

Conservatism and Evolution: Educational Continuation of Buddhist Music in the Luohan Temple of Chongqing City

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Abstract

Buddhist music was introduced into China along with Buddhism. Since the introduction of Buddhist music, it has combined with local folk music in China and has gradually formed a kind of Buddhist music with special local characteristics. Chongqing Luohan Temple is one of the famous Buddhist shrines in China. Since the 1980s, the Buddhist music of Chongqing Luohan Temple has been recorded and collected in academia. This paper intends to select the old music version of Yoga flaming mouth ceremony in 1987 and the new version in 2012, and find the conservatism and evolution of Buddhist music in Chongqing Luohan Temple by comparing with the two versions: the conservative form of the Buddhist music shows the continuation of the Buddhist music of Chongqing Luohan Temple; the spiritual transformation of the Buddhist music shows the evolution of the Buddhist music of Chongqing Luohan Temple; the Buddhist music of Chongqing Luohan Temple has educational characteristics that are the unity of cultivating humanity and artistry, the unity of external convention and internal morality, and the unity of paying attention to results and focusing on the process.

Key words: Conservatism; Evolution; Buddhist music of Chongqing Luohan temple

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INTRODUCTION

From the 6th century BC to the 5th century BC, Buddhism was founded by the Buddha in India. The “clean and elegant” musical form has been played and sung when speaking Buddhist sutras since Buddhism was founded. After about the 3rd century BC, Buddhist music has gradually spread to the rest of Asia and the world by following Buddhism. In the process, Buddhist music has combined different ethnic folk music that has produced different styles of Buddhist music. In the Eastern Han Dynasty (about 58 AD – 75 AD), Buddhism was introduced into China. Buddhist music came into China from India and the western regions, and it has combined with Chinese folk music and ethnic music so that the Chinese Buddhist music not only has Chinese music styles but also contains Indian or the Western minority’s styles. Chongqing Luohan Temple as a Buddhist shrine has a greater impact on the country, and plays an important role in the Ba (including Sichuan province and some regions of neighbor provinces) culture circle. Since ancient times, Chongqing Luohan Temple has been a place where provides lodgings for monks coming into Sichuan from Xiajiang area so Chongqing Luohan Temple has become the center of Buddhist culture and music exchanges in Sichuan. The main task of this paper is to understand the Buddhist music development of Chongqing Luohan Temple and explores the music conservatism and evolution in the cultural continuation through studying the music of Chongqing Luohan Temple.

1. THE VERSION SELECTION: BUDDHIST MUSIC VERSIONS OF CHONGQING LUOHAN TEMPLE

Chongqing Luohan Temple was built from the year of 1064 to the year of 1066 in the Northern Song Dynasty. The Chongqing Luohan Temple is a famous Chan sect temple. It is the location of the Buddhist Association of

Chongqing City and is one of important Buddhist temples in China. In the early 1980s, the Chongqing Luohan Temple resumed religious activities and the academia began to record, collect, sort out and publish the Buddhist music of the Chongqing Luohan Temple. Among many music versions, this paper selects a music version recorded by Mr. Zhong Guangquan in 1987 (hereinafter referred to as the “old version”) and another music version recorded by the author on August 31, 2012 (hereinafter referred to as the “new version”). The “old version” was the earliest publication of Chongqing Buddhist music. And at that time, the Vajra Master was Changfa. When the “new version” was recorded, the Vajra Master was Zhifeng who was a disciple of master Changfa. In this paper, the two versions are compared in details along the time sequence. And from the macroscopic view to the microscopic view, a comprehensive comparison and systematic analysis on the music elements are made by taking the music of the same ceremony after a period of 25 years as samples to explore how the music sticks to the traditional model and at the same time, observe the Buddhist music’s adjustments in the social and cultural changes by looking at Yoga flaming mouth ceremony. Although these subtle adjustments do not shake the traditional system in form, but some subtle aesthetic style changes should not be underestimated.

The Buddhist music of Yoga flaming mouth ceremony has plots. Its content is very rich and it is an integration of Buddhist music. The Buddhist music of Yoga flaming mouth ceremony is an integrated art form including songs, dances, music, arts, language, literature, and so on. The Yoga flaming mouth ceremony is often conducted in temples and it has “a systematic and complete form of Buddhist ceremony with very rich music.” From the perspective of continuing the tradition which is often carried on, this paper analyzes the changes and steadiness of Buddhist music elements in the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony. The tradition, which is often carried on, provides a research basis of the macroscopic view and the microscopic view and also is the best sample for people objectively and clearly understanding the evolution history of Buddhist music in Chongqing Luohan Temple. At same time, it is more important that the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony shows that the people continue the excellent traditional culture and ideas of thousands of years that the people believe filial piety is the most important virtue in all virtues and carefully doing things can make fewer mistakes.

2. CONSERVATISM AND EVOLUTION: THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF BUDDHIST MUSIC IN THE LUOHAN TEMPLE

The “*Book of Changes*” is the only Chinese philosophy book that established “a great philosophical system”

(Zong, 1944, p.188). According to the ontology idea of the “*Book of Changes*”, Buddhist music is a unity of the tangible form and the intangible meaning and has independent characters. Its soul, the “spirit”, is hidden in the form of Buddhist music. The spirit pushes out its form and uses the form as its existing form, in which, the life of the Buddhist music stays in. Between the “form” and the spirit, the spirit is the core and relies on the form of the music to exist. At the same time, the spirit is more dependent on people’s inner hearts to perceive and feel. In the form, the old version and the new version of the Buddhist music maintain an overall and high steady state but small changes of the form reflect that the two versions have different aesthetic styles although the small changes of the form do not shake the traditional framework of the system. The different aesthetic styles show that the spirit has some changes. The conservatism of the “form” and the evolution of the spirit reflect deep dual connotations of the two versions.

2.1 The Conservatism of the “Form”: The Continuation of Buddhist Music in the Luohan Temple

The “form” refers to the form of the overall performance, of the ceremony procedure and ceremony music in the Yoga Flaming mouth ceremony. In the historical heritage, the Buddhist music maintains an overall and high steady state and this whole conservative form of the Buddhist music shows that the Buddhist music has a “living heritage” feature. The conservative form also reflects that Buddhism sticks to the religious nature in the traditional continuation and in the Buddhist belief system of thousands of years and constitutes an unchanged world in a changing world with changes of social culture.

Firstly, the two versions basically have the same ceremony procedure and the overall structure is very conservative. The ceremony procedure has no big changes and is within confines of the belief system. The ceremony rites of the old version and the new version are exactly the same without any changes: There are four parts and 40 sections; the ceremony is held in the temple’s ceremony environment; according to the time guided by a provision, at around 16 pm, the ceremony is held in the preaching hall of the Luohan Temple; the masters of the ceremonies have a master and apprentice relationship (when the old version was recorded, the Vajra Master was Changfa. When “the new version” was recorded, the Vajra Master was Zhifeng who is a disciple of Master Changfa. After a period time of 25 years, the masters of the ceremonies have the master and apprentice relationship explicitly). In the singing section, for example, there is “*Xi Zhang Zhen Xiang*” that was spoken in the old version and it was sung and intoned in the new version; “*The Honorable Bodhisattva Mahasattva*” was sung and intoned in the old version and it was chanted in the new version. These two changes in the singing section do not represent that

the main core of the ceremony music has changes and the most singing types of the ceremony are fixed, reflecting the “high steady form”.

Secondly, in the music structure, a static and cross section analysis is conducted to try to find relationship rules of the music form between the old version and the new version after a lapse of 25 years. The old version or the new version as a whole musical form is a combining many tunes system, namely, it is composed of a plurality of single tunes of different types and the combination is according to a certain program. In the structural system, it is composed of many single tunes, and every single tune has a title. These single tunes are divided into independent or non-independent single tunes in according to the extent of their independence or wholeness. a) Independent type single tunes are often used in chanting or singing sections and these tunes have the strong independence and integrity. Each tune of them has an introducing melody and an ending melody with a free style. These are some composition methods: an introducing melody starts from a free style melody, and then goes into a tune to prepare for entering the “formal tune”; in the end, there is an ending melody with a free style, sometimes suddenly stopping. An independent single tune is often used in an important position such as the beginning or a climax of the ceremony music and it has strong lyricism. This kind of single tunes has a larger proportion in the whole ceremony music and has some prominent features. This kind structure of single tunes is often used in the ceremony music, and the rate accounts for 42.9%. And their changes are typical and basic. b) Many of non-independent single tunes are sung or intoned, and their independence is weak. Each of these tunes has not an introducing melody or an ending melody with a free style but they can be intoned by immediately following the beats. These tunes have the more abrupt beginning and ending and their tunes are more compact and short. As if each of them is limited by the tune which is before or after it, it is difficult to be independent or whole. One of these tunes is often used in the middle of a piece of cycle music, its narrative is strong, and it plays a role of a link or transition. In the category of intoned tune, the structure models of single tunes, the intoning forms, etc are more solid, and they are mainly ending in a unique Yu tone. Through the analysis of the aria music structures of the two versions, it can be seen that the most typical structure is a single piece or a tune arrangement which is played repeatedly although they have various structures. Although there are structure principles of contrast, cycle, arrangement and so on, most of the pieces follow the variation principle. This kind of variation structure thinking forms a unified and related music structure. The structures of these tunes have not been a strong contrast and more incline to principles of complete peace, balance and conservatism.

Compared with the old version, the new version has the stability in the ceremony procedure and the music

structure after a lapse of 25 years that indicates the overall “form” of the ceremony music melody has a relatively steady development trend in the historical heritage. Holding the flaming mouth ceremony is to respect and reverence for the Buddha, and monks use the music to conduct communication and dialogue with Buddhist gods. It is the religious idea that makes people very piously treat the original ceremony music which worships Buddhist gods and basically preserve the original ceremony music. In the ceremony, the music has an important task that is to entertain gods and ghosts, and any changes of the music may incur the gods’ displeasure. So during the continuation process of the tradition, the monks do not dare to be carelessly changing the music and they also are not allowed to change the overall form of the music because the music meets the religious ceremony. However, it is more important that the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony shows that China inherits excellent traditional culture and ideas of thousands of years and the people believe that filial piety is the most important virtue of all virtues and carefully doing things can make fewer mistakes. So the music must have been the constant conservatism for holding the particular belief system and preserving the norms of the ceremony procedure in the ceremony.

2.2 The Evolution of the Spirit: The Transformation of the Buddhist Music in the Luohan Temple

The spirit refers to a kind of style which is gentle quiet and has the aftertaste of implicit beauty. The spiritual style is closely related to the aesthetic property of the “charm”. The “*Xunzi • On Heaven*” said: “After a form is established, the spirit is born”. In the Buddhist music, a form is used to produce a kind of spirit that is an essential idea of the Buddhist doctrines. The characteristics of the spirit hide in the music: follow natural laws, respect honesty and advocate nature. The gentle quiet of Buddhist music is natural and it is not artificial. It is simple and it is not carved and gaudy. It is conflict-free, deep, elegant, and introversion which are aesthetic attributes of the Buddhist music.

Firstly, in the rhythm form, the main rhythm types of the old version are dotted notes, four dotted sixteenth notes, two sixteenth notes and one eighth note, regular eighth note, syncopation and so on. The main rhythm types of the new version are one dotted eighth note and sixteenth note, regular eighth note and so on. The old version has more fluid rhythmic pattern. The new version has more balanced rhythmic type and also the dynamics tend to weaken. The old version has ascended, descending or combined parallel conjunct melodies and is through surrounding a tone then to a higher or lower tone. The new version has ascending or descending disjunctive melodies with less fluctuates around a tone. The old version forms the soft and smooth motion states and reflects mellow

mood. The new version has a sudden, blunt straight up or straight down progressive method.

Secondly, in the melody aspect, the old version wave curves have more fluid melody patterns and the old version has soft and tender characters. The wave motion is ascending, descending or surrounding fluctuation which strengthen the gentle melodies. The melodic patterns show easy movements and quiet emotion effects which reflect aesthetic effects of smooth and soft melodies in Buddhist music. In wavy curve movements of the “new version”, there is the zigzag motion which is sharp and hard, and the fluid music is less. The new version has less beauty of form and rhythm.

Thirdly, in the rhythm movement form aspect: a) compared with the old version, the dynamics of rhythm movement of the new version are weaker. The old version has a streamline swaying rhythm and uses syncopation to exhibit streamline swaying and leisurely comfortable feeling, which reflect a free and unconstrained psychological rhythm and highlight the “free movement” of monks’ psychological rhythm (Pu, 2013, p.158). Because of the rhythm relating to the breath or pulse beat, the psychological rhythm should be aesthetic, free and comfortable. The new version has the mechanical and normative rhythm, the rhythm of one dotted eighth note and sixteenth note emphasizes the rhythmic stress. The most used rhythm is regular eighth note type, which is the contrast rhythm and likes the periodic characteristic of secular music to seek a rhythm and rigid control; b) in the movement speed of rhythm, statistics show: in 41 chanting tunes, the old version chanting speed is uniform and stable, and tunes with the andante speed account for 63.4%. The unhurried speed reflects the charm of the traditional Buddhist music—calm, solemn, balance, unearthly serene temperament; the “new version” speed has bigger changes and poor stability, and the moderato speed is account for 65.9%, 4 tunes reaching allegro pace. In the 25 years, the chanting tunes show a faster speed trend, gradually lost the charm, and reflect the secular restlessness. When emphasizing a slower speed in the ceremony music, donors and believers can be more sensible to appreciate the aesthetic sentiment of the ceremony, and by triggering their deep resonance, they can remember the rich meaning of life and have realistic perceptions.

The characteristics of the form of the old version are the soft and tender melodies, the surrounding conjunct method, casual rhythm and a suitable speed that more fit into an important category of Chinese ancient literary aesthetics-gentle quiet which has the aftertaste of implicit beauty. The characteristics of the form of the old version accurately explain the profound Buddhist religious ideas which are at peace with the world and in pursuit of aesthetic styles of the soft, purity and peace. The characteristics of the form of the new version are

the abrupt, straight method, rigid rhythm, restless and faster speed. The new version is affected by the secular culture and it shows the sharp ups and downs, secular comparative conflict and restless movements. Through the comparison of the old version and the new version, we can see quiet changes in the aesthetic style of the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony music in the universal changes of 25 years. These changes are important for confirming that the present-day Luohan Temple Buddhist music has been losing its charm and has been more far away from the original gentle quiet.

3. EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUDDHIST MUSIC

Buddhist music is an important part of Buddhist education. Buddhism education is activities, in which, Buddhism educators have objectives, plans and organizations to influence Buddhist disciples’ minds and bodies to make them become required Buddhist talents (Zhang & Chen, 1997). The Buddhist music of the Luohan Temple can have further evolution in a historical transformation process because it has very strong characteristics of education. It also reflects special education characteristics of the Buddhist music of the Luohan Temple.

3.1 An Unity of Education and Art

Since the appearance of the school system, it shoulders an important task of cultivating talents. How to cultivate students? What kind of people do schools make? These problems are core problems of the school education and are also philosophical propositions related to students’ happiness. If we regard a temple as a special school and regard Buddhist teachers and disciples as school teachers and students, the education of a true sense really exists in the field of Buddhism. How to cultivate Buddhist disciples? What kind of Buddhists does a temple make? They are key problems that Buddhism “schools” need to think, and these problems are directly related with upholding the concept of value in the development of Buddhism. Training “talents” has become an important task in the school of Buddhism. Buddhist music of various ceremonies as a kind of education form is throughout the activities of Buddhist education and it always is the main form of educational activities. In a variety of ceremony activities, Buddhist educators use various music forms to teach Buddhist disciples, tell Buddhist disciples what to do and not to do, let Buddhist disciples learn to read doctrines aloud, sing and intone, and cultivate Buddhist disciples’ good behavior for reaching education objectives through Buddhist disciples perceiving Buddhism. By the comparison of the old version and the new version, it can be seen that Buddhist doctrines are spread in the Buddhist music and the soft and tender melodies, the surrounding conjunct method, casual rhythm, and a suitable speed

reflect the profound Buddhists' religious ideas such as to be at peace with the world, and are in pursuit of aesthetic styles including soft, gentle, pure, quiet and calm. The Buddhist music is an art form which combines Buddhism and music. Through this form of Buddhist music, the goal of cultivating Buddhist disciples is achieved. Buddhist music of solemn and clean melody implicates the compassion feeling, moves people after their listening to it, arises a happy feeling and makes kindness thinking. When Buddhist disciples sing or intone, they can have more chance to understand the Buddhist way. Buddhist music is a kind of educational form to cultivate people's humanity and artistry so the people get a better combination. As Johann Friedrich Herbart said that we should make the process of education become a kind of art career (Johann, 1989). The educational process of Buddhist music is the process of educating people and also is a process with full of art. The Buddhist music of the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony itself has a role in educating people. And the ceremony program has strict requirements and specifications. In the educational content, the music advocates the excellent traditional culture and ideas that filial piety is the most important virtue of all virtues and carefully doing things can make fewer mistakes. In the form of the music, the music cultivates people's minds and helps every person to reach a peaceful mind.

3.2 An Unity of the External Norms and the Inner Virtue

As is known to all, Buddhism has the strict discipline and has the intrinsic moral binding for Buddhist disciples that realize the organic unity of the external system specifications and inner self constraints (Xia, 2014). The Buddhist ceremony activities become Buddhist services. From the content, Buddhist services can be divided into practice services, celebration and ceremony services, praying for fortune and dispelling calamity services, and universal relief services. The flaming mouth ceremony is a universal relief service and uses the doctrine of "*Yoga Flaming Mouth*". In the Yoga flaming mouth ceremony of Luohan Temple, "flaming mouth" is to dispel calamity and pursue happiness for living people. The Yoga flaming mouth ceremony is to release souls from purgatory so the dead will live the next life in the western paradise. The Yoga flaming mouth ceremony has strict requirements for the ceremony program, mantras, hand gestures, implements and so on. The master for the ceremony is generally having some merit. In the ceremony, the master has two assistants around him and a group of monks to intone or play music. The implements have drums, wooden fish drums, bells and so on. The Yoga flaming mouth ceremony is generally held in the evening. The ceremony is divided into four parts and the ceremony has a standard procedure. The first part is an open altar, which mainly is to worship gods; the second part is to invite

gods and it mainly includes seating, crowning, inviting a god (Vairochana), fixing places for the Five Wisdom Buddhas, chanting the Yoga text, inviting a god (Guan-yin Bodhisattva), sprinkling water, aiding four meditations, shaking the bell, praying for the Buddha-nature to stay, getting rid of all evils, devoting to Triratna, worshiping gods, chanting hymn of fundamental dogmas, inviting a god (Ananda), devoting to Triratna, chanting mantras for keeping nobleness, making offerings, transferring merit, sprinkling water, showing Mandala, making offerings, inviting Triratna, praying, chanting and signing prescribed rules of the altar, vowing, inviting, praying to the 35 Buddhas, the five kinds of offerings, getting rid of all evils, changing food, devoting food, breaking through the Hell gate, inviting a god (Ksitigarbha); the third part is to offer food that is to call all kinds of ghosts to attend the ceremony to have the food, and words of the seven Tathagatas, words of gods, words about the six paths, words about the completely offering and mantras are chanted; the fourth part is wholly complete, which mainly is to chant words about transferring merit. In the ceremony, people are solemn and serious, and the ceremony must be performed according to strict rules. At the same time, the ceremony is also a course, in which, Buddhist disciples have self practice. In the ceremony, the more important things are that doctrines are expounded for Buddhist disciples to let them return to Buddhism and ordain some people to full monkhood so the people will have correct views and have no longer made sin harming. It is hopeful that these people will get rid of suffering and become spiritual heroes of enlightenment. In the ceremony, the moral education, life education and music education are combined into the ceremony process, and disciples' standing, sitting and other behavior should have respect-inspiring dignity, the so-called "people with merit will be respected". Buddhist music is an indispensable part of the ceremonies which are accomplished by music, and the music is for the services. In daily music education, Buddhist disciples can learn the behavior standard, promote their spirit and practice at a higher moral level.

3.3 The Unity of the Results and the Process

Buddhism emphasizes the spirit of altruism, causal karma which is what goes around, comes around, and paying attention to the past, present and afterlife. Buddhists convert Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The Buddha is Sakyamuni Buddha; the Dhamma is the rules that Buddha told his disciples after his practice and later Buddha's words formed the text, his teachings; the Sangha refers to disciples of the Buddha. The essence of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is conducive to all beings, is a kind of transcendence of human wisdom, and saves living creatures from torment. Therefore, Buddhism pays attention to Buddhists' practice of the inner self. John Dewey said, "Education is not preparation

for life but is life itself' (Dewey, 2001, p.118) that is confirmed in Buddhism education. Ceremonies are used to cultivate Buddhists. In ceremonies or expounding the sutras, with Buddhist music, Buddhist disciples practice compassion and love. And Buddhist disciples also achieve whole merit through performing good deeds all around, compassionately saving people and preaching for benefiting people. In the individual own progression, Buddhism emphasizes to have strict review on Buddhist disciples, and make them form good habits of practice in the very beginning; in terms of one's lifelong development, Buddhism more emphasizes influence character by environment such as the deep influence of Buddhist music performed in the ceremony processes. In the Luohan Temple of Chongqing City, the Buddhist music gives people peace and perfection through diversified activities in its historical continuation and transformation.

CONCLUSION

After the historical transformation of 25 years, the old version and the new version of the music show the duality of the form conservatism and the spirit evolution in the Chongqing Luohan Temple. In its historical continuation and evolution, education has played a decisive role. Buddhist music and Buddhist ceremonies are interdependent. Educational characteristics of Buddhist music also are characteristics of Buddhist education, and they are naturally indivisible. Educational characteristics

of Buddhist music play a positive role in the continuation of the Buddhist music and Buddhism.

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