

Exploration of the Current Development and Inheritance Pathway of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of "Dragon Fist" in Huizhou City

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Abstract: Xiaojinkou Dragon-shaped Fist belongs to the second batch of provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in Huizhou City. As an intangible cultural heritage project of traditional sports competition in Huizhou, Dragon-shaped Fist possesses strong artistic and historical value. However, due to the changes in the times and the impact of modern civilization, it is gradually declining or even on the verge of extinction. The article employs literature review, interview methods, field investigation methods, questionnaire analysis methods, and dialogues with intangible cultural heritage inheritors to study the development background and current situation of Dragon-shaped Fist from the perspectives of humanistic history and geographical culture. Based on this research, development suggestions are proposed to optimize the inheritance pathway of Dragon-shaped Fist as a local culture in Huizhou.

1. Introduction

Dragon shaped Fist is one of the main schools of Nanquan Fist. In the late 19th century, it was created by Lin Yaogui, a Huizhou native known as the "Dongjiang Tiger", who absorbed and integrated martial arts from figures such as Hai Fengweng from Jinhua Temple and Master Dayu from Huashou in Luofu Mountain. Its name implies "agile like a swimming dragon, swift like a fierce tiger". It is mainly distributed in Jinji, Baishi and Bogang of Xiaojinkou, Huizhou, and is popular in Hong Kong, China. It has a significant influence in Southeast Asia, the Pearl River Delta region, Hong Kong China, Macao China and Malaysia, as well as the United States, Britain, Canada and other European and American countries[1]. In 2009, Xiaojinkou Dragon-shaped Fist was included in the third batch of the provincial intangible cultural heritage list in Guangdong Province. Dragon-shaped Fist is a martial art guided by ancient health preservation principles, based on the biomimetics of the dragon shape among the twelve zodiac animals, with a fundamental understanding of the unity of heaven and man, yin and yang, and five elements. It is rooted in biological science and was developed by ancient masters.

2. Introduction to the Development Background of Dragon-shaped Fist

In 1929, Lin Yaogui founded the martial arts school known as the "Dragon Style School" and

gained recognition from the martial arts community. From then on, the Dongjiang Dragon Style Boxing School was officially established. In 1965, the great master Lin Yaogui passed away at the age of 91. The second generation descendant of Dragon-shaped Fist, Lin Bing, hails from Longmen Longjiang. Lin Jinbin (September 1968 - December 2016) was born in Jinji Village, Xiaojinkou. In 2005, he organized and established the Huizhou Huicheng District Dragon Boxing Association, which trained and taught over 100 apprentices, making significant contributions to the inheritance of Dragon-shaped Fist; Lin Wenqin, the fourth generation disciple of Xiaojinkou Longxing Fist, studied under Lin Shucai in the same school as Lin Jinbin. Xiaojinkou is the birthplace of Dragon Fist. Jinji Village has a history of practicing martial arts for over a hundred years. In 2010, Xiaojinkou was designated as the "Guangdong Province Dragon-shaped Fist Inheritance Base". Up to now, more than 100 people in the village are studying Dragon-shaped Fist. As a representative inheritor of the Dragon Fist project and the fourth generation disciple of Xiaojinkou Dragon Fist, Lin Wenqin is a member of the Huizhou Citizens' Association and the president of the Huicheng District Dragon Fist Association. He began learning Dragon Fist from Master Lin Shucai in Jinji Village in 1980 and has devoted himself to studying the inheritance and techniques of Dragon Fist for many years. He has become one of the inheritors of Dragon-shaped Fist who have mastered all the essentials of the art. In 2012, he was awarded the title of Senior Technician in Rural Areas, and in 2013, he was awarded the second level referee of the People's Republic of China for martial arts routine projects by the Huizhou Sports Bureau.

The author first visited the former site of martial arts training and pushed open the temple door. Looking up, I saw the old-fashioned courtyard. The open space in front of the temple is where Grandmaster Lin Yaogui taught the Dragon-shaped Fist sixty years ago. To the left of the temple stands a large banyan tree with its roots spiraling, while straight ahead lies a winding and muddy road. According to Master Lin Wenqin, this is a cow plowing path. In the past, people used to tie the rope that pulled the yellow ox to the thick roots and branches of the banyan tree when practicing martial arts. The strength of the ox was enormous. Over time, the banyan tree's branches, damaged by constant pulling, grew thinner and thinner, but it remained an indelible, towering image in the hearts of the older generation. The banyan tree stood in front of the temple gate, witnessing the turmoil and stability, and also observing the rise and fall of martial arts. It silently guarded this ancient banyan tree. The temple guards the Dragon-shaped Fist and every kind and simple villager[2].

3. Dialogue with inheritors of intangible cultural heritage

I was fortunate enough to be invited to have a conversation with Lin Wenqin, the inheritor of intangible cultural heritage. "I started practicing martial arts at the age of 14. In that era, every household hoped that their children would learn martial arts and inherit Dragon-shaped Fist, and I was no exception. Master Lin Wenqin spent a year refining the Zhama Step and now has mastered 13 sets of Dragon Fist techniques.

In 2007, several founders including Lin Wenqin established the Huicheng District Dragon-shaped Fist Association. In line with the concept of resource integration and inheritance, the association encourages the sharing of skills and techniques, mutual learning, complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses, and systematically improving the performance of Dragon-shaped fist techniques.

In recent years, in order to expose more people to Dragon-shaped Fist, Lin Wenqin has led several masters to actively promote the introduction of Dragon-shaped Fist into schools, carry out public welfare teaching of learning boxing, and exchange boxing techniques in various places. We hold at least two public welfare classes at Xiaojinkou Cultural Station every year, and every time the class starts, it is packed. He also frequently participates in martial arts performance and public welfare

activities with other masters. In order to make Dragon-shaped Fist more performance-oriented, he led the district Dragon-shaped Fist Association and Xiaojinkou Cultural Station to jointly design and arrange the boxing program "Longxing Shengshi". Lin Wenqin believes that only those who possess the martial ethics of "restraining oneself to make others weaker than oneself, and intentionally guarding the path to make others stronger" can take the right path in practicing martial arts. This is also his strictest requirement for every disciple to practice martial arts.

The stacks of certificates and honors retrieved by Lin Wenqin were covered in dust and stained with mold. The author noticed two handwritten martial arts notebooks, which are the true biographies of Lin Yaogui's disciples. He smiled and recounted his experiences from the past few weeks: Not long ago, while conducting a public welfare performance, he encountered the son of a local wealthy businessman who was eager to learn Dragon-shaped Fist to strengthen his body and protect himself. Therefore, Master Lin Wenqin was invited to serve as a martial arts instructor. At that time, the wealthy businessman took out a three-meter-long iron steel pipe to test his martial arts skills and asked him how to resist and counterattack. He asked me cheerfully how to respond, but I could only shake my head and answer with some uncertainty: "The front end of the steel pipe should be the most powerful place to dodge, but unable to counterattack." I answered correctly, to avoid the front end. I punched through the middle section without mercy and won quickly.

The content of Dragon-shaped Fist mainly includes 13 martial arts routines, such as Three Crossings Bridge, Forced Tiger Jumping Wall, Single Blade Horse, Single Whip Savior, Eagle Claw, Dragon-shaped Moqiao, Transformation of Strength, Broken Bridge, Poisonous Snake Spitting Mist, Five Horses Returning to the Groove, Five Shapes, Plum Blossom Fist (Thrush Jumping Frame), Seven Route Plum Blossom Fist, and three stick techniques: Four Gate Picking Lotus Flower Double Headed Stick, Yellow Dragon Heart Piercing Stick, and Dragon-shaped Returning Dragon Stick.

Dragon-shaped Fist emphasizes the cultivation of essence, qi, and spirit internally, as well as the training of hands, eyes, body, legs, and steps externally. Its martial arts use intention as the spirit, qi as the driving force, and internal and external unity. Walking with speed like wind, falling horses like iron, throwing hands like a steel knife, advancing like a fierce tiger out of the forest, retreating like a mouse waiting for a hole, with clear eyes, fast hands, decisive strength, flexible and natural movements, and unpredictable changes. The movement characteristics of Dragon-shaped Fist emphasize qi, which is good at both techniques and leg movements. The technique often involves short strikes and close attacks, and the movements are brave, strong, yet flexible and agile.

The founder of Dragon-shaped Fist, Lin Yaogui, not only established a complete martial arts combat system, but also paid more attention to the cultivation of martial arts spirit and ethics by its successors. At the beginning of passing on the fist, he established the martial arts training rules of "self-restraint makes others not weak, and intentionally guarding the Tao makes others strong", inheriting, promoting and fully embodying the essence and basic values of Chinese martial arts culture.

Then he used an interactive approach to show me the dynamic and powerful techniques of Dragon-shaped Fist, and the steady and rock like strength of martial artists. I saw him gasping in anger, staring ahead with his eyes fixed, pressing forward step by step. In what seemed to be a moment of shaking, he unleashed his strength, frightening me and causing me to retreat continuously. He bent his right arm slightly and came forward to ask me how to resist. The victim should place resistance on the upper arm, and if it is on the lower arm, the opponent can easily break through the defense and attack in the blink of an eye. Lin Wenqin particularly mentioned the martial arts training rules set by Grandmaster Lin Yaogui, which are "self-restraint makes others not weak, and intentionally guarding the Tao makes others strong".

However, boxers also need to take into account family expenses when inheriting traditional culture. Due to the impact of complex modern cultural concepts, diversified entertainment methods, and the

epidemic, the classroom form of "intangible cultural heritage entering schools" has been cancelled, and playing electronic devices is more attractive than learning dragon shaped boxing. Therefore, the social influence of dragon shaped boxing is gradually declining, and its survival and development space is constantly being squeezed and destroyed. Many original boxing routes and techniques are facing the danger of extinction. In Yingtou Village, one of the birthplaces of dragon shaped boxing, the number of descendants who can fully master the entire set of dragon shaped boxing is decreasing. Given this objective reality, the Dragon-shaped Fist urgently needs to be excavated, rescued, and protected.

4. Analysis and Countermeasures

In this research on Dragon-shaped Fist, I mainly conducted a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with intangible cultural inheritors. I distributed 30 paper questionnaires and collected a total of 25 valid ones. This survey is based on three aspects: the age and identity characteristics of villagers in Jinji Village, their participation in Dragon-shaped Fist, and their efforts to protect and promote intangible cultural heritage. The general situation is as follows: Men account for about 48% and women account for 52% in Jinji Village. The age distribution of the elderly, middle-aged and young is average. In terms of education, 16 people have a junior high school education or below, accounting for 53%; 12 people have a master's degree or above, accounting for 3%. In terms of occupation, most villagers in Jinji Village are students, full-time housewives, employed workers, and retired workers. Regarding the questions of "Have you learned Dragon-shaped Fist" and "Do you expect to spread Huizhou's intangible cultural heritage through Dragon-shaped Fist", the proportion of affirmative answers is as high as 95%. The above data intuitively shows that the gender and age distribution in Jinji Village is relatively even, and the overall cultural level of the villagers is low, but they still hold a high enthusiasm for the cultural inheritance of Dragon-shaped Fist. In addition, in the questionnaire, respondents gave a relatively high proportion of answers, accounting for 34% and 27% respectively, regarding "what reasons prevented you from delving deeper into learning Dragon-shaped Fist", "too busy with family matters", and "going to school". From this, it can be concluded that the population base of Jinji Village is sufficient to support the inheritance and development of Dragon-shaped Fist, and the local government has given high attention to the intangible cultural heritage projects of Dragon-shaped Fist, including funding, construction of relevant cultural centers, promotion of "intangible cultural heritage into schools", and setting Dragon-shaped Fist as a classroom exercise in Jinji Village Primary School.

In a telephone conversation with Master Lin Wenqin five days later, I informed him of the analysis of the questionnaire data, first stating some optimistic current situation and future development prospects, and affirming his important significance as an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage.

However, the inheritance of the 'Dragon Fist' still faces obstacles and is long. In terms of apprenticeships, there are few enthusiasts of "Dragon Fist", low salaries, and narrow employment channels. In terms of the participation of inheritors in activities, the lack of emphasis on the main content of intangible cultural heritage inheritance by inheritors can also become a problem of intangible cultural heritage inheritance, but it does not exclude the lack of information communication and organizational promotion by government departments and intangible cultural heritage protection units. Therefore, improving the living conditions and working environment of inheritors, and enhancing the social status of intangible cultural heritage inheritors, are the key to solving the difficulties of inheritance. In terms of training, the lack of targeted and creative content in the "Dragon Fist" course, the relatively single and rigid form of the course, and the limited level of the master are the main reasons why some training courses cannot attract potential inheritors to actively participate; Moreover, the marketization level of intangible cultural heritage projects is relatively low, and

funding support from the government and protection units has become the main source of funding, making it difficult to carry out large-scale promotional activities. [1] And the rigid protection mode of Dragon-shaped Fist, which emphasizes practice but lacks theoretical protection, makes it difficult for future generations to inherit written and visual materials.

Therefore, I have put forward the following suggestions to Master Lin Wenqin and submitted them to the Huizhou Municipal Government.

4.1 Regarding inheritors of intangible cultural heritage

(1) Inheritors of intangible cultural heritage should establish cooperative relations with municipal museums, local newspapers, WeChat official account, television stations, and make full use of external media to carry out public welfare publicity, such as displaying the propaganda posters of the traditional martial arts, martial arts culture, class time, etc. of "Dragon-shaped Fist" in turn at each bus stop to expand social influence;

(2) Intangible cultural heritage inheritors should enhance the scope of "bringing intangible cultural heritage into schools" activities, expanding from Beiji Village Beigang Primary School and Xiaojinkou Primary School to Huicheng District. This not only enhances the awareness and attention of Huizhou people to intangible cultural heritage culture, but also consolidates the centripetal force of Huizhou people;

(3) Intangible cultural heritage inheritors should standardize the construction of the "Dragon-shaped Fist" team and build a standardized intangible cultural heritage dissemination team. Timely update the enrollment brochure and teaching design to keep up with the times.

4.2 At the government level

(1) Governments at all levels should increase funding subsidies for intangible cultural heritage projects such as "Dragon-shaped Fist" to enhance the confidence and confidence of intangible cultural heritage inheritors in cultural inheritance;

(2) Governments at all levels should introduce professional intangible cultural heritage inheritance teams and talents, and develop specialized plans for the inheritance of the "Dragon-shaped Fist";

(3) Governments at all levels should further strengthen the construction of intangible cultural heritage infrastructure, improve the "Dragon-shaped Fist Hall" to promote the protection and display of intangible cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

As an intangible cultural heritage, Dragon-shaped Fist lacks innovation and vitality, making it difficult to integrate with modern society. In recent years, the government has increased its investment and attention to the rescue, protection, and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and has also emphasized the identity responsibility of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. As a traditional martial arts technique, Dragon-shaped Fist needs to be passed down through oral and heart to heart transmission, and its inheritance mainly relies on people. Therefore, representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage play an extremely important role in the protection and inheritance of Dragon-shaped Fist intangible cultural heritage.

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