

Analysis of the Value of "Monkey Quack Whip" in Community Cultural Construction

Liu Zongyi¹ & Chen Yu¹

¹ Quanzhou Normal University, China

Correspondence: Liu Zongyi, Quanzhou Normal University, Quanzhou, Fujian 362000, China

Received: June 29, 2025; Accepted: July 16, 2025; Published: July 17, 2025

Abstract

This paper delves into the positive role of the intangible cultural heritage dance "Monkey Quack Whip" in enhancing community cohesion, inheriting traditional culture, and enriching the spiritual and cultural life of residents in community cultural construction. And propose corresponding countermeasures for the challenges faced in community cultural construction. The "Monkey Quack Whip" dance, which combines folk tales with physical art, enlivenes the community atmosphere with crisp whip sounds, cheerful drumbeats and lively dance moves, and attracts residents of all ages. From the exchange of skills in daily rehearsals to the collective appearance in festival performances, from the personal instruction of intangible cultural heritage inheritors to family group learning, it strengthens cultural identity through interaction and builds a community of cultural memory. It is not only a carrier of community cultural construction, but also an important bond that brings people closer together and promotes community harmony.

Keywords: Monkey Quack Whip, community culture building, cohesion, traditional culture, spiritual and cultural life

1. Introduction

Community cultural construction, as an important carrier of grassroots social governance and spiritual civilization construction, carries the core mission of uniting neighborhood sentiments, inheriting local cultural context, and enhancing residents' cultural identity. In the current context of accelerated urbanization and multicultural integration, how to tap into local cultural resources and activate the contemporary vitality of traditional folk customs has become a key issue in building a distinctive community cultural ecosystem. Intangible cultural heritage, as a living carrier of national cultural genes, its dynamic inheritance and innovative application in community scenarios not only inject unique historical depth into community culture, but also build an effective bridge for residents to participate in cultural practice and jointly build a spiritual home.

"Monkey Quack Whip" is a traditional folk dance form that has been passed down in a specific area. It combines dance, music and folk customs. With its cheerful rhythm, lively dance moves and profound folk customs, it has extensive cultural memory and emotional connection among the local people. This intangible cultural heritage project is not only a vivid representation of local cultural diversity, but also embodies the wisdom of collective creation, the spirit of neighborhood collaboration and the expression of life aesthetics. However, under the impact of the modernization wave, many traditional folk customs are facing the predicament of broken inheritance and shrinking scenes, and the survival and development of "Monkey Quack Whip" also face the realistic challenge of how to adapt to the changes in community life and integrate into the demands of contemporary culture.

Based on this, this paper focuses on the intrinsic connection between "Monkey Gata Whip" and community cultural construction, aiming to systematically explore its unique value in enriching the forms of community cultural activities, enhancing residents' cultural identity, and promoting the accumulation of community social capital by sorting out the historical origin, artistic features and folk functions of "Monkey Gata whip". At the same time, in light of the actual needs of current community cultural construction, this paper explores the practical problems and innovative paths faced by "Monkey Gua Ta Whip" in the living inheritance, with the aim of providing theoretical references and practical lessons for the empowerment of community cultural construction by intangible cultural heritage resources, and allowing traditional folk customs to regain new vitality and vigor in the fertile soil of the community.

2. The Basic Situation of the Monkey Quack Whip Dance

2.1 Origins and Historical Background

2.1.1 Origin Background

The Monkey Gata whip dance originated in the late Qing Dynasty in Xihenggouya Village, Lanling Town, Lanling County, Shandong Province. The origin of the "Monkey Gada Bian" is detailed in the book "Complete Collection of Chinese Ethnic and Folk Dances - Shandong Volume" : "The Monkey Gada bian was passed down in Xihenggouya Village, Lanling Town, Cangshan County (now Lanling County). It existed during the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty. At first, it was a means for poor artisans to make a living, performed by a couple. Later, during the Xuantong period, it evolved into a 'play society', with a significant increase in dance elements and the number of performers increased to four.^[1]" Lanling Town is a thousand-year-old town with rich historical and cultural heritage and a strong wine culture. Li Bai, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, once visited here and wrote the famous lines: "Lanling wine is like a tulip, in a jade bowl comes amber light." The local people are mainly engaged in farming, have a simple folkways and a bold character. During major festivals, there are performances of folk dances and folk music, which are very lively. The rich historical and cultural heritage and the natural geographical environment make the working people here love life, are diligent and kind, and love dancing. The dance has a history of nearly two hundred years. From its initial purpose of begging, it has evolved into a form of performance that combines dance, comedy and folk songs. It was performed on every major festival and celebration, with the male characters holding flower sticks and the female characters holding lotuses, cooperating with each other. The movements are simple, the performance is flexible and varied, dancing to the music, and can improvise on the basis of the original movements when the performance gets hot.



Figure 1. The inheritor demonstrates the Monkey Guata whip dance live and tells the story of its origin and development

2.1.2 Current Status of Inheritance and Development

In order to gain a more accurate and true understanding of the current situation of the development and inheritance of the Monkey Quack Whip, the author specially visited the inheritor of the Monkey Quack Whip, Mr. Cao Hongbing, in Lanling Town. It was learned that Mr. Cao Hongbing has had forty years of artistic experience since he began his apprenticeship at the age of fifteen. Through the form of live demonstrations, he demonstrated superb dance skills and appreciated the unique artistic charm of the Monkey Quack Whip. Since taking on the responsibility of passing on the art, Cao Hongbing has been actively organizing performances for major festivals, celebrations and other themes. In the "Qilu Characteristic Culture Series of Dance", it is mentioned that "Hou Gua Ta Ban" has received awards and honors. "In 2001, it was organized by the cultural department of Cangshan County and performed on the stage of the first square art festival in Linyi City and received praise, and won the 'Golden Dragon Award' at the second folk Yangko Festival.^[2]" This shows that the performers of this folk art have been working hard. In recent years, as efforts to protect and pass on intangible cultural heritage have been intensified, the intangible cultural heritage dance "Monkey Quack Whip" has also entered schools and become a course in secondary vocational schools, with teachers returning regularly every week to teach. This has greatly

broadened the channels for passing on dance skills and promoted this folk dance with local characteristics. Through conversation, it was learned that there is a missing "rolling whip" routine in the current Monkey Quack Whip performance. Mr. Cao is also doing his best to search for photos of the master's performance and videos taken at that time in the hope of restoring it.

2.2 Artistic Features

2.2.1 Characters and Costume Props

Among the male and female characters, the male performers hold flower sticks, wear yellow special monkey costumes, apply monkey face makeup, imitate monkey forms, perform vividly and flexibly. The flower sticks used by the performers are made of high-quality bamboo poles. The inside of the bamboo nodes is all cut through and a pair of copper coins need to be drilled through each node for fixation. Hitting them during the performance makes a sound. The surface of the flower sticks is painted multiple times, with red and green as the main colors, and yellow at the middle joints, both for aesthetic purposes and to prevent damage from insects and ants. A square piece of cloth is tied to each end, with one side being red and the other green. The female performers, dressed in Yangko costumes and holding lotuses (bamboo boards, trash spappers), perform in coordination with the male characters.

2.2.2 Dance Movements and Performance Forms

The movements are characteristic of the local area and have a distinct rhythm. The book "Illustrated Catalogue of Shandong Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage List" summarizes the artistic features of the monkey Gua Ta whip. "The rhythm is fast, the action is strong, and the atmosphere is lively. In particular, men with whips imitate the form of monkeys with great skill, leaping and moving, interspersed with action combinations such as "single whip playing with a move", "double whip playing with a move", and "fighting flower whips", full of the unique rural flavor of southern Shandong, forming an artistic style that combines dance, play and song.^[3] I learned about the eight basic movements of the monkey Gua Ta whip and the combinations of movements commonly used in the performance through communication and learning with the inheritors. The male flower stick is composed of eight basic movements: one for the left wrist, two for the left elbow, three for the left shoulder, four for the right shoulder, five for the left hand, six for the inner side of the right foot, seven for the outer side of the right foot, and eight for the left foot. The movements are coherent and rhythmically distinct. The combinations of the Monkey Gua Ta whip include: the leg suction kick jump combination, the front and back lunge hitting stick squatting and hitting the ground combination, the leg suction crossbar hitting shoulder combination, the front and back kick swing combination, and the double jump single drop push combination. The basic movements performed by the female character are the lozi step, standing on tiptoes with feet together, holding the board with the right hand and the knuckle with the left hand. Four beats are used as a foundation and can be performed forward, backward, left and right.



Figure 2. The inheritor's stage performance photo

2.2.3 Musical Accompaniment and Lyrics

The music is mostly folk songs. In "Research on the Customs and Culture of Lanling", many examples are given for the musical repertoire of "Monkey Gua Ta Bi". "The singing repertoire is mostly folk songs, and women have to sing along at the same time, such as 'Great Spring Outing', 'Little Spring Outing', 'Twelve Escort', 'Embroidered Lantern', etc. The content mainly reflects love and labor life.^[4]" In recent years, the music accompaniment has also included modern songs with distinct rhythms, as well as the highly local "Yimeng Mountain Ballad", and the selection of music has covered young people, which to some extent reflects the development of the dance.

3. The Value of the Monkey Quack Whip Dance in Community Cultural Construction

3.1 Enhance Community Cohesion and a Sense of Belonging

3.1.1 Community Activities Participated in Together

One of the major features of the Monkey Quack Whip dance is that its movements can be either simple or complex, which to some extent expands the range of performers to cover people of different ages and physical abilities: the elderly in the community can choose combinations of basic movements with smaller magnitudes, and the young can appropriately add technical movements such as jumps to make the performance more passionate. This inclusiveness allows the residents of the community, regardless of occupation or age differences, to find their place in the dance activities, creating a good atmosphere of "helping each other when needed and rehearsing together when free", increasing the frequency of interaction among residents and enhancing the overall cohesion of the community.

In Lanling, during the annual holiday, a large number of young and middle-aged people return to their hometowns. Since they spend most of the year away from home, this period is a rare opportunity for family reunion and close friends to strengthen their bonds. From the first to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, the Monkey Quack Whip dance team appears in the bustling town and county square. After the Monkey Quack Whip dance team performs, the performers invite people of all ages and genders to join in and teach hands-on, allowing the participants to fully experience the authenticity of folk art.

3.1.2 Emotional Bonds and Identity

After years of development, the Monkey Quack Whip dance has become an iconic cultural symbol, and its performance carries the collective memory of several generations, unconsciously becoming a carrier of emotional resonance among people. With the vigorous development of society and the continuous improvement of people's material living standards, people have gradually moved to residential buildings in communities and diversified forms of entertainment, etc. Many elderly people still often feel the passage of time. Fortunately, this intangible cultural heritage skill has gradually been valued again in recent years. More and more young people have begun to be attracted by this skill. After learning about the origin, development and glorious history of the monkey Gua Ta whip, they have joined the ranks of protection and inheritance. The elderly teach the skill carefully, and the young people learn it with great enthusiasm.

In the process of learning and training, this art form builds a bridge of emotions between new and old performers, allowing people to understand its unique value and realize that this dynamic art should become more colorful with the development of society and pass on the unique artistic charm of the Monkey Quack Whip better. Originating from Lanling, a place rich in cultural heritage, the passionate performance of the performers on the stage is a genuine expression of love for the local culture and emphasis on inheritance and development, making more and more people know Lanling and understand the Monkey Quack Whip, and making positive contributions to the cultural tourism of the hometown.

3.2 Inherit and Promote Traditional Culture

3.2.1 Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

As a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage of Shandong Province, the Monkey Quack Whip dance has received increasing attention and protection in recent years. One of the major characteristics of the community is the concentration of population. Through publicity and performance in the community, more enthusiasts can be drawn into the ranks of protecting and inheriting the Monkey Quack Whip, and better living inheritance can be achieved. Dance is a dynamic performance that is different from the static art forms such as calligraphy and painting. Only its physical performance costumes, props, awards and photos and videos can be statically displayed. Through regular activities held in the community to explain and demonstrate, one can feel its charm and value more vividly and graphically, through the combination of oral instruction and video recording. It avoids the risk of loss due to the absence of written records.

By organizing regular performance teams in the community, some major festivals can be used to create an atmosphere and enhance visibility, thereby strengthening the vitality of intangible cultural heritage in concrete practice. This way of highlighting performances during festivals and reinforcing customs through performances will make the Monkey Quack Whip more and more famous. In addition, various communities can hold competitions, with each community's performance team actively participating to enhance their own team strength through competitions, and the positive atmosphere formed by the team members during the preparation process promotes the healthy development of community cultural construction.

3.2.2 Cultural Education and Inheritance

Invite the inheritors to hold regular weekend cultural promotion events with the theme of Monkey Quack Whip in the community, to present the Monkey Quack Whip dance more directly to teenagers, internalize it in their hearts and externalize it in their actions. On the one hand, it helps to further inject fresh blood into the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage for better development; on the other hand, it enhances teenagers' emphasis on traditional culture. In the community where they live, rather than passive indoctrination and acceptance, the inheritance and development of this art are achieved through active identification through osmosis, allowing teenagers to naturally understand the historical and cultural genes of their hometown in the process of learning to dance. Through educational practice, the emotions of the younger generation towards the Monkey Quack Whip dance have evolved from "strangeness" to "curiosity", then to "pride", and eventually become active inheritors of traditional culture.

3.3 *Promote Communication and Enrich Life*

3.3.1 Communication Across Age Groups

The Monkey Quack Whip dance, with its inclusiveness, allows enthusiasts of all ages to participate, serving as a "lubricant" for communication among residents of different ages and creating a good community atmosphere. In daily rehearsals, young people help older people shoot videos of daily rehearsals and adjust sound equipment. The older man's steady character prompts them to be more demanding about the accuracy of the dance, teaching the young man the details of the movements and some precautions step by step. As a result, the Monkey Quack Whip can serve as a bridge of communication between the young and the old, making intergenerational communication more warm and bringing together the age groups that originally played separately. In the interaction and communication, the group consensus is subtly strengthened, and the harmonious atmosphere permeates every aspect of daily life.

3.3.2 Enrich the Spiritual and Cultural Life

The Monkey Quack Whip dance, which combines physical expression and musical interaction, can provide residents with a more immersive cultural experience. It has the advantages of cultivating one's character and strengthening one's body, providing community residents with more options for entertainment, leisure and cultural cultivation. With its unique artistic charm, it adds interest to the spiritual and cultural life of community residents. It can be used as a way to relieve work stress and relax the body after daily work, experiencing the charm of culture in an immersive way. Short videos are currently popular, and shooting with the theme of community intangible cultural heritage dance can also be a direction for short video producers. Record the daily rehearsals and performances of community residents, and let more people know about this dance art by telling stories and developments through short videos. This form not only expands the path of spiritual and cultural practice for residents, but also achieves the release of individual emotions and the construction of group cultural identity through the combination of body movement and artistic expression.

4. Challenges and Coping Strategies for the Monkey Quack Whip Dance in Community Cultural Construction

4.1 *Challenges Faced*

4.1.1 Underfunded

The issue of funds must be taken into account because the use of props and costumes for the performance of Monkey Quack Whip has a certain cycle. As a regular daily community activity, props and costumes are frequently used items, and this is a necessary expense that needs to be considered. For organizing the performance activities, there are costs involved in the construction of some stages and the adjustment of lighting, etc. It is very meaningful to hold the Monkey Quack Whip theme activities on several major festivals throughout the year, which will play a positive role in promoting the inheritance and development of the intangible cultural heritage dance itself, but the community's self-funding capacity is limited. The insufficiency of funds will directly affect the frequency and quality of the community's activities. To some extent, it will also dampen the enthusiasm of resident performers and affect the inheritance and development of the intangible cultural heritage dance Monkey Quack Whip in the community.

4.1.2 Insufficient Attention

The popularity of the Monkey Quack Whip is limited to the surrounding areas of its place of origin. It is relatively easy to promote it in the surrounding communities, but building popularity to attract more people to participate is mainly limited by geographical and promotional channels. On the one hand, when local traditional intangible

cultural heritage crosses cities and provinces, fewer people know about it. The resulting low popularity directly makes it difficult for the dance to reach other places. On the other hand, the Monkey Quack Whip has not fully utilized several mainstream new media platforms for systematic promotion. The fact that its rich historical and cultural heritage, unique fun and health benefits have not been fully promoted will inevitably affect the further understanding of the dance by community residents, the current development status and so on will increase the difficulty of introducing the Monkey Quack Whip into the community for inheritance and development. This shows that the lack of attention is an aspect that needs to be given special attention.

4.2 Coping Strategies

4.2.1 Seek Financial Support

Organize a promotional performance to allow residents to directly experience the unique artistic charm of the monkey Gua Ta whip, promote it to the residents of the community, explain in detail the purpose and advantages of the activity to win their support, and prepare some practical small gifts, such as dolls, folding fans, pendants, etc. as a return. Make it clear that all funds will be used for the necessary expenses of subsequent daily rehearsals, performances, etc. Establish a transparent account of the use of funds and regularly publicize it to the community to enhance credibility. For the first time participating performers join the team, they are provided with the necessary costumes and props for free. At the same time, a special team is established to maintain the props and costumes regularly to reduce certain daily expenses and avoid unnecessary waste.

4.2.2 Increase Social Visibility

Leverage mainstream new media platforms for promotion, invite local Internet celebrities and tourism bloggers to live-stream and film some historical stories, current development status, and the charm of the art itself about the Monkey Quack Whip, in order to attract more people to learn about the Monkey Quack Whip. Publish highlight videos on Douyin short Video platform, fully combine skill and beauty to create high-quality works, and regularly live-stream demonstrations, daily rehearsals, and actively interact to increase fans' awareness and affection for Monkey Quack Whip. Create a wechat official account dedicated to promoting Monkey Quack Whip, post regularly, focus on its own cultural connotations and the fitness functions of the dance, and break down and explain some movement combinations. Design a representative logo specifically, which can be a representative flower stick from the Monkey Quack Whip, because this prop is one of the main props for the performance and is simple and recognizable. Collaborate with a well-known local product to increase visibility. The increase in social recognition can boost the entry of Monkey Guata bian into communities, creating a virtuous cycle of inheritance and development.

5. Conclusion

The Monkey Quack Whip, an intangible cultural heritage dance with distinct local characteristics, originated from the folk and is bound to play a more active role in the construction of community culture: Further enhance community cohesion and belonging, inherit and promote this traditional art through mass participation, enrich the spiritual and cultural life of residents with unique performance forms, shorten the distance between the elderly and the young, enhance the feelings of community residents, and create a harmonious community atmosphere. Its value lies in being both a "symbol" of community cultural identity and a "bridge" connecting tradition and modernity, facilitating the better inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage dance. Future research could further explore quantifiable studies on the impact of dance activities on the well-being of community residents and provide some scientific and accurate data.

References

- [1] Chinese Ethnic and Folk Dance Ensemble Editorial Department. (1998). *Chinese folk and ethnic dance collection: Shandong volume* (pp. 847–857). Beijing: China ISBN Center.
- [2] Zhu, Z., & Sun, L. (2004). *Qilu characteristic culture series of dance* (pp. 217–218). Jinan: Shandong Friendship Publishing House.
- [3] Lee, C. W. (2012). *Illustrated catalogue of Shandong provincial intangible cultural heritage list* (pp. 145–147). Jinan: Shandong Friendship Publishing House.
- [4] Zhou, Y. (2013). *Research on Lanling ritual culture* (pp. 206–207). Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing House.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).