

MULTI-CONTEXTUAL REVIVAL, HIDDEN INHERITANCE CYCLE, AND FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY BEHIND THE CASE OF DONGPU BAMBOO HORSE IN GUANGDONG

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Abstract

This paper focuses on a specific type of long-term fieldwork that is closely linked to the inheritance cycle. This study employs a historical and longitudinal approach to investigate the history and two instances of revival that took place in 2016 and 2021 of the ‘Bamboo Horse’ in Dongpu village, situated in the Hailufeng region of Guangdong province, China. The two revivals occurred for distinct purposes: one was to participate in the ceremony in 2016, while the other was for the Intangible Cultural Heritage project in 2021. This study identified and examined the pattern of inheritance and conducted a comparative analysis to identify the variations and similarities across different periods of replay. The significance of this paper lies in its extensive and ongoing fieldwork, which involves continuous observation and contemplation of a specific subject. Over time, this research sheds light on how our perception and comprehension of this particular type of drama evolve. Furthermore, the consistent performance and status of Bamboo Horse are closely intertwined with the intrinsic nature of this ritualistic form of drama, and the change of the function of the drama in different contexts.

Keywords

historical ethnomusicology, longitudinal study; ritual, drama; intangible cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

The Malinowski (Murdock, 1943) model had a significant influence on the fields of Anthropology and Ethnomusicology. It established a standard for fieldwork that involved thorough observation of the community’s entire life cycle over one year. Due to advancements in transportation and the widespread use of modern media, scholars are increasingly able to establish and maintain long-term connections with the individuals or communities they study and are invested in. Applied Ethnomusicology promotes the idea of researchers refraining from conducting fieldwork without any intention of returning and instead emphasizes the importance of assuming responsibility towards the community, sharing knowledge, and actively participating in community engagement. Anthony Seeger (2008) highlights several benefits of long-term fieldwork, including expanding the researcher’s perspective, exploring solutions to old questions, generating new questions, facilitating collaboration and assistance, and the convenience of conducting long-term investigations. Kemper and Royce (2002) emphasize that returning to the field changes how to see and what we accept, and extended time in the research process facilitates the description and explanation of both change and persistence and makes us more sensitive to ethical issues and personal responsibilities.

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This thesis exemplifies a form of long-term fieldwork closely intertwined with the recurring cycle of the research topic. The uniqueness of this research topic stems from the significant role that long-term fieldwork and perspective play in the research methodology. This thesis examines the epistemology of the ‘Dongpu [东埔] Bamboo Horse’ topic, exploring various scenarios that arise when observing it from both short-term and long-term perspectives. This paper also challenged the prevailing notion of inheritance that scholars commonly accept.

‘BAMBOO HORSE’ AS A RITUAL PERFORMANCE: BASED ON ONE YEAR’S OBSERVATION

Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’ is a traditional drama found in Dongpu village in the Hailufeng [海陆丰] region of Guangdong province, China. The drama (Shih Teyu [施德玉], 2017; Zhang Shenghuan [张胜环], 2013) is named after the bamboo horse, a significant prop utilized by performers during walking around the villages, worship, and the performance of Zhaojun Hefan [昭君和番], a repertoire that consistently features in the first act of Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’. This drama features multiple repertoires, each performed by a group of 10-16 children who portray historical and legendary characters. They are accompanied by over ten adults who provide musical support on various instruments. This drama has been in existence for over three centuries in Dongpu village.

The ‘Bamboo Horse’, which serves as the emblematic symbol of Dongpu village, was not carried out between 2009 and 2015. Several reports have requested aid in preserving the Bamboo Horse, which was deemed to be at an imminent risk due to the six-year hiatus. Despite the endeavors of specific scholars to reassemble all the performers and restage the Bamboo Horse, unfortunately, this endeavor did not produce the desired outcome. However, in order to prepare for the grand ritual of Jieshi [碣石] town, in which Dongpu is located, a group of five individuals in Dongpu began rehearsing the ‘Bamboo Horse’ (Zheng Yanhui [郑燕辉], 2006). This entailed assembling tutors, instrumentalists, and children interested in performing, as well as engaging in fundraising activities.

Throughout the fieldwork done in Dongpu during the years 2016 and 2017, I had the privilege of documenting the complete restoration of the ‘Bamboo Horse’. The process of studying and rehearsing [开馆] commenced on 29th March, 2016. After undergoing almost four months of rehearsal, they actively took part in the worship and performance activities held during the Ghost Festival in the village on 28th July. The ‘开’ ceremony, also known as the consecration of the bamboo horses, and the Dahong [打红] ritual, which entails performing in front of the Buddha at Yuanshan Temple on Xuanwu Mountain [玄武山元山寺] and obtaining the peace talisman, which occurred on 10th October before the performance outside the village. They attended the ‘Regilding’ [重光] ritual of the Buddha at Yuanshan Temple on 1st November and take a detour around the town. They were invited to perform in the friendship villages in November; Performed around the villages in Jieshi town during the Spring Festival [走正] from 31st December, 2016, to 8th January, 2017. Concluding with the prayer [退光] on 12th January, 2017, and expressing gratitude to God [谢神] on 13th January, 2017.

The inner logic of the ‘Bamboo Horse’ revival can be discerned from the procedure. It is widely held that bamboo horses possess spiritual entities. Prior to venturing beyond the village, it is necessary to sanctify the bamboo horses and present them before the Buddha in the town’s largest temple. This ritual is intended to bestow blessings and safeguard the group during their journey, preventing any harm from the deities of neighboring villages. When the group chooses to temporarily halt their performance for an extended duration, bamboo horses must conclude the prayer and express gratitude to God. The bamboo horses will be housed in a dedicated structure until the next restoration, adhering to the identical process and rituals.

Their performance would consistently incorporate the following procedures: Upon reaching the villages where they are scheduled to perform, the initial action involves traversing the village

while offering prayers to the deity of the villages riding bamboo horses. Subsequently, the group will be guided to the venue where the performance will take place. When playing the kong, a specific percussion instrument, performers are required to stand up and sing Luolilian, a traditional vocal style, in unison. Simultaneously, Li Qing [李青], the experienced instructor of the troupe, will scatter the wheat. Once the instrument players finish, the bamboo horses commence their several formations on the ground, followed by a performance of Zhaojun Hefan. The second repertoire is titled 'Play the God' (also known as '扮仙' in Chinese) and is based on the Eight Immortals Blessing. The third story is titled 'Fairy Send Child' (which tells the tale of the seventh fairy sending her child back to the baby's father, a man named Dongyong). When the 'Send Child' plot is performed, the actors will hold the 'child' and follow the host person's instructions to pray to the deity; this has a positive connotation for the village. Occasionally, following the 'Fairy Send Child'-ritual, the group may also enact other stories, such as 'Wuniang Touring the Garden', as per the villages' request. The final act will feature a 'Qianggu Dance', performed by two children gracefully moving on a crimson carpet, while others sing a narrative about the tale of 'Guohua Sale Rouge'.

Based on the performance of 'Bamboo Horse', it can be inferred that this form of drama possesses ritualistic characteristics. As a ceremonial spectacle, it serves to demonstrate the hierarchical order of the deities within and beyond the village through the performance procedure and route: 'Xuan Tian Shangdi' (the supreme deity in Jieshi Town) and 'Chenghuang' (the overseer deity of Jieshi Town). 'Diling Gong', also known as the manager of Dongpu village, is one of the deities worshipped in Dongpu village. Furthermore, it demonstrates the interconnection among various villages through the presence of transportation routes. There are three categories of performance:

- a) performing by invitation from the friendship villages Sanjia village and Qiandui village;
- b) participating in worship ceremonies in Liutao village and Xiatian village after attending the 'Regilding' ceremony of Yuanshan Temple. These two villages, along with Dongpu, are located within the same administrative jurisdiction;
- c) spontaneously performing during the Spring Festival in over ten villages without being formally invited. The interconnection between the villages is passed down through the generations via the 'Bamboo Horse' performance.

Based on the revival procedures and performance routes, it can be inferred that the 'Bamboo Horse' is a ceremonial performance. Many dramas in Southern China, particularly in the Minnan culture, follow the practice of praying to the deity 'Tiangong Yuanshuai' [田宫元帅]. This ritual is performed before and after every learning, rehearsal, and performance, as well as on the 2nd and 16th lunar day of each month in Dongpu village. The theatrical performances consist of meaningful acts, such as the deity bestowing blessings upon the villagers. The props, such as the 'Qianggu', are adorned with the Eight Diagrams and adorned with Fulu. Significantly, the Bamboo Horse has a strong connection with children. Based on the statistics from Luo Di [洛地, 2008], there is a significant prevalence of "Bamboo Horse" activities across 13 provinces and cities in the southern region. The Bamboo Horse activities prominently showcase the association between the "bamboo horse" and children². However, what is the reason behind children being the ones who perform 'Bamboo Horse'? It is believed that the children's performance of the 'Bamboo Horse' is connected to the sacred nature of the "Bamboo Horse" itself. For

² Various "Bamboo Horse" activities are predominantly carried out by children. These include the "Bamboo Horse Drama" in Hailufeng, Guangdong province, the "Bamboo Horse Drama" in Xincun Village, Jinshan Town, Zhangzhou City, Fujian province, the "Bamboo Horse Drama" in Qin County, Shanxi province, the Zhejiang Zhuji Ma Jian Town Xianggong Dian bamboo horse, Hehuang bamboo horse, Jinzhong area "running bamboo horse", Ningbo horse lanterns, Guangxi Yulin "bamboo horse dance", Anhui Langxi and other places of the "small horse lantern", Hebei province "Running Horse Dance", Fujian *Sanming* "Bamboo Horse Dance", Fujian *Longyan* "Bamboo Horse Dance", Fujian *Yongfu* "Bamboo Horse Dance", "Bamboo Horse Lantern" in *Sanming*, Fujian province, "Bamboo Horse Lantern" in *Longyan*, Fujian province, "Bamboo Horse Dance" in *Yongfu*, Fujian province, "Bamboo Horse Dance" in *Pingdu*, Qingdao province, "Candle Bamboo Horse" in *Tianzhuang*, Qingdao, and so on.

example, ‘Bamboo Horse’ in Xianggong Dian village in Zhejiang province are performed by young actors and actresses portraying characters from the Three Kingdoms. The original ‘jumping bamboo horse’ is a revered ceremonial practice that has transformed into bamboo horse drama during the Qing Dynasty, serving as a means of amusement for both deities and individuals. [Guo Shoujing [郭守靖], 2015] Bamboo horse dance in Hehuang in Qinghai province which involves 12-year-old boys dressed as ancient army soldiers or generals symbolizes the idea of ‘horse stamping out the plague’ and expresses prayers for the prosperity and security of the country and its people [Zhao Zongfu and Zhou Weizhi [周巍峙&赵宗福], 2014]. The ‘Eight Horse Lanterns’ performance in Ningbo involves boys and girls around the age of 12 years. This performance symbolizes the desire to eradicate disease and attract good luck. Similarly, in Yonggan City, Sanming City, Fujian province, boys and girls perform with bamboo horse lanterns. Additionally, there is a tradition of burning these lanterns after welcoming them, symbolizing the act of warding off disease and preventing disasters. The local inhabitants hold the belief that the presence of horse lanterns can effectively avert calamities, ensure the safety of both humans and animals, and yield bountiful harvests.

Based on the provided information, it is evident that the performance of ‘Bamboo Horse’ possesses a distinct level of sanctity and ceremonial nature. The selection of children as performers of the ‘Bamboo Horse’ is closely connected to the sacred qualities of the ‘Bamboo Horse’, as children are seen as symbols of innocence and purity. Despite the limited scholarly literature on the topics of ‘the role of children in rituals’ and ‘the purity and sacredness of children’, traditional Chinese philosophy regards children as symbols of untainted vitality and hope, embodying the utmost significance. In traditional Chinese philosophy, however, children represent the freshness of unshaded life, hope, and vitality. And this is recognized. Observing the ceremonial practices in Chinese villages, it becomes apparent that while adult bands, songs, and dances from other villages are occasionally invited by the organizers, the children participating in these ceremonies are primarily the offspring of the local villagers. These children frequently assume the role of ‘pretending to be a God’. The cultural rationale for this widespread occurrence is that children symbolize the perpetuation of the family and the community over time. Utilizing one’s own offspring as a ‘sacrifice’ serves as a means of bestowing optimism upon the deities, surpassing temporal boundaries in order to attain everlasting existence. Although there is a lack of specific theoretical explanations, it is unquestionable in practical situations and in people’s perceptions that children are regarded as symbols of purity and sanctity.

THE INHERITED CYCLE FROM THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Despite concerns regarding the potential threat to Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’ during its period of inactivity from 2009 to 2015, my analysis of the fieldwork in Dongpu village suggests that the pause can be attributed to a regular and inherited cycle. On my initial trip to Dongpu village in 2016, I noticed that the participants included not only middle-aged and elderly individuals but also children. The ‘Bamboo Horse’ is highly cherished by the villagers, as indicated by the substantial attendance of villagers on every rehearsal night.

The Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’ sets itself apart from other dramas by exclusively showcasing theatrical performances featuring children between the ages of ten and sixteen years, instead of utilizing professional actors. This unique tradition is deeply rooted in the cultural legacy of the village and is intricately linked to its previously mentioned ceremonial importance. As the participants age, they will be replaced based on cultural requirements. Consequently, the drama typically remains operational for a period of 2–3 years, after which there will be a hiatus.

By investigating the oral history of Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’, which involves over 60 participants and other villagers, we can uncover a concise account of the drama’s revival. The villagers can recall several periods of revival throughout their history, starting around 1900 and continuing in 1922, 1946, 1952–1954, 1962–1963, 1977–1979, 1982–1983, 2006–2009, and 2016–2017. During the investigation, the villagers find it challenging to determine the precise year of

the drama's revival. However, they can rely on their childhood recollections to ascertain whether there was a performance by the 'Bamboo Horse' during that period. The displayed revival time is an estimation derived from the village's collective memory. Aside from the revivals in 2006 and 2016, which were motivated by the Regilding Ceremony of the Buddha in Yuanshan Temple, the reasons for the 'Bamboo Horse' reorganization in other years are not remembered by people. According to the literature, the historical account of the "Regilding Ceremony" indicates that the 'Bamboo Horse' participated in the fifth and sixth instances of the event. The chart presented below displays the years of the drama revival and the regilding year.

Start Years of the Revival	'Regilding Ceremony' Years
Nearly 1900	1896 (1 st regilding ceremony) 1906 (2 nd regilding ceremony)
Nearly 1922	1926 (4 th regilding ceremony)
Nearly 1936	1936 (5 th regilding ceremony)
Nearly 1946	1946 (6 th regilding ceremony)
1952	The 'Regilding Ceremony' was not conducted from 1947 to 1996. However, there were performances organized by the government in 1953, 1963, and 1978.
1962	
1977	
1982	
2006	2006 (110 anniversary regilding ceremony)
2016	2016 (120 anniversary regilding ceremony)

Figure 1: Timetable of the Dongpu Bamboo-Horse Revival and the Regilding Ceremony of the Buddha in Yuanshan Temple

The chart reveals a strong correlation between the resurgence of the 'Bamboo Horse' and the prosperous period of Yuanshan Temple. The 'Regilding Ceremony' was conducted at Yuanshan Temple, the largest and most renowned temple in Jieshi town. As per the Recording of Xuanwu Mountain, the inaugural 'Regilding Ceremony' took place in 1896, and subsequently, it has been held every decade. The 'Consecration Ceremony', held in the tempo, and the God Pageant Ceremony, taking place in the town, are the main events of the grandest ceremony in Jieshi town. The drama performances, which consist of Zhengzi Xi, Xiqin Xi, Baizi Xi, Shadow Puppet, Chao Ju, and Waijiang Xi, take place in front of the temple for a duration of five to tendays. The performances in Jieshi town were coordinated by various villages and groups, such as the Bamboo Horse of Dongpu village, the Lion Dance of Yingen village, the Shiyin band of Shishu village, the Fish Light of Wanghailou village, and the Stilts of Shaputou village, among others. The 2016 'Regilding Ceremony' featured a total of 100 performance groups. Following their performance at the Yuanshan temple, they proceed to perform in various locations around Jieshi town for a duration of 3 days. The event in Naore [闹热], known as the celebration of deities and residents, was referred to as a ceremony. The performances exhibited by various villages and groups serve as demonstrations of their affluence and influence, with certain villages allocating over one million yuan to orchestrate their events. The objective of the performances is twofold: to bestow blessings upon the village or group's well-being and prosperity, as well as to showcase their influence and affluence. Every village aims to showcase a distinctive performance that embodies its unique traditions, such as the Dongpu village's 'Bamboo Horse' and the Shaputou village's traditional splits.

The 'Regilding Ceremony', being the most significant event for the town, is accompanied by various forms of art performances in the villages, such as the Bamboo Horse by Dongpu village, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The regilding ceremony was put on hold after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and resumed in 1996.

During that period, the ‘Bamboo Horse’ in Dongpu village experienced four times of revival. There are three factors contributing to the resurgence. One primary factor is the execution of activities during the Spring Festival. While participating in a town performance can generate income for the organizers and participants, interviewees often reject this as their primary motivation for taking part. The second factor contributing to the resurgence is their concern regarding the ‘Bamboo Horse’. Many individuals are concerned about long inactivation of the ‘Bamboo Horse’. As the village’s drama, its purpose is to assemble individuals and have a positive influence on the village in terms of ceremonial significance. Additionally, this tradition serves as a symbol of the village and instills a sense of pride among its residents. The third reason is briefly mentioned in the accounts of the villagers, who recall government-organized performances in 1953, 1963, and 1978, specifically in Huiyang and Lufeng. However, villagers stressed that these performances were not the primary cause for the revival. Once they revived the ‘Bamboo Horse’, they were able to partake in these types of performances. Another factor I would like to highlight is that the functioning of the drama is heavily dependent on the economic conditions. For instance, in 1996, despite a ‘Regilding Ceremony’ taking place in Yuanshan temple, the Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’ was unable to afford rehearsals and attendance at the ceremony due to its poor economic situation.

It can be concluded that the ‘Bamboo Horse’ has an inheritance circle. In contrast to the professional troupe, the performance of ‘Bamboo Horse’ is organized by the villagers. When scholars and reporters consider it to be the enduring performance group, there will be a mistaken comprehension of it. From a historical standpoint, we can ascertain the inheritance circle and the correlation between the ‘Bamboo Horse’ and the ceremony. Numerous concurrent performances are closely linked to the ‘God Pageant Ceremony’, and the frequency of the ceremony has an impact on the traditional cycle.

Through my investigation, I discovered that Dishui village in Jieshi town and Songzhuliao village in Qiaochong town have previously hosted ‘Bamboo Horse’ performances. The most recent rehearsal in Songzhuliao village took place in 1964. The village of Dishui hosted the ‘Bamboo Horse’ performance in the years 1963, 1979, 1988, and 1992. In contrast to Dongpu, Dishui did not participate in any significant town ceremonies. Instead, Dishui primarily performed during the spring festival and generated income from neighboring villages. The event was paused due to a lack of incentives for the organizers, resulting in a lack of interest in taking on the responsibility. The investor mentioned that numerous villagers possess the ability to perform. If someone is interested in organizing an event and has adequate funds, one can also witness the ‘Bamboo Horse’. Through the comparison, it is to be observed that motivation is the paramount factor in the resurgence of ‘Bamboo Horse’. The revival is primarily driven by the villagers’ belief in tradition, as well as their self-awareness and recognition of the profound emotional significance and unifying influence it holds.

NEW MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGES FROM THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECT

Although the motivation to attend the ‘Regilding Ceremony’ has been identified as the crucial element for the revival of the ‘Bamboo Horse’, a new challenge emerged from 2021 onwards. Throughout the period from 2017 to 2024, I maintained ongoing interaction with the individuals residing in Dongpu village. The primary objective they expect me to engage in is applying for the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) project and providing videos, photos, and text. The ‘Bamboo Horse’ was officially recognized as an ICH project at the county level in 2019 and the city level in 2021. On 23rd December, 2021, the organizers of the ‘Bamboo Horse’ in the village sent invitation letters to the villagers, particularly those who have the potential to participate in the project. This marked the commencement of the new resurgence. The invitation letter included the details of the successful listing of the ‘Bamboo Horse’ in the third batch of Shanwei’s ICH. This achievement was made possible through the support of the Bureau of Culture, Radio,

Television, Tourism, and Sports of Shanwei, as well as the culture departments of Lufeng. The purpose of this listing is to preserve and promote the village's valuable cultural tradition of 'Bamboo Horse'. To revive and advance the 'Bamboo Horse', as well as preserve the tradition, there is a need to encourage villagers to come together and actively engage in this restoration initiative by having their names included on the list of sponsors'.

Following the dissemination of the invitation letters, the instrumentalists assembled and performed in unison. Commencing on 22nd March, 2022 (the 20th day of the lunar February), a group of 15 children was assembled to acquire four mandatory repertoires. On the 28th of lunar July, after the bamboo horses had been consecrated four days prior, they gave a performance at the Ghost Festival in their village. Although the ICH project may act as a substantial catalyst for some individuals to participate in the Bamboo Horse, it cannot serve as a perpetual source of motivation. The Bamboo Horse ceased its regular rehearsals following the Dongpu village performance on the initial day of the lunar month of January 2023. In contrast to previous occasions, they refrained from performing outside the village during the Spring Festival. The primary rationale behind this decision was that the organization's objective was focused on the ICH project. Consequently, they deemed it inappropriate to generate income through performances outside the village. The consideration also took into account the intricacy of organizing and the advancing age of the actors and actresses. Maintaining performance is difficult because of limited financial resources and organizational capabilities.

The Bamboo Horse occasionally rehearsed, particularly on the lunar 2nd and 16th in 2023, due to the consecration of the bamboo horses. On some occasions, only instrument rehearsals took place. Organizers are anticipating the occurrence of certain events in order to rearrange the performers. The ICH Plaque Listing Ceremony took place on the 13th of lunar December in 2023. In preparation for this ceremony, the organizers of Dongpu Village convened the performers in 2022 and 2016 to practice the Bamboo Horse. During the 'ICH Plaque Listing Ceremony', various procedures were carried out, including the introduction of the 'Bamboo Horse', which highlights its 600-year history and the principle of 'one inheritor for each generation' (Zhan Shuanghui [詹双晖], 2009; Zhong Zheping [钟哲平], 2015). However, it should be noted that these elements, although visually appealing, deviated from complete accuracy. Based on my investigation, the 'Bamboo Horse' can be traced back to 1737 in Dongpu village, as reported by Li Qing [李青]. During that period, the tutor hailed from Jiangjuntang [将军塘] village in Neihu [内湖] town. Following the unfortunate demise of the first tutor, A Xun [阿寻], who drowned while performing outside and his boat sank, Dongpu village recruited Chen Qianshen [陈谦慎] from Jiangjuntang village to instruct in the Bamboo Horse. Following his demise, the Jiangjuntang village ceased to stage 'Bamboo Horse'. The fourth instructor, Chen Naiji [陈乃济], who passed away in 1944, imparted his knowledge to Zhan Magui [詹妈桂], Chen Machang [陈妈长], Li Tu [李徒], and Wen Zuo [温座]. The group of individuals was referred to as the fifth-generation tutor. Following them, Li Qing [李青], Liu Bingyan [刘炳炎], and Li Chang [李昌] came next. Although some Dongpu villagers raised concerns about the "one inheritor for each generation" principle, particularly because multiple individuals were taught in the 'Bamboo Horse' in Dongpu, the ICH document supports this perspective.

Following the ceremony, they plan to showcase their tradition beyond the village, as they have been invited to perform at the Lantern Festival organized by the government of *Jieshi* Town. Prior to that, they visited the Yuanshan Temple to conduct the *Dahong* ritual on the 28th day of the lunar month of January in the year 2024, as previously mentioned. Following that, the troupe is able to showcase their performance in various villages or events. The latest installment of the ICH 'Bamboo Horse' has recently commenced.

In contrast to 2016, the new technique participated in the activity. The video captured in 2016 has become one of the instructional techniques. The organizers established a TikTok account called "ICH Jieshi Dongpu" and shared numerous brief videos showcasing various activities such as learning sessions, rehearsals, and significant events like consecrations, worship, and performances. Some videos even included specific details such as the time and name of the

event. The ‘Bamboo Horse’ performance was well-received, with numerous inquiries about the date of the show. The event attracted over 3000 fans and received more than 20,000 likes. Li Bing [李炳], a transverse flute player, made a significant contribution to the ICH application project as a participant in the ‘Bamboo Horse’ in 2016. Playing together was effortless for them, thanks to their extensive decades of experience. Nevertheless, as the players grew older and a few of them deceased, their proficiency in playing specific instruments, notably Xian, a bowed string instrument, declined. Fortunately, there exists a video recording that specifically documents the performance of the bowed string instrument that took place on 31st January, 2017, while I was conducting my fieldwork. This video has acquired significant value as a learning tool.

The acquired range of skills is less than that of 2016 when children were educated in five repertoires. However, from 2021 to 2022, children were only taught four mandatory repertoires. The four mandatory repertoires are ‘Zhaojun Hefan’, ‘Play the God’, ‘Fairy Send Child’, and ‘Qianggu Dance’, as previously mentioned. In the 1950s, in addition to the mandatory four repertoires or four parts, there were over ten repertoires of ‘Bamboo Horse’. Xiwen [戏文], which entails portraying the narrative, is the most crucial aspect of the performance (Xu Yixin [许翼心]. 1963). Unlike the four other parts that possess conventional ritual significance, Xiwen emphasizes narrative performance. However, starting from the 1980s, Dongpu only practiced three repertoires in addition to the four mandatory ones. These three repertoires were Wuniang Touring the Garden, Yichun Left the Umbrella, and Sijiu Ask for the Road. This continued for a period of 30 years. Villagers found it difficult to memorize other repertoires. While the inherited circle played a role in reducing the repertoires, the transformation of transportation and the change in the function of the Bamboo Horse are the primary factors responsible.

During the ‘Bamboo Horse’ performance, the group exclusively presents the ‘Xiwen’ part, including ‘Wuniang Touring the Garden’ and other repertoires, only during their nighttime shows. During the daytime performance, there are four obligatory components. ‘Zhaojun Hefan’ is the sole performance that incorporates the use of bamboo horse props. This segment is also commonly referred to as ‘Bamboo Horse Acting’ by the villagers. Therefore, the bamboo horse is an integral component of the traditional ‘Bamboo Horse’, serving a ceremonial purpose. The phrase “Play the God” symbolizes the concepts of well-being, prosperity, harmony, and abundance. On the other hand, “Fairy Send Child” represents the notions of birth and wealth, drawing inspiration from fairy tales, lyrics, and various items. These two stories are the obligatory theatrical performances in the Zhengzi Xi, Baizi Xi, and Xiqin Xi in Hailufeng area, as well as in the Chao Ju and Yue Ju in Chaoshan culture and Cantonese culture. ‘Qianggu Dance’ is a typical performance of Dongpu, which was also the one the troupe presented during the ‘Regilding Ceremony’ in front of the Buddha. The term ‘Qianggu’ encompasses various elements that symbolize blessings, such as the ‘108 footwork’, the ‘Eight Diagrams’, and the act of successfully throwing and receiving the ‘Qianggu’, which is the highlight of its performance (Compilation Committee of Hailufeng Historical and Cultural Series, 2013).

In the Hailufeng area, there is a customary practice of worshipping the deities during the day and present drama performances at night. During the day, the repertoires are specifically performed for the deities, while the evening performances are intended for both the deities and the people. The Dongpu ‘Bamboo Horse’ troupe only performs four compulsory parts during the day. During nocturnal performances, particularly when invited to other villages or during the Spring Festival, they would incorporate additional repertoires. The villagers have coined a distinctive term, ‘Zuoye’, to refer to this particular type of performance, which signifies performing during the night. Consequently, there has been a decline in the range of performances associated closely with this genre, particularly in terms of the duration of nighttime performances. Prior to the 1970s, the troupe would perform a total of 10 repertoires, which included the mandatory four repertoires, during their all-night performances that lasted until almost midnight. However, as a result of the transportation shift, the troupe is now able to commute by car to other villages and return home every night. Consequently, their performances are no longer

extended into the late hours, which directly contributes to the reduction in the number of repertoires.

The change in repertoires of the Dongpu 'Bamboo Horse' reveals a decrease in its entertainment function, while its ritual function has remained and became the predominant driving force for the drama. Based on the unchanging four compulsory repertoires, we can conclude that the ritual function is the most crucial and fundamental aspect of 'Bamboo Horse'. Between 2016 and 2024, the ritual procedure, which involved worship and circling the village, was also preserved. However, when we examine the 'Bamboo Horse's prosperous period, during which it was performed for longer durations and showcased more repertoires in the night, one cannot deny the inevitable decline of the 'Bamboo Horse' when viewed from a historical perspective. The 'Bamboo Horse' in Xincun village, located in Zhangzhou City, Fujian province, runs similarly to the 'Bamboo Horse' in Dongpu village. It showcases performances during the festive days dedicated to Lord Guan, which occur on the 13th day of lunar January and May. Due to the migration of villagers from Xincun village to the town for employment and educational opportunities, the population of Xincun village significantly declined. Villagers only return and celebrate the festival during the feast days of Lord Guan. Prior to the festive period, they will conduct rehearsals for the Bamboo Horse for approximately one month in a location outside the village. The purpose of these rehearsals is to coordinate the participation of the school-going children from the nearby town. Due to time constraints, the current practice for the 'Bamboo Horse' only focuses on rehearsing the lineup, while all the musical components are pre-recorded. However, the ritual procedures on the feast day are upheld. The ritual involves consecrating the bamboo horses, worshiping the deities, walking around the village and singing blessing songs, refixing and burning the bamboo horses, and showing the gratitude to deities. It is worth noting that the horses in Dongpu are constructed using fabric and bamboo, while the horses in Xincun are made from paper and bamboo. The act of immolating horses at the conclusion of the ceremony symbolizes the eradication of ill fortune for the local inhabitants. Although Dongpu and Xincun both depict the story of 'Zhaojun Hefan', they differ in terms of their music and ceremonial protocols. Through observation, a recurring pattern becomes apparent: the ritual elements remain intact while the repertoires or musical components are diminished.

The incorporation of the 'Bamboo Horse' performance in the ICH project elicited a feeling of pride among the villagers, while also fostering a desire among specific individuals to establish it as a regular and frequent event. Furthermore, they strive to showcase their endeavors in rejuvenating the 'Bamboo Horse' and endeavor to convince the cultural department to allocate funds. However, maintaining a consistent level of performance remains challenging.

CONCLUSION

The 'Bamboo Horse' in Dongpu village would be considered a situation on the verge of disappearing if we observe it in short-term fieldwork, mainly because it was inactive for a period of 6 years from 2009 to 2015. This paper employs extensive fieldwork and adopts a historical perspective to examine the 'Bamboo Horse' and their inherited cycle. From a long-term and historical perspective, the Dongpu 'Bamboo Horse' has an inheritance circle. The establishment of age requirements, rehearsal procedures, and ceremonial rules resulted in the development of the inheritance cyclicity. The Dongpu 'Bamboo Horse' is a ceremonial practice, akin to other 'Bamboo Horse' activities such as 'Bamboo Horse' Dancing or 'Bamboo Horse' Dramas in China and other countries, to ward off malevolent spirits, seek blessings and prosperity, and fertility worship. Every decade, the regilding ceremony takes place in the town, serving as a direct incentive for the rehearsal of the 'Bamboo Horse'. This event showcases the profound faith held by the villagers. The accumulation of the consciousness of the village's indigenous customs was also a significant factor. The villagers in Dongpu possess a strong awareness of

their customs and acknowledge the deep emotional significance and cohesive influence of the 'Bamboo Horse', a cultural tradition that has been inherited for more than three centuries.

Between 2016 and 2024, the ICH program incentivized certain participants to reorganize the Dongpu 'Bamboo Horse', effectively rejuvenating the 'Bamboo Horse'. Several changes have taken place, such as reducing the repertoires, discontinuing performances outside the village, and abandoning drama as a means of generating income. The videos now have a greater impact than before, and the fieldwork videos and other materials in 2016 are beneficial to their ICH project application and other efforts to promote and facilitate learning. When comparing it to 2016, an analysis of the four mandatory repertoires and rituals of bamboo horse reveals that the ritual function has emerged as the primary function of the 'Bamboo Horse'. The diminishing of alternative repertoires that exclusively perform during the evening and serve as a source of entertainment in the 'Bamboo Horse' indicates a decline in the entertainment aspect. This transformation primarily took place during the 1980s and is strongly associated with alterations in transportation and performance techniques. It was also partly influenced by changes in educational and work paradigms. It also reflects a shift in the function of drama, from being a source of income and entertainment to becoming a ritualistic and representative aspect of the village. However, the primary drive behind the bamboo horse remains the significant event. It continues to exhibit an intermittent state of rehearsal and performance.

The long-term fieldwork conducted in this paper demonstrates its importance. Engaging in ongoing research and comparing it to other relational issues not only yields additional research topics but also facilitates the discovery of new research topics or solutions to existing questions. Additionally, it allows for more accessible fieldwork. However, the most crucial aspect is the continuous observation and thought of the same object. Between 2016 and 2024, while conducting fieldwork in the Dongpu village or Hailufeng area, as well as other locations mentioned above, I engaged in continuous observation and supportive participated in significant events such as the application for ICH. This experience has significantly enhanced my understanding of this type of drama. The historical perspective and longitudinal study are crucial for understanding the 'Bamboo Horse' throughout history, as they allow me to identify both the changes and similarities within its inheritance circle. Engaging in short fieldwork, or solely emphasizing the present moment while disregarding the historical context, can give rise to a sense of tradition in disappearing. Conversely, lengthy fieldwork, particularly when examined through a historical lens, will expose the inherent yet uncondensed patterns of those with insider knowledge. We always ignore the folkloric organizations that arise spontaneously and demonstrate a distinct pattern of periodicity in their activities, and it is uncommon for them to host "annual performances" due to economic and organizational constraints. Therefore, as scholars and cultural authorities, we have failed to acknowledge the true significance of folkloric performances to those who are deeply engaged, as we have solely concentrated on the frequency and liveliness of these traditions. Through extensive and prolonged fieldwork, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness between drama, ritual, belief, and authentic musical culture.

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