

# Study on Laoshan Taoist Music under the Horizon of Harmonious Society

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**Abstract.** Laoshan is one of the earliest birthplaces of Chinese Taoism, and became Taoism jungle base and has been prosperous since the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Unique aesthetic value, health-keeping value and moral education value of Laoshan Taoist music have great significance to the building of socialist harmonious society. Promoting Laoshan Taoist music needs the effective form of stage performance, incorporating Laoshan Taoist Music works with contemporary musical elements and relying on Laoshan tourism.

## 1 Introduction

The Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China that just ended explicitly put forward to build socialist harmonious modern society in which people and nature coexist in harmony. The author believes that harmonious society requires achieving all-round harmony between people and nature, people and people, and people and society in essence. During the process of building socialist harmonious society, Taoist music should take on heavy responsibility, which is determined by the particularity of Taoist music. "Taoist music is an enlightened and religious music with authority, which could touch some people in society so that purify the soul and society and maintain social harmony," said Liu Hong, an expert in Taoist music. Laoshan Taoist culture has a long history, and Taoist music is an important part in it. It has been enriched and perfected in the historical changes of more than two thousand years, and is a comprehensive art collecting of national folk music, ancient palace music and local folk songs as whole. Laoshan Taoist music is bound to play an important role in the process of maintaining social harmony.

## 2 The Aesthetic Value of Laoshan Taoist Music

Laoshan Taoist music takes QuanZhen Zheng Yun(a collection of rhymes) as the principal part, and is closely related to the local language and folk music in Shandong and is famous in the world for "Laoshan yun" with local characteristics. Laoshan Taoist music is divided into three parts according to different occasions: Lesson sutra yun, YingFeng sutra yun, and QinQu Daoge(Taoist song played by an instrument in ancient China).

### 2.1 Quiet and Peaceful Laoshan Lesson Sutra Yun

From the melodic features of the sutra yun music used in Laoshan morning and evening lessons, whether Singing sutra yun with beautiful melody and strong lyricism, such as *Bu Xu*, *Hanging*, *Great praising*, *Little praising*, or Chanting sutra yun with simple melody which seems someone chanting or singing, such as *Great Eight Mantra*, *The scriptures Products*, *Various hymns for the deities*, all present a quiet and peaceful style. Why Laoshan Taoist music has this gentle and soft, and quiet and peaceful style, is determined by the basic belief of Taoism and the aesthetic orientation based on basic belief. Taoism, cultivating immortal as the final goal, worships Lao Tzu (Lord Lao Zi), the founder of Taoist school, as the leader and takes Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* as the supreme guiding ideology. Lao Tzu considered that five colors make eyes blind, five sounds make ears deaf, five flavors make people cool, and galloping hunting makes people crazy..."He opposed five sounds, five colors and five flavors, while advocated a kind of pure beauty in accordance with

Tao and without desire.

Laoshan Taoist sutra yun music gives priority to Palace style and Zhi style, such as *Great Praising*, *Bu Xu*, *Da Gui Yi*, *Mi Luo Gao* and so on. Every scripture ends in the trunk sound and presents a calm and peaceful atmosphere; the melodies are mostly in order, and the same or similar melodies repeatedly used, reflecting a calm and peaceful atmosphere, and is conducive to the practice of the effect of meditation. In the use of rhythm, for example, chanting style and singing style (music for voices in a Chinese opera) with poor melody, such as *Gao Style*, *Chang Qing Jing* sutra yun, *Repentance Script*, *Jie Style* and so on, which use relatively simple rhythm, and generally are one word, one tone and one beat. This simple and repeated rhythm embodies the declarative meaning and creates a devout, solemn and awe-inspiring atmosphere. In addition, smooth speed, moderate intensity and long singing style of lesson sutra yun while singing embody a simple, peaceful and quiet aesthetic taste.

## **2.2 Tragic Laoshan YingFeng Music**

Laoshan Taoist YingFeng music is used by Laoshan Taoist priests engaging in folk activities, and mainly used for offering birthday congratulations, praying for rain, mourning and releasing souls from purgatory. Laoshan YingFeng music has various famous songs, such as *Ting Tao*, *Lake Tour*, and *Six Times to Ask the Sky*, *Li Hen Tian*, *Azolla* and *Bin Hong Tears*.

The reason for Laoshan YingFeng music embodying tragic style is mainly related to composer's background and life experience. For example, Xie Li and Xie An, the TaiFei(it has been thought as the mother of kings since the Three Kingdoms) of South Song Dynasty are abandoned concubines, after the Wei(a country in ancient China) king Zhao Bing committed suicide by jumping into the sea, they took refuge to Laoshan as Taoist nuns. So Ying Feng music *Ting Tao*, *Watching the Tide*, *Contemplating the Sea* composed by them most use sea as the theme, in which the songs are depressing and sorrowful but full of endless affections, so that express grief to the dead. And people call it "Xie Pu"(a kind of music score). In addition, Yang Yan Ji and Lin Wan Yu, Emperor Chongzhen's Feizi(the wife of emperor) of Ming Dynasty, made great contributions on Laoshan Taoist music. *Li Hen Tian* and *Six Times to Ask the Sky* of Ying Feng music composed by them have complicated and sorrowful melody, move people with tears and full of tragic color. Large memorial songs *Azolla*, *Bin Hong Tears* and *Moon in the Sky* have both chorus and accompanist, composed by Taoist priests in Laoshan Temple present a tragic style, especially *Azolla*, which even more embodies tragic atmosphere in sorrow.

## **2.3 Ancient and quietly elegant Laoshan QinQu Daoge(music of violin song)**

Guqin music plays an important role in Laoshan Taoist Music. It experienced breeding period(before Tang Dynasty), development period(from Tang to Ming Dynasty), prosperous period[from early Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China(1912-1949)] and decline period(from end of the Republic of China to the Cultural Revolution), emerging a large number of guqin artists and a lot of Qinqu(songs composed by Guqin). For example, *Qiu Shan Travel* composed by Ren Xinting in Tang Dynasty, *Jin Ji San Guo* by Li Shouzhong in Ming Dynasty, *Contemplating the Sea* and *Yue Xia Xiu zhu* by Zhu Shoushi in the end of Ming and early of Qing Dynasty, *Dong Hai Yin* by Ye Taien, *Yin Wang Sun* and *Han Shan Yuan* by Xue Yiliao, *Yun Shi Feng Song* composed by Jiang Qingshan and Pu Songling, and the large Guqin *Qu Xue Di Hong Hua* was composed by Han Qianrang.

Numerous Laoshan priests Guqin artists and their excellent works constitute a unique temperament and profound cultural heritage of Laoshan Taoist Guqin music, and give these works quietly elegant style. It is inseparable from Taoism's conception of nature, indifference to fame and purity. The timbre of Guqin is simple and melodious, having a distant and profound conception; its unique rhyme is very suitable for people's mind into static state, so Guqin music plays a vital role in Laoshan's prosperity and its contribution to the Taoist priest practice. For example, during Jiaqing years, playing drum on the stone, cultivating their mind and being indifferent to the world are popular among Laoshan Taoist priests of various schools. The prosperity of Laoshan Taoist Guqin

music is also related to Taoist priests who made friends through Qin. According to Ming Ren You Shan Ji, the tenth volume of *Tai Qing Gong Zhi*, Laoshan Taiqing palace Guqin music in Qing dynasty made some achievements, and attracted a large number of scholars to come here to communicate and appreciate.

The long and graceful Laoshan Taoist guqin music has greatly enriched the Guqin music in Laoshan and made the Laoshan area become a center of Guqin music in Shandong.

### **3 The Health-keeping and Moral Education Values of Laoshan Taoist Music.**

#### ***3.1 The construction of harmonious society is closely associated with health of the broad masses, and many valuable concepts of health-keeping in Taoist music are worth learning.***

"Da Qi Qing" yun, one of Laoshan Taoist music Quanzhen zheng yun *Taishangmen morning altar lessons sutra* sings: "take peaceful and quiet Tao as purpose, you will be as clear and bright as moonlight; remove all your doubt, a bright moon will be visible; the best medicine namely, essence, energy and spirit are in your body, everyone owns them neither more or less than appropriate; if you can get tuition from master, your essence, energy and spirit will grow day by day." It's a seven-word rhyme. "Sincerity" refers to the human nature, and "pure" is the basic concept of Taoist doctrine, which is a method of practice and an attitude that Taoism believers must follow. The first two sentences of poem mean "peace and quiet" as the nature of "Tao", and those who learn "Tao" should base on "Tao", then will be truly peaceful and quiet, just like a round moon hanging in a cloudless night sky. The fifth sentences of poem talks about "medicine". The first-class medicine which is not used for ordinary people refers to human essence, energy, spirit, and is born with the original essence, energy and spirit from parents. Taoism believes that human essence, energy and spirit are top-class medicine of alchemy. Ordinary people also should understand this truth: only with enough essence, energy and spirit, can people be healthy. No matter how valuable medicine taken by sick person, they are incomparable to one's own essence, energy and spirit.

#### ***3.2 Moral education value of Laoshan Taoism music.***

Laoshan Taoist music contains a lot of valuable health-keeping wisdom, such as "discard all desires from one's mind and letting things take their own course (a Taoist concept of human conduct)", "objective laws follows nature", "indifferent to fame and gain" and "keeping a sound mind" and so on. It is necessary to build harmonious society with the wisdom of health-keeping in Taoism music, because one should not only be healthy physically, but also be healthy mentally and morally etc. Similarly the construction of harmonious society also includes the people's cultural and ideological progress and ethical progress.

*Peace and Quiet Sutra* Talked by Lord Laozi, the first part of *Zhu Pin Zhen Sutra* as Laoshan Taoism daily chanting morning lessons sutra, elaborates that monastic should "exclude desires", "run for nothing" and keep inner word peaceful. It also emphasizes that people's ideology is pure but interrupted by mixed thoughts; people's mind is peaceful but controlled by attempted desires. If we can remove desires and keep our inner world quiet, naturally our mind will be peaceful. Human like to own quiet inner world which are all controlled by desires. In modern society, many people have not only ruined their own future, but also caused great harm to the society due to greed. For example, a series of social problems of food fraud, environmental pollution, Internet fraud and so on. The drive of interest causes the credibility crisis among people. It says in *Peace and Quiet Sutra*: "the reason why all living creatures couldn't gain true "Tao" is because they have delusion." With what we urge ourselves and restrain greed will play a great role in individual physical and mental health, harmony between man and man and harmony between man and society.

## **4 Carrying Forward Laoshan Taoist Music and Promoting Harmonious Development of Society**

### ***4.1 The promoting of the Laoshan Taoist music requires an effective form of stage performances.***

Laoshan Taoist music was gradually created and inherited by people living in Taoist temples for a long time. It is inherited by means of oral transmission and inner understanding, which is very secret. Especially the Quanzhen School affiliated to Laoshan Taoism has even more strict requirements and a name of "the death of Quanzhen". Therefore, the ancient tradition of Taoism music could be preserved to now.

From the perspective of promoting Taoist music and maintaining social harmony, the ancient way of inheritance of Taoist music is obviously backward. It is an effective way to present Laoshan Taoist music to audience in the form of stage performance. We should make Taoist music on the stage more audible and appreciable, making them prone to be accepted by the public. Through this kind of public performance form which is strong artistic and easy to be accepted by the public, can make Taoism not widely known and its culture including Taoist music receive social publicity. Huang Xinyang, Vice president of Chinese Taoist Association, said: "It's not enough to promote Taoist culture through chanting Scriptures and holding religious rituals. It will often make progress to promote Taoist culture through means travel well. And Taoism music performance is an effective way."

### ***4.2 The Promoting of Laoshan Taoist Music Requires Laoshan Taoist Music Works with Elements of Contemporary Music.***

Since modern times, people's aesthetic to music is no longer confined to the traditional thinking of music, new musical styles constantly come into being on world stage while Taoist music are still remain in the shackles of traditional thinking, having no further development and innovation. For example, the representative of Chinese new century singer, producer and planner Yang Xiaolin said: "the rich connotation and philosophy of Taoism can't be embodied by the way of film and music." Yang Xiaolin himself had performed a number of well-known Taoist songs such as "*Tao Te Ching*", "*Qing Jing Sutra*". From their singing and production, powerful singers like Han Lei, Mao Amin and Li Yong were got involved in. Its production team includes many first-tier artists such as top-class producers Ma Jiuyue, guqin performer Wu Na and zither performer Chang Jing. Therefore, all of his Taoist songs with high artistic standards, is in line with the aesthetic taste of the contemporary people and finds an echo in audience, playing a demonstrative role in spreading Taoist music. The spread of Laoshan Taoist music should follow the above actions. Music professional person and Taoist priests who know music well jointly compose musical works, especially vocal music works to meet contemporary people's taste and spread among the public through modern media platforms such as TV and internet.

### ***4.3 The Promoting of Laoshan Taoist Music Requires Relying on Laoshan Tourism.***

Laoshan, the first famous mountain in the sea, is famous for its natural scenery of interdependent mountains and seas and its long history of Taoism culture. At present, Laoshan tourism confined to mountain-sea tour, Taiqing and Shangqing sightseeing area which are mainly used to show the Taoist culture and are only display exhibition of Taoist temples. It is difficult to give visitors a deep impression because of lacking experience and interaction with visitors. Therefore, it is urgent for Laoshan tourism development to excavate the resources of Taoist culture and develop Laoshan Taoist music properly.

First of all, Laoshan Taoist music experience Museum should be established. The use of high-tech technology fully mobilize people's sensory stimulation to participate in Laoshan Taoist music, showing all-dimensional Laoshan to visitors and add more projects participated by visitors. Exhibition area and play area for Taoist music instruments such as drums, cymbals, bells, bell, chime, and wooden fish should be set up. Broadcasting 3D films about Laoshan Taoist music whose content includes development history and videos of Laoshan Taoist music, the live show of national

Taoist music, making visitors fully felt mental connotation of Laoshan Taoist music. People are purified mentally and physically after visiting Laoshan.

Second, we should actively bid for the national Taoism Music Festival taking Laoshan Taiqing palace as the center.

Taoist Music Festival is Taoist music event which are jointly participated by Taoist communities in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. It was originally initiated by Hong Kong Ping Ying Xian Museum. Since 2001, it has been held in Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, Guangzhou and other places for fifteen times. If Taoist Music Festival can be held in Qingdao, it will stimulate and inspire the promoting and inheriting of outstanding culture in Qingdao Taoist circles, and will promote the sound development of Laoshan Taoism culture.

In course of building harmonious society, Laoshan Taoist music will play an irreplaceable role. Laoshan Taoism had enjoyed the reputation of being "The second jungle for Taoism Quanzhen school " in history. Although Taoist music in contemporary has also been included in the national intangible cultural heritage, the present situation of Laoshan Taoist music is not optimistic. Due to the war, many music scores were burned and lost with a limited number of complete music existent. And there are very few Taoist music talented performers due to various reasons. Under the impact of foreign religious culture, Taoist plight is worrying. The inheriting and promoting of Laoshan Taoist music can't be finished in one day and by one person, which requires joint efforts of whole society.

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