

# A Case Study of Autonomous Management of Folk Custom Organization "Dragon Committee"

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**Abstract:** There is a gap between the implementation of the official protection system and local identity in the management of intangible cultural heritage in China. As a local folk custom organization that manages national intangible cultural heritage projects, Dragon Committee integrates the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage into the governance of rural society. This innovative model of integrated protection and management of intangible cultural heritage, which is born in rural society, provides an example for other folk custom organizations. This paper expounds the logic of autonomy in its organization from three aspects: the division of labor, the election of personnel and the financial supervision; On the other hand, it discusses the governance mechanism of folk organizations in local village society from the dialogue and interaction between folk organizations and administrative power in local village society. At the same time, through the phenomenon that the organization borrows national symbols and moves closer to government organizations, it is proposed that village folk organizations can achieve their own development mode in the balance between the two opposite orientations of approaching the government and strengthening autonomy.

**Keywords:** civil autonomy; Folk organizations; Dragon Committee; Intangible Cultural Heritage Management

The value and function of folk culture in contemporary society has been widely valued by the academic community. Various types of folk matters play a subtle role in one way or another in people's daily life. Folk customs are as important to us as air and easy to be ignored. Therefore, how we understand and understand the value and impact of folk culture on our contemporary life is worth thinking and exploring. This paper focuses on the value of organizing folk custom in contemporary rural society and the social governance mechanism behind it.

## 1. The Elastic Space of Folk Custom Organizations in Modern Rural Governance

In traditional China, it is difficult for the centralization of power to really reach the rural grass-roots society, but there are many problems that are difficult to solve in the rural society, such as local social order, building water conservancy, famine relief, neighborhood disputes, etc. In this case, relying solely on the strength of a certain family or family is weak, and the folk custom organization in Chinese society is one of the powerful means to maintain local order, balance local resources, and unite interpersonal relationships, except for the official government organizations. With the acceleration of the modernization process, organizational folklore has not disappeared in the long river of history, but is constantly changing with the development of society, playing an important role in rural society in different forms.

In Wanrong Tonghua Village, Ronghe Village and Xiwang Village of Hejin in southern Shanxi Province, the "society", a folk organization, has shown different social functions in different historical periods and specific regions, and has also shown different folk characteristics in rural society. As an intersection of rural power and cultural networks, it is playing an irreplaceable role in the process of social modernization. The local belief of the believers in the Dragon Card Association in Fanzhuang Village, Zhaoxian County, Hebei Province, reflects the organizational strength of the local people to strengthen local unity, revitalize the local economy, enhance self-confidence, cohesion, and strengthen the sense of identity with the Dragon Card as the center and link. The old village organizations in Zhaoxing Dazhai Village, Liping County, southeast Guizhou Province are still playing an important role in the civil society due to local customs, human feelings, face saving and other factors.

It can be seen that there are also organizational folk customs based on a specific economic, cultural or institutional needs in contemporary villages, and the dragon committee organization is an organizational folk custom based on local culture that is endogenous in contemporary village society. As far as the research on organizational folklore in contemporary rural society is concerned, most of them talk about the function of rural social folklore organizations in stabilizing local order and strengthening local cooperation from a macro perspective. Few of them discuss the relationship between the outside and the formal administrative organization from both the inside and outside of the folklore organizations.

## 2. Logic of autonomy within the dragon committee organization

The dragon committee is composed of several prestigious elderly people from the local village society, and the elderly society is composed of nearly 100 elderly people over 60 years old in the village. Whether to hold the dragon dance, how to arrange the personnel, how to allocate and operate the funds, etc. are all decided jointly by the Dragon Committee. The President of the Dragon Committee (and the President of the Elderly Association) is the most important person. The dragon committee organization is not like a large clan organization. Some large clan organizations make the whole village a clan. At this time, the autonomy within the organization is the autonomy of the whole local village society. As a folk custom organization that can produce governance function in local society, it can be autonomous

internally, that is, its internal establishment, operation, supervision, management, etc. are all completed within the organization, not mainly relying on official or external forces. The fifth generation dragon committee is taken as an example to introduce its personnel division, election and supervision mechanism.

## 2.1 Arrangement of division of labor among members

The division of labor within an organization is the most important basis for maintaining its order and the key to the operation of folk activities. Take the Fifth Generation Dragon Committee as an example. The first is the president, who is responsible for the overall planning and overall scheduling of the dragon dance process. The President called on other members of the Dragon Committee to discuss the time of dragon dance. After the time and venue were decided, the President would notify every family in the village door to door. At present, there are ten members of the dragon committee plus the chairman, and five candidates for the chairman. In addition to more flexible and simple tasks, the division of other tasks is relatively fixed. For example, some members are responsible for the training and organization of cloud jumping children; Some of them acted as accountants of the Dragon Dance Committee and were responsible for recording the income and expenditure, writing receipts and issuing bills in the process of dragon dance and ordinary folk belief activities. Such work was highly professional, so it was relatively fixed. Other personnel arrangements are relatively flexible, but repeated work familiar to you can always save some labor costs. Therefore, although it is relatively flexible and simple work, most of it is who is responsible for what work this year, and it will still be the same next time. Therefore, the arrangement of the whole dragon dance organization is tacit and everyone performs his or her duties unless there is a big change of office and personnel transfer.

## 2.2 Principles for election of members

First, the election of the most important chairman of the Dragon Committee. In Chinese society, whether folk organizations can operate smoothly depends not only on the organization's own basic social capital stock, but also on "whether there are one or several folk leaders or Britain". Such elites "are responsible to the public for the consideration of social status, prestige and glory, rather than pursuing material interests" . "Although this president doesn't know one character, he has a strong sense of responsibility. He did a lot of things during his tenure. He organized the construction of the Dragon King Temple, Yang's Ancestral Hall and Dragon Dance Square. He is very persistent and responsible. The election of the president is decided by them internally, and we do not interfere. " Two information can be obtained from this description. One is the conditions and requirements for selecting the president; The second is that the election of the president is entirely conducted within the organization, and other departments do not interfere.

The President is nearly eighty years old, so it is extremely urgent to elect the next President. The way to select candidates is that the president puts forward his recommendation suggestions in the three drinking sessions of the elderly association every year, and then all the elderly association members raise their hands publicly to vote. The final decision right is in the hands of all members of the Elderly Association, which is relatively democratic. The author has five candidates when researching in March 2022. It can be seen from the division of labor that in the process of organizing the dragon dance, whether in charge of each section of the dragon body or the car following arrangement, these five people are intentionally separated, and one or two dragon committee members are equipped to follow. On the one hand, this will serve as an investigation for these candidates, and on the other hand, they will also begin to cultivate their ability to take responsibility independently. At the same time, the President himself also has his own set of rules and principles for the election of candidates, especially for people who deal with money, such as accountants and cash keepers. For posts with strong professionalism, the dragon committee will generally select and cultivate them in advance. For example, the current accountants have started to select and cultivate new accountants before they retire. Careful assessment will also be carried out for such positions as cash keeper with great responsibilities. According to the president's own description, the selection criteria for candidates for such positions dealing with money are generally good character and family conditions, and they cannot have such bad habits as gambling. The family condition is good because there is no shortage of money in the family, so they don't think about stealing the public property of the Dragon Committee; Good character requires self-discipline.

## 2.3 Check and Balance of Financial Supervision

The financial supervision in the dragon committee organization is the top priority. The president always likes to talk about the custody of cash and the handling of finance. There is an accountant, a cash keeper and a lock opener who is specially responsible for opening incense money boxes in the Dragon Dragon Committee. The financial mutual supervision has reached a balance among the three people. When someone donates incense money, the elderly people on duty in the Dragon King Temple will be present, and the elderly people on duty will make records. The lock opener opens the box of incense money once a week. After opening the box, he will count the money and make records. Indicate how much money was withdrawn on which day and who was present. This record book belongs to the record book inside the box. Then give the money to the cash keeper. The cash keeper and temple watcher shall be present when unpacking and withdrawing money. Unpacking is not allowed when alone. At the same time, let the accountant keep good records, and the number of the last two account books should be correct. At the same time, when there are many people donating money on holidays or when someone donates a

lot of money, the president himself should be present. This account is generally managed by the president himself. He numbered each book and each page of these account books. Any missing book and page will be found. At the same time, each one has the president's seal, which counts.

If a folk custom organization wants to survive for a long time, it must have a clear management and supervision system in addition to a certain material guarantee and a reasonable division of labor. This supervision mechanism is obtained by the organization through continuous learning and accumulating experience, and is also summarized from the interaction between people in self-organization. It hardly requires supervision outside the organization. It is balanced in the interaction of personnel within the organization, which saves management costs, improves management efficiency, and enables everyone to perform their own duties and get their own place.

### **3. Self governance mechanism of Dragon's Committee in local villages**

Since it is to discuss the governance mechanism, its perspective should also be on the governance mechanism and role played by the organization in the local rural society. The governance mechanism of the dragon committee in the local villages is mainly analyzed from two aspects: on the one hand, there is a set of rules of conduct based on the belief in the dragon god in the village, and the dragon dance tradition gives the dragon committee some authority; The second aspect is mainly about the interaction between folk custom self-organization and administrative organization in rural governance.

#### **3.1 Acquisition of local authority**

With the development of agricultural civilization, China's auspicious culture has been continuously inherited and enriched. Eventually, it has been widely spread in a way recognized by the public in various historical periods, forming auspicious customs and habits with the characteristics of the times, and inheriting them by means of exposure and teaching by words and deeds. By analyzing the folk beliefs existing in the Chinese rural society, we can find that they can not be separated from the auspicious culture rooted in the hearts of Chinese people, and its manifestation is people's yearning for and pursuit of a better life. People in the local villages expect the Dragon God to bless them with peace and prosperity and a full house of children and grandchildren; Bless the village to be prosperous, with good weather and abundant grain. Therefore, there are specific sacrificial ways, taboos and norms based on the belief of dragon god. For example, you can't drink or eat meat on the day of dragon dance or the day before; Participate in the dragon dance and be favored by the dragon god, and the year will be safe and smooth; In daily life, you should be filial to your elders. If you do something unfilial, you will be punished by the Dragon God. In the local area, personal words and deeds in daily life are closely related to the belief in the Dragon God, which affects the well-being of the whole village. The code of conduct formed based on the belief in dragon god has maintained the local order and stability to a certain extent. At the same time, the members of the Dragon Committee are considered to be the people who deal with and are favored by the Dragon God most. Therefore, from the perspective of dragon god belief, the dragon committee organization has been covered with a mysterious and invincible veil.

Dragon dance is an important public affair in local villages. The villagers living in a village have the same narrative space and living background. In the process of organizing the dragon dance, especially when going out to dance, the villagers and the organization share the same value and vision. The villagers and the organization, as well as the villagers and the organization, have a strong sense of cohesion and identity. It is precisely because the dragon committee organization has been recognized and trusted by everyone both in the process of dragon dance and in the handling of daily affairs in the village, which makes the dragon committee organization obtain certain authority. Therefore, the local villagers not only follow the organization and arrangement of the Dragon Committee in dragon dance and other related matters, but also show great trust in the Dragon Committee in daily village public affairs. This has played an important role in regulating neighborhood disputes in the village and allocating public resources.

#### **3.2 Interaction with administrative power**

There are many social problems in contemporary rural construction, but the main dilemma is that rural society has lost the internal power of autonomy and development. The blessing of external forces and resources is only a push or pull force, not an internal force, and can not really fundamentally solve these problems.] In traditional Chinese rural society, figures like the chairman of the Dragon Committee are often regarded as a buffer medium for the state to govern the grass-roots society, which has reserved a flexible autonomy space for the rural society. The dragon committee organization headed by the president has made great contributions to the public affairs in the village. In addition to the bridge and road building, the construction of the Dragon King Temple, and the dragon dance organization, there are also weddings and weddings in the village, family members are short, and when there is some friction in the contacts of people outside the law, the dragon committee will also come to preside over justice. These organizations represent the collective interests of the local villagers. There is a contradiction between the official regime and the popular will. Such organizations can represent the villagers to have a dialogue with the local official administrative organizations, and strive for more interests from their superiors; Based on this, it can be seen that the folk organization forms based on traditional societies such as blood lineage, village rules and regulations, and elder rule are changing in the urbanization and modernization of rural society, but these traditions are still playing an irreplaceable role in the governance of rural society.

### 3.3 Actively introduce national symbols

In the process of fieldwork, the author often hears such statements as “XXX is still a party member”, “this is based on national standards”, “this is recognized by the government”, etc. Therefore, to some extent, although Dragon Committee is an autonomous organization not controlled by the government, they will approach the government organization at some time to gain greater authority locally. It can be seen that when non-governmental organizations carry out activities, sometimes the more successful they are in evading the power of the state, the easier it is to carry out activities smoothly; Sometimes the more successful we can use the power of the state, the easier it is to develop. It can be seen that the relationship between folk organizations in rural society and the local government is not as opposed as imagined. At the same time, the future development trend of folk organizations is not necessarily administrative or completely independent of government organizations, but may also be to gradually achieve a balance in jointly handling public affairs in the village.

## 4. Conclusion

Under the background of vigorously promoting rural revitalization, the state simplifies administration and delegate power, transfers power, and advocates rural grass-roots autonomy, which is a useful strategy to face China's complex and diverse rural conditions. The endogenous force of rural governance should pay attention to the experience of rural governance generated from the depth of history and culture and the reality of grass-roots folk customs. Villages in different regions and with different historical and cultural backgrounds should be able to make use of traditional culture and folk culture according to local conditions, so that people can build their own mechanisms and models of civil autonomy. They should be good at making use of autonomous organizations in villages to solve governance areas that cannot be touched by official power, so as to save national governance costs Improving governance efficiency can solve the problem of rural governance in the largest scope, which is of great benefit to stabilizing the local society and enhancing the confidence of local culture.

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