

Following One's Heart Without Breaking the Rules

A Study of Garinsai of the Wa Nationality from the Perspective of Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*

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Abstract—Garinsai is a representative new dance of Wa nationality. Based on Johan Huizinga's game theory, this paper has deeply explored the game characteristics of Garinsai. It holds that the holding of Garinsai requires specific time and space, and has the characteristics of order, self-discipline and non-utilitarianism. It can make the participants enter the ideal game state of "following their heart but not breaking the rules", help to shape "the integrity of personality" and realize "the perfection of their soul", and achieve the highest level of society and human beings - freedom.

Keywords—Garinsai; *Homo Ludens*; game characteristics

I. INTRODUCTION

Wa ethnic group is an ancient original ethnic group in the southwestern frontier of China. It mainly distributes in the southwestern Yunnan and is one of the fifteen unique ethnic minorities in Yunnan Province. The special ethnic historical process and unique natural environment have created the unique ethnic culture of the Wa ethnic group, which has also attracted the attention of the academic circle. A large number of Wa research monographs and academic papers have been published, covering their social form, economy, religious beliefs, social customs, language, literature and art, dance, clothing and so on. Garinsai is a new Wa dance and a unique recreational activity of the Wa people. It is widely popular in Wa areas. Taking Johan Huizinga's game theory as the research method, on the basis of introducing Garinsai and its research status, this paper has analyzed the game characteristics of Garinsai from several aspects such as specific space and time requirements, self-discipline, orderliness and non-utilitarianism, and expounds the game value of Garinsai, so as to inherit and develop it and play its due role in modern society.

II. BRIEF OF GARINSAI AND THE ORIGIN OF WRITING

Garinsai means Wa people line up and dance together. It was first popular in the Buraoke dialect area of Cangyuan Wa nationality. It is a new Wa dance with simple, lively rhythm. Compared with the rough and bold dances such as wooden drum dance and cow dance, it is more elegant. It is a group dance, composed of singing and dancing, games and "discipline". It has a large space to play vocal music, mainly in pairs, with themes reflecting affection and love between men and women and longing for families. Its dance steps are fixed and can be carried out at any time. Both man and woman,

children and the old can participate in it. When dancing, people gather together, hand in hand and make a circle, one person leads and others sing with him/her. It fully demonstrates the easygoing and open character and the optimistic mood and loving life of the Wa people. [1] (p53)

At present, the research on Garinsai is still a weak link in the academic circles. The author, taking "Garinsai of Wa Nationality" as the theme, searched the general library of Humanities and Social Sciences by China HowNet and the full-text database of Chinese Journals (1979-2011), and found an academic paper related to Garinsai of Wa Nationality — "Research on Garinsai of Wa Nationality — From the Perspective of Leisure Science" (No. 6, 2013, Humanities and Social Sciences, Journal of Hubei Polytechnic University, Written by Hu Hui and Sun Yurong). This paper focuses on the internal and external value model of Garinsai by using the research method of leisure science, and draws a conclusion that the core value of Garinsai to society is the value of human leisure, and the more the core value of Garinsai is explored and inherited, the more helpful it is to maintain its vigorous vitality. [2] The author believes that there is still a huge space for academic interpretation of Garinsai. By introducing new research methods and perspectives, new opinions will be drawn on this issue. In addition, Garinsai is mainly composed of three parts: singing and dancing, games and "discipline". Based on the game theory of the famous Dutch historian and cultural scientist Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, it analyzed the game characteristics of Garinsai. It is not only a new way of thinking for the study of Garinsai, but also a pioneering work for the follow-up study of Garinsai. Mencius said, "When we eulogize one's poems and read one's books, we should also know what kind of person he/she is by exploring his/her deeds. It is a real way to make friends" [3] (P251). Therefore, before explaining game characteristics of Garinsai, Johan Huizinga and his masterpiece *Homo Ludens* are the first ones to be included in our research field.

III. AN OVERVIEW OF JOHAN HUIZINGA'S HOMO LUDENS: A STUDY OF GAME COMPONENTS IN CULTURE

Born in 1872 in the Netherlands, Johan Huizinga was the greatest historian and cultural scientist in the Netherlands. *Homo Ludens* was published in 1938. It is Johan Huizinga's masterpiece. At present, there are three translation versions in China. Its influence is obvious. "This seems to be the first

monograph to study the game from a multi-angle and multi-level perspective of culturology and cultural history. It is divided into twelve chapters. It expounds the nature, meaning, definition, concept and function of the game, and expounds the relationships between game and many social and cultural phenomena, mainly the relationship between games and myths, rituals, laws, wars, poetry, knowledge, myths, philosophies and various art categories. The definitions of games in the book are similar, but they can clearly explain the nature, function, status and rules of games" [4] (p16). Among them, the most comprehensive and important definition quoted by Stanner in the preface is: "Game is an activity in a specific time and space. It shows obvious order, follows the rule of voluntary, and keeps away from daily necessities and material utilitarian. The mood in game is joyful or enthusiastic; the atmosphere is sacred or festive; it mainly depends on the situation. Excitement and tension are always game's accompanies, as well as laughter and relaxation" [4] (p17). From the analysis of Johan Huizinga's definition and emphasis on the characteristics of the game, we can see that game should have space to carry out activities under certain rules and follow the principle of voluntariness and non-utilitarianism. The following analysis is about Garinsai in connection with above characteristics.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF GARINSAI

Garinsai is an interesting leisure activity of Wa people for gathering, game and entertainment. It brings joy, pleasure and excitement to the participants, but also reflects the customs of Wa people. According to Johan Huizinga's game theory, four characteristics can be summarized.

A. *It Is Held in a Specific Space and Time*

Garinsai takes specific time and space. First, in terms of time, Garinsai can be held at any time, but it has a complete and unique process. During the process, it follows a series of procedures, such as movement, change, alternation, succession, connection and separation. After that, it preserves the memory of each participant in the form of "mind". Second, from a spatial point of view, Garinsai held in major festivals (such as Carnival, New Rice Festival, Moh Nin Hei, Wooden Drum Festival, etc.) is more formal, requiring participants to wear national costumes and required to be in a pre-demarcated site. The demarcated boundary may be both material and consciously demarcated, such as Garinsai held on festival occasions, or imaginary and natural boundaries, such as Garinsai held on weddings and meetings. There is no essential difference. No matter form and function, they are game venues. All these venues are temporarily circled in ordinary world, which makes Garinsai proceed in an orderly manner.

B. *It Is Voluntary*

Johan Huizinga said, "The game is voluntary. In fact, the game itself is voluntary"[5] (p9). Game, singing and dancing, as mentioned above, are one of the three major elements of Garinsai. Therefore, the characteristic of Garinsai's voluntariness can be elaborated from two aspects. First, in Garinsai, participants participate voluntarily. Participants are never required to accomplish any task. It won't be daily necessity or moral responsibility on participants. And there is

no clear distinction between actors and audiences. In other words, each participant in Garinsai has the identity of both actors and audiences. They are creators of singing and dancing activities through which they exchange emotions and increases friendship. Second, the singing and dancing itself is the product of the participants' thoughts and emotions. It is said that "people will dance, if words and sings are not enough to express their emotions"[6]. Therefore, it is hard to imagine to "expressing emotions" forcefully. On the premise of voluntariness, every participant in Garinsai sings and dances, and expresses their feelings freely. This kind of singing and dancing is life, and life is the perfect experience of singing and dancing. Without voluntariness, it will be impossible to realize. After all, "the game of obeying orders" is no longer a game; such a "game" is only a compulsory imitation. [5] (P9)

C. *It Is Orderly*

It has an absolute and unique order in the holding of Garinsai. "The game creates order, and the game is order. Game brings a temporary and limited perfection to the imperfect world and chaotic life. Game requires an absolute and supreme order. Even the smallest deviation will "spoil the game", deprive it of its characteristics and make it lose all its value" [5] (p9). Game often has obvious aesthetic characteristics. The main element of Garinsai is singing and dancing, which belongs to the aesthetic field. When Garinsai is carried out, the beauty of human body in sports reaches its peak, and the game is full of rhythm and harmony, which is the noblest talent in human aesthetic experience. This "rhythm and harmony" is determined by rules or order, which is an absolute binding force. After all, once rules and order are broken, the game stops abruptly. Garinsai has strict rules of the game, which disciplines participants who make mistakes in singing or dancing. For example, if participants were found to be lazy in singing, they will be spilled with water or rice wine. It is also out of voluntary. In fact, "every link of the game is punished very seriously and vividly, and the punished person will certainly suffer, but the punishment process is full of strong exaggeration and dramatic joy. For viewers, it is a great enjoyment. [7]

D. *It Is Non-utilitarian*

"Game is not a 'normal' or 'real' life. It moves out of a 'real' life and into a temporary field of activity with its own inclination," said Johan Huizinga. [5] (p9) The non-utilitarianism of Garinsai means that by participating in activities of leisure, games and entertainment, people can temporarily or permanently dilute and dispel the hardships, unhappiness and sadness of participants in real life. Although we realize that this is temporary, it will never prevent us from participating in the activities with extreme devotion, concentrating on them wholeheartedly and entering the madness and happiness. At least, it helps participants throw out the difficulties and frustrations of real life temporarily and completely and get rid of some of the utilitarian and alienated states in daily life, and then brings joy, peace and satisfaction in mind and spirit. Sing merrily and dance elegantly, people become members of a higher community. They are enchanted like flying in the wind." [8] Garinsai has no direct relationship with interests. It is an episode of life and an interlude of daily

life. But as a periodic recreational activity, Garrison has become the accompaniment and supplement of society, and in fact it has become an integral part of life. The situation of public participation has temporarily blurred the boundaries of life, eliminating the distinctive features of rank, wealth, sex, age and so on. "The distinction between the superior and the inferior does not seem to exist in a moment: everyone is close to each other, everyone treats everything he encounters with generosity, and each other are free to blend in a common good mood without formality." [9] Individuals' potentials and emotions suppressed by daily life are released by the joyous atmosphere created by Garinsai. "In the excitement brought about by entertainment, participants can temporarily forget all kinds of restraints of life, and unconsciously experience a new attitude towards life. All distinctions have been erased, people return to the original state of equality, and both life and man return to the origin." [2] (P28)

V. CONCLUSION

Garinsai is a new Wa dance. Based on the game theory of Johan Huizinga, it should be played in a specific time and space. It has the characteristics of order, voluntariness and non-utilitarianism. Under the guidance of the above characteristics, the audience participating in Garinsai can enter the game with an ideal state of "following one's heart but not breaking the rules". It is a beauty and an art. By participating in Garinsai, it helps the participants to achieve "the integrity of personality" and "the beauty of the soul", and the highest realm of society and human beings - freedom.

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