



National Identity and Cultural Memory in Matouqin Music

Meng Zhang

School of Music and Dance, Qiqihar University, Qiqihar 161000, Heilongjiang, China

DOI: 10.32629/jher.v5i6.3412

Abstract: The national identity and cultural memory in Matouqin music are part of the research of Ulaanbaatar music culture. This study takes Matouqin music as the main line to explain how this musical form has become a symbol of Mongolian group identity and has been passed down from generation to generation. The research adopts the research method of cultural anthropology, through oral history, field investigation and document analysis, etc., to dig deeper into the status of Matouqin music in Mongolian culture and its related original ecological knowledge and values. It is found that Matouqin music is not only a form of musical performance, but also the cultural memory and historical identity of the Mongolian people, and this special identity is achieved through the inheritance of Matouqin music from generation to generation. At present, although the modernization process has brought about the impact of traditional music culture, the inheritance of Matouqin music has not been interrupted, but has been integrated into modern life in different ways, showing strong vitality. This study has important theoretical and practical significance for deepening the understanding of Mongolian culture, especially music culture and its role in national identity and cultural memory.

Keywords: Matouqin music, national identity, cultural memory, Mongolian culture, music culture inheritance

1. Introduction

Matouqin music is a kind of representative music of Mongolian nationality, which is rich in ethnic customs and unique beauty, and is the life source of the national culture. We study this music through storytelling, field visits, and materials to find out the unique knowledge and values of the Mongolian people, and reveal why it has become a symbol of Mongolian identity and can be passed down from generation to generation. Despite the challenges posed by modernization to traditional music culture, Matouqin music has maintained its heritage and shown great vitality by integrating it into modern life in innovative ways. By studying Matouqin music in depth, we hope to further understand the group identity and cultural memory of the Mongolian people, and to help better understand and understand the value of the Mongolian people, especially the music culture of the Matouqin.

2. The history of Matouqin music and Mongolian identity

2.1 Origin and development of Matouqin music

The origin and development of Morin Khur music are closely[1] related to the history and life of the Mongolian nation. There are many folk legends about the origin of the Morin Khur, among which the most widely spread story[2] is the "Magic Morin Khur". The story tells of a herdsman who was inspired by the loss of his love for his horse and made a musical instrument, the Matouqin, from the horse's skull and tail. Named for its shape, the instrument deeply touched people's hearts with its unique sound.

From the actual archaeological and historical documents, it can be found that the Matouqin had a prototype before the time of Genghis Khan. With the migration and conquests of the Mongols, this musical instrument gradually spread and developed widely in the Mongolian grassland. The structure of Matouqin is mainly made of wood, the head of the instrument is carved into the shape of a horse's head, and the strings are made from a horse's tail. This makes the tone of the instrument both rich and soft, able to express the vastness of the vast grassland and the diverse emotions[3] of herdsman's life.

The development of the Matouqin is closely related to the nomadic culture and history of the Mongolian people. As nomads, Mongolians have a deep affection and dependence on horses, which are not only used for transportation and fighting, but also an important part of the daily life of herdsman. This attachment to and respect for horses is reflected in the plastic art of the Matouqin. Through historical accumulation, Matouqin has gradually evolved into a representative of Mongolian folk music and a key symbol of the cultural identity of the Mongolian group.

It is precisely because of its unique skills and profound cultural connotation that Matouqin music has won wide attention and love around the world. This not only reflects the continuation of traditional Mongolian culture, but also provides more

possibilities for contemporary society to understand and appreciate the Morin Khur.

2.2 The historical connection between Matouqin music and the Mongolian nationality

Matouqin music has played an important role in Mongolian history, becoming one of the important symbols of national culture. The origin of this instrument can be traced back to the ancient nomadic culture. With its unique timbre and musical expression, it reflects the Mongolian people's lifestyle, religious beliefs and natural environment. With its expressive timbre, the Matou qin occupies an important place in Mongolian legends, religious ceremonies and celebrations, symbolizing the idea of harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

During major events and periods in Mongolian history, Matouqin music was often used to express collective feelings or record historical inheritance. It is not only a part of musical performance, but also a carrier of social memory, carrying Mongolian historical stories, heroic legends and myths. Through oral transmission and generational learning, Matouqin music has served as a bridge to the transmission of Mongolian history, providing cultural support for maintaining and strengthening national identity. This form of music is closely linked to the traditional values unique to the Mongolian people, reflecting their deep affection for their homeland, respect for their ancestors, and hope for the future. As an important part of the national history, Matouqin music not only retains rich historical information, but also records the evolution and development of the Mongolian people in the long river of time through its inheritance and changes.

2.3 The role of Matouqin music in Mongolian identity

The role of Matouqin music in Mongolian identity is reflected in its role as a cultural symbol, emotional sustenance and symbol of ethnic cohesion. The unique timbre and playing skills of the Morin Khur, like the free-spirited grasslands under the blue sky and white clouds, are deeply rooted in the daily life and ritual activities of the Mongolian people, and have become an important carrier for transmitting national culture and historical memory. The music of the Matouqin not only inspires the common emotions of the Mongolian ethnic group, but also plays an important role in the narration of the history of the Mongolian Yuan and strengthens the internal unity of the ethnic group. Its melodies and stories, passed down from generation to generation, have strengthened the ethnic identity and maintained the cultural self-confidence of the Mongolian group in modern society. Morin Khur music is a symbol of Mongolian spirit and culture, representing resilience and agility.

3. Morin Khur music is inherited as cultural memory

3.1 Concept and theoretical analysis of cultural memory

The concept of cultural memory originates from cultural anthropology and social memory theory, and its framework mainly focuses on a group's perception and identification of its own history and identity. Cultural memory is not only a collection of individual memories, but also a collective memory constructed by society and expressed through symbols, rituals, customs and other materialized forms. The core of cultural memory is that it is transmitted across generations through specific cultural carriers, thereby maintaining a group's historical awareness and cultural identity.

Theoretical analysis points out that cultural memory is the intersection of historical memory and personal memory, emphasizing how symbols in society carry collective memory and are solidified in the heart of a social group through continuous transmission and reproduction. This process is not only static storage and preservation, but also dynamic reconstruction and innovation, thus allowing cultural elements to adapt to change over time. Through this mechanism, cultural memory can be expressed in a variety of forms, such as music, dance, stories, etc., each of which may become a carrier of cultural identity.

In the process of passing on cultural memory, music is often regarded as an important medium, which is not only the art of sound, but also contains the precipitation of history, legends and collective emotions. Through specific melodies, beats and instruments, music has become an encoding tool for cultural memory, enabling national traditions to be passed on endlessly in the form of sound and emotion.

3.2 Elements of cultural memory in Matouqin music

As an important cultural symbol of Mongolian nationality, Matouqin music carries rich cultural memory. The memory elements contained in it not only help the ethnic group maintain cultural identity, but also preserve the historical sound and emotional code in the intergenerational transmission. The melody and rhythm in Matouqin music are an important part of cultural memory. Its unique timbre and tunes often evoke the Mongolian people's collective memories of grassland life. This musical art reflects the Mongolian lifestyle and emotional experience by imitating the sounds of nature and expressing the state of nomadic life.

The lyrics and content of the music convey rich historical stories and ethnic legends. Matou Qin songs often contain

epic narrative content, recording the heroic deeds, historical events and religious beliefs of the Mongolian nation in the form of music. These lyrics, combined with music, become the carrier of cultural and emotional transmission. During the performance of Matouqin music, improvisation is often emphasized, reflecting the characteristics of oral transmission, so that these memory elements can be passed on flexibly and in various ways, preserving the personalized expression and understanding of each generation of performers. These cultural memory elements in music not only maintain the unique identity of the Mongolian group, but also provide the strength for them to continue to explore their own cultural roots in the modern context.

3.3 The transmission and influence of Matouqin music on Mongolian cultural memory

Matouqin music has a profound influence on the transmission of Mongolian cultural memory. As a form of ethnic music with a long history, it carries and reflects the traditional customs, lifestyle and historical events of the Mongolian ethnic group. This kind of music is not only the transmission of melody, but also the carrier of collective memory, evoking the historical emotional resonance of the Mongolian nation through melody and rhythm. Matouqin music often incorporates elements closely related to grassland life, such as natural landscapes, herdsman's lives, and historical heroics, making it an important tool[5] for shaping and maintaining national identity. Its musical works, passed down from generation to generation, not only retain the purity of the national culture, but also promote the inner emotional identity of the Mongolian people and strengthen the cohesion of the ethnic group. Through continuous evolution, Matouqin music ADAPTS to the changes of The Times and remains dynamic, becoming a cultural link between the past, present and future of the Mongolian people.

4. The present situation of Morin Khur music and its implications for the future

4.1 Impact and adaptation of Matouqin music in the process of modernization

The influence of modernization on Morin Khur music is both profound and complex. In the context of globalization, urbanization and the acceleration of technological progress, the traditional music culture is generally facing the impact, and the music of Matouqin is no exception. The urbanization process has led to the transformation of the traditional herdsman's lifestyle, which has significantly changed the playing environment and learning conditions of the Morin Khur. Many of the younger generation have left the grasslands and entered the cities to receive modern education and lifestyle, and the chain of inheritance of traditional Matouqin music has been challenged.

Nonetheless, Matouqin music has also shown strong adaptability in the process of modernization. The development of technology and the diversification of communication media have provided new opportunities for the dissemination and innovation of Matouqin music. Through online channels and digital platforms, Matouqin music has gained wider attention and affection not only domestically, but also globally. While retaining traditional elements, musicians are also actively trying to integrate modern musical styles to meet the diverse aesthetic needs of audiences.

The support of educational and cultural policies is also an important factor in the ability of Matouqin music to adapt to the modernization process. The Mongolian government and relevant cultural institutions have taken measures to protect and promote this national musical treasure. Morin Khur courses have been introduced into the education system, and the cultural value and artistic charm of Morin khur music have been continuously transmitted through various cultural festivals and international music exchange activities. Through these positive adaptation strategies, Matouqin music still shows strong vitality in the context of modernization, and continues to play an important role in the cultural identity and memory of the Mongolian people.

4.2 Inheritance strategies and practices of Matouqin music

The impact of modernization makes the inheritance of traditional music face challenges. For Matouqin music, its inheritance strategy and practice present a unique and effective model. The introduction of Matouqin music courses in the education system has become an important inheritance strategy to cultivate the young generation's interest and ability in this traditional music form through formal education. Informal community education and family education also play an important role in the inheritance of Matouqin music, and many Mongolian families still maintain the tradition of playing the music at family gatherings and festivals, passing the musical skill down from generation to generation.

The development of media and technology has also provided a new platform for the inheritance of Matouqin music. Through online videos, social media and music software, artists and enthusiasts can spread and learn music more conveniently, and this modern means has not only expanded the audience for Matouqin music, but also inspired more young people to participate in it. With the support of cultural institutions that protect and promote the traditional skill, events such as music festivals and workshops are also on the rise, with the aim of raising public awareness and interest in the music and injecting

new life into the future of this ancient art. Such all-round efforts have ensured the continuous inheritance and innovative development of the music in a rapidly changing society.

4.3 Influence and enlightenment of Matouqin music on Mongolian cultural identity and memory in the future

In modern society, Matouqin music carries Mongolian cultural identity and memory, and continues to play an important role in the new era. By adapting various forms of expression to modernization, it achieves a blend of tradition and modernity. This form of music inspires the cohesion of Mongolian internal cultural identity and shows its unique national charm in the globalization of cultural exchanges. In the future, Matouqin music will continue to serve as an identity symbol of the Mongolian ethnic group and strengthen its mission of cultural inheritance. The development of technology and digitalization has provided a new platform for the dissemination of Morin Khur music, enabling its cultural memory to be transmitted and preserved more widely. Paying attention to the development trend of Morin Khur music can help predict its lasting influence and far-reaching enlightenment on Mongolian cultural identity and memory.

5. Concluding Remarks

Research shows that Matouqin music is not only a musical form, but also a carrier of Mongolian cultural memory and historical identity. What is particularly noteworthy is that although traditional music culture is facing great challenges under the impact of modernization process, Matouqin music has integrated into modern life in its unique way and shown strong vitality. However, the limitation of the findings of this study is that the deep integration of Matouqin music, as a unique musical form, in the modernization process still has problems, and how to better protect and develop this traditional music form is worthy of our further consideration and exploration. The future research direction can further explore how to maintain and strengthen the identification of traditional music culture under the background of modernization, and how to make more people understand and love Matouqin music through education and other ways, so that it can better reflect its value in modern life. In addition, empirical research can also be conducted to study the relationship between Matouqin music and the cultural identity of the Mongolian community, as well as the influence of Matouqin music in other ethnic cultures.

References

- [1] Sang Bu. The Position and function of Matouqin in Mongolian music [J]. *Literary Youth*,2021,(22):0051-0051.
- [2] QI Geqing. Development and Challenge of music Education of Matouqin [J]. *Chinese Science and Technology Journal Database (Full Text) Education Science*,2023,(05):0185-0188.
- [3] LIU Yangjun. Inheritance and Development of Matouqin music in Xinjiang [J]. *Journal of Xinjiang University of the Arts*,2019,17(02):25-29.
- [4] Huyagatu. On Matouqin and its Music and Mongolian Grassland Culture [J]. *China and Foreign Exchange*, 2019,27(05):48-49.
- [5] The bag is called Gel. Matouqin and its music and Mongolian Grassland culture [J]. *China Science and Technology Investment*,2019,(33):24-24.