

Living Inheritance of Ancient Miao Songs in Southern Sichuan*

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Abstract—Ancient Miao songs in southern Sichuan are a living expression of Miao people's ideology and a vivid reflection of their unique culture and religious beliefs. It is the special performance and inheritance environment of the ancient Miao songs in southern Sichuan that makes the ancient songs form the "text" style of the combination of vocal music, instrumental music and even dance rhythm. Only in its folk environment can it really survive.

Keywords—the Miao nationality in southern Sichuan; ancient songs; living inheritance

I. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Miao songs are collective creation epics written orally by the ancient Miao people. They are rich in content and complete in categories. They mainly systematically narrate the creation history of the Miao people, the formation and operation of heaven, earth, sun and moon, the origin and change of all things, the reproduction of human beings and the production and living scenes of the ancestors of the Miao people, vividly show the ancient Miao people's observation and understanding of the objective world, and record their great achievements in conquering nature, transforming nature, no fearing violence and establishing the business.

From the folk environment of ancient Miao songs singing in southern Sichuan, it can see that in wedding, funeral and sacrificial ceremony, the combination of instrumental music, dance rhythm and vocal music has created the special performance form and inheritance mode of ancient Miao songs. Living inheritance has important artistic value and social value.

II. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE PERFORMANCE OF ANCIENT SONG

A. Introduction to Instrumental Music

The musical instruments related to ancient Miao songs are mainly reed-pipe wind instrument, mouth harps, Xiao (a bamboo flute) and Muye (one kind of leaves, and one kind of musical instrument).

1) *A reed-pipe wind instrument*: There are many records about the origin of reed-pipe wind instrument in Han

literature. In the earliest collection of poems in China, "The Book of Songs", there are verses such as "blowing reed-pipe wind instrument and playing reed, blowing reed-pipe wind instrument and reed-pipe wind instrument, playing reed" and so on. In "The Book of Songs Xiaoya", there are also six lost poems, namely, "Nangai", "Baihua", "Huashu", "Yougeng", "Chongqiu" and "Yuyi". "The annals of Xuyong Yongning County" contains: "Miao people data on the high mountains in early January, date Gaofu, and dance with each other." For the people of marriage, men blow reed-pipe wind instrument; women play mouth harps; and they will sing to each other. When Yang Sheng'an saw the Miao people's grand mountain-stepping party, he wrote poems and praised it: "men and women dance with the songs, have their own feelings, and jump with the reed-pipe wind instrument."

The reed-pipe wind instrument recorded in the above documents appeared in the areas where the ancient Miao people lived. It is worth mentioning that the structure of modern reed-pipe wind instrument of the Miao nationality roughly coincides with the historical data. No wonder the historian Mr. Guo Moruo asserted that "musical instruments such as Sheng originated from the Miao people in my opinion, and Miao people have reed-pipe wind instruments." (See Guo Moruo's "Collection of Present and Past, Visiting Ancient Times of Diaoyucheng").

2) *Mouth harps*: The mouth harps of the Miao nationality is a musical instrument with a long history. In the Chronicle of Gongxian County of Sichuan Province, there are records of the Miao people who stepping on the hill, unmarried men blowing reed-pipe wind instrument, unmarried women playing mouth harps, and singing to each other. Mouth harps is used to transmit the love between young men and women of the Miao nationality, mostly used to play love songs close to each other. Night falls, men and women invite each other, and they sing to each other, asking and answering questions, and they enjoy it endlessly. The tunes of mouth harps are beautiful and melodious, gentle and fluctuant. It sounds just as the breeze slowly comes, or as the moon is bright, or as the clouds roll over, giving people a sense of relaxation and pleasure. It frankly expresses the pursuit of love between unmarried men and women, and fully reflects the simple and healthy love

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concept of Miao people. Some people wrote poems to praise the picture of Miao young men and women playing harps under the moon: "the sun and the moon shine on Miao villages in the sky, and the young men meet the young girls. Beautiful chords and songs play against each other, and young girls and boys are in pairs."

3) *Xiao*: "Xiao" is a bamboo wind instrument of the Miao nationality. The large and long pipe is called horizontal Xiao, and the small and short pipe is called vertical Xiao. Most of the Xiao are played by young men and women to express the love, and played by the old and middle-aged when they narrate the past and express their feelings. It is good at using portamento, and expressing one's emotion. The music can be played at any occasion. It can be played outdoors or in the mountains. Especially in the quiet night and the dim moonlight, listening to clear and melodious, soft and beautiful music often evokes a feeling of yearning and nostalgia.

4) *Muye* (a kind of leaf, and a kind of musical instrument): In Fan Chuo's *Manshu* of the Tang Dynasty, there are records of Miao youngsters blowing Muye. There are also many records in the historical documents of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Muye music is popular among young men and women of the Miao nationality. It is mostly played in the field. It is easy to play and can be played by picking leaves with one's hands. The tune of Muye music is clear and sound. "Love song of the Miao nationality" has the record of "climbing the slope after breakfast, singing by sister and blowing Muye by the brother, songs being not so loud as Muye, and the sound of Muye over the sky". When playing Muye, the sound can be heard miles away. Therefore, Miao youth often blow Muye to convey love. Muye can play language and music, and there is no fixed music. All the music can be played by the player freely. Most of them are quaver in one beat. Each bar changes from ten to twenty beats. The introduction of "Bu Bu Bu Bu Bu Bu - Bru" is often used. There are solos for blowing Muye. Two people play the Muye in front mountains, which is called two-person ensemble, etc. Communicating with each other through the music is very interesting.

B. Representative Tunes

The instrumental music of Miao nationality in Sichuan includes the music of reed-pipe wind instrument, music of bamboo Xiao, music of mouth harps, music of Suona horn and Muye music.

1) *The music of reed-pipe wind instrument*: The music of reed-pipe wind instrument is an important part of Miao music. Traditional music of reed-pipe wind instrument includes dance music, ancestor songs, interrogation songs, sacrificial songs and so on. Each kind of music has a number of tunes, the dance rhythm is light. The song tunes twist and turn, and is solemn. The music of reed-pipe wind instrument uses harmony, and the sound changes with the main melody of the music. Because the scale is incomplete

and there is no semitone, the music can only change in the range of bass symbols 6 1 2 3 5 6 or 5 6 1 2 3 5. Each piece has a beating melody. Trills and flowery tongues are often used to enhance the sense of rhythm.

When playing the reed-pipe wind instrument, the main accompanying instrument is the long-waist cowhide drum. Blowing the reed-pipe wind instrument is called "cuo geng" in Miao language. "Music of the reed-pipe wind instrument" is called "rang geng"; "Music of sacrifice" is called "geng tan qi"; "Music of welcoming customers" is called "geng sou"; "Music of mourning over a person's death" is called "geng da"; "Music of eliminating soul" is called "geng bie"; "Music of releasing souls" is called "geng mu"; "Music of receiving soul" is called "geng dao Wang", "Music of sending souls" is called "Gengsang Wang"; "Sai Zhi Song" is called "geng shua di"; "Song of welcoming bride" is called "Gengdao Chong"; and "Love Song" is called "Geng ji shen".

2) *The music of bamboo Xiao*: The music of bamboo Xiao is called "rang bu li" or "rang zhang" in Miao language, and is the popular music in the areas of the Miao nationality. It is mostly used for young men and women to talk about love. There are many names of the tunes and lyrics. Besides reflecting social life, the lyrics are more about narrating the love between men and women. The melody is high, broad, and expressive and has a strong national flavor. Bamboo Xiao music can be played on any occasion, mostly outdoors and in the mountains.

3) *The music of mouth harps*: The music of mouth harps belongs to musical composition, is called "rangx njangk" in Miao language. The tune is beautiful and sound, and is popular among the young men and women. The melody is equipped with lyrics to reflect the love between men and women as the main content.

4) *Suona music*: Suona music is one of the favorite music of Miao people. In the Miao inhabited areas of Yibin and Luzhou in southern Sichuan, people will play Suona when having worries and joys. There are many performers who can play Suona among the Miao people. There are many names of Suona tunes and modes with complete structure. "General's Tune", "Spring Flow" "Yu he Lan", "Little Girl" and "Xiao Luozi" are all popular songs in Miao area. Suona music can be solo or ensemble, often accompanied by Muye, flutes, erhu, gongs and drums, and other small drums. Suona music is melodious, and the playing atmosphere is warm. In 1955, Miao Suona artist Zhang Binhe of Gong Country went to Beijing to play Suona. They were praised by domestic and foreign audiences. The Suona music they played was praised as "peculiar low music".



Fig. 1. The Author and Wang Shixun (Research Specialist of Dasuona in Southern Sichuan), April 19, 2014.

^{a1} Photo Provided by the Author.

5) *Muye music*: It is a kind of music played with leaves in nature as instruments. This kind of music has great randomness. It can play love songs or other music. It mainly reflects the love between men and women, so it is popular with young people.

Ancient Miao songs can't be separated from the accompaniment of musical instruments. Otherwise they will lose their unique artistic form and social significance. Taking the reed-pipe wind instrument as an example, it actually strengthens the semantics of music by means of a conventional sound symbol or the corresponding relationship between the pitch of music and the intonation of Miao language in the non-literal society to convey a relatively clear semantics and realize people's social communication. [1] This conventional expression of "discourse" has become an important way to convey information. During the funeral, the reed-pipe wind instrument was endowed with multiple meanings in the ritual process, which not only showed the way for the deceased, but also relied on the grief of relatives. It is "instrumental music" that connects the living and the dead. Without the instrumental music, its artistic form and cultural value will be impossible to talk about.

III. MUSICAL RHYTHM IN THE PERFORMANCE SCENE OF ANCIENT SONGS

Miao folk poetry, like those in dialectal areas, is mainly rhymed and supplemented by rhyme. In long songs, rhyme and tune are often used interlacingly; in short songs, rhyme is mainly required. Miao poetry has strict rhythm, which can be roughly divided into odd and even rhythm, interval rhythm, insertion rhythm, and two-sentence rhythm and so on.

A. Odd and Even Rhythm

That is, in a poem, odd sentences have a rhyme and even sentences have another rhyme. For example,

Changd ndox dit lof, Δ
Lol nangs dit daox; ○
Khob lal zhit daut dof, Δ

Nzhed lal zhit dout naox; ○

Dol jis yout yout uat dol zhof, Δ

Naf muaf nyad nyad uat goux raox. ○

This is a children's song which is popular among Miao people in southern Sichuan. The rhythm of this song is a typical even-odd rhythm. Odd sentences are united in "0" and "f" tones, and even sentences are united in "ao" and "x" tones. This form of rhythm is also known as ABAB. In this kind of metrical poetry, the rhyme of even sentences is strict and must be consistent, while odd sentences do not necessarily require the same rhyme, but the tone must be consistent.

B. Interval Rhythm

That is to say, in a poem, the rhyme and tone of sentences are not emphasized, but the rhyme of sentences is intertwined. This form of rhythm is called ABCB, for example:

Wef bual houd mit doux mit roub,
Lik bual nat nyox nghel ndraos nqaod; Δ
Wef bual gaox mit nacik ngoux nyangb;
Uat god lob shab lol zhit sangd draod. Δ

This is a Miao love song which is popular in Gongxian, Yunlian and other places in southern Sichuan. The song means "to lure old cows off the rocks for a nest of grass; to love my sister, to make me want to go back." Poetry of this kind of rhythm is very popular among Miao people in Sichuan and other areas with the same dialect.

C. Insertion Rhythm

It is to insert a sentence or a few sentences with different rhymes before or between the rhyming units of a poem in order to play a leading role without affecting the structural form of the main rhyme of the poem. This kind of rhythm has various forms, for example:

Changd ndox deuf lol lab uat lab, Δ
Nongs lod deuf lol nbleuf yongd ghab; Δ
Yongb ghab bongb dout nongs lod njoux, ※
Ngoux ncaik bongb dout god lob ndab. Δ

This is a love song of Miao folk song popular in Xuyong and other places in southern Sichuan, which means: "When the sun comes out, swallows fly to eat mosquitoes; mosquitoes fall into the mouth of swallows, and love girls fall into the arms of brothers." The main rhyme of this song is "a", and the main tone is "b". The third sentence inserted in the middle is totally different from the first two sentences and the last one, but it is closely related to the content of the whole poem. The rhythm type of this song is also called ABCB type.

D. Two-sentence Rhythm

That is to say, in a poem, two sentences are used as a rhyme and rhyme unit, which is the unique point of Miao poetry in Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan dialects. For example:

Ndox zhouk nghel zhouk nduak ndit,
Zhouk nzhaif dout nzul nyos sheud ghax hlit;
Deb zhouk nghel zhouk ndox nkob,
Zhouk nzhaif dout ncit nyos sheud ghax hnob;
Ghax dout ngoux hnob zangd yenl draod nbongt ndox,
Ngoux hnob ghax yenl suk yad blox;
Ghax dout ndrous hlit zangd yenl draod nbongt drongb,
Nzhous hlit zangd yenl suk yad bongb.

This is the lyric of ancient Miao song "Moving the Sun and Moon". "The sky is pitch-dark, the moon will move slightly in the darkness, the earth will be a dim place, and the sun will move slightly in the darkness. If the sun moves to the west, the sun will shake and set; if the moon moves across the ridge, the moon will disappear." This form of two sentences and one rhyme is also called AABB type. In Miao ballads, both long and short songs will use this kind of rhythm a lot.

As mentioned above, it only refers to rhythm. In addition, Miao poetry also has a prominent feature, that is, the extensive use of set-off sentences. No matter the long song or the short song, the appearance of the lyrics is corresponding. The two sentences share the same content, but the words with the same, similar or opposite meanings are used in the sentences to express them. For example, "Yellow is just as death, thin as death". "In previous years, I did not tread on your Golden threshold with the left foot; tread on your Golden house with the right foot". "The underground medicine is good, but can't cure my life; heaven medicine is good, but can't cure my life". The list goes on and on. Miao people are good at singing and like to sing. They narrate history in the form of songs, distinguish the good from the evil, propagate philosophy and reflect real life. At the same time, it also created its own colorful song culture.

IV. CHORUS IN THE SINGING SCENE OF ANCIENT SONGS

Chorus means that the sound conforms to the rhythm. In "The Rites of Zhou Chun Guan · Daxu", "the students take the enrollment in spring, have the dance, learn the chorus in autumn." Zheng Xuan has made the note: "chorus, also wait for its twists and turns, so does the rhythm." Sun Yirang Justice: "Harmony is the sound of music." Yu Xin wrote: "Chu stayed the guests and Han'e sounded in chorus" in the "Dengfu" in Northern Zhou Dynasty. Chorus is the accompaniment part compiled according to the chorus in order to thicken the main melody voice. It is almost vertical, referring to the specific accompaniment with the vocal of the lead singer.

A. The Coordination of Songs and the Rhythm Arrangement Under the Regulation of Rituals

Ancient Miao songs can be divided into monophonic texture and polyphonic texture. The proportion of monophonic texture in ancient songs is quite high. Generally, it is divided into three parts: the starting cavity (a short lining sound or a lining sentence as the introduction), the main cavity (the body of the musical structure), and the last cavity (a short lining sound or lining sentence at the end).

In many narrative songs, the use of the starting cavity and the last cavity is emphasized, as a symbol of distinguishing paragraphs (mainly literary content), and the use of the first sentence as the core tone in melody composition is emphasized as the basis for the development of the whole song. With the use of core tone as the basic means of developing melody, the basic techniques of repetition and variation are naturally created in the process of development. There are two different styles of music with four sentence structures: starting, inheriting, turning and combining.

Most of the multi-voice Miao songs in southern Sichuan are two vocal parts. Sometimes Miao songs with three voice parts and four voice parts appear under the function of the liner (liner is the inner voice part, sometimes also the melodic voice part). In the study of Miao two-voice songs in southern Sichuan, it is found that the Miao two-voice songs are mostly branched, that is, the variant of two parts singing the same melody at the same time, which is the most common type of multi-part Miao song's voice structure. The two voices are different from each other in the same melody, singing the same song at the same speed and rhythm. The three-voice and four-voice Miao songs are rare. Only in the special festivals of Miao family can we hear the charm of this multi-voice folk song. The number of Miao singers of three-voice and four-voice Miao songs is generally more than a dozen. Sometimes they are arranged in two or three rows according to age and sex. The phenomenon of rotation of three-voice and four-voice Miao songs is formed by the alternation and combination of liner and lyrics. The chorus characteristic of multi-voice Miao songs is the five-tone interval. Like other multi-voice folk songs, it is mainly composed of five-tone natural intervals, and concentrated intervals within four or five degrees. The most common use is the second degree and pure fourth, fifth and minor third degree. [2]

In some ceremonial singing styles with mass occasions, there is a multi-voice "chorus". The effect of chorus is very harmonious and unified, and the singing form is more special, including singing, leading song, and chorus song. However, they sing without command, but tacit understanding, can be neat and uniform. It does not need to accompany, and the voice part still sing in harmony. The audience can enjoy beauty. It does not need the piano to start the tone, because it has the lead singer to start the tone. From the perspective of social integration, the soul of the deceased will have an impact on the whole family and even the whole community, and may also pose a threat. Therefore, the funeral is not a family thing, but a community thing. Through the joint efforts of the whole community, the negative impact of the

deceased on the living is minimized. Every recitation of ancient songs and rituals means that the negative meaning of death to society can be effectively resisted in the form of collective participation, so that it can be transformed into an event beneficial to society.

B. Dance Coordination and Rhythm Arrangement Under Ritual Regulation

The dance of reed-pipe wind instrument is a unique dance of Miao nationality. The traditional dance of Miao nationality in Sichuan is only the dance of reed-pipe wind instrument. Anyone who can blow reed-pipe wind instrument can dance. The dance of reed-pipe wind instrument can be divided into three categories: single dance, double dance and group dance. The dance of reed-pipe wind instrument is only used for sacrificial activities in most areas. In Chishui, Maling of Xuyong County and Shuangsha of Gulin County in southern Sichuan Province, the reed-pipe wind instrument is also used in marriage customs, but it only blows along the road, only plays music, and has no dance steps. Funeral sacrifices must be carried out by hanging drums and blowing Sheng, which are held in the central hall. When dancing single-person dance, one person, accompanied by drums, dances around the drum stand while blowing; double dancing refers to two people dancing together; group dancing is generally more than four people, led by one or two people blowing the reed-pipe wind instrument, and the rest of the people dance with the music of the reed-pipe wind instrument. According to the different rhythms of the music, each piece is equipped with different dance steps. There are four kinds of dance steps commonly used in funeral occasions:

1) *Tiaotan dance*: When playing "Tiaotan", people will dance. The music "Tiaotan" can be divided into 4 sections, each section is composed of 16 beats, and 10 dance steps. The dance step will have change the model, and the number of steps can't change.

2) *The dance of welcoming guests*: The dance of welcoming guests can be divided into 6 sections, and each section is composed of 26 beats, and 17 dance steps. There are 3 dance steps in 1-4 beats, 3 steps in 5-10 beats, 3 steps in 11-14 steps, 2 steps in 15-18 beats, 3 steps in 19-22 beats, and 3 steps in 23-26 beats.

3) *The dance of Saizhi*: The dance of Saizhi can be divided into 5 sections, and each section has 56 beats. The rhythm is lively, adopting the whirling, leaping dance step.

4) *Wutan dance*: The dance has only 24 beats and 24 steps.

The four dances mentioned above are dances that can be performed in funeral activities and ordinary games. In addition, there are more popular hand-in-hand dances in the annual mountain stepping festival. With the progress and development of society, the reed-pipe wind instrument of the Miao nationality has also changed under the influence of foreign culture, resulting in new Lusheng dances related to real life, such as monkey taming dance, spinning dance, harvesting dance and so on. In addition to reed-pipe wind instrument, during the Spring Festival, Miao people also

organize folk entertainment dances such as dragon lanterns, cattle lanterns, lanterns, lion lanterns and so on.



Fig. 2. Miao Ancient Songs in Festival Scenes in July 27, 2015.

^a Photo Provided: Gongxian Bureau of Culture and Sports.

In the singing of ancient Miao songs, dance "embedded" in the whole ceremony is an important element of the ceremony. Dance is a "collective" behavior presented by different relatives and in-laws within a group. It became the re-creation of the social significance of Miao society, constructed the structure of Miao society, enhanced the sense of identity, and established the social order of village society.

V. CONCLUSION

The government has taken various measures to protect the inheritors and contributed to rescue and protect the ancient Miao songs in southern Sichuan through video recording and picture recording. Although it is effective, it has neglected the ambiguity, situational features and unique musical patterns of the ancient Miao songs. In particular, from the transmission of oral texts to the production of "solidified" protected texts, there is a "cultural translation" problem. Derrida, a French structuralist, believes that "text" is an open and ambiguous network, and that "text" is constantly adding new meaning in its development. [3] Bourdieu also believes that anthropologists, as researchers, must place their research in the process of living cultural practice. [4]

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