

The Reason Why People Sing Hua'er

A Case Study Based on the Inheritors of He Huang Hua'er

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Abstract—He Huang Hua'er is a kind of folk song with regional style and cultural characteristics in northwestern China, and it is a world intangible cultural heritage. As the original living environment of the Hua'er singers change with the times and social development, Hua'er and its singers' lifestyle, market environment and concept are constantly changing, the ecological environment of the original Hua'er is facing enormous challenges. This article takes Kong Weifang, the inheritor of Linxia Hua'er in Gansu Province, as a case study object, with her experience as the acceptance of Hua'er and the research basis of the dilemma, she believes that the research and innovation of "intangible culture" can only become a drive force of living culture development. However, in our intangible cultural heritage protection project, the "original" "living" "intangible culture" is the real object of our protection.

Keywords—He Huang Hua'er; intangible cultural heritage; original ecological protection; Kong Weifang

I. INTRODUCTION

Confucius once said: "Students, why not learn poetry? Learning poetry can stimulate enthusiasm, improve observation, unite the masses, and express dissatisfaction." Hua'er is a kind of folk song that popular in the northwestern China, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia three provinces (areas) and commonly created by Han, Hui, Tibetan, Dongxiang, Baoan, Sala, Yugu, Mongolia and other ethnic groups. It has simple style, bright rhythm and beautiful tunes. They are very representative in northwestern China, according to their popular regions, styles and traditional customs, "Hua'er" is divided into two major schools of He Huang Hua'er and Tao Min Hua'er.

The "He" of the He Huang Hua'er refers to the "Yellow River", and the "Huang" refers to the Huang River. The historical He Huang area is the intersection area of the two rivers. He Huang Hua'er is the Hua'er that is popular along the river and its neighbors, centered by the intersection of the Yellow River and the Huang River. The main popular areas are Linxia, Yongjing, Hezheng, Dongxiang of Gansu Province, Minhe, Ledu, Huangyuan of Qinghai province, and Tongxin, Xiji, Guyuan of Ningxia province. The tones of He

Huang Hua'er are divided into short and long notes, for long tones such as "He Zhou Da Ling" and "He Zhou Er Ling", for short tones such as "Bai Mu Dan Ling" and "San Ling". The features of long tone are high-pitched, bright, slow, and long, while the short tone is compact, with clear rhythm and smooth melody. The Hua'er tones are all named as the "XX Ling", and the "Ling" is a short and lyrical song that is closer to the folk songs. He Huang Hua'er is generally divided into two parts, each part has two sentences; for six sentence-style, each part has three sentences. The protagonist Kong Weifang of this article is from Yongjing, and the original ecological Hua'er she sang belongs to He Huang Hua'er.

II. THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH HUA'ER

Kong Weifang, Han nationality, was born in Wangping Xishan of Yongjing city in 1974. Her father died very early, and her mother was sick all the year round, so she basically grew up under the care of her older brother and sister-in-law. At that time, Xishan was particularly poor, in order to survive, most young and middle-aged people went out to work during the slack season. When the busy season came, they went back to be a farmer, Kong Weifang's older brother was no exception. In her childhood memories, it was a common thing for her to hoe up the soil with her sister-in-law in the mountains. "First sell the saddle, second sell the horse, third sell the plum stool; first think of Father, second think of mother, third think of where to grow up." The short six-sentence Hua'er lyrics express the helplessness of newly-married sister-in-law when he faces a large and abandoned farmland alone, the missing of her parents who lived on the other side of the mountain, and the missing of her husband who work in big city. However, for Kong Weifang, who was only 11 or 12 years old at the time, this kind of depressed tone was annoying. She even went to her mother and told her that "My sister-in-law did not work hard, all she did was singing."

For her sister-in-law, she could not see her husband for a long time and she has to work hard everyday, the troubles in her heart are self-evident. Therefore, she often sang Hua'er in the open mountains to release her inner feelings of boredom. Although her crying tone made the young Kong Weifang

feel bored, the love of Hua'er from her neighbor Li Guizhou's family touched the girl little by little.

"I didn't like Hua'er before, mainly because I can not understand the lyrics my sister-in-law sang, the tone was high, the sound was loud, and it didn't feel good. Later, because I was familiar with my neighbor Li Guizhou, whenever they went to Liujiaxia hydroelectric power station at night to sing Hua'er, I would follow them. I could not sing at the time, and I was afraid to sing, so they taught me word by word, and soon I was able to sing a Hua'er. That year was 2005, it happened to be a singing contest of Hua'er, so I signed up for it. Although it was the first time I am on stage, I won the second prize. I was very happy for this award."

III. LOVE IS THE PRIMARY THEME OF THE HUA'ER SINGER

From the theme of lyrics, Hua'er is mainly about the love between men and women. Compared with other folk songs with straightforward and rough content, the lyrics of Hua'er are more delicate, and singers often convey emotions through the details in the lyrics. As the American social linguist Enbo said: "A society's language can reflect its corresponding culture, and one of its ways is expressed in lexical content or vocabulary." He Huang Hua'er can be said to break geographical and national boundaries, it reflects the cultural connotation shared by all ethnic groups in the He Huang area.

"Red cherries are so red. I think of a beautiful girl in my heart, the girl is like the red cherry on the tip of the tree, I can't pick it up no matter how high I climb up. Red cherries are so red. I think of my handsome man in my heart. My man is like the red coral on the bottom of the sea, I'm not afraid of how deep the sea bottom is, till I get it. Red roses are so red. I think of a beautiful girl in my heart, the girl is like the delicate red rose, I can't pick it up no matter how long I walked."

The lyrics are very subtle, and the emotions between men and women when they love each other but shy to tell each other are vividly expressed in this "Red Cherry". Kong Weifang said, "The lyrics touched me, and that is when I started to really like Hua'er."

San Mao said in "You are a dream that I can't reach" about reading and love, that "all the joys and sorrows when you meet, please paying all your sincerity, and the fact of the apart come so naturally, no one is asking for a marriage in this affirmative sentiment. In my opinion, this is a kind of cognition and mind. There is no regret, only extremely clear growth facing the fact." This kind of cognition of love is even more pure and simple in the lyrics of Hua'er.

But whether it is "Red Cherry" or "You are a dream that I can't reach", the eternal topic of love is a beautiful dream that people can't reach in their lifetime. But in the later narrative of Kong Weifang about Hua'er, we began to really know that the flower is beautiful but fragile.

IV. STEREOTYPED IMPRESSION HINDERS THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUA'ER

In 2005, Kong Weifang got married. Her father and mother-in-law originally liked her, but after knowing that she sang Hua'er, their attitude changed. They thought that singing Hua'er made them "disfigured."

The original ecological Hua'er was originally designed to drive away the Drought Monster, mainly a group of men with only grass skirt singing Hua'er to pray for rain. Therefore, the local people's impression of Hua'er singers is not good. Then they have the stereotyped impression that all Hua'er songs are love song, and Hua'er singers are "wild people."

In the traditional social environment, Hua'er is considered to be love songs, and those who sing Hua'er are "wild people." In order to sing, some people have to sing in the remote, burning incense hills because there is no "proper" place to sing Hua'er, and they are worried about being reprimanded by the elders. And some others even hide in the "dry wells" singing Hua'er. The marriage in the traditional period is mainly arranged marriage, and there is no original emotional foundation for their marriages.

The singing styles of the Hua'er include solo singing, duet, Hua'er festivals, etc., among which duet is more popular. Kong Weifang said, "In the process of duet singing Hua'er, both men and women tearfully complaint each other's experiences, and there may gradually have feelings with each other, the woman may ran away with the man." Therefore, ordinary families are against their daughter-in-law to sing Hua'er. In a closed and conservative social environment and an environment that people's talk is fearful, Hua'er singers generally refuse to sing Hua'er in public. Under such conditions, Kong Weifang proposed to sing Hua'er on the stage and in the crowd, which naturally would encounter many obstacles.

In the agricultural era dominated by the natural economy, it is people's living habits to work from dawn to dusk. In order to learn Hua'er, Kong Weifang often hides in the bed and whispers Hua'er. Sometimes in order to find the right feelings and emotions, even if she is sweating on her head, she still hides in the quilt and repeatedly memorizes the lyrics and practices and songs.

Kong Weifang's husband is the only one who supports her to sing Hua'er. "One day, I secretly practice Hua'er at home. He heard it, and he was surprised, because he didn't know that I could sing before marriage. He thinks my singing is very good and then supports me. It was a big help for my singing Hua'er." "Red cherries are so red. I think of my handsome man in my heart. My man is like the red coral on the bottom of the sea, I'm not afraid of how deep the sea bottom is, till I get it", the lyrics deepen the deep friendship between her and her husband.

V. THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE FAMILY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION MAKES THE HUA'ER SINGER

Kong Weifang's parents-in-laws opposed her from singing Hua'er from the beginning and even refused to

communicate with her, but Kong Weifang insists on her singing career. She said, "I can't convince my parents-in-laws to support me, but I believe I can change them with my own effort."

In the long-term tempering and persistence, Kong Weifang's Hua'er singing ability has been further improved. Kong Weifang integrated all kinds of sentiments into life into the singing Hua'er, making the singing more delicate and moving. She won a prize in a competition in Xinjiang and the prize is a TV set. The family relationship has been eased after all, Kong Weifang's father-in-law told her that, "You can take plane when you go out performance and also earn money from it, it is a good thing." Kong Weifang's Hua'er singing career has finally been recognized by the family.

"This kind of change is very happy for me. I have been persisting for so long, hearing my in-laws' scolding, I have been silently doing what I like, I have been singing Hua'er, I used to be sneaky, I didn't dare to say anything, now I can finally singing with no fear, I can participate in the competition without worry."

"Shi Ren Jian Wo Heng Shu Diao, Yu Wen Da Yan Jie Leng Xiao." It means that people in the world see me always talk big, and they all laugh at me when they hear my heroic utterance. Like ordinary families, Kong Weifang's in-laws opposed her singing Hua'er, but after she won honors again and again, they began to accept their daughter-in-law singing Hua'er and silently supported her. If you like a way of life, you should have the ability, endurance and execution to achieve the goal, Kong Weifang did it.

VI. THE ORIGINAL ECOLOGICAL SINGING METHOD IS THE MAIN FEATURE OF THE HE HUANG HUA'ER

According to the summary of Mr. Zhu Zhonglu, the vocalization method of Hua'er is divided into three types: "Jianyin method", "Cangyin method", "Jianyin and Cangyin together method". In addition, Hua'er is different from other local folk songs, the first and last part of a song has forms called Qiyin and Luoyin. It can be seen that singing Hua'er is not an easy task. In order to better interpret Hua'er, Kong Weifang began to learn to read music by herself.

"I didn't know how to read music before. But some of Hua'er is very difficult to sing if you don't know how to read the music. So, I start to learn how to read music. Take "Read Coral" as an example, first I sing the song, and then check the pronunciation to see if it is the same as the music score." "In order to adhere to the original ecological singing method, I don't sing any other songs except for Hua'er, because I am afraid I would mixed the singing methods. Until I am confident with the singing method and no longer afraid with the mix, then I start to try other folk singing method." Kong Weifang's spirit of focusing on the interpretation of the original ecological Hua'er is admirable.

In 2016, Kong Weifang accepted a student. "This female student is very busy at work, but she likes the singing of the original ecological Hua'er. She often asks me how to sing the Hua'er and persists for several months. I was touched by her spirit before I decided to accept her as a student. My student

started to sing in national singing method and she usually mixed national sing method with ecological singing method. So when I teach her the Da Ling, I let her use the national singing method first, and then use the original ecological singing method to sing. I will guide her when she can not sing the high pitch and let her pull up tones from the original foundation. This will slowly guide her to learn, I am even happier than her when I see her singing Hua'er with original ecological method." Kong Weifang began to use her unique original ecological singing skills to teach students.

VII. TELLING THE STORY OF HUA'ER TO THE WORLD

Kong Weifang was invited to participate in CCTV folk programme "Festival of Chinese Folk Songs and Dances" and "The Deep Love of Great Northwest China" and performed as a singer, all performances are of great success. As the Hua'er singer in the forty episode of the TV series "She Tian Lang", she won the Silver Award in the Western China Folk Song Invitational Tournament and the Third Prize of the Chinese National Vocal Music Dunhuang Award. She was participated in the activities organized by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China to perform Hua'er in the United States and Canada. Through her performance, she interpreted Hua'er vividly and in the meanwhile she also felt the world's attention to the intangible cultural heritage Hua'er.

"Sometimes, I wonder why Americans value Hua'er so much, and treat them as treasures, but our own people don't put Hua'er on their hearts. Hua'er can be regarded as the mother language of Gansu, but now, as a local, they do not know and could not sing a Guansu Hua'er, isn't it a shame? Now everyone is learning English, but they even do not know their native language. It's like a bad son. Although we want to expand our knowledge to learn English, we don't have to throw away our own things and treasures. If you throw away your treasure, then what should you do if someone steals the treasure?" During this overseas performance of the Hua'er show, Kong Weifang's speed rate has become faster than before, and the tone of voice has also increased. The feelings of regret and incomprehension are beyond words.

Hua'er mainly passed down and developed through long-term singing and oral communication, and they are often sung in dialects, which increases the difficulty of inheritance. Therefore, in the process of inheritance, in addition to teaching students the lyrics, how to improve students' interest with Hua'er is also crucial. She said, "Hua'er is the voice of the great northwestern people, especially the working people, and the true soul of the great northwest." On November 8, 2017, Kong Weifang and Lin Xiazhou folk literary masters visited Linxia Experimental High School to perform and teach Hua'er to the students.

VIII. WEBCAST PROMOTES THE WIDE SPREAD OF HUA'ER

"In the past, I was singing and performance Hua'er alone. Now I am slowly changing my mind and I am interested in teaching students. However, the requirement for my student is first character then the voice. Because the voice can be trained, but the Hua'er should be sung with heart and

characters." When talking about the students, Kong Weifang's eyes were firm.

Hua'er truly reflects the history and life of the nation, expresses the joys and sorrows of many nationalities, and the national environment and character, and it also shows the cultural customs and cultural characteristics of the nation. Hua'er is a kind of cultural symbol that can't be underestimated. It records the mountains and rivers, customs and relationships, and it also records the enthusiasm of local people for life. Therefore, Kong Weifang regards Hua'er as a kind of enjoyment of beauty.

2016 is the first year of web-cast, and the webcast platform is rapidly emerging. Under the influence of new media, the influence of Hua'er itself is increasing. In the second half of 2017, with the support of fans, Kong Weifang opened a personal webcast account in Kuaishou app, mainly introducing Hua'er to people who like it and explain the confusions of fans when they sing Hua'er. Until November 2019, her Kuaishou account "Shan Que Kong Weifang" has more than 20,000 fans. From 22nd to 26th of November 2017, under the leadership of Prof. Zhang Junren, Dean of Xi'an Conservatory of Music, Yongjing County Artists Association and other Hua'er singers made Hua'er bloomed in Shanghai.

In the long-term inheritance, Hua'er not only inherits the excellent Chinese cultural tradition, but also constantly absorbs the cultural spirit of various regions and nationalities. While enriching itself, it also enriches and expands the connotation of Chinese folk culture. Hua'er has precipitated the long history of the people in the northwest region during the process of national integration, social development, economic process and cultural pursuit, which is a good supplement to the history recorded in the literature.

"I didn't like it before but now I liked it. Hua'er is like a piece of meat on my body. I can't give it up. That's why I have students and why I do web-cast. I consider Hua'er inheritance as my destiny, maybe it is the reason for my existence."

IX. THE MAIN VALUE AND CURRENT SITUATION OF HUA'ER INHERITANCE

In He Wenci's "Discussion on Hua'er's function", he believes that Hua'er has five functions: release function, education function, fitness function, harmony function and radiation function. In Xue Songmei's "Original Ecological folk song-The cultural value of Hua'er lyrics", she believes that Hua'er as a folk song, although it is a stream of water in the long river of culture, its singing voice has a vitality of a nation that never ceases to exist, which contains some incomparable value of this national culture. Zhou Liang's "On the unique lyrics and artistic functions of He Huang Hua'er" thinks that the lyric function, entertainment function, communication function and aesthetic function of He Huang Hua'er express the real, bold and touching emotions through the lyrics and songs. It is an entertainment of ordinary people in the monotonous life of "working in the field in daytime, sleep in bed in the evening." It is an important way for the residents of deep mountains to transmit information with

each other, and it also shows the steel character of He Huang people and their indomitable attitudes to life, these emotions can only be realized so deeply when they listen to the Hua'er.

Hua'er is very popular throughout the Linxia area. It is an excellent folk music culture, discovering, salvaging, protecting the He Huang Hua'er has a great value on studying the formation, migration, and development of the nation, on researching of national culture, folk music, folk customs and people's production and living conditions, on enriching Chinese folk music and the cultural life of the people, and increasing the way people communicate with each other.

In the diachronic process of social development in China, poetry has long been in the mainstream of culture. However, time has changed and things have passed. Under the influence of industrialization and information modernization, Hua'er that has been growing in the farming culture is gradually being disintegrated due to the gradual collapse of the group's inheritance, activity and circulation. It is undergoing a process of turning from prosperity to decline.

With the increasing trend of globalization, the economy, society and people's lifestyles and concepts are undergoing dramatic changes. Young people no longer like to gathering in the square and sing Hua'er; some original ecological Hua'er singers have dead, their skills are difficult to pass on; the popularity of modern media and the influence of commercial fashion make people gradually lost their interest in traditional original Hua'er, and the protection and inheritance of Hua'er are also imminent.

X. CONCLUSION AND THINKING

In recent years, the cultural department has taken some protective measures against the original ecological Hua'er. The Gansu Provincial Department of Culture has issued the "Notice on Accelerating the General Survey of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Declaring the Representative of National Intangible Cultural Heritage", and the Linxia State Cultural Center organized experts to excavate and rescue, and encourage and folk artists with funds. It invested more than 10,000 yuan to go deep into the grassroots to shoot the singing image data of original ecological Hua'er. And organized the artist's archives and lyrics and tunes, edited them into electronic archives in succession in order to systematically study the original ecological Hua'er.

Popular Hua'er is just a new kind of cultural art that adapts to modern life and changes and innovates on the basis of primitive Hua'er. Every national culture is the same, and it is constantly changing. Every cultural phenomenon will undergo qualitative or quantitative changes in content or structure due to differences in time and space. Each culture not only can not be separated from the regulations of the times, but also it cannot be contrary to the great era of world culture. It has to conduct continuously innovations and developments only on the basis of protection and inheritance. Conservation does not oppose innovation, innovation is conducive to better conservation. If a nation does not have the innovate ability, it is impossible to preserve tradition. If traditional culture does not undergo innovations and changes,

it will have no vitality and cannot adapt to contemporary society. Therefore, the research and innovation of "intangible culture" can only become a driving force for the development of living culture. However, in our intangible cultural heritage protection project, the "ecological" "live" "intangible culture" is the object we really protect. "The essence of the Hua'er crisis is the crisis of the inheritors", this is the consensus of all walks of life at this stage. Zhou Liang's "The Inheritance Trend of National Folk Music in Colleges and Universities — Taking Hua'er as an Example" argues that "Teen years are the best time to learn and accept Hua'er. In the case that the naturally inheritance of Hua'er is difficult to continue, school education is undoubtedly the best choice."

On October 15, 2015, when Comrade Xi Jinping hosted The Symposium on Literary and Art work and delivered an important speech, he pointed out: "The highest state of art is to make people feel attractive, it cleared people's hearts, let people discover the beauty of nature, the beauty of life, and the beauty of the soul." Nietzsche also said, "Overcome this era in yourself." This is the ultimate goal of Hua'er in order to restore all the functions. Kong Weifang said "Don't throw away the things in your own home, if you throw away your treasure, then what should you do if someone steals the treasure?"

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