

Study on "Primitivity" of Folk Culture

Take "Yi Gou Gou" as Example

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Abstract—When human makes reflections on the result of "cultural evolution", "primitivity" as a new concept of value, is becoming a hot topic of modern people. It has been a systematic project of the grand strategy of "developing a country by culture" to discover, protect and re-value the "primitive" folk culture. "Yi Gou Gou" is a small folk opera, popular in the Northwest region of Shandong Province, and has a history more than two hundred years. In 2006, it was appointed as national nonmaterial cultural heritage. This paper made discussion on the origin and inheritance, types and characteristics, regional influence and protection and discovery of "Yi Gou Gou" based on its background of regional history and culture, through interviewing the inheritor of "Yi Gou Gou" and visiting the program rehearsal and discovering and arranging firsthand information.

Keywords—"Yi Gou Gou"; folk opera. national intangible cultural heritage; primitive folk culture

I. INTRODUCTION

The word "primitivity" appeared in the 19th century and then the ecology came into being in the 20th century, which results from people's thinking of the nature and reflection on material civilization evolution, while the concept of "cultural ecology" results from reflection on the human "civilization evolution" following the concept of "natural ecology". Therefore, "primitivity" has become a natural state the modern people yearn for. Therefore, the "primitivity" in the culture and art also become the hotspot concerned by contemporary people and a way for people to seek for human spiritual heritage. Under the grand strategy background of "developing a country by culture", the discovery and protection, arrangement and inheritance, recognition of Chinese national material and intangible heritages has become a great systematic project. This has positive practical significance for carrying forward the traditional culture, consolidating national spirit and creating Chinese brand. "Yi Gou Gou" is a small folk opera, popular in Linyi of Shandong and the Northwest region of Shandong Province, and has a history of two hundred years. It has regular inheritance, far-reaching influence and considerable characteristic. It also has merry and circumlocutory melody, witty and plain language, strong local rustic flavor, and its content mostly reflects the life and emotion of people in villages. This paper made discussion based on the regional history and culture, folk customs and folkway, and social life,

and is purposed to explore its aesthetic connotation in a form of folk opera and its value of "primitive" cultural heritage, so as to make better inheritance and development of national intangible cultural heritage such as the endangered local small opera.

II. THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: FOLK OPERA "YI GOU GOU"

"Yi Gou Gou" was appointed as "state-level intangible cultural heritage" by the state council of the People's Republic of China and the ministry of culture in June 2006, which is not occasional.

Under the grand strategy background of "developing a country by culture", contemporary Chinese cultural ecology is undergoing a prime change. The discovery and protection, arrangement and inheritance, recognition of Chinese national material and intangible heritages has become a great systematic project. The research on traditional folk culture is made not only in the folk, and many special research institutes of folk culture and art are established in China and almost all of culture and art colleges have the specialty or course. As the "ecology" of culture, folk art has been a hotspot concerned by contemporary people a way for people to seek for human spiritual heritage.

The study on traditional folk "primitive culture" is developed in the background of national spirit increasingly awakened and ecological consciousness further determined when people begin to reflect on modern material civilization, think of ecological environment and rethink the eastward dissemination of western learning since the reform and opening-up in our country. Whether for culture and art or for social life, people seem to have been tired of too much western mode and too much "scientific manufacture". Although people have different hobbies, they have similar yearning that is to make more national spirit and national language in culture and art and to make life and spirit close to the nature. People hope to provide more elements of Chinese nation and more natural ecological concept when they are seeking for modernization, internationalization, individuation and diversification.

The study found that Yi Gou Gou, as a primitive folk culture, has close relationship with historic culture, folk customs, social morality and life production. It has a profound influence on the spiritual life of the local people

and their aesthetic custom, because it concentrates and materializes the forms of folk arts. Over the years, it has witnessed the evolution of southwestern Shandong history. It has always been the culture carrier of their spiritual life, era characteristics and folk customs. Yi Gou Gou, born on this basis, has penetrated into all aspects of the local people's life. Its deep cultural deposit mainly came from Qilu culture and canal culture. This original folk art essence continues today, and it will provide previous historical materials for academic research and artistic practice. It can be regarded as the living fossil for the research and reference of traditional folk drama art. We can start the root-seeking travel of our traditional national culture from here and we will find the real source of our folk drama art, because it is real folk art and the background of the national memory and the origin of art exploration.

By focusing on the local drama of northwestern Shandong, we may regain this abandoned culture and review the forgotten history. Yi Gou Gou, as the name suggests, means to hook people's heart once they hear it. It may hook your soul once you hear it. So, people named it "Yi Gou Gou". In folk, it is said "one may forget working, once he/she hears Yi Gou Gou", which shows its charm and influence in the people. At that time, there are jingles that go, "people don't sing Yi Gou Gou in front of their own side", and "Unshy Wang Xiaowu will sing Yi Gou Gou when he goes out". Indeed, there are many sad and erotic episodes, so they would be embarrassed to sing before their families. This is the most prominent characteristic of this primitive folk culture, which is different from other classical dramas. At first, it was completed passed on by oral teaching. There is no detail written record. It is often common in the countryside. People created this entertainment way in their leisure time, and later it was spread like a sparkle setting the prairie ablaze. Beauty is in the folk; the folk is characteristic and the characteristic is the root.

III. VICISSITUDES OF HUNDRED YEARS: NATIVE "YI GOU GOU"

"Yi Gou Gou" began in the late Ming Dynasty and prevailed in the early Qing Dynasty. In early time, it was popular in places such as southern Hebei and Gaotang, Xiajin, Qihe and Jinan in Shandong, etc. In the period of the Republic of China, many places in the northwest in Shandong province such as Xinglong Town in Linyi County, Maipokou in Qihe County, Yangguanying village in Yucheng city, etc have become active zones for the sing of "Yi Gou Gou". According to the expedition, at the earliest time it evolved from a local folk tune "Yi Ou Hou". According to introduction of Zhang Dingli, an artist in Linyi County, it derives from the widely circulated folk tune "Xiao Gu Ou" and later it evolves into "Yi Ou Hou" gradually. "Hou" refers to its way of sound production, it is a singing method when real tone and falsetto transform, with the help of reactive force of pressing the throat to reach the pitch peaks. The tune of "Yi Gou Gou" is humorous and simple, natural and optimistic, full of full-bodied local flavor. Jiao Liankun, a deceased old artist of "Yi Gou Gou", whose stage name is "32 Jars of Vinegar", his founder master is Tian

Zhaoyu, whose native home is in Xiajin. The mentor of Tian Zhaoyu performed and imparted skills to disciples in the middle Qing Dynasty, a history of more than 200 years till now. This kind of music for voices that the local people express feelings directly, forms the characteristics of rap full of "Local Flavor".

As a folk opera, there are different opinions about the formation of "Yi Gou Gou": the first opinion says it derives from the flower drum in Liaocheng and the flower drum in Liaocheng and Two Clip Chord belong to the category Hua Road of the North Road; the second opinion says it derives from the flower drum clove in Heze and the flower drum clove belongs to the flower drum factions of South Road; the third opinion says it derives from Two Clip Chord in the southwest of Shandong; the fourth opinions says it derives from Gaotang drum yangko. Now it is generally accepted that "Yi Yi Gou" derives from the flower of South Road, formed in Gaotang flower drum and derived from drum yangko. The main accompaniment instrument is the four strings, also called "four strands of string" and "Hexi willow". Once it divided into two branches. One is in Liaocheng area, also called "Two Clip Chord of north term", the other is in Linyi area of Dezhou city, which is the "Yi Gou Gou" with current meaning. The contents mainly include folklores and the conditions of the people in the village, etc that common people love to see and hear, such as Persuading the Daughter and December sang in folk songs.

This is a performing form of rap and yangko. The open field of the plain terrain provides a natural and comfortable environment for this kind of entertainment and communication. The characteristics of outdoor form the bold and unconstrained performing form which can recreate by ourselves whenever and wherever possible. In the situations of harvest festivals, ancestor worship and marriage, and slack season in farming, "Yi Gou Gou" together with drum dance, circle dance and the yangko dance forms the symphonic poem of folk entertainment. In the period when "Yi Gou Gou" is popular, people can hear the sound of it and see its performance in big streets and small alleys.

In early stage, most of the actors of "Yi Gou Gou" are folk artists. When they go out, they are artists; when they come back, they are farmers. The fellow villagers call them "Weeding Team". With the wide spread and popularization of "Yi Gou Gou", the theatrical troupes in many places arise at the moment and move towards half professionalism gradually. They often form a team to perform in rural market and the temple fair. Moreover, local people have their own star, such as: "32 Jars of Vinegar" Jiao Liankun, "The Knife gouges out the Heart" Wang Liyou, "The Great White Peach" Zhao Chuanxi and "The Second Girl" Long Chuanying, etc. Because they have special voice suitable for this theatre genre, they can perform very well in the role playing and highlight the respective artistic talent and individual character of performance. Their tone quality is strong and their tone color is beautiful. The switch from true voice to falsetto is natural, mild and indirect, attracting people to listen to, for example, in traditional opera Wang Xiao Drives the Porter, the witty dialogue between the second girl on the way back to her mother's home and the

porter Wang Xiao. Two of them sing and dance all the way with a series of plots such as praise the donkey, racedonkey dance, bargain, chase the donkey, view enjoying, count money, raillery and present the pouch. Through performance, these plots incisively and vividly show the happy feelings of the second girl when she go back to her mother's home. Sing, aside, action and amusement use the particular form of "Yi Gou Gou" to show with personality, vivid and amiable, with long aftertaste.

In 1951, more than 10 people including Zhang Zhijie, Zhang Hongxue in Yangguanying village of Yucheng city, Jiao Liankun in Maipokou of Qihe County organized "Yi Gou Gou" opera troupe in Linyi county. In 1955, this opera troupe on behalf of Linyi County to take part in the amateur opera performance of Shandong province. They showed East Qin and the provincial broadcasting station recorded for main arias of this opera. In 1957, this troupe used the name of "Yi Gou Gou Opera Troupe of Linyi County" to perform in Jinan "Zhencheng" theater and was well received by the audience, attracting the attention of the provincial department of culture. In 1959, the government of Linyi County took over the troupe and formally established with the name of "Yi Gou Gou Opera Troupe of Linyi County" and the number of staff increased to 43. The troupe transplants more than a dozen of other operas and the increase of the operas makes show rate increase. In 1964, the "Yi Gou Gou" troupe created modern opera Red Plum by themselves to participate in the "joint performances of local opera in Shandong province" in Shandong concert hall and make a performance tour in Shandong province and gain wide praise. When the old actress Kuang Shuyun recalls the situation at that time, she still cannot conceal the inner excitement. She says that they performed three operas in a day and there were full of people in every performance. When the actors came on the stage, the audience cheered and they didn't let the actors go when answering a curtain call. She also said that the main traditional operas performed at that time included Eastern Qin, Western Qin, Songjiang Kills Yan Xijiao in the Upstairs, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Romance of the Jade Bracelet, Emperor's Female Son-in-Law, Three Successful Candidates of the Imperial Examination, Porter Wangxiao Serves with a Donkey, The Enmity of Three Generations, etc. Later the troupe brought out the self-made modern operas such as The Daughter of the Proprietor, Liu Hulan, The Winter Jasmine, After the Harvest, etc. Artists always say that if someone can sing the four Qin, he will not ask for help wherever he goes. Obviously, "Yi Gou Gou" had unusual charm and influence at that time.

From being a folk opera organization to the foundation of the troupe of Linyi county, the performance area of "Yi Gou Gou" spreads inside and outside the province during this time, east to Jiaodong, south to Subei in Jiangsu province, west to Henan and north to Changzhou in Hebei province with good response. Except for the Three Years of Natural Disasters, those years the annual income of the "Yi Gou Gou" troupe reached more than 50,000 yuan and the annual income of the troupe was one of the highest in Dezhou district. This was the most prosperous period. The rehearsal

had formal play, drama, fixed opera and fixed tune of sing and there were professionals such as Wang Daokuan, Ning Xiangting, Gao Daoshui and Liu Yintang to design the music for voices. On type of metre for music in Chinese operas, it uses Beijing Opera and Lvju Opera for reference and creates types of metre for music such as running water type, opera section in free rhythm and etc. On the names of the tunes, it uses Hebei Clapper Opera and folk drum music for reference. On the stage performance, it once employed Yan Haiqing and He Xiaoying from the Beijing Opera troupe to act as Wen Gong teacher and Kungfu teacher respectively and the film actor Cui Wenshun who returned home because of supporting agriculture to act as the director. In 1971, "Yi Gou Gou" troupe merged with the local troupe of Hebei Clapper Opera and set up Peking Opera Troupe. The popular "Yi Gou Gou" troupe broke up and the old artists leaved one after another. In the economic reform and opening period in the 1980s, the performance stopped at one time and "Yi Gou Gou" was close to hopeless situation.

As the only professional troupe of "Yi Gou Gou", during the 12 years of its existence, the "Yi Gou Gou" troupe played an important role in propagating and promoting this traditional folk opera, "Yi Gou Gou".

After disappearing for 30 years, in the autumn of 2001, the local small opera "Yi Gou Gou" which is endangered received its turnaround. The program group of CCTV 7 Culture and Life came to Linyi County to collect the origin of the "Yi Gou Gou" opera and invited some actors to perform on the scene in Xinglong town and the scene was moving. The audience enjoyed the amiable music for voices which they hadn't heard for a long time and the actors weeping when they performed. Even though many things had changed and the things were still here but men were not the same ones any more, with the rhythm of the music for voices, lotus steps and the waving of hands and feet, the audience at once recognized the previous "the second girl" and "Wang Xiao". The time cannot keep elegance and youth and the previous lofty sentiments were sealed in the vicissitudes of time, but ordinary people still remember those nicknames. This emotion and circumstance really make people have fixed feelings.

In June 2006, "Yi Gou Gou" was listed as "National Intangible Cultural Heritage". In the same year, Linyi Normal School set up the "Yi Gou Gou" research and spread center. Most of the core and latest created operas use the achievements of economic and social development or the present hot topics that the society pays close attention to as the theme, on the basis of basically keeping the primary taste of traditional operas, enriching and innovating the vocal music and aria. The foundation of it has practical significance on inheriting, promoting and effectively protecting local folk opera culture. In February, 2007, "Yi Gou Gou" participated in the competition of Dezhou area in farmers' cultural art festival of Shandong province and won the silver medal. In 2008, in the Spring Festival Gala of Dezhou City, the performance of Wandering in Jinan moved everyone there.

IV. THE RHYME OF THE NORTHWEST SHANDONG: ORIGINAL “YI GOU GOU”

The actors of “Yi Gou Gou” sing the words without cavity, like saying or reading, using the tunes according to their own understanding without words, with accompaniment, namely the actors sing the words first and then using the tunes according to the actor’s own understanding, it is fancy and pleasant to hear. Because it belongs to Banqiang-Style and derives from “Yi Ou Hou”, there is a seven degree big jump after every sentence and it is a typical type of opera of folk flower drum system. The type of metre for music in “Yi Gou Gou” includes lento, primitive plate, opera section in free rhythm, running water type, sharp type and type of singing slowly with fast tempo. There isn’t systematic type of metre for music in “Yi Gou Gou” and fixed model for the connection. The totality follows the meter development law of free to slow to original to fast to free. This is also the unique place comparing with other types of opera. The slow analysis of one accented beat and three unaccented beats in a bar are often used in large segment music for voices, such as the music for voices of Gao Wenju (the young man’s role) in *Staying in the Florist’s Kiosk in the Evening*, intermediate speed, one accented beat and one unaccented beat, forming narrative sing. The music for voices of Jiao Liankun in the *Eastern Qin* matches up with falsetto, combining the void and the solid and circulating the light sing and the heavy sing, fair-sounding for people to listen to.

There are more drama for Sheng (male character) and Dan (female character), more drama for Chinese Wen and less drama for Wushu. The roles includes Tsing Yi, Hua Dan (female role in Chinese opera), Hu Sheng, Xiao Sheng (the young man’s role), Hua Lian (male character in Chinese opera with a painted face) and Chou (clown), etc. In early time, there were not actress and the men made up and acted as women. So on singing method, there are no much differences between male voice and female voice and most of the tunes of music for voices are within the octave. While singing, they use true voice to say the words and use falsetto to prolong the tune. Generally speaking, there are no words while using the tunes and there are no tunes while saying the words, and there is application of words inserted in a line of verse for balance in the singing. Later, because of the join of actress, the men and women singing came into being. The male singing is upright, bold and unrestrained, while the women singing is mild, indirect and fair-sounding. The articulation of the librettos and spoken parts are clear. The librettos consist of two major sentences of up and down and the two major sentences divide into four minor sentences. Little interlude is added into the middle between the front two sentences and the back two sentences. And the large interlude appears when the fourth phrase is over. The frequently-used interludes include the first accented beat, the second accented beat and the third accented beat, with rich local flavor.

In the drama of Chinese Wen, its basic musical instruments are the most distinctive Banhu (a bowed two stringed instrument with a thin wooden soundboard) and Sixian (four strings). They bring out the best in each other and cooperate by superb. The peace of Sixian and the

infuriation of Banhu form contrasts, which increase the intensity of contrast in the play and complement the actors’ singing, with bright features and full-bodied charm. The Banhu performer deliberately increase the strength that the left hand presses the string and the range of up and down portamento to increase the timbre to let people feel it is out of tune, original and wild. But sometimes the troupe drops the Banhu volume in play then it is gentler. Now there are several living old actors still like that original type and some of them can even think of the Banhu played by the former troupe actor Zhang Hongxue and say that Zhang Hongxue’s play is untouchable, simply just like “Yi Gou Yi Gou’s Yi Gou Gou”. Later, some musical instruments such as Sheng (a reed pipe wind instrument), Sanxian and Chinese lute are added to the accompaniment, making its melody converse to delighted and lively, exquisite and rich aspects.^①

The stage language used by “Yi Gou Gou” is dialect of Dezhou city and Linyi County. Compared with mandarin, except for the differences in four-tones, there is an obvious difference in the pronunciation of some words, such as “reng” read as “leng”, “zai” read as “dai”, “bian” read as “ban”, “rou” read as “lou”, “ren” read as “lin”, and “jiu” read as “dou”, etc. Because of the differences between four-tones and pronunciation of some Chinese characters, the regional accent is obvious.

The musical sound of “Yi Gou Gou” derives from northwest Shandong and it has only one. That is the folk singing derived from the place where the spring tide rush through the thick yellow sand and filtered by the wave of the canal. It is an interaction sent out by the “Hear”, saturating the simplicity, grief, bold and unconstrained character of this great plain with the radical property of northwest Shandong. It shows the optimistic mood and the desire for good of the ordinary people in the past hard days. And it deserves to be the Sound of Northwest Shandong.

V. CONCLUSION

In that era with hard life, turbulent political situation and deficient culture, the appearance of “Yi Gou Gou” in northwest Shandong is indeed a big thing. It widely spreads through folk rap form loved by ordinary people in the country. It contributions to the aspects such as animating local culture, comforting the heart of common people and enriching the spiritual life, etc. However, any type of opera has vicissitude process and development law of itself. Nowadays, there are few people who can sing the opera completely. Even though some old people still love it deeply and can sing several sections of operas such as *Eastern Qin*, *Western Qin* and *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, etc., and some old actors even hope to set up a troupe to inherit it. The soil suitable for its growth is gone. Because of the facts such as lack of enthusiastic audience, people who want to learn it voluntarily, enthusiastic participants, the aging of the actors, gap in talents, etc., and the glory that it has on stage maybe will become memory forever. With the acceleration of the pace of social progress and the change of people’s cultural concept, just like the fate of other traditional folk art, “Yi

^① From oral account of the old actors interviewed, June, 2012.

Gou Gou” is facing unprecedented crisis and choices. In order to survive, being inherited and promoted, the primary tasks include restoring and protecting it, transforming the function, exploring its folk original ecological cultural heritage value and looking for new application ways.

However, when the manifest function of folk culture declines gradually, the implicit value is showing up. Because of being remembered continually, its meaning and value often surpass the meaning and value of art itself. At present, as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage, “Yi Gou Gou” is ushering its spring.