

# Activation and Exploration on the “Memory” of the Musical Living Fossil of Qujiaying Ancient Music

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**Abstract**—There is a Chinese "musical living fossil", "Qujiaying ancient music" in Gu'an County, Langfang City. Qujiaying ancient music has a history of more than 500 years and is an artistic treasure in China's excellent traditional cultural heritage. This paper elaborates Qujiaying ancient music from three aspects of the memory of history (inactive state), the memory of persons (active state), and the memory of the government (promoting the active state), and provides effective suggestions for the protection of this intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords**—*Qujiaying ancient music; music living fossil; memory*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The musical intangible cultural heritage is fundamentally a kind of "memory". Only by reserving the "memory" and making it last forever, can we understand ourselves and the value of human beings. In the 1980s, Qujiaying, an ordinary small village in Gu'an County, Langfang City, awakened musicians' "memory" with its musical treasures. It has not only become unusual but also shocked the whole world.

## II. RETROSPECTION OF THE MEMORY OF HISTORY OF QUJIAYING ANCIENT MUSIC

Qujiaying ancient music is one of the oldest kinds of music that now exists in China. It was initiated at the turn of the Yuan and Ming dynasties and originated from the Buddhist music in monasteries. It is the product of the exchange of the northern and southern music since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, which has the characteristics of both northern and southern music, being unsophisticated, rough and sweet, quiet. It is one of the oldest and most complete ancient music discovered in China up to now. It, together with Xi'an's imitating Tang music and dance, Hubei's chime music and Beijing's Zhihua Temple music, is known as the "Four Major Ancient Music of China". It is known as the "music living fossil".

The Qujiaying concert has experienced many vicissitudes and glorious times in history. In the Emperor Kangxi period of Qing Dynasty, the concert was invited into the palace, which is the first heyday for it; after the victory of the Anti-Japanese War, the concert stepped into its second heyday. There were so many musicians, double-set instruments, and

complete music scores. After the reform and opening up, the concert has entered a period of rapid development. Since 1984, the Institute of Music of Chinese National Academy of Arts has regularly sent experts to guide and support the development of Qujiaying concert, and held the "Chinese first wind and drum music seminar" in Gu'an; in 1987, the concert went to the Beijing Conservatory of Music and participated in the cultural exchange performances in the Asia-Pacific region, which has caused a great shock to the music circles. The concert was unanimously affirmed by experts at home and abroad, and experts and scholars from more than ten countries including the United States, Britain, Australia and Japan came to Qujiaying to research and study. In 2000, the concert won the silver award of the National Galaxy Award and the special-class award in the music competition of Hebei Province to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of China successively, being glorious once again. However, Qujiaying concert has also experienced three crises during the period of Xianfeng third year in Qing Dynasty, the Anti-Japanese War and the Cultural Revolution. The musical scores and instruments could be preserved because of the sacrifice and efforts of several generations of musicians and villagers.



Fig. 1. Hall of Qujiaying Concert.

<sup>a</sup>. A corner of the Hall of Qujiaying Concert



Fig. 2. Gongche notation of the concert.

a. Relics of the Hall of Qujiaying Concert



Fig. 3. "Sheng" in the concert.

a. Relics of the Hall of Qujiaying Concert

“Fig. 1”, “Fig. 2”, “Fig. 3” shows some pictures of Qujiaying exhibition hall. In the exhibition hall, there are “objects” which are the memory of history of the Qujiaying concert: music scores and musical instruments.

#### A. Concert Scores as Shown in “Fig.1”

From the past to present, the scores of Qujiaying concert have been renewed five times. The third, fourth and fifth renewing of the scores happened respectively in 1853 of the third year of Xianfeng, 1948 of the 37th year of the Republic of China, and 1980. These three scores are still intact. There are 13 divertimentos such as "Jade lotus", "Court of Zhou" and "Curse Yu Lang", 7 big-plate scores such as "Golden Word Scripture" and "Ask for an Order", and more than 20 ditties such as "Five Holy Buddhas" and "He Sanbao" existing currently.

#### B. Musical Instruments of the Concert

The instruments used in the concert are mainly Sheng, an 8-hole jade clarinet, two flutes, as well as percussion instruments such as Chinese gong chimes, drums, cymbals, etc. Among them, the 8-hole jade clarinet is still used now.

#### C. The Compilation, Performance Form and Inheritance Way of the Concert



Fig. 4. "Half-shed music" performed at National Taiwan Normal University.

“Fig. 4” is a photo of the performance of Qujiaying Concert in Taiwan on October 22, 2012. It can be seen from the photo that the concert was conducting with the musicians “sitting on chairs”. This is one of the forms of performance of the Qujiaying concert, and there is another form of performance called "music in walking", which means the musicians play music while they are walking. The band of the Qujiaying concert was fixed. The band with 24 musicians is called to be “full-shed”, and the band with 12 musicians is called to be “half-shed”. This concert was performed by the "half-shed" music band.

The music scores of the Qujiaying ancient concert are the gongche notations. The inheritance of Qujiaying ancient music is mainly based on oral communication. Learners must recite all the scores to access the instruments.

Qujiaying ancient music is rich in songs, complete in scores, skilled in musicians’ performance, and has a strict inheritance method. It is preserved with a relatively closed method and is original. It has a high value for the study of Chinese ancient music and the integrating and transformation of temple music and folk music.

#### III. PROMOTING THE QUJIAYING CONCERT TO TRANSFORM FROM INACTIVE MEMORY TO ACTIVE MEMORY

Whether it is the memory of music scores or the memory of musical instruments, these historical music objects are only a carrier for seeing and reading. They have certain values, but they can only enable us to get the feeling of passing through time and space while reading, watching, and touching them. If we really want to know about the long-standing stories in the scores, we still need the living memory of music, so that our feelings about ancient music can be not "empty and imaginary". Only the original music that does not carry our own thoughts is the embodiment of the music culture at that time. Therefore, the protection of the musical intangible cultural heritage strongly requires the living memory means. The memory of music can't just stay on the inactive music scores. Making the musical intangible cultural heritage have eternal value not only needs inactive memories with historical traces, but also needs to turn this

inactive memory into permanent living memory. Here, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Lin Zhongshu and the musicians who have contributed to this great cause! Thank you for using unique ways to "remember" the Qujiaying music and push the memory of the Qujiaying concert to change from the inactive memory to the living memory.

#### A. Simple Old Man Lin Zhongshu



Fig. 5. Lin Zhongshu.

It is an ordinary farmer in the picture (shown in "Fig. 5"). His red and black face shows his deep feelings with the earth. From the outside, no one would have thought that he could have relations with the elegant music, and that he could save a very old musical form in China, "Qujiaying Ancient Concert", and change the state of death or semi-death of Qujiaying ancient music to the living state, making it spread widely at home and abroad.

Lin Zhongshu has grown up under the infiltration of "Qujiaying Ancient Music", and the ancient music also has an impact on his life, thoughts and emotions. He saw that the ancient music was once designated as one of "the four old things" during the Cultural Revolution and was gradually disappearing; He also saw and felt that after the reform and opening up, the old artists of the Qujiaying Ancient Concert hoped to make this long-silent ancient music sound again in their lifetime. Lin Zhongshu, as the village head at the time, did not care about his personal interests and gains and losses, and supported the reunion of the concert with his enthusiasm and most simple behaviors. For the survival of the ancient concert, he recorded the music and traveled many times to the cultural departments, took many trips between the village and Beijing and the highest academic musical school in China. In the winter of 1985, Lin Zhongshu's efforts led to the study and research of nine state-level music experts from the Chinese National Academy of Arts in Qujiaying Village. The experts unanimously agreed that this form of music was a rare treasure. The Qujiaying Ancient Concert was fully affirmed by the experts. In order to make the Qujiaying Ancient Concert truly become an "evergreen tree", Lin Zhongshu built a rehearsal hall and a wide road leading to

the outside. These have given the Qujiaying Ancient Concert several opportunities to go out to perform in elegant music halls, and the concert has attracted many experts and scholars at home and abroad from Hong Kong, the United States, Germany, South Korea and Japan to visit Qujiaying and listen to the excellent Qujiaying ancient music. So that this ancient concert that was almost forgotten by the history and all performed by the peasants in the folk forms can receive much attention from musicians at home and abroad. This ancient musical form was also performed on the stage of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Music Research Conference in Beijing on June 19, 1987. The performance was a great success and was praised by the experts present that "Qujiaying ancient music is the root of world music". Since then, the Qujiaying Ancient Concert which was once on the verge of extinction has been in an active state. We have to pay the highest respect to this simple old farmer.

#### B. Artists in the Music Circles

If it can be said that the behavior of Lin Zhongshu makes the "Qujiaying Ancient Concert" refresh and activate the ancient music memory, then, the old predecessors of the music circles including Ji Lv, Huanzhi Li, Feng Zhao, Zhen Sun, etc. have made this ancient music form not only active but also give out brilliant light again by studying, affirming and appreciating the "Qujiaying Ancient Concert".



Fig. 6. Qujiaying Ancient Concert Rehearsal Hall.

"Fig. 6" is the rehearsal hall of the Qujiaying Ancient Concert, which was called the "Qujiaying Concert Hall" by Lin Zhongshu. The refined black bricks, red columns, and solemn red carpets of the Music Rehearsal Hall are all the record of the footprints and wisdom of the musicians who have contributed to the ancient music of Qujiaying.

For example:

- In the winter of 1985, Lin Zhongshu visited the professors of the China Conservatory of Music with the old music scores, and the scores were affirmed by musicians such as Li Xi'an, Feng Wenci and He Changlin. They believed that the "Concert" was "the national quintessence";
- On March 28, 1986, Qiao Jianzhong, deputy director of the Music Research Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, led more than 10 of ethnic

musicians, music historians, sound engineers, sounders, videographers, etc. such as Xue Yibing, Wu Sen, Wu Zhao, Liu Dongsheng to go to Qujiaying to study this ancient intangible music culture again, and determined Qujiaying as a research base;

- In the summer of 1986, Zhao Feng, the former president of Central Conservatory of Music, was invited by the simple farmer Lin Zhongshu to interview the Qujiaying Ancient Concert. At the time, President Zhao Feng proposed three vital and valuable suggestions for the Concert: first, young successors should be cultivated to make Qujiaying Music Concert be "evergreen"; second, a fixed rehearsal and performance venue should be built to make Qujiaying Music Concert "develop"; third, the roads should be built to make the Qujiaying Music Concert "go out". Now when all these scientific proposals have been realized, President Zhao has left the world for more than ten years.

With the affirmation and efforts of the musicians, Qujiaying is no longer an ordinary small village in the Jizhong Plain. Qujiaying music has brought much glory to this small village. In the past 20 years, from the central government agencies to UNESCO, and from receptions for foreign ambassadors to concerts in Beijing's major music colleges, Qujiaying music has been invited by various holders to perform in many elegant halls, and it has been reported by various media many times. It can be said that the glorious course of the concert has repaid the love of Teacher Zhao Feng and the musicians. These musicians have made the Qujiaying ancient music active again and bloom!

#### IV. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT MECHANISM TO REMAIN THE "MEMORY OF QUJIAYING ANCIENT MUSIC"

Keeping the shining "memory" of Qujiaying ancient concert, inheriting the culture, and making the ancient music living fossil bloom and never defeated all need the rescue, protection and support of various governments on Qujiaying concert.

##### *A. Attitude for Paying Attention to the "Qujiaying Ancient Music" by Governments at All Levels*

Experts from the Chinese Music Research Institute have made the value of the Qujiaying concert known by the society. At the same time, the Qujiaying ancient music and concert were highly loved and praised by the leaders of the country, the province, the city and the county. The CPPCC National Committee has repeatedly raised proposals about it; Director of the Social Library Department of the Ministry of Culture Chen Qilin, Deputy Director Lin Yongjun, member of the Standing Committee of the provincial Party committee and propaganda minister Zhang Qunsheng, former member of the Standing Committee of the provincial Party committee and propaganda minister Zhang Changru, Vice Governor Liu Jiansheng, etc. have come to Gu'an to appreciate the ancient music, guide the work, and made important instructions on

the rescue and development of Qujiaying ancient music; Zhou Zhenguang, Zhang Zhiping, deputy directors of the Propaganda Department of Hebei Provincial Party Committee, Wang Fujie, former director of the Culture Department of Hebei Province, Zhang Xiyong, Zhang Xu, deputy directors, Wang Xuejun, former Langfang Municipal Party Committee Secretary, Liu Haizhu, Liu Xueku, deputy mayors and so on have come to Qujiaying successively for field inspection and guidance, and paid great attention to the rescue of Qujiaying ancient music and the construction of the concert hall.

##### *B. Behaviors for Paying Attention to the "Qujiaying Ancient Music" by Governments at All Levels*

The Gu'an County Party Committee and the county government also adopted a series of measures to rescue and construct Qujiaying's ancient music and concerts, which has greatly improved the level of software and hardware of the Qujiaying concert.

1) *The government introduced the "five-one project"*: In order to rescue and excavate the Qujiaying ancient music and develop this national culture, Gu'an County issued and implemented the "Five-One Project" to rescue and protect the Qujiaying ancient music, that is, to publish a book about the ancient music, to record a CD of the ancient music, to train a young team, to build a music hall, and to form an industry.

2) *The government proposed to research and develop the ancient music and formulate work implementation plans*: In mid-September 2006, Comrade Wang Aimin, the mayor of Langfang City, made an important instruction on Qujiaying ancient music: we should protect and carry forward the ancient music, be responsible, and select able people who love ancient music to study and develop it. Comrade Wang Huiyong, deputy mayor, also raised clear requirements when he came to Gu'an County to inspect and guide the work about Qujiaying ancient concert. In order to implement the spirit of the city's leaders' instructions, the Gu'an County Party Committee and the county government successively held the county magistrate's office meeting and relevant department coordination meeting, and formulated the "Implementation Plan for the Rescue and Protection of Qujiaying Ancient Music in Gu'an County", and established five working groups of information and music score sorting out, audiovisual recording, propaganda and reporting, industrial packaging, and logistics to support and coordinate the rescue and protection of Qujiaying ancient music.

3) *The government assigned full-time staff to protect and rescue the Qujiaying ancient music*: In order to better protect the Qujiaying ancient music, the Gu'an County Party Committee and the county government have taken many specific measures. First of all, they assigned full-time personnel to collect the objects of the Qujiaying concert with historical value, and maintain and manage the historical materials, including the recently lost Kangxi gifted 8-hole jade clarinet; secondly, the Hebei Provincial Department of

Culture issued the Hebei Cultural Social Type [2008] No. 24 document which confirmed that the old musician Feng Yuechi and the young musician Qu Bingqing were the representative inheritors of the first batch of provincial intangible cultural heritage protection projects, proving new impetus to the inheritance of the ancient music, and the department is striving to make the total number of bandsmen be "full-shed" and the original taste of the ancient music be passed down. Third, the Qujiaying concert is to be packaged with clear purpose to become a tourism brand. Finally, the characteristic cultural industry of the Qujiaying concert is to be created and the "Sound of Ancient Rhythm Art Festival" is to be held in Gu'an County, which can take advantages of the national cultural treasure of Qujiaying ancient music, allowing Qujiaying ancient music to go to the society and to the market.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Opening the memory door of the music living fossil "Qujiaying Ancient Music" allows us to deeply perceive that culture comes from human creation, human beings create culture, and at the same time these cultures can store human "memories". Understanding the "memory" of the music living fossil Qujiaying ancient music makes us know the same simple truth. That is, only when we look at the future and maintains a balanced "memory", can the true meanings of value appear, and can the survival status of human beings be proved.

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