

An Interpretation of the History and Culture of the Chinese Kazak Folk Dance “Black Horse”

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Abstract—“Black Horse” dance accompanied by music is a folk dance of the Chinese Kazakh people, and also a national-level intangible cultural heritage. For such a dance form of grassland nomadic cultural exchange and integration, the researchers have a relatively lack of historical interpretation of it. This paper intends to study the current concept of “Black Horse” dance with music and the historical background of the cultural subject as well as its function from the perspective of periodical history.

Keywords—folk dance; Black Horse; history and culture

I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the sources of human art, dance plays an important role in the history of art. As it were, human beings have beginning of dance before the language in the age of obscurity, ancient people made it possible by using limbs action, gestures, and expressions to convey information and communicate emotions and ideas, and further realize the human communication. Later, music and poetry gradually developed, and with the development of the human ingenious mind and action, paintings and sculptures were produced. Following the improvement of human thinking ability and production level, quyi (Chinese folk art forms), novels and dramas have been developed. This context of artistic development is recognized by most art historians.

This is the common feature for the origin of dance art, and as a personality feature, the original dance has gradually developed into various branches of folk dances of all ethnic groups, bearing the spirit and supporting the spiritual home of each nation for production and life. As the representative of the Kazakh folk dance, the “Black Horse” dance is brilliant one of the branches.

In the “Concise Music Dictionary”, “Chinese Folk Love Songs — Volume of Minority”, “Chinese Folk Art Dictionary”, “Chinese Minority Art Dictionary”, “Chinese Silk Road Dictionary”, “Xinjiang Folk Customs” and other dictionaries, it is commonly interpreted that the “Kala Khor Leha” in Kazakh language has its Chinese meaning of “Black Walking Horse”, and is commonly referred to as “Black Horse” in later research literature. It is the most representative folk dance of the Chinese Kazakh people, popular in Altay, Tacheng, Yili, Changji Mulei, Hami

Barikun, and Akesai County in Gansu. With the horse as the theme, the dance expresses the strong and vigorous posture of the horse galloping on the prairie, among which the male’s actions are lively, bold and unconstrained, and the female’s actions are graceful and relaxed. As an impromptu one of group dance, the dance has no fixed number of people and a fixed program and formation, but self-created dance actions completely according to the pleasures and emotions of the dancers at the time, and it is accompanied commonly with Kazakh Dombra instrument, with the tune of a single theme variation, which can be lengthened and shortened according to the mood of the scene.

The Kazakh folk creates their music and dance mostly based on horses and are known as the “horseback” people; almost all of their music and dances have a name related to horses, such as “Chestnut Horse”, “Brown Horse”, “Hailuo Horse”, “Long-hair Horse”, “White-hoof Horse”, “Yellow White-dotted Horse”, “Eye-Colored Horse” and “Yellow Walking Horse”.

II. SEVERAL VIEWPOINTS ON MODERN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE OF “BLACK HORSE” DANCE

A. *It Is Considered That the “Black Horse” Dance Is a Specific Dance of the Kazakh Traditional Folk*

The intangible cultural inheritor of the dance is the most representative, and they believe that the “Black Horse” dance is a special dance that simulates the specific movements of horse on specific occasions according to the life habits of horses for an artistic presentation; for example, “Black Horse” dance’s intangible and cultural inheritor Dolqun of the Yili State Song and Dance Troupe, and the inheritors Shadati · Malik in Altay region as well as Jurat · Hakusan and so on, as the representative direct successor of folk dance, they have their family heritage pedigree that fully illustrated the ancientity, purity and unity of the “Black Horse” dance.

B. *It Is Believed That the “Black Horse” Dance Has Become the Collective Name of Kazakh Folk Dances*

They believe that the Kazakhs as nomads, have made the “Black Horses” symbolized in the historical development, and in the social parties of Kazakh people, “Black Horses”

dance can be found everywhere, suitable for all ages including the elders and the young, and such a scenes has become a vivid life view of Kazakh folk, the impromptu postures have far exceeded the action of the "horse" and greatly expanded the boundary and cultural significance of the "Black Horse" dance. For example, Arriaiy · Nurtayi, the master of cultural industry management of Shandong University, from the viewpoint of cultural heritage of dance, made a depiction of "Black Horse" listed into the third batch of national intangible cultural heritage in 2011 in his paper "Kazakh Intangible Cultural Heritage Research" in 2012. The author believes that the "Black Horse" dance gradually becomes the representation of Kazakh dance from a dance originally imitating the pastures of walking horses, and "Kala Khor Leha" also becomes the collective name of the Kazakh dance.

C. It Is Considered That the "Black Horse" Dance Is Not Only a Kazakh Folk Dance, But It Is also Blended with the Factors and Characteristics of Other Ethnic Groups and Dances Such as Mongolian, Xibo Folk, So It Is the Product of Multicultural Integration

In this paper, some doubts are raised from the perspective of history, ethnic origin, and regional evolution, which has made certain breakthroughs for such research, but no further exploration is made for a thorough study, and even the diversified integration is verified in premise of the "black horse" being determined as the Kazakh folk dance, so some contradictions are inevitable, difficult to justify it. Among them, Yang Jiaojiao's paper "Primary Study on the ancient nature of the nomadic folk music "black horse" (published on Page 20-23, the first issue of "Journal of Xinjiang Arts University", March 2013) is the representative that was written in 2013 to describe the "Black Horse" music widespread among the Kazakh folk, and the paper believes the music has unique rhythm characteristics of the "walking horse", and on the basis it is found that the tunes of the Mongolian and Sibe music are very similar with it, which the Mongolian calls "Sauuridin" and the Sibe calls "Belem Dance". She believes that the dances of the three ethnic groups originated from the saying about Kazakh's black horses and the subsequent series of analysis are based on the conclusion of Kazakh's "black horse" is the most ancient, lack of historical arguments supported and with subjective and arbitrarily hue.

There are additional two papers, one is Chen Jiangqiong's "Opinions on the Kazakh Folk Dance 'Origin of Kala Khor Leha' ("The Frontier Economy and Culture", the 9th issue, pp. 118-120, 2015) and "The Recognition of the 'Kala Khor Leha'" ("Dance Education", the 9th issue, 2017, pp. 52-53), describes the multi-ethnic integration of "Black Horse" dance through the academic discovery of dancing postures on the ancient rock paintings of Xinjiang, and the historical records of the Sakas in Yili River Valley as a verification of the ethnic origin, but in the papers it is skate over which impacts the dance, without details.

Nowadays, the "Black Horse" dance has entered the third intangible cultural heritage list in China, which is undoubtedly the best footnote for the cultural confidence of

the Kazakh nation. Since the fourth century AD, the Kazakh people of Xinjiang settled in the northern and central sections of the ancient Silk Road from generation to generation, and due to the abundant water and grass, as well the dense rivers; here becomes a hotly contested spot for all nomadic tribes. In the historical development of nearly two thousand years, no less than 10 nomad tribes on their horses have intruded into this fertile land. National integration and cultural interaction are the norm, otherwise, it is impossible to explain why the styles of Uyghur Muqam music has so differences such as Dalang Muqam, Yili Muqam, and Hami Muqam, why the folk song "Petruska" is widely spread among many ethnic groups in Central Asia, why the "Black Horse" dance and music have so many common characteristics with the Mongolian "Sauuridin" music and dance and the Sibe's "Belem" music and dance. All of these are the result of ethnic integration, cultural interaction and mutual exchange.

The phenomenon is obvious, and it exists there whether you care about it or not. To reveal the reason why it has become so, we must make a careful arrangement and demonstration through the history and culture.

III. THE ANCESTRAL ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF KAZAK

A. The Period BC

Scholars generally believe that the Kazakh's oldest ancestral origin is evolved from a clan to a tribe, and then developed into a tribal alliance, eventually the nation of Kazakh forms.

The traces of early human habitation are found in the Yili, Tacheng, and Altay where the Kazakhs lived in the Neolithic Age. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (the first 5th century-the first 3rd century), a nomadic kingdom was established in the surrounding area of the Yili River Basin and the Issyk Lake, and began large-scale copper mining and smelting in Nurasi of Nilka County and other places. In the early Qin and Han Dynasties (at the end of the 3rd century BC), Modu made an independence for a kingdom, Xiongnu rose sharply, defeating the East Hu in the east and attacking the Yuezhi in the west, and the Western Regions had a upheaval and was gradually controlled by the Huns. From the Emperor Hui to the Emperor Jing period of Han Dynasty (the first half of the 2nd century BC), forced by the Xiongnu, the Yuezhi went westward to the Yili River Basin, defeated the King of the Sai and established a state in the Yili River Valley, which is called Great Yuezhi in the history. Following, Kun Mo, the leader of Wusun tribe, Lie Jiaomei went out of the Hexi homeland and westward attacked the Great Yuezhi and utterly defeated it, and then the Wusun tribe made an entire west movement to the Yili River and the Tianshan hinterland, establishing the state of Wusun. From the third year of Jianyuan period to the second year of Yuanshou period of Han Dynasty (138 BC-1BC), Zhang Qian is sent on a diplomatic mission to the Western Region, and Han successively appointed to marry the Princess Xi Jun and the Princess Jie You to Wusun for stabilizing the Western

Region. During the period, the Xiongnu made a repeated invasion into Wusun, and the Han and Wusun made an alliance to attack Zhizhi, chief of Xiongnu, and kept the safety of Western Region. Later, due to the internal split of Wusun, the state became weak and was gradually controlled by the Xiongnu (till 73 AD).

B. The Period from AD to Ming and Qing Dynasties

In the 17th year of Yongping period to the first year of Yongshou period in the Eastern Han Dynasty (74 AD-155 AD), the Han Dynasty enjoyed the Wusun's tribute, they united to utterly defeat the Northern Xiongnu in the Altay Mountains, forcing it westward Kangju, and the remnants of the defeated troops developed into Yueban along the Tianshan Mountains. At the same time, Xianbei took the chance to occupy the Xiongnu's homeland in Mongolian plateau, with more than 100,000 Xiongnu people forced to self-call "Xianbei", and its forces gradually go westward Altay Mountain.

From the second year of Yongshou period in the Eastern Han Dynasty to the first year of the Western Wei Dynasty (156 AD-552 AD), Xianbei state was established, westward attacked Wusun, completely occupy the Xiongnu land, controlled the area of Altay Mountain. The Northern Wei state attacked the Rouran, invaded the Gaoche, established the Rouran Khanate, and invaded Wusun time and time again. By the chance of the weak east part of Wusun, Yueban was established in the hinterland of the Tianshan Mountains. Rouran utterly defeated Wei state and forced Wusun to southward move to Congling. Yueban is also merged by Gaoche state. Later, Yily Khan utterly defeated Rouran and established Turkic Khanate, and governed the Wusun land in the Yili River Basin.

From the second year of Baoding period in the Northern Zhou Dynasty to the third year of Wu Zhou period in Chang'an (AD 562-703), the Turkic Khanate dealt with the Sui and Tang and Zhou Dynasties, with mutual victory and defeat between them, and it governed the Yili River Basin all that time. Due to the internal split, the East Turkistan went to Persia, and the West Turkistan occupied the area of Yili and the Tianshan Mountains. During the period, Tang and Wu Zhou dynasties both unified the Western Region and set up the Duhu Supervision Office for management of the territorial boundaries. From the second year of Shenlong in the Wu Zhou dynasty to the 14th year of Tianbao in Tang dynasty (AD 704-755), the Turgesh state was established in the confusion and governed the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains for half a century. From the 15th year of Tianbao to the 9th year of Zhihe in Tang Dynasty (756- 814 AD), Karluks tribe was separated from the Uyghur and governed the most areas to the west of the Tianshan Mountains. The tenth year of Zhihe in Tang Dynasty to the first year of Shaoxing in the Southern Song Dynasty (AD 815-1131), Uighur Khanate occupied the most area of the Yili River Valley, and was defeated by Gijons, West Uighur built the Kara khanate, and then the khanate split into the east and west khanates, of which the east Kara khanate occupied the Yili River Valley. In the fourth year of Shaoxing to the eighth year of Jiading in the Southern Song

Dynasty (AD 1134-1215), the Jurchen entered the strategic pass to wipe out the Liao, the Yelu Dashi escaped westward to establish the West Liao and occupied the areas of the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains. From the 12th year of Jiading in the Southern Song Dynasty to the 16th year of Chongzhen in the Ming Dynasty (AD 1219-1643), the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains were occupied by the Mongolia all that time, during which the Mongolian internal disputes were occurred among the Chagatai Khanate, the East and West Chagatai Khanates, the Wala, the Oirat and Khalkha alliance, the Jungar and so on; and from 1503 to 1635, the Yili River was occupied by the Kazakh Khanate.

From the fifth year of Shunzhi to the third year of Xuanton in Qing Dynasty (1648-1911), and till 1758, the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains were still occupied by the tribes of Mongolian Galdan, Oriat, Zhungeer and Khalkha; Kangxi dispatched troops to attacked on Galdan for three times in the 27th year of Emperor Kangxi (1688) in the Qing dynasty and Qianlong dispatched troops to attacked on the Zhungeer tribe from both sides in the 20th year of Qianlong (1755), all triumphed, but they did not expel the Mongols out of the Yili River Basin, and only made them pay a political allegiance. From the 25th year of Emperor Qianlong, the Qing government adopted the policy to mainly dispatch multi-ethnic force to stay the Yili River Basin for government, and for about then years, the troops and people of various ethnic groups were transferred back and forth from the northeast, the Hexi Corridor, and the southern part of Xinjiang to Yili, including 300 able-bodied men of Aksu Uyгур, more than 500 people of the Mongolian Oriat tribe and the Chahar tribe (including soldiers' families), 1018 officers and men of the Heilongjiang Sauron and Daur, more than 3,200 Man-Mongolian soldiers in Liangzhou and Zhuanglang (now Gansu), more than 1,000 Man-Mongolian soldiers dispatched from Rehe, 1,100 officers and soldiers of Xibe dispatched from Shengjing, 6,350 families of Yarkand and Khotan settled back, and more than 2,000 Man-Mongolian officers and soldiers dispatched from Xi'an, as well as more than 10,000 people of Mongolian Turehot tribe entirely east returned from the Volga River and 48 families of Han moved back from Hami and other places.

For these, the mixed residence of multi-ethnic people formed in Yili that became the geographical fact, these ethnic groups are Mongolian, Uyгур, Hui, Xibe, Daur, Han and so on. In the 300-year rule of the Qing Dynasty, the management method of using barbarous people to subjugating their own races was adopted in the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains. It should not be overlooked that in the literature, there is very little contents involving in the whereabouts of the Kazakhs in Yili; for the powerful rulers such as Kangxi and Qianlong, only such achievements are recorded emphatically as conquering the Galdan for three times, bringing Zhungeer under the control of Qing, and putting down the unrest of the Big Hezhuo and little Hezhuo; why is Kazakh ignored who resided here from generation to generation? And why even for such important thing as garrison duty, is Kazakh not mentioned? Here are two explanations: first, Kazakh as a nomadic nation stands aloof from worldly success, their people mainly graze in the

mountains that makes the rulers have no misgiving for them; second, in the modern Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains of Xinjiang, the Kazakhs are mainly distributed in the territory of former Soviet Union and have no great impact in Xinjiang.

For a cultural influence on the superstructure based on economy, the culture, especially the culture of the ruling class, may have an irreversible and powerful influence on the ruling class; in this way, the "Black Horse" music and dance as a form of folk art of the Kazakhs, is more like the Mongolian traditional folk music and dance style. Especially in the over 800 years from the period of Genghis Khan to the modern times, the forces of the Mongolian tribe have never left the Yili River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains in China, and such a nation that has been stationed in the Yili River for a long time, surely has a cultural influence and diffusion not underestimated.

Therefore, the formation of "Black Horse" dance and music is undoubtedly a product of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration, reflecting the characteristics of the great migration and great integration of nomadic people. Multiculturalism refers to the cultures coexisting in regional associations, social communities, and collective groups and other system, and correlating each other in the system structure. Flow and integration are necessary conditions for the formation of multiculturalism and the basis for the existence of multiple cultures. Regarding all the habits and characteristics of the "Black Horse" dance in simulating the postures of horse, many nomadic groups have such similar dances, as the Mongolian Sawuerden and the Xibe's Belem Dance, which reflects the characteristics of the grassland culture integration. We can say it is an important representative of the nomadic culture in grassland, and also the embodiment of the nomadic culture and national spirit in grassland.

IV. THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF "BLACK HORSE" MUSIC AND DANCE

A. *Ethnic Identity and Communicative Function*

The culture of a nation is not only the carrier of communication, but also the symbol of national identity and the sustenance of national emotion. "Black Horse" is an important factor in the cultural identity and national identity of grassland nomads, and an important means to enhance their own cultural identity and national identity. "Black Horse" has become a representative symbol of grassland culture, no matter where you are born, no matter what status you have, as long as the music of "Black Horse" is played, people will naturally cheerful dance, nobody care about your posture, but the national unity of the grassland nomads, this is just the simplest and most effective way for the grassland nomads to communicate with each other.

Music and dance is produced from the national culture, and it directly reflects the spiritual essence of the national culture. Such music and dance from national culture has an extremely important role in the national identity, as the "Black Horse" with an extremely important position in the

national culture of the grassland nomads, is taken as the link of contact in various activities and life etiquettes of the grassland nomads. By such a group dance, people exchange emotions and determine their status, the grassland nomads in different regions have mutual understanding and mutual exchanges through joining the "Black Horse" dance, and hereby the national identity of the grassland nomads has arisen. Therefore, we can say that "Black Horse" has become an indispensable bridge and link for grassland nomads to exchange and recognize each other, and the role of "Black Horse" is very certain for ethnic recognition and communication.

B. *Cultural Inheritance and Educational Function*

The grassland nomads living in the nomadic state, with their daily life and cultural activities centered on the grassland nomadism, and as a carrier for entertainment and exchanges of grassland nomads, the "Black Horse" dance is the best way to make communication and entertainment, in which the people determine that their national identity and have stronger national emotion. The elders carry with the children to play Dombra and talk about the long history and culture of the grassland nomads, and jump the joyful "Black Horse" dance. In this process, the children make clear their identity of grassland nomad and enjoy the pride of Kazakhs as the grassland hero. The "Black Horse" has become the carrier and link to connect the grassland nomads in growth and cultural education, and today grassland nomadic life has changed, but this family culture exchange heritage is still preserved.

C. *The Functions of Emotional Catharsis, Entertainment and Fitness*

"Black Horse" is a common dance of grassland nomads in various gatherings, where people show their dance accompanying with Dombra and Mop music according to their emotions and imagination, everyone expresses his/her emotions through dance, soothing or exhilarating. In the dance, various actions can be added by the dancers at will who constantly vent their inner feelings, and after a piece of "Black Horse", people can vent their unpleasant emotions.

"Black Horse" is not only a dance but also a carrier of grassland nomads for entertainment and fitness. In the party dance, some humorous simulating actions are added to enhance the atmosphere of entertainment, and the dance also plays a role in relaxing the muscles and venting emotions, and has the function of in fitness. Some grassland nomadic schools take the "Black Horse" as the main content in the physical activities, which just applies the fitness function of the "Black Horse".

V. CONCLUSION

The "Black Horse" music and dance produced in the nomadic life of the grassland nomads, combined with the excellent culture of the grassland people, finally formed the characteristics of the "Black Horse", and the grassland nomads regard it as a symbol of national identity and a carrier of national communication. Everyone of grassland

nomadic nation will consciously accept and learn "Black Horse" and deeply remember the essence of the grassland nomadic culture. In the process of birth, growth and communication, the grassland people are inseparable from the "Black Horse" culture that has become the essence of the national culture for the grassland nomads, and this cultural essence has been passed down from generation to generation.

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