Study on the Music Culture of *Cribwork Song* of Kangxian County, Longnan City of China

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Abstract

*Cribwork Song* is a long narrative folk song, which spread in the folk of Kangxian County, Longnan City, Gansu Province of China. This paper has analyzed historical background, humanistic environment, story plot, artistic characteristic and inheritance significance of *Cribwork Song*.

Key word: *Cribwork Song* of Kangxian County; Hua Erjie; lyric; music; inherit

I INTRODUCTION

*Cribwork Song* is a long narrative folk song, which spread in the folk of Kangxian County, Longnan City, Gansu Province of China. The main purpose of this paper is excavate and discuss historical background, humanistic environment, story plot, artistic characteristic and inheritance significance of *Cribwork Song*, and used scientific method to analyse this art treasure, which rooted in folk soil, began in Daoguang period, continuously spread so far, and had a history of over one hundred years, to provide musical theory research reference for spread, protect and inherit *Cribwork Song*.

II The region and background of *Cribwork Song*

Kangxian County is located in southeast of Gansu Province, under the jurisdiction of Longnan City, is the border region of Shanxi, Gansu and Sichuan Provinces, and is located in the upper reaches of the Jialing River, lies on the coast of the Xihan River, east of Luoyang County of Shanxi Province, south of Ningqiang County of Shanxi Province, west adjacent to Wudu County, is bounded on the north by the Xihan River and lies opposite Chengxian County. Kangxian County covers an area of 2958.46 square kilometers. Kangxian County is the only forest landscape area of Gansu Province with subtropical climate in the valley and biotic resources. The territory of Kangxian County has towering mountains and beautiful scenery, unique natural landscape in every corner of urban and rural areas. Kangxian County formed late, but the human life in territory has a long history. Four thousand years ago, our ancestors have lived here, production and construction.

The story of *Cribwork Song* took place in Duidui Mountain of Miba Country, which was located in the junction of Kangxian County and Chengxian County. The protagonist Hua Erjie lived in the Eared Pheasant Mountain for generations, which on the opposite of Duidui Mountain. And the story began with Hua Erjie left home to watch the crops in the field of Duidui Mountain.

In Daoguang period of Qing Dynasty, in the Duidui Mountain of Kangxian County, there was a pretty clever girl named Hua Erjie, who fell in love with a young man named Lin Xiu. The basic-level officer of Chengxian County was Qiu Wenbing, who's son Qiu Wude took a fancy to Hua Erjie, and brought some people went up the mountain to rob a bride when Hua Erjie up the hill to guard the crops. Hua Erjie obstinately refused to yield, but Qiu Wude harboured unkind thoughts. Unexpectedly, he stepped crossbow was used to catch the beast and died of poisonous arrow. Hua Erjie was framed murder by Qiu Wenbing, who complained to Chengxian County town, and bought off Wang Youquan who was magistrate of Chengxian County and wanted to sentence Hua Erjie to death. Wang Youquan sent official document and ordered his staff to use the timber crib tumbrils escort Hua Erjie to Chengxian County to be tried. In the county trial of Chengxian County, Hua Erjie was resolute and courageous, who was indomitable, and provided an explanation for her grievances. For accepting bribes from Qiu Wenbing, Wang Youquan would

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behead Hua Erjie in the market. At this time, official document was arrived from Jiezhou, it’s Lin Xiu brought a lawsuit. The case would be referred to Jiezhou to trial. Hua Erjie was shut in the timber crib second time, and escorted to Jiezhou. Qiu Wenbing not to give up his gangster designs, who hurried to Jiezhou into the night, and spent lots of money to bribe the magistrate Lv Deqi again. Unexpectedly, Lv Deqi was a amorist, who attracted by the appearance of Hua Erjie. While he was hesitant between money and beauty, his father-in-law, who was a secondary official, sent the order secretly, said the clean-fingered and influential high-ranking officials would make an inspection of Longnan, and told him it was necessary to clean handling. Then, he returned to the 40000 grams silver, and said he would enforce the law impartially, examine the case strictly. In the court of law Hua Erjie recounted the cause and effect of the whole affairs. Lv Deqi sent his staff to investigate openly and secretly, and asked for information. Finally, Hua Erjie was sentenced to innocent, Wang Youquan was dismissed and punished, Qiu Wenbing was subject to punishment for false accusations. The day before released Hua Erjie, Lv Deqi invited Hua Erjie to visit his official residence, and ordered his staff to prepare a new dress and arrange a new house. Hua Erjie thought things were strange, and already bewared. In the night, Lv Deqi break into the house of Hua Erjie, harboured unkind thoughts. Unexpectedly, in the bed Hua Erjie was already changed into his fat wife. Hua Erjie and Lin Xiu had rushed back home over night.

III The Characteristics of Cribwork Song’s Lyrics

1. Literary Nature

*Cribwork Song*’s Lyrics are a long narrative poem, according to the development of plot is divided into six major parts, each part has a title, namely, engagement, be wronged, send under guard to Chengxian County, county trial, send under guard to Jiezhou, state trial. The lyrics are mainly seven words sentences, and the sentence is in order, metre is written in rhyme, a lot of rhetorical devices are used in the sentence. Such as in the first part of “engagement” (also known as “love-promise”), in a section of lyrics sang by Hua Erjie and Lin Xiu, Lin Xiu sang: “The swain like a candle which has only one heart, unlike lantern which has lots of eyes.” He compared his own heart to a candle, rather than a lantern, expressed he was single-minded and careful to Hua Erjie; In the second part of “be wronged”, Qiu Wude sang: “The sun comes up and shines the mountain ridge, on the top of the ridge there is a sheep, even if with the wings, it is difficult to fly, the tiger is right beside you.” Qiu Wude compared Hua Erjie who were protecting crops on the mountain to a sheep, and compared himself to a tiger, meaning that even if with the wings, Hua Erjie also could not escape the palm of his hand; The words in the fourth part of “county trial” said: “The person speak in front of the county magistrate with reason, cocks rob food by mouth, we should learn pine and cypress which die standing, rather than learn bean sprout which live kneeling.” The metaphor of the pine and cypress as well as the bean sprout expressed two different personality attitudes towards life and death respectively; In the fifth part of “send under guard to Jiezhou”, the words said: “The timber crib is carried to Suanzaopo, the funeral procession pass before the village, the old to see the young off, yellow leaves does not fall, but green leaves fall.” The old and the young were compared to the yellow leaves and green leaves respectively, meaning that the old had not died, but the child had left the world already.

Some lyrics reference allusion as a foil to Hua Erjie’s grievances, such as Hua Erjie said: “You should be like Lord Bao, who investigated openly and secretly to settle a lawsuit clearly, don’t judge an arrow’s wound in the wrong way of a gunshot wound, officials shield one another to wrong people.” “The timber crib is carried to Huanglongbei, people all boast Li Xi①, hope honest and upright official could revive, to redress an injustice for Hua Erjie.” “Carring the timber crib passes Cangyuan, the pot with gall boils coptis chinensis, everybody says Dou E is bitter, Hua Erjie, I am more pathetic.”

In addition, from the content of lyrics, it also includes a number of different subjects, such as the performance of love, the description of family love, the narration of life suffering, and so on. Such as the content of descripste the love between Hua Erjie and Lin Xiu—“The swain sings that the ivy on the tree,

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①See Kangxian County Annals-Cultural, "Li Xi, styled himself Bodu, Hanyang Prefecture(today southeast of Gangu County) Ayang County (today Jingning County) people in the Han Dynasty. He was promoted to the satrap of Wudu Prefecture in February Jianning three years (170) of Emperor Ling of the Han Dynasty. During his tenure, he cared about the people, paid attention to production, the county had a good harvest year after year. He also paid special attention to the construction of local roads. In Jianning six years (173) The Ode to Fuge was carved on the stone tablet to praise him for his deeds.”
twine one by one, pull constantly, has a heart to pull you, want to ask do you will or not. ” “The turtledove on the tree growling, makes the swain and the gril both crying, the swain cries for difficult to lose wife, the gril cries for hard to lose husband.” The content of describe family love—“Hua Erjie is put into timber crib, the pain as the knife to dig lung, other people raise children to respect their parents, she is not filial for serving a sentence.” “The timber crib is carried to the gate, her parents cry with tears, busy to kowtow to the god for blessing their daughter.” In the way of escort Hua Erjie, there were lots of scene which described the suffering of people's lives, such as “Carring the timber crib pass village, people in the village are very much poor, some flee to Fengzhou because of famine, and some flee to Liangdang for the same reason.” “The timber crib is carried to Wuliwan, Hua Erjie raises her head and looks around, there is no water in the river, rice shoots in the field are all dried.” “The timber crib is carried to Pingluojie, half a year without rain, so there has suffered a drought, but a grain of imperial grain is not reduced, nine-tenths of the families are difficult and have nothing to eat.” “The timber crib was carried to Resiwan, an old man has hotted dead by the road, didn't drink a mouthful of water before he died, the tongue was dried like a tile.”

2. Popular Character

The popularity of lyrics in *Cribwork Song* mainly manifested in some sayings and folk stories. Such as “Qiu Wude is impatient, who just wants honey when encounters honeybee, at Yinshi (the period of the day from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m.) buys hemp and woven into nets, cannot wait until Maoshi (the period of the day from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.) just wants fish”. This is a common saying, usually describes the person who is impatient. In ancient chronometry method, Yinshi and Maoshi only a difference of two hours, meaning that Qiu Wude wanted to marry Hua Erjie when just saw her. Another example is “Hua Erjie wearing a flail, suddenly feels dizzy, official messengers holding ring stick, like imps and yakshas”. In folk legend imps and yakshas are the messengers of the underworld, who hook people's soul when they died, used here to show the feeling of despair that Hua Erjie feel she has no chance of survival. “The timber crib is carried to Mengjiaba, the confused magistrate recruits people curse, in the world wronged people, in hell must suffer pan fried”. In ancient folk people often said that evil person would go to hell after death, the King of Hell would use torture, on mountain of knifes and under pan of oil were both punishment to them, showing the hate of the oppressed classes to the oppressor classes. “The magistrate had a dream last night, the whole body stick full of human excrement. He wakes up and laughs secretly, someone must have sent money to him.” This scene is dreamed by magistrate Wang Youquan on the eve of bribery, the brief explanation of one iromancy spread in the folk has the parlance of “dream feces will get rich”, representing the ugly face of Wang Youquan who has itchy palms. “Magistrate Wang, you sitting in the lobby, inferior to piglets sitting in the pigsty, the piglets will be killed when they grew up, you're always doing the wrong thing.” This metaphor satirize magistrate Wang funnily, as a local magistrate, he does not work for the people, and takes bribes and bends the law, worse than pigs or dogs. “Guan Yu's sword and Li Guang's glaive, Hua Erjie breaks the thread with teeth.” It is saying that in the state trial of Jiezhou, Hua Erjie had a ready tongue, the debate was properly and logically arranged, representing Hua Erjie is skilled in debate by analogy with mighty and sharp weapon of two ancient generals who were familiar with people.

In addition, the dialect intonation of the lyrics of *Cribwork Song* is also the important embodiment of its popularity. Such as “the timber crib is carried to Longchuangya, I live in hope that the stone cliff collapse, to kill the two of us together, so as not to make the bloce (one) miss another bloce (one)”. In the Kangxian county dialect, the word “one” was said to be “a block” in some places, in this sentence is the meaning of “one”. “The timber crib is carried to tavern, a hand climb is bought to her.” At here, “hand climb” refers to “bangle”.

IV The Melody and Structure Characteristics of *Cribwork Song*

*Cribwork Song* has six tunes in common: love-promise, be wronged, cribwork song one, cribwork song two, cribwork song three, state trial. The six open with explicit mode, clear structure, and fluent melody, highlights the characteristics of folk songs.

1. Five-Tone National Mode

The six operns of *Cribwork Song* adopt Chinese national mode, based on Zhi mode and Yu mode, in which, song one, song two, song three, song four, song five, and song six are all five-tone Zhi mode. Song four spread the most widely among these musics, and it is the only five-tone Yu mode melody.

2. Structural Style

The six operns of *Cribwork Song* are the equal of the suite which composed by six folk songs, each
song adopts the form of strophic song, the structure is very simple. Song one, song two, song three, and song five are single two part, song two, and song four are strophic form, in which, song four adopets the form of adding “Hua Erjie” as the lining word behind every two sections and in the form of “chorus” to sing.

3. Melody Style and Features

The six melodies of Cribwork Song are pleasant to hear and easy to sing, which adopt advantages of other forms of music widely, in addition to borrow the local popular folk songs or part of folk songs, they also draw nourishment from flower(a folk song popular in Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia Provinces), and minor key openly, even absorb the factors from folk minor in south of the Yangtze River, so the traditional flavor is very strong. Such characteristics mainly due to Kangxian County located in Longnan, the environment with the characteristics of the northern and southern regional style, in history a lot of people were attracted to here from the south, they have lived here for a long time or short term, affected the culture of here more or less. Influenced by these factors, the folk minor spread in Kangxian County must combine the musical style of the north and the south in melody features, soft with slight faster, gentle flashed frank.

The old gentleman Li Zhengnan was the heritage people of Cribwork Song of Kangxian County, during these years of collecting, compiling, creating and arranging the lyrics of Cribwork Song, he always said: “There was Liu Sanjie in the South, and there was Hua Erjie in the North.” Even lying in sickbed he was often making such nonsense.

Why Cribwork Song is loved by people? One reason is that it represents the will of the masses. Hua Erjie and Liu Sanjie were both folk singer, in the face of the cruel torture of the rulers they refused to be cowed or submit. They were heroic and unafraid. What they did got endorsement and support of ordinary people. They were regarded as a kind of sustenance and strength. Therefore, their image is great, their stories were also widely spread naturally.

The second reason is that they both sang out the evil deeds of the ruling classes by song, expressed the voice of the peasant class, showed the painful topic of people in another way. Tunes borrowed minor from the local folk song, convenient for everyone to sing, moreover, vented inner anguish and grievance of common people.

The third reason is that the content of lyrics tells the dark social background and the brutality of the ruling classes at that time, and records the real development process of the story. Because of varieties of historical incidents, Cribwork Song has become the only complete “narrative folk song” in the folk of Kangxian County.

The story of Hua Erjie mainly spread in Kangxian County, Chengxian County and Wudu County of Longnan, where she passed by in those days, so that the rustic song of Hua Erjie also first spread in these areas.

The escort process related in the lyrics extend all over more than 20 villages and towns along the way of Kangxian County, Chengxian County and Wudu County. Any place she walked, people are all singing the rustic song about her. In the later years, the elder generation teach the younger generation, people sing every year, so it handed down like “popular proverb”. Now, great changes have taken place in people's mode of production and social conditions. The folk art inherited for thousands of years is impacted inevitably, and faced with a new challenge. The lyrics of Cribwork Song have been published, and after a wide range of collecting and arranging, it also recorded a more standardized music score, and collected by relevant departments.

V The Inheritance and Protection of Cribwork Song

Tracing back to history, the first generation successor of Cribwork Song was An Dengfu, who was born in 1889 and died already. The second generation successor was Li Zhengnan, the relationship between he and An Dengfu is teacher-student relationship. In 1984, Mr Li began the work of collecting and arranging Cribwork Song. He has been to Chengxian County two times, to Wudu County three times, to Duiduishan eight times, and visited the old man more than 200 person-time, collected more than forty folk songs. The next work is collate and compile information. Mr Li mixed new lyrics collected by him with the ancestral lyrics of his family reasonably, discarded the dross and selected the essential, discarded the false and retained the true, finally in 2008 Cribwork Song was finalized and published in the form of a sequel.

As musical culture which rooted in folk soil, Cribwork Song has vividly reflected the local people's cultural life and the good and evil of human nature, whether in its production or in evolution. And it
exposes that in the old age the ruling class led a life of luxury and debauchery, they were corrupt and cruel. Meanwhile, it praises the kindhearted and beautiful, the witty and courageous character of the laboring people.

The form of sung of *Cribwork Song* in line with the simple and random way of entertainment for the peasants of society at that time. It expresses people's dissatisfaction with anger song and spicy language, on this account it become a cultural activity, and handed down.

**VI CONCLUSIONS**

The lyrics of *Cribwork Song* has a unique linguistic value. The syntactic distribution, rhyme tune, singing style and dialect tone all show the unique style characteristics. *Cribwork Song* has circulated for several hundred years, today still loved by people, and it has an enlightening effect on the popularity of musical culture and the creation of Chinese music nowadays.

**Reference**
