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LIFE OR DEATH IS A SONG: CULTURAL CONNOTATION AND TRANSFOR- MATION OF FUNERAL DANCE “SAYERHE” OF TUJIA PEOPLE IN CHINA

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Abstract

Tiaosang, or Death Dance, is type of dance of Chinese Tujia people, a minority living in Hunan, Hubei and Sichuan, where are the mountain areas in China. When a Tujia person die, a special dancing group dances in the front of coffin located inside the living room in order to entertain the spirit of the dead person during the last night before taken the coffin to the grave. The dance is accompanied by a big drum and exciting singing sung by the drum player. The movements of the dancers are complicated, the sounds of drum and singing are very dynamic.

In the Summer of 2016, this author did field work in Tujia area, and found the dance was also performed for tourists. The name of Tiaosang has also been changed to Sayerhe, a Tujia word mentioned during the singing but without concrete meaning. In fact this kind of phenomenon can not only be seen in Tujia area, but also in many places where people change the original functions of traditional music into a new social function. Based on the field work, this paper first exams the structure of the dance and the music to present a general knowledge background; secondly, the reason of the change as part of local funeral process to the tourist item is discussed due to the principle that the dance is recognized by the local people as the symbol of ethnic cultural identity, but the boundary between living and death, sharply divided two respects in the mind of Chinese people, has been blurred, in the meantime, the music and movements of the dance caused varied as well. Thirdly, continuing discussion about the imagination of the death fear which has gradually missing, growing with the imagination of an artistic performance which is related to economic income coming from the performance.

Key words: Tiaosang, Sayerhe, Tujia People, Funeral Dance, Chinese Minority Music

Introduction

I. Tujia People

As one of China's 55 ethnic minorities, the current population of Tujia is over 8 million, ranking seventh among the groups in China.

Tujia people aggregate in the areas of Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou and Chongqing, collectively known as Wuling Mountain areas, covering 100,000 square kilometers.

In order to have a more thorough understanding of the distribution of Tujia, it is necessary to see how hierarchy of Chinese administration works, according to the following order: state (highest level) – provinces and municipalities – prefectures and cities – counties and towns (lowest level). There are currently two Tujia and Miao autonomous prefectures, namely: (1) Hubei Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture (2) Hunan Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. Among these, there are six Tujia autonomous counties and one Tujia autonomous city, namely (1) Hubei Hefeng Tujia Autonomous County; (2) Hubei Laifeng Tujia Autonomous County; (3) Hubei Changyang Tujia Autonomous County; (4) Hubei Wufeng Tujia Autonomous County; (5) Chongqing Municipal Shizhu Tujia Autonomous County; (6) Guizhou Yanhe Tujia Autonomous County; Yanhe Tujia Autonomous County Enshi Tujia Autonomous City (city at prefecture level). In addition, there are five Tujia and Miao autonomous counties, namely: (1) Sichuan Xiushan Tujia and Miao Autonomous County; (2) Sichuan Youyang Tujia and Miao Autonomous County; (3) Sichuan Pengshui Miao and Tujia Autonomous County; (4) Sichuan Qianjian Tujia and Miao Autonomous County; (5) Guizhou Yinjiang Tujia and Miao Autonomous County. In addition, there are inhabitants of Tujia in Changde of Hunan and Yichang of Hubei Provinces (see fig. 1).



Figure 1. Inhabited Areas of Tujia People

Historically, Tujia people had their own language, belonging to Sino-Tibetan language family, Tibeto-Burman language subfamily and Tujia language branch. It has been suggested it should be categorised as Burman-Yi language branch, which is a form of very ancient Tibeto-Yi language. Since Tujia people do not have written script, their language has largely disappeared in the process of Sinicization. Tujia people in different regions speak local Chinese dialects, but indigenous Tujia vocabulary and pronunciation still survive.

Tujia ethnic group is divided into four branches based on the differences in languages, including: Bizika, Mengzi, Linka and Nanke. Among these, the Northern Branch (namely, Xiangxi Prefecture, Zhangjiajie City of Hunan Province, Enshi Prefecture, Yichang City of Hubei Province, Southeast of Chongqing City, Northeast of Guizhou Province) regard themselves as Bizika, Bijika and Mijika; the Southern Branch (territory of Luxi County, Xiangxi, Hunan Province) regard themselves as Mengzi. There are immense differences between the Tujia language in the Southern and North Branches, hence people from different Branches cannot communicate easily. The locals in Fenghuang County in Hunan Province call themselves Linka, and

were classified as Tujia in the late 1990s. Tujia people classified as Nanke are mainly found in Southeast Chongqing and Northeast Guizhou.

Tujia people have their own religion, while the local Han people can retain their traditional religion, at the same time adopting Tujia religion at their localities. Ancestral worship is a major feature of the religion of Tujia people, and emphases are put on divine objects such as King of Earth, Bapu God, King Xiang and other early ancestors of Tujia. They believe that Linjun was incarnated as a White Tiger after his death, hence the immortalisation of White Tiger, and with their Temples permeated in all regions. Linjun was the King Xiang Heavenly Son, whose real name was Ba Wuxiang. It is therefore apparent that White Tiger Temple, Linjun Temple, King Xiang Heavenly Son Temple are enshrined for the same person. The White Tiger tablet revered at people's homes is actually Linjun.

Under the influence of Han culture, Tujia people have also adopted Taoism and Confucianism. Each household hangs a "Heaven-Earth- Sovereignty-Ancestor-Teacher" tablet in the central room to proclaim their allegiance to heaven and the earth, and the respect to Confucian regard for knowledge (see fig. 2).



Figure 2. Heaven-Earth-Sovereignty-Ancestor-Teacher Tablet

The Han people in China tend to refer to minorities in the bordering areas in disparaging terms, such as "savages" or "barbarians", and hence it is not surprising that Tujia people were subject to the same treatment in early days. Little consensus has been reached on the origin of Tujia people, even though they are generally regarded as descendants of the ancient "Ba people", who lived in Southwest China (Pan Guangdan, 1955); some scholars have suggested that they are a tribe of the "Yi people" (one of the minority groups living in Southwest China). It is also possible to trace their origins to ancient Qiang people, who were related to Tibetans (Cao Yi, 1991).

Methods

II. Sayerhe: A Kind of Funeral Dance

Tujia people have the custom of dancing at a funeral as manifestation of honouring the deceased, and hence the performance is called Funeral Dance. The dance is often accompanied by singing, and there is frequent occurrence of the functional word Sayerhe in the lyrics; therefore, the dance is also known as Sayerhe. This form of performance is mainly popular in Changyang County, Enshi and other cities at county level of Hubei, and the art has been included in Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at national level¹.

1. Basic Form of Sayerhe

Traditionally, Sayerhe was a dance for men, but nowadays women can also be included in the performance. A big drum is the centre of performance, with the soloist singing while playing the drum. The music comprises over ten special tunes, each bearing a special name, including

¹Intangible cultural heritage in China is divided into five levels: international, national, provincial, city, and county levels.

“Daishi” (Viewing the Corpse), “Yaosang” (Rocking the Coffin), “Huaitai Ge” (Song of Pregnancy), “Yaoli Erhuo”(nonsense syllables functioning to expanding melodies), “Yaogujie Sailuo” (Sister Sieving the Sifter), “Pangxie Ge” (Crab Song) and “Yamizi” (Silent Riddle). These tunes are threaded together in form of an occasional piece according to the characteristics of the event, and may gear at all gestures of a dance that involves exchanges between singing of the drummer and movements of the dancers (Chen Qiong, Xie Wei, Yang Rong, 2013; Zhou Yun, 2012). The length of performance varies, according to the durations of the tunes chosen. Under all circumstances, the first section “Daishi” (Viewing the Corpse) must be included. While the lyrics are usually fixed, some form of improvisation is possible, as a means to express the positive sentiments of the deceased; sometimes humorous lyrics, love songs or songs in antiphonal style are included, so as to provide some kind of relief for the sorrowful mourners and bystanders (Tian He, 1995). The

dancers often appear in pairs; either involving one or two pairs, but on occasion the group can be enlarged to four pairs. In olden days, the dancers were villagers in daily clothes; nowadays the dancers are mostly local “professional art troupes” performing in stage costumes. The dance can be performed with naked upper bodies, reflecting its primitive nature and in an authentic style.

Results

2. Dance Movements of Sayerhe

Based on the above mentioned design of the music, Sayerhe accommodates specific movements and paces. The author has investigated dance movements in Changyang and Badong Counties, and found that Sayerhe in both areas shares the same meter, but the movements are inconsistent. In Changyang County, the dancers move their hands and feet mainly at the same direction, but this routine is not followed in Badong County (see fig. 3-4).



a.



b.



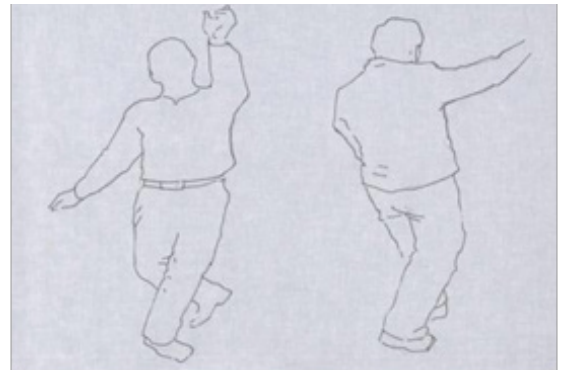
c.



d.

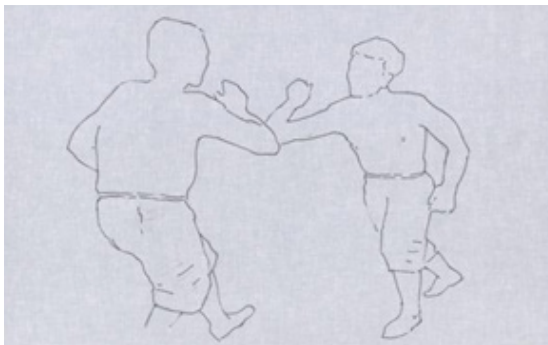


e.



f.

Figure 3. Basic style of the movements of Sayerhe in Badong County



a.



b.



c.



d.

Figure 4. Basic style of the movements of Sayerhe in Changyang County

Sayerhe includes two types of movements: the first comprises basic movements (as shown above), which are manifested at the early part of "Daishi" (Viewing the Corpse) and "Yaosang" (Rocking the Coffin), and are movements that link other parts of dance. In Changyang area, there are four groups of such movements, which jointly form a pattern. Each group is called a "step", hence collectively these are regarded as "four big steps". Each step contains six

beats, making a total of 24 beats for the four steps. The accompanying music is conceived in triple meter: the first step encompasses two measures (6 beats), the second step another two measures, and two measures for each of the third and fourth steps. Thus, the four groups have a total of 8 triple meters. The following are the basic movements of Sayerhe (see fig. 5).

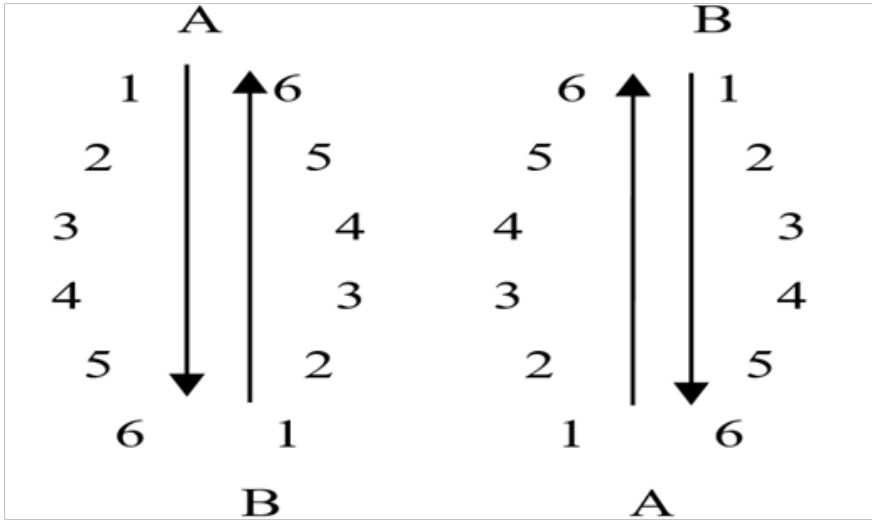
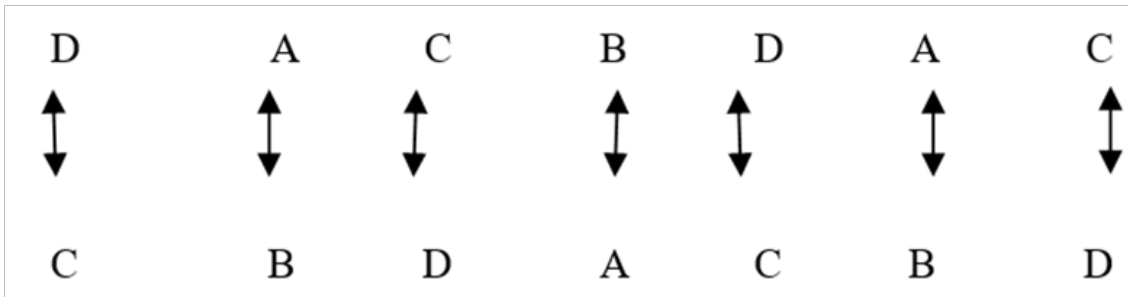


Figure 5. One around of movements of Sayerhe in Changyang County
 (Figure explanations: A and B indicate two dances. Numbers 1 to 6 indicate music beats.
 Arrows indicate the directions two dances follow)

There is an improved version of Sayerhe in Changyang County. Such style of dancing allows a pair of two to expand to two pairs of four, so as to accommodate dancing partners to change (see fig. 6).

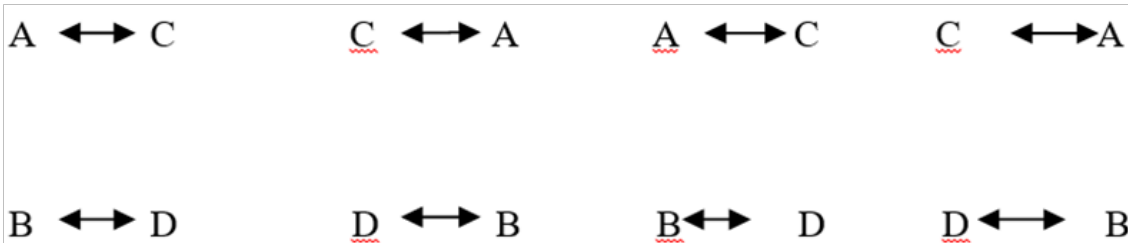
First Around

First Step Second Step Third Step Fourth Step

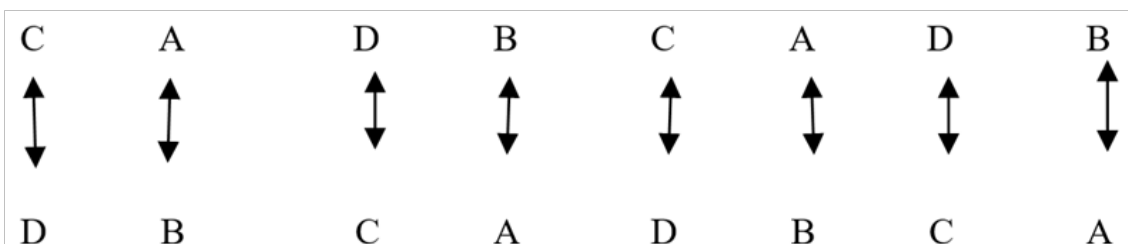


Second Around

First Step Second Step Third Step Fourth Step



Third Around



Fourth Around

First Step Second Step Third Step Fourth Step

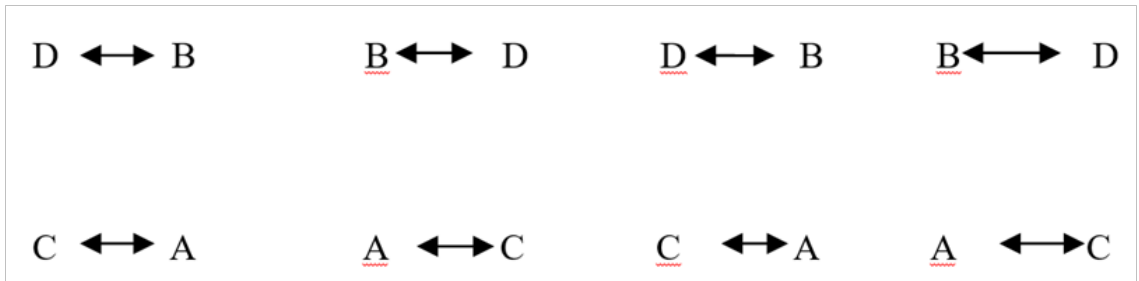


Figure 6. The improved version of Sayerhe in Changyang County, showing four dancers accord in paces:

(Figure explanations: A, B, C and D indicate four dances, and arrows indicates two dances a pair. First around, A and B, C and D in pairs; second around, A and C, B and d in pairs; third around, C and D, A and B in pairs, and forth around, D and B, C and A in pairs. All pairs go four time back and forth).

but the practice is to group them into two pairs. Each part of the dance movement, or “big step”, is performed within six beats; five “big steps” form a pattern, similar to a folk song sung in five verses of local Tujia inhabitants. Basic steps and dance lines are outlined as follows bellow (see fig. 7).

Sayerhe in Badong County usually involves four dancers in the performance,

First Step Second Step Third Step Fourth Step backward) Fifth Step

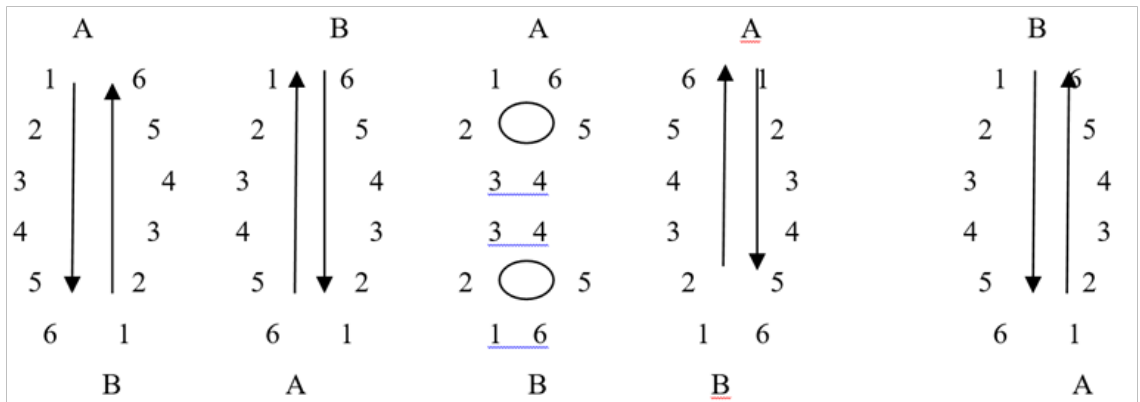


Figure 7. One around of movements of Sayerhe in Badong County

(Figure explanations: A and B indicate two dances; numbers 1 to 6 indicate music beats; arrows indicate the directions two dances follow; the circles indicate two dances go around.)

Spreading Wings", "Fierce Tiger Dashing Down the Mountain", "Rhino Gazing the Moon", "Crane Making Somersault", "Monkey Climbing Rocks", "Swallow Holding Mud in its Mouth", "Dragonfly Hopping on Water", and "Heavenly Dog Eating the Moon". It is also possible to include actions involving daily lives, such as "Yaogujie Sailuo" (Sister Sieving Sifter), "Meinv Shuzhuang" (Beauty Wearing Make-ups), and "Shuangbai Tang" (Bride and Bridegroom Kowtowing

The second type of dance steps involves special movements mimicking animals, with visual effect attained by the dancers adding extra movements to the music, in addition to basic movements. The added movements usually imitate animal images, typical examples include "Phoenix

at the Wedding Ceremony). (Shang Jinxia, Liu Yaofeng, 2016). These dance movements are usually accompanied by music in 4/4 meter, with a particular movement repeated at will, hence these lead to different effects, according to circumstances when the dance is

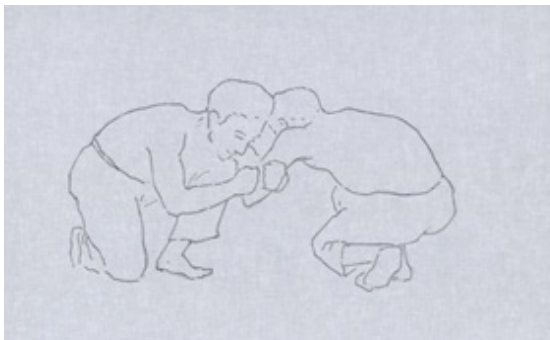
performed, resulting in varying lengths of performance; in other words, the duration of the dance depends on such improvisatory elements. The arranged dance lasts about 10 minutes, yet for a funeral, it is extended to over 20 minutes (see fig. 8).



a. monkey climbing rocks



b. tigers embracing heads



c. swallow making nest



d. cows are scratching



e. phoenix spreading wings

Figure 8. Special Movements of Sayerhe

3. Music for Sayerhe

Sayerhe begins with "Daishi" (Viewing the Corpse), which comprises singing in the high register, coupled with basic dance movements, hence strengthening the expressive power of the lyrics, which serve the dual role of expressing admiration for

life and for the diseased, notwithstanding the fact that there is a recurrence of such contrasting phenomena. The music is in triple meter, even though this is not strictly adhered to by the singer, who can perform in *ad libitum*. The weeping tune is permeated by singing involving real voice

and in falsetto. When combined with the sustained impact of drum beating, the overall effect of the music is very catching. The following music examples are recorded and transcribed by the author based on fieldwork research in Changyang, Hubei in February 2017. It is worth noting that these

transcriptions do not reflect the singing style, but it can still demonstrate the basic structure of the melodic line, the manner of solo singing and response (chorus, by dancers), as well as the patterns of phrasing (see figures 9 and 10).

The image displays a musical score for a segment of "Viewing the Corpse" in Sayerhe of Changyang county. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of six systems, each featuring a Solo Singer part and a Choir part. The lyrics are in Chinese characters. The Solo Singer part is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Choir part is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: Qiao Qi Lai... e Ye ci ci He Qi Lai Ye... Tuo Qi Ya Fu... Tou Luan Pi Ya Cai Ei Ei Sa Ye Er Huo Ei Tiao Qi Lai Ye He Qi Lai Ye Hei Hei Tuo Qi Ya Fu Tou Hao Cai Ya Bu Yong Lang Tou Da Ye Luan Pi Ya Cai Ei Ei Yi Fu A Luo Di Ya Liang Cha Er Kai Ye Ye Sa Ye er Huo Ye Hao Cai Bu Yong Lang Tou Da Ye Yi Fu Luo Di Liang Cha Kai Ye Ye

Figure 9. Music Example 1: Segment of "Viewing the Corpse" in Sayerhe of Changyang county, adapted version. (singer: Zhang Yanke; recorded and transcribed by Zhang Boyu; recording date: June 16, 2016)



Figure 10. Music example 2: “Daishi” (Viewing the Corpse) recorded in fieldwork research in Badong. The basic melodic pattern is similar to that of Changyang’s, but with slight changes in style. (singer: Liu Deng; recorded by Xu Song; transcribed by Zhang Boyu; recording time: February 12, 2017)

Some scholars (Yang Kuangmin, 1991) believe that this kind of music involves three notes, similar to the remnants of ancient music of Ba people. Indeed the music centers around the degrees of Mi, Soland La, with other notes juxtaposed, as a kind of decoration. In spite of its apparent simplicity, the singing can accommodate frequent use of vibrato, portamento and other decorative features, vastly enhancing the power to express delicate sentiments,

and hence resulting in immense beauty. “Yaosang” (Rocking the Coffin) is a transitional section derived from a melody, in preparation for the introduction of another melody. The melodies are basically the same as those of “Viewing the Corpse”, but the lyrics contain “Yaosang” (Rocking the Coffin) to prompt dancers the imminent change of melody and rhythm to enter to the next section (see fig. 11).



Figure 11. Music Example 3: Variations of melody after Rocking the Coffin

(singer: Liu Deng; recorded by: Xu Song; transcribed by Zhang Boyu; recording date: February 12, 2017)

As Sayerhecan accommodate different passages of “Daishi” (Viewing the Corpse), “Yaosang” (Rocking the Coffin), “YaoliErhuo” (nonsense syllables functioning to expanding melodies),

“Yaogujie Sailuo” (Sister Sieving the Sifter), “Yamizi” (Silent Riddle), “Huaitai Ge” (Song of Pregnancy), “Pangxie Ge” (Crab Song), the length of each performance varies, with one melody naturally leading to another. The followings are examples of melodic patterns frequently used (see figures 12 and 13).

Figure 12. Music Example 4. YaoliErhuo (nonsense syllables functioning to expanding melodies) (singer: Tan Pengfei; recorded by Xu Song; transcribed by Zhang Boyu; recording date: February 12, 2017)

Figure 13. Music Example 5. "Riddle" (singer: Liu Deng; recorded by Xu Song; transcribed by Zhang Boyu; recording date: February 12, 2017)

At the ending phrase of each section, there is a reiterated pitch, which is set to three meaningless syllables, in the manner "Eng, Eng, Eng"; these constitute the most characteristic vocal style of Sayerhe music.

Discussion

4. Aesthetic Significance of Sayerhe

The author has been, on four occasions, to Tujia inhabited areas to collect folk music between August 2016 and February 2017. During fieldwork, it was possible to attend four Sayerhe performances in different locations, including Ziqiu Village clusters, Changyang County, Enshi City and Yesanguan Village clusters of Badong County in Hubei Province. Three of the performances were specially performed for the research team, while the remaining was live dances at a funeral scene.

Regarding the ontology of the dance and music, it is possible to distinguish those rearranged by the artists of local inhabitants excelled in the art, from those which were authentic. Nonetheless, the research team were overwhelmed by either kind of performances, as they demonstrate the power to touch the inner emotions and aesthetic nerves of all. Everyone present could not help but exclaimed: "terrific!" The pinnacle of all performances was the proclamation of key words "life or death is a song", which aptly described the artistic, aesthetic and cultural significance of dancing Sayerhe.

The most significant factor conducing to the immense expressive power of Sayerhe is the overwhelming artistic elements in the performance, as reflected in the following phenomena: first, the conspicuous drum beats provide a constant impetus to the performance, and nurture an inherent strength carried by rhythm, as music and dance unite. The current

trend of aesthetics somehow warrants distinctiveness in rhythm, coupled with loud acoustics, as a kind of massive stimulus to the nervous system; such characteristics are duly reflected in the drum beats of Sayerhe. Second, the personal artistic appeal of the singer is a vital aspect: the fact that the performer needs to sing while playing the drum is demanding musically, while such performance is often accomplished, in addition, with acrobatics, which is physically challenging. Notwithstanding singers may have different styles, they possess the skills to arouse impetuous passions, often achieved through singing in high register, and by their distinctive shouts. In spite of such apparent coarseness, it possible to identify beautiful melodies and unique vocal techniques, rendering the music aesthetically very "modern", and providing a memorable auditory impact. Third, the smooth movements of the dance are readily distinguishable from most kinds of Chinese folk dances, which are characterised by repeated movements of the same pattern. Sayerhe, on the other hand, is performed with diverse movements, hence very dazzling to the eyes; they are sometimes robust, but can also be graceful. Since dancing is in pairs, the most basic form involves two dancers, moving while watching one another, with an attempt of first achieving close communication between the performers, before collectively attaining the same goal between themselves and the audience. It is visually much more exciting when a performance involves two pairs of dancers, as they change sides, shake shoulders and hips, as well as waving arms to render wonderful visual effects. Fourth, there is a distinct contrast of the vocal characteristics between the drum player and the dancers: during the dance

performance, the drummer sings a line, while the dancers respond, and will soon lead to themselves echoing one another. One notices, in particular, the drummer's low-pitched uttering of "Ou, Ou, Ou" or "Eng, Eng, Eng" at the end of a section, creating a unique atmosphere, and it is a feature of the music of Tujia people. Based on the observations outlined above, it will be seen that Sayerhe has very strong aesthetic characteristics. The inherent artistic elements provide uninterrupted stimuli to the audience: there is no question of feeling exhausted to attend a nine-hour performance – from eight in the

evening to five the next morning – as this is regarded as an "aesthetic" feast.

It is always awkward to provide a linguistic description of acoustic characteristics of music, since it is almost impossible to imagine the actual musical effect without listening to the performance. Readers who feel interested can listen and watch the Sayerhe performances on the internet, or through other channels. The courtesy photos intend to provide, for the readers, some idea of the visual effect of the movement and setting of the dance (see figures 14 and 17).



Figure 14. Sayerhe performance organized by Changyang Cultural Unit of Hubei Province (Photographed by the author in 2016)



Figure 15. Sayerhe performance organized by Changyang Ziqiu Village Clusters Cultural Unit of Hubei Province (Photographed by the author in 2016)



Figure 16. Sayerhe performance organized by Enshi Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre of Hubei Province (Photographed by the author in 2017)



Figure 17. Sayerhe performance at a funeral ceremony held in Yesanguan Village Clusters, Badong County, Hubei Province (Photographed by the author in 2017)

III. Social Factors on the Existence of Sayerhe and Changes in Its Cultural Connotation

Much has been achieved on research pertinent to *Sayerhe*, especially in its music ontology, dance movements, history, culture and acrobatic appeal. Readers can easily access some of these fruitful outcomes on the Internet. This paper does not endeavour to solely investigate the music features and dance styles of the art: it is necessary to consider, while watching the performance, *Sayerhe* is part of a funeral ceremonial, and therefore the

dance performance must be appreciated in this context, and one should not merely focus on the artist features. At the end of *Sayerhe* dance, the deceased will be buried, and this should, theoretically be a time of grief for the participants of the funeral. A more important observation should be: on the last night of the life, those who are living have gone into much complicated customs to honour the dead with a grand feast; this begs the questions why such a joyful form of entertainment is taken to accompany the deceased relative?

Zheng Yingjie suggested, “Life and

death is one's primary doom in life. The culture in Western Hunan is associated with the "cultural genes" of the local inhabitants believing 'all beings have a soul', a feature of primitive religions mixed with the idea of immortality found in Taoism; they regard death as life's destiny... It will be seen that in Western Hunan, when Tujia people mourn for the deceased with songs and dances at funerals, they are, in disguise, celebrating the rebirth, the privilege to be reborn, and the love experienced in life. The performance is a demonstration of human strength, vivid portrayal of feeling precious for life and eagerness for earthly life." (Zheng Yingjie, 2001:84) Most would argue that it is a natural phenomenon that all living beings undergo life and death, and hence the latter is something inevitable. It is precisely this simple logic which allows Tujia people to regard death as something natural, and of course, unavoidable for all. Hence, they do not regard death as an unhappy event (Zhao Dongju, 2005).

Areas around Wuling Mountain bordering the Han areas are populated with Tujia people, and the land is now divided into four administrative Provinces, namely Western Hunan, Enshi of Hubei, Qianjiang of Chongqing and Eastern Guizhou. In the early stage of conducting fieldwork research on music of Tujia people, the research team naturally planned to arrive at the capital city of each Province, before taking public transport to the destinations. The team later discovered that these areas are interconnected, in spite of the difference in geographic names. In other words, habitations of Tujia have a strong sense of coherence, both physically (some counties of different provinces adjoin one another) and culturally (customs and religion). The most important feature of Tujia settlements is their mountainous

landscape. When travelling from Yichang to Changyang, and after descending from the mountains, one sees the plains are occupied by Han people, further strengthening the designation that Tujia people truly belong to the mountains. Historically, Tujia people had a strong allegiance to Han people, and regarded China as their motherland, as demonstrated by their concerted effort in fighting against foreign invasions. Such an attitude enabled Tujia people to accommodate Han culture more readily and comprehensively than other ethnic groups. Tujia people had long accepted Taoism as a dominant religion, but they also worship the local Babu King; the two religions have become their two spiritual props. When entering a house of Tujia people, one finds the conspicuous display of the tablet of Heaven-Earth-Sovereignty-Ancestor-Teacher on the wall, the kind of respect shown to Chinese sages. It is this distinctive sign that distinguishes Tujia people from other ethnic minorities living in the area. This also reflects Tujia people's view to nature, as well as their allegiance to the Han people.

The Taoist philosophy of the balance of *yin* (female or negative) and *yang* (male or positive) can change under circumstances, and therefore these are not entities that remain static; this has become a belief deeply rooted among Tujia people. This flexible way in tackling contrasting elements is transformed into something more practical in daily lives – marriages and funerals – as typically embodied in the performances dedicated for these events, notably Bridal Lamentations and the Funeral Dance (*Sayerhe*). Marrying a daughter should theoretically be a joyful event, but Tujia people cry for days in anticipation of the ceremonial, and for this cause developed a unique music

genre: Bridal Lamentation Song. The singing is so touching that even in modern stage performing context, the audience can readily be moved emotionally, and burst into tears. This is, of course, due to departure of the daughter, and in anticipation of the bride's uncertainties ahead, and her opening up to the world. On the contrary, funeral is supposed to be the lamentation of the dead, especially the last night, as this is the only opportunity to pay respect to the body. Tujia people dance to joyful music, and sing cheerfully, with repertoire comprising many folk songs. The author has conducted interviews on the subject, with a view of investigating how such contradictory practices have been established, reversing the more natural means of human expression of emotion, and in particular concerning the genres Bridal Lamentations and Funeral Dance. These features have been thoroughly discussed, and are regarded as essence of Tujia culture (Zhang Daokui, 2001). One can argue that the background of these phenomena is Taoism, and the most relevant reference could be the following passage recorded in the Taoist classic *Zhuangzi: Perfect Enjoyment*:

When Zhuangzi's wife died, Huizi went to condole with him, and, finding him squatted on the ground, drumming on the basin, and singing, said to him, 'When a wife has lived with her husband, and brought up children, and then dies in her old age, not to wail for her is enough. When you go on to drum on this basin and sing, is it not an excessive (and strange) demonstration?' Zhuangzi replied, 'It is not so. When she first died, was it possible for me to be singular and not affected by the event? But I reflected on the commencement of her being. She had not yet been born to life; not only had she no life, but she had no bodily form; not only had she no bodily form, but she

had no breath. During the intermingling of the waste and dark chaos, there ensued a change, and there was breath; another change, and there was the bodily form; another change, and there came birth and life. There is now a change again, and she is dead. The relation between these things is like the procession of the four seasons from spring to autumn, from winter to summer. There now she lies with her face up, sleeping in the Great Chamber; and if I were to fall sobbing and going on to wail for her, I should think that I did not understand what was appointed (for all). I therefore restrained myself!' (See the Book of Zhuangzi, public network version)

Zhuangzi's outlook on life could be reflected from above, that is, one should not lament death, as human beings do not originally exist: death merely reflects a departure to the origin. The ideologies and behaviours of Tujia people demonstrated at the funeral dance therefore conform to Zhuangzi's thought and behaviour. Further manifestations of Tujia people's allegiance to Taoism are found in Tima performance, (part of Tujia religious ceremonial), in which elements of Taoist and Nuo rituals (dances with masks) are accommodated.

One may wonder why funerals for Han people are so much more mundane, yet their culture is more complex, and depending on areas and particular inclinations of individuals, they are subject to varying degrees of influence from Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. A typical funeral ceremony of Han amalgamates ideas such as the incarnation of soul in Buddhism, heaven and hell of Taoism, and filial piety of Confucianism. Even so, when a Han person dies in an advanced age, acquaintances often comfort relatives by referring to a "happy ending"; there is also a custom to invite theatrical troupes or instrumental

ensembles to perform at the funeral site, even though the aims may be very different. The suona cornet performances of Tujia people at weddings and funerals are also similar to the practice adopted by Han people. In a way, *Sayerhe* performed at a funeral leads to the same result as opera performance in Han regions, notwithstanding their difference in forms. In short, *Sayerhe* is more joyful, indigenous and occasional (gearing at a particular context).

The author had an opportunity to visit Chaozhou for collection of folk music a few years ago; the destination was a suburban village where it was almost want of young inhabitants, who had to work in the cities as a result of rapid urbanisation. The research team came across a courtyard where a solitary old woman lived, and found the main room of the residence enshrined with deities, while in the larger room across, ancestors' tablets were displayed. The old woman lived humbly in a smaller room nearby, a staunch demonstration of reserving the best to deities and ancestors, and tolerance for poverty. In the event, spiritual comfort was believed to be achieved. This scenario helped the author understand why Tujia people have developed a tradition of performing funeral dance: those who are living need to offer the most precious entities to the deceased. Performance of *Sayerhe* is most appropriate, since the music and dance are aesthetically pleasing to human senses, and the art is widely appreciated. Tujia people have the custom to reserve the most festive enjoyment to the last night of a funeral, hence the performance of *Sayerhe* amidst joy and laughter.

There is also an interesting custom in handling *Sayerhe*: a Tujia elderly may request a performance in advance, that

is, while still alive, or "funeral dance while living", owing to the desire of some to witness such a performance personally. This is, on condition that the performance is in lieu of that at future funeral. In other words, *Sayerhe* can only be enjoyed once, either before or after death. Since there is a clear biological distinction between life or death, and the change is sudden, those alive fear the uncertainties of the dead may have to experience. The Chinese believe that the dead will ascend to sky, hence the words that relatives hear most are "safe journey." Since those alive will not be able to accompany the dead, there is much fear for a lonely journey ahead. It is precisely the deceased still has its place in the world before burial that the Chinese have established the custom of observing the night, so as to ensure that there is a last chance to bid a collective farewell, prior to the tormenting lonely journey after burial. Likewise, Tujia people stage a dance performance at a funeral in order to let the dead enjoy the best, so as to alleviate the trauma of the relatives. When *Sayerhe* was performed in Yesanguan Village clusters, the research team could distinguish lyrics addressed to the deceased for a wonderful last night at home.

Conclusion

Tujia funerals are open to all villagers, mainly for the purpose of sharing the dance performance, and when the crowd aggregates, it can be a scene of grandeur. An important aspect is that the more acquaintances assemble, the more effective is the process of accompanying the deceased in the last moment on earth. In this respect, Han funerals, with performance of music and drama, serves the same purpose, even though this originates from the idea that the entertainments are for the spirits, so as

to ease the future path of the deceased; objectively, the performance also provides sufficient stimuli for the crowd to stay the night, even though the atmosphere is gloomy. Tujia funerals provide music and dance for those who attend, with the premise that the living and the dead can spend a happy night together; anybody who attends a funeral can earn an extra opportunity to appreciate *Sayerhe*, in addition to the one dedicated for the individual's funeral. While a birth for Tujia people is regarded as the beginning of life, and worth celebrating; dying is the beginning of another life, hence it is also worth being entertained with songs and dances. This is aptly expressed in the lyrics of *Sayerhe*: life or death is a song, summing up the enlightened idea on the inevitable fate of human beings. Tujia people therefore not only have an indomitable spirit and optimistic philosophy of life (one that never ceases), but have in their ceremonials, created amazing form of art.

The research team had the opportunity to attend four performances of *Sayerhe*, but there are vast differences among them. The first performance was in Changyang County Cultural Centre, where there were sceneries prepared for the audience, who were predominantly tourists, and we were seated while watching *Sayerhe* performed by five dancers on the stage. The second performance was at the Cultural Centre of Changyang Ziqiu Village clusters, where eight dancers and one drummer specifically performed *Sayerhe* for the researchers: they were naked on top and their dances were robust and forceful, and are highly sophisticated. The third performance was at Enshi Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre, featuring the famous Tujia folk singer Tan Xuecong, and with four dancers. The fourth performance was at a funeral in

Yesanguan Village clusters. The first three performances were specifically organized for the research team, with performers comprising farmers or folk artists, hired by the local Cultural Office. Only the performance in Yesanguan Village clusters has the realistic setting of a funeral, hence truthful to the original meaning of *Sayerhe* performance.

Despite being at a funeral scene, the performance was still not truly authentic, owing to changes imposed. First, the performers were members of the local "art troupe", a group of folk professionals, who would be remunerated; they have regular rehearsals, and hence the overall effect was graceful, neat and consistent. A villager joined in twice during the performance, and his movements were significantly different from those of the professional team. According to the tradition of performing *Sayerhe*, villagers should perform spontaneously to accompany the dead. It will be seen that the villager's performance has retained much authenticity and essence of the tradition. Second, the host introduced another performer in order to demonstrate the best of *Sayerhe*: the man had worked at the local Cultural Centre, and his singing and dancing were very characteristic and appealing. At the end of a piece, he informed the research team that the performance by the professionals was an adapted version, with raps-like phrases injected into the original melodies, while the dance movements have become more graceful, with sequences of steps slightly changed. Third, the performance of the professionals involved both men and women; women were allowed to play drum, sing, and dance in the streets, the only restriction being the permission to dance at the central room. Towards the end of the performance around four o'clock,

the final dance at the central room was restricted to male performers, in order to adhere to tradition more strictly. Based on field observations, the involvement of women had made the performance more attractive. According to a young Sayerhe dancer of the professional team, it is necessary to loosen the rule on gender, so that *Sayerhe* could better adapt to the modern society.

It is apparent that three levels of changes have been identified through the above analyses, and these can be regarded as phenomena of a continuously evolving tradition. Apart from the artistic elements of these performances, it is also necessary to reflect on a more serious issue: the change in performing context. The three performances the research team attended in Changyang County, Ziqiu Village clusters and Enshi City were specially designed for the tourists by local cultural organisations, as well as cultural units up to national level, under the grand idea of promoting "intangible cultural heritage". An established genre of performance can be regarded as a cultural product, which can readily be severed from the original context, and staged for tourists without the boundaries of time and space. At this juncture, one notices not only the purpose of the performance could be changed, but entities that can only be attained once in life are readily

available. An apt comparison is in cooking too much seasoning reduces the original flavour of food. The same applies to art: something that becomes mass-produced will depreciate in value. What is "tradition"? According to Baidupedia: "Tradition is something handed down from generation to generation, the thought, culture, ethics, customs, art, system and modes of behavior inherited from history. It has intangible impact and control on people's social behavior" (Baidu search, 2017). Concerning the performance of *Sayerhe*, its "tradition" is based on three aspects: performing form (artistic property), performing occasion (social property), and performing purpose (cultural property). We should be aware of continuous changes in these entities: when *Sayerhe* is subject to the present cultural context, it will lose its essence for being only enjoyed once in a lifetime, at the same time degenerating into, by analogy, some kind of junk food, which depends on additives to stay fresh. This is not a criticism on the changes imposed on *Sayerhe* at present, but it makes us aware of the pros and cons of the changes. It is not only because *Sayerhe* has wonderful music and beautiful dance, but it also represents the pinnacle of a culture which is fast disappearing under the rapid pace of industrialisation and urbanisation.

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ЭНДЕГІ ӨМІР МЕН ӨЛІМ: ҚЫТАЙДАҒЫ ТУЦЗЯ ХАЛҚЫНЫҢ «САЕРХЭ» ЖЕРЛЕУ БИІНІҢ МӘДЕНИ КОННОТАЦИЯСЫ МЕН ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ

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Аңдатпа

Tiaosang, немесе өлім биі Қытайдың Хунань, Хубэй және Сычуань таулы аймақтарында мекендейтін Туцзя азшылық ұлттың мәдениетіндегі бидің бір түрі болып табылады. Туцзяның біреуі қайтыс болғанда, оның мәйіті алдында жиналып, молаға жерлеуге алып кетудің алдында өлген адамның әруағына арнап би тобы билеп, рәсімді орындайды. Би үлкен барабанмен орындалып және әсерлі әнмен жалғастырылады. Бишілердің қимылы күрделі, барабан дыбысы мен ән айту өте динамикалық түрде көрсетіледі.

Мақала авторы 2016 жылдың жазында осы аймақтарда далалық жұмыстармен айналысып жүріп, бұл би туристерге де арнайы орындалатыны жайында хабардар болды. Tiaosang атауы Sayerhe болып өзгертілді, ал Turjia сөзі ән айту кезінде мағынасыз кейіпте қолданылады. Жалпы мұндай көріністі дәстүрлі музыкадан жаңа әлеуметтік қызметтерді ауыстыратын басқа аймақтардан да кездестіруге болады.

Далалық жұмыстарға негізделіп, мақалада алғашқы болып жалпы осы туралы ақпаратты беру үшін ән мен бидің құрылымын қарастыруда, екіншіден би жергілікті тұрғындар үшін этникалық мәдени өзіндік ерекшелігінің символы іспеттес, басқа жағынан қарағанда өмір мен өлімнің арасы өшіріліп, музыка мен би қозғалысы қытай халқының ойын екіге бөлді. Үшіншіден, өмір алдындағы қорқыныш басылып, көркемдік орындаушылық қиялының өсуін экономикалық кіріспен байланыстырады.

Трек сөздер: Tiaosang, Sayerhe, Туцзя халқы, жерлеу биі, би, музыка, Қытай ұлттық аз халықтарының музыкасы

ЖИЗНЬ И СМЕРТЬ В ПЕСНЯХ: КУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОННОТАЦИЯ И ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ПОГРЕБАЛЬНОГО ТАНЦА SAYERHE НАРОДА ТУЦЗЯ В КИТАЕ

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Аннотация

Tiaosang, или танец смерти, является видом танца китайского народа туцзя, меньшинства, проживающего в Хунани, Хубэй и Сычуань, где находятся горные районы Китая. Когда один из туцзя

умирает, перед гробом, расположенным в гостиной комнате, танцует танцевальная группа, чтобы развлечь дух мертвого человека во время последней ночи, прежде чем забрать гроб на могилу. Танцы сопровождаются большим барабаном и захватывающим пением, исполняемым барабанщиком. Движения танцоров сложны, звуки барабана и пения очень динамичны.

Летом 2016 года автор статьи занимался полевыми работами в тех районах и обнаружил, что танец также исполняется для туристов. Название Tiaosang также было изменено на Sayerhe, туцзинское слово, используемое во время пения, но не имеющее конкретного смысла. На самом деле такое явление можно увидеть не только в этом районе, но и во многих местах, где люди меняют исходные функции традиционной музыки в новую социальную функцию.

Основываясь на наблюдении и исследовании фактического материала, данная статья, во-первых, рассматривает структуру танца и музыки, чтобы представить общие фоновые знания; во-вторых, причина изменения части местного погребального процесса в туристический показ обсуждается в связи с принципом, что танец признается местным населением как символ этнической культурной самобытности, но с другой стороны грань между жизнью и смертью была стерта, разделив мнения китайского народа и разнообразив музыку и движения танца. В-третьих, рассматривается угасающий образ страха смерти, который перерастает в исполнительский художественный образ, что связывается с экономическим доходом от подобных показов.

Ключевые слова: Tiaosang, Sayerhe, народ туцзя, погребальный танец, музыка малых народов Китая.

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