

# Local Treasure—Wuning Tea-picking Opera

Xue Ao

Jiujiang literature and art institute, Jiujiang, 332000, China

**Keywords:** Jiangxi, Treasure, Wuning tea-picking opera.

**Abstract:** Tea-picking operas in Jiangxi including branches in east, south, west and north is another emerging opera genre, closely related with folk song and ditty, especially tea-picking opera in Qupai style so far. Wuning tea-picking opera as one of excellent local operas in Jiangxi Province and provincial level intangible cultural heritage keeps strong local flavor and specializes in expressing modern life.

## 1. Brief introduction of Wuning tea-picking opera

### 1.1 Artistic characteristics of Wuning tea-picking opera

Wuning tea-picking opera as one of four Han people's opera genres in Jiangxi province has formed unique style and strong local flavor under the influence of local regional features, national custom and simple folk culture. Wuning tea-picking opera centered in Wuning widely spreading and covering Xiushui, Ruichang, Yongde, De'an, Jiujiang, Fengxin, Jing'an, Tonggu in Jiangxi, and Yangxin, Tongshan, Daye, Huangmei, Wuxue county in Hubei, is one of cultural and entertainment activities active and exhibited in local areas. Especially in Tang and Song dynasty, Wuning black tea was well known at home. At the time of Emperor Kangxi in Qing dynasty, tea planting and tea picking were prevailing customs. The folk song "It drizzles during time of Ching Ming, people are busy with rice transplanting and tea picking" has truly reflected the laboring condition of people in Northern Jiangxi at that time.

Tea picking as a labor act evolves into a relaxed and joyful collective labor and entertainment activity after containing art, melody, leisure, entertainment and fitness. In special festival or time in rural areas such as at the time of widespread tea tress in March and harvesting, people sing in the tea forest with the joy of harvesting. Mountain songs and ditties sang by them are in vivid form and rich contents expressing the joy of labor and love between men and women. Some are short, some are long songs for storytelling and narration. After a series of evolution of speaking, singing, dancing and playing, it finally forms a complete and unique art form, which is Wuning tea-picking opera in the bud.

### 1.2 Evolution and development of Wuning tea-picking opera

Wuning tea-picking opera was developed from the tea-picking songs of people who pick tea-leaf with the movement form from tea-picking dancing after artists' creation and innovation characterized with local Wuning features. Wuning located in Mufu mountainous area is rich in tea-leaf. As tea-picking songs prevail, tea-picking playlet has formed gradually, called "Sanjiaoban". Wuning tea-picking opera spread to Hunan, Hubei and other places in Jiangxi earlier in Emperor Qianlong of Qing dynasty, and developed with unique characteristics after artists' recreation and innovation. Wuning tea-picking opera was influenced greatly by Jiangxi in terms of folk style, culture and education due to the location facing to Yangxin, Huangmei of Hubei province, so similar tea-picking opera emerged. The elevation and development of Wuning tea-picking opera has promoted cultural, artistic and educational exchange and development in perimeter zones. Tea-picking opera in Huangmei and Yangxin and tea-picking opera in northern Jiangxi influence each other and constantly enrich the aria and performance art, and greatly enrich the opera genre and artistic expression mode

respectively.

Wuning tea-picking opera started rapid development at the time of the emerging of two genres, Shanghe genre and Xiahe genre. It is divided into the upstream and downstream of Xiuhe River divided by living cluster area, with the outstanding feature that, tea-picking opera in upstream emphasizes performance art but the downstream stresses the art of singing technique. So there establish their own unique styles respectively. Meanwhile, both influenced by the essence of Hubei Han Opera, they have enriched original performance techniques and artistic expression mode, with some acrobatic fighting action integrated, such as "Xunyang Le", "Wuning Dao Guang Zhi", and "Tea-picking in December" with complete expression forms of Sheng, Dan, Qie, Jing, Mo and Chou roles.

Evolvement and development of Wuning tea-picking opera contains following stages: (1) from tea song to light drama, represented by "Xunyang Le" and "Tea picking in December", "Sister-in-laws pick tea"; (2) from dilemma to rebirth, represented by "Qijie down to earth", "Children's marriage"; (3) Sunset glow in Mufu Mountain, represented by "Poor Cuihua", "Wujin Ji", "Yu Chenglong's private visit"; (4) edit art features, represented by "Shi Yin Pei", "Gua Pao Ji", "Qiao Mai Ji", "Gao Qian Liang"; more than 100 selected scenes such as "Sister-in-laws pick tea", "Dadidquanfu", "Raro digging", "Yangmai", "Bansun"; (6) Honors. "Banger shengsheng" awarded silver prize, organization reward and screenwriting reward in the first National Boxing Playset Art Festival, the first award in international stage. 49 opera genres, 64 plays participated in the first National Boxing Playset Art Festival. Most plays were performed by national and provincial level troupes. Some are national-level first grade performers awarded Plum Blossom Prize and Wenhua Prize. "Banger shengsheng" is the only play performed by county level cultural center, as well as the only playset performed by Wuning. Wuning tea-picking opera was originated earliest from tea songs in northern Jiangxi. Most musical materials are from local people, closely related with dialects, thus it has strong local features.

## **2. Analysis on the basic components of Wuning tea-picking opera**

Wuning tea-picking opera is rich in its music. According to the legend, there are nine ban and eighteen qiang. Nine ban refer to Daoban, Menban, Yaoban, Erliuban, Kuaiban (huogong), Jiban, Sankuban, Shuban eighteen qiang refer to Beiqiang (Chaqiang, Huqiang), Hanqiang (Xianqiang), Tanqiang, Shanghe Sipingqiang, Xiahe Sipingqiang, Mansi Pingqiang, Maiqiang, Duikouqiang, Dongluohunqiang, Caiqiang, Daoqingqiang, Boqiang, Gaoqiang. Other qubai music and beat music are important components. So the music includes four parts: Zhengqiang, Zadio, Qupai and Beat.

## **3. Zhengqiang**

Zhengqiang is the main part of the vocal music which is widely used in formal operas, including Beiqiang, Hanqiang, Tanqiang, and Huaqiang". Characteristics are: complete organizational structure, strict norm of the context, fixed beat in music and strong theatricality, rich expression. They can be selected and used according to plot and changed with different beats on the basis of the music. Tunes can connect and link with each other.

(1) Beiqiang Pingban: Female and male, both are in four degree tone-changing relation in different gong systems (I.e. Shengqiang Erhu1-5 xian equals to dan qiang 5-2 xian). In addition, there are Hualian Beiqiang which are used in long context for narration to express joy, anger, sadness and happiness. Singing speed is about 60-120 beats per min, in 4/4 beat. Dingban starts singing in a form of seven characters' sentence and ten characters' sentence. There are declension sentences with different length. It is made up by six musical sentences, Brief diagram is as follow:

Qiban sentence (the first sentence)-the second sentence-II: the third sentence—the fourth sentence II Zhongyun sentence (the fifth sentence)—Luoban sentence (the sixth sentence). The third and fourth sentences are the major music sentences of Beiqiang, which can be changed for repeated singing. Beiqiang Pingban can be transferred to Duiban, Erliuban, Kuaiban, Sankuban, Shuban,

Sanban, etc, linked with Tanqiang, Luohunqiang, etc.

(2) Hanqiang is used for sad and execution place and dream place. Shengqiang and Danqiang are the same, as five tone shangdiao. Erhu dingxian (1-5), singing speed of about 45-90 beats per min in singing style and accompanied by drum, similar with Beiqiang in its musical sentence structure and using method. But due to different singers, there are some differences in the preceding and following sentences (the emphasized tone level is different) Hanqiang can be transferred Duiban, Erliuban, Kuaiban, Sankuban, Shuban, Sanban, etc., but cannot be used for qiban and luoban. It is not as complete as Beiqiang system, so it is less used than Beiqiang.

(3) Tanqiang is used in sad places. Erhu dan qiang 5-2 xian), made by two sentences with a singing speed is about 45-90 beats per min, in 4/4 beat, singing in a form of seven characters' sentence and ten characters' sentence. It is usually used together with Beiqiang Sankuban, and can be transferred to Beiqiang or Benqiang through Lunhunqiang as an end.

Luohunqiang is used for sad or desperate place with tone form musical sentence structure, singing speed, beat form, Erhu dingxian similar with Tanqiang. But the previous sentence can be transferred to the medium of Beiqiang.

(4) Sipingqiang includes Shanghe sipingqiang and Xiahe sipingqiang (also called sipingqiang) is between formal opera and playset. Shanghe sipingqiang is gongdiao type singing, Erhu dingxian 1-5; Xiahe sipingqiang is zhengdiao type singing, Erhu dingxian 5-2; Music is made by four sentences, with similar Sheng and Dan singing technique, with the singing speed of about 80-120 beats per min, in 2/4 beat, singing in a form of seven characters' sentence and ten characters' sentence, accompanied by huaqiang drums. It cannot be connected to other qiangban but can be transferred to Duiban and Shuban according to emotional demand. It can be used in happy and exciting drama places.

#### 4. Zadio

Zadio is the general name of Wuning tea-picking opera, Two playsets and Three playsets. There are special qiang in each playset. The ditty has strong local features and life flavor, usually in five tone scale, in 2/4 beat. Melody is made by the preceding and following sentence or four sentences, with many padding syllables and complex sentences, in a form of five-character, seven-character, ten-character sentences. It is accompanied by drums when singing which is funny and lively. It maintains strong musical and dancing feature.

Qupai music plays a important role in setting stage atmosphere and cooperating stage performances and roles' emotions. It is an important component of Wuning tea-picking opera. Most Qupai in this book are Suoa qubai. In the past, hall drum, big gong, cymbal and yun gong are used to set the atmosphere. But now we add Banhu, Erhu, Pipa, Sanxian, Dihu, Dahu, Yangqin, Dizi, Suona and other musical instruments and select devices according to the plot. The form of expression is diversified to greatly enrich the expression of Qupai.

Percussion music part can be used in singing and performance. The former is usually used as intermediate move. The latter has strong music tempo and plays an important role in cooperating role's body, movements and emotion. In the past, percussion instruments are simple including bass drum, big gong, cymbals, small gong, and horse gong, operated by three people. Now there are more than ten kinds including Ban drum, Yaban, Mubang, hall drum, big gong, Beijing gong, small gong, cymbals, small cymbals, water cymbals, horse gong, yun gong, and finger cymbals, etc.

In the past, Wuning tea-picking opera was accompanied by yaban and hall drum and other percussion instrument which is rough and original. In 1954, orchestral music accompaniment was added by using Banhu (president instrument), hu, pipa, sanxian, dihu, dahu, yangqin, dizi and suona, etc. which have enriched the expression of opera music and strengthen the effect of opera music. Later, under Party's guideline of "All flowers bloom together and innovate", Wuning tea-picking opera has obtained qualitative after entering in the 21st century with the rapid development electronic musical instrument. Young generation fond of electronic musical instrument has injected new blood into the traditional art by using electronic technology meanwhile they have created a batch of life-oriented excellent operas so that Wuning tea-picking opera can be well developed and inherited

on the basis of maintaining original traditional art. We hope Wuning tea-picking opera will shine splendidly in the future.

## References

- [1] Luo Siying. Investigaiton and studies on tea-picking opera in Jiujiang, Jiangxi, Shanxi Normal University, 2009.
- [2] Liu Bin, Yang Lin. How to create excellent tea-picking dancing work in southern Jiangxi, Journal of Beijing Dance Academy, 2009(03):77-79.
- [3] Jiang Hao, Zhang Wenjing, Function and development of tea-picking opera in new rural cultural construction—take Nanchang tea-picking opera as the example, Great Master; 12th issue, 2012
- [4] Hu Bo, Studies on the development and cultural connotation of tea-picking opera, Nanchang University, 2012.
- [5] Gong Guoguang. Modern character and morals and histrionic reconstruction of Jiangxi tea-picking opera, Jiangxi Social Science, 01, 2002.
- [6] Liu Bin, Yang Lin. How to How to create excellent tea-picking dancing work in southern Jiangxi in new era, Journal of Beijing Dance Academy, 2009(03):77-79.
- [7] Huang Wenhua. Three steps of performing southern Jiangxi tea-picking dance, Journal of Gannan Teachers College, 2014(10), 42-43.
- [8] Qu Hongmei, True meanings in jade, splendiddness among people—primary analysis on the compiling features of "teaching material and practice of southern Jiangxi tea-picking dance, Journal of Beijing Dance Academy, 2014:102-105.
- [9] Wanghuan, Xiong Ying. Studies on the inheritance and development of Jiangxi folk dancing education—take southern Jiangxi tea-picking dance as the exampl, Art Sea, 2012(09), 127-128.
- [10] Lai Dan. View of the formation of southern Jiangxi tea-picking dance from tea culture, Journal of Beijing Dance Academy, 2013, 21(06), 98-101.
- [11] Lai Dan, Chang Junyong, Chen Binmao. Studies on teaching art of southern Jiangxi tea-picking dance, Journal of Gansu Radio & TV University, 2015, 25(04):74-77.