

## The History and Inheritance of Qingyang Opera

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### ABSTRACT

Qingyang Opera once occupied a pivotal position in the history of Chinese opera and Jiangxi-Po culture, closely related to Hukou's geography, humanities, economy, folk customs and religion. However, after this ancient drama was almost dead in Hukou, it was slowly and widely sung. From the aspects of history and reality, internal and external, this paper dialectically analyses the reasons for the prosperity of Qingyang Opera in Hukou, hoping to provide a valuable reference for the protection and inheritance of traditional culture such as Qingyang Opera in Hukou.

**Keywords:** History, Inheritance, Jiangxi Hukou, Protective measures, Qingyang Opera.

### Introduction

Qingyang Opera was formed by combining local opera tunes, local pronunciation, folk music and religious music after the Yiyang tune flowed into Qingyang, Anhui Province, in the Jiaping period of the Ming Dynasty. It inherited the artistic legacy of ancient opera in the Ming Dynasty, continued the legacy of ancient Qingyang opera in the Ming Dynasty, and entered Jiangxi from southern Anhui in Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, which greatly influenced the Jiangxi opera.. Qingyang Opera nurtured the formation of Sichuan Opera, Xiang Opera, Hui Opera, Gan Opera, Qing Opera, Peking Opera and Huangmei Opera.

### Evolution and spread of Qingyang Opera

Qingyang Opera has been running through the Ming and Qing dynasties for hundreds of years, spreading widely and influencing greatly, and is popular at home and

abroad. After its heyday, it began to go to local areas, took root and sprouted everywhere, and gave birth to nearly half of Chinese operas, for example, Qing Opera in Hubei, Sichuan Opera in Sichuan, Hui Opera in Anhui, Xiang Opera in Hunan, Hukou Gaoqiang and Duchang Gaoqiang in Jiangxi, Liuzi Opera in Shandong, Yangqiang in Jiangsu, Wu Opera in Zhejiang, Qingxi in Henan, Qingxi in Shanxi, Chaozhou Opera in Guangdong and Puxian Opera in Fujian. There are also Peking Opera and Huangmei Opera, which are inextricably related to Qingyang Opera, forming a huge 'Qingyang Zhuqiang' system.

In June 2006, the State Council approved and published the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as 'intangible cultural heritage') lists determined by the Ministry of Culture, with a total of 518 items. Jiangxi Hukou Qingyang Opera is on the list. Qingyang Opera belongs to traditional drama performance art. 'Intangible cultural heritage' is an important part of cultural heritage, a witness of our

history and an important carrier of Chinese culture. It contains the unique spiritual value, thinking mode, imagination and cultural consciousness of the Chinese nation, and embodies the vitality and creativity of the Chinese nation. Protecting and making good use of intangible cultural heritage is of great and far-reaching significance for inheriting and carrying forward national excellent cultural traditions, enhancing national self-confidence and cohesion and promoting the construction of socialist spiritual civilization. After the Hukou County Party Committee, the county government and the county cultural bureau successfully applied for the national 'intangible cultural heritage', they quickly increased their protection efforts. However, the results were not obvious due to the lack of professional talents and theories.

Qingyang Opera has experienced a decline from prosperity to decline for hundreds of years. Up to now, there are only a handful of its descendants. Even in Hukou County, it is difficult to see a performance of Qingyang Opera. The main reason is that it is old and replaced by new operas. The lack of influential descendants is not easy for young people to accept. Due to the impact of the modern cultural market, the market is relatively small, and the troupe is only organised by weddings and funerals in rural areas or migration. It is difficult to renovate ancient music, with a low penetration rate and difficult innovation. Although Qingyang Opera is listed as a national intangible cultural heritage, its inheritance and development are still not optimistic. In order to let younger people know about Qingyang Opera, learn to sing Qingyang Opera, carry forward and inherit Qingyang Opera and protect national art treasures, Jiujiang University and Hukou County signed a cooperation agreement on inheriting Qingyang Opera art, which is the first school in Jiangxi to jointly protect and inherit national local opera. The monograph of Qingyang Opera was compiled, excavated and published together. As a teaching material for students to learn Qingyang Opera, music majors offered compulsory courses in Qingyang Opera, and old artists of Qingyang Opera were hired to sing and perform in schools. Teachers and students could accept the skills of old artists and make efforts to inherit Qingyang Opera, an ancient art.

### **Protective measures and methods**

Jiujiang University is the only undergraduate college in Jiujiang City. When we learned that it was very difficult to protect and inherit the local 'intangible heritage'—Qingyang Opera, we actively took effective measures and did a lot of work. Specifically, it is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

### ***In-depth research to understand the protection and inheritance status of Qingyang cavity***

In order to understand the current situation of Qingyang Opera protection and inheritance, Gan Xiaoqing, president of Jiujiang University, personally led the relevant professional and technical personnel of the school to Hukou Cultural Bureau and Hukou and Pengze County villages for investigation four times and mastered a large number of first-hand information. For example, through investigation, we know that in the 1980s, among more than 110 village-level peasant troupes in Hukou County, there were 48 Qingyang Opera Troupes. However, with the death of old artists, the art of Qingyang Opera in Hukou County was almost lost. Needless to say, until now, inheritance protection still faces many difficulties: The data preservation environment is very simple, and the preservation means are relatively primitive. Many handwritten scripts in Guangxu period can only be simply placed in file boxes. Many audio tapes are the original vocals of the deceased artists and have not been burned and backed up. Once degaussed, they will not be remedied. The investigation also learned that Liu Chunjiang, director of Hukou County Cultural Bureau, has done a lot of research on Qingyang Opera. Under his leadership, he has collected 131 handwritten plays, 36 original plays, 448 music cards, 64 single-fold and miscellaneous plays and 50 Yu Ben music materials. The county has also set up a professional troupe of Qingyang Opera and so on (An., K., 2007).

Based on the data of survey, the school held a special seminar and decided to set up Qingyang Opera Art Research Institute, which belongs to 'Lushan Culture Research Center'; established Qingyang Opera Exhibition Hall; actively declared relevant national and provincial research projects and strove for research funds; hired Liu Chunjiang, the director of Hukou Cultural Bureau, as an adjunct professor, signed a contract with him, and implemented the corresponding salary; and incorporated the relevant contents of Qingyang Opera into the teaching plan and local teaching materials for art college students to study and research. This series of effective measures greatly promoted the research work of Qingyang Opera.

### ***Attach importance to community construction and protect inheritors***

Professor Zhou Xing of Aichi University in Japan, a famous 'intangible cultural heritage' protection expert, once said: 'No matter how loudly we shout the slogan of intangible

cultural heritage and how much money and manpower we invest, it must be implemented in the community on which it depends, and it must be extended or maintained in national life' ( Liao & Zhou, 2007) The inheritance and protection of any 'intangible cultural heritage' is, first of all, the human factor. In order to protect the inheritors of Qingyang Opera, Jiujiang University actively assisted Director Liu Chunjiang in applying for the national 'intangible cultural heritage' inheritor for the old artist Yin Wuhuan and achieved success. On June 13, 2009, Jiujiang University and Jiujiang Cultural Bureau co-sponsored the unveiling ceremony of 'Yin Wuhuan Institute of Qingyang Opera Art' undertaken by Hukou County Culture, Radio and Television Bureau and Fulong Township Government of Hukou County. It was grandly held in Yijia Village, Fulong Township, Hukou County. Yin Wuhuan, an old artist, taught the students of Qingyang Opera Art Troupe to sing Qingyang Opera on the spot, which made the students deeply feel the artistic charm of Qingyang Opera.

#### ***Set up research groups, declare scientific research projects at all levels, and standardise project management***

In order to make the research on Qingyang Opera more scientific and standardised, our school has set up three research groups on Qingyang Opera to study Qingyang Opera from different angles or sides (Li, 2006). From 2007 to 2008, two research groups successfully applied for provincial humanities and social sciences projects and the other successfully applied for national art projects and won a total of 10,000 yuan of project funds. Among the members of the three research groups, there are cultural bureau cadres with rich research experience and long-term roots in rural communities, highly educated teachers who understand vocal music, vocal music theory and opera theory, and foreign language teachers who understand English and Japanese and management cadres of art colleges. This provides a talent guarantee for the in-depth study of the subject.

#### ***Establish Qingyang Opera website and build a research and resource-sharing platform***

In the information age, if the traditional drama culture is not combined with modern media, it is impossible to protect and develop it effectively. In order to strengthen the publicity and evaluation of Qingyang Opera and create good research and public opinion environment, our research group has established a website of Qingyang

Opera, which consists of columns such as Qingyang Opera, Qingyang Opera and Religion, Qingyang Opera and Folk Customs. In order to introduce 'Qingyang Opera' to international friends who are concerned about China's 'intangible cultural heritage', expand the international influence of 'Qingyang Opera' and prepare for the project to apply for UNESCO's 'Representative Works of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. Our research group has also translated some materials about Qingyang Opera into English and Japanese, etc.

#### ***Compile teaching materials and implement class hours***

Since 2008, Jiujiang University has incorporated Qingyang Opera into the training plan for music majors in Art College. Incorporating the essence of Qingyang Opera into local teaching materials makes Qingyang Opera, an excellent 'intangible cultural heritage' reflecting national spirit and folk characteristics, have a legal status in university music teaching (Zhou& Gong, 2012). This measure plays a great role in promoting teaching activities, popularizing protection knowledge, cultivating protection awareness and creating a good atmosphere for the whole school to protect 'intangible cultural heritage'.

#### ***Establish Qingyang Opera Exhibition Hall***

After the active efforts of the research group, Jiujiang University set up Qingyang Opera Art Exhibition Hall in the spring of 2008 and sorted out the data collected by our research group into the exhibition hall for the use of the research group and other researchers. Currently, 36 original plays and more than 60 single-fold plays have been collected. There are 448 music cards, 118 hours of singing music cards (boxes), 40 Facebook cards, more than 1,000 photos, more than 20 performance CDs, 40 Yu Ben singing music scores and more than 100 drama materials related to Qingyang Opera (13 provinces). It also collects ancient music symbols, religious ceremonies, origin and evolution, class troupes, stage couplets, artists' careers, and preliminarily completed the preliminary work of a series of research topics such as 'Jiangxi Qingyang Opera Examination', 'Jiangxi Qingyang Opera Music' and 'Jiangxi Qingyang Opera Repertoire'.

Qingyang Opera has entered the campus, allowing us to get in touch with this ancient art that has been circulating for hundreds of years (Zhu, 2014). In the eyes of contemporary young people, Qingyang Opera is difficult

to learn, sing, understand and perform, which is not as easy to understand and sing as Huangmei Opera, but the inheritance and development of Qingyang Opera are urgent. Enhancing the pulse of the times and the breath of life of ancient singing and promoting the development of this ancient singing naturally falls on the shoulders of educators and literary and art workers (Teng, 1962).

People's cultural life is diversified with the development of society, and appreciation habits have also changed.. To inherit Qingyang Opera, we must strive to carry forward our own advantages, accept all foreign musical expressions, methods and means that are conducive to expanding ourselves, integrate them into our own blood and turn them into new elements that constantly improve, strengthen and develop ourselves.

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