

# Study on Yangqin Accompaniment in Chinese Gansu Local Operas

## --Taking Qin an ditty as an Example

Lin Wu

Graduate School of Language and Culture, Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar  
11000, Mongolia.

### Abstract

As the main accompaniment instrument of Qin'an ditty, yangqin plays an important role in Qin'an ditty, which is also known as "Qin'an Old Tune", a local speciality of Qin'an County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province, and has an intangible cultural heritage with a history of about five hundred years. It has an important historical position in folk music. Through the introduction of Qin'an ditty and the role of yangqin in Qin'an ditty, combined with the influence of folk yangqin artists on Qin'an ditty, the use of yangqin in Qin'an ditty is analysed, aiming to provide certain help and guidance for later learners.

### Keywords

Qin'an Ditty; Yangqin Accompaniment; Folk Art.

## 1. Introduction

"Qin'an ditty is a typical rap art in national folk music culture, which has its own unique style and distinctive colour from the point of view of its lyrics and song structure. Yangqin, as the main accompanying instrument, has its own unique sound, which is rich in the delicate musical characteristics of Jiangnan for the accompaniment of Qin'an ditty, and the softness and gentleness are the characteristics of the music of the quartet, which is comparatively speaking lacking in the boldness of Northwest China's character.

"The musical structure of Qin'an ditty is complete, the content of the songbook is rich and has strong vitality, with beautiful tunes, simple language and lively melody. With its complete musical structure, rich and varied content, and self-contained system, it has been listed as an intangible cultural heritage by the state, and has become a very complete and systematic art of rapping and singing. The formation and development of "Qin'an ditty" has gone through a process from few to many, from simple to complex, and from coarse to fine. before the 1930s, "Qin'an ditty" had more than forty songs and ninety repertoires, but due to the yangqin's role in the accompaniment of Qin'an ditty, it was not possible for it to be performed in the same way as the other songs. However, due to the fact that the yangqin was used in the accompaniment of Qin'an ditty, it was necessary to solve the practical problems. With the continuous evolution of society and the development of folk music culture, the yangqin needed to be improved and developed to maximise the role of its special accompaniment.

## 2. The origin of Qin'an ditty

### 2.1. Historical Development of Qin'an ditty

Qin'an ditty is an ancient art of song circulating in Qin'an County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province, and is also a unique art form in Qin'an County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province. It is said that this folk art with northwestern characteristics was formed in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, about 500 years ago, in Qin'an County, the ancient Chengji boundary. The creation of Qin'an ditty is closely related to the local geographical environment, level of economic development, cultural

level and historical tradition. "Qin'an County, in terms of its history from ancient times, is said to be the hometown of Fuxi and Nuwa, and it is said that Li Taibai, the Poet Immortal, has his ancestral home here. There are these 4,000-7,000 years of cultural traditions here with a long history and a long history"[1]. So the local and nearby people, in order to differentiate the Meidu ditty from the foreign ones, called this ancient theatre art "Qin'an Laojiao".

## 2.2. Artistic Characteristics of Qin'an ditty

The artistic characteristics of Qin'an ditty are divided into lyrics and sentence structure and song structure. The lyrics and sentence structure, the complete repertoire, the rich and diverse repertoire, and the structure of the lyrics of the songbook, the rhyme scheme and the flat aversion also have a certain law and method. The structure of lyrics and sentence structure is rich and varied. The structure of singsong words has various forms, and the sentence structure is neat and free, except for five, six and seven words. Lyrics according to the fixed tune to fill in the lyrics "rely on the ancient tree" changes in the content of the plot and changes, is relatively disciplined, sometimes in the same tune, because of the tune and the story of the different, the number of words in the sentence is also different.

Song structure, Qin'an ditty and Qinqiang traditional theatre is different, Qin'an ditty is detached from the Qinqiang, quzi opera and other operas, bold, high-pitched, exhilarating and drums, singing, rapping and other ditties of the magnificent, miserable, more performance of a and Jiangnan ditties, soft, crisp, winding rhyme. The melody of its ups and downs, the long and wide sound, the fine and round singing voice, the elegant and gentle modulation and the plot and singing style are new and innovative. The singing style is a combination of tunes, divided into "major tunes" and "minor tunes", and the commonly used tunes are "Yue tune", "Yue tail", "wear the tail", "wear the tail", "wear the tail", "wear the tail", "wear the tail", "wear the tail" and "wear the tail". "Yue tune", "Yue tail", "through the word Yue tune", "four or six Yue tune", "Ten Mile Pavilion", "Man Jiang Hong" and more than forty others. "Ten Mile Pavilion", "Man Jiang Hong", etc. There are more than forty of them. The lyrics of Qin'an ditty are mostly long and short sentences, and there are also five-word, seven-word, eight-word, ten-word sentences, etc. The tunes using the long and short sentence styles are Ex-Sorrow Palace, Descending Night Fragrance, Horse Head Tune, etc., and the tunes using the seven-word sentence styles are Lower Counting Down, etc. The lyrics are concise and rhythmic, and the rhythm is very good. The lyrics are concise, rhythmic, generally a rhyme to the end, catchy, and have a sense of musical beauty and melodic sense of music. Lyrics format is rigorous, structural integrity, the number of sentences of each song, the number of words in each bureau are strictly regulated and cannot be violated. The tunes are lofty and popular, the melodies are concise and rich, and the singing style is unique. "Qin'an ditty is sung in the local dialect, and the performance is mostly in the form of one person playing and singing by himself, or two people singing in pairs, or many people playing and singing separately"[2].

## 2.3. Singing Forms and Accompaniment of Qin'an ditty

The singing form of Qin'an ditty is sung in the local dialect of Qin'an County, which is a unique local art with a melodious singing voice. It is mainly composed of three parts, i.e., the cadence, the key, and the accompaniment. As the masses like to ask to see the music of the intangible cultural heritage of folk music, Qin'an old tune in Qin'an County is widely circulated, especially in Xichuan, Xingguo, Guojia, Ye Bao and other five townships have a broad base of the masses, circulating in the fields, or playing and singing in the streets and lanes, and has become the masses of people's labour after work to entertain and family and friends gatherings to exchange feelings of a unique form of singing. The melody of the melody is deep and staccato. Its long and broad sound and beautiful singing voice. The general art of rapping and singing are said and sung, said and sung in combination with the characteristics of the "Qin'an ditty" is only sung, but did not say, this and its twangy tunes are closely related, but also with its local dialect. The

performance form of "Qin'an ditty" is simple and easy, and usually there is no fixed place for singing. Whether it's a small lyrical section of the plot of a small opera or a big section with a more colourful storyline and more varied characters, it's all sung by opera singers. And all of them are men. The singers hold "wrestling" (i.e., touching the bell) while singing, while using the touching the bell to strike the rhythm, the rhythm of the beat with the changes in the music and feelings of the changes can be a beat, but also in the musical interlude when a beat a number of strikes.

"Generally speaking, the accompaniment of Qin'an ditty is the yangqin, erhu, zhongruan and flute as the main accompaniment instruments, because these instruments are suitable for playing Qin'an ditty with their gentle and rich Jiangnan flavour. In addition to the melody, various ornamental notes, overtones, diatonic and partial chords can be added as its playing characteristics, with a beautiful, high-pitched tone and characteristic expressiveness. Yangqin artists with skilful playing skills can give full play to the performance of yangqin accompaniment in the singing of small songs, using a wide variety of accompaniment features to play a suitable role in supporting the singing, but this kind of accompaniment is mostly found in the New Year's Eve or large-scale concerts and other activities. Compared with large-scale stage performances, the Qin'an ditty singing form is simple and easy to operate. During festivals and celebrations, people who love to sing Qin'an ditty will gather together in the streets, alleys, courtyards or lanes. There are a lot of first month juggling stove fires in the area. ditty has become an indispensable performance for joint large-scale dry-boat running, lion dance, rice-planting songs, high platforms, dry boards, Qinqiang and other programmes, and even in some places, ditty has become the main way and content of the social theatre and the annual meeting. Many ditty lovers and folk artists, gathered together, so that ditty in the life of the rapid progress and spread, the family has a happy event, singing ditty small team or artists will take the initiative to go to the door to sing a small song to help the scene, to express the mood of celebration and create a joyful atmosphere" [3].

"Qin'an ditty, the art of rapping and singing, has gone through a course of more than five hundred years, gradually becoming complete and mature, and has been able to be widely disseminated and sung, and has endured for a long time, which is inseparable from the concerted efforts of the local literati, various celebrities and artists, as well as from the popularity, inheritance, and popularity of the "Qin'an ditty". "This is inseparable from the joint efforts of local literati and scholars, various celebrities and artists, and the people's preference for the Qin'an ditty, its inheritance and protection, and the increase of its popularity. At the same time, it is also directly related to the painstaking work and efforts of some non-professional or professional music workers who have searched for it, sorted it out, and understood it and researched it.

### **3. Formal Development and Artistic Characteristics of Yangqin Accompaniment in Qin'an Minor Songs**

#### **3.1. Formal development of the yangqin in Qin'an operas**

The form of yangqin in Qin'an ditty exists in the form of the main accompaniment, and the accompaniment of yangqin is only passed on orally, and it also exists in the form of improvisation accompaniment in Qin'an ditty. The special tone and form of accompaniment of the yangqin make the singing of Qin'an ditty more flexible.

In the initial stage of Qin'an ditty, the yangqin was not the main instrument, it only appeared in the performance as one of the accompanying instruments. During this period, the yangqin was played in a relatively simple way, mainly for playing chords and simple melodies. "The Gradual Sublimation of the Yangqin in Qin'an ditty"[4], With the development of Qin'an ditty, the yangqin gradually became one of the main musical instruments and gradually brought out its

special musical charm. During this period, the playing skills of yangqin were greatly improved, and the way of playing was more diversified, so that a variety of different musical effects could be played. The innovation and development of the yangqin in Qin'an ditty, in the modern Qin'an ditty, the yangqin has become a very important musical instrument, and its playing skills and musical expressiveness and other aspects have been greatly improved. When playing Qin'an ditty, modern yangqin performers can not only play traditional repertoire, but also create new repertoire, which enriches the musical content and form of Qin'an ditty.

To sum up, the development of the yangqin in Qin'an ditty can be summarised as the initial application, gradual sublimation and modern innovation and development. The development of the yangqin is inextricably linked to the efforts and innovations of the players, and its development has also provided a richer and more diversified way of musical expression for the performance of Qin'an ditty.

### 3.2. Characteristics of Yangqin Accompaniment in Qin'an ditty

Playing the strengths and effects of "accompaniment", the yangqin, as the main accompanying instrument of Qin'an ditty, has a bright tone, in various regions, the eight-tone yangqin is from f1-e2, the ten-tone yangqin is from d-g3, the twelve-tone yangqin is from c-e3, and the variant yangqin is from G-g3. The bass area has a fuzzy, strong and low pronunciation; the middle area is soft, dry and translucent; the treble area is soft, dry and translucent; the treble area is dry and translucent; and the treble area is soft, strong and translucent; the treble area is dry and translucent, The middle register is soft, dry and translucent; the treble register is crisp and bright; and the highest register is more high-pitched and tense. The middle and treble registers are mainly used when playing melodies, and the treble register is sometimes touched, but rarely used. The lower register is less often used for melody, and more often used as a chordal and harmonic backing. Yangqin is suitable for playing fast music, and is best suited for expressing light, lively emotions and feelings of joy and happiness. In Qin'an ditty, it is used in conjunction with Erhu, Zhongruan, bamboo flute and other instruments to fully reflect the warmth of Qin'an ditty. In the process of the whole stage art performance, the overall performance of the effect of the expression of the role, and the yangqin as the main accompaniment of the Qin'an ditty, in order to achieve for the performance of the ditty colourful and colourful effect. The yangqin can only assume the role of the singer in the whole performance process, but in the whole Qin'an ditty band, the yangqin and other musical instruments cooperate with each other, play a complementary, rich Qin'an ditty musical expression, increase the sense of fullness of the whole band, and according to the changes in the plot to increase the playing skills and emotional characteristics, to produce the artistic effect of Western instruments can not be realised.

The introduction of yangqin accompaniment in the stage performance of Qin'an ditty not only brings into play the auxiliary nature of "accompaniment", but also integrates with the whole performance at every appropriate moment and fully cooperates with the singers and other accompanists. In the stage performance of Qin'an ditty, the yangqin accompaniment must be matched with every detail of the sung drama, such as appropriate emotional mobilisation of the characters, and in the accompaniment of the free beat singing of loose plates, soft plates and fast plates, it is more appropriate to use the rotary tone to accentuate the atmosphere of its performance, which is characterised by the increase of the orchestra's power of presentation and performance effect when sung with other musical instruments to individual statements, and the narrowing of the dramatic contradictions in the performance. The characteristics are that when singing with other instruments to individual phrases, it increases the presentation and performance effect of the orchestra, and reduces the dramatic contradictions in the performance; while in the accompaniment of fast-paced cantata, the distinctive tone of the yangqin and the characteristics of other instruments can be used to add the position of playing harmonies, so as to make the orchestra's performance effect more full, and the original plate

cantata is generally able to express the gentle and delicate emotions, for example, the use of a variety of treatments for wheel tones and chords can enrich the overall presentation of the orchestra's performance[5]".

#### 4. The Contribution and Inheritance of Yangqin Artists in Qin'an ditty

Qin'an ditty originated in Qin'an County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province. During the Tang Dynasty, it was derived from "Qinqiang", combined with folk music in the Song Dynasty, and flourished in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, forming a kind of folk music widely circulated in the area nowadays. The yangqin has become an important accompanying instrument in Qin'an ditty. Among them, the inheritance and innovation of yangqin artists have continuously promoted the development of Qin'an ditty. Through continuous study and innovation, generations of Yangqin artists have formed folk music characterised by local music. It is mainly manifested in three aspects. Firstly, the combination of qin and music. Yangqin artists according to the Qin'an ditty song style and Yangqin improvisation accompaniment combination, there is no specific sheet music, to artists years of experience and the degree of Yangqin technology to complete the work, excellent Yangqin artists can greatly enrich the singer's mood, adding musical effects. Secondly, it has been passed down through generations. They use the oral-heart teaching method to pass on their skills and experience to their descendants. Moreover, the excavation and collation of Qin'an ditty songs by yangqin artists have made it possible for Qin'an ditty to be better inherited. Third, repertoire innovation. Yangqin artists have the dual roles of performers and creators, and as local people born and raised in Qin'an, the innovation of the repertoire of Qin'an ditty is also constantly collated and excavated, and the combination of Qin'an ditty and folk dances and music makes the content of Qin'an ditty richer.

Qin'an ditty inheritance also appeared some challenges and difficulties. It is mainly manifested in three aspects. First, as a national folk music, Qin'an ditty, protection work started late, weak foundation. And the yangqin, as the main accompanying instrument developed in parallel with the Qin'an ditty, the inheritance and development of the yangqin artists have also been hindered. According to the principle of excavation and protection of living culture, Qin'an ditty should be rescued. Secondly, there is a certain bias in the understanding that Qin'an ditty cannot adapt to the modern development needs, so it is important to correctly deal with the relationship between folk music and modern music, and realise its innovative development in Qin'an ditty. Thirdly, Qin'an ditty, as an intangible cultural heritage, has the problem of the inheritor's broken generation. With the passing away of the old generation of artists, resulting in the loss of the songbook; Qin'an ditty can not give artists or inheritors to bring little economic benefits, so that many artists to find another way out and other phenomena. Nowadays, many places have recognised the importance of the protection of Qin'an ditty in practice, and have increased their efforts to establish a more perfect protection system for intangible cultural heritage. This also provides better opportunities for the inheritance of yangqin artists.

#### 5. Conclusion

Through the study of the accompaniment of yangqin in Qin'an ditty, "Qin'an ditty", as an intangible cultural heritage, has a gentle and lingering singing voice and a kind of simple beauty, which was commented by the famous poet "Li Rulun", "in the hard west, there is such a wonderful sound, which has the beauty of Kunqiang". The famous poet "Li Rulun" once commented that "in the hard western part of the country, there is such a wonderful sound, which has the beauty of Kunqiang". The study of the accompaniment of yangqin in Qin'an ditty is to inherit and carry forward the beauty of traditional music and make it shine. Qin'an ditty in 500 years of inheritance, after many evolutions, not only singing more beautiful, tune is also more rich, more important is to attract people's attention, not only the local opera workers



actively inherit research, but also many folk artists in-depth study, all kinds of professional accompaniment instrument researchers to explore. This paper on "the use of yangqin in Qin'an ditty" is not only a collation of information, more people learn to study, understand and like, but also proves the cultural roots of Chinese folk music, but also proves the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

## References

- [1] Fang Huiqing. "Origin and Characteristics of Qin'an ditty[J]. Tianshui Normal College Music School. 2008:1-2.
- [2] Ma Yingjun. The Beauty of Chinese Yangqin - From the Rooted Cultural Soil[J]. Tianjin Conservatory of Music, Department of Folk Music.2022:2-3.
- [3] Li Yue. History and Changes of Yangqin Development[J]. Yangzhou University School of Music.2022:1-2.
- [4] Zhang Xia. On the role of pipe organ in opera accompaniment. [J]. Theatre House.2023(02):3-4.
- [5] Han Xiumin. Analysis of singing dialect of "non-heritage" Qin'an ditty [D]. Sichuan Normal University,2016:2-4.