

# ACCEPTANCE AND IDENTIFICATION: THREE BRIDES WHO DID NOT HAVE CRYING MARRIAGES

## THE NARRATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RE-OBSERVATION OF THE “KUJIA” (哭嫁) MARRIAGE CUSTOM IN WESTERN HUBEI DISTRICT, AND THE DISCUSSION OF THE MUSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE “SONGS OF KUJIA”

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### Abstract

When paying a return visit to the Laifeng (来凤) and Xianfeng (咸丰) in western Hubei province, the author occasionally found three “Xin Guniangs” (新姑娘, means “brides”, called by local people) who did not marry according to the “rules”. Therefore, the article concerns about the minority which did not have crying marriage for various reasons. It was and is lack of attention. And the article extends to come up with questions as follows. How should we look at those “Xin Guniangs” who cried and those who did not, when now the time-space relationship has changed profoundly? What statement should we make when it comes to the acceptance and identification of whether to/ can people have “Kujia” or not? At the same time, the author discusses the musical attributes of “the song of Kujia” by analysing the emotions and reactions of the people who perform “songs of Kujia” when they were asked about whether to agree that “crying” is “singing” or not.

**Key Words:** Identity, Laifeng , Xianfeng , Xin Guniang , the song of Kujia

### PREFACE

I went to Laifeng and Xianfeng in Hubei Province as a leader of a group of postgraduate students from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in July 2016. The purpose of our trip is to make field observation for the research topic “The Restudy of the Marriage Customs of the Tujia (土家) People in Western Hubei”. During the interview, an interesting phenomenon attracted my attention. While brides usually would have crying marriages according to the traditional custom of Tujia people in western Hubei, we occasionally found three “Xin Guniangs”, who did not “obey the rules”, that is to say, they did not cry on their marriages. The relative introduction to this “not crying” phenomenon is rarely seen in the past. At the same time, the relative study from the academia is also scarce. Therefore, it occurred to me that the three cases we coincidentally noticed are actually representatives of a minority which lacks attention. It consists of people who did not manage to cry on their marriages due to various reasons when the majority of people take it for granted that everyone should cry on marriage due to the ritual and custom. What this minority shows are questions worth further discussing: how should we look at those “Xin Guniangs” (brides) who cried and those who did not, when now the time-space relationship has changed profoundly; what statement should we make when it comes to the acceptance and identification of whether to/ can people have “Kujia” or not; at the same time, how should we explain the emotions and reactions of the people who perform “songs of Kujia”, “Xin Guniangs” or we can say “brides”, when they were asked about whether to agree that “crying” is “singing” or not.

### CHAPTER 1: COME INTO CONTACT WITH “XIN GUNIANG”

The first stop of our interview is Shemihu (舍米湖) Village in Baifusi (百福司) Town, Laifeng County. The “Xin Guniangs” that received the interview were contacted and arranged in advance by the Village Branch Secretary and Village Head Peng Chengjin (彭成金), who was in charge of the Cultural Heritage

Project of “Kujia” ceremony and hand-waving dance, also in charge of our reception. In order to enable us to conveniently watch the “crying Xin Guniang” (another name of “Kujia” called by local people), Village Head Peng arranged to meet four about seventy-year-old “Xin Guniangs”, who cried on their marriage when they were young, to perform the “songs of Kujia” in a huge newly-built hand-waving dance hall. For the purpose of receiving some extemporaneous, “natural” information, we did not abide by the timetable to hurry to watch the “Kujia” performance, but rather chatted randomly and casually with those “Xin Guniangs” and had basic acquaintance with their birth, family background and life experience. When the performance began, the “Xin Guniangs” went to the hand-waving dance hall, put down the small chairs and sat opposite each other. The four “Xin Guniangs” are Zhang Ancui (张岸翠) in white shirt with embroidery, Tian Ermei (田二妹) in white-and-grey plaid shirt, Zhang Jinbi (张金碧) in rose red top with pattern, and Zeng Qianzhi (曾前芝) in white T-shirt. Seen from the appearance, they had no difference from the ordinary old women in the village. They wore plastic slippers or low-cut low-heeled cloth shoes and tied up their silver-grey hair casually. The deep wrinkles on their faces told their actual age. After taking their seats, some of them put their knees together, some of them crossed their legs or some of them even kicked away their slippers gently and put their bare feet on the stone ground directly. Before the performance, the four people all declined to cry first out of modesty, after a while, they began to perform according to the usual way. Originally, no matter when they declined to cry or when they started to cry at first, their behaviour was still frolicsome. But soon, the situation has changed. They were not just performing but crying genuinely. Later, they cannot stop crying and wailing and their tears fell like rain. Seeing this, we were also very moved. We began to wonder why “Xin Guniangs” would cry so sentimentally and self-devotedly. Is it because they thought of the same emotion as when they were young? Or are there other reasons? “Xin Guniangs” said they seldom cried like this in the usual performances. They did not explain why. So, we could not understand the “secrets” behind it. However, we speculated that maybe it is because we communicated friendly with them before the performance, or maybe it is because the female students, who were just like their granddaughters, listened to their stories amiably and naturally, so that it was different from the usual performer-and-audience atmosphere.



FIGURE 1: The four “Xin Guniang” were performing “Kujia” (photo by the author).

## CHAPTER 2: DISCOVER THREE “XIN GUNIANGS” WHO DID NOT HAVE A CRYING MARRIAGE

The three “Xin Guniangs” who did not have a crying marriage were found coincidentally. It was unexpected to know about the people who did not “Kujia” and hear their stories. The three “Xin Guniangs” were Xia Fengxiu (夏凤秀) the League member, Zhang Ancui the daughter of the landlord, and Wang Bingxiu (王丙秀) the child bride who was literate and anti-feudal respectively.

It was accidental to learn about Xia Fengxiu’s experience of not having “Kujia”. When we were watching the performance, a woman was peeking behind the door, which was different from other people who just walked into the hall directly. She attracted my attention and by intuition, I thought this person must have some stories. Hence, I walked in front of her and asked why she would not come into the hall and watch the performance. But she smiled, shook her head and waved her hand, saying “I will not come in, not come in”. She even equivocated, hid her face and smiled when I asked her if the “Kujia” ceremony was very lively in those years. At this time, a man, who was also standing by the door and watching the performance due to the pesticide box on his back, told me the story of Xia Fengxiu altered the old customs and had a revolutionized wedding. He said that in those days, Xia Fengxiu was very prestigious for her uncle was the secretary of the commune. In order to lead the new fashion of marriage and set the example for destroying the old by establishing the new, at the day she got married, Xia Fengxiu not only wore a straw rain cape and bamboo hat, but also put hoes on her shoulder. She held The Little Red Book in her hand and shouted quotations from Chairman Mao. Listening to the old stories, Xia Fengxiu laughed without words, but kept saying: “Those were past things”.

At Shemihu Village, during the communication with “Xin Guniangs”, we found Zhang Ancui was the most outgoing and active. We could hear her bright and clear laughter even from twenty meters farther. She was also a bit different from other “Xin Guniangs” in clothing. Printed sparrow and totem patterns scattered on her white shirt with waving lines. The delicate crystal buttons on the front showed the fine quality of the clothes. The golden earrings, the bracelet and the ring fitted her disposition. What’s more, despite the wrinkles on her face, her smooth skin, her regular teeth and her unconstrained smile showed her vigour and energy. It is hard to perceive that she was actually a grandmother of a twenty-year-old grandson. In fact, Zhang Ancui was already sixty-six years old, and her two daughters and two sons were all married. She also had several grandchildren. She still has five sisters, four elder brothers and two younger brothers around her parents’ home. We noticed that whenever we asked about the situation when she got married, she always widened her eyes unnaturally, frowned and open her mouth, responded smartly by asking: “When did I get married? Even my grandsons are older than you!” Perhaps it was because we all surrounded her, which made her a little bit embarrassed, she reluctantly said: “You all laugh at us. The past things are not that funny.” After saying this, she turned her head shyly, squinted and laughed out loud. The person who sat around us explained that actually Zhang Ancui did not have “Kujia” ceremony when she got married because she was the daughter of a landlord and her family had much land, which meant her family background was not good at that time. Zhang Ancui said: “We, landlords’ daughters, were not allowed to ‘Jizu’(ancestor worship), not allowed to ‘Bei’(Be carried out of the house to marry), not allowed to ‘Baijiu’(banquets). It was those poor and lower-middle farmers who were allowed to ‘Jizu’ and ‘Bei’.” “Not allowed to ‘Jizu’” meant “not allowed to offer sacrifices to ancestors”; “not allowed to ‘Bei’” meant her brother was not allowed to carry her on the back to send her to the husband’s family; and “not allowed to ‘Baijiu’” meant “not allowed to have wedding banquet”. Therefore, her relatives and friends could not accompany her. And since her brother was not allowed to carry her on his back, then there was no lively activity when she got married, that is to say, the marriage did not hold any ceremony. According to Village Head Peng Chengjin, the day that Zhang Ancui got married, snow was falling heavily in the mountain area. Owing to the absence of ceremony and company, she had to stagger in the heavy snow all by herself, heading to her husband’s home. Compared with the common, lively crying marriage, Zhang Ancui’s wedding seemed to be miserable and dismal. But Zhang Ancui said she “had no complaint”, “had no grievance”, “did not cry much” and her “mind is open and wild”. Fortunately, the distance between the two families’ houses was not very far, so she could often go back to her mother’s home. Hence, she jokingly said: “There was no need to cry.” However, in speaking of the experience and feelings of “Kujia”, the facial expression of Zhang Ancui turned from enthusiasm into a little bit disappointed. She squinted and stared at the ground, recalling something we

did not know. Even so, she insisted that she did not feel aggrieved about not being able to cry at that time. Until later, her daughter did not cry at the wedding, either. In Zhang's words, it was "merry and happy", "delighted and joyful" to get married; the make-up made the person a "flower-like bride", "beautiful bride"; the bride can also "ask for red envelopes", so there was no reason to cry. Although Zhang Ancui simply talked a little about her own experience, what confused us and made us contemplate is that those customs and rules of "Kujia" that she told about vividly and those jokes she recited imitatively, were actually not her experience. Now we understood that she deliberately used witty remarks to deal with our questions and avoided to recall and to talk about her history, her experience of marriage. Only we chatted about her mother's home that she began to open her mind gradually. No one really knows what deep in Zhang Cuixia's mind has experienced in that era. No one can know the feelings of a bride who could not have wedding banquet and was not permitted to have the lively "Kujia" ceremony which everyone else could enjoy. Even later when people were free to marry without the words of a matchmaker, Zhang Ancui's daughter still could not choose the crying marriage due to the sensitivity of the social environment.

The third "Xin Guniang" who did have crying marriage is Wang Bingxiu who was found in Yangdong Township. According to Wang's own words, she "was born in the old society and grew up in the new society". When she was eight years old, she was arranged by her parents to be a child bride in a Zhang family. After liberation, the sixteen-year-old Wang went to school for two years. She did not get married with the Zhang family as promised. Wang said: "I look down upon that Zhang family." Later, she met her husband now by other people's introduction. At that time, her husband was a soldier in the army. He wrote a letter to ask his brother to find a wife for him. Therefore, someone introduced him to Wang Bingxiu. Wang was very willing to marry him, so she wrote a letter to express her mind to him immediately. Although Wang Bingxiu was educated for two years, she knew only a few Chinese characters and was not very good at writing. Still, she bravely wrote a letter with many wrong Chinese characters. Besides, she found a place with great difficulties to take a photo of her and sent it along with the letter. It was a letter like this that established the two people's relationship. Wang Bingxiu said, her husband told her later that when he saw the letter, he was sure that she was the one he wanted. In 1955, they got married. Her husband's army was in Shandong Province, so Wang Bingxiu moved from Yangdong Township in Xianfeng County, Western Hubei Province to Shandong. Wang said they had the "new style marriage" without "Kujia". She said: "The wedding we had in Shandong was all about just a few bags of candies on the tables. They took the candies one by one. The people in the army did not care about the formalities that much." Wang said at that time she was the only woman who did not have crying marriage, "because [she] needed to break the 'old-fashioned idea' and destroy the feudalism." "So, I definitely would not cry," said Wang. Whenever she told us the experience of not having "Kujia", her voice was full of bravery and indifference, even showed a little bit pride.

### CHAPTER 3: SOME QUESTIONS TO BE REFLECTED ON

The three "Xin Guniangs" who did not have crying marriage all have their own reasons. By observing these phenomena, we come up with some questions that need further consideration.

They all have private pain that is unspeakable. Xia Fengxiu, a progressive youth, wore a straw rain cape and bamboo hat, put hoes on her shoulder, held The Little Red Book in her hand and shouted quotations from Chairman Mao when she got married. Her uncle was the secretary of the commune and herself was League member. She led the new fashion of "destroying the old and establishing the new", so she impassionedly gave up crying. Zhang Ancui, the landlord's daughter, had a bad family background. She was the descendant of the "class enemy" and "object of dictatorship" of the proletariat, so she had no right to cry. Wang Bingxiu, the child bride, was promised by her parents to a Zhang family when she was eight years old. She did not like her future husband and was not willing to marry him. But she went to school for several years, so she was a little bit educated. She wrote a letter to the handsome young man who served in the army, made independent decisions for her love, and went to Jinan to have marriage by assigning a few bags of candies. She disdained to cry.

The reflections are as follows. There are few researches before pay attention to the minority of people



who do not have crying marriages. They are neglected in the cover of the “Kujia” custom. Although today we should respect the objective reasons for not having crying marriage, we should also be aware of the shortage of the social and cultural care towards this minority.

Specifically speaking, the Youth League member Xia Fengxiu’s special behaviour was the representation of demanding progress and changing customs of that the special time. Zhang Ancui was born involuntarily in the landlord’s family so she had no right to cry. Wang Bingxiu was educated and conscious and her behaviour was the expression of resisting the arranged marriage, of escaping the bondage and of pursuing the independent marriage.

But it is worth discussing that whether those historical or traditional phenomena that do not exist now should be explained and reflected under the new historical conditions. Still, we shall take the three “Xin Guniangs” as examples. Nowadays, how should we define the anti-traditional behaviour of changing customs, destroying the old and establishing the new of the Youth League members? How should we consider the “injustice” of the landlord’s daughter cannot “Kujia” though the landlord class does not exist anymore? What role does the anti-feudal educated rebel plays in the traditional customs? Today, it seems that not only the traditional phenomena should change, but also the “spectators” who observe and deal with them.

At present, we need some kind of cultural consciousness and reflection which based on the historical attitudes.

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE IDENTIFICATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CRYING OR NOT**

The chain reaction of identity relation: the self and social identification of the three “Xin Guniangs”.

Identity is originally a philosophical and logical topic. However, the most common identity phenomenon, which is in the sense of social system, includes social class, rights, power, interest and responsibility. Everyone in the society has multiple identities, and most importantly, the social system of identity often contains value preferences (Zhao Tingyang 2003: 16).

It is a common sense and identity in Tujia people of western Hubei that every woman should get married and every marriage needs crying. Based on such identification, people constitute an identity community. Xia Fengxiu, the guard of the revolution, transformed social traditions. Encouraged by the “anti-trend” spirit, her refusal to cry on her marriage is a resistance to the identity community of “old traditions”. Zhang Ancui, who was not able to cry on her marriage, was not accepted by the community. Therefore, what she could only do was to endure such exclusion. Wang Bingxiu thought crying on marriage is “superstition”, so she disdained Kujia and was unwilling to cry. She independently and deliberately disagreed the community’s identification.

Seeing from a present perspective, is the former standard of whether one can be accepted by the community in agree with the standard now? Besides, how should we interpret it if the identification standard back then is not same as the present? Of course, the fact is these past experiences no longer form any real impact on the interviewees as time goes by. Yet we still face a lot of questions to think about, considering how the academia looks upon this special period of history.

As a theoretical framework was used the separate identification and the explanations based on the “identity” theory (Bloom 1993).

Here we can give explanations from two perspectives: one is cultural identity, and the other is the value of “crying”.

Theoretically speaking, one’s cultural self is not fixed through a time dimension. The question “who am I” can at least be divided into “who I used to be”, “who am I now” and “who will I become”. When people are understood under an essentialism attitude, they are judged based on “who they used to be” as the essence is presumed as “to always be like this”. The essentials have more or less the general thinking pattern of “origin of family background theory”, and thus it is detested by all those people who try to change their destiny. On the contrast, using a standard of “who will they become” reflects a typical

modernist idea. Although such consciousness of identity is comparatively real, it has little relation to the cultural self, which is the issue in the focus of this age. It is “who I used to be” and “who I will become” that are closely related to the cultural self (Zhao Tingyang 2003).

We have observed during the field trip that for the overall Shemihu villagers, their acknowledgement of “Kujia” culture and pride in mentioning the “crying bride” may derive from the fact that their perception of “Ku” (to cry) is more than the nature property of a crying behaviour. Their crying not only means sadness, but also means “education” to some degree. After watching “Ku” that is “prepared”, “arranged” and finally “getting serious” in the hand-waving dance hall, we began to think about several methodological questions: How much autonomy should field observers have? What is the condition of the autonomy and the self-consciousness of the observed? When the autonomy of the observed is confined to some degree, how should observers face and interpret this? When seeing the “Xin Guniangs” cry bitterly to perform “Kujia”, people are bound to pay sympathy on them. However, in order to present this cultural heritage and publicize the local marriage culture, they must repeat countless marriage rituals, which is supposed to be held only once in their life. Being watched and interviewed by scholars, journalists and tourists over and over again, what kind of “identification” is pursued in such repetitive crying (even some of them, such as Zhang Ancui, did not cry in the past)? From another perspective, as the director of the local cultural tourism program, Peng Chengjin is considered to be the leader and “person who has knowledge” by the villagers. He is the one who publicizes the local “Kujia” culture of the mass media and the society, and he therefore contributes to the local tourism economy. Because of that, the “Xin Guniangs” approve and agree his deeds and are willing to obey the “arrangement” of him or the “upper section” (here it means the relative local government or organization). Besides reserving their “who I used to be” period in their own real history, “Xin Guniangs” acquiesce to be “shaped” into the condition of “who I will become” (including the reality). Therefore, Zhang Ancui, who did not really experience “Kujia”, learned and practiced it under the premise of accepting “the past” “unregretfully”. She has become an outstanding “Kujia” performer, who can both narrating and singing. When she presents “Kujia” to outsiders, she can tell the jokes orderly and sing “song of Kujia” effortlessly once she covers her face with a handkerchief. The scene is vivid, but also artificial. From the perspective of naturalism, Zhang Ancui’s “non-primordial” performance is a kind of distortion to some extent. What she “performs” may be the sound of a certain bride crying in her marriage, or maybe she imitates the posture of a particular crying bride. Therefore, if we did not talk about her parents’ condition and know by accident that she actually did not cry, no one would suspect that Zhang Ancui has any difference compared with other “Kujia” performers. Although the cliché she talks or “is asked to talk” is partly false, it is not overly wrong in our view. Just imagine, being imposed on an identity of “landlord’s child”, she was an outsider who did not even have the right to “Ku”. Hence, after watching four “Xin Guniangs” performing “Kujia” in hand-waving dance hall, other three performers talked fluently about their first experience being the crying bride except Zhang Ancui. At that time, Zhang Ancui’s vivid face suddenly lost vigour, and her eyes wandered among her friends like Peng Jumei and Zhang Jinbi, crumpling her handkerchief absentmindedly. When looked at us, she just smiled awkwardly. Such embarrassment may derive from the fact that her built-up, self-identified fictional Kujia was revealed. In such situation, Zhang Ancui, who was supposed to and willing to, but was not allowed to cry, lost her “position” at once.

## CHAPTER 5: CRYING OR SINGING? THE “MUSICAL” IDENTITY OF “SONG OF KUJIA”

After reviewing the existing studies, we can see that the “crying voice” of “crying bride” (Kujia) is often named as “Song of Kujia” and regarded as a “musical” phenomenon. The reason why it is a kind of “song” is that “Kujia” has its tune and melody and therefore conforms to the external presentation of a musical standard. For an observer who is not the person involved in “Kujia”, it is reasonable to treat the sound condition in “Kujia” ritual by using simple musical consciousness. Such phenomenon can be called a shared “musical” identity on the basis of certain group’s (mainly the musical academia) common identification, in other word, the “musical” identity in the self-expression of intellectual academia community.

According to the identification theory, identity can be shared by people. The result of that is people who share the same identity will take action together to preserve and enhance their mutual identification. (William Bloom 1990) If we agree to this theory, it is apparent that the relevant research that studies “song of Kujia” under “musical” identity is a kind of “act” and “defence” of the people in academia who share the identification that “Ku” is a kind of “music”. However, from the perspective of those participants of crying marriages, whether the tune of crying can be considered as “music” is not their major concern. Their mutual identification is whether the crying is presentable, decent and conforms to the local etiquette. Crying, being their concerted action, functions to preserve and enhance their common identification to a “social norm”. The stories narrated before trigger a question: what kind of identification do these “Xin Guniangs” seek through their crying? In addition, what we should pay attention to is that when we look at this “musical behaviour” in a whole marriage ritual structure, such stereotyped, regular, normative crying which can be seen as music: is it a kind of singing performance containing fundamental musical attributes that can be appreciated, or is it a natural ritual behaviour with normative tunes? If the answer is the latter one, then apparently to name this “musical behaviour” that has such strong sense of ritualism and lasts for several days as a kind of “song” is far-fetched, for it understands and analyses “Kujia” by taking it out of the complete ritual structure. Therefore, the participants of “Kujia” are neither possible to constitute a consensual foundation with scholars nor reach an agreement with them on the “musical” properties of “Kujia”.

According to those “Xin Guniangs” we have interviewed, the crying in “Kujia” is due to the reluctance to leave their parents, relatives, friends and places they grew. Therefore, in the several days before the wedding, the most important task for a bride is to cry: cry for parents, uncles, brothers, sisters, even for the matchmaker. Whoever or whatever the bride meets, she should cry for that. Crying here should not be interpreted simply as an action. It can be a condition, a spirit or a realm of thought. It is also a form of the social rule, a ritual, a kind of emotion, a representation of lifestyle and cultivation and so on. The “Xin Guniangs” of Shemihu village told us that in the past, the bride cries in her bedroom several days before the wedding. After crying for her parents, she will cry for anyone who comes to congratulate her for the wedding. Since the bride is wearing a red bridal veil and cannot see anyone, the bridesmaids have to run between the living room and the bedroom in order to deliver messages for the bride. They would tell the bride which person is coming, so the bride can prepare to cry for him or her. If the crying is appreciated, this person will also cry together with the bride, expressing their friendship to each other, or he/she will give the bride a red envelope called “comforting money”. According to Du Quzhen (杜曲珍), the eldest daughter of Wang Bingxiu in Yangdong (杨洞) township, a bride must cry in her wedding. If she doesn’t cry, she must be a “not promising” daughter without being “properly educated by her mother”. The rules of Kujia should be taught by the bride’s mother. If the mother is not familiar with that, the rules must be taught by an aunt or other female elders, and the teaching normally starts from 10-15 days before the wedding. The main content is the appellations in the crying, crying for father, mother, aunts, uncles, for instance. Before the wedding, the bride has to cry for three nights. In the first night she cries with her own family members, and in the second day when her husband’s family comes to present the wedding gift, she cries for her uncle and the matchmaker. In the third day, everyone in the village will come, and the bride must cry for every person she meets. “In traditional rules,” Du Quzhen added, “for each one who comes to her bedroom, the bride must cry in his or her name. If she did not cry for someone, that guest will feel that he or she was ‘looked down’ by the bride. In this case, the guest will not only refuse to give the gift money but also speak ill of the bride to neighbors. That is to say, the bride must not omit a single guest during the whole process, and there are also many norms in it. For example, the guest who is mentioned in the crying must give back some gifts; otherwise he will be ‘criticized’. Normally the guest will give a little gift money. If he or she does not have money, the guest can give something like a towel or a handkerchief instead. If he or she does not even have that, the guest should return a salute by crying back, speaking some blessing words such as ‘may you be happy and prosperous’ or ‘may you have many children and grandchildren’.” Du Quzhen also said that there are some special rules in crying for the matchmaker. First, if the matchmaker is an elder from the bride’s own family, just as her condition, then the bride should not cry. Second, the crying for (or complaining) the matchmaker should only be made on the second day of “Kujia”. If a bride still cries for (or complains) the matchmaker after the second day, she will incur misfortune for herself. (When we interview Wang

Bingxiu's family, they told us a story about a bride and her mother who later suffered misfortune because the bride did not cry for the matchmaker according to the rules.) Besides, if there is no wedding, one should not cry at home without proper reason as the tune of "Kujia" is same as that of "Kusang" (crying at the funeral), except for the words of the two crying that is different. When interviewing Tian Ermei in Shemihu village, a member of our research group asked her about the difference between her "Kujia" when joining another family and her daughter's "Kujia" when leaving the family. Peng Dazhao, the husband of Tian, answered: "Wedding is a happy ceremony, but why must we cry? Actually, 'Kujia' is just a kind of etiquette, and it means nothing more." "At the time when we get married, we cannot see each other before the wedding. Once the bridal sedan chair comes into my home, I must marry this woman." For marrying Tian Ermei, the Peng family prepared a house, a bed and some new clothes, but they did not have money. When the eldest daughter of the Peng couple got married, there were two younger brothers in the home, so her crying includes their names, too. It was the comparatively older brother who carried her in his back and sent her out of her bedroom. When being asked who taught her daughter the way to "Kujia", Tian Eermei said: "The bride's crying ('Kujia') needs not to be taught. When there is 'Kujia' in other people's houses, my daughter will go to see it. 'Kujia' is actually speaking in one's heart, expressing one's true feeling. It would be dull to teach 'Kujia' to a bride. 'Kujia' is to cry according to the atmosphere and one's real conditions, and a song taught by someone else cannot be sung well. 'Kujia' is same as the folk song: both of them come from one's own heart, and they haven't fixed lyrics or tunes. They are both very casual." When being asked "do you call it 'song of Kujia', or you have other names for it", Peng Dazhao answered: "no one calls it 'song of Kujia'. 'Kujia' is to cry, and a song is to sing. Crying and singing is different, so 'Kujia' is not a kind of song but itself an art. Besides, if it's not for a wedding, one cannot cry at home. Crying is not allowed if there is no wedding or funeral in the family." When chatting with Wang Bingxiu and her three daughters (the eldest, the third one and the seventh one), I asked: "Do you sing in 'Kujia'?" The third daughter was confused and asked back: "Sing? Sing what?" Wang Bingxiu answered to me: "Who have the time to sing? All I did is crying." Then, I replied: "But someone said your crying sounds like singing sometimes." They all said: "Alas! That is the case now, that performance thing." Wang also said: "I can cry for one or two sentences. Let's see if that is singing." Since crying at home is a taboo, we all stopped her.

Obviously, "Xin Guniangs" do not have the concept of "Song of Kujia". However, there is a phenomenon that needs to be explained: in a "Kujia" which lasts for several days, there are apparent differences and variations in the "crying sound" and "crying manners".

First, there are huge differences and variations in the external forms of the crying sound and manners. To be specific, sometimes the crying between mother and daughter or among the best friends can be very emotional. The people are crying in great sorrow and shed rain of tear, expressing the misery of leaving each other. Take "Tomorrow We Will Be Nine Hills Apart" as an example, this song of "Kujia", which is included in the CD "Song and Earth" ("Tudi Yu Ge" (CD), WIND MUSIC, 2001) / ('土地与歌' (CD), 台北: 风潮有声出版有限公司出品, 2001 年.), Sounds basically like irresistible crying that has little relevance with "song". On the contrary, in the same situation, sometimes the crying sound is mild and has tunes like music, and the manner also looks like singing. From the section presented below, we can see the traces of singing clearly:



## 哭妈妈



Figure 2: Notation by Wang Yue, 2016.

Second, the differences and variations in crying sound and crying manners are closely related to the arrangement in the wedding time and process. They are also strongly influenced by the degree of intimacy in the interpersonal communication. According to the rules, the bride and her family members, relatives and friends should begin to cry several days before the formal wedding. In this process, the content of crying, just as the text before has described, includes not only the relationships between relatives and friends expressing emotions but also greetings to guests and complaints to the matchmaker. From the perspective of the time, in the night before the wedding, the bride and her family members (especially her mother) has a stronger grief of separating compared to earlier days. At this time, their crying sound and manners are most frequently presented as natural weep, and the bride's eyes usually become red and swollen because of the severe crying. Compared with such situation, in the several days before, the grief is weaker because many guests will come to celebrate and congratulate, and the bride has to deal with them. Here the sound and manners of crying tend to be like singing, which has to do with more musicality.

The process described above can be presented in following chart: (Liu Hong 2003: 24).

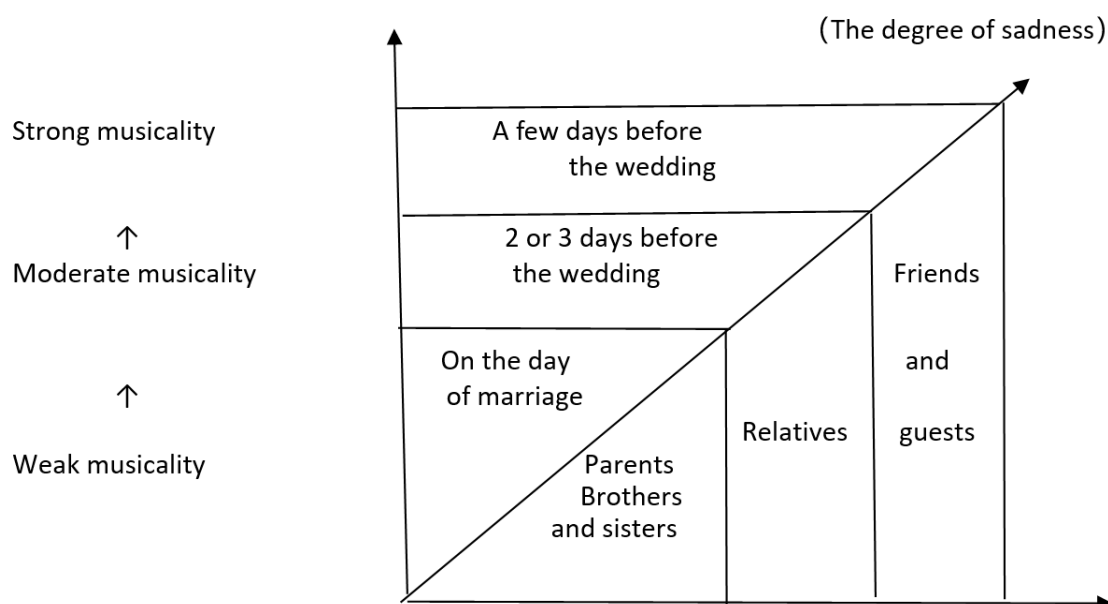


Figure 3: Chart of the degree of sadness: Cry → Like singing and crying → Cry in the song (Chart by the author).

This coordinate graph shows the relation of crying sound and manners with the strength of grief:

The horizontal axis presents the tendency from almost natural crying (the most severe occasion can be a bitterly wail, like the case in “Tomorrow We Will Be Nine Hills Apart”) and the more rational crying which is like a “song”.

The vertical axis shows the tendency of musicality from the weakest to the strongest in accord with the horizontal axis, which shows from the crying condition to the singing condition.

We can see from the graph that the closer the time comes to the wedding day, the stronger the grief will be. The stronger the grief is, the weaker the singing attributes and musicality of the crying will be. On the contrary, when the crying contains stronger musicality, the sentiment of separating at that time will calm down more quickly. There is an inverse ratio between the two elements.

How should we understand that?

On the one hand, the observers listen to “Kujia” from the perspective of music. So in their ears, the crying has tunes. Does it mean that crying equals singing, and the sounds of crying are songs? So “the song of Kujia” is observers’ musical identification that they think it conforms to the musical standards. But seen from the “Xin Guniangs”, crying is not singing. It is a custom, a rule which should be obeyed by everyone. Crying is crying. It is their mutual identification.

On the other hand, although the participants of “Kujia” do not agree with the observers to take crying as singing, they clearly know that during the process of crying, the sound, the state and the manner of crying do change. They also know that some crying is similar to singing, but based on the nature of crying in “Kujia” custom and the rule that “Kujia” has to be crying, they do not think and identify “the song of Kujia” is named for the crying is like singing. Therefore, though we may see some participants in “Kujia” indeed understand what is “the song of Kujia” called by us, and they even also call it “the song of Kujia”, we should understand they are just echoing us or acquiescing to us. It does not mean that they share the same knowledge and common sense with the scholars in the concept and the fact of “the song of Kujia”. They do not identify completely with the scholars.

At the same time, an undeniable fact is, as the “Kujia” ceremony (or “the song of Kujia”) is commonly known and the social attention raises, the local people and participants of “Kujia” can feel the focus and appreciation from the outer world. They understand why the outsider would take crying as “songs”; therefore, even though the “Kujia” custom has gone now, they would fake it. That is to say, they would pretend to have “Kujia” custom, arrange the demonstration of the traditional culture, which is maybe actually not identified by themselves and the academia, to show their identification to the outside world’s acceptance to their cultural value. For example, the “Kujia” will be performed several times in the tourist attractions, and all sorts of “original”, “natural” and well-trained performances in the traditional culture program (which is exactly what Wang Bingxiu and her daughters said about “that performance thing”) will be shown to outsiders, etc.

## A BRIEF CONCLUSION

Several years ago, a friend of mine went to the desert in Northwest China to do field work. When he saw the workers were washing the gold, he sighed for everyone knows the value of the gold, but few people are aware of the value of those people who bring value to the gold (Wu Yuebei, 1986). If we borrow his thought, we can consider when the value produced by our academic work is identified, do we ever think of whether the observed (no matter people or things) that brought value to our work are identified and respected or not? When the objects of our observation change beyond the will of them (or us), which is we are not willing to see or accept, what kind of attitude did or should we show in the aspect of identification?

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## NOTES AND THANKS

This is the author's project topic conducted through the "Research Center of Traditional Music Culture along the Yangtze River" at Wuhan Conservatory of Music. The purposes of the research topic are as follows:

- (1) We would like to investigate the status of people who had a crying marriage at a specific time period in the current cultural situation, and their feelings about the "Kujia" custom.
- (2) By recording the stories of those people who had a crying marriage, we can narrate and explain how the same people in the different times and spaces transformed social and cultural traditions from the perspective of change.
- (3) How should we consider the relationship between social class and structure presented through the observation whether a person enjoys the crying marriage (or the traditional ritual) or not, influenced by the special social environment in the given time.
- (4) What do those people who no longer cry in their marriage think of their ancestors and these marriage customs and rituals which may seem "bizarre".

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