

The Secret History of a River and a Nation

-- Reading the Full-length Historical Novel "The Yellow River Bends from Here"

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Abstract

Han Qinggong's novel "The Yellow River Bends from Here" takes the life changes in Sujili Village, Xunhua County as an introduction, by telling the life experience and soul journey of three generations of the Osman family, presents a textured national cultural psychology, vividly reflects the historical development course of the Salar nationality in the past 100 years, which has sociological and ethnological value and significance.

Keywords

"The Yellow River Bends from Here"; the Salar nationality; national culture; sociology; ethnology.

1. Introduction

"The Yellow River Bends from Here" is the first novel of the Salar nationality written by Salar writer Han Qinggong, this novel uses Sujili Village on the bank of the Yellow River as a site, and in a chronological way, it panoramically describes changes of the social production, life, marriage and funeral, religious activities, society and politics of the Salar nationality over a century in a chronological way.

"The Yellow River Bends from Here" uses the Yellow River to link the lives of different people in Sujili Village together, condenses the nearly 100-year history of the Salar nationality into the change history in a village. In this view the Yellow River is the mother river of the Chinese nation; it has nurtured the Chinese nation, including the Salar nationality, moreover, it has witnessed the modern changes of an ancient country and the historical changes of the Salar nationality with less population. Han Qinggong wrote in an essay on culture of the Salar nationality, "the culture of the Salar nationality is undoubtedly part of the Yellow River culture, the Salar "this drop of water" rush towards the vast ocean of globalization in the river of Chinese mother culture. [2] This may be the reason why the author named it, so as to show us "the secret history of a river and a nation". As the author wrote in "One Man's Project- Creation Talks of Full-length Novel <The Yellow River Bends from Here>", "The Yellow River is the mother river of the Chinese nation, the Chinese nation that has gone through five thousand years needs a turning point to achieve its great rejuvenation; the Salar nationality, who have lived and multiplied on the Yellow River for 800 years, also need to turn around to keep up with the wheels of the times; as individuals, we need a gorgeous turn in the process of comprehensive building a well-off society and realizing modernization." [3]

The time node chosen by the author is also very clever: from the Salar nationalities' participation in the Anti-Japanese War to the new era of socialist modernization, the novel is easy to closely link the historical narrative of the Salar nationality with the fate of modern China over a hundred years. As Han Qinggong wrote in "One Man's Project- Creation Talks of Full-length Novel <The Yellow River Bends from Here>", this is undoubtedly history's favor for the Salar nationality, the Salar nationality in the deep mountains are fortunate enough to

participate in the great cause of national independence and national rejuvenation in their own way. The ancestors have done magnificent feat for future generations and descendants, as the younger generations, we have the responsibility to present their little-known stories about the beacon. [1] This kind of consciousness make Han Qinggong exaggerate the Salar nationalities' participation in the anti-Japanese history in thick and heavy colours and explore the continuation and inheritance of the Salar nationalities' culture in the form of micro-history. This is a cultural dark corner that foreign writers cannot penetrate. Therefore, as far as the novel is concerned, the construction of the Salar nationalities' culture is obvious, but the novel is not a work that simply sings merits and praises virtues. On the contrary, with the help of the Salar nationalities' participation in the anti-Japanese history, this period of true and once obscured history, "we can make the groups that cannot speak up to emerge from the surface and give them a fair dialectical opportunity in the historical field. A strong sense of reality is presented in the historical narrative, the past, present, and future are not a certain node in the linear evolution chain any longer, but make them become the object of equal dialogue in the open view of history, namely only we are doing a good job of cleaning up and fully realizing that history may repeat in the future, then it is possible to avoid the repetition of "historical tricks" and historical comics. History is still moving forward, and the reshaping and reflection of history will never stop, only poetic writing can give history eternal justice". [2]

The biggest feature of this novel is that the author not only mastered a large amount of first-hand practical information, but also walked deeply into the folks, he interviewed dozens of old people who had experienced the old and new eras, made a lot of field notes, at the same time, he consulted the historical books and records about the Salar nationality. It can be said that by arranging and reviewing folk cultural materials and historical books and records, as well as solid field survey records, combined the text with the field, and depicted the Salar people's survival reality and ideological appearance under the background of the social and economic structural changes in the new era in the form of novel.

Similarly, Han Qinggong's "The Yellow River Bends from Here", through a large number of detailed descriptions of the Salar nationalities' customs and public feeling, constructed a space for the Salar nationalities' culture for readers, presented the cultural landscape of the Salar nationality, revealed the deep psychological structure of the Salar nationality, moreover, it enhanced readers' cognitive impression of the Salar nationalities' literature and literary groups.

2. Explore and Analyze the Salar Nationalities' Spirit

The foundation of novel creation is characters. Whether it is a full-length novel, a medium-length novel or a short novel, the core is to create some vivid, unique, rich and attractive characters, and this is also the criterion for judging whether a novel is excellent or not. "The Yellow River Bends from Here" adopts a realistic creation method, the narrator is the third person, uses an omniscient and omnipotent narrative, and the narrator speaks on behalf of history. And "the realism creative method is a writing technique that expresses life and shapes characters according to the original appearance of life; it emphasizes the authenticity of details and shapes typical characters in typical environments." [1] Therefore, James N ▪ Frey said: "the image of the characters is the cornerstone of the novel, and the conception of the novel comes from this."

In the first part, the novel created some striking and unforgettable characters. For example, Osman, as a representative of the older generation of the Salar nationality, he is full of national wisdom and has the excellent qualities of the Salar nationality, he dare to fight, is pious religion, has strong heroic spirit, self-consciousness of homeland and national identity. He was open and straightforward throughout his life, and the only thing that was wrong was that he sold seconds

at best quality prices when measuring the dung due to a slight error in thought, which made him regret it all his life.

Another typical character in the first part is Osman's son, Han Laifu, who has a relatively introverted personality, this depends on his blood background, his mother is the Han nationality from the Central Plains, so he has both the Salar nationalities' boldness and righteousness and the Central Plains, therefore, he has the openness of the Salar nationality and the mildness of the Han nationality in the Central Plains. He followed the custom all his life and loved quietness, so he chose the life of the blacksmith shop.

Musa is Han Laifu's eldest son, he is particular about loyalty to friends and is concerned about face-saving, but he also has the greedy side of human nature. As written in the novel, he and the villagers went out to engage in sidelines, attempt to fill their own pockets with the remaining money of the sideliners.

Han Zhixing is the second son of Han Laifu, he is the protagonist of this novel, and He is introverted, sensitive, and complicated, he loves the educational undertakings in his hometown and devotes himself to it. As the first generation of Salar men to receive Chinese education in Sugiri Village, he has more profound thinking about the culture of his nation than ordinary people; it reflects the cultural consciousness when contemporary educated youth of the Salar nationality assume historical responsibility, which is the core spirit of the work. For example, when he was the teacher and principal of Sugiri Village primary school, he wrote the history of Sugiri Village, in his opinion, "these written notes are a written practice to awaken the cultural memory of his hometown with his own cultural savings." [2]

The other characters in the first part, such as the sea grandfather, the nose colonel, the Huangshangwa, the bison deputy colonel, Palangbao, the secretary of Hamuri, the captain of Sario, and the idler Heidan also have their own characteristics. Moreover, it portrays the distinctive, vivid and bright, three-dimensional and well-rounded images of Salar women, such as the religiously pious Osman' aunt, the arrogant Aunt Suoya, the virtuous and clean Maimunagu, and the industrious and thrifty Peach Blossom Aunt, the sweet-tempered Gashungu, and the infatuated and persistent Ruguya, Han Qinggong improved the spiritual level and literary taste of his works by shaping these female images, so that his works showed the ecological beauty and natural beauty of the society of the Salar nationality.

In addition, several Han educated youths appeared in the first part, Huo Yiming, an educated urban youth working in Hongtuling primary school, was not only knowledgeable, but also very anxious about the future of the Salar nationality this minority, but Han Zhixing's strong desire for knowledge has changed Huo Yiming's pessimistic view of the fate of the Salar nationality. Moreover, he founded the literary journal "The Soul of the Yellow River", which promoted the emergence of the first generation of poets of the Salar nationality. The popularization of basic education of the Salar nationality benefited from the educated youth like Huo Yiming, and it was inseparable from the assistance of other nationalities to the Salar nationality.

The spiritual qualities of the Salar nationality are highlighted through the creation of these characters, as far as the complete explanation of the spiritual qualities of the Salar nationality is concerned, Han Qinggong believes in an paper about the spirit of the Salar nationality, "the Salar nationality are an open nation; they are very pioneering; have a strong sense of honor; are full of heroism in their bones and blood; have a strong and heroic spirit; are very intelligent, are full of self-confidence; and they have a strong national and ethnic identity." [1] In the end, Han Qinggong summed up the spirit of the Salar nationality into eight words: "self-reliance, openness, tenacity, and courage." However, the formation of the Salar nationalities' spirit is closely related to its special historical and geographical conditions. As Han Qinggong said, "the Salar nationalities' in history does not represent the eternal spirit of the Salar nationalities." [2] "As the Salar nationality come into contact with the outside world and are affected by the

elements of the new era, when the closed door is opened, the ice in the soul boundary is slowly melting. Under the impact of prevalent and fashion trends, people's lifestyle choices are diversified, their pursuit of spiritual values is not uniform, the psychological structure in the traditional sense has begun to differentiate, it is difficult to transplant the parental idea to the next generation without leaving the trace, each person has an independent personality mode, and the judgment of values gradually tend to be individualized. [3]"For example, the young people represented by Musa, they are not read to the status quo, they are always a little unwilling, love tossing, and disagree with the preaching of grandfather Osman and father Han Laifu.

Islam has a special status and role in the social life of the Salar nationality, "religion forged a grand and long psychological model and cultural system composed of psychological structure and national consciousness, it restricts the national character, customs and habits, thinking characteristics, social ethics, moral value, and aesthetic taste of the nation group in the form of hidden history, a strong religious culture is formed." [4] Religious culture has obvious traces on these characters, in a paper on the historical cause and national nature of the Salar nationality, Han Qinggong once wrote, " the Salar nationality believe in Islam and are a nation full of religious feelings. Religion occupies a supreme position in the spiritual life of the Salar nationality, from trivial details of life to solemn etiquette norms, from individual behaviors to collective actions; they are inseparable from the real of religious laws. Religious life and life religion are the basic ways of life for the Salar nationality. "[1] The influence of Islam on the Salar nationality is particularly obvious in Osman, Bison Deputy Colonel, and Han Laifu.

3. Show the Distinct Flavor of the Salar Nationality

Literature is about people's living atmosphere. "The Yellow River Bends from Here" uses the "Along the River during the Qingming Festival" sketching style write the original local customs and practices on both sides of the Yellow River and the custom paintings of Salar society in the last century. The author used much length describe the, scenery, view and customs of the Salar nationality. "When describing the history of border minority areas, national customs are important expression carriers, only by presenting the body of that era can we find the solid material support for the characters' manners, and novels can become a reliable language practice." [2]

These life scenes everywhere embody the Salar people's life pattern of holding together for warmth and helping the weak, which has been formed for 800 years. Han Qinggong once wrote in a paper on thinking on culture of the Salar nationality, "in the past, we needed the support of relatives, friends and neighbors in everything we did, there are very few affairs that one family can do it alone, in this case, people always keep the relationship with the surroundings, they firmly believe that they will ask help for others one day, if they really encounter the difficulties, they hope that others will not look at the jokes from the side. In order to this unexpected idea, people's holding together for warmth like a group of chicks curled up under their mother's wings. In the Salar society, individuals have always relied on their families, families have relied on their clans, and clans have relied on "Kong Mu San". "Kong Mu San" relies on "Zhe Ma Ti", and "Zhe Ma Ti" is a community of interests that maintains the destiny of the whole village, the imam, who represents the 'Zhe Ma Ti', is highly respected. "For example, the villagers of Sugiri build courtyard for nose colonel, the villagers of Sugiri repaired the bridge, and Kelimu and Han Laifu made arrangements weddings for the Huangshangwa, which demonstrated this traditional lifestyle of the Salar nationality.

The marriage, etiquette and customs of a nation embody this national aesthetic idea, aesthetic taste, and the national ideal, desire and pursuit of aesthetics, so the marriage customs of the Salar nationality are, in addition, they highlight the life style of holding together for warmth of

the Salar nationality. The novel spends a lot of space describing the wedding of the Salar nationality, explains the preparation process and the wedding procedure in detail, for example, in Han Zhixing's wedding, Musa sent some young and strong men up the mountain to chop wood two months before the wedding; the Han family prepared lots of materials; Han Laifu raised calves and two goats in the Tibetan Xuhu family as early as possible; Peach Blossom Aunt arranged the day for grinding noodles early; the scene of noodle grinding and oil extraction; Peach Blossom Aunt asked the skillful daughter-in-law help the cook in advance. From preparation to the end of the wedding, the help of relatives and neighbors is inseparable, and it describes the simple rural true feelings in the traditional life of the Salar nationality for readers. Festivals are the long accumulated outcome of a nation's culture, one of the symbols of a nation's identity, and the main form of a nation's self-identity, it contains cultural factors such as a nation's customs, religious beliefs and other cultural factors. The main festivals of the Salar nationality are the Id al Fitr and the Id al-Adjha, the novel describes the Id al Fitr of the Salar nationality in detail, every family is scattered with pancakes and sweets; the younger generation goes to the elder's house to say their greetings to the elders; the men visit grave... details are full of religious rituals, and it's not difficult to enter into the deep psychological consciousness of the Salar nationality from this scene that gives off a strong religious atmosphere.

In addition to the description of these life scenes, the novel uses a lot of pen and ink describe the relationship between the Salar nationality and the Zang nationality, owing to the living pattern of the Salar nationality and the Zang nationality, they have frequent and close exchanges, forming a relationship that is integrated in blood," it is called as Xu Hu relationship." [1] For example, Han Laifu, who often travels in and out of Tibet, can speak fluent Tibetan, and has established relationships with many Tibetans, the most impressive thing is that when Han Laifu's neighbor Yaqubai ran out of food to seek assistance from Han Laifu, Han Laifu let He drove his donkey to a Tibetan village in Laqianggou to borrow grain, after Yaquba arrived in Tibetan village, Han Laifu's Xu Hu saw Han Laifu's donkey and the familiar chain, he lent him a bag of barley, also treat him kindly. The two nationalities also have exchanges on weddings or funerals, when Han Zhixing got married; Tibetan Xu Hu of Han Laifu sent milk and butter.

Because the author has the quality of a life philosopher and his own national attributes and national life background, the description of the Salar nationalities' customs and people in the novel is an obvious reflection of the author's cultural psychology, the author excavates and deeply presents the national cultural psychology, and reconstructs the national spirit through reflection and criticism of the national culture.

4. Follow the Artistic Norms of Novel Creation

Although this novel is fictional, and the geographical space "Su Jili" that are vigorously shaped and constructed is also fictional, however, this novel comes out of historical stories; the author maintains a certain sense of existence in specific location and place, multiple locations can be found in reality, which reflect the author's clear sense of orientation. The geographical environment of the "Sujili Village" in the novel has a certain "expansion", namely when the author describes the "Sujili Village", as the activities and plots of the characters in the story open, from "Sujili Village" to Jishichuan, the scope is expanded step by step, and finally the geographical features of the whole Xunhua area are displayed in full view. For example, Qingshuiwan is the focus of the novel, and Qingshuiwan Poetry written by Han Yuanlin, a contemporary Salar poet, made this land famous in the field of literature, This collection of poems is clear, beautiful and sensual, and is full of the author's love for poetry, life, and home. In addition, Langjia Mountain, Nimalonggou, Suolang County and other places have detailed

descriptions, these details can withstand empirical investigation, and such writing also reflects the distinctive literary geography significance.

Language can best express the writing skills of a writer. Gorky said, "the fundamental material of literature is language-it gives us all the impressions, feelings, thoughts in form, etc., literature is the art of sculptural description through language", [1]"The Yellow River Bends From Here" adopts a simple language style, especially in the dialogue between characters, the author's writing skills are most obvious, "after repeated comparisons, I adopted a compromise method and decided to use Mandarin in the most part-this is the need to complete the narrative, and a small part adopts Shaanxi accent, in order to increase language activity and fineness. This is because many Han ancestors in the Xunhua area came from Shaanxi, and the Salar dialect and the Xunhua dialect close to the Shaanxi dialect formed a kind of tacit that is not clear but can be felt in the mutual penetration". [2] This novel combines dialect, proverb, common saying, and philosophy, presenting a colorful and swaying artistic feature.

The common saying is inseparable from the local culture of a nation; it is not only the reflection of the nation's labor and living conditions, but also the summary of all objective things. In the novel "The Yellow River Bends from Here", the author melts these vivid common sayings into his novel with originality, integrates with his own language, and forms his own unique language style. Every common saying used is a natural press, just right. It shows the unique cultural psychology of the characters in the novel, has received the artistic effect of turning stones into gold, creating a unique cultural atmosphere for readers. For example, "it's as easy to pull hair in butter", "sheep must have leading sheep, the trumpeter is necessary when building wall, and soldiers need leader in battle", "the clouds in the sky, the marriage on the ground", "whether the mountains are not high, only the clouds know; whether a person has the abilities, he will show his ability when encountering things", "there is no place like home", "whether the family has vitality, it depends on the ability of women", "don't loosen the falcon until you see the hare.", "sound soft like wool, hurt people like sword," "the hero rides the good horse, and the good man marries Alima", all have unique local flavor and a strong rustic flavor.

"The oral culture of the Salar nationality is the language and art essence formed by the Salar people over 700 years of history, it is a treasure in the traditional culture of the Salar people, it is the precious spiritual wealth of the Salar people and is also the long-term production, life, and rich imagination crystallization of the Salar people. The." [1] In "The Yellow River Bend from Here", the author take the initiative to intersperse the Salar folk songs as a kind of content in the narration of the novel into the progress of the plot, in order to exaggerate the atmosphere and set off the emotional changes in the inner world of the characters in the novel, it is full of rustic flavor. Such as "wall song", "chain flail song", "wedding congratulations", "cry wedding song", "flowers" and so on. The novel scenes the expression of oral literature of the Salar nationality, presents the most primitive folk songs of the Salar nationality in Xunhua to readers, and highlights the characteristics of local culture and local sentiment that the novel writing has. The author adopts the writing method with narration and discussion, the narrative always maintains a keen observation of the social phenomena of the Salar nationality, and it has the detailed description, exquisiteness, vividness for characteristic of the psychological appearance of the characters, which is full of characteristics. The narrative is full of warmth in suffering, and the warmth is saturated with the writing of suffering. For example, the days when Osman guarded the river beach and the woods, the life of Gushungu's family in the vegetable garden, the south Gansu prairie and the Houshan village after the rain were like fairyland on earth in the author's writing, reflecting the optimistic and positive national psychology of the Salar nationality.

5. Conclusion

"The Yellow River Bends from Here" shows the various distinct traditional customs and etiquettes of the Salar nationality through the narration of the Salar nationalities' survival and development over the past 100 years, it not only has the local characteristics of "custom history" significance, but also has the modern "ethnography" significance; it is the presentation of ethnic cultural memory. It penetrates deeply into the soul of the Salar nationality through symbolic "ethnography" writing; make readers experience the life scenes of the Salar nationality in a specific historical period. This full-length novel turned the once neglected Salar customs and culture from the expression object to the self-expression subject. This kind of "deep description" of the national history and culture reflects the author's historical tracing and reality confirmation of the home village to some extent, and it is an attempt for the author to construct the national spirit from the national history. In addition, the novel not only detailed the customs and etiquette of the Salar nationality, but also described the reality of the Salar nationality living in harmony with other nationalities, respecting each other, and caring for each other; this can enhance people's understanding of the Salar nationalities' culture, promote mutual understanding, respect and trust among people of different nationalities, which has important practical significance.

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