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Historical Source of "Zhang and Li Combined Households" in Taomin Region

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Abstract Folk activities are the most representative form of regional culture, the humanistic care, homeland affection and festival customs that run through them are all vivid and true embodiments of local life. The folk custom activity of "Zhang and Li combined households" is a living inheritance of the historical fact of Mongolian – Han fusion in Taomin region. It takes Shehuo (festival entertainment) as the carrier, and uses rich forms of performance to recognize relatives and worship ancestors. At the same time, as a kind of entertainment and catharsis, it also carries the social function of folk culture, such as maintaining and connecting the emotions between the ethnic groups and neighbors, *etc.* On the basis of field investigation, this paper deeply describes the folk custom event of "Zhang and Li combined households", shows the whole picture of the grand festival, and discusses the ancestral memory, identifies and ethnic integration process of "Zhang and Li combined households" as a cultural phenomenon.

Key words Ethnic integration, "Zhang and Li combined households", Living research

1 Introduction

Intangible culture is the "live" embodiment of national personality and aesthetic habits, which contains the unique spiritual value, way of thinking, imagination and cultural consciousness of the nation. It is not a continuation of statically solidified record, but a living continuation of "innovation" and "creativity". As the most representative form of intangible culture of regional culture, the cultural consciousness and spiritual value carried by folk custom events are the bond that connects emotions between ethnic groups and the basis for maintaining community unity, and are the most vivid and true representation of local life. Understanding and cognition of folk custom events is the premise of local and regional cultural exploration, and it is also the most fundamental way to enter the local culture and life.

The Taomin region is the junction area of the living areas of the ethnic minorities in ancient western China and the Han nationality in the Central Plains, where multi-ethnic cultures have historically converged, and has become the core area for the study of ancient western China's Di and Qiang cultures due to the discovery of a series of prehistoric cultural sites such as Majiayao, Machang, Banshan, Qijia and Xindian. Taomin area covers the Taohe River basin, Western Han River basin, Bailong River basin and Mintai Mountain area in Gansu Province, including the south of Dingxi City, the southeast of Gannan Prefecture and Longnan City in Gansu Province. Geographically, Taomin area is connected with Qinling Mountains and northwest Sichuan Province. Until now, Taomin area is still an important geographical area where multi-ethnic cultures are integrated. The relatively closed geographical environment has created a more primitive and traditional retention of many living intangible cultures. Lintao County is located at the

intersection of Loess Plateau and Qinghai – Tibet Plateau, with the Tao River passing through the city, and is located in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. By investigating the ethnic relations in Lintao County, it is found that the earlier ones were Han, Qiang, and Di, and later were Han, Tubo (Tibet), Tugokun (later transformed into Qiang), Hui and other ethnic groups, and the Mongolians who moved here at the end of Yuan Dynasty were the descendants of the Yuan clan. Today, the Tibetan and Mongolian ethnic groups in Lintao County have been basically Sinicized. History is gone, we can only explore the process of migration, exchange and intermingling of ethnic groups from the "clues" left by history. We can also see the shadow of the "real" history from these "clues". It is not the reality that people imagine, but the reality that has existed for a long time. Just as we can see through "Lazar Festival", "Fan Drum Stall Dance" of the Tibetan people; through the investigation of the Mongolian "combined households" and other folklore phenomena, we can see the legacy of ethnic habits and characteristics, and see the historical changes of ethnic integration, as well as the formation and evolution of identity and regional identity.

2 Origin and form of "Zhang and Li combined households"

"Zhang and Li combined households" originally refers to the clan activities of Zhang family in Shuiquan village and Li family in Lijiawan village in Taishi town, Beixiang, Lintao County, Dingxi City, Gansu Province (former Taosha County). According to research, it began in the early Ming Dynasty. At first it was a simple visit to relatives and friends and worshiping ancestors. Later, it developed into a large-scale "combined households" festival entertainment with rich performance forms, and became one of the most important folk activities in Shuiquan Village and Lijiawan Village and the neighboring villages such as Nanmen Village,

Taishi Village, Shaleng Village and Anjiazui Village.

It is recorded in *Shuiquan Zhang's Five Family Genealogy Preface* that "Zhang's family in Shanishuiquan is a prominent family in the area, and its origin is actually is the Yuan Dynasty clan, and it was registered as common people in the early Ming Dynasty. Name of the ancestor was not clear, his wife name; "A Gu Nian Zi", gave birth to four sons, the eldest son named A Nu, the second son named Da Da, the third son named Wan Zhe Tai, the fourth son named Tai Ping. She first lived in Xigouling in the east of the city, the tomb and temple still exists. At that time, it was popular that one named his (her) surname with the name. In second year of Yongle (AD 1404), the branch of the eldest son lived in Lijiawan, hence, used Li as the surname. The branch of the third son lived in Yuantouhudi and Zhangjiapogen in Hashagou. Those who lived in Shuiquan were a branch of the family of the second son. The genealogy was written in the beginning of the seventh month of the lunar calendar in 1881. The title was written by Shi Huai Qing, a Jinshi of the year. The genealogy records that the surname Zhang in Shuiquan and the surname Li in Lijiawan have the same origin and the same ancestor, and are actually descendants of the Yuan Dynasty clan, are the Mongolian nationality, registered as common people in the early Ming Dynasty, as well as the history of settled in the western foot of the Mountain Maxian. The annual ancestors worship in the Birch forest is an important form for Zhang and Li to honor their ancestors. In addition to the traditional Qingming Festival and other folk customs to worship ancestor at the ancestral grave in the Birch forest, the grand ceremony of "Zhang Li combined households" festival entertainment is the most important embodiment of Zhang Li's group of homology and respect for ancestors.

Shehuo (festival entertainment) has a long history and originated in the Zhou Dynasty, and is a folk art activity held by people to entertain gods and people during festivals. "She" is the god of earth, "Huo" is the god of fire. "Shehuo" is the ritual of sacrificing "She" and "Huo" under the influence of ancient land worship and fire worship^[1]. "Shehuo" records and inherits folk culture in a dynamic way. Its ceremonious, grand scale, complex and diverse contents make it a time-honored tradition of performances. The traditional "Shehuo" activities include dragon and lion dance, Taiping drum, waist drum, land boat, cart, Yangko (a popular rural folk dance), witch, paper horse and so on. It is reported that the main forms of family recognition, family integration and ancestor worship between the two surnames Zhang and Li, which began in the early years of the Ming Dynasty, were only simple New Year greetings to each other. With the growth of the population in Shuiquan Village and Lijiawan Village, the convenience of transportation, and the frequent contacts, only in the process of mutual communication has the form of "Zhang and Li combined households" changed from large to small, and the content changed from simple to rich. Increasingly, the "Zhang and Li combined households" folk activities, which are now quite popular, have been formed with Shehuo (festival entertainment) as the carrier.

The "combined households" Shehuo is huge, the scene is

spectacular, the procedure is complicated, and the ceremony is grand. In addition to the traditional Shehuo activities, there are also unique performances, such as spring officials, " Baozi ", guards, dressed Mongolian and Tibetan people, horseback riding, bull riding, yellow eagles, leading dogs, speaking Mongolian, "Guawazi" and so on. Although the "Zhang and Li combined households" ancestor worship folk activity is called the two families of the surnames Zhang and Li joined together, it has actually become a festival entertainment (Shehuo) gathering activity of the two villages and the surrounding neighboring villages. In addition, the branches of the third and fourth sons far away in the mountainous area also assist in the "combined households (Hehu)" festival entertainment (Shehuo), making the "Zhang and Li combined households" festival entertainment (Shehuo) become the most distinctive local folk activities. Through the carrier of Shehuo, it presents family unity, ancestor worship, ancestors searching and recognition, and kinship recognition. However, with the development of "combined households" Shehuo today, it even uses the name of ancestors to connect the feelings between the nearby villagers and neighbors. Through blood identification to ethnic identification, and then to regional identification, the commemoration of ancestors leads to loyalty to the clan. The "Zhang and Li combined households" Shehuo concretely and vividly reflects the historical fact of the migration and Sinicization of the Mongolian people in Shuiquan Village and Lijiawan. The folk custom activity of "Zhang and Li combined households" worshipping ancestors has been passed down from generation to generation in Shuiquan village and Lijiawan village, and has a long history. The historical fact that the two surnames of Zhang and Li have the same ancestor more than 600 years apart is no longer known, but the folk custom of "Zhang and Li combined households" ancestor worship is the most effective evidence to prove this historical fact.

3 Historical origin of "Zhang and Li combined households"

The Zhang and Li's family tree is a precious physical evidence, which is preserved and discovered today, of the integration of Mongolian people into the Han nationality, and gradually Sinicized, becoming the Han nationality. This kind of precious physical evidence can reconstruct the history of ethnic integration with vivid and fresh examples, connect the distant ancient past with the current life of people, and give people the inheriting of the spirit of ethnic integration, equality and unity.

It is said that the Zhang and Li's family tree has not been preserved due to its long history. The Zhang and Li's family tree that we can see now was repaired during the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, which can only maintain a rough memory. The genealogy (family tree), *Text on Qingming Birch Tree Stele to Sacrifice Ancestors*, *Epitaph of Zhang and Li's Ancestral Grave* and other materials complement each other, and when linked together, we can understand the ancestral origin of Zhang and Li's family. The ancestors were descendants of the Yuan Dynasty clan, and they were registered as the common people in the early Ming Dynasty. The ancestors were the descendants of clan, the ruling class with lofty

and prominent status, and naturally they were Mongolians. After the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty regime, the Ming Dynasty was established, and the descendants of the clan were subordinated to the common people, which was reasonable. But the ancestors became the common people, why did they settle in Xigouling (Xigou Ridge), a remote and desolate northwest village? According to *Epitaph of Zhang and Li's Ancestral Grave*: "Our ancestor was a descendant of the Yuan Dynasty clan and was official of the Yuan Dynasty. During the Zhizheng period of the Yuan Dynasty, there was internal political chaos and our ancestor stayed away from power to escape from the chaos. Then they settled in Xigouling, western foot of Maxian Mountain". The main reason why our ancestors settled down and became the common people was to abandon politics to avoid chaos. Since it was to avoid chaos, the more remote and the further away from the political center, the safer it was. According to historical records, after the establishment of the Ming Dynasty, there was still a force of Yuan Dynasty remaining in the Mobei area, the Ming government had spared no effort to pursue them and sent generals such as Lan Yu to capture them. Dharma King Damin, a monk from Baota Temple in Lintao, was ordered by the Ming government to go to Mobei to persuade the Mongolian prince to surrender to the Ming Dynasty. Therefore, it was imperative to clear the descendants of the Yuan dynasty's clan. At the end of the Yuan Dynasty, social contradictions intensified, and the struggle within the ruling group was also fierce. In order to avoid family disasters, the ancestors abandoned their officials and came to the west, the farther the better. The Xigouling at the western foot of Mount Maxian is located in the western border, far from the center of political rule. Maxian Mountain is also a good place for grazing. It has similar geographical conditions to the birthplace of the ancestors. Therefore, they settled here and reproduced from generation to generation. In the passage of time, the ancestors merged with the local Han nationality, gradually sinicized. The ancestral memory of the Mongolian people only becomes the words engraved on the stele, and the Han identity of the surname of Zhang and Li is their new identity for living and multiplying in Xigouling.

The ancestors were Mongolians, the family of the eldest and second sons were separately named Zhang and Li, and the family of the third and fourth sons were also named Zhang and Li. However, they belonged to one family, even were subordinated to the common people, they should have the same surname. What is the reason for the difference? Regarding this question, there was a story circulating among the people: there was a time to draft into army, the soldiers for the draft encountered the eldest son at the front door, came in and said that the surname was Li, and he was not from their own family. Then he was let go. At the back door they met his younger brother, said that his surname was Zhang, and he also was not from their own family, and was let go. In this way, the two brothers were able to escape without being captured and enlisted in the army. But since then they have been in exile, one surnamed Zhang and the other Li. Later, when they met, they recognized their kindred and became a family. As mentioned before, after the founding of the Ming Dynasty, the Ming government

spared no effort in hunting down the Yuan Dynasty clansmen. Therefore, only by letting the four sons live in different places, changing their surnames to Zhang and Li, and mingling with the Han nationality, can they escape this disaster. In this way, the problem of changing the surname can be reasonably explained. Later, when the situation was eased, the families were united to recognize kindred. The four sons and four surnames lived in four places, on the one hand, it had something to do with concealing their identities, on the other hand, it can be understood as "separate households". Since the four sons have established their family, they will be separated from each other and live in four places. As for the four surnames, they lived and labored together with the local Han people for a long time, leading to intermarriage and marriage together. The product of this integration is that the four sons of the ancestors took on the local Han surnames and were completely sinicized, becoming the real Han people today.

We do not know if "the ancestor was 'A Gu Niang Zi'", "A Gu Niang Zi" is the name of ancestor's, or a kind of honorific title for the first grandmother by the descendants. *Epitaph of Zhang and Li's Ancestral Grave* records: "Our ancestor was a descendant of the Yuan Dynasty clan and was official of the Yuan Dynasty. During the Zhizheng period of the Yuan Dynasty, there was internal political chaos and our ancestor stayed away from power to escape from the chaos, and then settled in Xigouling, western foot of Maxian Mountain". Therefore, it is impossible for "A Gu Niang Zi" to bring four sons to Xigouling in Maxian Mountain alone. So why did the first grandfather, who was a descendant of the Yuan Dynasty clan and an official of the Yuan Dynasty, not appear in the genealogy? Regarding the identity research of the old grandfather, Mr. Ma Wenhui, a cultural celebrity in Lintao County, made two inferences: one is that the first ancestor was a Tibetan "Zong Lang Zang Bu Tian Chi Ba", a name told by a Tibetan lama who came to the village, but he did not remember it completely. In the Yuan Dynasty, Mongolia and Tibet had a close relationship, and the Mongolians abandoned Shamanism and converted to Tibetan Buddhism in the Yuan Dynasty. For political purposes, the governments of the Ming and Qing dynasties stabilized the frontiers, opened commerce and mutual trading, adopted a policy of appeasement, and in addition actively advocated the implementation of lamaism. During the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, the Tibetans in Lintao County were powerful and had a high status, especially the Zhao family were all local high officials, so the combination of Tibetans and Mongolians was not impossible. Another theory is that the old grandfather was a Mongolian and died in the distance during the battle, and his body could not be brought back for burial, so in the ancestral tomb, the main tomb was just a solitary tomb. The only one left on the genealogy is the old grandmother. Interviewee—Ma Wenhui; interviewer—Wang Tingting; interview time—June 13, 2020; interview place—Taoyang Town, Lintao County. Zhang and Li are inclined to the second kind of speculation. They do not admit that their old grandfather is the Tibetan "Zong Lang Zang Bu Tian Ci Ba". "We do not admit that

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our grandfather is a Tibetan, which means our ancestors are Tibetans. We are Mongolians, not Tibetans," Mr. Zhang Shenzhai said. Interviewee—Zhang Shengzhai; interviewer—Wang Tingting; interview time—June 12, 2020; interview place—Taoyang Town, Lintao County.

So far it has been more than six hundred years, and they have lived for more than twenty generations. The descendants stretched all over the country. The ancestral grave is in the birch forest of Shangliang. The first ancestor settled in Xigouling of Maxian Mountain and lived for more than twenty generations, which has been more than six hundred years now. There are more than twenty generations, if one generation is calculated according to twenty or thirty years, there are indeed more than six hundred years. If the first ancestor arrived in Xigouling at the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the fall of the Yuan Dynasty was in 1368 AD, then plus more than six hundred years, hence it can be inferred that the time when the ancestors settled down is generally accurate.

In the torrent of the times, the Mongolians with high power and prominent status were pushed to the remotest and most secluded mountain villages in the northwest. They have experienced painful changes, thrived on this infertile land, and lived the life of the most ordinary country people. They lost their glory, became common people, and merged into the Han people. It is fleeting in the river of history, but the fragments of memory retain their tracks. The "Zhang and Li combined households" is the living fossil of this. The folk custom of "combined households" interprets the migration, coexistence and intermingling of ethnic groups in the river of time. The "combined households" is a kind of retrospective memory, a remembrance and commemoration of ancestors, a response to the times, and an unforgettable history. It is innumerable, invisible, and intangible, but the real life of more than twenty generations. It is the memory and symbol of the sur-

vival of this nation. It is not only where we came from, but where we are going.

4 Conclusion

From the history of the development of world culture, we can see that the cultures of different ethnic groups in different regions are open to each other, they communicate with each other, introduce and absorb each other, and at the same time continue to differentiate and intermingle. This is a law of the cultural development of various ethnic groups. Since ancient times, China has been a multi-ethnic country with the Han people as the main group, and ethnic unity and ethnic integration have been the mainstream of Chinese history. Historically, the Han people were integrated into the ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities were integrated into the Han people, and the two complement and promote each other, forming a pattern of pluralism and unity of Chinese nation. The integration of Mongolian and Han people is also a historical inevitability. As the Mongolian people of the northern nomads, their ancestors lived where there was water and grass from generation to generation, nomadic on the vast prairie, and cultivated an ancient nomadic culture^[2]. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the intermingling and interpenetration of Mongolian and Han cultures were reflected in many aspects such as production, labor, food, clothing, housing and transportation, as well as sorcery, religion and folklore activities. Especially after the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongolian and Han cultures were exchanged extensively and merged with each other.

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