

# Tragic Color of History of a Chinese Muslim Family

Chen Lingli

College of Chinese Language and Literature, China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, 637009, China

Keywords: Religion, Character Features, Tragic Color, Love.

Abstract: *History of a Chinese Muslim Family* written by Huo Da is like an unreachable climax drawing people's admiration. Besides, it is also like an abyss which makes people sad or lost into thought. Due to its theme of minority, this book describes the living conditions of ordinary family from the perspective of religion. It mainly focuses on the fate as well as the rise and fall of a Muslim family. From the historical background, the study analyzed the character personalities and tragic love story, thus further interpreting the tragedy of this work.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

*History of a Chinese Muslim Family* mainly describes the rise and fall of three generations of Muslim family with more than fifty million words. In this book, the emotion is expressed from different perspectives, so the connotation is very rich. In terms of the Muslim era in China, there are hardships and romantic times with people's confusion in pursuing the essence of life. This book emphatically creates the vivid and live images of Han Xinyue, Han Ziqi, Liang Bingyu, etc. Furthermore, the suffering of the subjects in that environment is also presented. The tragic color of *History of a Chinese Muslim Family* is further analyzed as follows.

## 2 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF HISTORY OF A CHINESE MUSLIM FAMILY

*History of a Chinese Muslim Family* was composed by a female writer Huo Da, whose works always have the characters of Hui. The innovation of this literary work owes much to her deep consideration of Muslim culture. This book has not only rich tragic plots, but also the exploration and sentiment for literary spirit tragedy under the oppression of tragic subconscious. All these achieved the unique status of *History of a Chinese Muslim Family* in Chinese literary history.

This work describes the love and hate, individual

fate and life sufferings of people during thousands years of history of Hui. Besides, it also manifests the collision and integration between Chinese and Islamic culture, the history between Han and Hui, as well as their conflict, sadness and emotions in history. Unlike other authors, Huo Da did not outline a narrative plot under large social background, just describing several Hui people in a small social environment. Their joy, pain, and frustrated life have reflected people's tragic fate under such social environment. Meanwhile, this book also demonstrates the peace and war, the confusion and complexity of human nature, the impermanence of fate, as well as the collision between old concepts and new ideas. Being the sweethearts, they still cannot share joys and sorrows but to cheat and betray the other side, bringing the feeling of guilt to readers. Living in an unimaginable condition, the characters in this book are bound to have complex and unimaginable destinies. And all these characters have life-like images in Huo Da's description. Han and Liang's family both had remarkable achievements for several generations, but with bad endings. With such difficulties, the struggle for destiny is failed. For example, Han Xinyue, Liang Yiqing, Han Ziqi had their pursuit of life, yet cannot get rid of their fate. Although the love between Han and Liang is admirable, it is manifested full of frustration. Therefore, this book is about a tragic and beautiful love story with sigh and helpless in that era.

The achievement of *History of a Chinese Muslim Family* lies in Huo Da's high skills. The silent struggle or regret, the unimaginable life, as well as

the passing of beautiful love, are all shown in this book. Through these surface things, people can feel author's confusion about past hardships and the way to the future. Such feelings of author are mainly from her profound experience of social life. On this basis, author formed her tragic thought, which is the life experience of Hui people for the hardship in life for millions of years. It is the passion and frustration in life that makes Hui people generate grief feelings. Huo Da is a person of Hui and lives in Hui, where there is a collision between national beliefs and social ideas. Thus, the tragic psychology is vividly presented in her works, most of which are her worry for the development of Hui. Tragedy will certainly bring psychological depression and pain to people, which is the pain of body rather than spiritual sufferings. Besides the sufferings and depressions in life, Huo Da still enjoys a happy life for her unique experience of crucifixion. The author has represented tragedy incisively and vividly by her deep understanding of tragic spirit, thus making the work full of tragic colors. The tragic color is reflected not only in characters, but also in the final unexpected outcome—a tragedy rather than a happy ending. So the author has got rid of the bound of traditional concepts by abandoning the previous ideas of reunion.

It is the sublimation from lofty tragic spirit to the thinking of life, as well as the urgent desire to change social situation, that create this excellent work. Tragedy is not the imagination of author, but her perception in society. Such tragedy often appears in the lives of Muslim people. Therefore, author's presentation of her national tragedy can explore the national culture better. Through description, Huo Da has demonstrated the importance of culture for a nation. People try their best to improve the national situation, thus casting off the bands of destiny. As the reality is cruel and helpless, they can do nothing but face the pressure of life and society. Furthermore, every attempt brings only failure. *History of a Chinese Muslim Family* shows a sad but beautiful love story. And the literary thought in this book has been sublimated through the precipitation and activation of tragedy.

### 3 TRAGIC TRAITS OF CHARACTER PERSONALITY IN HISTORY OF A CHINESE MUSLIM FAMILY

The characters in Huo Da's writings all have the

ideal and pursuit of life. In the cause, they keep going and never give up. Besides, they regard the difficulties and hardships in life as a gain and life experience, facing these crucifixions with pleasure.

Drifting from childhood, Han Ziqi lacks the warmth of family, so he knew early about the hardships of social life. Later, Han learned craft from Liang Yiqing who later drove Han to the right path. Han devoted into carving jade, thus enriching his life belief. Even though driven by hatred, Han endured humiliation to complete the arduous task of reviving the Qizhenzhai (a jade shop). Such task changed his destiny, even bringing himself a title of "Jade King." But it had not sustained too long. With the invasion of Japan, his career was reduced to ashes in the war. Then he went to British Isles for a new beginning, but he still cannot stage a comeback. After the foundation of New China, Han returned to homeland, without the combatant spirit in career. Then he entered the declining period and wandered all day. The arrival of Chinese Cultural Revolution brought much misery to him, including the intolerable sufferings on both body and mind. Through this attack, Han completely lost the confidence in life. Because of the turbulent times, Han lost his courage to pursue and placed all the hopes on the hands of his daughter Han Xinyue, hoping her to complete the unfinished business. With the fighting spirit and the courage when facing hardships, Han Xinyue insisted her ideal and pursuit. This spirit brought her luck, so she went to the long-cherished college. Although with these brilliant achievements, she had to submit to fate rather than has a bright future.

In the work of *History of a Chinese Muslim Family*, the fate of different generations of both Han and Liang is constantly changeable. A profound truth can be drawn from that: if it is predestined, one cannot change anything even he tries his best to pursue the ideal. Han Ziqi's fate is capricious, with ups and downs. He has own dignity as well as stubborn personality. Due to his efforts for the ideal, he obtained a splendid life, while his failure was the result of social turbulence. Compared with love, the failure of cause was the least. It was love that gave him a deadly strike. Two beautiful women, the sisters, appeared in Han's life. Marrying the elder sister was not from his sincere heart, but from his gratitude psychology as well as the aspiration to revitalize family career of Liang. While Han Ziqi fell in love with Liang Bingyu in England, he felt Liang Bingyu is the ideal wife. Under the concept of equality between men and women, Han's immoral love was the true meaning of love. After returning to

China, Han was immersed in the inner torment and gossip around, becoming delirious every day. Having fallen into despair, Han placed the hope on his daughter Han Xinyue, who became the spiritual pillar of him. However, this was the beginning of another tragedy. Not too long, Han took part in his daughter's funeral. Through this complicated plot of ups and downs, author of this book better present the tragic color.

With a miserable fate, Han Ziqi had to bear heavy mental stress from life. Finally, Han ended his tragic life for the great burden. After the death of Han, author did not stop at here, but further presented the miserable fate of characters from spiritual level by unveiling the real identity—Han nationality—of Han. By revealing this secret, readers may absorb in deep thought about the characters in this work. What makes such a tragic life to the hero? It is himself, the impact and contradiction between Han and Hui, the belief of Muslims or the turbulence society. Readers may hold that the tragic fate has ended after the death of Han Ziqi. But the author don't think so, she further presented another tragedy by her excellent causality. As the same in reality, the end of one thing is just the beginning of another. Another tragedy is the miserable fate of Han's wife, from which readers can see a vivid tragedy of the Muslims. A wife lives under self-deceiving just to keep the faith and spirit of her husband. By presenting the tragic life of Han's wife, the tragic color of this work become more concentrated. Limited by Han culture and her own belief, she struggled to maintain husband's image rooted in her mind, even living in the cruel society. Is this not the beginning of another tragedy? In this work, tragic plots are connected one by another in a causal cycle. And the tragedy of characters is completely presented through author's description of characters' temperamental characteristics. Hence, readers cannot but gasp in admiration about author's precise grasp and description of character personality.

In *History of a Chinese Muslim Family*, Liang Junbi, the eldest daughter of Liang Yiqing, is also an important tragic character and the most disputed and published one. What is the tragedy of Liang Junbi's life? And what kind of character makes it? In Huo Da's writings, Liang Junbi had experienced the fluctuation of relationships, as well as sufferings of both life and spirit. However, she still stuck to her yearn for life and loyalty for love. Due to the cultural inheritance and Muslim's faith, Liang Junbi had to endure too much in the collision of reality of destiny. However, her tragedy is mainly caused by

her godliness for Muslim culture. In this tragedy, readers can find a competent Muslims woman filled with hope for life while facing the inequity of fate. Readers surely admire such positive image. Besides, they should think it is the spiritual driving force of nationality and religious belief that make Liang Junbi live with conflicts. On one hand, she lived optimistically when faced with suffering. On the other hand, she destroyed her daughter's happy life and marriage by her narrow national idea, thus conversely destroying her own lives and emotions. The enormous pressure of secularity and religion heavily demoralized her pursuit of faithful love, thus starting her tragic life. Even frustrated, she did not give up love, thus becoming the executioner and the victim of the cultural belief. With these contradictory features, a different image of Muslim women is shown. Behind the tragic fate, the chief cause of that is worth thinking deeply by people today.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

*History of a Chinese Muslim Family* written by Huo Da presents a kind of magnificent but tragic cultural belief. How could Muslims live under different cultures, nations and religion? How can reality and inner conflict create the tragic life? This book will arouse people's thinking and exploring to the culture of Hui. Life is always inconstant. Who can live without any influence? What we should choose in reality, accepting the fate or revolting it? It is worthy of our weighing.

#### REFERENCES

- Zhang Shuangang, Brief Description to Tragic Beauty of *History of a Chinese Muslim Family*, *Literary Review*, 2008 (5): 36-37.
- Han Kun, Liu Bin, Interpretation of Hoda's *History of a Chinese Muslim Family*, *Modern Chinese (Literature Research)*, 2011(1): 23-26.
- Xu Jia, Sad Whisper and Glancing Back: Interpretation of tragic theme in *History of a Chinese Muslim Family*, *Modern Languages (literature Research)*, 2011 (6): 55-59.