

# THE DEVELOPMENT TREND OF ORIGINAL ECOLOGICAL DANCE IN BIJIE AREA OF GUIZHOU PROVINCE

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## ABSTRACT

This Article aims to study delves into the development trend of original ecological dances in Bijie City, Guizhou Province. The region has unique geographical characteristics and a strong original ecological atmosphere, and these dances are unique in form, with high research value and aesthetic value, and can also bring practical social benefits. This paper analyses the historical evolution, stylistic characteristics and current inheritance status of the Miao Lusheng Dance 'Gun Shan Zhu', the Yi Bell Dance and the Yi Sama Dance through field research and literature review. At the same time, the challenges and opportunities they face are explored, and specific and feasible suggestions are made for their protection and promotion, aiming at contributing to the inheritance and development of the original ecological dances in Bijie and the whole country.

**Keywords:** Original Ecological Dance, Trends, Innovation

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## INTRODUCTION

Bijie City in Guizhou Province is located in the karst landscape area, and the terrain dominated by plateaus and mountains has had a profound impact on the physical form, movement and style of local original folk dances. The intermingling of natural and social environmental factors has given birth to original ecological dances with distinctive national characteristics. Most of these original folk dances are used to worship ancestors, commemorate the resilience of the national migration process, as well as to express the desire for a harmonious home and the pursuit of a peaceful life. They are part of folk life and production activities, and reflect the aesthetics of the public.

This paper focuses on the Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’, the Yi Bell Dance and the Yi Sama Dance among the original ecological dances in Bijie City, Guizhou Province. The Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ is originally called ‘Ground Dragon Rolling Jing’, which is called ‘Zi Luo Duo’ in Miao language. It is circulated in Nayong County, Guizhou Province, pig farm Miao and Yi Township, is one of the Miao people's generations of Lusheng dance. Legend has it that during the ancient times, the ancestors of the Miao people migrated, and the road was bumpy and full of thorns, the heroic Miao youths, in order to open up a channel for the folks, rolled a road out of the forest of thorns with their sturdy bodies, and in order to commemorate the achievements of these youths, they imitated the action of rolling down the thorns with their bodies, and compiled it into the Lusheng dance, named ‘Earth Dragon Rolling the Thorns’. The name is ‘Earth Dragon Rolling Thorns’. It is a traditional folk dance of the Miao people to commemorate their ancestors' bravery and unflinching perseverance in the great migration, which opened up a beautiful home for them today, and it is a Miao dance integrating lusheng playing, dance performance and acrobatic art.

The Yi Bell Dance, also known as the ‘foot hopping dance’, is a traditional dance of the Yi people in Hezhang County, Guizhou Province. In the Yi language, it is called ‘Ken He Bei’, ‘Ken He’ refers to the songs sung in the sacrificial rituals, and ‘Bei’ means jumping, ‘Ken He Bei’ means to pray to the spirits. ‘It is a traditional folk dance of the Yi people to commemorate the dead’. According to legend, the chief of the Yi tribe held a festival to memorialise the late king and the chiefs who died in battle, and in order to show the elegance of the cavalry in the battlefield, he organised a troop of soldiers and horses and a team of songs and dances, which were performed in the festival ground. In order to express their grief, the dancers danced in imitation of the battle state, the dance to ring the bells in their hands, making the sound of bells when the war horses ran, ‘bells dance’ thus named. Later, the ritual dance came into the people, popularised to the villages and cottages, the Yi people, in addition to the funeral occasions, but also in the ancestor worship and festivals began to dance the bell dance, which continues to this day, has a history of more than 2,800 years.

The Sama Dance of the Yi people, called ‘Mu Shu Shu’ in Yi language, is one of the traditional labour dances of the Yi people. Sama Dance originated from the slash-and-burn farming era, Yi ancestors in the hemp planting labour to relieve fatigue, men and women improvised and self-indulgent question-and-answer duet, which orally sung from the reclamation of the land to plant hemp to the spinning and weaving process. After a long time of practical labour and singing, the Yi people gradually summed up the essentials of hemp planting and weaving, and adapted them into a dance to be passed on, and the prototype of the ‘Sama Dance’ was thus born.

The purpose of choosing the Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’, the Yi Bell Dance and the Yi Sama Dance is that these three original ecological dances have unique stylistic characteristics and inheritance significance, and they have unique artistic charms and expressive power, which provide rich materials and inspirations for modern artistic innovation. Through the study of these original ecological dances, we can learn from them and promote the innovation and development of modern art, original ecological dances are also an important

part of human civilisation, carrying a wealth of historical, cultural and ethnic information. Through the study of original ecological dances, we can better understand and pass on these cultural heritages, protect cultural diversity and prevent cultural loss.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

### The current situation of domestic research on original dance

In recent years, domestic scholars have mainly focused on the following aspects of the research on original dance:

First, in terms of dance ontology research, Liu Yuanlin and Dong Yinghao (2011) systematically analysed the performance form of the Guizhou Miao Lusheng Dance, pointing out that its unique 'Gun Shan Zhu' movement is closely related to the history of Miao migration. Wu Shu (2020) focuses on the Yi Bell Dance and discusses its ritual characteristics and cultural symbolism as a sacrificial dance.

Secondly, in the field of inheritance and protection research, Chen Xin (2021) reveals the difficulties faced by the inheritance of difficult skills by examining the current development of 'Gun Shan Zhu'. A-Tu's (2009) study emphasises the important role of original ecological dances in ethnic cultural identity. It is worth noting that most of the existing studies focus on case studies of single dance types, and there is a relative lack of research on the overall development of regional indigenous dances, which provides room for innovation in this study.

### Current status of research in Bijie

There is still a lack of specialised research on the original dance of Bijie:

An Yi's (2007) study of the Weining Yi dance reveals the influence of mountain culture on the dance style. Zheng Feng's (2008) dissertation systematically examines the social functions of the Yi Bell Dance, but lacks an exploration of contemporary trends. There are three obvious limitations in the existing research: firstly, the lack of comparative research on multiple dance styles; secondly, insufficient attention to emerging areas such as digital inheritance; and thirdly, limited exploration of the innovative practice of cultural and tourism integration.

### Innovative points of the study

The innovation of this study is to systematically sort out the development trajectories of the three representative original ecological dances in Bijie, and explore the innovative path of digital inheritance and cultural tourism integration based on the latest cases, which fills the gaps of previous studies.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study makes comprehensive use of the literature research method and the fieldwork method to deeply analyse the development trend of the original dance in the Bijie City area of Guizhou Province.

In terms of the literature research method, through extensive collection and systematic collation of relevant literature, historical records, photos and video materials, the study traces the evolution of the dance over time, and understands its historical background, original forms and changes in different historical periods. The historical evolution and stylistic characteristics of the original ecological dances in various regions of Bijie City were comprehensively sorted out, providing rich background knowledge and theoretical support for the study.

For the fieldwork method, the researchers travelled to the Bijie area to observe the three original dance performances in different scenes such as festivals, ceremonies and daily life. In-depth interviews were conducted with cultural experts to collect their views on the current status, changes and future development of the original ecological dances. Systematically analysing the changes in dance movements, props and performance forms of these original ecological dances in different periods, these data and the literature study corroborate and complement each other, providing a strong support for the study from the actual performances and folk

perspectives, and comprehensively and in-depthly revealing the development trend of the original ecological dances in the Bijie area.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

First of all, from the historical perspective, we systematically analyse the changes in the dance movements, props and performance forms of the original ecological dances of the Bijie region, such as the Yi Bell Dance, the Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ and the Yi Sama Dance, which all carry profound ethnic cultural heritage and historical memory.

### Historical Evolution

#### 1) Early Development

The history of the Yi Bell Dance, which is called ‘Ken He Bei’ in Yi language, meaning the dance of spiritual farewell, can be traced back to the 8th century BC when the Yi ancestors, Dur Emperor, divided the six vassals. At that time, the Yi ancestors in the Wumeng Mountains loved to raise horses, and the bridles were often decorated with copper bells. In order to obtain resources, the clans and tribes set up a team of warhorses to fight fiercely. When holding rituals, in order to mourn those kings and leaders who died in battle, the Yi people organised a team of warhorses and a song and dance team to perform in the sacrificial arena, where the dancers imitated the battle movements and vigorously shook the bells in their hands in the course of the dance, making them sound as if they were warhorses running, thus giving their name to the ‘Bell Dance’.

Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’: ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ was originally called ‘Ground Dragon Rolling Thorns’, and in Miao language it is called ‘Zi Luo Duo’. Legend has it that in ancient times, the ancestors of the Miao people migrated from the Yellow River Basin to the Dongting Lake area and Wuxi area and then trekked to the mountains and ridges of Southwest China, and on the way, the road was bumpy and full of thorns and thistles, and in order to open up a passageway for the townspeople, the heroic Miao youths rolled a road out of the forest of thorns and thistles with their own sturdy bodies to let the townspeople pass through in triumph and arrive at the Heiyang Dajiao and settle down. In order to commemorate the achievements of these young people, the descendants imitated the action of rolling down the thorns with their bodies and made up a Lusheng dance named ‘Ground Dragon Rolling Thorns’, which reproduces the thrilling scenes of the Miao youths who defied difficulties and dangers, went forward and eliminated all the difficulties in their migratory journey in those years, and danced in worship of their ancestors.

Yi Sama Dance: Translated as ‘Mu Shi Shi’ in Yi language, the dance originated in Sanguanzhai, Datun Yi Township, Bijie City, and was initially a question-and-answer duet sung by the ancestors of the Yi people in order to alleviate the fatigue of labouring in hemp planting and men and women improvising for their own amusement. According to the ancient Yi literature, ‘the origin of all things’ (‘Lou Lou Duzheshuo’), there are several thousand years of history, as early as in the 41st year of the Kangxi (1702), there are the earliest written records of the Yi Sama Dance, which is a unique farming culture of the Yi men and women singing and dancing.

#### 2) Medium-term Changes

Yi Bell Dance: After more than 2,800 years, with the development of the times, the Bell Dance continued to evolve, and the gender of the performers was limited to males at the beginning, but became a bell dance for both men and women. The dance scene has also expanded from a single ritual to include festivals, funerals and marriages, as well as performances during agricultural leisure time. The dance incorporates the hardships of the Yi ancestors who used to trek across mountains and rivers to make roads and bridges, as well as the hardship and beauty of ploughing and weaving.

Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’: ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ retains a primitive and dignified artistic style, faithfully reflecting the psychological structure of the Miao people in ancient times, with movements originating from life but higher than life. It used to be used for ancestor worship, but now it is usually performed for entertainment during farming or festivals, therefore, it promotes the Miao compatriots to compete with each other, and creates the continuous development and innovation of the high skill of ‘Gun Shan Zhu’. It’s rough and heroic style, difficult and thrilling movements and profound cultural connotation.

Yi Sama Dance: After a long time of practical labour and singing, from which it was adapted into a dance to be passed on, it is mainly divided into nine sections: clearing the land - purifying the soil - loosening the soil - spreading sesame seeds --cutting hemp - stripping hemp - performing hemp - washing hemp - weaving. -Weaving. Male actors holding hoes and other props, female actors holding bamboo weaving small bumps and other props, in the singing in a question-and-answer way, its dance formation changes little, to circle, horizontal rows, vertical rows of the formation of alternating changes in the main, the dance imitation of hacking and burning grass, reclaiming the land for sowing seeds, cutting and spinning hemp, washing and weaving and other actions, with the image of the body language to decipher the primitive labour process of spreading hemp and weaving a series of processes. Each tiny movement represents a certain labour movement, with a strong folk style, reproducing the labour production of the ancient Yi people, and has become one of the traditional dances often danced by the Yi people during festivals and weddings and celebrations.

### 3) Recent Development

#### 3.1) Protection and inheritance of non-heritages:

The Yi Bell Dance was listed in the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage list approved by the State Council in 2008.

The Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ was selected in May 2006 as one of the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage.

In December 2024, Yi Sama Dance was selected as one of the sixth batch of representative items of provincial intangible cultural heritage in Guizhou Province.

#### 3.2) Inheritance methods and ways:

Yi bell dance through the family inheritance and master-disciple inheritance, by as the fifth generation of bell dance in the family inheritor Su Wanzhao, in 1977, learned Su Wanzhao began to accept disciples, half a century, Su Wanzhao's footprints all over Bijie, Liupanshui and Guiyang and other places. Hundreds of disciples, under his careful guidance, brought the rhythm of the bell dance out of the mountains of Wumeng. By 2024, the Yi Bell Dance's legacy has ushered in a diverse and thriving development. The Hezhang County Cultural Centre conducted a national intangible cultural heritage Yi Bell Dance inheritance training programme at the Hezhang County Ethnic High School from April to May. At the same time, Bijie Vocational and Technical College took the initiative to co-operate with Su Wanzhao to build a course open to the public, ‘National Intangible Cultural Heritage - Yi Bell Dance’. This upcoming course will serve as the core curriculum of the school's aesthetic education practice, and with the power of the network, support colleges and universities in and outside of the province and organisations to select courses online.

Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ Before the 70s, ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ was only a single action performance form and widely spread in folklore, Nayong old artist Huang Shunqiang taught it to Wang Jingcai, who incorporated a variety of skills into the action, and in 2006, the ‘Rolling Mountain Pearl’ was widely spread in folklore, Nayong old artist Huang Shunqiang taught it to Wang Jingcai, who incorporated a variety of skills into the action. Nayong County Miao Lusheng Dance (Gun Shan Zhu) was listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage. In 2006, Nayong County Lusheng Dance was listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage, and Wang Jingcai was named the national inheritor of the Miao

Lusheng Dance (Gun Shan Zhu). In April 2004, Zhu Ying returned to his hometown to open the ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ training course to cultivate newcomers. In August 2022, Zhu Ying was to be selected to the list of the sixth batch of national intangible cultural heritage representative heirs, and in 2025, Zhu Ying has taught nearly 600 students and passed it on to the younger generation through education.

The inheritance of Yi Sama Dance is mainly carried out through the family and community, the fourth generation of the inheritor Luo Caiyan, is a native of the Sanguan Yi, love of song and dance, familiar with the cultural traditions of the Yi people, she has taken up the Sanguanzhai Yi and Chinese bilingual teaching as well as Yi song and dance guide the responsibility of the Sanguanzhai Primary School, the students were organised to learn the Yueqin Dance, Sama Dance, etc., and these dances are included in the scope of the classroom activities! The students of Sanguanzhai Primary School were organised to learn Yueqin Dance and Sama Dance, and these dances were included in the scope of recess activities. In addition, the Sama Dance is also widely spread among the folk, and is often invited to perform abroad, gaining the recognition value of audiences and experts from all over the world.

### 3.3) Artistic integration and innovation:

The Yi Bell Dance has been adapted and innovated in the process of inheritance. During Su Wanzhao's teaching, he realised that the 28 bells symbolising the 28 starry nights of the traditional Bell Dance, which weighs more than 3 pounds, is more strenuous for the dancers and inconvenient for them to learn. In order to pass on the art, in the early 70s, Su Wanzhao boldly innovated by streamlining the bells to 12, taking the meaning of the twelve earthly branches; in 2004, Su Wanzhao innovated again by reducing the bells to six. In terms of costumes, they have changed from a single black Yi tunic to more elaborate Yi totems (flames), making them more aesthetically pleasing on stage. In terms of form, the version performed on stage is different from the original version, and there are more variations in both the choreography and the formations to meet the aesthetic demands of modern audiences.

The Miao Lusheng Dance ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ is also constantly enriched and innovated in the form of performance, from the beginning of a single action, Wang Jingcai on this basis will be the Lusheng high pile dance steps, short pile dance steps and other actions and acrobatic skills, in the preservation of the original characteristics of the Lusheng Dance, to add street dance, martial arts and other forms of art and stage effects, such as: street dance in the For example, in street dance, the ‘shoulder support’, with the shoulder as the support point and other parts of the body hanging in the air to make various shapes, which is called ‘inverted pile’ in ‘Gun Shan Zhu’; and the shapes that often appear in martial art ‘Die Luohan’ and so on. This makes the ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ more innovative and attracts more young people.

Yi Sama Dance in the beginning is just a folk entertainment activity, in the dance action and the changes in formation are single and unchanged, the dance imitates the action of cutting barrens and burning grass, reclaiming the land for planting, cutting hemp and spinning, washing yarn and weaving, etc., and interprets the series of primitive labour process of sowing and weaving with the image of the body language, and the formation is based on the alternation of circles, horizontal rows, and vertical rows, and the Sama Dance nowadays has added the plot choreography and modern dance action elements, which makes ‘Gun Shan Zhu’ more novel and attractive to more young people. Nowadays, the Sama Dance has added elements of plot choreography and modern dance movements to make the audience feel more immersed. The locally created musical work ‘Watching – Sama’ won the ‘Group Star Award’ of the 19th China Culture and Arts Government Award in 2022. ‘Watching – Sama’ takes rural revitalisation of Huayu Village in Bijie City as the main background for its creation, and tells the story of a Yi girl, Yitu, who returned to her hometown to start her own business and create a beautiful and happy new home after graduating from the university, and the work is close to the pulse of the times, with ethnic characteristics, regional characteristics and a modern dance

movement to make the audience feel better. The work is close to the pulse of the times, with distinctive ethnic and regional characteristics, showing the beauty of ethnic music, full of local flavour and life atmosphere, with strong ideological, ornamental and artistic qualities.

### **Future Prospects**

With the progress of society and modernisation, many traditional folk rituals and folk activities have gradually been diluted or forgotten. For example, sacrificial rituals have been less frequent in modern society, resulting in the loss of the original ecological dances closely linked to these rituals. In modern society, people's lifestyles and ways of entertainment have changed dramatically. In the future, these dances may be presented to the public through more channels and forms, such as cultural tourism, festivals, artistic performances, etc., to further promote national culture and cultural exchange. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen the excavation and research of their historical and cultural values in order to better protect and pass on these precious cultural heritages.

## **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

### **Discussion**

Comprehensive analyses show that the Miao Lusheng Dance 'Gun Shan Zhu', the Yi Bell Dance, and the Yi Sama Dance have a number of problems in their development trends, including the lack of inherited subjects, changes in the humanistic environment, and insufficient innovation and development.

With the progress of society and modernisation, many traditional folk rituals and folk activities have been gradually diluted or forgotten. For example, sacrificial ceremonies are held less frequently in modern society, resulting in the loss of the original ecological dances that are closely linked to them. In modern society, people's lifestyles and forms of entertainment have changed dramatically. Dance is no longer the main form of entertainment and leisure, and more people tend to choose relaxation methods such as singing, drinking and travelling. Even if some people are interested in dance, they are more inclined to choose modern dance types such as street dance and international dance rather than original dance. How to maintain the original traditional style while conforming to the aesthetics of the modern public is a problem that needs to be deeply thought about in the original dance of the region at present. Secondly, the limited financial investment in the protection of intangible cultural heritage in the Bijie region of Guizhou has led to a shortage of professional technicians and backward equipment. This makes it difficult to effectively record, preserve and pass on traditional dances. Finally, the original ecological dances of Bijie, Guizhou are also deficient in education and transmission. Although colleges and universities can serve as an effective way of transmission, it is difficult to effectively promote the transmission of original ecological dances in colleges and universities due to the lack of relevant courses and teachers. Although some of the original ecological dances have a deep cultural heritage and unique artistic charms, many people know little or nothing about these dances due to insufficient publicity. This further exacerbates the lack of the main body of original dance inheritance.

In order to effectively inherit the original ecological dances in Bijie, Guizhou, while maintaining the tradition, the dances should be adapted to the aesthetics and needs of the modern society, and on the basis of maintaining the tradition, the dances can be appropriately integrated with modern aesthetic elements, such as modern choreography techniques, as well as stage lighting and sound effects, so that the dances can be more ornamental and contemporary. For example, combining the individual movements of these original ecological dances with modern dance movements increases the skill and formation changes of the dances. Innovative forms of dance expression can also be used to attract modern audiences, such as the combination of multimedia technology, the introduction of plot clues, etc., so that the narrative of the dance is stronger and more resonant with the audience. In terms of stage arrangement,

modern technology such as Pani lights and computer lights can be used to create a richer visual effect for the dance. Of course, in the process of promoting the original dance, we should also pay attention to the inheritance and popularisation of traditional culture, so that the audience, while enjoying the dance, can also understand the cultural connotations and historical background behind it, so that the original dance in the region can be well inherited and developed.

### **Conclusion**

The development of original dance in Bijie City, Guizhou Province, has shown a positive trend, but in order to achieve more sustainable conservation and promotion, more targeted measures need to be taken on the basis of the existing foundation to face up to the existing challenges. Specific recommendations and strategies are as follows:

#### **Build a multi-dimensional financial guarantee system**

Set up a special protection fund for the original dance in Bijie City, and raise funds through multiple channels such as government financial allocations, social enterprise sponsorships and public welfare crowdfunding. The fund will be used to record high-definition video data for traditional dances and establish digital databases; purchase professional stage equipment to improve the hardware conditions for performances; and set up special subsidies for the inheritors to protect their living and teaching needs and avoid the loss of talents.

#### **Innovative modes of education and inheritance**

Implement the activity of 'non-heritage in schools' in primary and secondary schools, and arrange a simplified version of the original dance exercise suitable for young people to learn, and incorporate it into recess activities and community programmes. At the same time, the development of online teaching platform, recording high-quality courses, breaking geographical restrictions, expanding the coverage of heritage. In colleges and universities, we have set up undergraduate programmes or elective courses on original dance, and jointly prepared teaching materials for non-genetic inheritors and professional dance teachers, combining theoretical knowledge with practical teaching. Setting up the 'Original Dance Inheritor Cultivation Plan', selecting young dancers with potential, adopting the 'one-to-one' teacher-apprentice system to cultivate them, and regularly organising professional training and academic exchanges for the inheritors. Encourage colleges and universities, art colleges to set up related programmes to train choreographers, stage designers, cultural researchers and other composite talents. At the same time, the establishment of talent incentive mechanism, outstanding contributions to the inheritors and creators to give recognition and reward.

#### **Deepening the integrated development of culture and tourism**

Relying on the rich tourism resources of BiJie, using short video platforms, social media and other new media channels, create 'original dance culture tourism lines', linking dance performances, folklore experiences, cultural exhibitions and other projects. In the scenic area, the construction of original dance-themed lodging and experience pavilions allows visitors to deeply participate in dance learning and performance. Development of dance creative products, such as special costumes, accessories, souvenirs, etc., to extend the industrial chain, through tourism consumption to feed the protection and development of dance.

In the face of challenges such as the lack of heritage subjects, insufficient funds and weak publicity, the government, society, universities and inheritors need to make concerted efforts. Through policy guidance, financial support, education and innovation, market operation and other means, to build an all-round protection and promotion system, so that the original dance of Bijie in the inheritance of innovation, innovation and development, to achieve a harmonious symbiosis of traditional culture and modern society.

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