

The Research on the Integration and Innovation of Baoshan Lisu Dance Culture in Yunnan

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the cultural integration and innovative development of Lisu dance in Baoshan, Yunnan, focusing on how historical migration, cultural exchanges, and modernization have shaped its evolution. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating field observations, interviews with cultural practitioners, and literature reviews to examine the transformation of traditional Lisu dance. The research sample includes Lisu communities in Longling and Tengchong counties, known for preserving rich cultural heritage. Research tools include video documentation of performances and interviews with key cultural figures. Data collection involved gathering insights from Lisu dance performances and analyzing their development across different historical periods.

The research results found that Lisu dance has undergone significant changes due to its interactions with other ethnic groups, modern media, and global influences. While maintaining its traditional elements, such as the "Three-String Dance," Lisu dance has adapted to modern aesthetic preferences, incorporating contemporary music, choreography, and costumes. These innovations, along with the use of digital platforms and formal education, have helped Lisu dance reach a broader audience while preserving its cultural identity.

Keywords: Lisu Dance; Cultural Integration; Baoshan; Yunnan; Modernization; Traditional Dance

Introduction

The protection and preservation of cultural heritage have gained increasing attention globally, beginning in the 1960s with various international organizations promoting advanced methods and principles. However, the rapid transformations resulting from cultural exchanges and interactions among ethnic groups present significant challenges. The Lisu people, one of China's 56 ethnic minorities with a population of 762,996, primarily reside in regions such as the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Dehong Prefecture, and Baoshan in Yunnan Province (China Statistical Yearbook, 2021). Their unique cultural traditions, especially dance, have undergone significant changes throughout their migration and interactions with neighboring ethnic groups over 4,000 years. Lisu dance culture, however, faces challenges related to its preservation due to rapid social and cultural changes. This issue is exacerbated by the Lisu's transition from a primitive to a socialist society, making it critical to address the need for cultural heritage preservation (Chen & Tang, 2007).

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Baoshan, located in western Yunnan, is a multi-ethnic region where the Lisu interact with ethnic groups such as the Han, Yi, Bai, and Dai. Over time, these interactions have significantly influenced Lisu culture, especially in their traditional dance forms. Baoshan's Lisu dance traditions, such as the "Sanxian Dance" and "Waqiqi," have been recognized as important cultural assets and are listed as city-level intangible cultural heritage. These dances reflect the Lisu's way of life, labor practices, and religious customs, encapsulating their resilience and optimism in the face of adversity. However, with rapid modernization, traditional practices and labor-related dances have lost their original functions, transforming into more abstract representations (Duan, 2015). As modern production methods replace older ones, there is an urgent need to examine how these cultural changes affect the preservation and transmission of Lisu dance culture.

Moreover, globalization and urbanization have introduced new cultural dynamics that challenge the survival of traditional Lisu dances. The influence of external cultures and the migration of Lisu youth to urban areas for education and employment have led to a disconnect with their cultural roots. Government policies focusing on economic development sometimes overlook the importance of cultural sustainability, further exacerbating the issue. Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that not only documents these traditional dances but also explores ways to integrate them into contemporary society, ensuring their relevance and continuity.

The Lisu people's migration and cultural exchanges with neighboring ethnic groups have shaped a rich cultural tapestry that includes religious rituals, labor practices, and aesthetic values, all of which are deeply embedded in their dance forms. As their cultural traditions continue to evolve, understanding the factors contributing to these changes, such as the decline of traditional religious beliefs and the influence of national policies, becomes increasingly important (Luo, 2020). By studying these shifts, this research aims to explore the cultural transformations of Lisu dance in Baoshan and how these shifts reflect broader changes in the community's way of life, cultural exchanges, and the influence of external factors such as state policies and economic developments.

Research Objectives

1. To study the integration and development of Lisu dance culture during migration and interaction with other ethnic cultures.
2. To explore the evolution of Lisu dance culture in Baoshan after the founding of the People's Republic of China and its transformation through multi-ethnic interactions.
3. To investigate the innovation and preservation of Lisu dance culture in the context of modernization and globalization.

Literature Review

1. Lisu People and Lisu Dance

In Paul and Elaine Lewis' (1984) book *Peoples of the Golden Triangle—Six Tribes in Thailand*, research on the Lisu people is presented with a shared ethnographic approach. This work systematically examines and explains the origins, development, population distribution, language, and culture of the Lisu ethnic group.

Kong Jun (2017) pointed out in his research that Lisu ethnic dance has seen further development and growth. The cultural industry has continuously expanded, and the strategies for preserving and transmitting intangible cultural heritage have been deeply implemented. These dances and musical expressions are primarily rooted in the unique characteristics of the Lisu ethnic group, but they also incorporate elements from other ethnic cultures, as well as influences from Western music and dance traditions. As a result, Christian music has gradually become a unique cultural tradition within the Lisu community.

Luo Xin (2020), basing his work on the rich historical culture and unique natural ecological environment of the Dechang Lisu, conducted an in-depth analysis of the main types, structural elements, and distinct characteristics of Lisu dance. Through his exploration of its deep cultural significance, he comprehensively elaborated on the cultural connotations and far-reaching impacts of Dechang Lisu dance. From a historical perspective, this research not only further enriched the cultural content of the Lisu ethnic group but also provided solid theoretical support for the preservation and transmission of Dechang Lisu dance, allowing it to shine even brighter in the context of modern times.

Guo Huaizhi (2015), after studying the origins and distribution of the Waqiqi dance, summarized its characteristics, content, and dance techniques. This work provides a richer theoretical foundation for a better understanding of Waqiqi dance. Additionally, Guo analyzed the form and aesthetic features of Lisu dance. He highlighted the "Sanxian Dance" and "Sanxian Tune," which not only have diverse content but also showcase the Lisu people's wisdom and unique ethnic characteristics.

2. Dance Culture

Li Tao (2023) discussed the process of acculturation and assimilation in folk dance, emphasizing that whether the cultural elements are passively absorbed or actively accepted, both internal development and external factors influence the process. Throughout this transformation, culture is integrated, evolved, invented, and created, ultimately reaching the goal of transmission and being endowed with new cultural attributes. In this process, local culture is reconstructed.

Li Jia (2016) noted that as modernization accelerates and societal and cultural changes continue, the cultural connotations and social functions of dance will also undergo corresponding changes. Thus, social and cultural changes are the main drivers of dance culture evolution. In the development of ethnic minority dance art, various governments throughout history have issued policies aimed at promoting the development of ethnic dance arts. As time goes on, changes in dance culture are inevitable to adapt to the progress of the times, meet aesthetic needs, and reflect shifts in social concepts.

Research Methodology

The methodology section outlines the approach used in this study to explore the cultural evolution of Lisu dance in Baoshan, focusing on population sampling, research tools, data collection, and analysis.

1. Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of Lisu communities in Baoshan City, particularly in Longling County and Tengchong County. The total population of the Lisu in Baoshan is 28,800, with 7,048 Lisu people residing in Longling County, where many traditional customs have been preserved. These areas have been included as a sample for data collection due to their rich cultural heritage, including the "Sanxian Dance" and other unique

traditional practices such as bamboo weaving, vocal arts, and ritual performances. The population sample ensures a diverse representation of Lisu dance culture across various regions of Baoshan, allowing the study to gain an in-depth understanding of the Lisu dance's cultural transmission and evolution over time.

2. Research Tools

Various tools were utilized to collect and analyze data:

Literature Review: Academic databases such as CNKI, VIP, Wanfang, Google Scholar, Web of Science, JSTOR, and SAGE Journals were used to retrieve information on the Lisu dance, cultural change, and related subjects. Documents such as historical texts, local chronicles, and previous academic studies provided foundational insights into the Lisu dance's historical and cultural context.

Field Observations: Observations of Lisu dance performances were conducted in Longling Pingda Township and Tengchong Mingguang Town, where researchers engaged with local communities. Observing live performances and participating in local festivals provided firsthand experience of Lisu dance in its cultural context.

Interviews and Recordings: Interviews were conducted with Lisu dance practitioners and cultural inheritors, such as Yang Haiyan and Yu Changxiang, who demonstrated traditional dance movements. The use of video recordings allowed the researchers to analyze dance movements and their variations over time.

3. Data Collection

Data collection involved multiple methods:

Fieldwork: Researchers visited Lisu villages and performed in-depth observations, focusing on traditional dance elements such as footwork, gestures, costumes, and accompanying music. By engaging with community members and cultural practitioners, the researchers gained valuable insights into the dance's cultural significance.

Interviews: Interviews were conducted with local cultural heritage holders and key stakeholders from local cultural bureaus to understand the socio-cultural dynamics influencing the Lisu dance's transmission and adaptation.

Documentation and Recording: Video recordings and photographs of dance performances were taken during field visits, allowing for detailed analysis of the dance movements, rhythms, and styles.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis involved qualitative methodologies:

Comparative Analysis: Lisu dance was compared across historical periods and regions, using horizontal and vertical approaches. Horizontal analysis compared contemporary and traditional dance forms, while vertical analysis explored the evolution of specific elements such as dance steps, music, and performance settings.

Cultural Morphology: The study used morphological analysis to examine the structural features of Lisu dance, identifying how movements, music, and costumes have evolved over time. The analysis highlighted how the dance reflects cultural changes and adaptations to modern societal contexts.

5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on cultural change theory, particularly focusing on three dimensions: contact, adaptation, and transmission.

Contact: Lisu dance's development is influenced by its contact with other cultures. Historically, the Lisu people's limited interaction with external cultures allowed their dance to maintain distinct ethnic characteristics. However, as globalization expanded, Lisu dance began integrating elements from other ethnic groups and global cultures, contributing to its contemporary evolution.

Adaptation: The study explores how Lisu dance adapted to new socio-cultural environments. While preserving its roots in traditional practices, the dance has evolved to reflect modern aesthetics and societal values. Adaptation includes innovations in dance choreography, music, and costumes to align with modern artistic trends.

Transmission: The research investigates the transmission of Lisu dance through various mediums, including traditional oral transmission within communities and modern methods such as media and digital platforms. The rise of cultural festivals, competitions, and the support of national policies has enabled Lisu dance to reach broader audiences, furthering its cultural transmission and preservation efforts.

In conclusion, by integrating these theoretical dimensions, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how the Lisu dance in Baoshan has evolved through cultural interaction, adaptation to changing environments, and transmission across generations. This multi-dimensional approach helps shed light on the broader implications of cultural transformation in ethnic dance traditions.

Research Findings

1. The Migration of the Lisu People and the Formation of Their Dance Culture

1.1 Major Migration and Ethnic Contact

Before the Tang Dynasty, the ancestors of the Lisu people mainly lived along the Jinsha River, in areas such as Yuejun, Jianwei, Taideng, Qiongzuo, and Dingzuo. Although these tribes had not yet formed a unified ethnic group or organization, they had already begun early cultural exchanges and divisions within their shared living space. During the Three Kingdoms period, many tribes emerged in Dingzuo County (modern-day Yanbian, Sichuan), including the Zu, Juan, Qiong, Kunming, and Mosha tribes, which demonstrated significant influence. These tribes primarily belonged to the Yi language branch and played an important role in the political landscape at that time. The ancestors of the Lisu people interacted more frequently with these tribes, laying the foundation for future ethnic differentiation and national development (Peng, 2010).

In the 8th century, the conflict between the Tang Dynasty and Tibet led to the involvement of the Nanzhao Kingdom and the Lisu people. The Lisu began migrating westward into the Nujiang River basin. During this migration, the Lisu frequently came into contact with other ethnic groups such as the Naxi and Tibetans. Notably, the Naxi Dongba culture had a significant influence on the Lisu (Li, 2020). The Naxi Dongba dance and religious system deeply impacted the Lisu's spiritual and cultural life, and the Lisu gradually absorbed elements of the Dongba culture, integrating them into their own traditions.

By the Song Dynasty, historical records of the Lisu became sparse, but their history continued to develop through interactions with neighboring peoples. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the Lisu underwent two major migrations, moving south from the Tibetan Plateau and eventually settling in the northern Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau (Guo, 2015). This migration strengthened the Lisu's interactions with the Nu and Drung peoples. Through these

exchanges, the Lisu's hunting, gathering, and daily life practices became richer and more developed.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Lisu's cultural exchanges with surrounding ethnic groups deepened further. In the 19th century, following years of continuous warfare, many Lisu tribes decided to migrate toward the Nujiang River and into Myanmar. The Qing Dynasty's "Gaitu Guiliu" policy further facilitated the Lisu's interactions and cooperation with the Han, Bai, and Naxi peoples (Li, 2020). Through these interactions, the Lisu not only improved their material production but also underwent profound cultural and social changes.

1.2 The Integration of Dance Culture with Other Ethnic Cultures

Dance, as an art form, often serves as a vivid reflection of ethnic interaction and integration. In the case of Lisu dance, this fusion is particularly evident. It not only incorporates diverse dance movements but also carries profound cultural significance (Zhang, 2014). This cultural exchange is expressed not only through dance movements and forms but also through its role in festive events, where it plays a crucial part in promoting ethnic unity and cultural transmission.

The "Waqiqi Dance" of the Lisu is an exemplary case of this multicultural integration (Figure 1). This dance not only showcases the unique style of the Lisu but also skillfully integrates elements from Tibetan, Naxi, and Bai dances. For example, the Tibetan "Reba Dance" and the Naxi "Lebai Dance" share similarities in posture and movement dynamics with Lisu dances. This blend highlights the historical cultural exchanges between different ethnic groups. By observing the dance movements and rhythm, the mutual influence between the dance cultures becomes quite apparent.



Figure 1 The "Waqiqi Dance" of the Lisu
(Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/121601375_387408)

The "Waqiqi Dance" not only reflects the fusion between ethnic groups but also preserves an ancient mythological tale. Accompanied by instruments such as the flute, plucked string instruments, and the mouth harp, dancers perform jumps, leg lifts, and foot stomps, showcasing the dance's complexity and richness. In Lisu society, this dance serves multiple functions, being both a key performance during festivals and a way to stay physically fit.

There are also many shared elements between the Lisu dances and those of neighboring ethnic groups like the Bai and Naxi. In the Lisu dances, certain movements and rhythms resemble those found in Bai and Naxi dances, underscoring the long-term cultural exchange. The Lisu dance repertoire is rich and diverse, featuring dances that mimic animal behavior, depict labor, and reflect daily life, all highlighting the distinctive nature of the Lisu people. Particularly, the "Achimua Gua Dance" (Figure 2) and the "Rebounding Pipa Dance" (Figure 3) are prominent Lisu dances, focusing on themes of animal mimicry and labor, marked by lively rhythms and strong expressive power, making them important parts of Lisu dance culture.



Figure 2 The "Achimua Gua Dance"
(Source: Photographed by the researcher, 2024)



Figure 3 The "Rebounding Pipa Dance"
(Source: <http://dqich.cn/mobile/baohuminglu/detail/35/566>)

In the 19th century, the Lisu migrated into the Nujiang region, frequently interacting with the Nu and Pumi ethnic groups. Through this interaction, Lisu dance also absorbed artistic elements from these groups. The Nu "Dabiya Dance" shares similarities with Lisu dance in both the use of instruments and dance style (Figure 4). Instruments used in these dances, such as the Lisu "Qiben" and the Nu "Dabiya," show striking similarities in appearance and craftsmanship, reflecting the cultural exchanges between the two groups.



Figure 4 Comparison of Instruments in Lisu Dance and Nu's "Dabiya Dance"
(Source: Photographed by the researcher, 2024)

Beyond dance, Lisu festivals also demonstrate their cultural integration with other ethnic groups. For instance, the "Kuoshi" festival, the traditional Lisu New Year, reflects their reverence for nature and love of life. During this festival, the Lisu express their emotions through dance, archery, and other activities, while also strengthening their interactions with other ethnic groups. Additionally, in the Lisu "Knife Pole Festival," activities such as climbing the knife mountain and descending into fire pits showcase their courageous spirit and have become a distinctive cultural tradition.

The "Torch Festival," celebrated jointly by the Lisu, Yi, Naxi, Bai, and other ethnic groups, is another key event. During this festival, people from various ethnicities gather, dressed in festive attire, singing and dancing together while sharing cultural experiences. This further promotes cultural exchange and integration among different ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the music accompanying Lisu dances is also deeply influenced by other ethnic groups. Musical elements from Tibetan, Naxi, and Yi traditions—especially in melody, rhythm, and instrumentation—have profoundly affected Lisu dance music. For example, Naxi classical music and Yi percussion instruments are visible influences in Lisu dance music. Bai music, known for its lyrical melodies, has introduced new elements into Lisu dance music, making it even more evocative.

Before 1949, Lisu dance culture absorbed not only the essence of other ethnic groups in terms of movement and music but also reflected this integration in their costumes. Lisu dance costumes were influenced by Tibetan, Yi, and Bai ethnic attire. For example, the grandeur and ornamentation of Tibetan clothing, the handcrafted embroidery and batik techniques of the Yi, and the embroidery craftsmanship of the Bai all had an impact on Lisu dance costumes, enhancing their artistic and symbolic significance.

In conclusion, Lisu dance culture not only showcases the spirit of the Lisu people but also evolves and develops through ongoing cultural exchanges with other ethnic groups. This integration fosters harmony between ethnic groups and enhances mutual cultural recognition.

2. The Development of Lisu Dance Culture

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Lisu people gradually settled in the Baoshan region and engaged in extensive interactions and cooperation with the local Han, Yi, Dai, and other ethnic groups. These exchanges had a profound impact on the Lisu's way of life, cultural customs, and festive celebrations. Through daily contact with the local ethnic groups in Baoshan, the Lisu people actively learned and absorbed the cultural essence of other ethnic groups (Duan, 2015). For instance, through interaction with the Yi people, the Lisu adopted advanced agricultural techniques and skillfully incorporated the Yi people's dance movements and rhythms into their own dance forms, reflecting their openness and inclusiveness toward other cultures. This mutual cultural integration not only enriched Lisu culture but also strengthened the deep friendships and solidarity among various ethnic groups. Additionally, Dai dance art had an influence on Lisu dance, with the gentleness and elegance of Dai dance providing new inspiration and style for Lisu dance.

During festive celebrations, ethnic groups such as the Han, Yi, and Dai joined in the Lisu "Knife Pole Festival," sharing in the joy of the occasion. Through these celebrations, the Lisu people showcased their unique charm and cultural confidence, expressing their love for life and their vision for a bright future. In everyday life, the Lisu learned new production methods through interaction with other ethnic groups, which in turn promoted economic development. Meanwhile, the Lisu also actively shared their traditional skills, such as weaving and embroidery, which were preserved and passed on through interactions with other ethnic groups, enriching their cultural lives.

During this period, Lisu culture gained broader recognition and respect as they continuously absorbed outstanding cultural elements from other ethnic groups, expanding their own cultural horizons. For example, during the Han people's Spring Festival celebrations, the Lisu community actively participated, learning Han customs such as pasting couplets, setting off firecrackers, and making dumplings, celebrating the New Year alongside the Han people. These activities not only deepened the friendship between the Lisu and Han people but also allowed the Lisu to experience the charm of Han culture.

The Lisu's "Three-String Dance" became more diverse in form, with the addition of solo, duet, and other formats alongside the traditional group dance (Figure 5). The choreography focused more on artistic expression and audience appeal, combining clever movement design with matching music to enhance the dance's impact. Whenever the sound of the three-string instrument played, the Lisu people would gather to "circle dance," performing the lively "Three-String Dance." Even minor neighborhood disputes would dissipate in the cheerful atmosphere created by the dance and music. Through their interactions with other ethnic groups, the Lisu people came to deeply understand the unique charm and value of their own culture. By showcasing and preserving traditional cultural forms such as the "Three-String Dance," they reinforced their cultural identity and sense of belonging, while also sparking other ethnic groups' interest in and respect for Lisu culture. This enhanced cultural confidence and pride laid a solid foundation for the flourishing of Lisu culture.



Figure 5 Comparison of Instruments in Lisu Dance and Nu's "Dabiya Dance"
(Source: Photographed by the researcher, 2024)

The Lisu people also maintained close contact with the Yi people and other ethnic groups. During the Yi "Torch Festival," the Lisu community eagerly participated, lighting torches and dancing together to celebrate the harvest. These activities not only strengthened interethnic friendships but also enriched the cultural life of the Lisu people. Through extensive contact with other ethnic groups, the Lisu absorbed elements of their cultures, showcasing their own cultural characteristics in areas such as dance, music, and handicrafts. This cultural exchange and integration not only promoted the transmission and development of Lisu culture but also contributed to the flourishing of the cultures of various ethnic groups in the region.

The Lisu's interactions and exchanges with other ethnic groups in the Baoshan area reached new heights, profoundly influencing Lisu cultural arts and injecting new vitality and meaning into them. These interactions left a lasting impression on their lifestyle, cultural customs, and festive celebrations, while also spreading their traditional knowledge and skills, leading to the formation of a diverse and rich cultural transmission framework.

In terms of dance culture, the influence of these exchanges was particularly notable. Lisu dances began incorporating movements that reflected labor and production activities, such as "digging the soil," "planting corn," and "building dikes." The basic dance steps and specific movements of Lisu dances also became closely connected with daily production and life. Movements such as single-leg jumps, double-leg jumps, and foot stomps were artistic representations of the Lisu people's daily labor. It is worth mentioning that the Lisu people created a "flower-bird calendar" based on natural changes, and followed the ancient calendar for agricultural production.

3. The Innovative Development of Baoshan Lisu Dance Culture

3.1 Contact with New Cultures and Influence of New Elements

Since the reform and opening up of China, the dance culture of the Lisu people in Baoshan has experienced unprecedented innovation and development as it encounters and engages with new cultural influences. As society advances, Lisu dance culture has begun to interact with and be influenced by modern cultural elements. New media platforms such as television, media, and the internet have provided a broader stage for Lisu dance. These platforms have allowed Lisu dance to transcend the mountains, reaching national and even global audiences.

In addition, modern media has introduced contemporary aesthetic concepts and creative approaches to Lisu dance, enabling it to integrate modern elements while retaining its traditional essence. This innovation has enriched the dance movements and forms of expression, extending to the music, costumes, and other aspects of the dance. As a result, Lisu dance has flourished in the new era, evolving to meet the demands of modern aesthetics. The development of modern education has also provided strong support for the preservation and innovation of Lisu dance culture. Some educators have begun incorporating the "Three-String Dance" into classroom instruction, aiming to enhance students' aesthetic appreciation and bring Lisu dance into schools and the public eye, making it more widely known.

For example, Lisu folk dances have been included as compulsory courses in the dance programs at various universities in Yunnan Province. In Tengchong's autonomous primary schools, which cater to border ethnic communities, efforts have been made to deepen quality education by incorporating traditional Lisu dances such as "Da Tiao" and the "Three-String Dance" into the school's daily activities (Figure 6). Through these subtle but impactful methods, students are encouraged to inherit and promote traditional Lisu culture. As ethnic education becomes more widespread, younger generations are not only mastering traditional dance techniques but are also integrating modern aesthetic ideas into their creative performances. This innovative blend of tradition and modernity ensures that Lisu dance continues to thrive, keeping pace with contemporary demands while preserving the cultural essence that defines it.



Figure 6 Tengchong Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor Li Guoshu Teaching the "Three-String Dance" to Students
(Source: Photographed by the researcher, 2024)

3.2 Innovative Development of Dance Culture

Lisu dance, as a traditional art form rich in folklore and historical memory, is gradually integrating modern aesthetics and creative concepts under the influence of new media and new ideas, revealing a refreshed and vibrant appearance (Figure 7). Traditionally, Lisu dances have primarily focused on imitating daily activities such as farming and hunting, with relatively simple forms. However, under the influence of modern aesthetics, the movements have become increasingly diverse, incorporating more emotional expression and engaging storylines, thereby enhancing the dance's expressiveness and emotional impact. In terms of music, the lively rhythms originally dominated by traditional percussion instruments have begun to blend with electronic music, pop music, and other modern elements, making the music more diverse and captivating.



Figure 7 New Era Costumes of Lisu dance.
(Source: Photographed by the researcher, 2024)

As times have changed and society has evolved, the themes and content of Lisu dances have also undergone profound transformation. Modern Lisu dances are no longer limited to traditional scenes of agriculture and hunting but have expanded to focus on broader themes such as modern society, the relationship between humans and nature, and the preservation of ethnic culture (Peng, 2010).

In terms of costumes, the traditional ethnic attire of Lisu dances, which once emphasized bright colors and simple designs, has also begun to incorporate modern fashion elements. New color schemes and design innovations make the costumes more visually appealing and aligned with contemporary aesthetics, attracting younger audiences.

Some dancers have also taken steps to promote Lisu dance more widely by creating instructional materials, recording videos, and hosting workshops. These efforts have allowed the artistic charm of Lisu dance to reach broader audiences. By utilizing modern technology, they have made instructional videos accessible online, allowing people to learn Lisu dance anytime, anywhere. Additionally, various forms of training and exchange activities have been organized, injecting new vitality into the preservation and development of Lisu dance.

These innovative methods of transmission have not only facilitated the popularization and promotion of Lisu dance but also infused it with new life and cultural significance. Through continuous exploration and practice, the development of Lisu dance culture has become more comprehensive and in-depth since China's reform and opening-up, contributing to the flourishing of Chinese national culture and international cultural exchange.

The achievements and positive changes in Lisu dance culture after the reform and opening up are evident, as dancers continue to innovate while preserving the traditional essence. They have maintained the fundamental movements and core concepts of the "Three-String Dance" while updating the dance forms and content to better meet modern aesthetic preferences. In particular, the study of Lisu dance in Baoshan, Yunnan, across different historical periods reveals a culture rich in artistic value, deeply rooted in the lives of the Lisu people. This rich cultural heritage enhances the traditional cultural system, helping to promote Lisu culture on a broader scale.

Discussion

1. Research Objectives

This study aimed to examine the evolution of Lisu dance culture in Baoshan by analyzing its transformations through the lenses of contact, adaptation, and transmission. The primary objective was to understand how interactions with other cultures, changes in socio-cultural environments, and modern methods of cultural transmission have influenced Lisu dance from its traditional roots to its contemporary forms. The research also sought to explore how these changes reflect the broader cultural shifts experienced by the Lisu people in Baoshan over time.

2. Research Results

The research results reveal several key insights into the transformation of Lisu dance in Baoshan:

Cultural Contact and Influence: Lisu dance has historically incorporated elements from neighboring ethnic groups such as the Han, Yi, and Bai, as well as from other global cultures through modernization and globalization. This contact has introduced new musical styles, costumes, and performance elements into Lisu dance, resulting in a more diverse and hybridized cultural expression.

Adaptation to Modern Socio-Cultural Environments: While Lisu dance has retained its core traditional elements, such as the rhythmic footwork and use of instruments like the sanxian (three-stringed lute), it has adapted to modern aesthetic demands. The inclusion of Western music styles, increased emphasis on stage choreography, and integration of modern costumes illustrate how Lisu dance has evolved to meet contemporary artistic standards.

Transmission through Modern Platforms: The transmission of Lisu dance has shifted from purely oral and performative methods within the community to more widespread dissemination through media, digital platforms, and national cultural festivals. This has expanded the reach of Lisu dance beyond the confines of Baoshan, bringing it to national and even international attention.

3. Reflection on Research Results

The findings align with earlier research that highlighted the Lisu dance's ability to integrate external influences while maintaining its ethnic identity. For instance, Duan Xiaoling (2015) emphasized the aesthetic beauty of Lisu dance as shaped by its natural environment, noting the incorporation of nature-inspired movements into traditional performances. This study extends that idea by showing how Lisu dance has further evolved, incorporating not only natural aesthetics but also modern cultural influences from urbanization and global media. The combination of traditional and modern influences makes Lisu dance a dynamic and adaptive cultural form.

Moreover, Duan Longshan (2015) discussed how Baoshan's multi-ethnic environment has led to a fusion of cultural practices among different ethnic groups, particularly in the realm of folk dance. The results of this study corroborate his findings, demonstrating that Lisu dance in Baoshan is a product of continuous interaction with other ethnic groups, which has enriched its cultural repertoire and enhanced its resilience.

The research results also resonate with Peng Xiaoxi (2010), who analyzed the cultural meanings embedded in traditional Lisu dances such as "Wa Qi" and "Qian E." Peng emphasized the spiritual and symbolic significance of these dances, which are deeply rooted in Lisu cosmology and social practices. This study builds on Peng's work by exploring how these symbolic meanings have been preserved even as the dance form adapts to modern cultural trends. For example, despite adopting Western musical elements and stage performances, Lisu dance continues to reflect core cultural values such as community, harmony with nature, and spiritual reverence.

Finally, Li Jian (2010) pointed out the importance of preserving the "original ecological" characteristics of regional ethnic dances. He argued that while modernization brings opportunities for cultural innovation, it is essential to maintain the authenticity of traditional dance forms. The findings of this study align with Li's caution, as it highlights the balance that Lisu dance has struck between modernization and tradition. Despite the external influences, Lisu dance remains grounded in its cultural heritage, with efforts to preserve its unique movement patterns, musical instruments, and community-based performance traditions.

4. Consistent/ Inconsistent with Previous Research

Consistent Results: The study's findings on cultural contact and transmission align with previous works by Duan Xiaoling (2015) and Duan Longshan (2015), who emphasized the role of intercultural interaction in shaping Baoshan's ethnic dance forms. The results also support Peng Xiaoxi (2010), who highlighted the symbolic importance of Lisu dance, as this study confirms that even with modernization, the spiritual aspects of Lisu dance remain intact.

Inconsistent Results: While Li Jian (2010) advocated for preserving the "original ecological" characteristics of ethnic dances, this study reveals that Lisu dance has embraced modernization in a way that does not entirely align with Li's concept of preservation. The adaptation to modern aesthetic and cultural trends, particularly through the incorporation of Western elements, suggests that Lisu dance is moving beyond its traditional ecological boundaries. However, this transformation is not viewed as a loss of authenticity but as a necessary evolution to ensure the dance's survival and relevance in contemporary society.

5. Conclusion

The research results demonstrate that Lisu dance culture in Baoshan is a vibrant and evolving art form, reflecting the dynamic interactions between tradition and modernity. Through contact with other cultures, adaptation to modern social environments, and transmission via new platforms, Lisu dance continues to thrive. The study underscores the importance of balancing cultural preservation with innovation, ensuring that traditional practices are not lost but are allowed to evolve in response to changing cultural landscapes.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of cultural evolution in ethnic minority communities, providing insights that can inform future efforts to preserve and promote traditional cultural practices in an increasingly globalized world.

Recommendations

1. Theoretical Recommendations

The theoretical implications of this study center on the application and development of cultural transformation theories, particularly in relation to ethnic minority dance cultures. The study has confirmed that the concepts of cultural contact, adaptation, and transmission are critical in understanding how traditional dances like those of the Lisu have evolved. Therefore, further research could expand on these theoretical frameworks by incorporating aspects of globalization theory, which explores how cultures are increasingly influenced by international trends and media.

Future theoretical work should also consider the role of digital transformation in the preservation and innovation of ethnic dance cultures. This study has shown that modern media platforms play a significant role in the dissemination of Lisu dance, suggesting the need to include digital media theories to explain how technology alters traditional cultural expressions.

2. Policy Recommendations

To ensure the sustainable preservation and promotion of Lisu dance culture, several policy recommendations are essential:

Strengthening Cultural Preservation Policies: Government authorities should implement policies that focus on preserving traditional ethnic dance forms while allowing for their natural evolution. Policies could include creating dedicated funding for cultural preservation initiatives that ensure both the documentation and continuous practice of traditional Lisu dances in their original form. Such policies should also address the risk of cultural commodification, ensuring that Lisu dance retains its authenticity in modern cultural exchanges.

Integration of Cultural Education: Introducing Lisu dance and other minority cultural practices into the formal education system, from primary schools to universities, can ensure the long-term survival of these traditions. Local governments should consider creating school curricula that teach ethnic dance alongside broader subjects, ensuring that the younger generation understands and appreciates their cultural heritage.

Supporting Cultural Tourism: The development of cultural tourism focused on Lisu dance performances can be an effective way to support local communities while promoting cultural heritage. Policies should aim to create partnerships between cultural practitioners, local governments, and tourism agencies to promote Lisu dance in a way that respects its cultural significance while also generating economic benefits for the community.

Enhancing Cross-Ethnic Cultural Collaboration: Government policies could promote collaborations between different ethnic groups in multi-ethnic regions like Baoshan. By facilitating exchanges of cultural practices, such policies would not only enrich the cultural fabric of the region but also foster deeper intercultural understanding and cooperation..

3. Practical Recommendations

In practical terms, the following steps are recommended to preserve and promote Lisu dance culture effectively:

Training Programs for Dance Practitioners: There is a need for systematic training programs aimed at both preserving traditional Lisu dance and fostering innovation. Such programs should involve community-based learning, where local dance practitioners and elders teach younger generations. Workshops that introduce modern choreography techniques while retaining traditional dance elements can help Lisu dance evolve without losing its essence.

Utilizing Digital Platforms: To expand the reach of Lisu dance, practitioners and cultural promoters should fully embrace digital platforms such as YouTube, social media, and online cultural hubs. By uploading performances, tutorials, and cultural information online, Lisu dance can reach a broader audience, both nationally and internationally. Partnerships with digital content creators and influencers could further raise the profile of Lisu dance.

Community-Based Cultural Festivals: Organizing community-based festivals that feature Lisu dance performances would create local spaces for cultural expression while attracting tourists. Local governments and cultural organizations should collaborate with community leaders to develop annual festivals that showcase the full diversity of Lisu dance forms, ensuring that both traditional and modern versions are presented.

Developing Lisu Dance Documentation Projects: To preserve the historical evolution of Lisu dance, local cultural authorities should support efforts to document traditional dance forms through video, photography, and written records. These materials should be housed in local libraries or digital archives, ensuring that future generations have access to accurate representations of traditional Lisu dance.

Cross-Cultural Exchange Programs: Establishing exchange programs between Lisu dancers and other ethnic dance practitioners can help to enrich Lisu dance while fostering greater understanding among different cultures. These exchanges could be facilitated through regional and international dance festivals, where Lisu dancers have the opportunity to learn from other traditions and share their own cultural practices.

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