
Case Study Paper

Inheritance and Development of Traditional Minority Culture in Southwest China:

A Case Study of Miao, Dong and Dai Nationalities

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Abstract

Guizhou Province and Yunnan Province are located in the southwestern part of China, with a large number of ethnic minority areas, of which Miao, Dong and Yi nationalities are important ethnic groups in terms of quantity and distribution. This part of China retains a large number of landscapes and traditional buildings, including terraces, Miao Village, Dong Village and Drum Towers, which are important components of the traditional culture of the Miao and Dong nationalities. Meanwhile, in Zunyi City of Guizhou Province, traditional folk religious culture is still preserved, and the text, language, songs, and utensils have been effectively passed down. Moreover, in Xishuangbanna of Yunnan Province, the traditional wooden structure which is inhabited by the Yi nationalities is still provided with typical national characteristics. And all aspects of clothing, food, housing and transportation are of great cultural characteristics. The entire village has a large number of intangible cultural heritage. This paper introduces the inheritance and development of traditional cultural changes in Guizhou, Yunnan Province in southwest China from the perspective of anthropology. The minority learners mentioned in this paper retain the essence of culture, but also attract more people to understand traditional culture and inherit and develop traditional culture. Otherwise, government, media and residents, including encouraging tourism, increasing cultural and tourism projects, publicizing intangible cultural heritage to attract people to understand and disseminate traditional culture, and making Chinese traditional culture develop in the new era. Chinese traditional culture has a long history and it has been passed down from ancient times to the present. The ethnic minorities in the southwestern region have retained their independent and complete national culture because of their geographical location and traffic. Therefore, they are highly recognizable. In short, Chinese traditional culture has great national characteristics and is the essence of Chinese culture. It is also an important part of world culture.

Keywords

Anthropology, Southwestern China, Traditional cultural, Inheritance, Development

1. Introduce

Guizhou Province is located in the hinterland of southwestern China. Meanwhile it's a world-renowned mountain tourism destination and a mountain tourism province. It's also a national ecological civilization pilot zone, and an inland open economy experiment area. Guizhou Province is a multi-ethnic provinceⁱ. Yunnan Province is located in the southwestern border of China, and the east is connected to Guizhou Province. Yunnan is the province with the largest ethnic group in China. In addition to the Han nationality, there are 25 ethnic minorities with a population of over 6,000. Among them, 15 ethnic groups are unique to Yunnan. Otherwise, Yunnan ethnic minorities are staggered, showing large mixed living and small settlementsⁱⁱ.

2. Traditional Cultural Types of Minorities in Southwest China

2.1. Architectural culture

The traditional architecture of ethnic minorities has a long history. Due to the influence of the natural environment and the characteristics of the nation, its rich architectural culture also has very distinctive characteristics, which fully reflects the living habits, thinking concepts and religious beliefs of ethnic minorities. It also makes the traditional architectural culture of ethnic minorities an important part of national culture. Among them, the Pile Dwelling is a typical representative of the Miao nationality architecture, the Drum Tower and the Wind and Rain Bridge are typical representatives of the Dong nationality architecture, and the Dailou is a typical characteristic building of the Dai nationality. Most of these structures are selected from the nearest material, and the shape and the characteristic are harmonious with the natural environment, which have the cultural connotation of their own nation.



Figure 1 Guizhou Dong people's wind and rain bridge stone monument (Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 2 Guizhou Dong people's wind and rain bridge(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 3 Guizhou Dong people's Drum Tower(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 4 Yunnan Dai people's traditional Dailou(Photo by Chen Lin)

2.1.1 Practical concept according to local conditions

Since ancient times, the residents living in Guizhou Province have mostly lived in agriculture, while Guizhou Province is located in the mountain plateau. There are very few plains. In order to preserve the farmland to the greatest extent, the residents use mountainous and sloping land that is not suitable for use as cultivated land. On top of it, a traditional structure, the Pile Dwelling, with Guizhou national characteristics is built. This type of construction not only destroys the natural environment in a large amount, but also makes full use of the non-cultivated landforms, minimizing the deforestation and waste of cultivated land. The rear half of the Pile Dwelling is placed against the rock above the ground, and the front half is supported by wooden columns. Because the second and third floors of the structure and the eaves are beyond the perimeter of the structure, a suspended sling posture is formed, which is called the "Pile Dwelling"ⁱⁱⁱ. From the longitudinal section, the shape forms a unique landscape. When observing these hanging structures, it is natural, especially in the Miao Village, which is surrounded by mountains and rivers. The slinged structures is like a eagle flying high in the Miao Village with a sense of nature^{iv}.



Figure 5 Guizhou Miao people's Pile Dwelling (Photo by Chen Lin)

2.1.2 Building materials sustainability concept

In Guizhou and Yunnan Province, the building materials used in traditional structures in ethnic areas are mostly adapted to local conditions and locally. Soil, stone, trees, bamboo, straw, etc. can be used as materials for building houses^{iv}. For example, the Miao people's Pile Dwelling, the Dong people's the Drum Towers and the wind and rain bridges use wood, stone and mud as the main building materials in the nearby forests. The Dai Lou in Yunnan Province use wood and bamboo. These materials are obtained from the surrounding environment and are often more adapted to the local climate, geography and other conditions. The people living here use the resources given by nature, and they also know how to give back to nature. Plants are often planted near their homes, which not only increases the comfort of living, but also maintains the local soil and water, reflecting their respect for nature and endless belief. For example, the Buyi people are used to planting bamboo and other plants around the village, which is named "Zhailin" by Buyi peopleⁱⁱⁱ.



Figure 6 Yunnan Xishuangbanna traditional thatched cottage (Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 7 Yunnan Xishuangbanna traditional thatched cottage (Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 8 Yunnan Xishuangbanna Dailou uses wood and bamboo raft as building materials
(Photo by Chen Lin)

2.1.3 Diversified functional culture

The drum tower and the wind and rain bridge, which are public structures in the villages of southwestern Guizhou Province, play different functions in their respective national cultures.

The drum tower is mainly made of wood, with many eaves and columns, which are mainly used for placing cowhide drums, while the drum tower and drums form important public buildings and cultural things of the Dong people. In addition, the wind and rain bridge breaks through the single function of the bridge, and integrates the styles of bridge, pavilion, gallery and leaning. There is a roof on the bridge, which can be used for people to rest on the benches on the side of it (Fig. 9). Meanwhile, there are Dong people's folk paintings, flower and bird landscape paintings on both sides of the bridge (Fig. 10), making the wind and rain bridge more artistic and ethnic. The whole bridge pavilion is connected by wood, which is integrated into one. It not only has the basic functions of the bridge, but also has functions for pedestrians to rest, watch the scenery, avoid the wind and rain. During the festival, the wind and rain bridge also gathers the Dong men and women to hold entertainment and religious activities on itⁱⁱⁱ. As a residential structures, the Pile Dwelling is generally divided into three layers. The lower tier store debris, stack firewood, and store production tools such as plows and hoes for easy access. The middle tier lives to make people live off the ground, avoiding the attack of insects and beasts, and protecting people from the influence of moisture; the upper layer of grain storage can not only avoid food moisture, but also can be used at any time^{iv}.



Figure 9 Guizhou Diping Twon wind and rain bridge(Photo by Chen Lin)

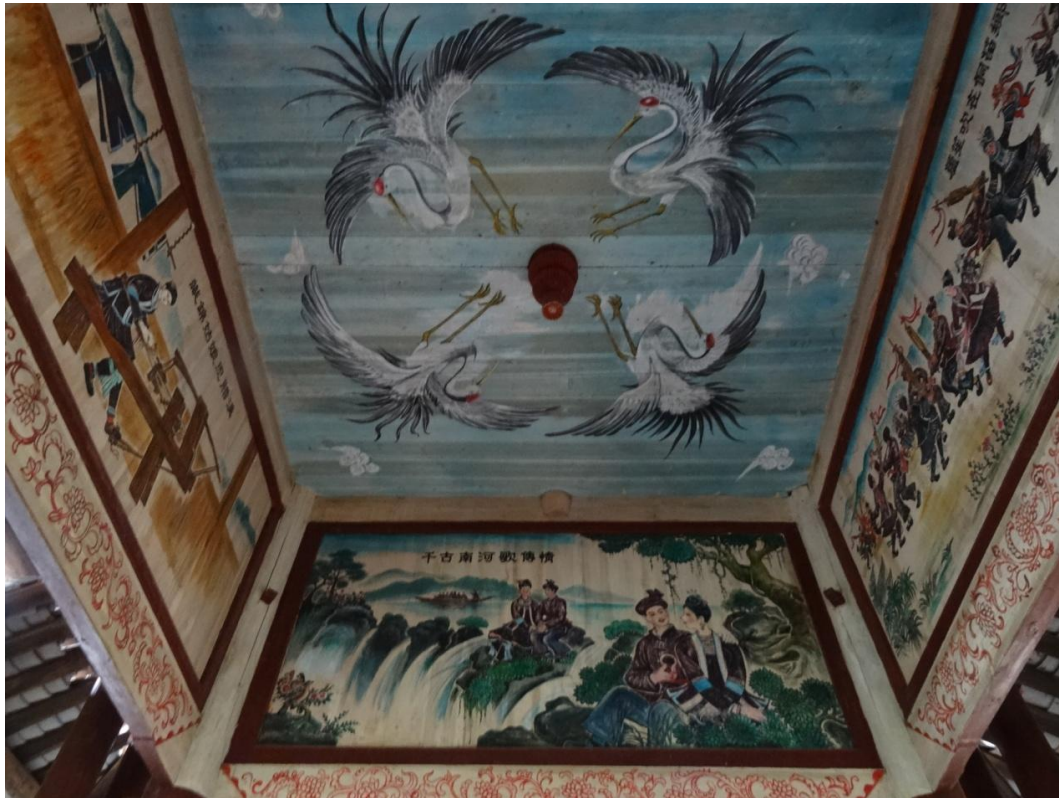


Figure 10 Paintings on the wind and rain bridge(Photo by Chen Lin)

2.2. Religious culture

Religious belief is a series of spiritual worship concepts, behavioral patterns and ritual systems produced by people in their production, life or entertainment, which are hopeful, praying for happiness and maintaining psychological security. The content is very rich. In the Daozhen Miao and the Gelao Autonomous County of Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, people have the religious beliefs of the the Gelao people. Ancestor worship, heaven and earth worship, sun and moon star worship, wind and rain and lightning worship, mountain water and fire worship and animal and plant worship are the basic contents of the original religion of the Gelao and the Miao people in Guizhou Province. The original inhabitants of the Gelao people considered themselves to be descendants of the bamboo king, who was their ancestor. Up to now, the legends of the bamboo king and the custom of revering bamboo have been widely spread among the Gelao people in various places. For example, in the Meijiazhai country, Daozhen Gelao and Miao Autonomous County, when the first boy was born, parents should bury their placenta and some egg shells in the bamboo forest to pray for the protection of the bamboo king. During the Spring Festival, every household must go to bamboo forest to offer bamboo king money. There are quite a few places where bamboo wares are used to worship the ancestors or to harvest. Moreover, the Gelao people in Guizhou Province are full of worship for the sun, the moon and the stars. They regard the sun as a spiritual thing, and they are called "the sun bodhisattva" and are enshrined in the temple. The Gelao people believe that the representatives of Thor and justice should enjoy the incense of human sacrifice. Many places have built a Thor temple, dedicating to the Thor Buddha. The Gelao people in Guizhou Province also believe that the earth and rock are

closely related to human life. People believe that life comes from the land, and the land can bring peace to the people. The mountains, rivers and the gods of the land give sacrifices. Therefore, build a temple for setting the mountains and rivers, the land of the gods, to give sacrifices. Some strange shapes of landstone and stalactites are also regarded as spiritual objects. Stone buddhas, stone pigs, and stone goddess in the Gelao area can be seen everywhere. People devoutly put on red cloth and scented candles. Animal and plant beliefs and worship are worshipped by animals and plants or fantasy animals. The Guizhou Gelao people think that they may bring their own gospel or threat, so they are awe-inspiring and sacrificed^v.

During the field investigation in Daozhen Miao Autonomous County, Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, the author found that the Gelao people still retain relevant words and symbols (Fig. 11) and the molds for making these characters and symbols (Fig. 12). The transcripts record some eulogy and songs about religious ceremonies. Some residents also retain the crafts of making religious utensils and personally make some utensils used in religious ceremonies (Figure 14-15). On special religious anniversaries, local residents will still carry out some religious activities to sacrifice their ancestors and worship the gods. This tradition has been passed down to the present day.

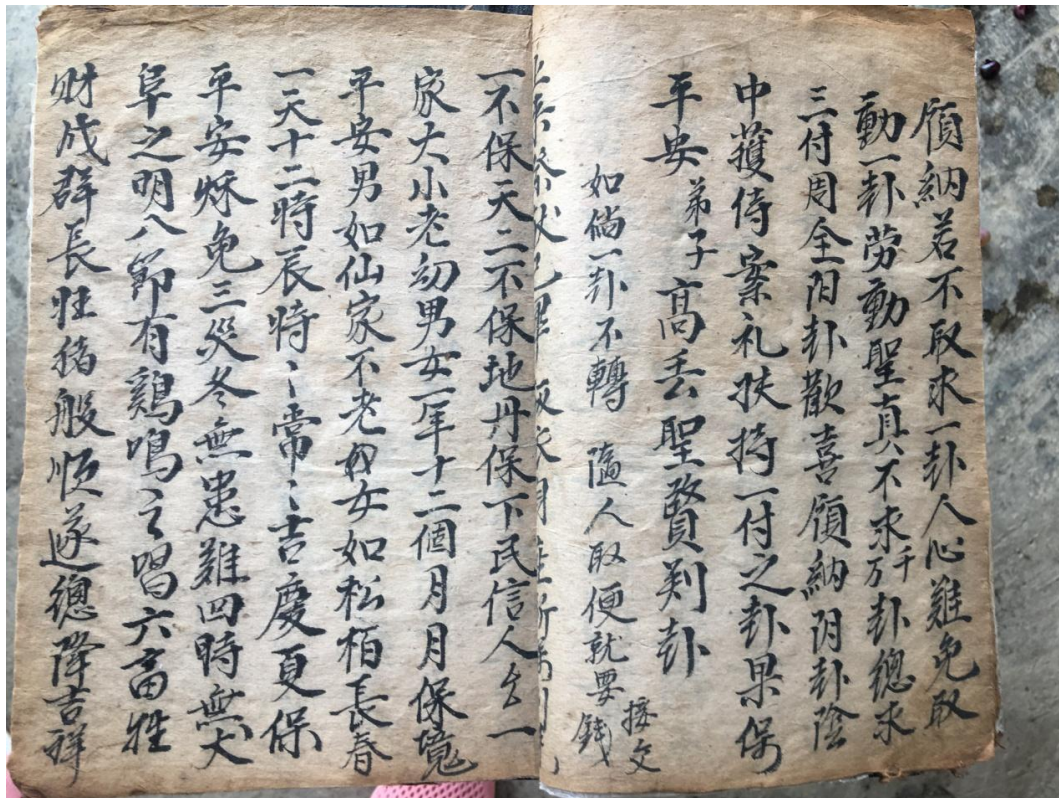


Figure 11 The text recorded by the Gelao people (Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 12 The mold for making text, symbol by Gelao people(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 13 Utensils used in religious ceremonies of Gelao people(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 14 Homemade mask of Gelao people(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 15 Gelao people wear masks(Photo by Chen Lin)

2.3. Intangible Cultural Heritage

There are a large number of intangible cultural heritages in Guizhou and Yunnan Province. According to the statistics of relevant departments, more than 30 projects in the Yunnan-Guizhou ethnic minority area have been included in the list of national intangible cultural heritage, including folk oral literature, folk festivals, folk music and folk dances, as well as

folk crafts^{vi}. In Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, people's clothing, food, shelter and transportation all have national characteristics, reflecting people's hard work and wisdom. The Dai people nationality Zhang Ha, the Dai people ethnic brocade skills, the Dai people drum production skills, the Dai people traditional umbrella craft, the Dai people bamboo building construction skills, Xishuangbanna minority tea customs, etc. are listed as intangible cultural heritage.



Figure 16 Dai people bamboo building construction skills(Photo by Chen Lin**)**



Figure 17 Dai people dance performance(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 18 Dai people ethnic brocade skills

3. The way of inheriting and developing traditional culture in Southwest China

Under the background of globalization, traditional culture has been greatly impacted in the contemporary era. But as the essence of culture that has been handed down for thousands of years, it should be scientifically passed down and developed in the contemporary era. On the one hand, these valuable cultural wealth can be passed down from generation to generation, on the other hand, traditional culture can be developed into a culture that meets the spiritual needs of the contemporary people in the new era. With the joint efforts of the state, society and residents, the traditional culture of Southwest China has been effectively passed down and developed through the following three methods.

3.1. Development tourism

The development of tourism has a positive effect on the return of local culture, traditional culture, the highlight of national identity and the expansion of the traditional living space of ethnic traditions^{vii}. Nowadays, people like to see different landscapes and experience different human relationships through tourism. They can also interact with human landscapes in the process of tourism. People from different regions and cultures can exchange cultural information in this process and directly experience the cultural enjoyment that traditional culture brings to people. In Guizhou Province, many villages in the form of tourism invite visitors to participate in their lives, experience the authentic Dong people's life. So the visitors can understand the traditional customs of the traditional culture of the Dong people and carry out deep cultural tourism. The author was fortunate to participate in the local Dong people's wedding during the field investigation in Diping Township, Liping City, Guizhou Province. The local marriage still retained the traditional customs, and the groom needed to marry the bride before dawn. The bride's dowry also retained the traditional customs of several categories of essential items, and the traditional way of carrying accompanied to her husband's family. The day before the wedding, the villagers gathered together to prepare food for the next day wedding banquet. On the wedding day, with the method of open-air banquet to welcome all the guests, visitors can also join in with sincere blessings and feel the local culture. This kind of cultural experience of direct participation often reminds people of the time, and can appreciate the charm brought by traditional culture. It is more conducive to the inheritance and development of traditional culture. Tourism has become an effective way for people to understand and inherit traditional culture. The direct economic benefits brought by tourism can improve the living standards of local residents and promote local economic development. Under the premise of meeting basic living needs, people have more time and energy to participate in the traditional culture construction, so that the local traditional culture can be better developed.



Figure 19 Villagers in Dongzhai prepare food for the wedding(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 20 Villagers in Dongzhai prepare food for the wedding(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 21 Tourists take a group photo with the bride and groom(Photo by Chen Lin)

3.2. Cultural communication

Because the southwestern region is located in the middle of the mountain, the traffic conditions are not very convenient. So in the long period of time, it was in a relatively closed state. But it is precisely because of this environment that the local traditional culture is more preserved. In such an era of information, on the one hand, we guarantee the traditional culture is not affected by the impact of the cultural globalization, more keep its characteristics. On the other hand, it spreads the traditional culture of Southwest China and makes more people to understand traditional culture. Inheriting and developing traditional culture is the responsibility given to us by the times. Nowadays, in many villages, digital intangible cultural heritage databases and museums have been built digitally, such as the "Miao Nationality Costume Database" of the Guizhou Provincial Museum, the "Taijiang Miao Nationality Embroidery Museum" in Taijiang County, and the "Suojia Miao Nationality Ecological Museum" jointly built by the Kingdom of Norway and Liuzhi District of Liupanshui City^{viii}. The museum enters the village to establish a real ecological or "live" museum, recording and inheriting local traditional culture with modern means of communication. As an important window for propagating national culture, carrying forward the national spirit and inheriting national civilization, the museum plays a pivotal role in the protection of the national cultural heritage. Moreover, as a working mode or a means, the object of protection should be a fresh cultural whole. It requires itself not only to protect the static culture, but also to protect the dynamic culture; It is necessary not only to protect the status quo of culture, but also to accept the facts of cultural change and development, thus maintaining the dynamic development of culture in the historical process. In fact, what

intangible cultural heritage really needs is the display and inheritance of living state, as well as the self-survival ability to make it live state and inheritance^{ix}.

While traditional culture brings us spiritual pleasure, it is also indispensable that people play the role of the media. The essence of traditional culture often takes time to consolidate. It needs to be taught orally and passed down from generation to generation. The inheritance of such culture is usually handed down by teachers and apprentices of folk organizations or family inheritance, which requires people to participate in either way. Therefore, we must pay attention to the cultivation of the "inheritors". The government encourages the younger generation to systematically study traditional culture and skills. When necessary, professional colleges and universities can cultivate professional talents in the form of joint construction to ensure the inheritors' talent reserves.

3.3. Increase the number of cultural tourism projects

The cultural tourism project is a clear market positioning form, which mainly combines local characteristics to form a cultural brand effect and form a new cultural industry. It promotes the development of tourism and other related industries, and ultimately promote cultural and artistic exchanges between ethnic groups. In 2005, Guizhou Province held the "Colorful Guizhou" series of competitions and introduced the relevant content of intangible cultural heritage through the competition project. Explore continuously, sort out and restore the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities through the development of ethnic tourism, and reproduce the minority traditions. Thus, revitalize and carry forward the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. People can understand the history and culture of ethnic minorities in entertainment. "Colorful Guizhou" has become the representative of ethnic minority tourism industry in Guizhou Province, and it has become a model for the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities in China^{vi}. Open a folk museum, publish a series of books and brochures to publicize traditional folk customs, and make people understand the folk culture in traditional culture through the reproduction of original scenes, traditional national costumes and artifacts.

The cultural tourism project generally pays more attention to people's participation. Through some specific activities, people are involved, such as inviting people to participate in the production process of ethnic dishes, visiting the production process of Miao people silver jewelry, and opening up some self-service farmhouses to let people experience the country life themselves. Such a collision of different national cultures not only promotes the spread of traditional culture, but also brings new vitality to its development. In addition, Miao Village, Dong Village and Dai Village not only have deep traditional culture to attract people, but also have beautiful natural landscapes such as terraces, mountains, streams, and ancient trees. It is the best choice for tourists to commemorate and also become a base for various artists to create art and collect art styles. Artists create artistic creations here, and integrate natural landscapes and human landscapes into their works. These works are the most authentic records. With the spread of the works, traditional culture is also deeply rooted in the hearts of the people.



Figure 22 Terraced fields in Daozhen County, Zunyi City, Guizhou Province(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 23 Tourist photo of hundreds years of Bodhi tree in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province(Photo by Chen Lin)



Figure 24 The painter is making paintings in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province (Photo by Chen Lin)

4. Summary

The Yunnan and Guizhou provinces are the ones with the largest concentration of ethnic minorities in China. And the traditional culture of ethnic minorities represented by the Miao, Dong and Dai ethnic groups is very distinctive. There are a large number of intangible cultural heritages in all aspects of clothing, food, housing and transportation. The intangible cultural heritages pass down from generation to generation through teacher-apprentice teaching or family inheritance mode. Meanwhile, The the drum towers, wind and rain bridges of the Dong nationality, the Pile Dwelling of the Miao nationality, and the Dai Lou of the Dai nationality are representative of the traditional architectural culture and have been developed in the inheritance of the past. The Miao, Dong and Dai residents living in the village still retain the traditional customs of marriage and funeral. In the context of the contemporary era, combined with the development of tourism, cultural and tourism projects will be vigorously developed with the joint efforts of the state, society and residents, so as to attract people from different ethnic groups to experience local culture here.

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