



The Protection and Inheritance of Cuotaiji in Guizhou China and the Integration of Contemporary Drama

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Abstract

To conserve and prevent loss and it is historical research with actual fieldwork. The research results found that: the development of human civilization, culture is the backbone of a nation and the profound accumulation of national history. How to protect and inherit those precious cultural heritages has become the unshirkable responsibility of the academic community and creators. Cuotaiji, a Yi ethnic group in Guizhou Province, China, is a treasure that was included in the first batch of China's intangible cultural heritage list in 2006. The application of intangible cultural heritage is to slow down the loss of this culture and take effective protection measures. After field investigation, the author found that the protection, inheritance and promotion of Cuotaiji in Guizhou, China has weak publicity, insufficient popularity and influence, and insufficient investment, which makes it difficult for inheritors and villagers who learn Cuotaiji to survive; the inheritors have outdated inheritance ideas and lack of professional talents to organize and coordinate; in order to solve these problems, the author studied the history and traditional characteristics of Cuotaiji in Guizhou, China, the current situation and innovative methods of protection and inheritance, and the integration with modern drama, and proposed some innovative protection and promotion strategies. First, innovate the costume shape of Cuotaiji, retaining national elements while combining modern materials and aesthetics. Secondly, try to experiment with local characteristics and Mandarin versions in the lines to promote the spread of Cuotaiji. Finally, from the creative level, we will integrate Cuotaiji with modern drama, which will not only protect inheritance but also realize innovative promotion. With an innovative spirit and an open vision, we will contribute to the protection and inheritance of our country's intangible cultural heritage. Let these cultural treasures shine more brilliantly in the new era.

Keywords: Protection and Inheritance; Cuotaiji; Integration of Contemporary Drama

Introduction

This research has used concepts and theories about cultural conservation from various people. The conclusions are as follows: Hegel once said: “Drama is a product of the life of an already civilized nation. The presence of drama in a nation is a sign that the nation is maturing”. In Guizhou, China, there are many types of ethnic dramas, including Nuo Opera, Qian Opera, Bangzi Opera, Lantern Opera, Dong Opera, Di Opera, etc. “Cuotaiji”, known as the living fossil of Chinese drama, is a branch of Nuo Opera, which was bred in Bandi Township, Weining Yi, Hui and Miao Autonomous County, Guizhou. Cuotaiji, the Yi “transformation drama”, is called “Cuotaiji” in Yi language. It is an important belief and folk custom of the Yi people. It was discovered in the 1970s and 1980s. (Refer to in Duan Yuzhu. 2023)) It is hidden deep in a village called Luoja in the vast Wumeng Mountains of Guizhou. Every year from the third to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month during the Spring Festival, the Yi compatriots in the Luoja Village will perform “Cuotaiji” and hold the “sweeping Mars” exorcism and Naji activities, praying that fire and plague will stay away from people, and let peace and happiness always accompany the Yi family. The performance includes worshipping ancestors, ethnic migration, cultivating land, buying and selling livestock, copulating and breeding offspring, etc., and finally sweeping away the fire for the whole village from house to house. This is roughly the same as the ancient Nuo that was popular in the Central Plains to drive away ghosts and epidemics (Zu Qijun. 2021)) In addition the role of “Cuotaiji” is the incarnation of the ancestors, and people call it “god and ghost”. It is mainly dressed up with the characteristics of apes that have not yet completed their evolution into humans, full of mystery; the mask is a protruding forehead and a big nose, wearing black clothes and wrapped with white cloth, indicating that the primitive people are naked, the headdress is wrapped into a pointed top, walking with a bow-legged gait, and speaking with inhaled and unclear pronunciation. In the past, performances were held at night, the venue was on the flat ground behind the village, illuminated by lanterns and torches, and the masks were stored in the caves beside the village. Mr. Wen Daohua is the inheritor of Guizhou Cuotaiji intangible cultural heritage. He is now over 80 years old. Due to physical reasons, he has performed for more than 60 years and no longer performs. He

passed Cuotaiji to his 18-year-old grandson Wen Chao. The origin and development of Cuotaiji is in a remote and backward area with a high altitude. Language communication is often based on the Yi language of ethnic minorities. Therefore, the drama language of Cuotaiji performances is also Yi language (ancient Yi language). In addition, the expression of Cuotaiji is different from the presentation of modern and contemporary dramas. Few young people are interested in it, which leads to the lack of development of Cuotaiji. Therefore, there is a resistance to inheritance from the acceptance of drama. The development of Guizhou local ethnic drama lags behind, and there is also a problem of being unable to promote it, and it is impossible to keep up with the times. (Zhang Xiaolin Zhang Wenlei Zhao Qian. (2021) In the past, the problem was found that Due to the small number of performances, the development of Cuotaiji is not good, resulting in the inheritors being unable to make a living from it. Therefore, the research and innovation direction of my thesis will be to integrate the costumes, props, performance venues, and presentation methods with the modern and contemporary drama styles. Make the protection and inheritance of Cuotaiji universal, popular, and visual. Specifically, the costumes and props will be adjusted to a combination of modern and contemporary costumes and ethnic costumes, so that the audience can more easily accept it and have a popular aesthetic. From the performance venue, the original mountains and fields can be changed to stage space. The viewing environment will be simplified and movable while maintaining the original basis. In terms of presentation, Cuotaiji will be integrated into the performance techniques of modern and contemporary dramas, making it easier for the audience to accept and have a sense of experience.

Objectives

1. Research the historical origins and performance elements of Cuotaiji, including costumes, lines, and staging.
2. Innovative communication through the integration of Cuotaiji history and contemporary drama.
3. Complete innovative creations and promote the development of national drama.

Literature Review

Since the discovery of Cuotaiji in the 1980s, artistic research on Cuotaiji culture has achieved certain results in the fields of drama, dance, and ethnic studies.

Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House's "Origin of Cuotaiji" is a relatively comprehensive and detailed documentary material, with a performance script that is a complete comparison of ancient Yi and Chinese, which has greatly helped the inheritance of Cuotaiji. However, although there are not many materials analyzed from the perspective of the protection of Cuotaiji, there are some that are worth referring to. (Li Hong you., 2015) "Art and Technology" 2021 No. 010 "Research on the Living Inheritance and Legal Protection of the Yi Ancient Opera Cuotaiji in Weining County" mentioned that although Cuotaiji was selected into the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2005, it was affected by many factors such as social and economic development and the mutual penetration of ethnic cultures. Its inheritance and protection are facing new shocks and challenges. "Rural Economy and Technology" 2021 No. 015 "Inheritance of Minority Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tourism Development - Taking the Yi "Cuotaiji" as an Example" proposed that culture is the soul of tourism development, tourism is the support of cultural development, and the strength of ethnic cultural development has a serious impact on the tourism industry. Taking the Yi "Cuotaiji" as an example, the difficulties faced by its intangible cultural heritage in the development of the tourism industry are analyzed, and strategies for the inheritance of minority intangible cultural heritage such as strengthening the "Cuotaiji" tourism performance team, improving the "Cuotaiji" tourism resource planning system, and extending the tourism industry chain are proposed. (Zu Qijun, 2021) Duan Yuzhu, a master's student at Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, wrote a paper titled "Research and Application of the Yi Nationality's "Cuotaiji" Clothing Culture". The symbolic characteristics of "Cuotaiji" are used as the material and inspiration for creative practice. Through case analysis and process practice, the author explores the appropriate design methods, and then formulates design ideas to explore how to express the artistic characteristics and symbolism of "Cuotaiji" through creative clothing design. (Duan Yuzhu, 2023)

Conceptual structure

This paper studies the protection and inheritance of the Yi opera Cuotaiji in Guizhou, China, and its integration with contemporary drama. In order to explore the protection and inheritance of the ethnic culture in this area, and to visit the inheritors and experts of Cuotaiji, this paper combines field investigation and research to grasp the history and current situation of Cuotaiji and conducts analysis. This paper is divided into five chapters: Chapter 1 explains the research background and research significance, research purpose, research scope, definition of terms, and research results; Chapter 2 explains the geographical location, historical background, traditional characteristics and literature review of Cuotaiji culture in Guizhou, China; Chapter 3 explains the protection, inheritance and innovation methods; Chapter 4 is the creation and summary of Cuotaiji; is the thesis summary.



Figures 1: China map, the red circle is Guizhou

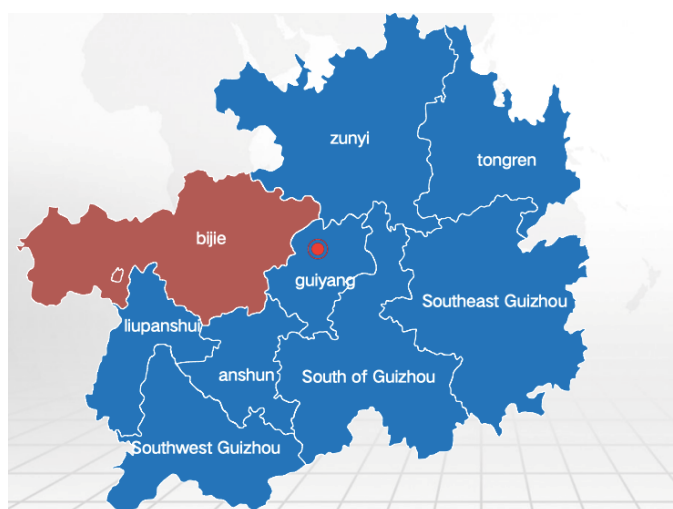



Figure 2: Map of Guizhou Province, the red circle is the bijie

Table 1 Table of the number of acts in Tsutaj's plays and the story of each act

Stills of the scene of Cuo Taiji	Scene Name	Each scene
	Act One:Sacrifice.	Abumo led Adamu, Mahonmo, and Hebu to stagger from the forest into the sacrificial site with wooden sticks and bow-legged steps.
	Act Two: Farming.	This is the core part of the whole play, which mainly reflects the history of migration, farming and reproduction of the Yi ancestors. Farming is the main performance performed by Abmo, Adamu, Mahonmo, Hebu and Aan. When the gongs and drums sound, one person leads the two lion (nine-horned beast) actors into the venue.
	Act Three: Festive.	The lion dancers wave their sticks to tease the lions and dance gracefully on the field to congratulate them on the harvest. According to the local Yi people, this part of the ceremony did not originally exist. It was added in modern times and is a celebration ceremony. Joy is the third step of the “CuoTaiji” ceremony. If

Stills of the scene of Cuo Taiji	Scene Name	Each scene
		the human-changing scene is the main play, then joy is an external play in the “CuoTaiji” ceremony. Amidst the rapid sound of gongs and drums, a lion played by a human appears, and a human being plays the role of a lion. The performers of the characters will joke with the lions with sticks and perform lion dances
	Act four: Cleaning up the village.	Also called sweeping Mars, “Mi Shuoqiu” in Yi language, it is an important link in “Cuotaiji”. It is performed on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. Jagja Abu leads the “Cuotai” old man to go from village to village to sweep away disasters and plagues, and to wish everyone the best. The village is prosperous with people and animals, and the harvest is plentiful. It is also a link that has the characteristics of ethnic minorities. The elderly Thai people led by Raqa Abu go from house to village.



Figures 3 : Photographed by myself



Figures 4 : Polishing of EVA foam



Figures 5: Costume display in Guizhou National Museum



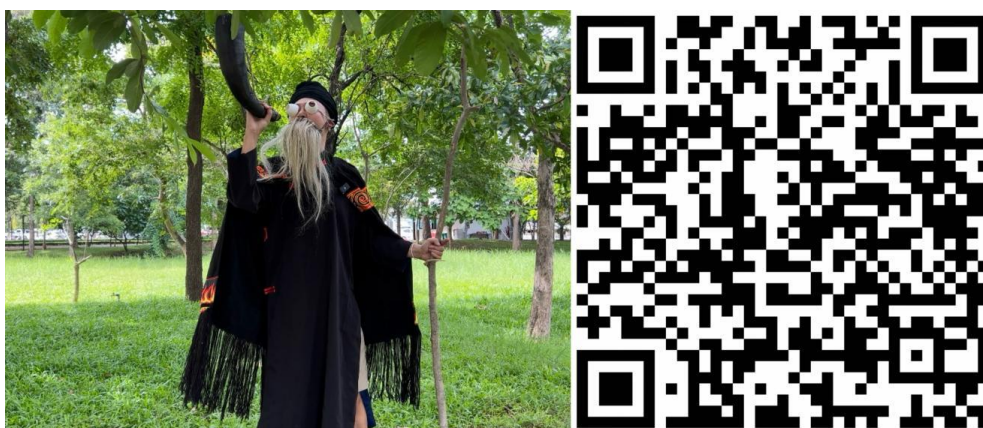
Figure 6: Actor upper body effect



Figure 7: Actor upper body effect



Figure 8: Actor upper body effect



Figures 9: Performance of ancient Yi language dialogue



Figures 10: Chinese Mandarin version of the dialogue performance

By studying the plot and lines of each scene, we can understand the ideas and practical significance conveyed by Cuotaiji drama. According to the development of the plot, we can effectively combine and adapt it with contemporary drama to form an innovative drama model, and finally achieve inheritance and development through innovative integration of Cuotaiji's original masks, costumes, and lines.

Summary

In this master's thesis “The Integration of Protection, Inheritance and Contemporary Drama of Cuotaiji in Guizhou, China”, we deeply explore the historical development context, traditional characteristics and artistic characteristics of Cuotaiji, a unique drama form of Guizhou ethnic minorities, in terms of costumes, masks and lines. Cuotaiji is not only a kind of drama performance art, but also a cultural heritage that carries rich national culture and historical memory. Through the careful study of Cuotaiji, we can not only better understand its role and significance in traditional society, but also discover its inheritance and innovation potential in contemporary society.

The historical development of Cuotaiji reveals its integration and mutual influence with the multi-ethnic culture in Guizhou. As an ancient drama form, it has undergone an evolution from primitive religious rituals to folk drama. In this process, Cuotaiji not only retains its original religious and sacrificial functions, but also gradually integrates the social functions of entertainment and education, becoming a performing art deeply loved by local people.

In terms of traditional characteristics, Cuotaiji has a distinct national style with its unique masks, costumes, dances and music. The mysterious colors, symbolic meanings and interactive methods with the audience in the performance all reflect the uniqueness of Cuotaiji as a national drama. These traditional elements not only provide a solid foundation for the inheritance of Cuotaiji, but also provide rich materials for the innovation of contemporary drama.

The innovative integration of costumes, masks and lines is the key to the combination of Cuotaiji and contemporary drama. Through the modern interpretation of traditional elements, we can make Cuotaiji closer to the aesthetic needs of modern audiences while maintaining its traditional charm. In terms of costume design, we try to combine traditional

elements with modern design concepts to create costumes that are both in line with the role setting and have a sense of the times. The innovation of the mask is reflected in the abstraction and simplification of the traditional mask shape, making it easier for modern audiences to accept. The adaptation of the lines focuses on the modernization of language and the directness of emotional expression to enhance the appeal of the drama.

In summary, as a precious national cultural heritage, the protection and inheritance of Cuotaiji requires not only our in-depth excavation and research of traditions, but also our innovation on the basis of respecting traditions. Through integration with contemporary drama, Cuotaiji can not only be effectively protected and passed on, but also be active on the modern cultural stage with a new look, making new contributions to enriching and developing Chinese drama art. In the future, we look forward to seeing more such attempts to give traditional art new vitality and vigor in contemporary society.

Research Suggestions

As a traditional drama form of the Yi ethnic group in Guizhou, China, Cuotaiji has a long history and profound cultural connotations. In recent years, with the enhancement of cultural protection awareness, the protection and inheritance of Cuotaiji has received a certain degree of attention. However, in the context of contemporary society, Cuotaiji faces many challenges. This paper analyzes the current situation of Cuotaiji from the perspective of protection, inheritance and integration of contemporary drama, and puts forward the following three suggestions.

1. In order to better protect Cuotaiji, an intangible cultural heritage, we recommend the following measures: Strengthen policy support and improve protection efforts. The government should formulate relevant policies, include Cuotaiji in the list of intangible cultural heritage protection, increase financial investment, and ensure the smooth inheritance and development of Cuotaiji. Establish a Cuotaiji database to systematically organize and preserve relevant information. Through digital means, the performances, scripts, costumes and other materials of Cuotaiji are organized to facilitate future research and application.

2. In order to make Cuotaiji rejuvenate in contemporary society, we suggest modernizing and improving it from the following aspects : Costume improvement: Improve

the traditional simple costumes and incorporate Yi elements to make them more ethnic and meet modern aesthetic need Mask improvement: Change the traditional wooden masks to lightweight new environmentally friendly materials, which not only retains the original cultural connotation but also improves the performance comfort of the actors. Line innovation: Try to combine ancient Yi language with Mandarin to innovate the lines, which is conducive to the promotion and dissemination of Cuotaiji.

3. In order to better integrate Cuotaiji into the contemporary drama market, we suggest taking the following measures: Diversification of performance forms: On the basis of maintaining the traditional performance form of Cuotaiji, try to combine it with other drama elements and innovate the performance for Add a theatrical version: Adapt Cuotaiji into a theatrical version to make it more enjoyable and market competitive Integration with cultural tourism departments: Combine Cuotaiji with cultural tourism to create characteristic cultural tourism products and enhance its popularity and influence.

Through the above suggestions, we hope that Cuotaiji can be revitalized in the process of protecting, inheriting and integrating contemporary drama, and contribute to the development of my country's drama industry.

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