An Investigation of Yi Folk Song Knowledge and Development in Guizhou, China

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Abstract

The qualitative research methodology was applied in this investigation. The study's objective was to investigate Yi folk song knowledge and development in Guizhou, China. The contemporary status of the Yi Folk Song is examined. The fieldwork methodology is mostly used for data collection, together with information from the document, using literature and interview methods. Interviews and observation are the primary research tools. To collect study data, we created a questionnaire, an interview, and an observation form based on the research objective. The study results confirmed: There are now around 350 songs recorded in the Guizhou Yi area, with 40 of them being the most popular. A group of 16 people are the inheritors of Yi folk tunes. There are eight recognized inheritors from Guizhou Province and eight recognized inheritors from Guizhou City among them. The number of Yi inheritors in Guizhou is currently small in proportion to the overall Yi population. The decrease in inheritance venues and the use of inheritance venues both have an impact on song inheritance. Yi folk songs have now become the key presentation and inheritance settings for festivals. There are five basic inheritance approaches proposed: 1) Educational institution inheritance 2) Society and community inheritance 3) family inheritance 4) social media inheritance; and 5) socialization and government participation inheritance.

Keywords: Yi Folk song, Investigation, Development, Guizhou, Yi ethnic people, China



1. Introduction

The Yi ethnicity is a long-established ethnicity that has gradually accumulated many excellent and colorful national cultures throughout its history. Music, dancing, theater, needlework, and other traditional arts, for example, play a vital part in Yi ethnicity. This Yi ethnicity song is a one-of-a-kind cultural phenomenon among them. Yi folk song, as an essential aspect of traditional culture, reflects the nation's valuable cultural memory, demonstrating a process of cultural inheritance that runs from generation to generation. Yi Folk Song has grabbed the attention of many experts and academics as a classic of the Yi ethnic group and has had a favorable influence on the future development of Yi culture (Harrell, 1990; Anand et al., 2000; Mayes et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2022).

Guizhou songs are varied, and Guizhou Among the folk songs of China's ethnic minorities, Yi folk songs are a wonderful achievement (Sun et al., 2020; Di et al., 2021; Du & Leung, 2022). It's a folk song with far-reaching implications. It has an important place in the history of Chinese folk music as an example of intangible cultural heritage. Yi folk songs are an important way to communicate Yi culture since they reflect the history, science, production, life, traditional traditions, and other colorful characteristics of Yi culture. The study of the history, development, features, and trends of Yi's folk music in Guizhou is of considerable academic and social worth. Identifying, preserving, and disseminating Yi Folk Song is also beneficial to the creation and development of folk songs in the modern era (Mackerras, 1984; Jones, 2003; Han, 2011; Kuang & He, 2022).

Yi folk songs are the loud noises made by Yi ethnic people in their daily lives (Harrell, 2005; Ting, 2020). Songs have been used to revere ancestors and pray for disaster relief since the early days of the Yi ethnic people's civilization. Folk songs record the vicissitudes, pleasures, and sorrows of the Yi ethnic people through thousands of years. They cultivate their sentiments, cleanse their hearts, balance their psychology, and have fun with their bodies and brains, all while developing and promoting truth, goodness, and beauty. Yi Folk songs, which come from the masses, sprout in the collective, disseminate in the collective, and temper and develop in the collective. The content is straightforward, coming from the chest and flowing through the lips and teeth. The language is new and straightforward, popular but not superficial, and implied but not opaque. There is no intentional carving or pompous speech, vet there is a genuine beauty. Yi folk song is inextricably linked to traditional practices. Because of numerous traditional activities, many singing contests exist. There would be no love songs if young men and women did not fall in love; without natural religious activities, there would be no burial songs; and without the habit of marrying men and women, there would be no wedding songs. Folk songs have their own expressive requirements and distinctive contents according to their content, setting, and mood. Folk traditions are livelier and more passionate as a result of the unique art form of folk music. Both coexist in folk music (Hung, 1985; Zhang, 2010; Xiaoqian et al., 2021; Li, 2021).

The Yi ethnic people's vocal music compositions, as a specific cultural bearer, represent its own geographical characteristics, traditional traditions, and human situations. To begin with, the study of Yi folk songs may expose the historical evolution of Yi ethnic people to some



degree, which is very important for the exploration of Yi ethnic people's development history and the study of human history. Second, the study of Yi Folk Songs' distinctive form and content has improved human cultural activities and preserved cultural variety. Finally, the study of Yi Folk Song may help us better understand the transmission, conservation, usage, and development of intangible cultural assets (Hsu, 1999; Rees, 2001; Cao, 2010; Liu et al., 2022).

As a special cultural carrier, the vocal music works of the Yi ethnic group reflect its unique geographical features, folk customs, and human conditions. First, the study of Yi folk songs can reveal the historical evolution of Yi people to a certain extent, which is of great significance for the exploration of the development history of Yi people and the study of human history. Finally, the study of Yi Folk songs can better explore the inheritance, conservation, utilization, and development of all types of intangible cultural heritage (Qiu & Zhang, 2021; Huang & Song, 2022).

Yi folk song is one of Yi culture's emblems. Yi folk songs portray Yi ethnic people's lives. Yi folk song is a kind of cultural legacy passed down from the Yi ethnic group to the present day. Because of fast economic growth, the Yi ethnic people's superb songs are rapidly dying out in the process of inheritance and development, and the number of inheritors is small. These issues are worthy of our investigation into Yi ethnic music. The study of Yi Folk Song may broaden and extend the research on Yi Folk Song, and its social effect can be enlarged. In today's world of globalization and cultural variety, the study of Yi Folk Song in intangible cultural heritage is not only representational but can also serve as a reference and promotion tool in preserving and passing down China's wonderful minority music culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Geographical Location of Guizhou

Panzhou City is the representative area of Yi ancient songs in Guizhou. The ancient songs of the Yi people of Panzhou city are mainly circulated in Pugu, Mud, Jichangping, Pingdi, and Sige townships in the northern part of Panzhou city. These areas are the most abundant and complete in their preservation and realistic operation of Yi ethnic group folk culture, as well as an important area for Yi ethnic group culture expression in Guizhou. The provincial department of culture designated Panbei Yi song and dance hometown in 1993. In 2009, the People's Government of Guizhou Province announced "Yi Ancient Songs" as the third batch of intangible cultural heritage of Guizhou Province. Ancient songs of the Yi people are generally sung in the form of cappella, which is one of the basic characteristics of the inheritance of ancient songs of the Yi people. They can be sung singly, in pairs, or by several people in a chorus. A lot of comparison, imitation, xing, exaggeration, parallelism, and other decoration techniques are used in the lyrics. The ancient songs are mostly sung in five-character sentences in the ancient Yi language, with several sentences as one section and three verses as one poem. The content involves the origin of the Yi ethnic group, love, marriage, funerals, living environments, and many other aspects of the content, in which they mainly sing ancient folk songs, wedding ceremony songs (a wine song), and funeral songs (Ouyang, 2013).



The Yi ethnic group of Panzhou city is one of the minority nationalities living in Panzhou and has existed in the city for more than 2000 years. In the long life and production of the Yi ancestors, rich Yi culture and customs were bred, and they also inherited the Yi language, the ancient Yi language, and original ecological folk songs, which are listed in the national intangible cultural heritage list. Pan County Yi songs are an important part of Yi traditional culture. Mainly spread in Guizhou Province, Panzhou City is the most representative. Yi people mainly live in the areas of Pugu, Mudi, Pingdi, and other ethnic townships centered on Jichang Ping at the foot of Batan Mountain in the Wumeng Mountains. In 1993, the northern Yi community of Panzhou city was named by the provincial government as the "hometown of ethnic song and dance art".



Figure 1: Map of Panzhou city, Guizhou Province, China Source: https://chinafolio.com/provinces/guizhou-province

2.2 General Knowledge of Yi Folk Song

Ancient Yi Folk song represent the majority of Yi Folk song. The Yi people often refer to their vocal works as "ancient songs" or "Guge." The word "ancient song" is a stylistic type that relates to the development of lengthy, old songs. The Beijing Future New Century Education Research Institute's book "Music Knowledge Discussion" introduces the notion of "ancient song": "Chinese folk song genre, custom song." Ancient songs embody the simple understanding and beautiful imagination of the world, human beginnings, and societal occurrences. The ancient songs of diverse ethnic groups, based on their content and singing style, most likely emerged in the late stage of primitive society or the early stage of class society (Zhang, 2017).

Ancient song, as a type of folk art, serves as a carrier of rich folk culture. Its singing field is



usually the traditional festivals and mass activities of various ethnic groups, and most of the voices are heard in the ritual procedures such as festivals, sacrifices, marriages, and so on. There are various forms of singing ancient songs, such as solo singing, duet singing, or a group singing together. It's big and rich. In a word, ancient songs are closely related to national languages and customs in music. Yi ethnic group is the main body of Yi ancient songs, emphasizing that they are national cultural treasures handed down by Yi ancestors in their production and life through oral transmission. The interpretation of "Yi ancient songs" can be divided into two kinds. The first one is based on the analysis of the meaning, and the main way of inheritance is oral transmission. It is the ballads created and circulated continuously by the Yi ancestors in their production and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and enjoyment. The interpretation of "Yi ancient songs" can be divided into two kinds. The first one is based on the analysis of the meaning, and the main way of inheritance is oral transmission. It is the ballads created and circulated continuously by the Yi ancestors in their production and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and enjoyment. The interpretation of "Yi ancient songs" can be divided into two kinds. The first one is based on the analysis of the meaning, and the main way of inheritance is oral transmission. It is the ballads created and circulated continuously by the Yi ancestors in their production and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and lives, with the characteristics of sharing and collective creation and enjoyment (Kern, 2007; Lam, 2008).

3. Research Methodology

Musicology can conclude that the emphasis of education in western music should be the focus of musicology. It consists of research, music theory, musical contents, musical history, musical sound, and other branches of knowledge such as physics, psychology, social science, ethnomusicology. Musicology today covers composition and and performing (Woramitmaitree, 2017). Panzhou, Guizhou Province, was chosen as the study location by the researcher. The field study of musicology is employed in this article to examine and sort out the acquired data. Explain the present state of Yi Folk song. Based on surveys and interviews, this study makes some recommendations for the preservation of Yi Folk song in Guizhou and serves as a resource for Yi Folk song inheritance.

3.1 Key informants

The following are the criteria for identifying key informants: 1) He or she is a native who was raised in a Yi community. 2) He or she is acquainted with Yi Folk song and performing traditions. 3) He or she is a descendant of intangible cultural heritage. 4) He or she is older, has many years of performance and organizational experience, and has connections with scholars in the field.

(1) Mrs. Che Xiuhua: She is the oldest holder of the intangible cultural heritage of "Yi wine" in Guizhou Province. It is famous for performing ancient Yi Folk songs in the Panxian region. Simultaneously, he trained numerous Yi Folk song inheritors





Figure 2. Mrs. Che xiuhua and her daughter

(2) Mrs. Wang Fuhuai, a female Yi ethnic, was born in the Panxian Mud River region. She is now a member of the Guizhou Song and Dance Troupe. "Panzhou Village," in which I took part, received first place in the sixth Colorful Guizhou Music Creation Competition. With the competition piece "Flying Dream to Liangdu," he represented Liupanshui and won the Best Actor prize in the fifth Guizhou Ethnic Minority Art Performance in 2013.



Figure 3. Mrs. Wang Fuhuai

3.2 Research Tools

This study relied heavily on interviews and observation. The researcher created the questionnaire, as well as the corresponding interview form and observation form, to collect study data. The method for developing a questionnaire.

- (1) Take it to the adviser for review.
- (2) Be revised in accordance with advisor editing.



(3) Before using, get it inspected by an expert.

(4) Revised before usage in the field in accordance with expert advice.

3.3 Data Collection

The researchers will collect data via literature review and field research. Researchers examined papers at libraries and cultural institutions and analyzed them using internet platforms such as CNKI (China's National Knowledge Infrastructure). The researcher will also do fieldwork at the studied area (Guizhou, China). To collect on-site information, I will attend a performance of Yi Folk song and capture the performance process via an interview, observation, and audio and video recording.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed by the researcher's using concepts and theories described by the objectives and terms. 1) The researcher will study the characteristics of music using quantitative research methodologies and fieldwork data. We will investigate in the Guizhou Yi ethnic group using on-site observation and interview my main informants to acquire experience and important information. 2) The objective is to categorize and analyze the collected Yi Folk song in Guizhou as well as the new Yi Folk song developed by contemporary composers, and to explain the structure, melody, and harmony, in that order. 3) The objective is to gather and analyze data via literature review. Conduct study on the inheritance and development of Yi Folk song in conjunction with local cultural inheritance and conservation, tourist development, and related regulations and needs.

4. Results

4.1 Investigation on the Number and Usage of Yi Folk Song

Yi Folk songs are the loud noises that Yi's ethnic people make as they go about their daily lives. Songs have been used to revere ancestors and pray for disaster relief from the early days of the Yi people's civilization. Folk songs record the vicissitudes, pleasures, and tragedies of the Yi people across thousands of years. They nurture their feelings, cleanse their hearts, balance their psyche, and enjoy their bodies and minds while creating and spreading truth, goodness, and beauty. Yi Folk song emerges from the masses, germinates in the masses, spreads in the masses, and tempers and develops in the masses. Yi Folk songs are inextricably linked to traditional practices. Because of numerous traditional activities, many singing contests exist. There would be no love songs if young men and women did not fall in love; without natural religious activities, there would be no burial songs; and without the habit of marrying men and women, there would be no wedding songs. Folk songs have their own expressive requirements and distinctive contents according to their content, setting, and mood. Folk traditions are livelier and more passionate because of the unique art form of folk music. In folk tunes, both cohabit and coexist (Zhang, 2010).

Yi Folk songs may be categorized into four groups based on the local people's functional definition of songs and the substance of musical expression: Love songs include any music utilized by young men and women of Yi ethnicity in their love and marriage. Life songs refer



to narrative songs, which are utilized by Yi people in their work and leisure activities. It includes songs about festivals, songs about playing, songs about comprehending nature, and songs about historical legacy. The Yi people employ ceremonial songs, sometimes known as "ritual songs", in religious rituals like as funerals, sacrifices, and blessings. After 2000, new Yi Folk songs were written utilizing appropriate music elements from the Guizhou Yi people, such as chorus songs, solo songs, and so on. Figure 5 is a song that the researcher recorded while doing fieldwork with the Yi ethnicity in Guizhou. "Shan Ge Chu Zi Yu Ni He" is the title of the song.



Figure 4. Shan Ge Chu Zi Yu Ni He (Songs from Mud River)



During the field investigation, the study collected 30 popular songs from Yi areas. There are many Yi Folk songs that no one can sing in comparison to the 232 Guizhou Yi Folk songs released in 1995 in the China Folk Songs Collection Guizhou. Aside from the lost Yi Folk songs, the frequency of certain other songs has also decreased significantly. The outdoor display is often dominated by tunes that everyone in the community knows. Of course, with everyone's help, most songs can still be performed, which is a blessing. During the field examination in the Guizhou Yi region, the researcher questioned Yi Folk songs inheritors. The interview covers topics such as age, musical preference, employment, living location, years of education, and so on. Interviewees are from the surrounding region, and their industries range from schools to singers to farmers, encompassing all industries. Their comprehension and performance of Yi Folk songs represent the current state of Yi Folk songs in Guizhou, which has a high reference value. Although folk songs are still performed in communities in the Guizhou Yi region, the situation is not encouraging. In the table below, the author's data reveal the current state of songs.

The collection and preservation of Yi Folk songs has produced certain successes over the last several decades, thanks to a lot of hard labor. Prior to 1949, the Yi ethnicity's folk songs were on the verge of extinction due to a dearth of vocalists. National culture and art have been collected everywhere since 1960. The Ministry of Culture and the China Musicians' Association published a notification in March 1979 about the revision of the integration plan for Chinese folk tunes. According to this, relevant departments in different locations performed extensive and in-depth surveys and collections, resulting in China's first complete and systematic folk song literature. This not only has numerous study implications in the world of music, but it also has implications for folk poetics, folklore, sociological linguistics, history, ethnology, anthropology, and other fields. In 10 years, these 232 Yi Folk songs were gathered and published. Precious folk song recordings and written materials were left behind throughout the process of rescuing, unearthing, and sorting out the traditional folk songs of the Guizhou Yi ethnicity, which is a highly significant job. It has played a significant role in the transmission of Yi folk melodies. These 232 Yi ethnicity songs are now the most extensive recordings of Yi ethnicity songs in published publications. Yi Rhyme, a collection of Guizhou Yi Folk songs issued by the Guizhou National Culture Palace in 2020, comprises 25 Yi Folk songs from our area. The songs in this compilation are based on music that is popular among Yi people. Guizhou's current condition regarding the quantity of Yi Folk songs Table 1 is also included.

Statistical folk songs	Number of songs
Existing songs	About 350 songs
Frequently sung songs	About 40 songs
Disappear songs	About 100 songs

Table 1. The present situation of the number of Yi music songs in Guizhou



4.2 The Present Status of Inheritors of Yi's Songs

There are a limited number of heirs. Guizhou's Yi population is now at 8 million, with just 16 provincial and municipal inheritors linked to Yi music. There are just 16 inheritance specialists in an 8-million-person population, which is a relatively low ratio. "There used to be a dozen singers like her in the hamlet, but today there are just a handful", Che Xiuhua stated during an interview with Ms. Che Xiuhua. "There are some people who are too elderly to sing". As can be observed, the number of Yi vocalists is currently less than half of what it was before.

Folk singers are becoming older. The Yi vocalists' ages vary from 36 to 88 among the 16 inheritors. Ninety-two percent of them are beyond the age of 40. Only one individual under the age of 40 accounted for 8%. We may expect fewer youthful vocalists and more middle-aged and elderly singers. It is simple to perceive the connection between folk performers and folk songs over many decades, if not longer.

There is a significant imbalance in the percentage of male and female folk singers. Only four of the 16 inheritors are males who are totally identifiable as vocalists. Women outnumber males among Yi village folk singers, which is a regular occurrence.

5. Discussion

According to the data collected, there are now approximately 350 pieces of music produced in the Guizhou Yi area, with 40 of them being the most popular in the Yi region. According to the findings of a research study of Yi peasants, the cognition of Yi folk songs is heavily impacted by economic growth. They are proud of their ancient culture and art, but they are also fearful for their future survival and progress. It is not enough to simply inherit Yi Folk Songs to improve one's living conditions. A collection of inheritors of Yi folk songs, including a total of 16 persons. Among them are eight inheritors recognized by Guizhou Province and eight inheritors recognized by different Guizhou cities. In comparison to the whole Yi population in Guizhou, the number of Yi inheritors is now modest. The inheritance environment of Yi Folk Songs has undergone significant modifications. The lowering of inheritance venues and the utilization of inheritance venues influence song inheritance. The inheritor is critical to the dissemination of Yi folk songs. In external communication, the inheritor is the first external presenter. The singer's comprehension and singing of how music works influences the audience's perception and understanding of music. In other words, the singer's singing techniques influence the audience's perception of Yi music. As a result, inheritors may only better disseminate their own nation's art by taking the art forms they have learned seriously throughout the inheritance process. Yi music can only advance if its folk songs and heirlooms are adequately safeguarded.

In the process of historical development, the Guizhou Yi ethnicity is a typical ethnic group in the southwest of China and among all ethnic minorities in China. A specific era may develop a very fine system of musical connotation, which is the product of historical and contemporary musical culture. In the evolution of its long history, the traditional national culture will change with the natural environment, social environment, and other factors.



Music will also undergo some changes and differences according to the characteristics of the times (Chang & Zhou, 2022). The Yi ethnicity's music comes from life, is higher than life, and should also serve life. It does not appear out of nowhere or exist in isolation but is a distinct music culture produced during a specific time and on a specific occasion. Music is closely related to culture, which reflects history and culture and is part of history. Various songs of the Yi ethnicity are one of the components of the traditional culture of the Yi ethnicity. Up to now, although there are uncertain factors and changes, it is like a mirror in which the characteristics of contemporary society are concentrated in the bodies of people's spiritual worlds. It reflects the profound cultural connotations of a nation and has its own artistic value and appeal (Qian, 2017).

Since the development of Yi songs, they have represented Yi people's positive energy in life, work, and emotion. From the music of the Yi people, we can see many habits and national characteristics of the Yi people. We should turn passivity into initiative and find suitable ways to show the traditional culture of the nation. For example, Asiri West Village, of Guizhou Yi ethnicity, has been built into a tourist village. With the help of commercial development, national music can be put on stage in the form of performances, which can not only bring economic benefits but also spread the culture of Yi songs, reflecting their artistic connotation and value.

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