



A Study on the Historical Origins and Rhythmic Interaction of the Buyi Bamboo Drum Dance in Guizhou Province from the Perspective of Cultural Heritage and Digital Education Transformation

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Abstract. The Buyi Bamboo Drum Dance is an important folk dance that has been passed down for generations in the Buyi ethnic minority area of Ceheng County, Guizhou Province. It is also a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage that combines ritual, narrative, and performance elements. This paper focuses on its "historical origins" and "rhythmic interaction," and uses a combination of methods, including literature review, field investigation, in-depth interviews, video frame analysis, and expert validity assessment, to systematically study its cultural genes, performance elements, and the intrinsic relationship between movement, drumbeat, and music. The study finds that the Buyi Bamboo Drum Dance was formed amidst multiple cultural narratives, including bamboo king worship, rain-praying sacrifices, and love commemorations. Over a long period of transmission, it has gradually formed an overall structure supported by costumes, venues, festivals, accompaniment songs, and instrumental systems. Its core accompaniment song, *Ge hai ge*, has a high degree of correspondence with the dance movements and bamboo drum rhythms, forming a relatively stable "musical phrase-movement-rhythm" organizational mechanism. Furthermore, this dance demonstrates significant potential for expansion in educational transformation, digital archiving, and public cultural services, offering inspiring practical pathways for the living preservation, curriculum construction, and social dissemination of ethnic minority intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Buyi Bamboo Drum Dance; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Rhythmic Interaction; Ethnic Dance; Educational Transformation; Cultural Services.

1 Introduction

In the context of globalization and digitalization, how local traditional arts can be effectively transformed within contemporary education systems, public cultural services, and academic dissemination has become an important topic in humanities and cultural studies. The Buyi bamboo drum dance, popular in Buyi villages in Ceheng County,

Guizhou Province, is a traditional ethnic art form that uses the bamboo drum as its core prop and integrates song, dance, and music. Data shows that this dance was included in the Guizhou Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative List in 2015, possessing a clear living lineage and a relatively stable performance structure. Unlike general ethnic dance studies, the Buyi bamboo drum dance is not merely a stage routine, but a comprehensive cultural text continuously generated through rituals, festivals, social interactions, labor memories, and emotional expression [1]. Therefore, a systematic review of its historical origins, constituent elements, and rhythmic organization not only helps deepen research on ethnic arts but also provides an operational knowledge base for intangible cultural heritage protection, educational application, and cultural governance.

From a practical perspective, research on the Buyi bamboo drum dance is naturally linked to issues such as cultural heritage preservation, smart education, and cultural service management [2]. Firstly, the bamboo drum dance embodies the Buyi people's cultural imagination regarding nature, ancestors, labor, and love, serving as an important carrier of local humanistic spirit. Secondly, the approach developed around standardized teaching materials, bilingual lyrics compilation, digital sound archives, and movement diagram construction provides a practical path for constructing intangible cultural heritage courses within the context of smart education. Thirdly, the protection practices surrounding festival activities, tourism displays, public cultural spaces, and community participation also have significant implications for cultural service management [3]. Therefore, a systematic interpretation of the Buyi bamboo drum dance is not only a deepening of ethnic art research but also an important attempt to transform local cultural resources into educational, service, and dissemination resources.

2 Research Basis and Data Sources

This paper employs a hybrid research approach, conducting fieldwork in the core heritage area of the Buyi ethnic group in Ceheng County, Guizhou Province. The primary data sources include documentary materials, local oral histories, oral accounts from intangible cultural heritage inheritors, performance videos, accompaniment scores, and expert evaluations [4]. The research subjects encompass historical origins, clothing characteristics, performance venues, festival contexts, accompaniment songs, instrumental systems, and the interactive relationships between dance movements, drum rhythms, and musical structure. Particularly noteworthy is that the research did not remain at the qualitative narrative level; instead, through video frame analysis, beat measurement, and movement correspondence statistics, a relatively detailed quantitative processing of rhythmic interaction was conducted, advancing the study of the Buyi bamboo drum dance from "textual description" to "structural interpretation."

Regionally, the main living preservation sites of the Buyi bamboo drum dance are located in Buyi villages in Ceheng County. This area not only preserves core performance spaces such as bamboo forest sacrificial sites, village squares, and troupe training bases, but also possesses a relatively complete inheritance chain, standardized performance teams, and a comprehensive accompaniment system [5]. Interviews with key

figures such as Luo Junhua, the eighth-generation inheritor, and combined with practices in local troupes and schools, provide a relatively clear picture of the dance's development from village rituals to public dissemination and from its original form to standardized organization. This material lays a reliable foundation for in-depth discussions of its historical continuity, structural stability, and path of practical transformation.

3 Historical Origins and Cultural Composition: From Bamboo King Worship to Living Performance

3.1 Dual Origin Narratives and Their Cultural Core

Fieldwork and literature review indicate that the Buyi bamboo drum dance has two intertwined origin narratives. The first narrative is closely related to "Bamboo King worship" and rain-praying rituals. During the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, local villages suffered from consecutive years of drought. Villagers worshipped the Bamboo King at the bamboo forest altar, praying for rain. After the rains fell and the harvest was plentiful, they thanked the gods and celebrated the harvest by striking bamboo and dancing [6]. This narrative established the ritual core of the bamboo drum dance—"thanking the gods," "praying for blessings," and "revering heaven." The second narrative is related to the commemoration of free love. Legend has it that in the nineteenth year of the Qianlong Emperor's reign, a young couple, unable to bear the oppression of feudal marriage, fled to a bamboo forest on the edge of a cliff. They expressed their feelings to each other through bamboo drumming and folk songs, ultimately committing suicide together.



Fig. 1. Core sacrificial scene of the Buyi bamboo drum dance.

To commemorate their loyalty and spirit of resistance, later generations gathered in the bamboo forest to sing and dance during the third day of the third lunar month,

gradually forming another performance tradition. These two origin narratives correspond to the two cultural cores of reverence for heaven and prayer for blessings, and emotional commemoration, respectively, jointly shaping the solemn and lyrical artistic character of the bamboo drum dance. Figure 1 presents the bamboo forest sacrificial site and its original performance scene, demonstrating the close connection between the Buyi bamboo drum dance and local ritual spaces.

3.2 Two-stage Development and Eight-generation Lineage

In its historical evolution, the Buyi bamboo drum dance has undergone a transformation from a folk ritual form to a standardized art form. Research summarizes its development into two stages: the first is the folk ritual stage centered on sacrifices, prayers, and labor celebrations [7]. During this period, there were many participants, the movements were natural, the formations were open, and the dance was deeply embedded in daily life and seasonal festivals. The second is the artistic development stage that gradually formed after 1948. With the establishment of local troupes, the standardization of performances, and the expansion of stage dissemination, the bamboo drum dance began to transform from a "dance in life" into a comprehensive ethnic dance that is "teachable, demonstrative, and disseminated." At the same time, the data also reveals a relatively clear eight-generation lineage, indicating that this dance is not a short-term stage performance, but a living cultural tradition with continuity, lineage, and a foundation of local community identity.

3.3 The Overall Composition of Costumes, Venues, Festivals, and Instruments

The Buyi bamboo drum dance has maintained its distinctive ethnic identity for so long because it is not solely based on "movements," but is supported by clothing, space, festivals, songs, and instrumental music. Regarding clothing, indigo-dyed fabric, embroidery, batik, and silver ornaments constitute typical Buyi aesthetic markers. Indigo blue is not only a visual style but also implies an understanding of the sky, water, bamboo forests, and the natural order. The silver ornaments on women's clothing produce a soft tinkling sound during movement, complementing the rhythm of the bamboo drum and enhancing the ritual atmosphere [8]. As for performance venues, bamboo forest altars, cliffside gathering points, village squares, troupe training bases, and cultural display spaces constitute five core scenes, corresponding to different functions such as sacrifice, love commemoration, festival performances, daily traditions, and tourism displays. In terms of festival context, folk festivals such as the Third Day of the Third Lunar Month and the Autumn Harvest Festival imbue the bamboo drum dance with different emotional colors: some are solemn and dignified, some are joyful and open, and some combine social interaction and prayer. In terms of the instrumental system, the bamboo drum is at the core of the rhythm, while instruments such as the ox-bone fiddle, gourd fiddle, erhu, sanxian, and lelang work together to weave melodic layers, forming a complete "song-drum-string-pipe-percussion" collaborative mechanism.

4 Contemporary Transformation Towards Smart Education and Cultural Service Management

If the Buyi bamboo drum dance is understood merely as a "performance," its contemporary value will be significantly diminished. Data shows that this intangible cultural heritage project currently faces multiple pressures, including youth migration, skill loss, language weakening, and changes in performance settings. Therefore, its transformation into an educational, digital, and service-oriented approach has become a crucial path from "rescue-style protection" to "development-oriented protection." Firstly, at the educational level, Buyi language lyrics, simplified and standard musical notation, standard movement diagrams, and cultural story interpretations can be integrated into modular curriculum resources and incorporated into local primary and secondary school art education courses, school-based courses, and university ethnic art courses, achieving simultaneous cultivation of knowledge, skills, and cultural identity. Secondly, at the digital level, a sound archive can be established around the "Ge hai ge" (a traditional Buyi drum dance), a video and frame sequence database around the movement system, and a multimodal oral history resource platform based on the oral accounts of inheritors, improving preservation accuracy and dissemination efficiency. Finally, at the public cultural service level, the bamboo drum dance can be promoted from a single display to social sharing through festival performances, intangible cultural heritage workshops, community courses, tourist interpretation, and digital exhibitions, achieving the continuous revitalization of local cultural resources.

5 Conclusion

The comprehensive research results show that the Buyi bamboo drum dance of Guizhou is not a single ethnic dance style, but a complex cultural expression composed of origin narratives, ritual memories, costume symbolism, spatial scenes, festival order, accompanying songs, instrumental systems, and movement structures. Its most outstanding academic contribution lies in revealing the inherent organizational law of the "musical phrase-movement-rhythm" trinity through the corresponding analysis of Ge hai ge, bamboo drum rhythm patterns, and dance movement systems. This allows for a clearer understanding of why the Buyi bamboo drum dance has maintained strong stability throughout its long history. At the same time, this research also demonstrates that the protection of ethnic dances cannot remain at the level of static display or slogan-based inheritance, but needs to be integrated into curriculum systems, digital resource construction, and public cultural service systems, forming a sustainable mechanism where research, teaching, dissemination, and management mutually support each other. Therefore, the research on the Buyi bamboo drum dance is not only an important case study in the study of local cultural heritage in Southwest China, but also a valuable practical example in the issues of smart education and cultural service management. This suggests that the truly vital path in intangible cultural heritage research is not to "turn tradition into a specimen," but to promote its continuous growth in education,

communities, and public cultural spaces while respecting its inherent rhythm and cultural semantics.

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