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A STUDY ON PSYCHO-ECOLOGICAL
INTERACTION IN THE
TRANSFORMATION
OF XIANGXI
MIAO DRUM
DANCE



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YANG LIU

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2024



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A STUDY ON PHYCHO-ECOLOGICAL INTERACTION IN THE
TRANSFORMATION OF XIANGXI MIAO DRUM DANCE

YANG LIU

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2024



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Time flies. The study and life of doctoral students is coming to an end. Looking back on the past, I have many thoughts. After years of hard study, there have been both the joy of success and the frustration of failure. There are too many people and things worth remembering. By writing my doctoral dissertation, it is to synthesize the knowledge learned in recent years, and creatively use it to analyze and solve problems. In the process of writing it, the knowledge to be sorted out and used is the theoretical response to the investigation practice, and sublimation of it, in order to better guide practice and carry out investigation and research. After writing my thesis, I feel that my practical investigation, writing and other aspects of ability to exercise, enhance the ability of scientific research and practice. Writing a doctoral dissertation may guided me to pay attention to the academic frontier, conduct research and continuously investigate as I carried out academic research while engaging in academic discussion. I am very lucky to have my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Muhammad Fazli Taib Bin Saearani (Dr. Fazli) for his patience and support. After more than three years from the selection of my research proposal to the finalization of my doctoral dissertation, he has provided me with very timely and valuable suggestions and help. He checked all aspects of my thesis, in writing the dissertation, I try to achieve strict academic standards, which is mainly due to the influence of my supervisor's strict academic style. Doctoral training is a very important experience, which is a valuable asset to my life. Although the results may not be perfect, the process of writing has given me valuable experience. This is a spur, a driving force for me to further improve the quality of my academic research and take my research to a higher level. While studying in Malaysia, I have learned a lot of things worth learning. This is an important part of my life, leaving many precious memories. In recent years, the support and encouragement of my family members have also been an important driving force for me to complete my studies. My parents have always been concerned and supported my studies. I would like to thank them for their selfless support and care. I would also like to thank my teachers and friends who have always cared and supported me, including Geeta, an English teacher in Malaysia. She is my sister in Malaysia for her support and help. Professor Qian Zhengxi, Professor of Hunan University of Arts and Sciences, Professor Li Kaipei, The dean of the Faculty of Music and Dance of Jishou University, and Professor Tan Jianbin, Professor Chen Tingliang, Faculty of History and Culture, Jishou University. Thanks to Long Lulu, Associate Professor Hong Xuefei of Normal College of Jishou University, and Liu Hui, Associate Professor of Jishou normal school for nationalities, who worked in Jishou cultural center. Thanks to their support, I successfully went to Xiangxi for further research and found and collected relevant materials. Thank you to all my teachers, colleagues, classmates and friends who support and paid attention to my doctoral study. Your support is the biggest driving force and assistance for my study and work. Thank you very much.



ABSTRACT

This thesis conducts an ethnographic study exploring the evolution of the Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance (XMDD), an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the Miao ethnic group in China, from its religious origins to modern-day entertainment. The study aims to investigate the driving forces behind this transformation by comparing historical and contemporary XMDD performances, including their objectives, content, venues, and methodologies. Drawing on social anthropology literature, the research delves into the cultural ecology and historical context shaping the development of XMDD. Employing ethnographic methods and concepts from motivational psychology, the study analyses XMDD's contemporary status as popular entertainment posts its recognition as an intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Psychological factors influencing this transformation are examined through extensive fieldwork and a thorough literature review among XMDD performers and choreographers. The research culminates in the proposal of a psychological model of performance transformation, linking environmental changes, technological advancements, economic structures, and societal shifts to the evolution of XMDD performances. It sheds light on the psychological needs, particularly autonomy, affiliation, and intimacy, that led to the designation of XMDD as an ICH. However, it argues that the current trajectory does not fully satisfy the highest psychological needs of the community. To address the psychological needs comprehensively, a balanced approach that integrates commercialization and heritage conservation is suggested. This approach emphasizes a living perspective, co-creation of cultural value, grassroots heritage discourse, effective risk management, and management rooted in matriarchal principles. The research contributes to understanding the psychological aspects of local culture in the development of intangible cultural heritage and proposes strategies for sustainable tourism benefiting local communities. This study is framed within the Si Ma Yun Jie Cultural Ecosystem Theory and Bowen's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, providing insights into the intricate interplay of cultural ecology and psychological factors in the transformation of XMDD, particularly after its recognition as an ICH in 2006.



KAJIAN MENGENAI INTERAKSI PSIKO-EKOLOGI DALAM TRANSFORMASI TARIAN DRUM XIANGXI MIAO

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini dijalankan menggunakan kajian etnografi yang meneroka evolusi Tarian Gendang Xiangxi Miao (XMDD), warisan budaya tak ketara (ICH) bagi komuniti etnik Miao di China, dari asal usul keagamaan hingga hiburan moden. Kajian ini bertujuan menyiasat faktor-faktor pendorong di sebalik transformasi ini dengan membandingkan persembahan XMDD secara sejarah dan kontemporari, termasuk objektif, kandungan, tempat, dan metodologi. Menggunakan literatur antropologi sosial, penyelidikan meneliti ekologi budaya dan konteks sejarah yang membentuk perkembangan XMDD. Dengan menggunakan kaedah etnografi dan konsep psikologi motivasi, kajian menganalisis status kontemporari XMDD sebagai hiburan popular selepas pengiktirafan sebagai warisan budaya tak ketara pada tahun 2006. Faktor-faktor psikologi yang mempengaruhi transformasi ini dilihat melalui kerja lapangan yang meluas dan tinjauan literatur yang mendalam dalam kalangan penari XMDD dan koreografer. Penyelidikan ini menghasilkan cadangan model psikologi transformasi persembahan, yang menghubungkan perubahan alam sekitar, kemajuan teknologi, struktur ekonomi, dan perubahan sosial dengan evolusi persembahan XMDD. Ia menerangkan keperluan psikologi, terutamanya autonomi, afiliasi, dan intimiti, yang membawa kepada pengiktirafan XMDD sebagai ICH. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat isu tidak sepenuhnya terlihat sebagai keperluan psikologi tertinggi komuniti. Bagi menyelaraskan keperluan psikologi secara menyeluruh, satu pendekatan seimbang yang menggabungkan komersialisasi dan pemuliharaan warisan ini dicadangkan. Pendekatan ini menekankan perspektif hidup, penciptaan bersama nilai budaya, perbincangan warisan akar umbi, pengurusan risiko yang efektif, dan pengurusan yang berpaksikan prinsip matriarki. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman aspek psikologi budaya tempatan dalam pembangunan warisan budaya tak ketara dan mencadangkan strategi untuk pelestarian pelancongan yang memberi manfaat kepada komuniti tempatan. Kajian ini dipaparkan dalam Teori Ekosistem Budaya Si Ma Yun Jie dan Teori Hierarki Kebutuhan Bowen, memberi wawasan tentang permainan ekologi budaya dan faktor-faktor psikologi dalam transformasi XMDD, terutamanya selepas pengiktirafannya sebagai ICH pada tahun 2006.





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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CCTV	China Central Television
CSICH	China's Intangible Cultural Heritage
DD	Drum Dance (drum-dancing)
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICH Law	Intangible Cultural Heritage Law
PRC	The People's Republic of China
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
Xiangxi	Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture
XMDD	Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance



LIST OF APPENDICES

- A Glossary of Chinese Terms
- B Questions Outline for Interview



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined as the accumulation of materials and spiritual wealth created by humans through social and historical development. Some examples of spiritual wealth include literature, art, education, and science (Liu, 1999). The essence of multiculturalism is cultural diversity. In fact, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage has emerged as a global cultural trend in the twenty-first century (Liu, 2010). It is evident that the voice of protecting cultural diversity is rising all over the world, much like the voice of protecting life on Earth. Furthermore, all countries are increasingly aware about the importance of preserving national cultural heritage and fostering long-term cultural development.



According to UNESCO's World Declaration on Cultural Diversity: "Cultural diversity is a source of communication, innovation, and creativity, as essential to humanity as biodiversity is to the maintenance of the balance of life". In this sense, cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO, 2003). Moreover, preserving cultural diversity is an ethical responsibility that needs to be implemented, and is closely linked to respect for human dignity. Furthermore, a focus on culture is central to contemporary debates about identity, social cohesion, and the development of knowledge in economy. In fact, all societies worldwide are unified in many cultural traits, however, in different ways (He, 2004). The fundamental nature of culture is diversity and unlimited change: many of the world's cultures are particular and unique, nevertheless, they constantly change over time and only prosper when they come into



A shared heritage is the world's cultural diversity, it is rich with differences in visions, beliefs, values, practices, and expressions. The diversity of cultures is not only a natural aspect that need to be recognised and esteemed, but it also includes the plurality of wisdom, knowledge, and energy as other major driving force. In addition, it also includes fundamental human rights, and it represents the point where peaceful co-existence and the inclusion of people begins. In the globalising world, the holders of a unique culture need to be allowed to join or adapt to a globalising world on their terms rather than those of a dominant culture. Hence, this autonomy appears essential to the successful participation of developing countries or countries in transition in the world economy.



Many performing arts today face multiple threats. In fact, traditions of dance, music, and theatre figure into cultural endorsement as attractions for tourists. While this may bring revenue to a country or community and provide a vehicle for understanding its culture, it is not uncommon for such processes to create new forms of performing art that seem to diminish certain elements essential to a tradition. Furthermore, this situation may turn traditional forms into simple entertainment (Radojčić, 2009). One of the most traditional and ancient art forms in human history is dance that has significant research values in human culture (Long & Xu, 1997).

In the context of China, the combination of ‘drum’ and ‘dance’ is called ‘Drum-dancing’ or ‘Drum Dance’ (*guwu* 鼓舞) that is an integral part of Chinese traditional dance (Yang & Qian 2020). First of all, Drum Dance is rich in the drumming spectrum. In fact, audience will have intense emotions when a drum is played. Second, Drum Dance has profound cultural value because it is distributed to all parts of China and influences the whole world. According to the Chinese intangible cultural heritage website (Figure 1.1), Chinese Drum Dance (drum-dancing, DD) has various forms such as Waist DD, Flower DD, Wooden DD, Long Drum DD, Elephant foot DD, Monkey DD, Bronze DD, Bell DD, and Wax DD.

Figure 1.1

Screenshot of Part of The Category Traditional Drum Dance (drum-dancing, DD) (The Intangible Cultural Heritage Website, 2022)

编号 Serial number	名称 Name	类别 Category	公布时间 Time
III-25	木鼓舞 (反排苗族木鼓舞) Fanpai wooden drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The first batch	2006 (第一批)
III-25	木鼓舞 (沧源佤族木鼓舞) Cangyuan Wa wooden drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The first batch	2006 (第一批)
III-26	铜鼓舞 (文山壮族铜鼓舞) Wenshan Zhuang and Yi copper drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The first batch	2006 (第一批)
III-26	铜鼓舞 (田林瑶族铜鼓舞) Tianlin Yao copper drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The second batch	2008 (第二批)
III-26	铜鼓舞 (雷山苗族铜鼓舞) Leishan Miao copper drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The second batch	2008 (第二批)
III-26	铜鼓舞 (南丹仫佬族铜鼓舞) Nandanqinzegele copper drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The fourth batch	2014 (第四批)
III-30	湘西苗族鼓舞 Xiangxi Miao drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The first batch	2006 (第一批)
III-38	基诺大鼓舞 Jinuo big drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The first batch	2006 (第一批)
III-42	鼓舞 (花钹大鼓) Huabe big drum-dancing	传统舞蹈 The second batch	2008 (第二批)

‘Xiangxi’ is a Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, located in the Western part of Hunan Province, China (Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3) that refers to the unique ethnic culture of the Xiangxi Miao people in Xiangxi. This is because Miao dance performed in other Miao regions outside Xiangxi cannot be called Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance. For example, there is the Anti-rank Wood Drum Dance (*Fanpai muguwu* 反排木鼓舞), a unique type of Miao drum dance in Guizhou. Another drum dance, Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance is different from other Miao drum dance forms in other areas of China. Firstly, a single XMDD performance requires a person standing on the side of



the drum to beat the rhythm. Secondly, the way it is placed is different because of the composition of its drum (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.2

Xiangxi, Hunan Province, China Map (Overview of Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, 2007)

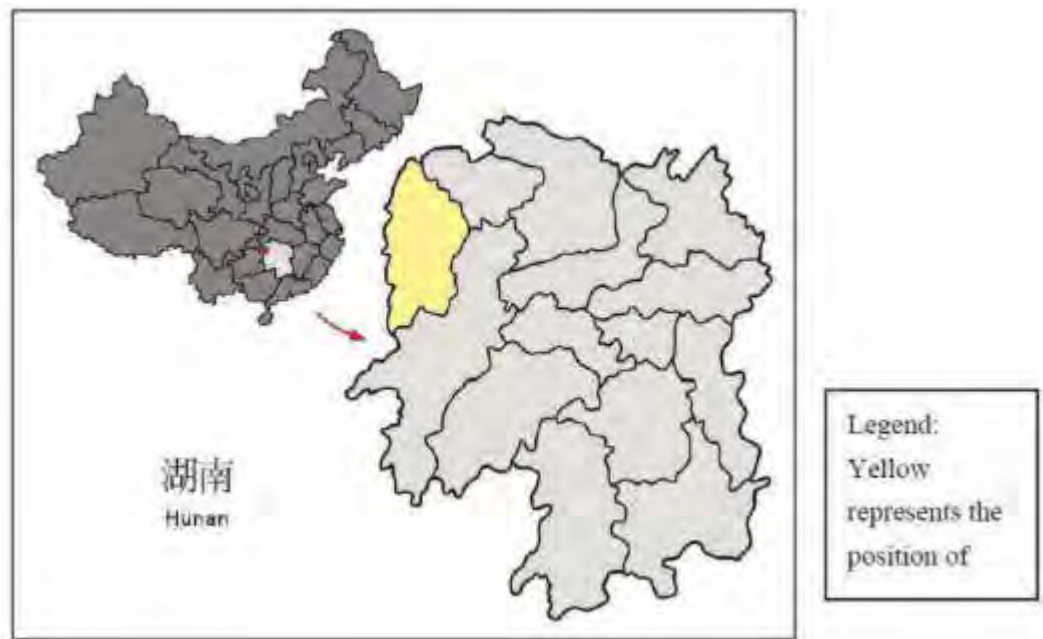


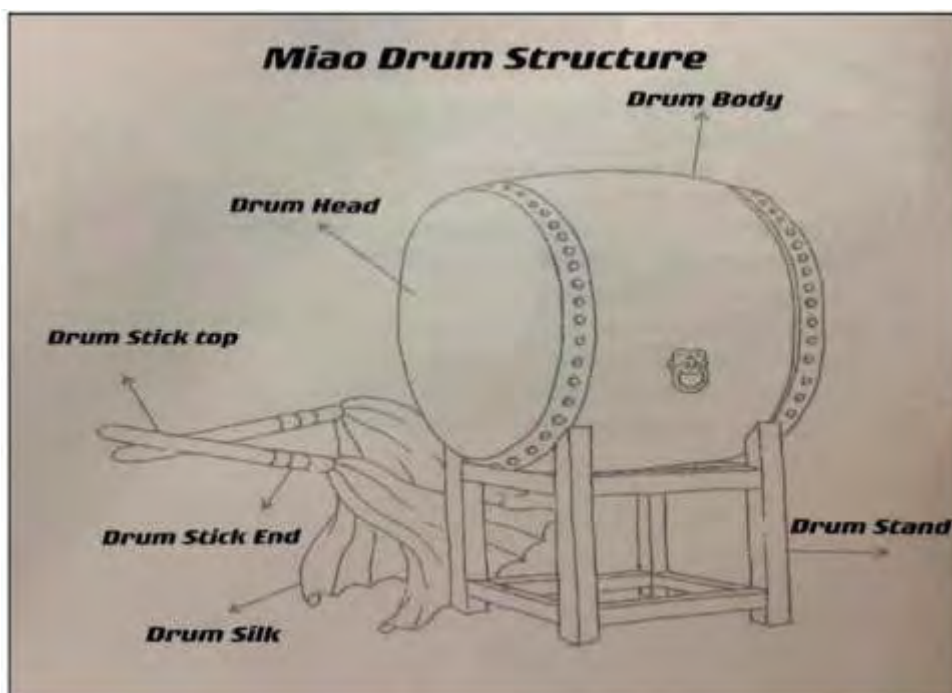
Figure 1.3

Hunan Map (Overview of Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, 2007)



Figure 1.4

Xiangxi Miao Drum Structure (XMDD, 2018)





Since the Chiyou Jiuli (蚩尤九黎) tribe 5,000 years ago, Miao people have worked, lived, and multiplied on the vast land of China together with their brothers of all ethnic groups. Therefore, the Miao people have made irreplaceable contributions to the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. The birthplace of the Miao people is in the middle and lower places of the Yangtze River. During the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties in China, some Miao people migrated to Southeast Asia and spread themselves in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and other countries (Wu, 1992). Moreover, Miao ethnic people mainly live in Hunan and Guizhou Province of China, and others live in Guangxi, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Hubei provinces (Li et al., 1996). In fact, Xiangxi is the central gathering place of the Miao people in Hunan. Referring to its history, Xiangxi Miao folk art is the culture of Miao Drum Dance in China that has a long history and culture.



XMDD is very popular in Jishou City, Fenghuang, Luxi, Baojing, Huayuan, Guzhang, and other counties in Xiangxi (Figure 1.5); it is a traditional dance unique to the Miao people in China. There are many kinds of XMDD (Table 1.1), such as ‘Flower Drum Dance’ (*huguwu* 花鼓舞), ‘Reunion Drum Dance’ (*tuanyuan guwu* 团圆鼓舞), ‘Women's Single Drum Dance’ (*nvzi danren guwu* 女子单人鼓舞), ‘Men's Single Drum Dance’ (*nanzi danren guwu* 男子单人鼓舞), ‘Double Drum Dance’ (*shuangren guwu* 双人鼓舞), and ‘Monkey Drum Dance’ (*hou guwu* 猴鼓舞). The movements that show productive labour are plowing, raking, sowing, cutting grain, threshing, stepping on a wagon, spinning, bouncing yarn, weaving, cutting trees, and cutting wood. There are also martial arts that show military movements included in the dance such as the



rifle, practice, aiming, and shooting. Later, a variety of difficult dance movements were developed. When the drum song is played with suona (a traditional musical instrument with double-reed horn), brass, three strings, and other musical instruments accompanied, hence the rigid and soft performance will excite the audience. Naturally to a forthright character, hospitality, singing, and dancing of the people have a kind of reverence. In fact, dance cannot be separated from rhythm. Although Drum Dance music, melody may not be colourful, it is firm, the rhythm still makes its characteristic.

Wooden drums as sound, it sounds clear, antique, and simple, and their rhythm is very distinct. In making up for the lack of musical melody, the clever Miao family also invented the beating method of beating the heart, edge, and stick of the drum that is slow and urgent, enriching the musical character of drum dance (Wu, 2015).

Figure 1.5.

Distribution Area Map of XMDD (Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, 2018)



Table 1.1

Distribution Table of XMDD

City/County	Varieties	Popular Area	Typical Representative
Jishou city	Flower Drum Dance (DD), Single Monkey DD, Double DD, Nuo Wish DD, Female Double DD	Dehang Miao, Pinglang Miao villages	Flower DD
Fenghuang county	Flower DD, Single Monkey DD, Double DD	Shanjiang, Heku, Miliang, Liubo, Machong villages	Flower DD
Huanyuan county	Men's DD with bare hands	Minyue, Paibi, Dongmadao, Paiwu, Dader, Lianghe villages	Money DD
Baojing county	Reunion DD, Bahe DD, Martial Arts DD	Ludongshan village	Bahe DD
Guzhang county	Flower DD, Reunion DD, Simian DD	Morong, Pingba, Hepeng, and Shuangxi villages	Reunion DD
Luxi county	Diaonian DD, Single Monkey DD, Double DD	Heshui, Xinglongchang, Xianxi, Tanxi villages	Diaonian DD

Source: Yang, 2021

XMDD is an intangible cultural heritage legally protected by the Chinese government. Furthermore, the culture of XMDD in China is rich in religious consciousness such as myths and legends, totems, and sorcery that does not only embody the cultural charm of the new era but also reveals rich historical resources. As an intangible cultural heritage of China, XMDD is essential to human cultural heritage. In fact, when this culture can be inherited, then only human creation can be preserved and cultural diversity can be reflected. In recent years, XMDD is constantly developing



as a stage performance. Moreover, the culture of XMDD has gradually moved out of the mountains and into a broader international stage of national culture. Although the current economy is developing rapidly, this intangible cultural heritage is well inherited and developed. Nevertheless, it also faces many challenges.

Esti (2005) claimed that the origin formation of the word 'transformation' is a process of changes in the aspects of appearance, shape, and nature while in terms of the language it is defined as a process to change another grammatical structure by adding, omitting or rearranging constituents. An anthropologist, Bronisław Malinowski, proposed that the processes of cultural transformation in the functional theory of culture involved learning processes referring to the repetition of the reaction of an organism in which one instinctive need of the organism can be met (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). Furthermore, according to Fazli et al. (2014), cultural transformation or cultural change refers to the dynamic process in which life and culture worldwide change and adapt due to external or internal forces. This process occurs in the western and non-western cultures of the world's civilisations and cultures. Furthermore, ideas emerging from cultural change have been described as the following:

1. colonisation,
2. globalisation,
3. advances in communication,
4. improvements in transportation and infrastructure, and
5. military expansion.





Dance is a form of moving art as defined by Sheets as form-in-the-making in which the dance seems to be performed and exhibited (Soedarsono, 2000).

A Chinese Dance scholar, Luo Wanhong (2015) analysed that cultural change is the epitome of society. In fact, social change brings cultural adjustment and change, and the accumulation of cultural change and development also brings social change and development, hence it influences XMDD. In the long process of historical evolution, XMDD culture with Chinese traditional culture as its historical background constantly absorbs the cultures of surrounding nationalities and regions, and changes and develops in relative stability. In fact, this is evident especially after the founding of the People's Republic of China as well as the reform and opening up. Moreover, with the social progress and economic development, people in traditional Miao villages have gone to cities to search for more development opportunities resulting in significant changes in their production and lifestyle, and values.

Therefore, the expression form and connotation of XMDD have significantly changed. Accordingly, XMDD has not been limited to various religious and folk activities. For example, XMDD has not only been used in various religious and folk activities such as worship, hunting, and worship of gods but also has been extended to many fields, such as daily life, stage performance, culture, and trade. In fact, it has been spread to the whole Xiangxi area and surrounding ethnic groups and regions from the Miao village. In recent years, a professor at the Faculty of Literature at Jishou University, Tian Maojun (2017) believed that when XMDD was recognised as intangible cultural heritage, the Miao people's way of production and life have





undergone a transformation with the development of the social economy, hence their cultural and social functions also changed accordingly.

A Chinese dance scholar Huang Qiong (2017) believed that traditional XMDD is a sacrificial dance. This kind of sacrificial dance is usually performed on special occasions, such as the ritual of vertebral cows (Rong Ni or Wo Xiong Neng Ni, worshipping Lin Duo and Lin Qi by offering cows). Presently, the function of XMDD has changed and its performance function has been gradually enhanced; it is not limited to specific occasions and seasons, but it is an indispensable entertainment activity in Miao people's life. In terms of developing the traditional culture of each region in China, the local culture is combined with songs and dance for tourist attractions to ensure the cultural inheritance and development of the ethnic group remain its novelty.

Following the trend, XMDD has also combined Miao culture with modern Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, maintaining the drum dance culture of the nation while people enjoy dancing in popular entertainment. Therefore, this reflects on a phenomenon of cultural transformation.

Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, deeply rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Miao ethnic group in Xiangxi, China, stands as a captivating testimony to the dynamic interplay of a tradition and transformation. Over the centuries, this iconic form of artistic expression has evolved from its historical religious origins into a contemporary phenomenon of cultural significance and entertainment. In fact, the transformation of XXMD presents an intricate narrative of cultural adaptation, ecological influence, and psychological resonance.



This introductory chapter marks the inception of an academic journey into the heart of this transformation, serving as a gateway to the comprehensive exploration that lies ahead. Furthermore, it is an exploration that delves into the historical formation of this intangible cultural heritage, probes the nuanced characteristics that defined its pre-2006 existence. Furthermore, it unravels the multifaceted layers of change that have been unfolded since 2006. In fact, the quest extends beyond the visible shifts in performance style; it delves into the psychological dimensions that have shaped these transformations, aligning with the principles of Bowen's Hierarchy of Needs. Additionally, it seeks to extract the intricate interplay between psychological needs and the ever-evolving cultural ecology of Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance.

Throughout this intellectual journey, it is poised to illuminate the enigmatic forces that have sculpted the destiny of XXMD. In fact, this exploration not only unveils the rich tapestry of its past and present but also offers valuable insights into the broader domains of intangible cultural heritage preservation, cultural ecology studies, and the psychology of artistic transformation. In this process, it aspires to contribute to the global discourse on the intricate dynamics between tradition and modernity within the realm of cultural expressions.

1.2 Background of the Study

According to the website of Xiangxi Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau (2021), the Miao people have a long history and are one of China's most populous ethnic minorities. According to the fifth national census in 2000, there were 8,940,116 Miao people in



China, mainly in the mountainous regions of southwest and south-central China, with Guizhou being the most populous province, followed by Hunan. In Xiangxi, the Miao are neighbours of the Han, Dong, Tujia, Hui, Yao, Bai, and Zhuang ethnic groups. They are an ethnic group living together and intermingling with other ethnic groups. During the long history, the Miao ancestors, to survive and develop, went forward and backward, struggled tenaciously, and created a glorious history and a unique national culture with their blood and sweat. As the ruling class has always regarded the Miao as a 'foreign people' and adopted a policy of discrimination, oppression, and cruel exploitation, the Miao people have been struggling in the abyss of suffering for a long time, and the whole Miao is in constant migration. In fact, during their constant migration, the Miao not only maintained and enriched their own culture but also influenced other ethnic groups with their own culture and absorbed the culture of other ethnic groups. In terms of the settlement, the Miao live in a vast area, mainly in Guizhou, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Hainan provinces, and have many branches. In terms of language, dress, marriage, burial, festivals, customs, and cultural arts they display standard features and differences from region to region (Tang, 2007).

With the development of social and institutional changes as well as the deepening of reform and opening up, and the current wave of economic globalisation, the initially conservative Miao society is interacting more frequently with the outside world, and various aspects of ethnic culture are undergoing visible or invisible changes. The study of these cultural changes has become an essential topic in the study of Miao culture today. In this context, XMDD, as an essential part of Miao culture, has also undergone some transformations, especially since it was listed as an intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Referring to this study, it can be divided into two parts. Part one is the





policy and cultural background of intangible cultural heritage in China. The second part is based on the policy and cultural background of transformation faced by Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance after it was taken as the national intangible cultural heritage.

1.2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in China

The international protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has been carried out for more than 100 years and has progressed. As for China, its ICH is a precious cultural resource handed down from generation to generation by the people of all ethnic groups that is closely related to the lives of people of all ethnic groups. In recent years, with the continuous promotion and practice of ICH in China, the thinking and research on a series of relevant protection of ICH have never stopped. Evidently, the Convention for the Protection of ICH (2003) defined intangible cultural heritage as follows:

The “intangible cultural heritage (ICH)” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated with communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals, recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment. Their interaction with nature and their history, provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2003).



In a study, Ba Moqubu (2008) systematically examined a series of issues such as the history, origin, and definition of the concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the international community. It was revealed that over the past 30 years, the international community has been constantly exploring the definition of the concept of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ from many aspects. These aspects include the joint efforts of UNESCO and The World Intellectual Property Organization to the global appeal for cultural rights, from the protection of folk customs to the issue of intellectual property rights. Based on the interaction of ICH to a tendency of viewing the whole world and jointly guard the spiritual home of humankind against the perspective of ‘human heritage’, this indicates that the conceptualisation process of ICH has been extended.

China officially joined the CSICH in August 2004. In fact, on March 26, 2005, the Chinese State Council issued the official document ‘Recommendations on the Strengthening of the Safeguarding of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage’ that recommended establishing a list of China’s national ICH and protecting ‘representative transmitters’ of national items of ICH. Furthermore, in 2005 the State Council also issued the ‘Circular on the Strengthening of the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage’ that further established the principles and policies of the safeguarding of ICH and established the second Saturday of June as ‘Cultural Heritage Day’ and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (ICH Law) was enacted in China in 2011. Hence, it has put forward normative requirements of the safeguarding of ICH as three aspects: a survey system, a directory system, and a transmission system. Evidently, China has developed a legal framework to nominate and safeguard ICH with this law. Hence, with the participation and promotion of the Chinese central government and local governments,



this project will soon spread as a national political campaign throughout China (You, 2020).

You Ziying and Hardwick (2020) noted that since the election of Xi Jinping as the president of China in 2012, the dream of ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ has been promoted. This programme reveals the strong appeal of using tangible and intangible heritage as a platform for nation-state building and nationalist imagination in the contemporary China. As Demgenski observed, Xi Jinping has attached great importance to the need in China to develop an ‘excellent traditional culture’ that focuses on ‘excellence’ affects how ICH is understood, interpreted, and reconstructed in the context of China. In term of the history, China is a country with a long history of traditional dance and music. In fact, the colourful folk dances of 56 ethnic groups in China have their characteristics and a long history, constituting of the traditional dance and music culture in China. Traditional folk dance is an expression form of folk culture, and it represents a unique understanding of nature itself, human nature, and interpersonal relationships expressed by various regions and ethnic groups with their bodies. From the perspective of long-term continuation and development, traditional folk dance has been rooted in people’s lives for thousands of years and developed with the changes in society, economy, and politics. Although the reputation of folk dances sometimes rise and fall, still they are popular for thousands of years. Furthermore, people of all nationalities use their bodies to create, inherit and develop their dances, a kind of living, visible, and precious intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, most traditional folk dances rely on collective creation and dissemination, passed on from generation to generation through ‘oral to physical teaching’. In addition, this kind of inheritance has intense sociality. In fact, the collective inheritance is





conducive in preserving the original basic vocabulary, so that the style and essential elements of dance have substantial stability, and all the different ethnic groups have left precious marks on the dance during the changes. In history, however, compared with other intangible cultural heritages such as folk literature, folk music, and folk drama, traditional folk dance received little attention. In the early 1970s, China carried out a nationwide census of folk dance that was recorded in the Chinese folk dance integration book.

As of December 2013, 37 Chinese ICH items have been included in UNESCO's ICH List, making China one of the countries with the most significant number of intangible cultural heritage in the world. As an essential part of the Chinese nation traditional culture, Chinese ICH is an essential carrier of the spirit and emotion of the Chinese nation, the basis for maintaining national unity and ethnic unity, and the embodiment of human wisdom. In particular, the history of the numerous ethnic minorities, that did not have their languages in history or were founded relatively late, was expressed in creation myths, recorded in folklore, and spread orally among the masses.

Traditional national culture is the prerequisite for the interdependence of nations. The disappearance of traditional culture means the disintegration of a nation (Zhang, 2007). Nowadays, in the tide of globalisation, economic integration, and modernisation of social life, Chinese traditional national culture is strongly impacted by foreign cultures.



According to Yuan (2018), the Chinese Ethnic Folk Culture Protection Project ‘Notice on the Implementation of the Chinese Folk Culture Protection Project’ clearly highlighted that through a series of protection measures in 2003, by 2020, all the precious and nearly endangered outstanding ethnic folk cultures in China, especially those with more historical value, scientific research value, and cultural value, should be regulated and protected effectively, and efforts need to be made in establishing a complete system and protection system for ethnic folklore in China and to improve people’s awareness of consciously protecting ethnic folklore as well as to systematise the work gradually. At the same time, the relevant departments at all levels have responded positively to the call for formulating applicable laws and regulations by the essential characteristics of the local area, incorporating local features.

1.2.2 Transformation of XMDD as an Intangible Cultural Heritage

According to a document posted on the website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) ‘Notice of the State Council on Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage’ (2005) highlighted that intangible cultural heritage refers to various forms of cultural expression that exist in a form of non-material and are closely related to people’s life and passed down from generation to generation. Furthermore, it includes oral tradition, traditional performing arts, folk activities and ceremonial festivals, folk traditional knowledge, and practice about nature and the universe, traditional handicraft skills, and the cultural space related to expression of the above traditional culture.



According to China's ICH website (2021), the government of China published five batches of national-level project lists in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2021 (the first three batches were named 'National-level ICH List'. Then, after the implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage, the name of the fourth batch of lists was changed to 'List of Representative Projects of National ICH', with a total of 1,557 representative projects of national intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as 'national projects'), according to the regions or units that declared them. A total of 1,557 national-level representative items of ICH (hereinafter referred to as 'national-level items') are listed, with a total of 3,610 sub-projects according to the regions or units for which they were declared. Then, the national list divides ICH into ten categories, five of which were renamed in 2008 and are still in use today. The ten categories are folklore, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional drama, opera, traditional sports, amusement and acrobatics, traditional arts, traditional skills, and traditional medicine. The ICH 'traditional dance' is included in the first batch with 74 items, the second batch with 139 categories, the third batch with 65 categories, the fourth batch with 46 categories and the fifth batch with 32 species. In fact, XMDD was one of the first to be added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage list of China in 2006.

In the Wuling Mountains west of Hunan Province, Xiangxi is the first barrier between the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau and the Yangtze River plain. This is because Xiangxi Miao people lived in the mountains for a long time and the land and water transportation was inconvenient, however, the people of Xiangxi Miao still maintained their original characters; they had rich cultural connotations without being impacted by the developed cities and the economy, materials, and culture. According to Liu (2021),



in May 2010, the Ministry of Culture of China approved the establishment of the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Ethnic Ecological Protection Experimental Zone. After about 10 years of digging, sorting, inheritance protection, and protecting ICH, the Ministry of Tourism approved the establishment of the Tujia and Miao Ecological reserve in Xiangxi in December 2019.

Apart from this, XMDD has undergone a long and tortuous process during its contemporary development. The Miao drum inspires the pious belief of the Miao people and the national spirit of creation and hard work (Yang, 2020). Throughout the history of China, culture and art emerge endlessly and have a long history among which drum culture plays an important role that cannot be ignored. Furthermore, in the traditional Miao culture, the drum was used in sacrifice, it was then gradually used in various folk cultural festivals and became a folk activity. For example, the Miao festival on April 8 (Figure 1.6). Being the first batch to be listed as a national intangible cultural heritage, XMDD is very popular among the Miao People in Xiangxi. Nevertheless, with the economic globalisation trend, Xiangxi is also in line with the world in the increasingly complex economic and cultural integration, the exchange of drum culture is also constantly expanding, for example, the World Drum Dance Cultural Festival in Xiangxi (Figure 1.7). In the present situation, tourism is the trend of economic development in Xiangxi. However, combining cultural tourism with the development of contemporary times also brings new challenges to the development and inheritance of XMDD (Yang, 2021).



Figure 1.6

The Miao Festival, April 8 (Xiangxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Distribution Map, 2021)



Figure 1.7

The World Drum Dance Cultural Festival in Xiangxi (Xiangxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Distribution Map, 2021)





1.3 Statement of Problem

Ethnic minority dance is a type of dance that has been developed through the accumulation of certain cultures and fused with each other during the process of development. In fact, Chinese minority dances represent the culture and spirit of minority groups, however, with the rapid economic development, minority dances have been strongly influenced by the culture of modern society, resulting some of them are on the verge of being lost (Xu, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen protection of the intangible cultural heritage of minority dances. Huang (2017) argued that XMDD, as a traditional art form, originates from production and life, and comes into being in the sacrificial activities of the Miao people. In the past, the main performance scenes were in the celebration of the New Year and the God, a traditional festival of the Miao people. Some examples include 'The eighth day of the Fourth month', chasing autumn and cattle, or essential activities such as harvest celebration, marriage, and welcoming guests. In recent years, with the local economic development, especially cultural tourism, the local government excavated and packaged XMDD as a cultural heritage, making it a cultural product and stage show in a form of stage performance. Therefore, Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance presents new style features including rural, tourism, and fitness exercise. In fact, the dance is taught on campus, and there is the Dehang Miao Village tourism company's Miao organized a drum dance competition. Hence, this will help the promotion of XMDD culture by the integration of tourism and the establishment of the city brand. In fact, the entertainment competition play a specific role.



In 2006, XMDD became one of the first batches of ICH in China with the strong support from the national and local governments. Furthermore, it has undergone significant changes in the transformation of today's society. In addition, XMDD performance is gradually losing both content and form of dance, and there is no successor for its inheritance. For example, drum culture that used to be popular in the XMDD area, is facing social changes and lacks the innovative ability to adapt to social development (Xiang, 2020). These are some of the issues emerged:

1. How to deal with the relationship between dance inheritance and tourism development?
2. How to maintain the original Miao characteristics in contemporary choreography?
3. How to meet the needs of local Miao people in the transformation of social and economic development in contemporary times?

It is evident that Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, a significant intangible cultural heritage of the Miao ethnic group in Xiangxi, China, has experienced a profound transformation over the years. This transformation, spanning from its historical religious roots to its contemporary role as popular entertainment, raises fundamental questions that necessitate thorough investigation.

As the 'identifying culture' and traditional dance ICH project of Miao nationality, XMDD enjoys overall development trend in ethnic tourist attractions, urban and rural areas, schools, and other fields. Still, there are also problems mentioned to some extent. In fact, Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, as a cultural heritage of the Miao

ethnic group in Xiangxi, China, has undergone a significant transformation from its historical religious origins to contemporary popular entertainment. This transformation encompasses a complex interplay of cultural ecology and psychological factors. This study will explore the historical formation of Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance, its contemporary transformation since 2006, and the psychological factors that have influenced this transition.

By addressing these aspects in detail, this study seeks to contribute significantly to an understanding of the transformation of Xiangxi Miao Drum Dance. Furthermore, it also aims to provide valuable insights into the broader context of intangible cultural heritage, cultural ecology, and the interplay of psychological factors within such transformations. Additionally, this study endeavours to offer practical strategies for the preservation, inheritance, and sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage in diverse cultural settings.

1.4 Objectives of Research

Research objectives explain what will be achieved in a research work. Hence, four research objectives were formed in this study. They are as follows:

RO1: To investigate the Historical Formation of XMDD

- i. Examine the historical formation of XMDD.
- ii. Analyse the influence of cultural ecology, natural environment, science and technology, economic system, and social organization on its historical origins.

RO2: To analyse the pre-2006 development and the transformation of XXMD Pro-2006

- i. Explore the pre-2006 development of XMDD and investigate its characteristics, performers, purposes, content, performance venues, and means during this period.
- ii. Analyse the contemporary transformation of XMDD since 2006.
- iii. Examine how changes in cultural ecology have influenced this transformation, including shifts in natural environment, science and technology, economic system, and social organization.

RO3: To explore Psychological Factors.

- i. Investigate how Bowen's Hierarchy of Needs theory explains the psychological factors influencing the evolution of XMDD.
- ii. Construct a psychological model to understand the performance's evolution, connecting environmental changes, technological advancements, economic structures, and societal shifts to the shifts in XMDD.

RO4: To examine Psychological-Cultural Ecological Interaction.

- i. Study the intricate interaction between psychological needs and cultural ecology within XMDD's transformation.
- ii. Understand how this interaction has driven the evolution of this ICH.

1.5 Research Questions

A research question guides a study in collecting relevant data. For this study, four research questions are formulated to guide the study. They include:

RQ1: How did the historical formation of XMDD occur, and what role did cultural ecology, natural environment, science and technology, economic systems, and social organization play in its origins?

RQ2: What were the characteristics, performers, purposes, content, performance venues, and means employed in the pre-2006 development of XMDD and how has XMDD transformed since 2006 in response to changes in cultural ecology, and what are the various forms of transformation observed?

RQ3: How do Bowen's Hierarchy of Needs theory and a psychological model explain the psychological factors influencing the evolution of XMDD?

RQ4: What is the intricate interaction between psychological needs and cultural ecology within the context of XMDD's transformation, and how has this interaction driven the evolution of this ICH?



1.6 Scope of Research

This study is based on further research from the researcher's previous collection and collation of XMDD. In fact, the researcher has been in contact with XMDD communities since 2003, and has changed from the practice of its dance performance and dance composition to the study of its cultural theory. With approximately 20 years of gaining the knowledge of and experience with XMDD, it has given provided the researcher with a deeper understanding. In fact, the researcher has realised that the study of XMDD does not only concern the study of the dance itself but more importantly, its cultural connotations. Therefore, this study is an exploration of the history of XMDD to investigate its evolution and transformation in contemporary times. Furthermore, XMDD is one of the typical traditional ICH dances, hence it is the focus of this study.



This study takes ICH of XMDD as the research object. Briefly, it gives an overview of the XMDD's historical context, cultural surroundings, and ecological system. In addition, two typical Miao villages in the typical distribution areas of Xiangxi were selected for this study: Dehang Miao Village and Pinglang in Jishou. These two Xiangxi Miao villages were selected as the research location because of several reasons. The first reason is because the number of activities of XMDD in these two villages are higher than that other Miao villages in recent years. The phenomena linked to enhanced tourism brought rapid development and transformation. The second reason is these two villages are located in the surrounding area of Jishou. Moreover, Dehang is one of the oldest Miao villages and Pinglang is one of the most distinctive Miao villages. Evidently, both of them are famous for their XMDD. The last reason is because the researcher is very familiar with these two Miao villages, because field





research was once conducted in these places. During the fieldwork, it was discovered that XMDD is from local inheritors and dancers. Hence, in 2015 a performance called Ama's Drum made a stage play based on XMDD. In addition, the squares, campuses, and stages around Jishou were also selected as the research sites to observe their dance styles, inheritance, and performance status. Therefore, Jishou, the capital of Xiangxi Prefecture, is selected as the main point of the fieldwork.

1.7 Significance of Research

Through the fieldwork of the population distribution area of XMDD, this change is quite significant when the XMDD has changed from the cultural and social needs of the Xiangxi Miao community in the past to the needs of the external society (the government or tourists). The reality, definitely, is that the 'Miao Drum' of the Miao people's community bears the cultural needs of the community itself; people continue to communicate through it with their ancestors and their deities. At the same time, it becomes a tool that can bring direct economic benefits and tool benefits. In this study, it was a combination of both.

Without a suitable protection mechanism for change and development, the culture will be changed solely by the external environment. By then, it will be very likely to lose its characteristics. Therefore, it can be extended to a new field, it can become a kind of cutting-edge theoretical work when considering the development and protection of intangible cultural heritage. Only after understanding the internal causes and phenomena of how a cultural event changes, new work can be conducted.



XMDD is the most popular form of dance performance in Xiangxi. Furthermore, it is the performance that contains the Xiangxi Miao's religious beliefs that reflected the Xiangxi Miao people. Hence, inventions and expressing indomitable national spirit in the process of developing the Miao nationality is a very important role. Furthermore, the Xiangxi Miao also carries its cultural information. It serves as a kind of intangible cultural heritage of traditional dance and has the following aspects of meaning:

- i. From the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection, it is a unique perspective to study the transformation of XMDD in modern transformation. As from the inheritance perspective, it can be clearly understood the phased characteristics and adaptation process of the inheritance transformation of XMDD to reflect on the detachments in the inheritance and evolution. At this stage of the existing problems, the inheritance experience can be summed up.
- ii. Achieving comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable economic and social development is significant. As a traditional dance of intangible cultural heritage, XMDD is not only a witness of historical development but also a precious cultural resource. The rich and colourful ICH created by the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in their long-term production and living practices can drive all walks of life and promote economic development.
- iii. Exploring the evolution of XMDD to enhance and realise national identity. A study on Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of XMDD allow people to fully understand the connotation and the present situation of ICH of traditional dance.



furthermore, it also will strengthen the consciousness of protection as ICH of traditional dance, actively participate in the development of the ICH and, inherit the traditional dance team and extend the traditional culture.

