

Meditative Water Drum Rhythm in De'ang Dance

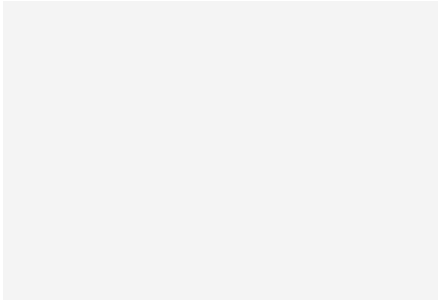
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Abstract:

The research will explore the protection and inheritance of ethnic culture, taking the De'ang Water Drum dance as an example, to fully showcase the profound traditional cultural heritage and the rich and colorful folk-art characteristics of the Chinese nation. The De'ang ethnic group is one of the unique cross-border ethnic minorities in Yunnan Province, distributed in Dehong, Lincang, and Baoshan. In addition, many clans and tribes of the De'ang ethnic group in history now mostly live in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and other countries. Although they live in different countries, they are connected by their common blood, language, customs, as well as art works, beliefs and hearts. Nestled between the extension of the Gaoligong Mountains and the Nushan Mountain Range, and surrounded by the Lancang River, the Nujiang River, and the Daying River, this ancestral land of the De'ang ethnic group traverses the ancient lives of the De'ang people. The De'ang ethnic group has a population of over million in other countries, but in China, they are an extremely small minority residing in western Yunnan, with a population of less than 20,000 in China. They make a living through tea production and farming. The De'ang ethnic group is a people who are skilled in singing and dancing. They have always been inseparable and have been accompanying each other. Whether in the fields or in the mountains and bamboo forests, the De'ang people will dance when they hear the songs. In the continuous development of thousands of years, the De'ang people have accumulated a vast and colorful national folk dance. In these original ecological dances with strong traditional charm, we can not only appreciate the simple beauty of De'ang singing and dancing, but also feel the ancient and wonderful taste of tropical ethnic groups in Southeast Asia. From the first-hand information obtained through long-term field research in Chudonggua Village, the author observed how a nation with a population of less than 20,000 in China maintains its art and traditions amidst changes. When the closed village established its status as an ethnic cultural eco-village, and when traditional art acquired the status of intangible



cultural heritage, the new art not only became an important foundation for shaping the villagers' worldview, but also a unique way for the ethnic group to engage in social exchanges with the outside world and construct social life.

Keywords: De'ang ethnic group, Meditative Water Drum Rhythm of dace, Protection and Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

Between the extension areas of Gaoligong Mountains and Nushan Mountains, the De'ang people's ancestral home is surrounded by Lancang River, Nujiang River and Daying River, which flow through the ancient life of the De'ang people. The surging rivers cross the mountains and the territory. The rivers are green, the water is clean, also the mountains are green. Among them, there are many low mountains and river valley basins. Under the influence of the Indian Ocean monsoon, the climate in this area is hot and humid with abundant rainfall, which is a typical subtropical monsoon climate with "no scorching heat in summer, no heavy snow in winter, and no drying in summer"(Dagudalenggelaibiao,2012, p.13). The De'ang people live in this mountainous area with dense forests and the fertile dam with lush water and grass, bathed in the wind and rain of the transition from subtropical to tropical zones, experiencing vicissitudes and multiplying generation after generation. Everything is so vast and remote, and everything is so unique and gifted by nature. (Dagudalenggelaibiao,2012,p.45)As their Book of Songs sings that, "The ancient song of Benglong is born with mountains, the history of Benglong as long as the river." According to historical records, wang ningsheng (2007): "The De'ang ethnic group has a small population among the minority nationalities in China, ranking eleventh in the number of nationalities in the western region and crossing the border to Myanmar. Although the De'ang people are small in number, they have their own unique lifestyle and cultural customs throughout history" (p.19). However, due to the lack of written records, much of their cultural heritage has been passed down orally, and as a result, much of their social and historical information has gradually disappeared over time. Similarly, their history is rarely recorded in the historical documents of other ethnic groups. As a result, many aspects of their history and culture are now unknown and can only be uncovered through meticulous research, collection, and extensive fieldwork by future

scholars. This study aims to provide a reference for ethnic culture and contribute to its inheritance and development. China has been a unified, multi-ethnic, and highly inclusive country since ancient times. Ethnicity is a historical category and a product of historical development. The De'ang ethnic group is a mountainous ethnic group with a large dispersion and small gatherings, and they have lived together with the Han, Dai, and Jingpo ethnic groups for a long time. Affected by economic development and living environment, the ethnic culture of the De'ang people is gradually disappearing. With the intention of protecting and inheriting the culture of ethnic minorities, the author conducted a comprehensive understanding of the De'ang people's historical culture, religious beliefs, and dance music genres through investigating their historical museum, consulting historical books, documents, and academic journals, and watching videos of De'ang dance performances. This study adopted fieldwork research methods, including fieldwork and interviews, to compare and study the De'ang people's production labor, festive activities, and cultural activities throughout the year. It found that the De'ang people retain relatively complete ethnic cultural characteristics, especially in dance culture, which has unique charm. However, with the development of the times, the unique culture of the De'ang people is facing a crisis of inheritance. How to protect and better develop the De'ang culture is the most important task of this article.

2. Theoretical basis and concept definition

Intangible Cultural Heritage refers to the various social practices, conceptual expressions, forms of expression, knowledge, skills, as well as related tools, objects, handicrafts and cultural sites that are regarded as integral parts of cultural heritage by various communities, groups, and sometimes individuals. This intangible cultural heritage is passed down from generation to generation, and is con-

stantly recreated in the adaptation of various communities and groups to their surroundings and their interactions with nature and history, providing these communities and groups with a sense of identity and continuity, thereby enhancing respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. After a long period of historical evolution, the water drum dance of the De'ang ethnic group in Dehong Prefecture has gradually developed into a cultural card with local ethnic characteristics. After being listed as a national intangible cultural heritage, it undertakes a higher level of cultural heritage and exchange carrier of ethnic groups. Intangible cultural heritage carries the memory of a nation, "it is not only a witness to the historical development of the nation, but also an extremely important cultural resource of the nation." The intangible cultural heritage of each nation contains its unique national culture and characteristic lifestyle, which can vividly reproduce the historical evolution track and religious beliefs of the nation. It is the precious and valuable cultural resource created by the people of all ethnic groups in the long-term practice of production and life, which is closely related to their daily life and cultural history and passed down from generation to generation.

Precisely because of this situation, the history of the De'ang people has persevered deeply rooted in their folk traditions, accompanying the green trees and mountains, and befriending the blue mountains and clear waters. "De'ang" is the self-designation of the De'ang ethnic group. In their language, "ang" means "cliff" or "cave," while "de" is a respectful affix that implies high moral integrity. By calling themselves "De'ang," it is evident that they are honoring the historical memory of their ancient ancestors who lived in caves. The De'ang ethnic group is one of the oldest ethnic groups in Yunnan, and both relevant historical records and legends from other ethnic groups reflect that the De'ang ancestors, the Pu people, were an ancient ethnic group in western Yunnan. The De'ang ethnic group belongs to the Austroasiatic language family and is part of the ancient Mon-Khamti ethnic group. They originate from the Baiyong ethnic group during the Shang and Zhou dynasties around 1600B.C.E, or are descendants of the Pu people in Yunnan. Tracing their origins, the Pu people were mentioned in historical documents as early as the Han and Jin dynasties from 206 to 220 C.E, and the De'ang people successively submitted to the Han, Jin from 220 to 589 C. E, and other five dynasties.as well as the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms during the Tang and Song dynasties between 618 and 1279 C.E. During the Sui and Tang dynasties from 581to 618C.E, the main political force in southwestern Yunnan was the Mang people tribe. During the heyday of the Nanzhao Kingdom, the De'ang people were conquered. They then

went through the late Tang during 704 C. E. and Five Dynasties periods, the Yuan and Ming dynasties from 1279 C.E.to 1368 C. E, and eventually became subjects of the Dai people after the Ming dynasty (1644C.E), similar to the Westward Expansion in the United States in the late 18th century, except that it was not through expulsion but rather becoming a subordinate people. In the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty from 1644 to 1911 C.E. The De'ang people separated from the "Pu people" and became a single ethnic group.

The water drum is a unique national musical instrument of the De'ang ethnic group. It is made by hollowing out soft wood. The drum body is long and divided into two parts: the big head and the small head. It is painted with patterns, and the drum surface is stretched with cowhide. The size and weight of the drum are uncertain. Before drumming, water or wine should be used to moisten the drum skin to enhance the sound quality, hence the name water drum. In De'ang language "Gelengdang" means big drum. "Gelengdang" is the self-name of the De'ang ethnic group, and the Han nationality calls it "water drum". It has some spiritual metaphor in the eyes of the De'ang people. As outsiders, we try to describe it morphologically as a musical instrument to investigate the sociological significance of its shape, structure and production technology. The drumheads of small water drums are all made of cowhide, while the wood used to make the drum body is made of wood with high density. Locals believe that using the trunk of "Hameigan" (a kind of tree come from Panzhihua) is the best choice. It is said that only in this way can the drum achieve the sound quality recognized by people. In order to adjust the sound quality, dozens of bands made of cowhide are tied vertically around the drum body to tighten or loosen the drum skin. At the drum chamber, people are used to chisel a small hole to inject water. Usually, the small hole is closed with a short cork. After water injection, the water in the water drum is not taken out but allowed to dry naturally. The amount of water poured is related to the size and shape of the drum, as well as the sound quality of the drum. "Gebengdan" often requires two bamboo tubes of water, while "Gebengde" requires only one bamboo tube of water. From the acoustic point of view, it is to achieve the purpose of drum sound concentration. In this way, the sound is very clear when it is made, which plays a good role in boosting morale, driving away dangerous animals and monsters. The following is a survey of raw materials for making water drums(comparing modern and ancient)

Specification and modles		Drum Front diameter(cm)	Drum Back diameter(cm)	Length(cm)	Drum head materials	Drum rope materials	Water injection hole
Gangbeng dan drum	Maximum water drum	71	48	154	Cattle hide leather	Water buffalo hide	Yes
	Plain water drum	55	34	92	Cattle hide leather	Water buffalo hide	Yes
Gangbengde drum	Traditional water drum	Around 30	28	39	sheepskin	Water buffalo hide	NO
	Improved water drum	29	20	55	Cattle hide leather	Water buffalo hide	Yes



There are many legends about water drum, but only two of them Sun (2014) claim that, "One of the legends is that there no written record of the exact time when the water drum appeared, but from the mythology and legends of the De'ang ethnic group, it can be seen that it should have appeared in ancient times. In the ancient legends of the De'ang ethnic group, the water drum originated from the hands of crabs." (p.5) Because the De'ang people's living areas were severely damaged by floods, they urgently needed to relocate. When crossing the river, they were attacked by crab demons, so they fought with them. After defeating the crab demons, they took their hands, made them into drum bodies, used cowhide or frog skin for the drumheads, and wrapped the drum bodies with tiger skins. The water drum can be heard from a thousand miles away, and it can also be used as a signal to call people together. From ancient times to the present, it has been handed down from generation to generation. No matter what festival it is, the De'ang people always regard it as a symbol of spiritual strength and express the bravery, enthusiasm, hospitality, and positive attitude of the De'ang people. Therefore, the water drum dance is not created just for sacrifice like other dances, but more for defense and resistance against foreign enemies and dangers. Another legend goes like this: At the end of the matrilineal society, the De'ang ancestor tribe ruled by the queen fell into a difficult situation both internally and externally, with constant disputes within the tribe and frequent at-

tacks from foreign nations and wild animals. During this difficult time, the heroic and valiant Along Guozha gained increasing prestige and later became the first male leader in the history of the De'ang people. Young Along Guozha was highly skilled in martial arts and led the tribe to victory many times. One day, he was ordered to eliminate the harmful tiger spirit. He went into the mountains and forests to fight the tiger to the death. After a fierce battle, he finally killed the two harmful tigers. He skinned the tigers and hung the hides on both ends of a hollow pillar for display. The angry tribesmen hit the tiger skins with wooden sticks to vent their anger, which always produced a loud sound, attracting many tribesmen to watch. Later, when the tiger skins dried up and the sound became smaller, the tribesmen found that the sound would become louder again when the tree trunk was filled with water. A few years later, when the tiger skins were worn out, the tribesmen imitated them and made the first water drum, which officially became a percussion instrument of the tribe. Every time Along Guozha led the tribe to battle, as long as the water drum sounded, the warriors would be filled with fighting spirit. Since then, the sound of the drum unified the thoughts and actions of the tribes, and the water drum became a powerful tool for uniting the tribe and gathering people. As sung in the ancient songs of the De'ang people: The brother open their eyes ,offer their hand and straightened up ,my bothers revive, my sister happy, we dance to celebration, people are busy in dancing and sing,

forget the four demons, although the underground monster's body to evil, but brothers and sisters brave fight bare-handed, don't forgive underground, brother and sisters in air to help combat, we cheered loudly and beat our water drums to celebrate such a victory.

"Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men," Rousseau provides a description of the natural state of humanity, as well as the origins of society, family, language, private property, the state, and values, drawing heavily on materials from indigenous peoples around the world. This work presaged some of the core issues in anthropology. The "water drum dance," which serves as an inspiring element in the large-scale religious festivals or ceremonies of the De'ang ethnic group, is an integral part of their indigenous heritage. The combination of the psychological call of the drumbeats and the physical movements constitutes a folkloric "soundscape." This dance represents the De'ang people's transmission and reenactment of their ancestral cultural memories within their community. It is a unique regional cultural expression within the cultural sphere of Theravada Buddhism, and an essential medium for the De'ang people to showcase their cultural identity, engage in inter-ethnic interactions, and achieve cultural recognition amidst the backdrop of economic integration. The social form of the De'ang ethnic group is characterized by a coexistence of both large-scale mixed residence and smaller-scale concentrated settlements. In villages where the population of minority ethnic groups is relatively small, a high degree of homogeneity in ethnicity is often observed, with members of the same ethnic group residing in a single village or within a smaller geographical area. This arrangement fosters a strong sense of ethnic cohesion and facilitates the preservation and transmission of their cultural heritage. By living together in close proximity, the De'ang people are able to maintain their traditional customs, beliefs, and practices, ensuring that their unique cultural identity remains vibrant and intact. Indeed, the concentrated settlement pattern of the De'ang ethnic group, where members of the same ethnicity reside in close proximity, makes the transmission of cultural traditions such as the water drum dance relatively easier. "The strong sense of community and shared cultural identity among the De'ang people fosters a natural environment for the preservation and perpetuation of their cultural heritage." (Wuyan, 2012) The water drum dance, as an integral part of their religious ceremonies and festivals, is thus passed down from generation to generation through oral transmission and demonstrations.

3. The water drum dance

The De'ang ethnic group is one of the oldest ethnic

groups residing in Dehong, and its language belongs to the Wa-Deic language branch of the Mon-Khmer language group of the Austroasiatic language family. They have no written language and mostly use Chinese and Dai scripts. They believe in Theravada Buddhism. In the early 1950s, the production mode of the De'ang ethnic group was still relatively backward, basically in a "living by the sky" extensive farming state, and the livelihood model of deforestation, slash-and-burn farming was still prevalent. After the 20th century, the De'ang ethnic group gradually learned to build water conservancy facilities, practice scientific farming, and other technologies, and their economic level improved to a certain extent. However, under the centralized planned economic system, the enthusiasm for economic development of the De'ang ethnic group and the potential of ethnic areas were suppressed, and economic exchanges still showed obvious closed characteristics. After the reform and opening up, stimulated by the market economy, economic exchanges have become increasingly open and frequent, and the economy of the De'ang ethnic group has developed rapidly. With the industrialization of the economy and the adjustment of the industrial structure, the De'ang ethnic group has been integrated into the new economy and division of labor, and has more frequent and closer contacts with other ethnic groups. Ethnic relations have gradually shifted from closed to open on this basis. However, they do not have their own written language. Their language belongs to the Wa-Deic language branch of the Mon-Khmer language group of the Austroasiatic language family. They do not have a written language and mostly use Chinese and Thai scripts. Their belief is Buddhism. They live in dry-column-style buildings with grass roofs, and men like to have tattoos. They are mainly engaged in agriculture and are good at growing tea, so they are called "ancient tea farmers". The water drum dance of the De'ang ethnic group is a wonderful flower that has only been opened in recent years among many types of drums in China. It not only has the profound connotation of ancient legends of the De'ang ethnic group but also the essence of modern national culture. Under such social and environmental conditions, the De'ang people still preserved the ancient songs, tea making, dances, and handicraft works passed down from their ancestors for generations.

The De'ang Water Drum Dance has been listed as a national intangible cultural heritage protection item by the State Council, fully reflecting the rich creativity of the De'ang people's dance culture. In addition to performing at cultural activities of traditional festivals such as the Longyang Festival, Watering Festival, and Songkran Festival, it also frequently appears in various cultural activities organized by local governments. In the tide of

market economy, the Water Drum Dance has also shown remarkable skills. Local ethnic art workers have made many innovations to the Water Drum Dance, such as the ones created by Zhang Rongqing, a young De'ang dancer from Ruili City, and Zhang Xiaoying, a singer, with national characteristics, including "Water Drum Passing Emotions", "Crazy Gabendang", and "Charm of Water Drum", which have been widely spread among the people and have become famous Water Drum Dance songs of the De'ang people. The De'ang Water Drum has participated in the "China Feast", been invited to perform in Hong Kong and Macao, and has become famous at home and abroad. During the annual Songkran Festival and Watering Festival, the De'ang Water Drum Team is also invited to visit relatives and friends in Myanmar, participate in cultural and artistic festivals held in Myanmar, and show its brilliance in foreign countries, so that this cultural masterpiece of the De'ang people can be spread in Southeast Asia and South Asia, thus winning high praise and compliments from domestic and foreign media. As a dance of the De'ang people, the Water Drum Dance has the nature of a mother culture, fully reflecting the rich creativity of the De'ang people's dance culture. In the drum culture of our country, the Water Drum Dance is a red camellia on the Yunnan border that has attracted special attention from people at home and abroad in recent ten years. It is a wonderful flower that has re-bloomed among many types of drums in China in recent years. It has strong artistic and ornamental qualities and has a certain influence in the border areas between China and Myanmar. It can be said to be a traditional dance of ethnic minorities that spans national borders and has a certain international character. It not only has strong ethnic characteristics and prominent local flavors, but is also an endangered dance with a small number of performers and is spread among the De'ang people with a small population. The main prop of the Water Drum Dance is the water drum, and the auxiliary musical instruments are different. Among them, the water drum is divided into large and small according to its shape and size, and the way of dancing and playing is different. When dancing the small water drum dance, a man holds the drum horizontally across his abdomen. The way to play it is to hold the drumstick in his right hand and hit the big head, and use his left hand to slap the small head. The other two men each hold cymbals and large gongs, playing music at the same time to form various rhythms that overlap and intertwine. The sound is deep and powerful. They knock and dance while exchanging positions. From time to time, the drummer's drumstick and the cymbalist's cymbal plate will come up with wonderful patterns, which are well-coordinated and ever-changing, making people dazzled. At the same time, the rest of the people gather

in a circle and dance to the beat of the drum, with dance steps mainly consisting of "single-foot stepping around". The movements include "single and double shuffling steps", "kicking and turning around", "circling around the drum tail", "twisting the drum", "roosters fighting", "showing one's own prowess", "squatting and jumping", and "stepping on each other". Walking, pointing, grinding, squatting, and jumping steps form a rich vocabulary of dance and unique dance poses, occasionally interspersed with some jumping face to face and spinning in place, creating a very warm and joyous atmosphere. The Santaishan branch is good at dancing the small water drum dance. The big water drum, on the other hand, is supported by a fixed drum stand, and the drummer hits it with a drumstick (either single or double) in front of the drum. The movements are strong and powerful. The drummer can hit it from the front or turn around to hit it from the back, depending on the drummer's impromptu performance. The accompaniment is provided by cymbals, gongs, and small elephant-foot drums, and the crowd dances to the sound of the drum, singing the "Water Drum Tune" from time to time, interspersed with people's cheers of "yes, yes". When dancing, they form a circle and move clockwise. The dance steps include "single-step kicking", interspersed with "stepping in place and spinning around", "jumping face to face", etc. The hands naturally turn the wrist upwards and make flowers, doing movements such as "single-cushion step, raising the hand, and turning the wrist". There are many group dance routines for the Water Drum Dance, including "chicken dance", "quadrilateral dance", and "footwork dance". The routines in the dance also show people's agricultural process from sowing, plowing to harvesting. The sound of the big water drum is deep and solemn, creating a very warm atmosphere. The main water drum used for dance performances by the De'ang people in Ruili City is the big water drum.

4. Protection and Inheritance Status

The current state and issues surrounding the inheritance of the De'ang Water Drum Dance, a precious heritage developed and passed down by the De'ang people throughout their long history and possessing significant cultural value, have been a long-term concern for the author. Amidst the rapid development of ethnic cultural tourism today, the inheritance of the De'ang Water Drum Dance faces difficulties, with its rousing drumbeats struggling to resonate passionately.

Between November 2023 and February 2024, the author conducted several research trips to the Cudonggua Village in Santaishan, Ruimang City, to investigate the Water Drum Dance. Interviews were held with Zhao Jiaxiang, a

De'ang scholar from Lianghe, as well as Zhang Rongqing, Zhang Xiaoying, and Zhang Fei, who are the curator of Ruili Cultural Center and inheritors of De'ang dance. Furthermore, field visits were made to De'ang villages in Muse and Nankan, located in northern Myanmar, to gain a deeper understanding of the craftsmanship and transmission of the Water Drum Dance. Currently, in Nansang Village, Ruili City, there are only two craftsmen from Myanmar who are proficient in making water drums. They are currently producing 28 water drums of varying sizes, which will be distributed to the village for use by veteran artists in their performances.

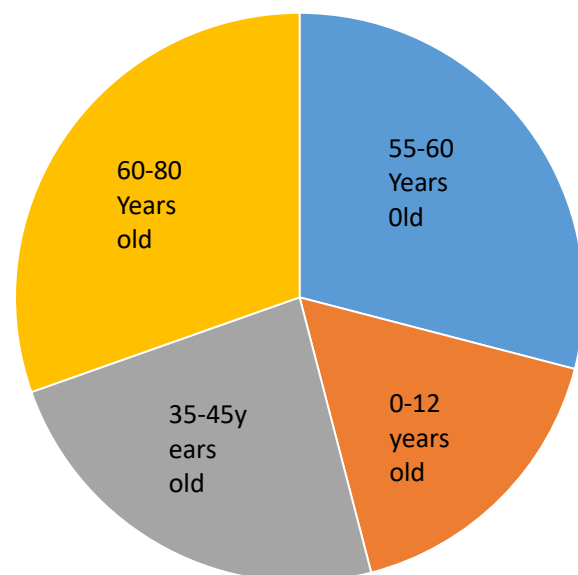
Intangible cultural heritage arises and exists within specific geographical environments and among particular groups of people, carrying the cultural life codes of a nation or ethnic group. With the development of society and economy, communication among people has become increasingly frequent, especially under the influence of convenient communication means and ubiquitous mass media, people's thoughts and values have been greatly impacted, leading to notable cultural convergence. Since most young De'ang people now work outside their villages to make a living and have little interest in traditional performances, there are not many who can perform the Water Drum Dance, and even fewer who can craft the water drums. Traditionally, De'ang water drum dances were primarily organized within villages, characterized by small scale and high costs. As the market economy and foreign cultures exert subtle influences, the original religious beliefs, values, lifestyles, marriage, and funeral customs of indigenous De'ang residents have all undergone unconscious changes. The De'ang people are scattered in mountainous areas with remote geographical distances between villages, resulting in limited interactions among residents. Ethnic cultural activities during traditional festivals are primarily organized spontaneously by villages, and due to economic and human resource constraints, the processes of these activities have been continually simplified or even disappeared. In important cultural scenarios such as festivals, weddings, funerals, and traditional rituals, the characteristics of folk activities have become increasingly weakened or even absent, leading to a shrinking environment for the Water Drum Dance. To protect this ancient ethnic minority culture from being lost or forgotten, immediate rescue measures should be taken to further excavate and organize its content, enrich its repertoire, ensure its dance is passed down, and its water drums are crafted, thereby contributing to the construction of Chinese ethnic culture.

The inheritance of the De'ang water drum dance is in crisis. As an intangible cultural heritage, the De'ang traditional water drum dance has the characteristic of "vitality",

which is mainly passed down through oral instructions and learning by heart among members of the water drum team, and is displayed and disseminated in important folk religious and folk activities. Due to the narrow scope of inheritance and limited communication between villages, the skills of water drum dance have limited room for improvement, and most members of the De'ang ethnic group do not know how to perform the water drum dance or its historical origins and cultural connotations.

As time passes, the existing folk artists and musicians are gradually withdrawing from the stage, and many excellent water drum cultural works, historical legends, and dance skills will disappear with their passing. The overall small population of the De'ang ethnic group, scattered settlements, and poor economic conditions have led to the majority of young people leaving for education and work, which has indirectly affected the indigenous residents. Their traditional production and lifestyle have changed, and common ethnic songs and dances and ethnic cultural activities have gradually disappeared from the countryside. Modern media has replaced traditional entertainment programs, and many young and middle-aged people do not understand their own ethnic history and culture. It is difficult for existing folk artists to devote themselves to the inheritance of traditional skills, and it is difficult for the younger generation to identify with the unique folk culture and lifestyle of their own ethnic group, making it challenging to continue the inheritance of the water drum dance.

Age segment of De'ang nationality in Chudonggua village



Author conducted research and analysis using the field-work method among the research methodologies surveyed

the population of each age group in Chudonggua Village, and the approximate numbers are as follows: 7 people aged 0-12, accounting for 8%; 20 people aged 35-45, accounting for 27%; 50 people aged 55-60, accounting for 30%; 63 people aged 60-80, accounting for 35%. The surveyed population has a larger proportion of elderly people, indicating that the young people have left the village to work in big cities, while the elderly and children are left behind in the village. Therefore, the inheritance of water drum dance is very difficult, and many young people prefer to work in big cities rather than return to their villages to inherit traditions. Compared with the countryside, big cities offer more development opportunities and more diverse job forms.

From the perspective of government responsibilities, the implementation of protection policies is not in place. On the surface, insufficient funding is the main problem for the protection and inheritance of the De'ang Water Drum Dance. The De'ang communities are far away from cities and do not have any industrial or mineral resources. Residents have basically solved the problem of food and clothing, and are basically self-sufficient, with relatively backward economic development. Basic living facilities, cultural venues, and props are insufficient, making it difficult to normally carry out various traditional ethnic cultural activities, which seriously restricts the protection and development of the De'ang folk culture. In essence, it is a problem of inadequate implementation of protection policies. Cultural heritage is a systematic project involving many departments such as culture, ethnicity, and tourism, and there is a shortage of special funds. Local governments have insufficient financial resources and lack necessary supporting funds and measures while implementing national protection policies. The limited funds are difficult to allocate and use in a standardized manner, making it difficult to achieve the expected results in heritage collection, organization, personnel training, and infrastructure construction.

5. Conclusion

Talking about the importance of inheritance and protection strategies for the De'ang Water Drum Dance, the Chinese government should recognize that this intangible cultural heritage is rooted in the living environment of the people. The Water Drum Dance reflects the survival history, living customs, psychological characteristics, as well as the natural and social environments and religious beliefs of the De'ang people. It must be deeply embedded in the traditional culture and community of this ethnic group, manifested through the daily lives, weddings, funerals, and festive activities of the indigenous residents, embody-

ing the cultural characteristics and values of this ethnicity or region.

On one hand, the government should strengthen its guiding role and stimulate awareness of ethnic cultural protection. The preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage cannot be achieved without government guidance and support. A model of "government leadership, enterprise participation, and market-oriented operation" should be adopted, with preferential policies formulated to encourage social capital investment in development and operation. It is essential to prioritize the interests of ethnic community residents, improve mechanisms for equitable benefit sharing, and motivate local residents to actively participate and cooperate, fundamentally reducing the negative impact of tourism development on cultural heritage protection. The involvement of indigenous residents ensures the authenticity of ethnic cultural tourism products, thereby promoting sustainable development based on local social, ecological, and economic improvements.

On the other hand, the protection and inheritance of ethnic culture necessitates stimulating the spontaneous protection consciousness of the ethnic group itself. As the core carriers of ethnic culture, indigenous residents can only establish cultural self-confidence and pride by understanding their own historical culture, customs, and traditions, enhancing the resilience of their ethnic cultural heritage against external influences. The government can encourage the De'ang Water Drum Dance to participate in significant local government festivals, such as the annual Water-Splashing Festival and the Sino-Myanmar Baobo Carnival parade and performances, as well as commercial exhibitions and performances. This will enhance societal recognition of their ethnic culture and promote the holistic development and inheritance of their cultural heritage. Using modern science and technology, we can produce a special promotional video on the history and culture of the De'ang Water Drum Dance and its important works, collect relevant historical relics and material pictures, and preserve them in the De'ang Ethnic Museum in Santaishan through image technology, becoming a special cultural heritage specimen. Relying on various festivals and major events, we can use government and mass media platforms, including television, radio, film, the Internet, and newspapers, to create and establish a national cultural brand for the De'ang Water Drum Dance, making it closer to the public and more in line with their aesthetic needs and emotional requirements. We should adopt a market-oriented operation mode that combines enterprises with traditional craft inheritors, and inheritors with the water drum cultural industry. Relevant policies should be introduced to stimulate the enthusiasm of society and individuals, help and cultivate the market-oriented operation

of the Water Drum Dance, so that the skills of inheritors can find a combination point with the market, adapt to market demand, and make their skills continue and develop, allowing cultural heritage to survive in its original living area in a living form.

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