

Ethnic Minority Folk Epics as Boundary Objects: Interactive Collaboration for the Sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage *Meige* of Chuxiong Yi Communities

JIN DAI

Abstract:

This study applies the notion of ‘boundary objects’ to cultural heritage studies, using as a case study *Meige*, the orally transmitted folk epics of the Chuxiong Yi people in Yunnan province, Southwest China. The study explores how *Meige* exemplifies interactive collaboration between diverse stakeholders—Yi communities, academic scholars, government agencies and industry professionals—in its preservation and revival within contemporary Chinese society and how these diverse partnerships cooperate to make the revival of *Meige* across three phases: canonisation, stage performance and social media dissemination. Treating *Meige* as a boundary object, this study examines how these partnerships collaborate effectively, leveraging their strengths to transfer and promote *Meige* sustainably. Via comprehensive qualitative research, this study incorporates archival analyses to examine *Meige*’s canonisation, virtual ethnography to observe Yi communities’ stage performance and daily music practices on social media, as well as fieldwork insights from *Meige*’s place of origin. It highlights the positive impact of stakeholders’ collaboration on *Meige*’s sustainability. Further, it identifies foundational issues to address, such as the lack of *Meige* heritage practitioners and the survival challenges faced by *Meige* heritage bearers, for critical long-term sustainability strategies.

Keywords: *boundary objects; Meige; Yi communities; Yunnan; cultural sustainability; intangible cultural heritage; Southwest China*

This article can be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v43i1.7733>

© Jin Dai

Published under the Creative Commons License (CC BY).

Introduction

Since the implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, China has actively protected intangible cultural heritage (ICH, hereafter), or *fei yi*. Numerous cultural elements have been officially recognised and documented in inventories, supported by legal texts (Maags 2021; Zhu and Maags 2020). The concept of ICH has gained widespread recognition and institutional grounding and has found strong traction across various sectors, including government agencies, the public, the media and particularly cultural practitioners. With increasing national awareness of ICH, the subcategories of oral literature and folk music have fostered a variety of associated cultural practices and expressions, enhancing their visibility in the public sphere and reinforcing their cultural significance (Bamo, Chao and Niles 2016; Kuang and He 2022; McLaren 2010).

Studies on oral literature and folk music in China have focused on sustainable preservation (Bamo et al. 2013; Gao and Karin 2023; Qiu et al. 2023; Tso 2019; Wong 2009; Yang and Chonpairot 2024). These studies highlight common challenges, such as funding limitations in restoring heritage works and insufficient public awareness, emphasising the need for comprehensive frameworks integrating the extensive use of digital technology (Bamo et al. 2013), government support and active educational programs and community engagement (Qiu et al. 2023). At the same time, very few studies consider how a specific ICH is preserved through the coordinated efforts of various stakeholders—cultural bearers (communities), academic scholars, government agencies and industry professionals—or analyse the complexity of the internal power dynamics among these stakeholders in making ICH sustainable in the Chinese context.

This study focuses on *Meige* (梅葛), the oral literacy and folk music of the Chuxiong subgroup of the Yi community in the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture in central Yunnan Province. *Meige* comprises long-narrative folk epics known as the ‘Creation Epics’ (*chuangshi shishi*) and is considered as Chuxiong Yi cultural ‘genealogy’. It encapsulates cosmic visions and historical developments, outlines the Yi ancestors’ production and social life and showcases customs related to production, festivals, marriage, funerals and other rituals. It also provides explanations for the creation of the world and descriptions of nature and insights into life, reflecting the life

philosophies and worldviews of the Yi people. Traditionally, *Meige* is an orally transmitted literary genre. Yi elders and youth gather, and the elders narrate stories, sharing their ancestors' wisdom. *Meige* can also be a tune accompanied by improvised lyrics, chanted during ritualised ceremonies and sung in the Yi vernacular and customs.

Meige has experienced various revivals and setbacks since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). This paper examines *Meige* across three distinct historical periods: the 'golden period' of collection and compilation efforts spanning the early years of the PRC (1949-1966); the post-1978 revival in the Reform and Opening-up era after the stagnation during the Cultural Revolution; and the comprehensive top-down revitalisation efforts following *Meige's* inclusion in the second batch of national ICH in 2008 by the State Council of China. This formal inclusion in the national ICH symbolises its preservation as a state initiative as it has been incorporated into rural tourism and received more public exposure through new media.

Research on *Meige* has been conducted in the fields of ethnic literature (Bender 2002, 2016, 2019), ethnomusicology (Su 2022; Yin 2021), cultural memory transmission and ICH preservation (Huang 2014). Bender (2016) points out that the Yi people's ancient cosmology and philosophy embodied in *Meige*—including themes such as the pursuit of balance within the universe, the harmony between humans and animals and peaceful coexistence with nature—remain highly relevant to understanding contemporary Yi society and its communal values as these ideas continue to resonate with the Yi community's present-day understanding of nature. Huang (2014) analyses *Meige's* memory-making and its transmission by studying the revival process after the Cultural Revolution. Researchers also emphasise the measures taken for *Meige's* sustainability, such as canonised preservation (Yin 2021) and music adaptation (Su 2022). However, existing studies often overlook the roles of stakeholders in preserving and transmitting *Meige*. For instance, the government frames *Meige* as essential to its broader agenda for ICH protection, and the tourism industry sees *Meige* as an attraction. Performers use *Meige* to increase their social media attention and income. Seemingly, each group approaches *Meige* with different objectives—cultural or commercial—that influence the internal dynamics of representation and reception. The analysis highlights the unique

advantages each stakeholder brings. Despite diverse interests and competing forces, the stakeholders leverage their respective strengths and collective efforts to promote *Meige* in a complex environment of shifting power dynamics.

To reveal the intricate involvement of stakeholders and how they contribute to *Meige's* sustainability, this article applies the concept of 'boundary objects' (Berliner 2012; Star and Griesemer 1989; Winter 2013; Zeitlyn 2022) to heritage studies, emphasising the importance of stakeholders' collaboration and interconnectedness for *Meige's* sustainability. It identifies four key *Meige* stakeholders—the Yi community, university scholars, government agencies and industrial professionals—who either partially or fully engage in sustainable preservation and dissemination. It then investigates the efforts and collaborations that these stakeholders make and how these contribute to the sustainable development of *Meige*. Drawing on archival research and firsthand fieldwork, the historical trajectory of *Meige* post-1949 is summarised in three phases: canonisation, stage performance, and digitalisation through social media. During each phase, the identified stakeholders interact, and their interaction plays a crucial role in ensuring cultural stewardship through community participation and fostering resilience by maintaining *Meige* continuity amid social and technological change. The article emphasises the key factors influencing sustainability, stressing that the number of *Meige* practitioners and the integration of new cultural practitioners are critical to maintaining longevity.

Boundary Objects in Heritage Studies

Boundary objects are concepts or items existing between different social worlds or communities of practice. They are flexible enough to be interpreted differently by groups yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across groups. Star and Griesemer (1989) coined the term in the context of scientific research, serving as a translation and negotiation medium; it has been adapted in heritage studies to understand how diverse stakeholders—governments, local communities, international organisations (e.g., UNESCO) and tourists—engage with heritage sites or objects from different perspectives. According to Star and Griesemer (1989: 393), boundary objects are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual-site use. Star and Griesemer (1989) explain how

boundary objects enable collaboration without requiring consensus. This framework is useful because it reveals how the indeterminacy of heritage provides space for different stakeholders – or, in managerial terms, ‘interested parties’ – using this ‘weak structure’ for self-interest.

However, this theory has limitations, often oversimplifying collaboration among different groups using boundary objects while neglecting potential conflicts and power imbalances (Huvila 2011; Kimble, Grenier, and Goglio-Primard 2010; Trompette and Vinck 2009). In heritage studies, various groups (local communities, government bodies, international organisations, etc.) may interpret heritage objects differently and argue over their use, meaning or preservation. A focus on collaboration can mask internal power differences and cultural complexities.

Berliner applied Star and Griesemer’s boundary object concept to heritage studies, highlighting how economic and cultural dynamics shape processes of heritage interpretation and negotiation. According to Berliner’s (2012) analysis of heritage in Luang Prabang, the site serves as a boundary object that brings together different interests – locals seeking economic benefits, UNESCO aiming for cultural preservation and tourists looking for exotic experiences. While each group has different objectives, they all engage with the site in ways that fulfil their needs. Despite the differences in interests and perspectives and the lack of a ‘common sense of heritage’ (Berliner 2012: 782–83), stakeholders are still intertwined in multiple forms of nostalgia and interact with one another at heritage sites, though the degree of consensus around the meaning of the site is lower than might be assumed.

Winter (2013: 541) criticises the overextension of the boundary object concept, arguing that ‘heritage risks’ become an overly broad term encompassing everything. He acknowledges its potential to bridge cultural and social divides, revealing the need for heritage studies to account for its relationship to today’s regional and global transformations and to develop post-Western understandings of culture, history, and heritage. Jacobs, Neyrinck and Van der Zeijden (2014) emphasise the 2003 Convention paradigm as critical, highlighting the important roles played by mediators, cultural brokers and boundary spanners in safeguarding ICH. Zeitlyn (2022: 57) describes boundary objects as ‘concepts that span divides and provide the substance of debate, argument, and division. As such, they are, or should be, the explicanda, not the explanans’. This

suggests that boundary objects should not be seen as explanations themselves but as points of analysis that reveal how heritage is debated, contested and defined across divides of language, culture and power.

Applying the boundary objects concept to heritage studies is suitable due to recent advancements in applied ethnomusicology and ICH, which highlight the importance of connectivity in sustaining cultural heritage (Barney 2014; Pettan and Titon 2015; Schippers 2015, 2018). This article analyses Yi's ICH *Meige* as a boundary object, examining how tradition-bearers and external supporters have collaborated since 1949 for *Meige*'s sustainable development through canonisation, performance and social media. It does not explore power struggles among stakeholders but investigates how they leverage advantages to promote *Meige* sustainability amid dynamic power distribution, despite their diverse backgrounds, power positions and interests.

Research Methods

This study uses a comprehensive qualitative approach, combining archival research, virtual ethnographic observation and fieldwork. Key informants—folk musicians, Yi cultural experts, government and university scholars—shared their knowledge on preserving *Meige*. This comprehensive qualitative approach offers first-hand insights into the preservation status, historical significance and cultural relevance of *Meige*.

Archival research examines existing records of canonised *Meige* chronologically, offering historical context and background on its post-1949 textual preservation, which is crucial for understanding its canonisation. Virtual ethnographic observation entails digitally watching and analysing *Meige* stage performances, including social media posts on WeChat Channels by Yi folk musicians and cultural activists; short videos of musical practices and *Meige* performances by *Meige* bearers on social media platforms such as Kuaishou and Douyin (TikTok in China); and relevant television programmes broadcast by Chinese Central Television (CCTV)—particularly the *China in the Intangible Cultural Heritage* series (*fei yi li de Zhongguo*). This virtual ethnographic observation was conducted intermittently over nine months, from September 2023 to May 2024. Before the observation

period, I contacted key informants, including *Meige* bearers and cultural activists, by adding their WeChat profiles and following their public social media accounts with their permission. I also observed the platforms anonymously. Through continuous online interactions, I kept in regular touch with key informants, fostering mutual trust. This relationship established a strong foundation for the subsequent ethnographic fieldwork in Yunnan.

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in June 2024 in Mayou Village, Yao'an County, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan. Mayou Village, located 25 km from the county centre, is known as the 'Hometown of *Meige*'. It is a predominantly Yi village with a population of 2,223, many of whom are *Meige* folk musicians or amateur practitioners. During fieldwork, I visited a *Meige* studio, attended *Meige* transmission classes with 13 Yi children and conducted informal conversations with 10 *Meige* bearers (mostly Yi villagers), cultural activists and university scholars to discuss challenges associated with internal transmission and external dissemination of *Meige*. This immersive fieldwork offered a detailed, context-rich understanding of the Yi community's environment and activities, capturing nuances other methods can overlook. Integrating these resources provided a comprehensive understanding of *Meige*'s three sustainable development phases.

Regarding the design of fieldwork and the structure of the following empirical analysis, the section on the 'canonisation of *Meige*' was written according to a review of published *Meige* books; the section on the 'stage performance and digitalisation' describes data gathered during online ethnographic observation and on-site fieldwork. During fieldwork, I strictly adhered to the ethical standards and principles of ethnographic research. As a non-Yi observer in Mayou Village, I showed full respect for the Yi people's way of life and cultural practices and ensured that my presence and study did not interfere with or alter their daily lives. Virtual ethnographic observations of *Meige*'s staged performances were conducted anonymously on social media platforms like Baijia Hao (Baidu video), Kwai, Douyin, WeChat video and cultural programmes on Yi *Meige* broadcast by Chinese Central Television (CCTV). These approaches provide a robust framework for analysing *Meige*'s sustainable development.

The Canonisation of *Meige*

For this study's research on *Meige*, 'canonisation' refers to converting orally transmitted knowledge, culture and stories embedded in *Meige* into written form, preserving and editing them as standardised books or documents for future reference. The canonisation of *Meige* involves three waves led by government actors, Yi community elites and scholars. In 1957, a think tank, composed of officials and scholars called the 'Yunnan province Chuxiong folk literature investigation team', was established and sent to Chuxiong Prefecture to compile *Meige* oral literature. Local cultural officials and scholars, guided by state initiatives, sought to preserve *Meige* culture by gathering and formally recording oral traditions. This marked the first standardised attempt to canonise *Meige*, resulting in a government-led book published in 1958. This edition was reprinted, drawing interest from academics and spurring further research. It remains a benchmark for subsequent research (Bender 2002, 2016, 2023; Guo 1982; Hu 2005; Huang 2014; Wang 2007), and international translations (Deng and Zhang 2021) often use this version as the primary text. However, it has shortcomings: lack of sound and images, published only in Mandarin, missing the Yi language's rhythm and context and structural reductions of funeral chants deemed tedious or superstitious (Bender 2023; Yin 2021). Even so, this marked the first attempt at *Meige's* canonisation. It represented a form of top-down cultural dissemination but broke with customs of the Yi's feudal society, where higher social strata like the Bimo¹ controlled cultural transmission and interpretation. The Cultural Revolution interrupted *Meige's* transmission and development until it was revived in the late 1980s. Then, the second wave of canonization, led by the Yi elites and scholars, enriched *Meige's* content and dissemination.

During fieldwork in Yao'an County, I conducted archival research that sorted all published editions of *Meige* books from its first publication in 1958 to the most recent versions (Yunnan Province Chuxiong Folk Literature Investigation Team 1958, 1959a, 1959b, 1960, 1978). Following the initial publication in 1958 in Chinese, following editions such as those released in 1960 and 1978 were newly produced on the basis of the original version. The findings reveal that original *Meige* stories were composed in concise and highly refined Chinese. Over time, as the work was translated and

disseminated, *Meige* evolved into Chinese-English script versions (see the translated editions published in 2018 and 2021) and later into IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions (see the editions published in 2009 and 2021), adapted to facilitate chanting and oral performance.

The review of the books revealed that in the late 1980s, following the end of the Cultural Revolution and in the early years of China's Reform and Opening-up, a large number of new editions of *Meige* emerged, and since the Yi epic *Meige* was inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage protection list, it has gradually become a focal point of public attention and a hot topic in academic research. According to a search for the title *Meige* on the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, there are 353 related publications. As shown in Figure 1 below, the annual number of publications indicates that since *Meige* was included in the second batch of Yunnan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage items in 2008, the volume of research output has increased sharply and shows a fluctuating trend.

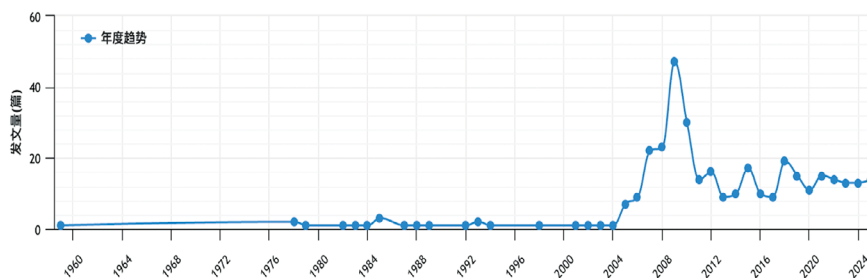


Figure 1. Annual number of publications on *Meige* (1960s–2024).

Source: Screenshots from the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, 2025. Figure 1 illustrates the yearly volume of academic publications on *Meige* from the 1960s to 2024. Research output remained relatively limited prior to the early 2000s, but experienced a significant surge after 2008, when *Meige* was officially inscribed as an item of Intangible Cultural Heritage, marking a peak period of scholarly attention. URL: <https://kns-cnki-net-s.vpn.muc.edu.cn:8118/kvisual8/article/center?language=CHS&uniplatform=NZKPT>. (accessed on 15 December 2025).

From the perspective of disciplinary distribution (as shown in Figure 2), most researchers have studied the Yi epic *Meige* from the angles of Chinese literature, music, dance and tourism. Some studies approach it from perspectives such as ethnology, public administration, and religious studies. Overall, the literature on *Meige* primarily focuses on two main aspects: research on its historical and cultural value and research on the pathways for its protection and transmission.

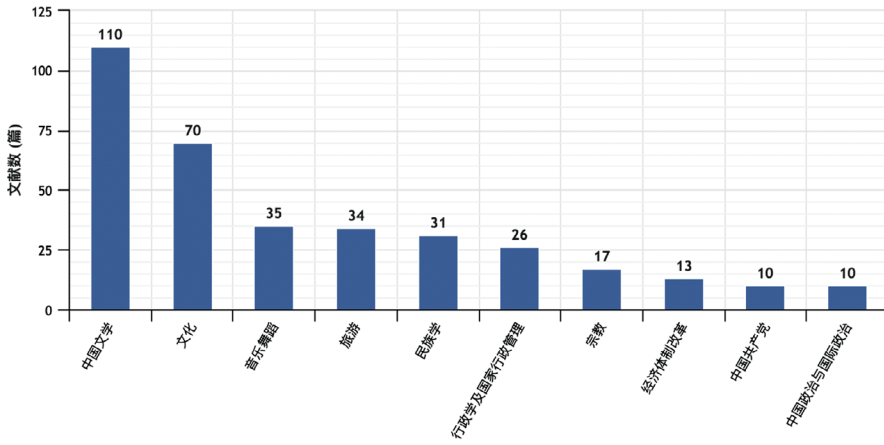


Figure 2. The distribution of research disciplinary. *Source:* Screenshots from the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, 2025. Figure 2 presents the distribution of scholarly publications across nine key research domains related to *Meige*. Among these, *Chinese Literature* dominates with the highest number of publications (110 articles), followed by *Culture* (70 articles). *Music and Dance* (35 articles), *Tourism* (34 articles), *Ethnology* (31 articles) represent moderately studied fields. URL: <https://kns-cnki-net-s.vpn.muc.edu.cn:8118/kvisual8/article/center?language=CHS&uniplatform=NZKPT>. (accessed on 15 December 2025).

Unlike earlier government-led efforts, research published since 2008 reflects the importance of Yi intellectuals' initiatives in protecting their cultural heritage. On the one hand, many scholars focus on the historical and cultural values of *Meige*, viewing it as both the Yi people's creation epic and an encyclopedic record of their cultural life (Chen 2010; Y.Li 2011; S.Li 2019), reflecting their customs and religious practices (Chen 2022). On the other hand, research concerns the preservation and transmission pathways of *Meige* (Chen 2010; Hu and Li 2005).

Regarding *Meige* studies conducted overseas, research remains relatively limited due to its distinctive local characteristics. A search of databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar yields only a few related works. Bender (2002, 2016, 2019, 2023), examining *Meige* as a 'tradition-oriented' text, conducted field interviews in Chuxiong with scholars involved in its collection and editing. He observed that existing Chinese-language editions, though inevitably altered during translation and publication under specific historical conditions, faithfully preserve and artistically represent Yi traditional culture. He suggests that Yi studies should pay closer attention to the textual and cultural contexts in which *Meige* was originally embedded. Kwon (2010) discusses *Meige* from the perspectives of cultural value and transmission methods, analysing the unique mythological elements and rich cultural connotations embedded in Yi creation epics, emphasising their diversity and identifying the significant role of ritual specialists (*bimo*) and performance contexts in the transmission of Yi literature.

With *Meige's* resurgence followed its inclusion into Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2008. This led to efforts by local Yi ethnic like Guo Xiaowei, a folk musician and *Meige* preservation activist from Yao'an County. Guo compiled and published a five-volume comprehensive edition of *Meige*, covering five themes: 'Origins', 'Love Songs', 'Sadness', 'Rituals' and 'Tune Collection'. Guo included musical elements in the *Meige* epic, added staff notations for vocal melodies and improved earlier editions. For example, Guo's performance contexts (children's *Meige* nursery rhymes with simple lyrics) were missing from the 1958 edition. *Meige* love songs by unmarried youths emphasised personal emotions, contrasting with the grand narratives of the 1958 epics. Guo's series significantly challenged the older literary-oriented version, expanding content and performance contexts and showcasing the role of Yi cultural elites in compiling and editing material books.

The contrast between the two representative *Meige* publications from 1958 and Guo's 2018 illustrates a transition from traditional top-down documentation methods to a more participatory and self-reflective approach to cultural revival. In this shift, Yi communities have taken on greater responsibility for crafting, recording and sharing their narratives of *Meige*. The earlier wave of *Meige* canonisation was driven by government-led preservation efforts

through policy development, funding and legal guarantees. The 1958 publication reflects a top-down approach to preservation by a local think tank that responded to policy directives and conducted grassroots fieldwork, including data collection, documentation, Yi-Chinese translation, compilation and publication of the book *Meige*. Local communities were often positioned as passive participants and mainly served as interviewees in ethnographic inquiry rather than as independent agents. Their participation was limited to compliance or symbolic collaboration in a top-down knowledge production process in which their voices were often mediated for institutional recognition and publication. While historically valuable, it did not support *Meige*'s transmission in native languages or diverse contexts. This initiative prompted Yi elites to enhance *Meige*'s content and independently collect and organise materials into new volumes. Initially state-driven, the focus shifted to independent intellectual initiatives from the late 1980s to the 2010s.

More recently, collaborations between ethnic elites and scholars, particularly experts in literature and music, have facilitated fresh explorations of *Meige* themes and materials. The 2018 version emphasises musicality, treating *Meige* as a performable tune with adaptations for various ages and contexts, prompting further analysis of *Meige* in its performance settings. This shift from literary documentation to musical recording also marked a transition in power dynamics, with collaborative leadership involving the government, Yi elites and scholars in canonisation. Another case is the government-academic initiative 'Intangible Cultural Heritage into Campus' (*feiyi jin xiaoyuan*), which has included organising heritage workshops, cultivating student interest in traditional arts and identifying and mentoring emerging cultural practitioners. These institutions have additionally welcomed ethnic minority artists for advanced studies, providing them with technical skills in performance and heritage transmission, enhanced cultural literacy and knowledge of national heritage laws and policies. Institutions like the China Conservatory of Music and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music have conducted extensive ethnomusicological research on *Meige* through fieldwork in Mayou Village, gathering *Meige* narratives and musical expressions as part of student investigation projects. These field investigations are often framed within broader research themes, such as the literary and musical value of *Meige* or *Meige* as a 'rare and endangered art form' (*lengmen juexue*).

The Stage Performance of *Meige*

Meige's cultural bearers are mainly Yi villagers who practise music for self-entertainment. Its transmission is limited to family units, passed down orally during festivals, with elderly Yi sharing it with younger members. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), *Meige* faced devastating setbacks; few were willing to sing it openly, and performances were restricted to private settings like family celebrations. Even after the Cultural Revolution, *Meige* faced stereotypes and practitioners' resistance to performing or singing it (Yin 2021). This period saw *Meige's* presence in public life severely diminish, with performers and audiences (particularly younger generations) hesitant to engage with it due to its perceived association with outdated values. Meanwhile, older, experienced performers were reluctant to present it publicly due to repression and the promotion of stereotypes of cultural backwardness that *Meige* faced during that period. As a result, the stage performance of *Meige* encountered significant challenges transitioning from private to public spaces during its early revival.

This tenuous shift from private to public implies the important role of the government in China in promoting ethnic minority performances, positioning them as engines for local tourism and economic growth. Since *Meige* was designated as a national ICH item in 2008, both central and local governments rebranded *Meige* as a cultural symbol for regional tourism in Yao'an County, launching cultural initiatives with *Meige* performances at festivals and tourism events. These developments illustrate how national and local governments have collaborated to integrate *Meige* into heritage discourse and economic development frameworks.

By institutionalising these performances, the state not only incorporates minority cultures into a framework of heritage display but also reinforces a more superficial and fast-consumed mode of cultural experience through social media and tourism-oriented spectacles. While such practices contribute to regional economic development, they risk reducing minority performances to mere adjuncts of the tourism industry, leaving insufficient space for deeper reflection on their cultural meanings and the performers' own agency.

Recent scholarship on minority performance in China has increasingly shifted from celebratory narratives of cultural preservation to more critical examinations of the political and

economic contexts that shape such performances. Scholars such as Mackerras (2011) and Rees (2016) argue that the state's cultural policies frame minority performances as vehicles for national unity and tourism, transforming ritual traditions into staged spectacles that align with official narratives of ethnic harmony. This state mediation often results in what Gladney (1994) terms the 'aestheticization of ethnicity', where minority culture becomes a visualised and consumable sign of difference under the logic of the market and the nation-state. Building on this, Oakes (1998) and Tuohy (2001) note that the recontextualisation of ethnic ritual into public performance inevitably alters its social meaning, shifting it from a communal act of belief into a commodified form of entertainment. This process, while creating economic opportunities for local performers, also reproduces unequal power relations between minority actors and Han-majority cultural institutions. The tension between authenticity and commercialisation has therefore become a central issue in the study of Chinese minority performance. As Schein (2000) point out, while performances often claim to preserve tradition, they simultaneously enact a 'touristic gaze' that prioritises spectacle over spiritual or communal significance.

Moreover, in the context of globalisation, scholars such as Wilcox (2019) have emphasised that minority performances now operate in transnational circuits of representation, where cultural heritage is reimagined as both local identity and global commodity. This perspective complicates the dichotomy between preservation and commodification, suggesting that performance spaces are also sites of negotiation, where local performers actively reinterpret state and market expectations. In this light, discussions of the *Meige* performance should critically interrogate the broader structural forces – political, economic and cultural – that shape its transformation to staged heritage.

This context allows *Meige* to evolve for broader public spaces. Simultaneously, Yi elite performers innovatively transmit and develop their cultural traditions, transforming *Meige* into a contemporary, stage-ready art form. A variety of contributors, including composers, musicians and filmmakers, have discovered and adapted *Meige*'s original content, integrating various artistic expressions into its performance. *Meige* has become an audio-visual combination of movement, singing, dancing, makeup and costumes in a cohesive presentation.

One prominent figure in this transformation among the Yi elites was Guo Xiaowei, one of the few university graduates from Mayou Village. After earning his graduate education in music production in Kunming, he returned to his hometown and has dedicated himself to the cultural preservation of *Meige*. Drawing on his professional training, he independently edited and adapted many *Meige* pieces to make them more suitable for stage performance, including love songs arranged as male-female vocal duets and children's songs with joyful melodies and memorable lyrics.

Guo drew from *Meige*'s textual content while adapting it for modern audiences. The themes selected for these performances often include widely appealing subjects that suit stage performance. This adaptation process leverages visual and auditory elements and is largely supported by cultural activists and elite Yi scholars like Guo, who contribute their expertise in music and literature to shape these performances. Guo has actively engaged in the professional dissemination of the tradition, and additionally established an NGO, *Meige* Studio, to pass the torch of *Meige* culture to the next generation and as a self-financing initiative, gathering Yi adults and children from Mayou Village to voluntarily film *Meige*-based music videos. Guo established a *Meige* children's class (Figure 3) to educate Yi children, capturing their songs in music-based videos. Thanks to self-funded preparations, which included Yi village volunteers working with performances, costumes, props, equipment, audio recording and rehearsal processes, Guo and the local community effectively converted the written records of *Meige* into a staged and visual format.



Figure 3. Meige children’s class. *Source:* Screenshots from MTV’s ‘Meige Love Song’ (Produced by Meige Studio in 2023). This video interweaves scenes of villagers singing *Meige* tunes. All actors in the MTV were Yi residents of Mayou Village. They filmed daily life settings and performed on-stage. These rehearsal scenes have become fixed preludes to their public performances.

As *Meige* transitioned to stage performances, it has become an audio-visual spectacle integrated into local tourism and cultural exhibitions. This allows *Meige* to serve as a commercial cultural product for sightseeing and marketing ethnic diversity. Industrialisation brought professional recording and filming teams – including videographers, photographers and field interviewers – to rural areas for cultural inspiration, creating works with strong regional characteristics. These teams produce high-quality visual content, often transforming *Meige* performances into narrative-driven formats such as music videos closely tied to lyrical content and storytelling structures. Many performers underwent stage training for cultural tourism and media production. The local cultural industry curated their dance and music for tourism documentaries, promotional videos and cultural showcases, reflecting guided participation rather than autonomous self-expression. Yuansheng Fang, an audio-visual company in Yunnan, hired professional teams to record indigenous music and dance, creating music videos (MTVs). These were

shared on domestic video and social media platforms to promote local tourism and showcase the cultural richness of Yunnan’s ethnic groups.



Figure 4. Screenshot of Yuansheng Fang’s official page/public account on WeChat. Source: Photograph taken by author in 2025.

With the support of cultural elites and market-driven forces, Meige has reached wider exposure. China Central Television (CCTV), for example, launched the ‘China in the Intangible Cultural Heritage’ programme to explore ICHs across Chinese provinces. In 2023 and 2024, the programme introduced *Meige* songs from a group of Yi children and *Meige* inheritors from Mayou Village. It showcased a cross-genre fusion of the *Meige* nursery rhyme ‘Carving a Wooden Trough’ (*wa mu la*) with symphonic music, combining *Meige* inheritors of old, middle and young age on the same stage (see Figure 5). These ‘living fossils’ of older *Meige* inheritors interacted with guests on-site, showcasing the depth of *Meige* culture by performing a selection from the *Meige* epic, ‘The God

Gezi Creates the Sky and the Earth' (*Gezi tianshen zao tiandi*). Dressed in traditional Yi costumes, they performed a traditional left-foot dance accompanied by a gourd flute, blending traditional music with dance and revealing Yi culture's unique charm. These stage performances helped bring *Meige* into the national spotlight.



Figure 5. *Meige* performance titled 'The Voice of Harmony', aired on CCTV-1 during Chinese New Year 2024. Source: CCTV official YouTube channel. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6zvZAR7CaM>. (accessed on 24 February 2026).

The journey of *Meige* from grassroots to national platforms has been consistently infused with new meanings by the representations of national cultural authorities, evolving it into a cultural product with aesthetic appeal for promoting local tourism and ICH nationally. *Meige* has become a central feature in introducing the Yi people's traditional Yunnan customs and culture. Its integration of song and dance performances gives it considerable exposure to national programmes. This progression highlights its dual role as a commercial entity with aesthetic appeal and a tool for promoting national culture and tourism. Simultaneously, its cultural essence has been adapted to a commercial environment, with enhanced real-time and immediacy of expressions through dance, audiovisual elements, photography and music, adding new layers of appeal to the original

texts. While the shift toward commercialisation and media-enabled stage performances has indeed expanded the visibility and popularisation of minority cultures, it has also compromised their authenticity.

When viewed as a boundary object, *Meige*'s transition from an orally transmitted tradition to a stage performance marks a shift beyond its original form, reaching a broader audience. This transformation enables diverse stakeholders to introduce new elements and emphasise various aspects, making *Meige* more accessible and engaging. Through collaborative efforts, grassroots cultural practitioners can now bring *Meige* to larger stages, fostering broader cultural appreciation. However, this gradual process requires time, stage experience and proactive grassroots promotion to secure performance opportunities.

Yi community elites, like Guo, have played a pivotal role in staging *Meige* by leveraging musical expertise and organisational skills to produce programmes and rehearse performances. Additionally, local industries and national television exposure underscore the involvement of Yi elites in *Meige*'s transition from a written form to stage and screen. This shift transforms *Meige* into a blend of entertainment, traditional ritual and communication, serving as a 'mode of aesthetic being' (Gadamer 1975, cited in Chinyowa 2011). Through this evolution, *Meige* preserves the vitality of oral literature by making it tangible and visually engaging. Still, commercialisation has also produced adverse effects. Sacred occasions and authentic expressions have been reshaped by market-driven practices, and in promoting *Meige* to broader audiences, its transmission has drifted from indigenous meanings. Consequently, increasing commercialisation risks losing the ritual depth and cultural integrity of *Meige* performances, as over-commercialisation driven by market demands may further distort the tradition's authenticity and indigenous character through the simplification or dramatisation of cultural content. To mitigate such challenges, producers and creative teams must develop a nuanced understanding of *Meige*'s cultural depth and strive to preserve its core aesthetic and ethnographic integrity. At the same time, however, they also have to consider contemporary audiences' expectations by employing accessible narrative structures and appealing visual styles. Striking a balance between cultural authenticity and communicative effectiveness remains a key challenge in the commercial mediation of *Meige*, highlighting the complex interplay between heritage preservation and market dynamics.

Digital Dissemination of the *Meige* Performance on Social Media

The third phase of the dissemination of *Meige* is primarily characterised by the rise of social media in China since the 2010s. The development of 5G and the widespread use of digital mobile devices have significantly influenced grassroots communities in China. By June 2023, the number of internet users in China reached 1.079 billion, including a short video user base of 94.8 percent (CNNIC 2023). These internet-enabled media platforms also extend to the rural and peripheral regions of Yunnan Province. According to Xinhua Net (2023) citing the *2023 Internet Development Report of Yunnan Province*, the internet penetration rate in Yunnan Province has reached 68.8 percent in 2022 (see also CNNIC 2023), with short videos being the most popular, with an average annual penetration rate of 94.4 percent (2023: 84–85).

These trends were corroborated by fieldwork conducted in 2024. In Mayou, WeChat is the predominant social media platform for instant messaging, and most Yi villagers employ the short video-sharing apps Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou (Kwai) to watch video clips and upload self-made videos recording their cultural traditions (author's fieldwork in 2024, Yunnan). The data and field observations demonstrate how digital methods have broadened grassroots villagers' access to information and engagement in self-initiated online interactions within and beyond the Yi community, thus providing innovative methods to disseminate *Meige* digitally.

Meige's digitisation relies heavily on both industrial development and strong government support. The *Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China* (implemented in 2011) clarifies the legal status of intangible cultural heritage and delineates the division of responsibilities for its protection. Since its enactment, the industrial sector plays a critical role in providing the necessary technological infrastructure, while government initiatives and promotional efforts at all administrative levels (national, provincial, municipal and county) ensure that *Meige's* digital transformation aligns with broader cultural preservation goals, forming a vertical policy-implementation network for the identification and management of ICH items.

This combined effort is essential to effectively preserve, promote and adapt *Meige* for contemporary audiences in the digital age. Many social media platforms, especially short-video platforms, have initiated activities to promote tourism by introducing cultural

and local specialities of ethnic minorities in rural and peripheral regions. A pertinent example, as shown in Figure 6, is a tourism initiative called ‘Chuxiong Yao’an Second Rural Village Gala and Meige Cultural Festival’. The project aims to digitally empower cultural tourism development and improve ‘rural cultural tourism’ through digital social media. Amateur videos feature costumes and dances on stage, accompanied by an introduction to the origins of female and male hosts wearing traditional dresses. The hosts call the performance a ‘cultural banquet’ (*wenhua shengyan*), dancing and singing performances by Yi people showcasing their traditional culture widely. The industry’s facilitation of these livestream technologies enables the digital promotion of traditional culture.



Figure 6. Meige Studio serves as a destination for fieldwork training for anthropology and ethnology students from domestic and international universities. *Source:* Screenshots from a personal tourist account “Guanglu Chuhan”, 光禄楚晗, taken by author in 2026. Note: Chinese text translation: Beautiful Village, People’s Stage – The 4th Yao’an County Rural Village Gala (2025) Successfully Held in Mayou Village #Rural Village Gala #Rural Revitalization #Experience Life in Yunnan.

The third phase of *Meige* dissemination needs media and technology that support Yi villagers in curating their culture independently from the government. This *Meige* digitalisation, driven by technological innovations, enables Yi villagers to contribute to the sustainability and sharing of their endangered heritage. They can actively record, upload and share traditions on their own terms. Social media has equalised user participation in video dissemination. Digitalisation clarified stakeholders' roles, illustrating the collaborative efforts of all participants. The government offered top-down policy support, while cultural elites and villagers aided in dissemination. University scholars applied their technical expertise to help ethnic elites and villagers through advanced means.

Digitalisation balances the power dynamics between stakeholders, placing them in a state of equilibrium while granting the Yi community greater autonomy and choice. For instance, villagers could use social media platforms to disseminate their daily *Meige* practices widely and indiscriminately, breaking the monopoly previously held by the elites and providing everyone with the means to express and promote their culture. Additionally, university scholars played a prominent leadership role by employing a professional and academic approach to promote culture in ways that grassroots cultural elites cannot; for example, scholars from University College Cork and Minzu University of Yunnan utilised their specialised knowledge for multilingual translation and have created bilingual and trilingual materials, including English-*Meige* teaching resources and Chinese-Yi-English subtitled audiovisual archives, broadening *Meige's* reach beyond the local context. Collaboration among industry, the Yi community and scholars has led to lyric-based folklore MTVs focused on narrative lyrics that depict the vernacular life of the Yi people, encompassing daily farming and production, entertainment, religion and more. The videos are provided with multilingual subtitles for international promotion on platforms.² Further, digitalisation implicitly strengthens the audience's role. Unlike the former two phases, in which audience engagement is limited and incidental (e.g., buying a book or attending a stage performance to experience culture), digitalisation facilitates immediate and widespread cultural exchange between practitioners and the audience.

Conclusion

This study treats *Meige* as a boundary object and provides an analysis based on first-hand data on the sustainability of *Meige* in the minority-populated province of Yunnan, southwest China. Recent progress in applied ethnomusicology and intangible cultural heritage emphasises the critical role of connectivity in preserving cultural heritage (Barney 2014; Pettan and Titon 2015; Schippers 2015, 2018). Empirical research has shown that collaborative partnerships between tradition-bearers and external supporters like government, industry, and university scholars, can empower communities to sustain their indigenous cultural heritage (Titon 2009: 134, 2019).

The research here finds that the collaborative efforts and partnerships not only lie in the interaction between the government and Yi community but can also include industry and academia. University scholars engage in safeguarding *Meige* through professional, rigorous and informed methods that surpass grassroots efforts. Their expertise in multilingual translation, cultural documentation and pedagogical development preserves *Meige* in systematic and globally accessible formats. For international dissemination, scholars use digital multilingual translation to help the Yi community convert *Meige* content into multilingual publications and videos. For domestic preservation, initiatives such as *Intangible Cultural Heritage into Campus* demonstrate how state-academic collaboration has institutionalised the transmission of *Meige* by integrating heritage education, the training of ethnic minority practitioners, and ethnomusicological fieldwork. Apart from academia, commercial organisations now influence ICH transmission and promotion through market-oriented models. These strategies revive traditional practices, enhance cultural competitiveness and meet market needs often overlooked by government or academia. Thus, they transform cultural value into economic worth, boosting the social and cultural roles of ICH resources.

One limitation of the study is the use of *Meige* as a single case study to analyse China's ICH. Due to the relatively brief scope of fieldwork, moreover, further strategies for protecting forms and understanding the reception of *Meige* may be explored. Future research should also focus on audiences' reception of *Meige* beyond the Yi community, as *Meige* is sung and disseminated in Yi languages, and language and cultural barriers make understanding the content difficult for many people. These efforts have already prompted technological advancements, such as AI-based automatic speech recognition to

facilitate understanding *Meige* content. This represents a promising direction for future research and might become a valuable model for cultural dissemination among minority groups worldwide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities; the Research Enhancement Program for Newly Recruited Young Faculty of Minzu University of China (Grant No. 2025XJJS008).

Dr Jin Dai is an Assistant Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication, Minzu University of China. Jin's research interests and practice fall within the areas of the mediation of cultural memory, heritage studies, and the intersection between ethnic (cultural) identity and media practices (e.g. photographs, popular music) in everyday life. She has published journal articles in Media, Culture & Society, and Memory Studies. Institution: Department of Journalism and Communication, Minzu University of China, Beijing. Email: JDai_dr@outlook.com ORCID:0000-0002-7560-3047

NOTES

- 1 Bimo, meaning 'master of scriptures', officiates at births, funerals, weddings, and Yi holidays.
- 2 For the international promotion of *Meige* and ethnic minority musical culture, see the ECura Horizon Europe YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@ECura_Horizon_Europe

REFERENCES

- Bamo, Qubumo, Chao, Gejin, & John D. Niles. 2016. 'Documenting Living Oral Traditions: China's. Institute of Ethnic Literature as Case Study'. *Journal of American Folklore* 129 (513): 270–287. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.129.513.0270>.
- Bamo, Qubumo, Guo, Cuixiao, Yin, Hubin and Gang Li. 2013. 'Customizing Discipline-Based Metadata Standards for Digital Preservation of Living Epic Traditions in China: Basic Principles and Challenges'. *2013 Digital Heritage International Congress (Digital Heritage)*: 145–151. <https://doi.org/10.1109/DigitalHeritage.2013.6744746>.
- Barney, Katelyn. ed. 2014. *Collaborative Ethnomusicology: New Approaches to Music Research between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians*. Lyrebird Press.
- Bender, Mark. 2002. 'Zenme Kan "Meige": "Yi Chuantong Wei Quxiang" de Chuxiong Yizu Wenxue Wenben' [What to Do about Meige: 'Tradition-Oriented' View of Chuxiong Yi Nationality Texts]. *Minsu Yanjiu [Folklore Studies]* 4: 34–41.
- — —. 2016. 'Landscapes and Life-forms in Cosmographic Epics from Southwest China'. Reprinted in *Chinese Literature Today* 5 (2): 88–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21514399.2016.11834105>.
- — —. 2019. 'Co-Creations, Master Texts, and Monuments: Long Narrative Poems of Ethnic Minority Groups in China'. *CHINOPERL* 38 (2): 65–90. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cop.2019.0000>.
- — —. 2023. 'Yi Literature: Traditional and Contemporary'. In *A World History of Chinese Literature*, 123–132, Routledge.
- Berliner, David. 2012. 'Multiple Nostalgias: The Fabric of Heritage in Luang Prabang (Lao PDR)'. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (4): 769–786. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2012.01791.x>.
- Chen, Yongxiang. 2010. 'Yizu Shishi Meige de Chuancheng Yanjiu' [A Study on the Transmission Methods of the Yi Epic Meige]. *Qinghai Shehui Kexue [Qinghai Social Sciences]* (1): 121–124.
- — —. 2022. 'Integration and Identification of the Yi and Han Cultures - Centering around the Myths about Origin of House in Chapter "Elegy to the Deceased Elderly" in the Yi Epic *Elegy to Meige*'. *Journal of Chuxiong Normal University*, 37(2): 43-50. <http://cxtc.magtechjournal.com/EN/Y2022/V37/I2/43>.

- China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC). 2023. *The 52nd Statistical Report on China's Internet Development*. Beijing: China Internet Network Information Centre.
- Chinyowa, Kennedy C. 2011. 'From Oral Literature to Performance Analysis: Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm Shift'. *Contemporary Theatre Review* 21 (1): 60–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2011.536028>.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1975. *Truth and Method*. Seabury Press.
- Gao, Chunxian and Karin Khomrich. 2023. 'Literacy Transmission Guideline for Preserving "Xin Tian You" Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi, China'. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 11 (4): 159–165. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.11n.4p.159>.
- Gladney, Dru C. 1994. 'Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities'. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1): 92–123. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2059528>.
- Guo, Sijiu. 1982. 'Shishi "Meige" yu Yizu Minsu"' [The Epic "Meige" and Yi Ethnic Folklore]. *Yunnan Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Zhhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)* [Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)] 1982 (2): 63–69.
- Guo, Xiaowei and Zhaosheng Zhuang. 2021. *Yi Ethnic Epic* (Chinese–Yi–International Phonetic Alphabet ed.). Yunnan Minzu Publishing House.
- — —. 2022. *Simplified Edition of Yi Meige Epics* [Yizu Meige Shishi Jingjianban]. Yunnan Ethnic Publishing House.
- Hassid, Jonathan. 2008. 'Controlling the Chinese Media: An Uncertain Business'. *Asian Survey* 48 (3): 414–430. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.414>.
- Hu, Liyun. 2005. 'Shishi de Wenben Fenxi—Yi Yizu Shishi "Meige" wei Shidian' [Text Analysis of Epics: From the Perspective of the Yi Ethnic Epic "Meige"]. *Minzu Wenxue Yanjiu* [Ethnic Literature Studies] 2: 76–82.
- Hu, Liyun and Zixian Li. 2005. 'The Relationship Between the Survival of Primitive Epics and the Cultural Ecosystem: A Case Study of the Yi Epic Meige'. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies* (6): 122–127.
- Huang, Chi-Ping. 2014. 'Chuangshi Shishi "Meige" de Jiayi: Chuxiong Yizu Geyao de Chuantong yu Zaixian' [The Memory of the Creation Epic "Meige": Tradition and Representation of Chuxiong Yi Folk Songs]. *Minsu Quyi* [Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore] 185: 115–166.

- Huvila, Isto. 2011. 'The Politics of Boundary Objects: Hegemonic Practices in Information Sharing'. *ASIS&T Proceedings* 48 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21639>.
- Irani, Lily, Vertesi, Janet, Dourish, Paul, Philip, Kavita and Rebecca E. Grinter 2010. 'Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development'. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '10)*: 1311-1320. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1753326.1753522>.
- Jacobs, Marc Zeijden, Albert Van Der and Jorjin Neyrinck. 2014. 'UNESCO, Brokers and Critical Success (F) Actors in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage'. *Volkskunde* 115: 249-257. <https://researchportal.vub.be/en/publications/unesco-brokers-and-critical-success-factors-in-safeguarding-intan/> (Accessed on 12 May 2024).
- Jiang, Min, and King-Wa Fu. 2018. 'Chinese Social Media and Big Data: Big Data, Big Brother, Big Profit?'. *Policy & Internet* 10: 372-392. <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.187>.
- Jiang, Rongwen. 1993. *Qingling Meige [Dragonfly Meige]*. 1st ed. Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- Kimble, Chris, Grenier, Corinne, and Karine Goglio-Primard. 2010. 'Innovation and Knowledge. Sharing Across Professional Boundaries: Political Dynamics of Boundary Objects'. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* 8 (4): 307-318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.02.002>.
- Kuang, Jia and Lan He. 2022. 'From Oblivion to Reappearance: A Multi-faceted Evaluation of the Sustainability of Folk Music in Yunnan Province of China'. *Sage Open* 12 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221117806>.
- Kwon, Tae-hyo. 2010. 'Aspects and Features on the Creation Epics of Yizu (Yi ethnic) in China'. *Journal of Southern Regional Folklore Studies*, 20: 29-58. <http://doi.org/10.23134/nf.2010.20.002>.
- Li, Shiwu. 2019. 'Cong Difang Zhishi dao Shishi Xueshuyu: Yizu Shishi Meige de Neihan he Waiyan' [From Local Knowledge to Epic Terminology: The Connotation and Extension of the Yi Epic Meige]. *Minzu Yishu [Ethnic Art Studies]* (1): 53-66.
- Li, Yixiu. 2011. *A Study on the Living Epic of the Yi People in Chuxiong* (Master's thesis, Minzu University of China). CNKI.
- Li, Yunfeng, Li, Zixian and Fuwang Yang. 2007. *Meige de wenhuaxue jiedu [Cultural interpretation of Meige]*. Yunnan University Press.

- Maags, Christina. 2021. 'Cultural Heritage Politics in China'. In *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Studies*. Routledge pp.177-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2022.2077538>.
- Mackerras, Colin. 2011. *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalization*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789814299305_0013.
- McLaren, Anne. E. 2010. 'Revitalisation of the Folk Epics of the Lower Yangzi Delta: An Example of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage'. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 5 (1): 29-43. <https://www.ijih.org/volumes/article/56>.
- Oakes, Tim. 1998. *Tourism and Modernity in China*. Routledge.
- Oakes, Tim and Louisa Schein (eds). 2006. *Translocal China: Linkages, Identities, and the Reimagining of Space*. Routledge.
- Pettan, Svanibor and Jeff T. Titon (eds). 2015. *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*. Oxford University Press.
- Philip, Kavita, Irani, Lily and Paul Dourish. 2012. 'Postcolonial Computing: A Tactical Survey'. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 37 (1): 3-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41511154>.
- Qian, Lijuan, 2017. 'Which Identity Matters? Competing Ethnicity in Chinese TV Music Contests'. *The World of Music (New Series)* 6 (2): 57-82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44841946>.
- Qiu, Liang, Chuangprakhon, Sayam and Shuying Jian 2023. 'Qualitative Analysis of the Transmission and Preservation Strategies for Qin'an Xiaoqu Folk Music in Gansu, China'. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 6 (4). <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2024048>.
- Rees, Helen. 2016. *Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China*. Oxford University Press.
- Schein, Louisa. 2000. *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Duke University Press.
- Schippers, Huib. 2015. 'Applied Ethnomusicology and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Understanding "Ecosystems of Music" as a Tool for Sustainability'. In Svsnibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*, pp. 134-56. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199351701.013.7>.
- — —. 2018. 'Community Music Contexts, Dynamics, and Sustainability'. In Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Lee Higgins (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, edited by Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Lee Higgins. Oxford University Press, pp. 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190219505.013.29>.

- Shao, Ping. 2014. *Zaishuo Meige* [Revisiting Meige]. Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House.
- Star, Susan and James J. R. Griesemer. 1989. 'Institutional Ecology, "Translations" and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39'. *Social Studies of Science* 19 (3): 387-420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030631289019003001>.
- Su, Faji. 2022. "Meige' de hunli yishi yinyue jiangou: yi Yunnan yaoa xian mayouping diqu weili" [The Construction of Wedding Ritual Music in Meige: A Case Study of Mayouping Area in Yao'an County, Yunnan Province]. *Dangdai yinyue* [Modern Music] 2: 88-91.
- Titon, Jeff T. 2009. 'Music and Sustainability: An Ecological Viewpoint'. *The World of Music* 51 (1): 119-137. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41699866>.
- Tuohy, Sue. (2001). 'The Sonic Dimensions of Nationalism in Modern China: Musical Representation and Transformation'. *Ethnomusicology*, 45(1), 107-131. <https://doi.org/10.2307/852636>.
- Tso, Bendi. 2019. 'Opportunities and Challenges in Preserving and Revitalising the Tibetan Oral Literature Shepa in Chone'. *Book 2.0*, 9 (1-2): 7-18. https://doi.org/10.1386/btwo_00002_1.
- Wang, Yixiang. 2007. 'Lun Yizu Shishi "Meige" de Shehui Gongneng' [On the Social Function of the Yi Ethnic Epic 'Meige']. *Yunnan Minzu Daxue Xuebao (Zhaxue Shehui Kexue Ban)* [Journal of Yunnan University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)] 6: 43-48.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2019. *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy*. University of California Press.
- Winter, Tim. 2013. 'Clarifying the Critical in Critical Heritage Studies'. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19 (6): 532-545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2012.720997>.
- Wong, Isabel K. F. 2009. 'The Heritage of Kunqu: Preserving Music and Theater Traditions in China'. In H. Silverman and D. Ruggles (eds.) *Intangible Heritage Embodied*. Springer, pp. 15-35. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0072-2_2.
- Xinhua Net, 2023. *Release of the Yunnan Internet Development Report (2023)*. 15 September. <http://www.yn.xinhuanet.com/20230915/c71da235262a4c4da581de64f3572953/c.html> (Accessed on 12 December 2023).
- Yang, Lulei and Jarenchai Chonpairot. 2024. 'Preservation and Promotion of Literacy through Performing Arts Education of

- Chuanjiang Haozi in Chongqing Province, China'. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 12 (1): 155-161. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.1p.155>.
- Yin, Jian. 2021. 'Meige de "Dianjihua" Ji Qi Xiangguan Wenti Yanjiu' [Research on Meige's Canonization and Related Issues]. Master's thesis, Shanghai Conservatory of Music.
- Yunnan Province Chuxiong Folk Literature Investigation Team. 1958. *Meige:Yizu Shishi* [*Meige:Yi Ethnic Epic*]. Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- — —. 1959a. *Meige:Yizu Shishi* [*Meige:Yi Ethnic Epic*]. Chinese-English scripts translated by Chen Ping. 2018. Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- — —. 1959b. *Meige:Yizu Shishi* [*Meige:Yi Ethnic Epic*]. Chinese-English scripts translated by Deng, Zhiyu and Zhang Liyu. 2021. Wuhan University Press.
- — —. 1960. *Meige* [*Meige*]. People's Literature Publishing House.
- — —. 1978. *Meige* [*Meige*]. Yunnan People's Publishing House.