

# Narrative Strategy of Ethnic Minority Films in Guizhou After 2000

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## Abstract

The year 2000 was an important period for the vigorous development of minority films, and some new changes have taken place in the creation of minority films. Before 2000, the main task of filmmakers was to interpret the changes that had taken place in New China. The overall politicization and revolutionary style are serious. In their own films, the filmmakers of different times, either with the interpretation of political ideas as the starting point or with the dissemination of national culture as the core, use different narrative skills to gradually form a personal style with a national aesthetic form. This paper, based on observation, director interviews, and the study of related documents and research, mainly uses the theory of narrative strategy to analyze and discuss the ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000. Focus on analyzing the narrative expression of ethnic minority films in Guizhou in this period and summarizing the narrative characteristics of ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000. The study found that folklore narration and modern reflection are important narrative strategies.

**Keywords :** Narrative strategy, Ethnic minorities, Film, Guizhou

## Introduction

### Background and Importance

Ethnic minority films in Guizhou is a very important part of the Chinese film. In the decades of development history, with its colorful national color enriched the history of

Chinese film. As a special part, ethnic minority films in Guizhou quietly contributes to the development of Chinese films.

After 2000, with the continuous advancement of the process of social modernization, the environment of film development has undergone great changes. The reform of the film system enables the private capital to enter the film industry. Ethnic minority films in Guizhou was affected by the institutional changes. Under the influence of the commercial films and mainstream cinema films, ethnic minority films in Guizhou, have to survive, and how to develop has become a hot topic in the industry.

After 2000, Guizhou province has issued a number of policies to promote the development of ethnic minority films, attracting many directors to shoot their works. Such as Detailed Rules for The Implementation of The Reform of Film Distribution Screening Mechanism, Film

Industry Promotion Act, Guizhou National Film Industry Development Special Funds Management Method, Guizhou Province on Further Strengthening The Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Work of The Implementation Opinions, Qiannan Ten Measures to Promote the Development of Film and Television Culture Industry, The "14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan" Chinese film Development Plan, etc.

Under this context, the research of ethnic minority films in Guizhou has attracted more and more attention, and most scholars tend to study aesthetics, and cultural communication. In this paper, by using relevant knowledge such as narrative theory, folklore, to study narrative strategy of ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000.

### 1. Chinese films

Chinese films are a general term for films released in Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Chen, J.H., 1963). According to Li Shaobai's book *The History of Chinese Film*, the development of Chinese film has experienced, the period of trial, exploration period, commercial competition period, change period, emergency period, harvest period, the period of new Chinese film creation period, imprisonment period, re-exploration period, marketization period, Hong Kong film, and

Taiwan film. On August 11, 1896, another village in Xueyuan District, Shanghai showed the "Western Cinema", which was the first film screening in China, and opened the prelude to the development of Chinese film. Chinese film was born in 1905. Ren Qingtai, founder of Beijing Fengtai Photo Studio, shot the footage of Dingjunshan starring famous Peking Opera actor Tan Xinpei. This is the first film produced by Chinese people, marking the birth of Chinese film. Ren Qingtai is therefore known as

the "*father of Chinese film*" (Chen, X.H. & Liu, Y.Q., 2008). The history of Chinese films has been more than 100 years since Dingjunshan was shot in 1905. Putting the centenary of Chinese film history in the social background on which its development depends, we can see that the history of Chinese film is in the historical development stage of China from the

## 2. Characteristics of Chinese films

**Carry forward the main melody.** We should adhere to and develop the realistic path of revolution, resolutely implement the double hundred policy, cover a wide range of subjects, and reflect various contradictions in daily life with a certain depth and breadth. Such as Shanzhai fire, Caravans with ring, Five Golden Flowers, Black Horse, Ma Hong Jun and other films.

**Respect for the historical facts.** Respect the objective laws of art, create a variety of real and vivid screen images, shaping a variety of different typical characters. For example, Liao Zhongkai depict the revolutionary leaders from multiple angles, and

late modern to modern to contemporary. This 100 years is a rare era of great social changes in Chinese history, full of contradictions, and conflicts between the economic, political, military, and cultural countries at home and abroad, which plays an important role in the development of Chinese films.

show the historical figures according to the true colors of history.

**A variety of themes.** Due to the expansion of the subject matter field, artists can freely give full play to their own talents and specialties, explore their own most suitable style, style, and express the most perfect content. Especially noteworthy, a group of young and middle-aged directors have shot a number of exploratory films with certain experimental significance, such as Yellow Earth, Red Sorghum, and so on. At the same time of film creation, the study of film theory is unprecedentedly active and has influence on a considerable number of creative personnel.

## 3. Chinese ethnic minority films

### 3.1 The Chinese ethnic minorities

China has 56 ethnic groups, including Han and 55 ethnic minorities: Han, Mongol, Hui, Wang, Uyghur, Miao, Zhuang, Buyei,

Chosen, Man, Dong, Yao, Bai, Tujia, Hani, Kazak, Dai, Li, Lisu, Va, She, Gaoshan, Lahu, Sui, Dongxiang, Naxi, Jingpo, Kirgiz, Tu, Daur, Mulao, Qiang, Blang, Salar, Maonan, Gelao, Xibe,

Achang, Pumi, Tajik, Nu, Uzbek, Russ, Ewenki, Deang, Bonan, Yugur, Gin, Tatar, Derun g, Oroqen, Hezhen, Monba, Lhoba, and Jino.

Zhang, C.Y. (2015) pointed out in his book *A Brief History of Guizhou* : Guizhou province, located in the southwest of China, is a mild climate, rich and beautiful and rich place, with an area of about 170,000 square kilometers, accounting for 1.82% of China's total area. Guizhou has been a multi-ethnic-inhabited area since ancient times. In the long struggle, the Han, Miao, Yi, Bu, Dong, and Shui ethnic groups, In the long-term life and production, they learn from each other, support each other, get along with each other, and establish a deep friendship.

### 3.2 Chinese ethnic minority films

The development status of ethnic minority films in China. Some achievements have been made in the development of ethnic minority films, but they also face many problems. The two obvious aspects are: insufficient market competitiveness and unbalanced regional development.

#### Market competition force is weak.

Ethnic minority films have their particularity, need to express national culture and have a high artistic level. Coexist with big era, the vast majority of minority film creation can only to art film, or want to go business route, but in the end due to financial reasons

and art. (Rao, S.G., 2011) Nearly a decade of minority films although made a breakthrough in quantity, but in the commercial film system, the current minority films rarely on cinemas, the audience is less, thus become a niche film.

#### Regional development is not balanced.

The introduction of national policies has stimulated the vitality of private capital. Generally speaking, private film enterprises have developed in the new century, and ethnic minority films have also benefited from it. However, there is the problem of unbalanced regional development, and there are great differences in film production ability and talent reserve between different regions and different ethnic groups. After 2000, it has also achieved some development, such as ethnic minority films in Guizhou, Chou Chou, Ana yi, Dong Song, Bird's Nest and so on. But in the quantity and quality still need to be improved.

#### Characteristics of Chinese ethnic minority films. The number is gradually increasing.

Looking back at the development of Chinese ethnic minority films, there have been both brilliant and dim times. After 2000, under the tide of globalization and commercialization, ethnic minority films have made new breakthroughs in quality and quantity, especially ethnic minority films have reached a new climax. In addition to the

Mongolian, Tibetan, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, and other common ethnic minority films in history, other ethnic minority films have also appeared.

#### **It has distinctive ethnic characteristics.**

The ethnic characteristics of the ethnic minority films are mainly reflected in two aspects, one is the unique natural style, the other is the defamiliarization of social folk

### **4. The Ethnic Minority Films in Guizhou**

#### **4.1 Guizhou ethnic minorities**

According to the Guizhou province people's government network shows: Guizhou province is a multi-ethnic province, a total of 56 ethnic composition, including in the Han, Miao, Buyi, Dong, Tujia, Yi, Kelao, Shui, Hui, Bai, Yao, Zhuang, She, Manzu, Mongolian and other 18 nationalities. According to the fifth national population census, the Han nationality, Miao nationality, Buyi nationality, Dong nationality, Tujia nationality, Yi nationality, Gelao nationality, Shui nationality, Bai nationality, and Hui nationality have a population of more than 100,000.

#### **4.2 Ethnic Minority Films in Guizhou**

Ethnic minority films in Guizhou are an important carrier of the traditional culture, living customs and festivals of Guizhou ethnic minorities, as well as an important symbol of the development of cultural industry in Guizhou. In the history of film development in

customs. Before 2000, it mainly showed ethnic minorities from the perspective of curiosity, and after 2000, ethnic minority films further deepened the expression of ethnic culture.

Guizhou, the earliest film dates back to 1925. " Liu Yuqing, a businessman from Guizhou, sold a silent film Eagle Eyes in the 'Liu Yuanchun bathhouse' set up by the South China Road in Guiyang, which caused a sensation. Then, Bai Jitao, a businessman from Zunyi, and Zhou Xicheng, the commander of the independent division of the 25th Army, rented films from Shanghai and Chongqing respectively and screened them in Zunyi and Chishui. Around 1930, Guiyang, the provincial capital, successively established six cinemas, including star, people, Guizhou, God light, and China. (Huang, J.J., 2012)

Before 1949, Guizhou barely produced its own films. After 1949, it was not until 1960 that the first film themed on ethnic minorities was *Qin Niangmei*, adapted from the original works of famous Dong dramatists Liang Shaohua and Liang Yao. In 1961, the Shanghai Film Studio produced the Miao dance drama

*Man Luo Flower*, directed by Fan Lai and Zhao Huanzhang. Later, with the development of the society and the bumpy stage, the ethnic minority films in Guizhou gradually began to transform themselves and entered a new period of development. From the late 1980s to the beginning of the new century, ethnic minority films in Guizhou entered a reflective period. *"In this stage, social thought changed greatly. First, with the emergence of scar literature and reflection literature, the film industry of ethnic minority in Guizhou entered the stage of reflecting on ethnic minority culture; second, with the reform and opening up, the economic development and the economic structure, the concept of film art changed accordingly"*. (Yuan, Y. & Li, H.Y., 2020) The works during this period are *Shexiang Lady* directed by Chen Xianyu, *Good Women* directed by Huang Jianzhong, and *Shanque* directed by Hua Ke.

In 2000, Zhu Yimin opened the door of the new century with *Raise Your Smile Face*. Since the beginning of the new century, the development of ethnic minority films in Guizhou has entered a conscious period. Due to the rich cultural resources in Guizhou, some directors and screenwriters have been attracted to create films in Guizhou, and for example, the local directors. In more and more creative practices, ethnic minority films

in Guizhou appear open and inclusive. While contributing to the protection, dissemination and development of ethnic culture, they inherit and spread the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities in Guizhou.

**Characteristics of ethnic minority films in Guizhou.** Narrative is a statement of a certain statement. There is a process of telling and a process of things itself (Shen, Y.W., 1998), besides, there must also be a narrator in a complete narrative activity, narrator is not necessarily a screenwriter and a director, It could be a certain character in the film, or a virtual character evolved by the author, Sometimes it's someone's voice-over, sometimes even just subtitle mainly solve the task of how to speak and what to say. The narrator will interact with the audience, and have an impact on both sides, This is also just like the basic grammar of the film narrative, whatever the real content of the picture alone is alone, The content of the narrative is mainly derived from the relationship between them. (Shen, Y.W., 1998)

The film enables the creators to more accurately record and describe life in the narrative, which mainly reflect the director is eager to reflect the real life of the people in ethnic minority areas, attract the outside world to realize the protection, inheritance and development of ethnic minority culture, or

reflect the real problems existing in these places, the lonely elderly and left-behind children in remote ethnic minority areas become the leading role on the screen. Most of the shooting with natural light, field shooting, using non-professional actors, and trying to reflect their authenticity. At the same time, most of the narration of these films is

dull, and it does not follow the development trend of beginning, development, climax, and ending. There are few violent conflicts, showing the free space and free process of life, showing all the embedded meaning of life, which reflects the simple and natural life of the minority people in Guizhou from the side.

## 5. Theory and Concept

Narrative theory : The concept of narratology (narratology) was first put forward by the French literary theorist Zftang Todorov, and the study of narratology in literary works began early. Film narratology focuses on functional and structural issues, so the concepts of presentation and discourse are particularly important. Statement is related to narrative and perspective, and it is the behavioral mechanism that produces discourse.

In this article Person, Plot, Event are several important element of narrative theory.

Folklore : In the book Introduction to Folklore, Zhong Jingwen puts forward that folklore is a subject that studies customs, oral literature, traditional skills, life culture and their thinking mode, so as to clarify the significance of these folk phenomena in time and space.

## Research Objective

1.To study narrative strategy of ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000.

## Results

### Narrative analysis of ethnic minority films after 2000

Contemporary film narrative theory is divided into two kinds: comprehensive narrative and restricted narrative. Ethnic minority films before 2000 were mostly omom the narrative genre. Omniscient narrative often

occurs in the era when the mainstream ideology or cultural types put forward comprehensive requirements for narrative. After 2000, the exploration of film narrative is first reflected in the narrative perspective.

Some filmmakers are trying to expand the story by limiting the narrative without knowing the narrative. The so-called restricted narrative is narrated through the characters in the film, reflecting life through the specific perspective of the characters, and scanning events.

"Person" is the most flexible and important factor in the film narrative. The establishment of the person is the establishment of the narrative subject, and different personal positioning determines different narrative angles, narrative vision and narrative style. (Song, J.L., 2007) Different from the single narrative in The Seventeen Years period, since the beginning of the new century, and ethnic minority films have shown the narrative style with folk customs as the main narrative body. For example, director Ning Jingwu's *Lala's Gun*, Basha Miao's characteristic adult ceremony runs through the beginning and end of the film narrative story, and the folk custom of adult ceremony is the driving force for the development of the plot, forming the beginning→development→climax→ending. The plot development of the whole film is born out of the adult ceremony, which constitutes the causal coding relationship of the film story and is the embodiment of folk narrative strategy. Another example is the film

Red River directed by Zhang Jiarui, which is a film reflecting the life of the Yao people in Yunnan Province. In the film, reflecting the wedding customs of the Yao nationality, one of the details is that the woman bites the man's finger. At the end of the film, when the hero, Ah Xia, is captured by the police, the heroine, Ah Tao, severely bit her finger by imitating the Yao wedding customs. The setting of the folk plot of "*biting*" on the finger properly reflects Tao's love and regret for Xia, which pushes the narrative of the film to a climax.

After 2000, the minority film not only the pursuit of minority cultural differences, also seek national folk culture and modern civilization, in the spread of unique national culture, also to the modernization process of minority culture cultural reflection and humanistic care, to cause people to the inheritance and protection of minority culture. Avoid excavating the deep ethnic culture, closing the narrative of "folk culture" in the narrow cultural space of ethnic minorities, and taking the narrative strategy of folk culture as the tension, shorten the distance between ethnic minority films and the audience, and realize the mass dissemination of ethnic minority films.



### Analysis of ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000

**Folklore narration.** Every ethnic group has its own unique folk customs. After 2000, one of the characteristics of ethnic minority films in Guizhou is the prominence of folk customs. Rich and colorful ethnic minority customs participate in the narrative of the film as a narrative element, which is a strategy for the creation of Guizhou ethnic minority theme films.

**The first way of participation is minority folk customs as the key point of the plot narrative.** Refers to the folk customs into the plot chain before and after a certain narrative logic, make it become the organic part of the film plot and influence the plot chain, not only the basic unit of narrative, but also the basic link in the chain of cause and effect. (Xie, W.R., 2009)

The film *Close to The Sun* begins with the French girl Pauline suffering from a strange illness in the paddy field of Danzhai. The story creates suspense at the beginning, with three key plots in the Film, each of which serves to move the story forward. Finally, after a miraculous cure of her illness, she returned to the Miao village. This return completed her role recognition and transformation of The Miao village culture, and stayed in The Miao village as a member of the belief worship of bird totem. The folk plot of golden pheasant

treatment sets suspense and conflict for the development of the film, making the whole film more attractive.

**The second way of participation is a scenario-based narrative embedded in the narrative plot.** Here folk custom itself does not constitute the joints of the plot, only to the development of the plot and does not constitute the core link of the plot in the film, mainly constitute the development of the environment (since the plot cannot leave human participation, which is the space of the activities of the characters) and strengthen the narrative effect of the plot, focusing on the narrative function of folk space narrative. (Xie, W.R., 2009) The film *Ma Hong Jun*, directed by Tao Mingxi, tells the story of Ma Chongde, an unknown veteran soldier in the History of the Red Army's Long March. Ma Chongde was wounded in the battle and fainted in the field, was rescued by the Miao people, and escaped the difficulties with the help of the whole village people, after staying in the Miao village to recuperate and publicize the spirit of the Red Army, in order to realize the commitment to sacrifice his comrades, he went through hardships and dangers, left his life to the beautiful Miao village. The film shows the unique natural landscape, costumes, language, and social interaction of the Miao

village, but these are only as folk culture, do not constitute the main plot of the narrative, but strengthen the characteristics of the narrative environment.

**The third kind is the display of pure folklore.** At this time, the folk customs of ethnic minorities do not directly participate in the narrative of the film, but they can shape the psychology of ethnic minority actors, assist the narrative, and help the audience to understand the content of the film. Such as Miao dance, Miao building, Miao dress, etc., as The Miao people's folk culture has become a symbol of their identity, often appear in the miao film, although not directly involved in the film narrative, but conveys the wisdom of The Miao people's life and unique national culture, can help the audience better understand the behavior of the actors. In director Ning Jingwu's film *"Bird's Nest"*, the presentation of the living environment of The Miao people; the embodiment of the ancient architectural style of The Miao people in The Miao costume and dance in *The Sun on the Clouds*. These folk customs do not directly narrate, but they can assist the development of the narrative, so that the audience can understand the uniqueness and mystery of The Miao folk culture from the picture, which plays an important role in the protection and inheritance of the national culture.

**Modern reflection.** Wang, Z.M. (1997) mentioned the influence of modernity on rural culture in his article *Entering modernity*. It is the urban turbulence of modernity that makes the fixed things fixed values, fixed lifestyle, fixed time, arrangement, fixed psychology and experience, and fixed social relations all disappear. Similarly, modernity also has the same influence on the traditional culture of ethnic minorities. After 2000, the ethnic minority films in Guizhou showed obvious Cultural Consciousness, that is in the face of the impact of modernity, they actively explore the original power in ethnic minority culture and strengthen the pursuit of national identity and roots.

These ethnic minority films *"enter the source of memory and emotion of a specific nation, looking for the spiritual beliefs, and cultural genes for their survival and continuation, express the historical suffering and practical difficulties that cannot be resolved, and express the nostalgia, nostalgia and separation facing the urban civilization and the hearts of the ancients"*. (Li, D.X., 2010) The Dong film *Our Sanga* expresses the different attitudes of the generations of Dong people under the influence of modernity, and the film naturally incorporates folk elements in the narrative. In the traditional life of The Dong people, Dong songs are equally important as

food. In the songs sung by the folk for generations, there are such lyrics: *"You can not feed your life without farming. How can you live without singing folk songs? Rice raises the body song nourishing the heart yo, live to do also want to sing folk songs"*. The importance of Dong songs is expressed through simple folk ballads. The Dong song expresses the concern and reflection on the minority culture: Under the influence of modernity, how to protect and develop the minority culture under the economic impact, because they are the soul of the nation and the key to the national diversity.

After 2000, ethnic minority films in Guizhou tell the reflection of ethnic culture and the consciousness of seeking roots through the strategy of folk narrative. These films reflect the influence of modernity on ethnic minority culture, which is the inevitable result of social development. How to protect the minority

culture of Guizhou is also an important issue discussed at present.

This research shows that folklore narration and modern reflection are important narrative strategies and characteristics of Guizhou minority films after 2000. After 2000, the folk customs in Guizhou minority films are no longer just the background but directly participate in the narrative of the film, which is an important element to attract the audience. In addition, in terms of theme expression, it pays more attention to the living environment and practical problems of ethnic minorities. While expressing cultural differences, it actively explores the integration point with modern civilization, reflects on and cares for the modernization process of ethnic minority culture, and arouses people's attention to the inheritance and protection of ethnic minority culture.

## Conclusion

Narrative strategy in the ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000, reflects the new characteristics: folk narrative and modern reflection narrative. The strategy of folk narration enables the director to narrate from the perspective of ethnic minorities. In this way, the films produced by ethnic minorities can reflect the real situation of ethnic minorities, which is conducive to the film

development and cultural dissemination of ethnic minorities. In essence, although film is a new medium spread from the West, Chinese film is inseparable from our own cultural tradition. (Wu, E.Q., 2015) One of the major functions of ethnic minority films in today's society is to spread ethnic minority culture and highlight the characteristics of ethnic minorities. Through the folk narrative analysis

of ethnic minority films in Guizhou after 2000, it can be seen that ethnic minority films in Guizhou are trying to record and spread folk culture, while having the consciousness of cultural reflection and searching for roots, which is the result of the influence of modernity on the traditional culture of ethnic minorities.

The narrative of ethnic minority films in Guizhou mainly reflects the tendency of folk

narrative, which plays an extremely important role in the expression and dissemination of national culture. Although ethnic minority films in Guizhou have a certain influence and reputation in Guizhou, they have not yet won a place in the Chinese film market. In order to win a win-win situation between word of mouth and box office, we need to continue to improve the film creation and government policies.

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