

A Historical Study of Miao Films in Guizhou, China During 1950–2024

Zijia Liu

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Pat Kotchapakdee

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Pitipong Pimpiset

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Article Info:	Research Article
Article History:	Received January 10, 2025
	Revised March 23, 2525
	Accepted March 24, 2525
Corresponding Author:	Zijia Liu
E-mail Address:	zijia.l@kkumail.com

Abstract

Through the method of qualitative research, this study comprehensively combs and analyzes the historical development of Guizhou Miao films from 1950 to 2024. This research is divided into two main periods, 1950-1999 and 2000-2024, and probes into the characteristics and changes of Miao films from two dimensions of plot and narrative respectively. Through observation, interview, and survey tools, a total of 30 individuals were interviewed for this research. Through the theoretical frameworks of folklore studies and narratology, the research findings reveal that Miao film from 1950 to 1999 primarily focused on depicting the life struggles and cultural heritage of the Miao people, as well as their adaptation to new societal contexts. In contrast, Miao films produced between 2000 and 2024 exhibit greater diversification and modernization, integrating contemporary social issues while showcasing the living conditions and spiritual outlook of the Miao people in the new era. This study not only fills a critical gap in the historical research of Miao film but also offers innovative perspectives for the preservation and development of Miao cultural traditions.

Keywords: Miao, Film, Historical study

Introduction

Miao is a cosmopolitan ethnic group with a large population. It is mainly distributed in China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, the United States, France, Germany, Canada, Argentina, Guyana, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. According to a large number of historical records and archaeological discoveries, Miao people's birthplace is in China, and they are one of China's oldest indigenous peoples (Shi, 2006) Besides, in Savina's works, it is also mentioned that Guizhou is the largest Miao colony in the world, and Miao is also the most populous ethnic group in Guizhou besides Han nationality (Savina, 2009) Although the migratory process is full of hardships, Miao people also develop their perseverance and national character. Finally, they find a place to settle down in the mountains of Guizhou and multiply and live there. It forms the largest Miao colony in the world. As one of the many ethnic minorities in China, the Miao people have a long history and rich cultural connotation, including language, music, dance, film, etc. These cultural elements together constitute the unique cultural landscape of the Miao people.

From 1950 to 1999, China underwent a transformative journey from the consolidation of state power after the founding of the People's Republic of China to the great process of reform, opening-up, and modernization. Concurrently, the Chinese film industry experienced robust development, emerging as a significant chronicler of this historical era. As filmmaker Fei Xie recalled in a 2024 interview: "The first two films I directed, *The Fire Boy* and *The Guide*, were both politically didactic works fabricated around the principle of class struggle. At that time, we viewed cinema as a propaganda tool that ought to serve the revolution."

Meanwhile, in 1950, the Film Bureau issued the Central Film Bureau's Regulations on Script and Film Censorship, standardizing the review procedures for film scripts and productions to ensure alignment with national ideological and cultural policies. This institutional framework underscores the era's emphasis on cinema as both an artistic medium and a political instrument.

In 2000, China's State Council issued the Notice on Several Economic Policies to Support the Development of Cultural Undertakings, which mandated the continuation of five economic policies aimed at advancing the film industry. This policy had a profound impact on China's film sector, serving as a catalyst for its rapid development. It not only elevated the standards of film production and creativity but also stimulated market prosperity while enhancing the industry's international competitiveness. The strategic implementation of these measures effectively positioned Chinese cinema as a dynamic force in the global cultural landscape.

According to the book "Research on Ethnic Minority Films in China" (Zang, N., 2017) which reviewed more than 300 ethnic minority films produced since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Miao films, as an important branch, have undergone a transformation from political tools to cultural carriers. In

stark contrast to Mongolian films' grassland epic narratives and Tibetan films' religious philosophical reflections, Miao films have always been rooted in the culture of the southwestern mountainous regions, establishing a unique "Miaoling Narrative System." This system first emerged in the film *Miaoling Wind and Thunder* which, through the form of Peking Opera film, depicts the story of the People's Liberation Army liberating Miao villages, setting a precedent for combining Miao films with political propaganda.

In comparison with other ethnic minority films, Miao films have made unique contributions in the fields of folklore studies and narrative studies. Firstly, they have filled historical gaps by systematically establishing the development lineage of Miao films from 1950 to 2024, filling a blank in the research of Chinese film history. Secondly, they have engaged in theoretical dialogues by incorporating Miao films into the global research system of ethnic minority films, proposing new concepts such as "Miaoling Narrative" and "soundscape politics." Finally, they have provided practical implications, offering image-based communication strategies for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and cultural poverty alleviation. For example, the film *Close to the Sun* has promoted the industrialization of Miao embroidery intangible cultural heritage through its cinematic influence. Therefore, this research has not only deepened the historical and cultural analysis of Miao films but also provided interdisciplinary and cross-cultural theoretical tools and practical references for the study of Chinese ethnic minority films.

Research Objective

To study history of Miao film from 1950 to 2024 in Guizhou, China.

Methodology

1. Research content

This research uses qualitative research to analyze the history of Miao films in Guizhou from 1950 to 2024 through the three tools of investigation, observation and interview, combined with the theoretical framework of folklore and narratology.

2. Target group

Key Informants (KI) : 5 individuals. The selection of KI was based on their expertise and experience in Miao culture, film industry management, and policy formulation. Three categories of Key Informants were selected:

Miao culture scholar: They provided profound insights into the historical representation of Miao culture in films and its cultural significance. Film industry manager: They shared industry insider perspectives on film production, distribution, and policy support. Government staff: They offered information on how government policies have influenced the development of Miao films.

Causal Informants (CI) : 10 individuals. The selection of CI was based on their direct experience in Miao film production. Three categories of Temporary Informants were selected:

Directors: They provided firsthand information on the film creation process, narrative choices, and directorial vision. Ethnic consultants: They offered expert opinions on cultural accuracy and sensitivity in films.

General Informants (GI) : 15 individuals, general film audiences.

3. Data analysis

3.1 Document analysis

The document analysis phase involved a systematic review of written materials related to Guizhou Miao films from 1950 to 2024. This included policy documents and academic literature. Government policies, regulations, and official reports related to film production, distribution, and cultural policies were collected and analyzed, as these policies may have influenced the development of Miao films. Existing research on Miao films, including academic papers, books, and film reviews, was synthesized to establish a historical and theoretical foundation for the study.

3.2 Field interview analysis

On-site interviews were conducted with KI, CI, and GI. The analysis of interview data included editing interview transcripts and extracting key content.

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, focusing on understanding the historical background, cultural representation, and narrative structure of Miao films. Interview questions were designed to be flexible, allowing respondents to freely express their views and experiences. Observations focused on detailed records of folk events, cultural conflicts, narrative themes, and narrative structure characteristics in the films.

Results

Miao films refer to 17 films from 1950 to 2024, divided into two periods: 1950-1999 and 2000-2024. The historical characteristics of the Miao films during 1950-1999 focus on the life struggle of the Miao people, national culture and tradition, as well as the change and adaptation in the new social background. These works have strong political color and regional characteristics, and show the unique charm of Miao nationality customs through the film lens. They include *Children of the Miao People*, *Manluo Flowers*, *Miaoling Wind and Thunder*, and *The Fire Boy*. The historical characteristics of Miao films from 2000 to 2024 are more diversified and modern, which not only continue to pay attention to the inheritance and development of Miao culture, but also integrate more contemporary social issues and modern elements, showing the life status and spiritual outlook of the Miao people in the new era. These works are also more novel and fashionable in terms of narrative techniques, visual effects and musical scores, attracting a wider audience. They include *Anayi*, *I Want to Dance*, *Aou Song*, *Bird's Nest*, *Lala's Gun*, *Ma Hongjun*, *Miao Village*,

Sweet Journey, Close" to the Sun, Miao Child, Hero of the River, The Flower of Revenge, Love of Miao Village.



Figure 1 Children of the Miao People
(Douban, 2005 : online)



Figure 2 Miaoling Wind and Thunder
(Douban, 2005 : online)

1. Part 1: 1950-1999

1.1 Plot Folk event

She defines film and television folklore precisely as a science that objectively and truly records and presents folk customs with film and television as its performance and communication media. Compared with the general science of film and television, film and television folklore pays particular attention to the objective authenticity of the recorded folk customs and the deep excavation of cultural connotations (Huang, F. L., 2002) For example, in the film Children of the Miao People, the audience can deeply appreciate the enthusiasm and extraordinary talent of the Miao people through the vivid display of the celebration of traditional festivals, the traditional customs of weddings and funerals, and the wonderful performance of song and dance art. The film Manluo Flowers highlights the diligence, wisdom and selfless dedication of the Miao people through the exquisite depiction of Miao women's textile skills and the special folk customs of the revolutionary period. In Miaoling Wind and Thunder, the cheerful rhythm of Lusheng dance and the passionate scene of the song, as well as the solemnity of religious belief and sacrificial ceremony, together outline the deep and rich heritage of Miao culture. Moreover, The melodious folk songs and folklore stories in The Fire Boy, as well as the unique Miao costumes and architectural styles, let the audience feel the diversity and unique charm of Miao culture in an all-round and multi-angle.

The purpose of film and television folk art exchange is to establish a new cultural identity (Zhang, J. W. & Sang, J., 2011) Taking The Fire Boy as an example, the film cleverly integrates the traditional Miao

belt element with the spirit of the Red Army, and successfully builds up the recognition and respect for the revolutionary culture of the Red Army on the basis of inheriting and promoting Miao culture. Similarly, Children of the Miao People also integrates the Red Army spirit carried by veterans into the construction and development of Miao village, which not only shows the inheritance and development of the Red Army spirit, but also further deepens the audience's understanding and understanding of the mutual integration and common development of Miao culture and Red Army culture.



Figure 3 Leishan Miao Museum



Figure 4 Anshun Miao History Museum

Cultural conflict:

Sellin, T. (1997) pointed out that there are two kinds of cultural conflicts in society: one is the cultural conflicts in different periods caused by the development and change of society, and the other is the cultural conflicts caused by two opposing cultures in the same period. This kind of cultural conflict will inevitably lead to the conflict of behavioral norms, which may further cause the problem of crime. The Miao films from 1950 to 1999 are the comprehensive embodiment of these two cultural conflicts, which profoundly show the opposition and collision between tradition and modernity, revolution and conservatism. For example, in the film Children of the Miao People, after returning to his hometown, the veteran Kiang leads the people through arduous efforts with advanced concepts and methods to dredge the river and successfully complete the grain increase plan. This process not only reflects the conflict between the Han advanced culture and the Miao traditional culture, but also shows the challenges and opportunities in the integration process of the two cultures.

In Manluo Flowers, the Miao people together bravely resist the bullies, which deeply presents the opposition between the revolutionary forces and the conservative forces. This confrontation is not only reflected in the struggle at the political level, but also has a profound impact on the ideas and ways of action of the Miao people, inspiring their pursuit of justice and freedom.

The film Miaoling Wind and Thunder shows the spread and practice of revolutionary culture in Miao areas through the story of Miao cadre Long Yansong participating in the revolution and leading the

battalion back to Miao township to fight bandits. Long Yansong's heroic deeds and firm conviction have become a model for the Miao people to resist oppression and pursue liberation.

Similarly, in *The Fire Boy*, Huowa and the Miao people help the Red Army to fight bandits, which vividly depicts the Miao people's struggle against the Kuomintang bandits and reactionary forces under the leadership of the PLA. Huowa's bravery and wisdom, as well as the unity and dedication of the Miao people, have jointly written a magnificent chapter in the revolutionary struggle.

These films not only record the struggle and sacrifice of the Miao people in the historical changes, but also profoundly reflect the impact and shape of cultural conflicts on the Miao society. Through vivid storylines, they show the choice and struggle between traditional culture and modern culture, revolutionary culture and conservative culture, and their unique cultural identity and national spirit formed in this process.

1.2 Narrative

Theme:

Between 1950 and 1999, "the most distinct theme of Guizhou Miao films was struggle" (Yaheng Chang, interview : 24 September 2024) The works of this period, like brilliant chapters in the scroll of history, profoundly reflected the resilience and defiance of the Miao people amidst the currents of history. The film *Children of the Miao People* serves as a prime example, vividly narrating the story of demobilized soldier Ka Liang leading the masses to dredge rivers and increase grain production. It not only showcases the Miao people's fervent passion and unwavering determination to engage in socialist construction but also highlights their unity and indomitable fighting spirit in the face of adversity. This spirit shines brilliantly as the Miao culture evolves through the ages.



Figure 5 Interview Yaheng Chang

Meanwhile, *Manluo Flowers* employs tragic aesthetics to poignantly depict the love tragedy of Miao girl Man Luo and young hunter A Dao Yue. The film not only reveals the ruthless oppression of free love by evil forces but also profoundly reflects the numerous hardships encountered by the Miao people on their journey toward a better life. Like a mournful ballad, it recounts the Miao people's profound longing and relentless pursuit of a better existence. As Miao cultural scholar Wu Bin notes, "These legends embody

the historical memories, cultural concepts, and life wisdom of the Miao people, passed down through generations by word of mouth. They not only enrich the cultural treasure trove of the Miao but also provide invaluable materials for studying their history, culture, and society." (Bin Wu, interview : 2 October 2024)



Figure 6 Interview Bin Wu

When discussing the film *Miaoling Wind and Thunder*, Miao cultural scholar Wei Zongqiang points out, "The expression of Miao culture in early films mainly revolved around political needs, with political overtones being more pronounced." (Wei Zongqiang, interview : 2024) In this film, the heroic scenes of military and civilian unity in fighting against the enemy not only demonstrate the valiant spirit of the revolutionary war era but also profoundly reflect the Miao people's firm support and active participation in the revolutionary cause. Every shot in the film seems like a heartfelt look back at those eventful years, evoking a sense of historical power and warmth.



Figure 7 Interview Wei Zongqiang

As for *The Fire Boy*, it vividly portrays the brave and wise image of Miao youth during the revolutionary era through the growth and struggle of the young Miao boy Fire Child. Fire Child's character not only represents the revolutionary spirit of the new Miao generation but also symbolizes the inheritance

and development of the revolutionary cause. Like an unextinguished flame, Fire Child in the film ignites the Miao people's firm belief and selfless dedication to the revolutionary cause. Director Fei Xie, reflecting on this creative journey, mentions, "Even after the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, our thinking, and that of the entire film industry, was still shrouded by the overall social atmosphere of the past few decades. Therefore, when we first resumed work, many of us, like me, continued to produce works imbued with the unwavering ideals instilled in us by past education." (Fei Xie, interview : 26 February 2024) This statement not only profoundly reveals the creative background of The Fire Boy but also succinctly summarizes the film creation ideology of that era.

Structure:

The Miao films from 1950 to 1999 showed rich and varied features in the narrative structure. In addition to following the basic framework of linear chronological order, the contrasting structure of good and evil is also very sharp and profound. "Because everything in reality is not always as depicted in the classic Hollywood movie model, full of coincidences and idealized plots: the bad guy is in the way, the beautiful woman is in trouble, the hero saves the beauty, and the illusion reality of the eventual marriage." On the contrary, it is more about the intricacies of right and wrong, forward and backward, progressive and conservative, justice and evil, civilization and barbarism, humanity and beast, and even the complex existence of antinomy." (Li, X. J., 2000)

Specifically, the Miao films of this period make clever use of this contrastive structure in narrative. For example, Children of the Miao People, starting from the hero Kaliasang's demobilization to his hometown, slowly unfolds in the chronological order of his construction of his hometown, dredging the river and finally winning victory. In this process, the contrasting structure between Kaliasang and Chunliang runs through, highlighting the power of justice and persistence.

Another example is Manluo Flowers, the film begins with the love of Manluo and A Daoyue, followed by their marriage, the encounter of marriage, and finally the twists and turns of resistance. In this temporal thread, the contrasting structure between the vine and the black Dayang stands out, showing how love and courage can overcome evil and oppression. Miaoling Wind and Thunder begins with Long Yansong's return to Miaoling, followed by a tense plot in which the enemy pretends to surrender, Long Yansong is framed by the enemy, and finally annihilates the enemy bandits. In this film, the contrasting structure between the PLA and the KMT agents is clearly visible, highlighting the firm belief that good will eventually triumph over evil.

Finally, The Fire Boy starts with the fire boy herding cattle, followed by his heroic journey of saving his grandson, delivering letters to the fire boy, and finally the liberation of Zhawang Village. In this film, the contrast structure between the Red Army and the bandits runs through the film, vividly demonstrating the spirit of revolutionary heroism and the greatness of people's power.



Figure 8 Bird's Nest
(Douban, 2005 : online)



Figure 9 Close to the Sun
(Douban, 2005 : online)

2. Part 2: 2000-2024

2.1 Plot

Folk event:

Folk narrative not only serves as a crucial carrier of cultural display in Miao films but also profoundly propels the construction of dramatic conflicts and the development of plots. According to Luo, C. Q. (2019) research, the integration of folk narratives effectively enhances dramatic tension, acting as a pivotal driving force for the evolution of stories. In the creation of Miao films from 2000 to 2024, folk events have transcended their role as mere background elements and have been endowed with rich narrative functions, becoming core components in character portrayal and plot construction.

On the one hand, films vividly reproduce the unique charm of Miao culture through the diversified presentation of folk events. In the film *Anayi*, scenes where Miao girls sing classic Miao songs such as *Wedding Dress*, *Many Blessings*, and *Angelica*, not only showcase the rhythmic beauty of Miao music but also immerse audiences in the magnificent scenery of Miaoling and the daily life of the Miao people. In particular, *Miaoling Song*, with its lively melody and lyrics rich in ethnic flavor, has not only been listed as a national intangible cultural heritage but has also become an important symbol of Miao culture (Xiangang Li, interview : 1 August 2024) The utilization of such folk elements not only enriches the artistic expression of the film but also promotes audiences' cognitive understanding and emotional resonance with Miao culture.



Figure 10 Interview Xiangang Li

On the other hand, folk activities serve as narrative vehicles that profoundly reveal the cultural identity and spiritual pursuits of the Miao people. The film *Anayi's* detailed depiction of the Sisters' Festival is a prime example. Director Chou Chou (interview : 5 July 2024) mentioned that during filming, over a thousand girls adorned in their finest attire set off in the early hours of the morning, traversing mountain paths to arrive at the festival site. This scene not only showcases Miao women's ultimate pursuit of beauty but also, through their use of songs to convey emotions and communicate through antiphonal singing, embodies the unique romantic sensibilities and adherence to traditional customs within Miao culture. This narrative approach not only enhances the film's visual impact but also deepens audiences' understanding of the core of Miao culture.

Furthermore, the presentation of Miao wedding customs and festive traditions further strengthens the theme of cultural identity in the films. Through lively wedding scenes and festive, harmonious holiday imagery, films such as *Aou Song*, *Hero of the River*, *The Flower of Revenge*, and *Love of Miao Village* not only showcase the richness and vitality of Miao culture but also allow audiences to deeply sense the enthusiastic, hospitable, optimistic, and upward-looking spirit of the Miao people. These folk events not only serve as catalysts for story development but also act as bridges connecting individual destinies with ethnic culture.

Tian Zhaoyuan (2017) pointed out that the core function of folklore is identity, and its manifestation is narration. This viewpoint has been profoundly confirmed in Miao films. In *Lala's Gun*, through the narrative clue of Lala searching for her father, from the identity confusion of an orphan to the identity confirmation at her coming-of-age ceremony, she ultimately completes her personal and ethnic identity and belonging. On the other hand, *Bird's Nest* explores the narrative process of Xiangma searching for his father and uncovering the secrets of the bird's nest, not only realizing the collision and fusion of tradition and modernity but also embodying the significant role of folk narration in connecting the past with the present, as well as personal memory with collective culture. Director Jingwu Ning (interview, 2024) deeply realized during the creative process that the local people's emotions towards nature and animals transcend simple

environmental slogans and have become a life practice. This profound sense of identity is precisely the cultural essence that folk narration strives to convey.

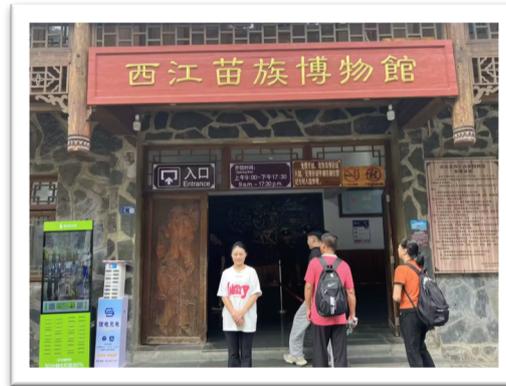


Figure 11 Xijiang Miao Museum

Cultural conflict:

As Kearney, R. (2007) poignantly points out in *How Far Are Stories from Reality*, "Because stories (modern times) all derive from them (histories) in the same way, historical groups are ultimately responsible for shaping or reproducing their own identities." This point of view has been vividly interpreted in the Miao films in Guizhou, China, especially since the new century, how to awaken ethnic memory and how to shape ethnic identity as its core issues for in-depth exploration.

Film, as a cultural carrier, realizes the construction of cultural identity through the unique perspective of cultural conflict. In Miao films from 2000 to 2024, this technique was widely applied, and the collision and integration between traditional Miao culture and modern civilization was vividly demonstrated through delicate plot depiction.

Specifically, some films, such as "Lala's Gun" and "Bird's Nest", cleverly realize the integration and dialogue between traditional culture and modern culture through the narrative clues of the protagonist's search for his father (symbolizing the exploration of modern culture) and the completion of his growth process (symbolizing the inheritance of Miao culture). Aou Song and Anayi show how the characters realize the harmonious unity of self-identity and ethnic identity In the process of pursuing personal happiness through their persistent search for love.

In these films, the Miao people have to face the impact of modern civilization while sticking to their traditional culture. On the one hand, they cherish the customs and beliefs handed down by their ancestors, such as traditional weddings and funerals, festival activities and unique handicraft skills, which are an integral part of Miao culture and carry the historical memory and national characteristics of the Miao people. On the other hand, with the acceleration of the modernization process of society, new values, lifestyles and technologies continue to pour in, posing unprecedented challenges to the traditional culture

of the Miao people. Against this background of culture clash, the characters in the film experience confusion, struggle, and difficult choices. They want to preserve the traditional characteristics of the Miao people and protect this valuable cultural heritage; I also want to integrate into modern society and enjoy the convenience and comfort brought by modern civilization. This inner entanglement and contradiction are vividly displayed in the film, and the audience can deeply feel the difficulty and persistence of the Miao people in the cultural change.

At the same time, these films also fully demonstrate the perseverance and wisdom of the Miao people in the cultural conflict. They do not blindly reject modern civilization, but with an open and inclusive mind, actively seek the integration of traditional culture and modern civilization. They strive to absorb the excellent achievements of modern civilization on the basis of maintaining traditional characteristics, and realize the organic integration of traditional culture and modern civilization.

Therefore, through vivid plots, the Miao films not only show the cultural conflict between the traditional culture of the Miao people and the modern civilization, but also highlight the tough wisdom and cultural self-confidence of the Miao people in this conflict. They awaken the ethnic memory in a unique way, shape the ethnic identity, and inject new vitality into the inheritance and development of Miao culture.

2.2 Narrative

Theme:

Between 2000 and 2024, Miao films profoundly showcased the unique charm of Miao culture and the significance of its inheritance through a rich variety of narrative themes (Xiaolang Yi, interview : 2 September 2024) These interwoven and complementary themes not only constructed a distinctive artistic style for Miao film but also opened a window for audiences to explore the spiritual world and profound cultural heritage of the Miao people. This allowed them to deeply appreciate the extensive and profound nature of Miao culture while enjoying an audiovisual feast.



Figure 12 Interview Xiaolang Yi

Miao cinema regarded cultural inheritance as one of its core narrative themes, emphasizing the crucial role of traditional culture in ethnic identity and cohesion through delicate emotional depictions and vivid scene reproductions. For instance, in *Anayi*, *Anayi's* grandmother patiently taught her the art of Miao

embroidery from a young age. This detail not only demonstrated the exquisite beauty of Miao traditional crafts but also highlighted the profound connotations of the cultural inheritance theme in the film. As Director Chou Chou stated, "As a daughter of the Miao and Dong, I shoulder the mission to enable more people to understand my hometown and ethnic group through the lens, to love our culture, and to inspire the better inheritance of ethnic culture." (Chou Chou, interview : 5 July 2024)

Growth and self-realization constituted another major narrative theme of Miao films. In *Bird's Nest* and *Lala's Gun*, the films focused on the growth journeys of Miao children, showcasing their perseverance and resilience as they overcame numerous challenges and hardships in their quest to find their fathers. In the face of countless difficulties, they relied on courage, wisdom, and persistence to gradually overcome obstacles and ultimately achieve their dreams and goals. This process not only provided a profound depiction of personal growth journeys but also a deep interpretation of the universal theme of growth and self-realization in life.

As an indispensable narrative theme, history and memory in Miao films showcased the historical changes and cultural inheritance of the Miao people, allowing audiences to more directly understand Miao history and culture. In *Ma Hongjun* and *The Flower of Revenge*, the lives of two Miao legendary figures, Ma Hongjun and Shanmei, were vividly presented on screen. Their stories were not only portraits of individual fates but also microcosms of Miao history and memory. Through these films, audiences could deeply sense the Miao people's respect and remembrance of history, as well as their adherence to and inheritance of cultural traditions.

Structure:

Miao films produced between 2000 and 2024 demonstrated diverse characteristics in their narrative structures, specifically manifested in the flexible application of timelines, the multifaceted switching of narrative perspectives, and the varied presentation of contrastive techniques.

The primary nonlinear narrative techniques employed were "flashbacks" and "anachronies," which emphasized the complexity of the films' plots. Some films unfolded through multiple independent short stories (Song, 2007) This unique narrative structure not only enhanced the artistic appeal of the films but also allowed audiences to deeply experience the weight and vicissitudes of history from a personal perspective. Taking the film *The Flower of Revenge* as an example, the film employed an extremely ingenious design in its narrative timeline. It began with the death of Shanmei and gradually unfolded the storyline through a flashback structure, leading the audience to trace back to the past. In the final part of the film, when depicting the crucial decision Shanmei faced in front of Yang Shuqing, the film skillfully adopted a structure where memories and reality intersected, resulting in a clear hierarchy of narrative time. This not only strengthened the emotional impact of the story but also reflected the diversification of narrative time.

In terms of narrative perspective, "*The Flower of Revenge*" adopts omniscient perspective and limited-knowledge perspective. The omniscient perspective is introduced from the perspective of the "son"

and tells the death of the mother through the form of narration, which lays a deep emotional tone for the whole film. From the perspective of limited knowledge, the narrative is mainly narrated from the perspectives of Shan Mei and Yang Shuqing, interspersed with the narration from the perspective of her son. This multi-perspective switch not only enriches the narrative level of the film, but also enables the audience to have a more comprehensive understanding of the inner world of the characters and the development of the story, which is a vivid reflection of the diversified narrative form of perspectives.

In addition, in the use of contrast techniques, "The Flower of Revenge", the sharp contrast between justice and evil between the Miao people and the Kuomintang agents, the profound contrast between human brilliance and animal instinct between Shan Mei and Yang Shuqing, and the strong contrast between the quiet and peaceful environment of the Miao village and the turbulent environment outside. All of them make the film more vivid and powerful in the theme expression, and also reflect the diversity of contrast techniques.

Therefore, the diversity of Miao films in the narrative structure from 2000 to 2024 not only enriched the artistic expression of Miao films, but also brought more profound and diversified movie-watching experience to the audience.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Conclusion

Through qualitative research methods, this research comprehensively combs and analyzes the historical development of Miao films in Guizhou from 1950 to 2024. The research results show that Miao films experienced significant changes and development during this period, not only increasing in number, but also showing a unique charm in plot setting, cultural conflict handling, narrative theme and structure. As follows:

Table 1: Comparison of Plot, Character, and Narrative between 1950-1999 and 2000-2024

Category	1950-1999	2000-2024
Plot		
Folk events	The grand scenes and original ecology of the Miao people's traditional festivals and ceremonies are depicted with spectacular imagery, often serving as a backdrop to highlight the grandeur and authenticity.	Using detailed portrayal, the transformation and integration of Miao culture in the process of modernization are presented, participating in the narrative and becoming key elements that drive the development of the plot.
Cultural conflicts	Centering around revolutionary struggles and national liberation, with class contradictions and ethnic conflicts as	Highlight the survival challenges faced by Miao culture in the context of globalization, as well as the issues of

	the main focus.	identity and cultural adaptation faced by the Miao people in the process of modernization.
Narrative		
Theme	Focusing primarily on political service, it revolves around the traditional values, moral outlook, and national spirit of the Miao people.	Focusing primarily on cultural inheritance, it pays attention to the survival and development of Miao culture in the process of modernization.
Structure	The narrative structure is simple, employing a linear narrative that emphasizes the completeness of the story.	The narrative structure is complex, incorporating non-linear narrative techniques to emphasize the layered and three-dimensional aspects of the story.

Miao films from 1950 to 1999 focused on the life struggle of the Miao people, the national culture and tradition, and the change and adaptation in the new social background. These works have strong political color and regional characteristics, and show the unique charm of Miao customs through the film lens. The Miao films from 2000 to 2024 are more diversified and modern, not only continuing to pay attention to the inheritance and development of Miao culture, but also integrating more contemporary social issues and modern elements, showing the life status and spiritual outlook of the Miao people in the new era. In terms of narrative analysis, the Miao films from 1950 to 1999 took struggle as the theme and deeply reflected the perseverance and heroic struggle of the Miao people in the historical changes through the contrasting structure of justice and evil. The Miao films from 2000 to 2024 present richer narrative themes, including cultural inheritance, growth and self-realization, history and memory, etc. At the same time, they show diversified characteristics in narrative structure, such as flexible use of time line, multiple switching of narrative perspectives and diverse presentation of contrast techniques.

2. Discussion

2.1 The Symbiotic Construction of Folklore Genes and Film Narrative

Within the theoretical framework proposed by Liao, H. B., (2007) folklore is not a static cultural specimen but a dynamic carrier of "living culture." Miao films produced between 1950 and 1999 were well aware of this concept: the political transcoding of life struggles. For instance, *Manluo Flowers* transformed Miao batik craftsmanship into visual symbols of class struggle, and silver ornament patterns became political metaphors for ethnic identity. The ritualized expression of cultural conflicts: through the cinematic reconstruction of folk rituals such as the "Guzang Festival" and "Youfang", the conflicts between traditional culture and modernity were embodied in festival taboos and ritual breaking ceremonies. This creative

practice elevated folklore elements from daily life practices to image carriers of political narratives, confirming the transformation mechanism that "art originates from folk life."

2.2 The Paradigm Shift in Folklore Expression in the Context of the Times

After 2000, the processes of globalization and modernization reshaped the cinematic presentation of folklore: bidirectional writing with cultural consciousness. The new century film *Anayi* used the "Miao embroidery epic" as its narrative thread, showcasing the beauty of traditional craftsmanship while reflecting on cultural extinction anxiety through the perspective of young inheritors. The spatiotemporal strategy of memory reconstruction: films like *I Want to Dance* employed a time-loop structure centered around the "Guzang Festival," transforming folk rituals into healing spaces for historical trauma and creating an altar of collective memory in cinema. This transition from "political symbols" to "cultural genes" is precisely as Liao Haibo stated: folklore has become an "important aspect of the formation of national style," constructing image identifiers of cultural identity in the context of globalization.

2.3 The Poetic Practice of Folklore in the Narrative Revolution

The evolution of narrative strategies reflects the aesthetic progression of folklore expression. For example, polyphonic narration: *Lala's Gun* deconstructed the singular interpretive authority of traditional folklore through the triple narrative perspectives of a "shaman-singer-migrant worker," forming a polyphonic structure of cultural dialogue. Image montage: in *Close to the Sun*, the "Jinji" legend was deconstructed into a collage of images of clothing, folk songs, and dances, constructing a visual atlas of ethnic cultural memory. These innovative practices validate Liao Haibo's theoretical foresight: folklore elements are not merely tools for creating atmosphere but also a driving force for narrative innovation. Their function of "extracting images to elevate themes" has gained more expressive tension in contemporary cinema.

In conclusion, the modern transformation of folklore imagery and the evolution trajectory of Guizhou Miao films are essentially a cinematic "reinvention" of folklore culture: from symbol transcoding in political contexts to genetic recombination in the era of globalization, and further to poetic innovation in postmodern contexts, they have consistently followed the transformation logic of "living culture—artistic expression—national style." This ongoing dialogue not only continues the vitality of Liao Haibo's theory but also heralds the limitless possibilities for the localization of Chinese cinema from a folkloric perspective. As demonstrated by Miao films, when folklore narratives break through the surface layer of "regional characteristics" and touch upon the modern proposition of "how people dwell within culture," they acquire artistic value that transcends time and space.

Reference

- Douban. (2005). **Douban Movie**. Retrieved 29, April 2025, from <https://movie.douban.com/>
- Huang, F. L. (2002). The current situation and issues of Chinese film and television folklore in the new era. *Journal of Northwest Ethnic Studies*. (02) : 203-207.

- Kearney, R. (2007). **On Stories (Wang Guangzhou, Trans.)**. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Li, X. J. (2000). **Narratology in film: Theory and examples**. Beijing : China Film Publishing House.
- Liao, H. B. (2007). **Folklore in Film and Television**. Beijing : Peking University Press.
- Luo, C. Q. (2019). Integrating local customs into the plot: The folk narrative of the Zhuang opera “Song King”. **Journal of Sichuan Drama**. (10) : 141-144.
- Savina. (2009). **Miao History (Li Ren, Trans.)**. Guiyang : Guizhou University Press.
- Sellin, T. (1997). Cultural conflict and crime (Xu Zhangrun, Trans.). **Journal of Youth Crime Studies**. (8) : 12.
- Shi, C. J. (2006). **World history of Miao migration**. Beijing : Guizhou People's Publishing House.
- Song, J. L. (2007). **Narratology in Film and Television**. Beijing : Communication University of China Press.
- Tian, Z. Y. (2017). Genealogical concepts and research practices in folklore studies: A case study of beliefs on East China Sea islands. **Journal of East China Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)**. (03) : 72.
- Zang, N. (2017). **Research on Ethnic Minority Films in China**. Beijing : Central University for Nationalities Press.
- Zhang, J. W., & Sang, J. (2011). Filmic Folklore and Chinese cultural identity. **Journal of Wenzhou University (Social Sciences)**. 02 : 51-61.