



The Significance of Indigenous Preservation in Cultural Transmission: A Case Study of the “San Sheng” Culture

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Abstract

Background and Aims: The "San Sheng" culture is a significant folk art form of the Yi ethnic group in Shuangbai, Chuxiong, Yunnan, characterized by its unique primal ecological features and profound ethnic cultural connotations. However, in the context of globalization and modernization, the authenticity and indigenous nature of traditional culture are at risk of erosion and homogenization. Therefore, exploring the importance of primal ecological inheritance in cultural transmission is crucial for preserving ethnic cultural diversity and achieving the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). This study takes the "San Sheng" culture as a case to analyze the value and role of primal ecological inheritance in cultural dissemination.

Methodology: This study adopts a combined approach of literature review, Fieldwork, and in-depth interviews to systematically examine the historical origins, performance forms, and contemporary dissemination of "San Sheng" culture, interpreted through cultural transmission theory.

Results: Through in-depth interviews on the "San Sheng" culture, it was found that its unique rituals and cultural background are key to maintaining artistic forms and ethnic identity. The interview data indicate that participants generally believe traditional rituals are the core of cultural identity and also crucial in forming cultural differentiation advantages during cross-regional transmission. Moreover, its primal ecological nature enhances cultural engagement and ritual significance, increasing its communicative value in the development of cultural industries and cultural tourism integration in the new era.

Conclusion: The preservation and transmission of "San Sheng" culture must adhere to a dual approach of "primal ecological inheritance and innovative dissemination"—ensuring respect for its authenticity while leveraging modern tools such as digital media and cultural-creative products for broader outreach. This study provides valuable insights for enhancing ethnic cultural communication strategies and ICH safeguarding practices.

Keywords: "San Sheng" Culture; Primal Ecological Inheritance and Innovative Transmission; Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Cultural Diversity

Introduction

The "San Sheng" culture is a distinctive, primal ecological folk art form of the Yi ethnic group in Shuangbai, Chuxiong, Yunnan. It comprises three ritual dance forms: LaoHu Sheng, DaLuo Sheng, and XiaoBaoZi Sheng (Figure 1). These dances embody the Yi people's religious beliefs, life rituals, and nature worship while showcasing their unique artistic creativity. As a quintessential representation of Yi sheng-instrument performances, "San Sheng" has evolved from purely ritualistic functions to encompass production, daily life, and folk customs through continuous development (Lin & Chen, 2023). Consequently, it is hailed as a "living fossil" of ancient Yi nuoc ceremonies and tiger culture in China. These three dances serve not only as core elements of Yi religious rites and festive celebrations but also as profound symbols of reverence for nature, deities, and life, reflecting the ethnic wisdom of harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world. As an archaic artistic expression, "San Sheng" culture is intrinsically linked to polytheism, nature worship, and animism—concepts that constitute the soul of primitive art and exert enduring influence on subsequent folk traditions (Liu, 2009).



Figure 1 LaoHu Sheng, DaLuo Sheng, and XiaoBaoZi Sheng

Note: Photographed by the researcher

In the long-term historical development process, the "San Sheng" culture has not only become an important part of local social life but also a symbol of Yi cultural identity and collective memory. However, with the acceleration of modernization, traditional culture is facing problems such as reduced inheritors, weakened performance scenes, and commercial transformation. The original ecological characteristics of culture are gradually being diluted, and there is an urgent need for academia to explore how to maintain its original ecology in the dissemination of culture. In the study of cultural dissemination, the significance of original ecological inheritance lies in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of culture, avoiding excessive transformation and performative erosion of its spiritual connotation. Unlike pure recreation or commercial dissemination, originality emphasizes the respect and protection of the original values of traditional culture, ensuring the continuity of cultural diversity and national characteristics.

This study selects the "San Sheng" culture as a case study, which has strong research representativeness due to its distinct regional cultural symbols and the dual challenges of survival and dissemination. Through in-depth analysis of this culture, research has filled the current gap in the combination of originality and cultural dissemination innovation, and provided useful ideas for the protection and dissemination of similar cultures in the future.

Simultaneously, this study employs a mixed-methods approach combining documentary analysis, fieldwork, and in-depth interviews, framed within cultural transmission theory, to systematically investigate the historical origins, artistic features, current dissemination status, and future pathways of "San Sheng" culture. It seeks to address the following questions:

1. What role does primal ecological inheritance play in cultural transmission?
2. How does it contribute to cultural identity, social cohesion, and cultural industry development?
3. How can a balance be struck between primal ecological preservation and innovative dissemination?

Findings reveal that primal ecological inheritance is pivotal not only for sustaining the uniqueness of "San Sheng" culture but also for enhancing its cross-regional communicative power and cultural soft power. In the context of digital media and cultural-tourism integration, adherence to primal ecological principles strengthens cultural resonance and identity, while innovative dissemination methods expand its reach. Their synergy forms a sustainable development model for "San Sheng" culture.

This study contributes by elucidating the intrinsic relationship between cultural transmission and primal ecological inheritance through the "San Sheng" case, offering theoretical and practical insights for ethnic cultural heritage preservation, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) dissemination strategies, and regional cultural development.

Objectives

1. To elucidate the socio-cultural value of "San Sheng" in Yi ethnic life, religious practices, and identity formation, thereby affirming its unique status as intangible cultural heritage (ICH).
2. To analyze the imperative of preserving San Sheng's primal ecological authenticity in modern dissemination contexts, decoding its inherent logic through the lens of cultural transmission theory and primal ecologicality.
3. To propose sustainable pathways for "San Sheng" culture, advocating a dual approach that synergizes primal ecological safeguarding with innovative dissemination mechanisms.

Literature review

1. Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding

As a multi-ethnic region, Yunnan Province boasts rich cultural heritage resources. To protect and transmit ethnic minority traditions, the provincial government has implemented localized regulations and policies supplementing national laws. Notably, the 2017 Yunnan Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Regulations explicitly defined ICH scope, protective measures, inheritor accreditation, and management protocols. Under this framework, the government enhanced financial support for heritage conservation while strengthening oversight of cultural activities, performing arts, and traditional festivals (Luo, 2023).

The "San Sheng" culture, recognized as Yi ethnic ICH, has benefited from these localized policies. Beyond preserving traditions, the government facilitated its modern adaptation to meet contemporary societal needs. By integrating "San Sheng" into regional cultural-tourism policies, these measures elevated its social recognition while providing institutional support for innovative transmission.

Yunnan further promotes "San Sheng" through cultural festivals, exhibitions, and performances, fostering public engagement in its preservation. These initiatives enrich local cultural life while expanding external awareness. Concurrently, the province prioritizes inheritor training through funding and skill development programs, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of core techniques (Lin & Chen, 2023). Collectively, these efforts establish a robust foundation for sustainable cultural continuity.

2. Transmission Mechanisms of "San Sheng" culture

As an indispensable component of Yi culture in Shuangbai County, "San Sheng" serves as a vital vehicle for ethnic knowledge transmission. This dance form synthesizes religious beliefs, social functions, and artistic expression, embodying the Yi worldview regarding nature, life, and cosmology. Through its three variants—LaoHu Sheng, XiaoBaoZi Sheng, and DaLuo Sheng—it conveys intergenerational wisdom about human-nature-divinity relationships, communal solidarity, and life cycles (Zhang, 2016).

Traditional transmission occurs orally and performatively within ritual contexts. As the core of Yi nuoc ceremonies, "San Sheng" intricately blends religious, historical, and artistic elements. Within Yi social structures, these dances function both as sacred rituals and markers of ethnic identity (Bian & Yao, 2018). Elders transmit cultural knowledge through participatory performance, exemplifying the "teaching by precept and example" model that ensures cultural perpetuation (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Little LaoHu Sheng performer

Note: Xu Zhengyuan (back row, center, 2025)

At the same time, "primal ecological inheritance" emphasizes the protection of cultural origins, ensuring the continuation of the core values and spiritual connotations of culture in modern society. For the "San Sheng" culture, its original ecological inheritance is not only to maintain the authenticity of its artistic form, but also to ensure that the national wisdom, religious beliefs, and social functions contained therein are not distorted or diluted.

However, with the rapid advancement of modernization, traditional culture faces dual challenges from the impact of external cultural influences and the growing detachment of younger generations from traditional values. The transmission of "San Sheng" culture is now under threat of decline. Consequently, how to effectively preserve and perpetuate "San Sheng" culture through innovative approaches in contemporary art, education, and cultural industries has become a pressing issue demanding urgent resolution in modern society.

3. Local Cultural Identity

The "San Sheng" culture represents a distinctive folk art form of the Yi ethnic community in Shuangbai, Chuxiong, Yunnan, embodying profound historical memories and cultural symbols. Within local society, "San Sheng" transcends mere performance art—it functions as a living ritual and spiritual bond, playing a pivotal role in constructing and sustaining regional cultural identity.

As a crystallization of historical memory, "San Sheng" originates from ancient sacrificial rites, agricultural ceremonies, and nature worship, encapsulating the Yi ancestors' worldview regarding nature, life, and the cosmos. Through intergenerational transmission, it has evolved into a shared cultural code, enabling participants and audiences alike to reaffirm their historical roots during performances (Zhang, 2016).



As a catalyst for social cohesion, "San Sheng" reinforces collective identity and communal solidarity. During festivals, rituals, and significant social events, it serves as a centerpiece performance, creating vital spaces for social interaction. Villagers' participation and observation foster emotional resonance while strengthening their sense of belonging to the local community.

As a marker of regional identity, "San Sheng" has emerged as a cultural emblem for Shuangbai and broader Chuxiong through cross-regional dissemination. It functions both as a symbolic resource showcasing local uniqueness to outsiders and as an expression of cultural pride for the community itself. Amid modernization and globalization, San Sheng's primal ecological traits gain heightened significance, enabling the local population to maintain cultural distinctiveness within pluralistic exchanges, thereby bolstering cultural confidence (Chai, 2023).

In summary, although Yunnan Province has introduced a series of policy measures in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and the "San Sheng" culture, as a traditional art form of the Yi ethnic group, has also received corresponding protection and inheritance, how to balance "original ecological inheritance" and "innovative dissemination" in practice is still a blank in existing research. Current research mainly focuses on the discourse of policies, regulations, and cultural values. However, with the increasing demand for cultural innovation in modern society, how to commercialize and disseminate the "Three Sheng" culture while maintaining its original ecological characteristics has become an important issue that urgently needs to be addressed. Specifically, there is still a lack of in-depth theoretical exploration and practical cases on how to further expand its influence through modern communication channels, such as digital means and cultural industries, without destroying its spiritual connotation. Therefore, this study aims to explore this issue and fill the research gap in the field by analyzing specific cases of the "San Sheng" culture, providing a reference for the protection and dissemination of other similar cultural heritages.

Conceptual Framework

This study establishes a conceptual framework of "primal ecological inheritance - cultural transmission - sustainable development" (Figure 3) centered on "San Sheng" culture. Through analyzing its cultural value, transmission processes, and contemporary challenges, the research reveals how primal ecological inheritance maintains authenticity, distinctiveness, and identity, while demonstrating cultural transmission's role in expanding influence and enabling industrial transformation. These two dimensions interact synergistically to provide sustainable pathways for both preserving and innovating "San Sheng" culture.



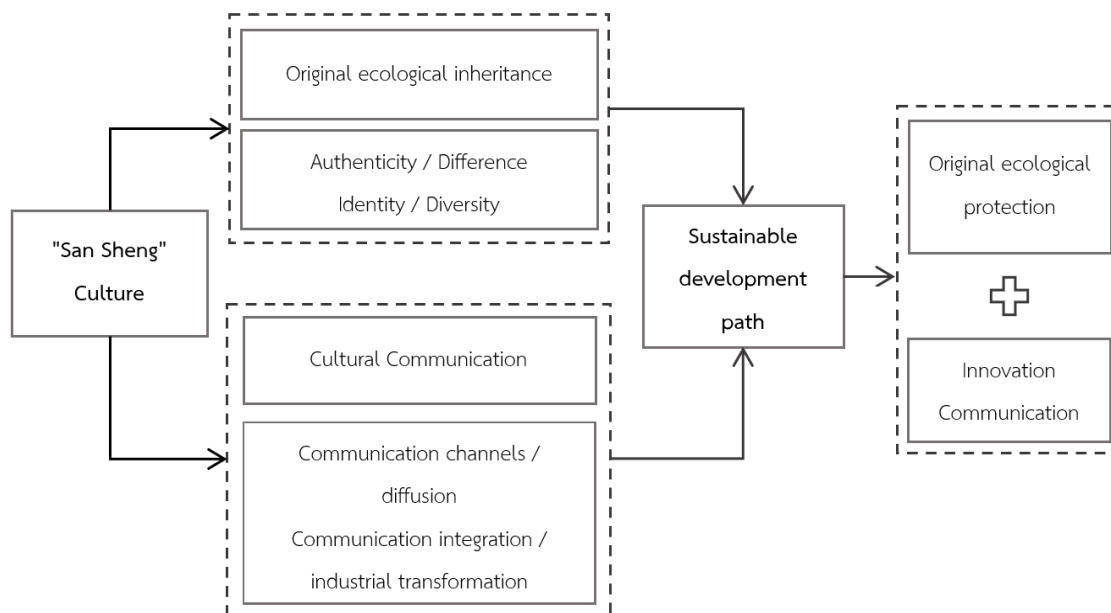


Figure 3 Conceptual framework of “San Sheng” cultural communication

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Figure 3 illustrates the sustainable development path of the "San Sheng" culture, emphasizing the dual path of ecological inheritance and cultural dissemination to achieve long-term protection and development of culture. The inheritance of the original ecology ensures the authenticity, diversity, and identity of culture. Authenticity emphasizes the preservation of the original characteristics of culture in the process of inheritance, while diversity emphasizes the uniqueness of the "San Sheng" culture in the context of globalization; Cultural dissemination promotes the widespread dissemination and industrial transformation of culture through multi-channel diffusion and cross-cultural communication. The combination of the two can achieve the preservation of the traditional characteristics of the "San Sheng" culture in modern society, while also adapting to the development of the times and ensuring its sustainable development.

Methodology

This research primarily employed the following methods:

Literature Review: A literature review is a method that collects, organizes, and analyzes existing research findings to clarify the academic context and current status of research. In this study, the author extensively reviewed relevant literature on Yi totem worship, sacrificial practices, cultural communication strategies, and the protection of intangible cultural heritage, particularly local chronicles, academic papers, and policy documents on the Yi "San Sheng" culture, to identify research gaps and entry points.

Fieldwork: A fieldwork method involves in-depth observation and recording in a specific community or region. In this study, the author conducted field research in Shuangbai, Chuxiong, participating in festivals, sacrificial ceremonies, and performances related to "San Sheng" culture. This research collected firsthand data, authentically documenting the "San Sheng" original forms and social functions. The author also compared and contrasted contemporary performances of "San Sheng" culture with traditional, original forms, identifying key issues (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Comparison of “San Sheng” cultural performance forms

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Interview Method: This method uses communication with relevant groups to gain insights into their understanding and experiences. In this study, the author conducted in-depth interviews with inheritors of the "San Sheng" culture, local government officials, and villagers. The selection criteria are shown in Table 1. This approach aimed to understand different groups' understanding, attitudes, and identification with the "San Sheng".

Table 1 Target group selection criteria

Target Group	Selection Criteria	sampling method	sample size	Data analysis technology
Local government	Government officials are involved in the management, preservation, and promotion of the "San Sheng" culture.	Purposive Sampling	6	Thematic Analysis; NVivo
Cultural inheritors	Individuals who hold important positions in the preservation, performance, and organization of the "San Sheng" culture.	Purposive Sampling	5	Thematic Analysis; NVivo



Target Group	Selection Criteria	sampling method	sample size	Data analysis technology
Villagers	Residents who understand the cultural background and history of the "San Sheng".	Purposive Sampling	12	Thematic Analysis; NVivo

To ensure the smooth progress of the interview and cover all important topics, the interview outline focuses on policy support, cultural heritage practices and challenges, and community identity and participation from the perspectives of local government, cultural inheritors, and villagers, respectively, to comprehensively understand the protection and dissemination of the "San Sheng" culture.

Case study method: Case studies reveal universal patterns through in-depth analysis of specific instances. In this study, the "San Sheng" are systematically analyzed as a case study, integrating theories of cultural communication and ecological preservation to explore their value in local identity and sustainable development.

In summary, this study, through the integrated use of literature review, field research, interviews, and case studies, not only ensures the research's academic foundation but also emphasizes the authenticity of practical observations, laying a solid methodological foundation for the systematic study of the "San Sheng" culture.

Results

1. To elucidate the socio-cultural value of "San Sheng" in Yi ethnic life, religious practices, and identity formation, thereby affirming its unique status as intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

As an integral part of the traditional Yi culture of Shuangbai, Chuxiong, Yunnan, "San Sheng" culture is a complex cultural form that combines dance, music, and ritual. Its performances, centered on sheng music and dance, integrate religious worship, historical memory, social interaction, and aesthetic expression, reflecting the unique cultural creativity cultivated by the Yi people through long-term social practice. In the context of contemporary intangible cultural heritage protection, "San Sheng" is not only an aesthetically pleasing folk art but also a crucial medium for maintaining ethnic ties, inheriting belief systems, and constructing identity. This article aims to reveal the value of "San Sheng" culture in social life, religious beliefs, and cultural identity, and further clarify its unique status as an intangible cultural heritage.

1.1 Value in Social Life

"San Sheng" plays an important social role in the daily lives of the Yi people. As a collective performing art form, it is not only performed at sacrificial ceremonies but is also





commonly seen in public events such as festivals and harvest celebrations. Traditional Yi society lacked systematic written records, so oral transmission and performance were the primary means of knowledge transmission. Through the dance movements, rhythms, and ritualized procedures of "San Sheng", members of the Yi ethnic group can understand the cosmology, historical memory, and social ethics inherent in "San Sheng" culture. This performance is not simply entertainment but a cultural practice closely integrated with lived experience and social norms, serving an educational and socially integrated function.

At the same time, "San Sheng" has gradually become a local cultural symbol in contemporary society. With the revival of ethnic culture and the development of rural tourism, "San Sheng" dance has been widely used in festival performances, tourist displays, and cultural events. Its role in building a local cultural brand is becoming increasingly prominent, enriching the spiritual and cultural life of the local people and providing resources for local economic development. This transformation from a traditional practice to a contemporary social resource demonstrates the multifaceted significance of "San Sheng" in social life.

1.2 Value in Religious Beliefs

The "San Sheng" dance is deeply rooted in the Yi people's religious beliefs. As an integral part of the Chuxiong Yi Nuo ritual, the "San Sheng" dance carries a distinct sacrificial function. Its performances are often combined with religious ceremonies such as offering sacrifices to heaven, worshipping ancestors, exorcising ghosts, and praying for blessings. It is believed to serve as a channel between humans and gods, and the dance movements symbolize prayer and protection. Thus, the "San Sheng" dance is not only an artistic performance but also a symbolic practice of religious belief.

In traditional society, the ritual nature of the "San Sheng" dance reflects the interweaving of the sacred and the secular. Dancers in rituals often assume the dual roles of "shaman" and "artist", acting as both inheritors of cultural skills and mediators of religious power. Through dance and music, they safeguard the safety of the group, pray for a good harvest, and ward off disasters. This religious significance elevates the "San Sheng" dance beyond mere folk art to become a vital component of the group's spiritual life (Zhang, 2016).

Furthermore, the "San Sheng" dance embodies a cultural memory within religious beliefs. Ritual movements, rhythms, and melodies often contain metaphors for ancestral legends, ethnic origins, and historical events. Through ritual performances passed down from generation to generation, Yi society continuously strengthens its cosmology and conception of life, ensuring the continuity of its belief system. In this sense, the "San Sheng" serves as a crucial medium connecting humans and gods, the past and present, and life and death.



1.3 Value in Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is one of the most prominent core values of the "San Sheng" culture. Within the ethnic group, "San Sheng" is not only a traditional dance form but also a symbol of ethnic identity and spiritual unity. Whether in village festivals, wedding and funeral ceremonies, or cross-regional gatherings, the performance of "San Sheng" signifies the cohesion of the ethnic community and the awakening of cultural spirit. Its unique musical rhythms and dance movements carry profound religious symbolism and social significance, serving as a crucial cultural symbol that reinforces the Yi people's sense of "who we are." This symbolic nature makes "San Sheng" an important mechanism for distinguishing outsiders and strengthening in-group identity (Zhang, 2016).

In the context of cross-cultural communication, "San Sheng" has gradually transcended regional boundaries and entered a broader social stage, serving dual functions as a cultural representative and identity showcase. Through various intangible cultural heritage performances, ethnic festivals, and cultural tourism promotion activities, "San Sheng" has not only become a vital medium for showcasing Yi ethnic art and spiritual world but also established a unique symbol within the multi-ethnic cultural system of Yunnan. It represents the significant position of Yi culture in the national cultural landscape, fostering external understanding, respect, and inclusiveness toward Yi culture (Chai, 2023).

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of cultural modernization and globalization, the identity significance of the "San Sheng" culture is continuously being redefined. As the younger generation of Yi people undergoes urbanization and market-oriented social transformation, they gradually diminish the religious function of "San Sheng". However, they revitalize this cultural resource through forms such as stage performances, school curricula, artistic creations, and cultural and creative products. This process of "de-religionization" yet "strengthened identity" reflects the adaptive transformation and symbolic regeneration of "San Sheng" culture in contemporary society. It not only preserves the cultural roots but also showcases new cultural vitality, enabling "San Sheng" to serve as a bridge connecting tradition with modernity and locality with the world in the inheritance and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

In summary, the "San Sheng" culture plays a multifaceted role in the social life, religious beliefs, and cultural identity of the Yi people: it serves as both an artistic expression of faith and ritual, a symbolic carrier of ethnic group identity, and a vital resource for the contemporary reconstruction of cultural identity. This characteristic highlights the unique status and enduring vitality of "San Sheng" as an intangible cultural heritage in modern society.

1.4 Unique Status as an Intangible Cultural Heritage

The unique value of the "San Sheng" culture as an intangible cultural heritage lies primarily in four dimensions: First, authenticity, fully preserving the original forms and ritual symbols of the traditional Yi music and dance of the Shuangbai region of Chuxiong; second, complexity, embracing multiple cultural functions, including religious worship, artistic performance, historical memory, and social integration; third, vitality, perpetuating cultural life through oral transmission and dynamic performances; and fourth, identity, as the core carrier of Yi cultural identity, fostering cultural identity within and beyond the Yi ethnic group. This "four-dimensional" cultural quality makes the preservation of this intangible cultural heritage not only crucial for the preservation of cultural diversity but also for enhancing cultural awareness and promoting cultural innovation. Therefore, as a national intangible cultural heritage, the "San Sheng" culture not only contributes to preserving ethnic cultural diversity but also contributes to the dual goals of promoting cultural confidence and innovation. In summary, the "San Sheng" culture carries the functions of social cohesion and cultural education in Yi society. It plays a role in ritual communication and cultural memory in religious beliefs, and serves as a crucial symbol of ethnic identity and cross-cultural exchange in cultural identity. Its unique authenticity, complexity, and dynamic nature give it an irreplaceable position in the system of intangible cultural heritage. By deeply exploring the multiple values of the "San Sheng", we can not only understand their cultural significance but also provide theoretical support and practical approaches for their contemporary preservation and innovation.

2. To analyze the imperative of preserving San Sheng's primal ecological authenticity in modern dissemination contexts, decoding its inherent logic through the lens of cultural transmission theory and primal ecologicality.

In terms of the importance of dissemination, "San Sheng" culture, as a unique folk art form of the Yi people in Shuangbai County, Chuxiong, integrates religious rituals, historical memory, and aesthetic expression. Its originality not only represents the authenticity and uniqueness of the culture but also embodies the spiritual core of the ethnic group. The preservation of its original form is the core guarantee for maintaining the authenticity and distinctiveness of "San Sheng" culture. Traditional "San Sheng" dance is not merely an artistic form but a cultural complex deeply embedded in ethnic rituals and daily life, reflecting the interactive relationships between humans and nature, humans and deities, and humans and society. Once overly theatricalized or commercially altered during dissemination, it may weaken its religious function and cultural symbolism, reducing it to a soulless performance symbol.

Interview data reveal that both cultural inheritors and local government officials emphasize the importance of preserving the original ecological characteristics of the "San Sheng" culture.



Inheritor Xu Zhengyuan pointed out: If the sacrificial rituals are removed and only the dance movements remain, it can no longer be considered the true "San Sheng". This perspective highlights the crucial role of original ecological inheritance in maintaining cultural authenticity. Local cultural department personnel also stated: When promoting the "San Sheng" culture, we consistently adhere to its ritual background and safeguard its original form, ensuring that the external world can truly understand the spiritual essence of Yi culture. These qualitative data indicate that in the process of cultural dissemination and innovative development, maintaining original ecological integrity is not only the baseline for cultural preservation but also a prerequisite for enhancing its cultural communication power and social recognition.

At the same time, authentic preservation provides a solid cultural foundation for the modern dissemination of "San Sheng" culture. In contemporary society, digital media, the integration of culture and tourism, and cross-cultural exchange have brought new opportunities for the dissemination of "San Sheng" culture. However, only by preserving its authentic characteristics can modern dissemination imbue it with greater cultural value and social significance. It is precisely this authenticity that has attracted international attention, allowing the "San Sheng" culture to enter a wider arena through its unique cultural symbolism. Furthermore, original ecological preservation and modern communication are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Preserving the original ecology ensures the soul of the "San Sheng" culture is preserved, while modern communication methods expand its presence and influence (Zhao et al., 2024).

Therefore, the authentic heritage of the "San Sheng" culture holds irreplaceable importance in modern communication. It is not only the foundation of cultural authenticity but also a prerequisite for sustainable cultural development. In the future, a balance should be struck between "preserving authenticity" and "innovative communication" to ensure that the "San Sheng" culture can be revitalized in the context of globalization.

In terms of theoretical application, cultural communication theory studies how cultural elements or cultural clusters are transmitted, imitated, borrowed, and accepted across different regions and groups. It not only focuses on the transmission of cultural information but also delves into the selection, interpretation, integration, and innovation of culture within this process. Cultural communication theory posits that cultural communication is a complex and diverse system involving multiple links and mechanisms. During the process of communication, cultural elements constantly interact with new cultural environments, generating new meanings and forms. This process drives social progress and cultural innovation. The importance of cultural communication theory lies in providing a new perspective for understanding cultural diversity and cultural change, helping us to delve deeper into how culture spreads, integrates, and innovates



globally (Yang & Shen, 2012). It's worth emphasizing that within cultural communication theory, authentic communication emphasizes the authenticity, originality, and unprocessed nature of culture. It focuses particularly on the importance of maintaining cultural uniqueness and original expression in a modern media environment (Wanwei Publishing, 2022).

Authentic communication emphasizes the preservation of cultural authenticity, attempting to reduce the influence of modern media on culture while promoting a decentralized and original cultural dissemination (Figure 5). However, in a modern communication environment, completely avoiding media is unrealistic; therefore, the key to effective cultural dissemination is how to preserve the originality of culture while adapting to audience needs (Wanwei Publishing, 2022).

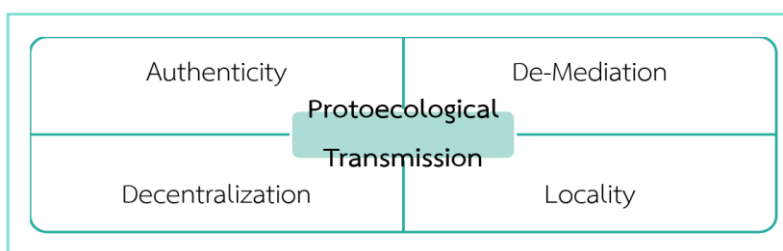


Figure 5 The core components of original ecological communication

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Furthermore, cultural communication theory not only explores the mechanisms, pathways, effects, and authenticity of cultural information dissemination but also emphasizes that the dissemination of cultural information is not simply about transmission; it also encompasses the process by which audiences interpret this information. Cultural communication is not only about the content itself but is also closely linked to the audience's cultural background, social environment, and reception methods. This theory provides insights into how "San Sheng" culture reaches a wider audience through modern media (such as social media, television, and the internet), sparking interest in this traditional culture.

Three approaches can be employed in the dissemination process:

Media Selection and Adaptation: Distribute "San Sheng" cultural content through various media (social media, television programs, online platforms, etc.). For example, short videos and performance clips related to "San Sheng" culture can be released on platforms like TikTok and Weibo to attract the attention of young people (Zhao, 2022).

Audience Analysis and Cultural Positioning: Effective encoding of cultural information tailored to the cultural backgrounds and needs of different audiences is crucial to ensure accurate interpretation. For example, tailoring the presentation of performances and disseminating content



to different domestic and international audiences to better align with their cultural preferences. Multicultural Interaction and Cross-Cultural Communication: Through cross-cultural communication, "San Sheng" Culture can integrate and interact with other cultures, promoting its artistic value and cultural connotations with a global perspective. Through cultural exchanges with other ethnic groups, it can increase its international influence and promote mutual understanding and recognition among cultures.

3. To propose sustainable pathways for "San Sheng" culture, advocating a dual approach that synergizes primal ecological safeguarding with innovative dissemination mechanisms.

The "San Sheng" culture, a significant intangible cultural heritage of the Shuangbai Yi people in Chuxiong, is not only a core component of religious rituals but also a crucial vehicle for ethnic identity and cultural memory. In contemporary society, with the advancement of modernization, urbanization, and globalization, traditional culture faces challenges such as shrinking living space, weakening ritual functions, and a declining sense of identity among younger generations. Therefore, achieving the sustainable development of the "San Sheng" culture has become a key issue in the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This article proposes a path forward that emphasizes the integration of "original ecological preservation" and "innovative dissemination". The path forward is analyzed as follows:

In terms of original ecological preservation, we must uphold the authenticity of the culture and preserve its spiritual core. To ensure the sustainable preservation of the "San Sheng" culture, multifaceted measures are necessary. Institutionalized protection should be strengthened through existing policies and laws, and local special funds should be established to support inheritors, performing groups, and cultural activities. Cultivating inheritors is a key component, combining traditional methods such as the "apprenticeship system" and "family inheritance" with modern educational approaches. The "San Sheng" culture should be incorporated into local school curricula to enhance cultural identity among young people. What is particularly crucial is to maintain the original performance context, protect the ritual space and process, avoid excessive commercialization or theatrical adaptation, and thus preserve the authenticity and spiritual connotation of the culture in its original social and religious environment.

In terms of innovative dissemination, the contemporary value and influence of "San Sheng" culture should be expanded. To achieve the innovative inheritance and sustainable development of "San Sheng" culture, a strategy that prioritizes both digital preservation and industrial development should be adopted. Digital preservation should integrate new media platforms such as short video platforms and interactive games to create immersive cultural experience spaces. In terms of cultural and tourism integration, through themed events such as the "San Sheng" Cultural Festival, cultural and creative products with ethnic characteristics should be developed.





This approach maintains cultural authenticity while achieving industrial value-added, expanding its presence and influence in contemporary society (Song & Liu, 2015).

At the same time, the sustainable development of "San Sheng" culture requires a dynamic balance between "protection" and "dissemination". Relying solely on preserving its original ecology could confine "San Sheng" to a small local area, lacking contemporary vitality. Excessive pursuit of innovative dissemination could weaken the cultural essence, turning it into a soulless "performance". Therefore, we must adhere to the principle of "protection as the root, dissemination as the wings": preserving the cultural core through preserving its original ecology and expanding its presence through innovative dissemination.

Therefore, the sustainable development of the "San Sheng" culture must combine "original ecological preservation" with "innovative dissemination" (Figure 6). The core concept of this model is "Protection is the foundation, dissemination is the extension", emphasizing the interactive and complementary relationship between original ecological protection and innovative dissemination. The protection of the original ecology ensures the authenticity and continuity of the "San Sheng" culture, which is the foundation of cultural life; innovative communication achieves cultural revitalization and expansion through digitization, integration of culture and tourism, and cross-cultural exchange. The two form a cyclical relationship: protecting and providing content sources, promoting identity and participation through dissemination, and ultimately achieving sustainable cultural development (Table 2). Only by preserving the cultural essence while expanding its modern dissemination space can we achieve the creative transformation and innovative development of ethnic minority intangible cultural heritage in the new era. This not only concerns the survival of the "San Sheng" but also provides a model for the preservation and dissemination of ethnic minority cultures as a whole.



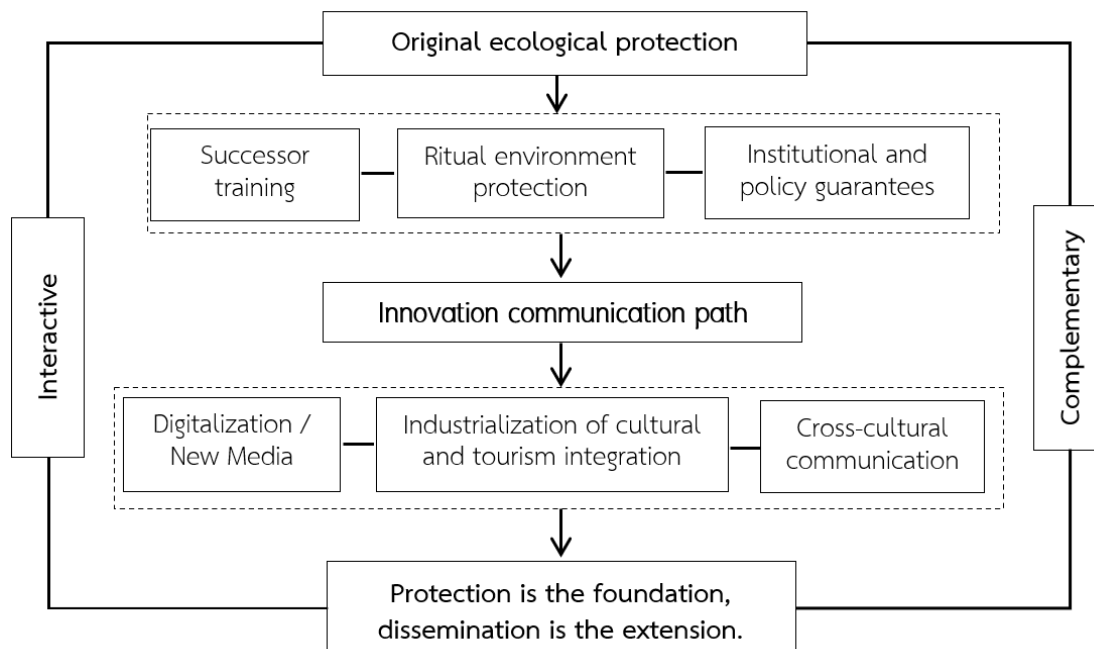


Figure 6 Sustainable development path of "San Sheng" culture

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Table 2 Model Structure of Sustainable Development Path

Module	Main Content	Functional positioning	Interrelation
Authenticity Preservation	Cultivate, protect, and ensure	Preserve the authenticity and continuity of the "Three Sheng" culture, and maintain its spiritual core.	Provide content sources and cultural foundations for dissemination.
Innovative Communication	Dissemination, integration, and communication	Expand the influence and participation of the "Three Sheng" culture	Feedback protection promotes social identity and cultural dissemination
Cultural Re-identification	Strengthening national identity and cultural confidence	Establishing a sense of cultural community identity	The cycle mechanism of "Protection - Communication - Re-identification - Re-protection"

Discussion

As a significant folk art form of the Shuangbai Yi people in Chuxiong, the "San Sheng" culture carries a rich legacy of historical memory and national spirit. Its inheritance and dissemination in contemporary society face multiple opportunities and challenges. Research findings indicate that



the interactive relationship between authenticity and cultural dissemination is a core issue in the development of "San Sheng" culture.

First, in terms of cultural identity, preserving the authenticity of "San Sheng" culture not only safeguards its authenticity and uniqueness but also serves as a crucial link in sustaining Yi identity. The preservation of authenticity enables local communities to maintain a sense of spiritual roots and cultural belonging amidst modernization. This sense of identity is both a crucial source of community cohesion and a crucial expression of cultural confidence.

Secondly, at the level of cultural dissemination, the influence of "San Sheng" culture has gradually transcended local boundaries, entering regional and even broader dissemination spaces. The development of digital media and the cultural and creative industries has provided new channels and platforms for its dissemination, but at the same time, it also carries the risk of "performance" and "consumerization." When "San Sheng" is over-packaged as a cultural symbol or tourist resource, its original religious, ritual, and community functions may be weakened, leading to a crisis of cultural "hollowing out" (Li & Cao, 2025).

Thirdly, in the development path, finding a balance between protection and innovation becomes crucial. On one hand, primary ecological protection provides a solid cultural foundation for "San Sheng" culture, preventing it from being alienated during modernization. On the other hand, moderate innovation and communication methods are essential for the "San Sheng" culture to adapt to contemporary society and achieve dynamic development. Therefore, a dynamic mechanism of "primal ecology - innovative communication - sustainable development" needs to be established, ensuring the preservation of cultural integrity while promoting its entry into broader public cultural domains (Shi, 2022). Ultimately, the significance of this study lies not only in revealing the current survival status and communication logic of "San Sheng" culture, but also in providing insights for the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage. In the context of the intertwining of globalization and localization, the practice of "San Sheng" culture demonstrates that strengthening local cultural identity and expanding diverse communication are not contradictory, but complementary dual forces.

In summary, future research should further explore integrated mechanisms of policy support, community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration to promote the innovative development of "San Sheng" culture while preserving its original essence, ultimately moving towards a truly sustainable cultural future.

Conclusion

The "San Sheng" culture embodies multiple values of the Chuxiong Yi people, including social life, religious beliefs, and ethnic identity. It serves not only as an essential component of



religious rituals and ceremonies but also as a symbol of emotional cohesion and cultural identity. However, under the pressures of modernization and marketization, its ecological authenticity and spiritual essence face the risk of weakening.

Study indicates that "ecological preservation" and "innovative dissemination" constitute dual pathways for the sustainable development of "San Sheng" culture. On one hand, ecological preservation safeguards its authenticity and cultural roots through the cultivation of inheritors, institutional protection, and the maintenance of ritual environments. On the other hand, innovative dissemination revitalizes it by employing digital documentation, cultural-tourism integration, and cross-cultural exchange, expanding its reach and influence. Together, these approaches complement each other, enabling "San Sheng" culture to achieve a dynamic balance between tradition and modernity.

Therefore, the protection and dissemination of "San Sheng" culture are not only vital tasks for intangible cultural heritage preservation but also essential practices for sustaining ethnic spirit and cultural diversity. By constructing a development model of "preservation as the foundation and dissemination as the wings", "San Sheng" culture can gain renewed vitality in the new era and offer valuable insights for the inheritance and innovation of minority intangible cultural heritage.

Recommendation

On a theoretical level, this study argues that the preservation of the "San Sheng" culture should strike a balance between the tension of "originality" and "re-creation". Future research needs to explore the interplay between cultural authenticity, identity, and dissemination from an interdisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, at the policy level, we should emphasize community agency, strengthen the cultural identity of the Yi people, promote digital preservation and display, establish a mechanism integrating industry, academia, and research, and form a multi-stakeholder collaborative system for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

On an applied level, future study could focus on the digital dissemination of the "San Sheng" culture, cross-cultural comparative studies, and its expanded value in youth education and community development. In practice, we should promote the integration of the "San Sheng" with cultural creativity, tourism, and education, develop regionally distinctive products, create immersive experiences, and enhance public engagement. We should also prioritize the cultivation of young inheritors and build a talent pipeline to provide long-term momentum for the sustainable development of the "San Sheng" culture.





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