

# *Research on the Influence of Regional Factors on the Ethnic Folk Dances in Northern Guangxi*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore how regional factors influence the ethnic folk dances of Northern Guangxi. Through an in-depth analysis of the geographical environment, historical background, ethnic composition, and cultural heritage of the Northern Guangxi region, this paper reveals how regional factors shape the unique style and expression of local folk dances. The study shows that the diverse geographical environment and rich ethnic culture of Northern Guangxi provide a fertile ground for the development of folk dances, also displaying the dynamic evolution of these dances in their transmission and innovation.

## 1. Introduction

This research delves into the impact of regional factors on the ethnic folk dances of Northern Guangxi, focusing on the area's unique geographical environment, diverse ethnic composition, and rich cultural traditions. By analyzing the historical evolution, stylistic features, and the interaction of folk dances with socio-cultural aspects in the Northern Guangxi region, this paper aims to reveal how regional characteristics shape and influence the form and essence of folk dances, while also reflecting the transmission and transformation of ethnic culture in modern society.

## 2. Geography and Ethnic Characteristics of Northern Guangxi

### 2.1. Overview of Geographical Environment

Northern Guangxi, located in southern China, boasts a unique geographical position and is the source of several important rivers, including the famous Li River. The region features a complex and varied topography, with mountain ranges and rolling hills in the north forming a natural barrier and nurturing a wealth of natural resources. In contrast, the southern area showcases a different landscape, with vast plains and fertile basins providing ideal conditions for agriculture. This topographical diversity not only shapes various natural landscapes but also influences the lifestyle and cultural customs of local residents.[1]

Climatically, Northern Guangxi experiences a subtropical monsoon climate with distinct seasons, hot and rainy summers, and mild, less rainy winters. Such climatic conditions result in a rich variety of plant species and biodiversity, offering abundant natural resources to local inhabitants. Additionally,

the region's unique climatic conditions have led to specific agricultural practices, such as the widespread cultivation of crops like rice and citrus, which are not only major food sources for locals but also integral parts of the local culture.[2]

The rich and diverse geographical environment of Northern Guangxi provides abundant inspiration for local folk arts, especially in dance and music. The majestic landscapes of the mountains and hills, coupled with the gentle scenery of rivers and plains, are skillfully incorporated into folk dances, forming unique expressions and styles. For instance, mountain dances are often vigorous and robust, reflecting the bold spirit and awe of nature among mountain people, while dances from the plains are softer and smoother, showing the delicate perception of life and harmonious coexistence with nature among the plain dwellers. These dances are not only important components of local culture but also vital in preserving and showcasing the unique geographical and cultural characteristics of Northern Guangxi.[3]

## 2.2. Analysis of Ethnic Composition

Northern Guangxi is a typical region of multi-ethnic integration in China, inhabited by various ethnic groups such as Han, Zhuang, Miao, Dong, and others, forming a rich and colorful ethnic tapestry. Each ethnic group, with its distinct characteristics, weaves a diverse and harmonious socio-cultural fabric. The Zhuang, being the most populous ethnic group in the region, have profoundly influenced the folk arts of Northern Guangxi with their unique culture and customs. The Miao, Dong, and other minority ethnic groups, although smaller in population, contribute significantly to the cultural diversity of Northern Guangxi with their rich cultural traditions and unique lifestyles.[4]

The Zhuang and Miao, in particular, have distinct cultural characteristics, fully reflected in their languages, religious beliefs, festival celebrations, and daily customs. The Zhuang's "March 3rd" celebration is not only a showcase of Zhuang culture but also an embodiment of their ethnic identity and traditional values. The Miao's "Miao New Year Festival" is the most important festival of the year for the Miao people, known for its unique folk dances, attire, and rich folk activities.[5]

The Dong, another significant ethnic group in Northern Guangxi, contribute to the region's culture with their unique song and dance culture and wooden architectural structures, such as Wind and Rain Bridges and Drum Towers. Dong's Grand Song, Dong opera, and other cultural forms play an important role in the local society, serving as carriers of ethnic cultural heritage and symbols of ethnic spirit and social cohesion.[6]

The cultural intermingling of these diverse ethnic groups lends a unique diversity and richness to the folk arts of Northern Guangxi. The cultural exchanges and integration among the ethnic groups continuously promote the development of folk arts, especially dance, making the folk dances of Northern Guangxi a treasure in China's ethnic dance repertoire. These dances are not only continuations of each ethnic group's cultural traditions but also bridges of mutual understanding and respect among ethnicities, laying a solid foundation for promoting multi-ethnic development and social harmony.

## 2.3. Exploration of Cultural Characteristics

The cultural characteristics of Northern Guangxi, as a product of its geographical environment and multi-ethnic composition, display unique features. The region's cultural traditions are deeply influenced by nature worship and totem beliefs, profoundly reflected in folk dances, music, and handicrafts. Dance, as a form of cultural expression, often incorporates imitations and praises of the natural world's flora and fauna, expressing awe of nature and respect for life. For example, Zhuang dances often include movements mimicking landscapes and animals, while Miao dances embody worship of nature and ancestors.

These dances are more than mere entertainment; they carry historical memories and serve as important carriers of social relationships and cultural identities. During traditional festivals and celebrations, folk dances become a bridge connecting the past and present, the old and young generations. These activities not only preserve ancient dance forms but also allow them to be passed down and developed in new social contexts.

Additionally, the folk arts of Northern Guangxi exhibit distinct regional characteristics. Due to differences in geography and ethnic history across various areas, dance styles and performance forms vary. This diversity enriches local cultural life and serves as an important window to study the diversity of Chinese ethnic folk culture. For instance, the Dong Grand Song Dance reflects the Dong people's collectivism and harmony, while the Miao Lusheng Dance showcases the Miao's unique understanding and expression of music and dance.

The existence and development of these cultural characteristics not only enrich the cultural identity of Northern Guangxi but also provide important perspectives for understanding and appreciating the region's unique culture. Through studying and preserving these dances and cultural characteristics, we can better understand Northern Guangxi's history and culture, promote mutual understanding and respect between different cultures, and jointly maintain and enrich our shared cultural heritage.

### **3. History and Development of Folk Dance in Northern Guangxi**

#### **3.1. Historical Evolution Overview**

The history of folk dance in Northern Guangxi is long-standing, tracing back to ancient primitive dances and rituals. Early dance forms were primarily associated with sacrificial activities and agricultural culture, reflecting local residents' worship and awe of natural forces. Over time, these dances gradually incorporated more social elements, such as war, hunting, and scenes from daily life. Particularly under the influence of various ethnic cultures, the folk dances of the Northern Guangxi region began to exhibit rich diversity and unique regional characteristics.

Throughout different dynastic cultural backgrounds, the folk dances of Northern Guangxi continuously evolved, integrating various cultural elements. Especially during the Tang and Song dynasties, with the prosperity and exchange of cultures, dance art experienced significant development in both form and content. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the rise of opera arts, the exchange and integration of folk dance with other art forms like opera and Quyi became more frequent, promoting further development and innovation in dance art.

In modern times, while maintaining traditional elements, Northern Guangxi folk dances have also been influenced by modern culture. Since the mid-20th century, with deeper cultural exchanges and the development of modern media technology, Northern Guangxi folk dances have begun to transcend regional boundaries, gaining recognition and appreciation from a broader audience. During this period, folk dances not only innovated in technique and form but also gained attention in preservation and transmission.

#### **3.2. Representative Dance Forms**

The folk dance forms of Northern Guangxi are extremely rich, and the diverse dance styles reflect the region's profound cultural heritage and multiple ethnic characteristics. Among them, the Zhuang's "Brocade Dance," Miao's "Lusheng Dance," and Dong's "Grand Song Dance" are the three most representative forms, showcasing the cultural characteristics of each ethnicity and becoming unique symbols of Northern Guangxi's folk dance art.

The Brocade Dance is a shining jewel in Zhuang culture. Its origins can be traced back to the traditional Zhuang brocade weaving activities, with dance movements incorporating weaving

techniques, such as shuttle movements, characterized by elegant and varied rhythms, fully reflecting the grace, delicacy, and wisdom of Zhuang women. The Brocade Dance is not just an art form but also an important carrier of Zhuang culture and history.

The Lusheng Dance is an indispensable part of Miao culture, often accompanied by the melodious sound of the Lusheng. This dance is vibrant and unrestrained, fully showcasing the unique style of Miao culture and the emotional life of the Miao people. The Lusheng Dance is not just a form of dance performance but also an important means of social interaction and courtship among the Miao youth.

The Dong's Grand Song Dance focuses more on collective participation and chorus, with simple yet solemn dance forms, reflecting the harmony and unity of Dong society. Usually performed during important festivals or community events, the Grand Song Dance, through collective singing and dancing, showcases the Dong people's collectivist spirit and respect for traditional culture.

These dances are not only important carriers of cultural heritage in Northern Guangxi but also integral parts of local people's daily lives. In various festivals, weddings, and other social activities, these dances are used to express joy, gratitude, and wishes, and are also important ways to strengthen community cohesion and pass down ethnic culture. Through these dances, the people of Northern Guangxi not only express their love for life and awe of nature but also pass their culture and traditions to the next generation.

### **3.3. Interaction between Dance and Social Culture**

Folk dances in Northern Guangxi are closely related to the local social culture, serving as important avenues for cultural transmission and social communication. These dances are not just forms of artistic expression but also crucial carriers of social values, historical memories, and ethnic identity.

In traditional societies, dance was often combined with rituals, agriculture, and social ceremonies, reflecting the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, and individuals and society. For instance, in agricultural culture, dances were often used to pray for a good harvest and ward off evil, expressing reverence and gratitude towards nature.

With societal development and changes, Northern Guangxi folk dances have gradually incorporated modern elements in their transmission. In modern society, these dances are not only historical and cultural inheritors but also important means to promote ethnic cultural exchanges and enhance ethnic cohesion. Through festival celebrations, cultural performances, and educational activities, folk dances in Northern Guangxi provide opportunities for people of different ages and backgrounds to share and appreciate ethnic culture.

Moreover, with the impact of cultural globalization, Northern Guangxi folk dances face challenges and opportunities while maintaining tradition. On one hand, the cultural impact brought by globalization poses challenges to the preservation of traditional dances; on the other hand, globalization also offers opportunities for Northern Guangxi folk dances to reach the global stage. In this context, finding a balance between preservation and development has become an important issue for the development of Northern Guangxi folk dances.

## **4. The Impact of Regional Factors on Folk Dance**

### **4.1. Influence of Geographical Environment on Dance Style**

The geographical environment of Northern Guangxi plays a decisive role in shaping the styles of local folk dances. The diverse terrain of the region, ranging from mountains and hills to vast plains and basins, has fostered unique dance styles and expressions. In mountainous areas, folk dances often display a fast rhythm and large movements, reflecting the bold spirit and resilience of the mountain

people. Dancers frequently imitate animals or natural phenomena found in the mountains, such as the flight of an eagle or the run of a tiger, expressing reverence for nature and the inheritance of the mountain spirit.

In contrast, the dance styles in plains and basin areas are usually more gentle and delicate. These dances often portray the concept of harmonious coexistence with nature, with movements emphasizing fluidity and continuity, reflecting the nuanced experience of life and deep understanding of nature by the residents of the plains. For example, dances in these areas might mimic the softness of flowing water or the ambiance of paddy fields, showcasing a life closely connected with nature.

Additionally, the unique climate and natural landscapes of Northern Guangxi have profoundly influenced dance styles. The distinct seasonal characteristics and rich natural scenery become significant sources of inspiration for dance creation. In dances, movements often imitate seasonal changes, weather phenomena, or specific geographical features, such as the blooming of flowers in spring or the falling leaves in autumn. These elements not only enrich the content of the dances but also make them a way to express reverence and admiration for nature.

The influence of the geographical environment on dance is also reflected in the choice of costumes and props. The natural resources and material characteristics of different regions affect the style and materials of dance costumes. For instance, mountain dance costumes often use local plant fibers or animal fur, while costumes in plain areas tend to be light and flowing, fitting the characteristics of the dance movements. These costumes and props add visual beauty to the dance and serve as important links connecting the dance with its geographical and cultural background.

In summary, the geographical environment of Northern Guangxi not only provides a diverse range of content and forms for local folk dances but also deeply affects the performance techniques and artistic expression, making each dance a vivid representation of the region's natural environment and cultural characteristics.

## 4.2. Influence of Ethnic Culture on Dance Content

Folk dances in Northern Guangxi are deeply influenced by the rich ethnic cultures of the area. These cultural elements not only impart unique themes and styles to the dances but also make them important carriers of historical and cultural heritage. The history, legends, religious beliefs, social customs, and lifestyles of each ethnicity find vivid expression in their dances.

Taking Zhuang dances as an example, the content often integrates worship of nature and ancestors, reflecting the Zhuang people's philosophy of harmonious coexistence with nature and respect for ancestors. The movements and rhythms in these dances are closely related to Zhuang's nature worship and mythological stories, such as imitating animal behaviors or celestial changes, expressing awe and admiration for the natural world.

Miao dances display unique historical stories and totem beliefs. Miao dances often revolve around traditional beliefs and totem worship, with dancers narrating ancient myths and legends, conveying respect for nature and ancestors. For example, the Miao's Lusheng Dance is not just a dance performance but also a means of social interaction and cultural inheritance, incorporating Miao music, costumes, and historical stories.

The influence of ethnic culture on dance content is also reflected in music, rhythm, and dance structure. The music style and sense of rhythm of different ethnicities significantly determine the rhythm and arrangement of dance movements. For instance, the rhythm of the Lusheng Dance is closely connected to the music of the Lusheng, reflecting the unique style and rhythm of Miao music.

Beyond entertainment and artistic expression, folk dances also play a crucial role in social culture and historical inheritance. Dances are often used to commemorate important historical events, national heroes, or traditional festivals, serving as an important way to transmit ethnic memories and

cultural heritage. Through dance, stories of historical events and national heroes are passed down in communities, becoming part of people's collective memory and cultural identity.

In summary, the content of folk dances in Northern Guangxi is rich and varied, heavily influenced by the diverse ethnic cultures of the region. These dances are not only a heritage of traditional ethnic cultures but also a display of ethnic history and cultural diversity, providing a unique window for understanding and appreciating these ethnic cultures.

### **4.3. The Impact of Social Change on Dance Transmission**

The transmission of folk dances in Northern Guangxi faces numerous challenges and opportunities against the backdrop of societal development and changes. With the progress of modernization and urbanization, traditional lifestyles have undergone significant changes, directly affecting the transmission and development of folk dances. Traditional performance occasions and social functions have diminished, and with the acceleration of modern life, the interest and participation in traditional folk dances among the younger generation have generally declined. This trend poses a threat to the transmission of traditional dances, with fewer inheritors and some precious dance forms even facing the risk of extinction.

However, social changes also bring new opportunities for transmission. The development of the modern education system and media technology, especially the widespread use of the internet and social media, provide new platforms and methods for the dissemination and popularization of traditional dances. Through online teaching, video sharing, and online performances, folk dances can transcend geographical boundaries, attracting more young people's attention and interest. These emerging methods of dissemination not only make traditional dances more accessible to the public but also open up possibilities for innovation in traditional culture.

Furthermore, the growing awareness of the protection of intangible cultural heritage by the government and society provides important support for the transmission of folk dances. Through relevant policies, protection programs, and various cultural activities, governments and social organizations strive to promote the preservation and development of folk dance art. These efforts not only help protect traditional dances from extinction but also provide conditions for the innovation and development of dance art.

In this context, folk dances in Northern Guangxi face the significant challenge of finding a balance between maintaining tradition and adapting to modernization. Inheritors and enthusiasts of traditional dances need to explore new ways and paths of transmission to ensure that this precious cultural heritage continues to survive and develop in modern society. By combining tradition with modernity, and inheritance with innovation, the folk dances of Northern Guangxi are expected to rejuvenate in the new era.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study demonstrates that the geographical and cultural diversity of Northern Guangxi has had a profound impact on its ethnic folk dances, not only forming unique dance styles but also promoting cultural diversity and heritage. In the face of challenges posed by globalization and modernization, the protection and transmission of these unique cultural heritages are particularly important. This research provides a new perspective on the role of regional factors in the development of ethnic culture and points the way for future cultural preservation and research work.

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