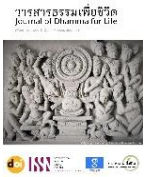
JDL
JOURNAL OF DHAMMA FOR LIFE
ISSN (Online): 2822-048X

วารสารธรรมเพื่อชีวิต
JOURNAL OF DHAMMA FOR LIFE
ISSN: 2822-048X
https://soo8.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/dhammalife/index



Academic Article

DOI: 10.14456/jdl.2025.99

Cultural Space Protection for "Waving Dance" by Tujia People in Youyang from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

Lanmei Fu [1]*, Nataporn Rattachaiwong[2], Qianqiu Jin[3]

ARTICLE INFO

Name of Author & Corresponding Author: *

1. **Lanmei Fu***
Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand.
Email: s62584947016 @ssru.ac.th

2. **Nataporn Rattachaiwong**
Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand.
Email: nataporn.ra@ssru.ac.th

3. **Qianqiu Jin**
Jiangnan Vocational College of Media Arts, China.
Email: jinqianqiu1391@sina.com

Keywords:
Waving Dance by Tujia People; Cultural Space; Cultural Identity and Ethnic Identity

Article history:
Received: 28/09/2024
Revised: 04/11/2024
Accepted: 12/03/2025
Available online: 29/03/2025

How to Cite:

Fu et al. (2025). Cultural Space Protection for "Waving Dance" by Tujia People in Youyang from the Perspective of Cultural Identity. *Journal Dhamma for Life, 31*(1), 667-677.

ABSTRACT

We explored Waving Dance in the southeast Chongqing by applying the Theory of Cultural Space from the perspective of cultural identity. It is of great significance for protection and development in the cultural space of Waving Dance, as well as for rejuvenation and revitalization of the cultural circle of Wuling Corridor through route exploration. The Tujia People in the southeast of Chongqing forms one of the most important parts of the Tujia People living in Wuling Mountains. Due to their different geography, living environment and historical circumstance, they are different from the Tujia People in Guizhou, Hunan and Hubei. As time changes, the culture of Waving Dance has kept evolving in a Procrustean way to adapt to the external environment. Such a passive inheritance mode has impacted the entire cultural space with Waving Dance at its core, and thus hindered the cultural rescue, protection and development. The cultural space of Waving Dance was explored and the dilemma against cultural development was analyzed herein regarding the Theory of Cultural Identity. The significance among the Waving Dance, the ethnic identity and the cultural confidence of Tujia People were analyzed objectively from the "people-oriented" idea to "overall promotion", as well as from the ontological protection under cultural ecology to the cultural transmission and future prospects of Waving Dance.

Introduction

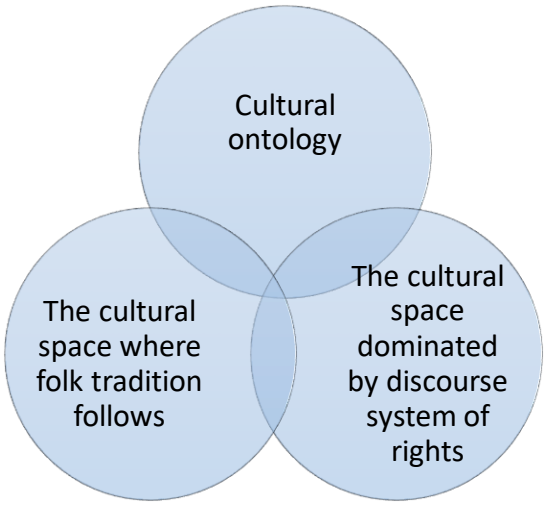
Waving Dance, a symbolic system and an ethnic memory of Tujia People, maintains their common social experience. It not only records the past of this dance language but also projects their ethnic history. The Waving Dance by Tujia People in Youyang evolves from the gods and ancestor worship and entertainment by ancient ancestors, and has been intermittently preserved to this day in the waves of history. However, there are various problems in the current preservation, such as the variation in both dance form and style and the interruption of natural continuation. For example, the separation of clan system from Waving Dance directly results in the drastic reduction in the ritual, frequency and scale of ancestor worship; the coexistence among Tujia People, Miao People and Han People has a direct impact on the transformation in its traditional dance forms and styles; the degeneration of Tujia language and primitive faith has deformed the cultural styles and cultural value of Waving Dance. As a result, it is urgent for us to propose a set of strategies conducive to both tradition inheritance and economic development in the Waving Dance by Tujia People. Under the Cultural Identity Theory, by virtue of literature collection method, first of all, we sorted out and analyzed the literature concerning cultural symbol, cultural space, folk culture and cultural identity theories, as well as the cultural theme on Waving Dance; then, field investigation method: we adopted observation method to observe the inheritors and folks in the hinterland of Youyang; we adopted the interview method, especially the interview with the local middle-aged and elderly people familiar with Waving Dance. In this way, the discourse text was acquired and analyzed for the explanation for the cultural metaphor behind such an art form.

The Cultural Space View from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

The Identity Theory has been widely applied in the field of humanities and social sciences during recent years. Different scholars have given their own explanations in the respects of sociology, art, politics, history, etc. “Cultural identity refers to the common culture among individuals or between individuals and groups, who share same cultural symbols, abide by common cultural values, and develop successful thinking patterns and behavioral norms.” (Cui Xinjian, 2004). “From the perspective of source, identity means a sort of ‘identity’”. As a recognition symbol system, we adopt it to define the characteristics of “ego” and to display the difference from “the other”. According to William Connelly, difference and identity need each other... The way for one to solve his self-identity doubt is to construct his own self-identity by constructing the other in opposition to ego.” (Willia E.Connolly, 1991) “Cultural identity works as a system of meaning and intelligence and the logical basis for group unity. It emphasizes the reconstruction of cultural characteristics and the primacy of identity in the cultural system.” Therefore, Tujia People in the southeast Chongqing usually take a certain symbol as their own spiritual belief. This symbol, serving as cultural identity, exists in the group. It is not only diverse, complex and confrontational but also concrete and plastic. It is a process that can be cultivated. Therefore, cultural identity is bred in the social practice, cultivated during the process of cultural integration and conflict, and serves as the premise and basis of both ethnic and national identity.

“Based on the social process of cultural identity, the theory on space generation by Lefebvre provides an explanatory path for cultural identity. He created the Ternary Theory on Space by regarding both physical and spiritual social space as a whole, and then divided the

space generation into into three important levels: Spatial practice, spatial representation and representational space. (Zhang Xiang, 2020)"



Cultural space works as a kind of symbol condensed by spatial practice, namely "cultural ontology", and the common habits of regional ethnic groups during their long-term living and social practice. It is a kind of cultural space with different contents, scales and characteristics created by the mutual behaviors among people. Spatial representation refers to the "circle influenced and radiated by power discourse system", an over-controlled cultural identity under power discourse system that advocates the alignment with the national political ideology. The representation space refers to "the multiple space formed by the circle influenced and radiated by transmitter". It refers to the attempts by cultural holders, learners, communicators and researchers to change cultural subjects and practices through themselves, their daily lives, languages and influences. Those three levels of space overlap and influence each other. Generally, the cultural cultivation and identification in an established cultural space works as a conflicting and contrary process. This process concern how individuals and society should be integrated in the cultural space, and how "identity" should be "generated" from the conflict between individuals and group. Starting from the cultural space of the Waving Dance in southeast Chongqing, we tried to explore the profound significance behind the culture and the sustainable development law on culture through the cultural recognition of Waving Dance, so as to explore a new path to revive the culture.

Overview on Case Site

Youyang of Chongqing stands as a multi-ethnic area composed of Tujia People, Miao People and Han People. Located in the hinterland of Wuling Mountain in southeast Chongqing, Youyang links western Hubei, western Hunan, eastern Guizhou, etc. The Youshui River Basin stands as the core area for Ba-Tu culture deposition, and an important area for the multi-cultural integration among Tujia, Han People, Miao People and Dong People. According to the 2021 national census, Youyang County had a population of 860,400 then. Among them, there were 17 ethnic minorities, accounting for a total population of about 790,400, or 91.86%; there were 693,000 Tujia people, accounting for 80.54% of the total population, and 97,400 Miao people, accounting for 11.32% of the total population. Therefore, the county is a Tujia-based multi-ethnic settlement area. Waving Dance, a symbol of Tujia People, has been spread among the

Tujia People in the Wuling Mountains for thousands of years. According to Tian Jingmin, a national inheritor of Waving Dance in Youyang, "Our ancestors migrated from Yuanling of Hunan Province to Xiasha Village, Yuanxinxi Township, Youyang Autonomous County (The current Kezhai Village, Keda Town). The Waving Dance inherited from our ancestors was gradually formed during the migration process". (China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network). Therefore, the Waving Dance in Youyang is also named the Waving Dance for Migration.

Table 1: Cultural Space of Waving Dance in Youyang

Cultural Space	Cultural Types	Cultural Interpretation	Cultural Characteristics
Spatial practice	1. Hand Waving Hall 2. Hand Waving Hall 3. Faith 4. Costume 5. Weddings and funerals	1. Temple of King of Earth: Dedicated to the eight great gods and King of Earth; 2. It is the spiritual and cultural carrier of Tujia People; 3. Origin of faith: Earth king worship and ancestor worship; 4. Xilankapu 5. Maogusi: Reflect the reproduction worship; pay tributes to the deceased.	1. The spiritual and cultural space for worship and entertainment; 2. The song and dance activities reflecting the farming, war and migration of Tujia People; 4. Colorful fabrics of Tujia People; 5. Traditional songs and dances are mixed in Waving Dance;
Spatial representation	1. Festival celebration; 2. Events; 3. Language; 4. Intangible Cultural Heritage Center.	1. The Spring Festival and April 8th 2. Official departments hold intangible cultural heritage performance activities, non-genetic learning activities, tourism activities and Waving Dance Festival from time to time, and publicize the hand waving image through texts, images and other mainstream platforms.	1. They are festivals with the most sacrificial activities; 2. The promotion activities organized by the government are intended to gain cultural attention and cultural recognition both within and outside the People; 3. It is used in both sacrificial ceremonies and waving songs;

Cultural Space	Cultural Types	Cultural Interpretation	Cultural Characteristics
		3. The Tujia language, which does not have character. 4. Inheritor evaluation, transmission, cultural inheritance and protection institution	4. It is a regional self-made cultural protection system.
Representational space	1. Inheritor; 2. Performer; 3. Secondary creators and choreographers.	1. Act as the priest presiding over the waving ceremony and teaching Waving Dance; 2. Tujia villagers and the relevant learners in the cultural hall; 3. Professional dancers and local choreographers	1. They are the living fossils for Waving Dance inheritance and responsible for study, inheritance and transmission; 2. Important channels for the folk independent inheritance and official transmission of Waving Dance; 3. Choreograph the Baba Dance and the broadcast gymnastics according Waving Dance, and popularize the dance art in this region;

To sum up, the Waving Dance by Tujia People in Youyang is a symbol of ethnic culture in the region. The spatial practice by Tujia People in Youyang exists in such a form which constructs the identity system of Tujia Culture. In other words, a better and richer cultural space can be created only when there is a high recognition of Waving Dance culture inside and outside this region.

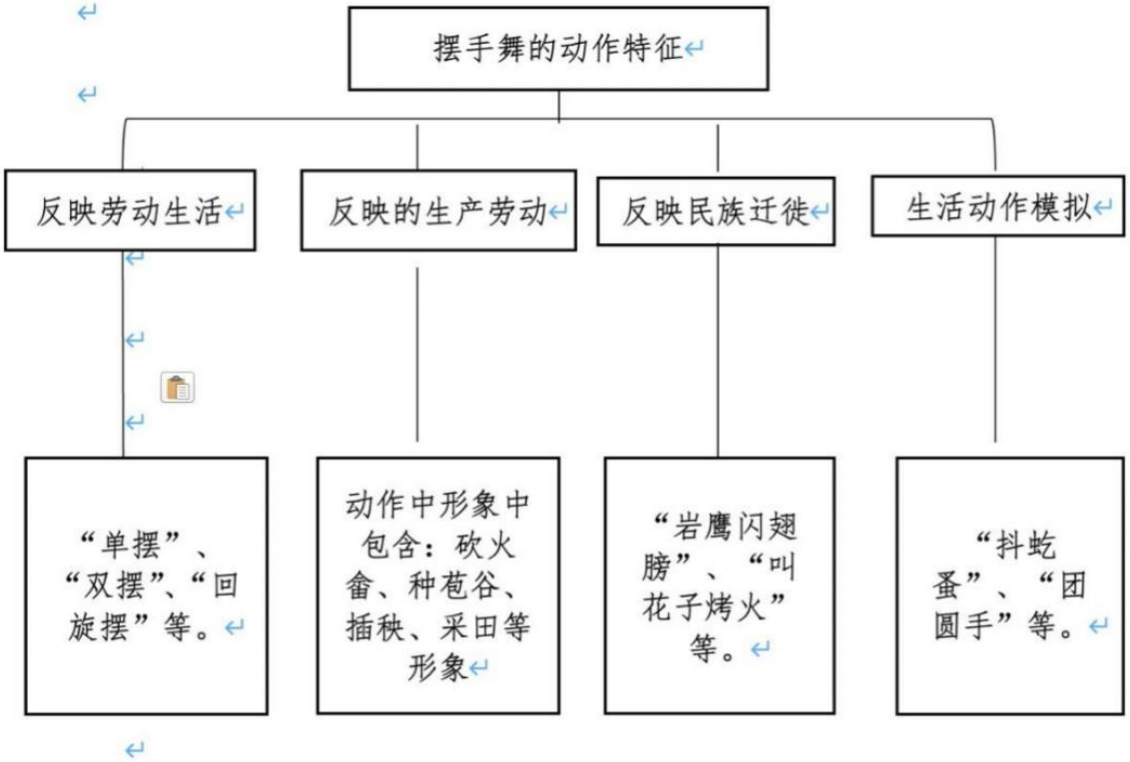
The Cultural Identity of Waving Dance under Cultural Spatial Practice in Youyang

The Cultural Spatial Practice of Waving Dance in Youyang

The collection, choreography and popularization of Waving Dance has gone through three rounds of systematical development during the past forty years. The first phase started from the 1980s: This round of development originated from the collection of main movements of the

original Waving Dance in 1982 and was organized from folk dance collection. That collection recorded and included the elements, styles, rhythms and connotation value of the dance.

Table 2: The Current Movement Elements and Types of Waving Dance in Youyang



The second phase started from the 1990s: In 1993, Waving Dance saw its development under the guidance of Zhang Yubing, the deputy director of Chengdu Song and Dance Theater and National Level I Choreographer, and Ju Yu' an, the executive director of Sichuan Dancers Association. They refined, popularized and promoted Waving Dance in Youyang County. The refinement of Waving Dance was the "beautification" of a whole set of dance movements under the instruction of professional choreographers. The dance started from the modern aesthetic perspective to a certain extent and turned from the original ecological type to the ornamental type. The audience of the optimized Waving Dance expanded from rural people to urban residents. The fitness and entertainment value of Waving Dance began to be unprecedented. Academic achievements, such as *the Overview on Tujia People and Miao People Autonomous County*, were published in 1986.

The third phase started after 2000. Led by the Youyang County Cultural Center, Yang Yi, Guo Xiaohong and Tian Hongling refined, promoted and popularized Waving Dance in Youyang. This promotion spread Waving Dance across China via the Internet platform and government media, and a large number of activities were also conducted. For example, in November 2009, a total of 20,000 people danced Waving Dance together, which successfully declared the Denise record. The programs of"Intangible Cultural Heritage Dance on Campus" and "Waving Dance Competitions among Primary and Secondary Schools" were designed to strengthen the folk symbol of Tujia People. They expanded the cultural influence and cultural identity of Waving Dance beyond Tujia region. Thus, more "production value" concerning Waving Dance was uncovered within the category of cultural space.

Figure 1: The Waving Dance Performed by 20,000 Dancers in Youyang, shot by Li Hua



Figure 2: Tian Weizheng, an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage, conducted Waving Dance inheritance activities on campus. The photo is provided by Tian Weizheng.



Uncovering and Enhancement of Cultural Space Symbols

Waving dance works as the symbol of Tujia cultural space, the will attached with multiple understanding and common identity, and the action or event containing "special significance". It serves as the emotional expression of the ethnic group to convey their feelings, reflect their beautiful prospect of co-existence idea, and express their feelings about cultural and recreational life. Waving Dance, an important component of ancestor worship ceremony system, is the medium and carrier for the study on the culture space of Tujia People. Through the body language of the wave dance, it expresses national emotion, expresses group consciousness and seeks identity community. Local folks express their national emotions and group awareness, and seek for identity community through body language of Waving Dance. Furthermore, the Dance can confirm the cultural architecture, cultural function, cultural logic, etc. inside Tujia People. The Small Waving Dance in Youyang achieves a symbol of the common amusement between human beings and gods through the uniform movements on one side of body, the movements by hand and feet together hand, and the movement potential. Those movements refer to the specific images of dancers' stepping out the same side of their feet and crotches, and stretching out the same side of their hands. As a cultural symbol of Waving Dance by Tujia People, the dance style of the uniform movements on one side of body plays the role of cultural identity identification. From the unique shape characteristics of Waving Dance, one can tell the ethnic living environment presented by the Dance since its beginning, namely a mountainous, steep and farming cultural background. The same body side feature is not only the symbolic manifestation of the experience among cultural pioneers but also the physical memory extracted from the cultural habitat. It is the common emotional expression coupled with the social sentiment of Tujia People. Therefore, the following aspects were explored for us to build a complete cultural space of Waving Dance:

First of all, the complete material and cultural system of Waving Dance: The symbolic system that simulates and reproduces the mythological stories of the current Waving Dance has disappeared; the disappeared Tujia language led to the non-existence of the unsung hand-waving songs; the compression of large-scale dance scenes has reduced the use of dance instruments; the sacrificial field and its symbolic system have dissolved. For example, as important places for the spatial practice of sacrificial ceremonies, the demolished Temple of King of Earth and the Hand Waving Hall are not only the aggregation of behavioral symbols but also the spiritual symbols of Tujia People. In Youyang County, there were once numerous small Hand Waving Halls. However, there are only two now and the large ones have already disappeared. Therefore, the bearing subjects and performance sites of Waving Dance need to be preserved in a benign and active state.

Second, the complete spiritual and cultural system of Waving Dance: We need to take traditional customs in a reasonable viewpoint, such as marriage customs, funeral rituals, festivals, etc. When it comes to folk activities, Waving Dance is integrated with folk belief and ancestor belief. However, during the process of promotion and recognition, those two have not received equal attention and acceptance, and even the rational treatment. In the rejuvenation and protection of culture, we should reflect on the relationship between "ancestor belief" and people's life, modern politics and academia, and objectively consider the rationality brought by ancestor belief towards our society, history and life.

Waving Dance Protection under Cultural Space

The current transformation of traditions is realized passively under the impact from globalization and modernity. Although traditions are passively transformed under the pressure of modern civilization, their results are more rational, thorough and comprehensive. Under such a context, the protection for Waving Dance should be conducted from the perspective of the overall cultural space of Tujia People. Only when it is closely connected with the times, society and people, can culture achieve see significant development. Then, we can discuss where inheritance comes from and where it goes in a better manner. Only by placing the protection and development of Waving Dance on the stance of the general public, the perspective of life, and the platform where history and reality interact, can we awaken the sleeping cultural gene and incorporate culture into people's life again. In a way close to the general public, folk customs and daily life, we can find Waving Dance the most appropriate "primitive" and "simple" way to go home.

(I) The Principles of Cultural Space Protection for Waving Dance

Like other ethnic minorities, Tujia People attach great importance to their ethnic traditions. Meanwhile, against the backdrop of global cultural identity crisis, they also realize that the traditional expression manner cannot conform to the current form, and that they are bound to bring forth changes to meet the needs of the times. Therefore, it is particularly important for them to attach importance to traditions and "reshape traditions" in modern ways, so as to seek for ethnic identity. Therefore, the following two points shall be noted during the cultural space protection and the transformation toward modernization: First of all, the connotation, function and symbolic meaning of traditional Waving Dance by Tujia People should be preserved. Cultural symbols and functions should be applied and embodied in the modernized reproduction. Second, the traditional skills of Waving Dance should be re-expressed in modern language so that the general public can understand those traditions in a new manner. We should interpret the connotation value, thought, spirit and meaning of Waving Dance in a new manner. Although Waving Dance keeps evolving in a Procrustean way during its modernized "acculturation"process, its cultural values, genes and roots still remain unchanged.

(I) Proposals on Cultural Space Protection for Waving Dance

During the cultural protection, it is very important for us to adhere to the principle on scientific protection. The cultural space for Waving Dance by Tujia People is constructed in both humanistic and natural environment. Any inappropriate inheritance measure and protection system may affect and further change the cultural ontology. For the same reason, we can modify the institutional settings and other protective measures to stop the change to cultural space, or record and preserve those cultural items on the verge of extinction in case of their complete disappearance due to social transformation or natural change.

First of all, the "people-oriented" protection should be taken as the premise. Human beings belong to the representation in cultural space. People in cultural space are the main carrier and witness of culture. The premise of cultural protection is the protection for people. Inheritors serve as the axis and main body of cultural space. Teachers, apprentices, participants, cultural protection commissioners and scientific researchers are the components of representational cultural space. Although the responsibilities and meanings of those five groups are different, they correlate and influence each other in the overall cultural space. Not one of them can be dispensed with. As the living carriers of intangible cultural heritage, those inheritors are basically composed of elderly groups, thus endowing the cultural heritage with

"traditional", "sense of age" and "color of endangering". As the carriers and future inheritors of the culture, apprentices take the implicit responsibility of inheriting and exploring. Participants mostly refer to folk performers or visitors. They form one part of the cultural space for Waving Dance and act as practical recipients of the value and significance of cultural items of Waving Dance. The cultural protection commissioners refer to the relevant personnel who implement and formulate the system on right discourse for the local government. They manage and control the status quo and effect of cultural protection, and can regulate its effect in real time. Scientific researchers uncover those cultural items, expound their significance, and provide proposals for the system, whose achievements have a certain influence upon system formulation. Those five groups of people constitute the symbolic cultural space for Waving Dance, and serve as the premise that influences its development and protection.

Secondly, a holistic approach toward protection should be taken as the requirement. When it comes to holistic promotion, we should first make overall planning, and strive to be holistic, objective and comprehensive. Waving Dance across the region should go through comprehensive census. A cultural protection level can be set as per the preservation data and activity data on "Waving Dance". The confirmation, preservation, research and publicity can be conducted through the census. The key ecological reserves can be established based on the experience from pilot project and evaluation, and then relevant protection policies can be rolled out. Besides, we can formulate specific rules and improve the cultural protection measures concerning inheritor cultivation and inheritance base construction, such as the policies on inheritor identification, the policies on the rights, obligations and funding of inheritors, the specific rules on supervision by authority, the specific rules on inheritance, rewards and punishments upon inheritors, and the flexible entry and exit mechanisms. Thirdly, we should facilitate the creative transformation, development and dissemination. First of all, the main bodies of Waving Dance need to be popularized among the general public so that they can understand how to dance and what the beauty is. Therefore, it is urgent for the education department to popularize the excellent Waving Dance textbooks, such as the mass dance textbooks, and the Waving Dance textbooks for children and teenagers, so that they can be adopted for fitness, entertainment and other purposes. In addition, more excellent Waving Dance works should be created. We can take Waving Dance as the material for artistic creation, improve its aesthetics, artistic conception and historical conception, so as to not only provide sufficient elements for folk dances but also facilitate its own development, sublimation and dissemination. Finally, the cultural transmission relied on the participation from various organizations and societies, and the impartation of culture via textbook in class and on campus, or the incorporation of culture into cultural education system and aesthetic education system, so that it can become an important part of our cultural life. Simultaneously, we can adopt paper media and cyber media to pro-actively disseminate the content and protection significance of Waving Dance, so as to enhance the understanding of Waving Dance itself and the necessity for its protection among the general public.

Conclusions

Waving Dance takes its root in each individual mind of Tujia People in the Youshui River Basin. It confirms the growth in ethnic groups and the changes in their culture, and witness the ups and downs of the times. Waving Dance has been integrated with Tujia People in this region. They have developed a common cultural value and formed a common value orientation. Ethnic

self-consciousness and identity take a deep root in not only the cultural space for Waving Dance but also the mind of Tujia People. Furthermore, the experience from cultural exchange, fusion and communication among various ethnic groups is also reflected in the overall cultural space for Waving Dance. Its cohesion forms a part of the stable and invisible valuable tradition inside Waving Dance.

References

Chen Yujing. (October, 2013). *Carnival Hymn — Singer Culture of Tujia People*. People's Publishing House.

Cui Xinjian. *Cultural Identity and Its Roots*. *The Journal of Beijing Normal University* (in Social Science Edition). 2004. 4.

Denis—Constant Martin, "The Choice of Identity",Social Identity,Vol.1,NO.1(1995),pp.6-13. Quated from Zhang Xupeng. *Cultural Identity Theory and European Integration*. *European Studies*. Vol. 4, 2004, p 68.

Lin Jifu. (2012). *Research on Modern Expression of Ancestor Belief of Tujia People in Qingjiang River Basin.* People's Publishing House.

Liu Xishan. (June, 2020). *Research on the Inheritance Mode and Changes in Waving Dance by Tujia People.* Zhengzhou University Press.

The Compilation Group of the Overview on Shizhu Tujia Autonomous County (April, 2008). *The Overview on Shizhu Tujia Autonomous County*. Ethnic Publishing House.

The Compilation Group of the Overview on Youyang Tujia and Miao Peoples Autonomous County (April, 2008). *The Overview on Youyang Tujia and Miao Peoples Autonomous County*. Sichuan Ethnic Publishing House.

Willia E.Connolly,Identity/Difference:Democeatic Negotiations of Political Paradox Paradox,Ithaca,N,Y;Coronell University Press,1991,p.x.

Wu Shengyan. (2008). *Youyang — The Hometown of Waving Dance by Tujia People in China.* Chongqing Press.

Zhang Xiang and Li Xingming. Research on Cultural Space Reproduction for Tourism based on Cultural Identity — A Case Study on Reproduction of Cultural Space of Waving Dance in Mihu Village of Laifengshe, Hubei Province. The Journal of Central China Normal University (in Humanities and Social Sciences Edition). 2020. 3.

Zhou Yishun. (April, 2001). *Waving Dance in the You River Basin*. International Culture Publishing Company.

Zou Mingxing. (2003: 108). *Waving Dance by Tujia People in Youyang*. Southwest Normal University Press