

Local Interactions and Practices: A Case of Eastern Tibet's Reba Dance, China

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ABSTRACT

The Reba dance of Eastern Tibet, a vital aspect of China's intangible cultural heritage, has been significantly influenced by national cultural policies since the 1980s. This context necessitates an examination of the practices of folk groups and local intellectuals, as practical subjects, which have been overlooked in previous studies. By using the ethnographic method and Bourdieu's concept of agency, this study seeks to analyse how these two practical subjects collaborate and interact in the practice of art festivals, performances, and teaching under the structure of national policies. By exercising their agency, the study emphasises that in the preservation process, folk groups and local intellectuals play crucial roles as primary practical subjects. This study argues that, in the preservation and inheritance process of Reba dance in Eastern Tibet, the relationship between the state, local intellectuals, and folk groups is not a one-way operation of the government and intellectuals but involves a strategic interaction of multiple subjects' practices. While the state appropriates and shapes folk dance through its policies, folk groups and local intellectuals, as the practical subjects, strategically respond to these policies, further facilitating the inheritance of Reba dance.

Keywords: Reba Dance; Folk Groups; Local Intellectuals; Interaction; Agency.

INTRODUCTION

In 1959, with the national reform carried out by the Chinese government in the Tibet Autonomous Region and its incorporation into the modern nation-state in China, the influence of government policies gradually permeated every significant aspect of Tibetan society. This transition caused Reba dance, originally circulating among Tibetan folk communities to gradually adopt a nationalistic flavour.

The Tibetan folk song and dance form "Reba" was a means for wandering Reba artists to earn a living (Omi-Jiacan, Hongxing-Yangzong & Zeji, 2018; Hongxing-Yangzong, 2018). Reba dance was recognised as a dance form with the development of the National Literacy and Artistic Project in the 1980s and has become widely known as an independent Tibetan dance style. It is the most essential part of Reba art, mainly focusing on bell drum dance. In the Tibet Autonomous Region, Reba dance is primarily practised in Eastern Tibet.

With the project being carried out in Tibet, the government has authorised local intellectuals to investigate, document and archive folk culture, including traditional folk dances (Gu & Liu, 1991). According to the author's observation, from this period, local intellectuals and folk groups became two important practical subjects and leading forces in the inheritance of Reba dance in Eastern Tibet.

The intellectuals mainly come from Tibet University, which is the only comprehensive university in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Additionally, some of them are from the Tibet Autonomous Region Institute of National Art and Qamdo Cultural Bureau (Shi, 2004). In contrast to folk groups in Tibet, these intellectuals generally have undergone more extensive formal education and possess degree certificates sanctioned and acknowledged by the state. Moreover, they have been granted the right by the state to interpret and set aesthetic evaluation criteria for Reba dance. Local intellectuals are the link between the country and folk groups. The national will and cultural

arts policies can be communicated and implemented in local communities through the involvement of local intellectuals, who collaborate with folk groups to articulate and transmit their interpretation of Reba dance.

Folk groups refer to local Reba artists or inheritors, individuals and groups engaged in the performance of Reba dance and participants related to Reba dance from folk communities in Tibet. In contrast to local intellectuals, these groups serve as the creators and carriers of Reba dance and the practical subjects in the process of its natural transmission.

After entering the 21st century, the government of China merged the previous national and folk cultural protection projects (Zhang, 2006), undertaking vigorous efforts in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Reba dance (Dingqing Reba), the most active Reba dance, was designated a national intangible cultural heritage in 2006 (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2006). In 2008, a small number of folk groups, like Zaxi-Quzhen and Danzeng-Quta, were recognised as national representative inheritors of Reba dance through their cooperation with intellectuals (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2008).

These policies and protection measures led to a fundamental change in the way Reba dance was inherited and performed, traditional Reba dance has been inherited locally and has formed a trend of protection and inheritance led by the government, guided by local intellectuals and participated in by the local groups.

At this point, Reba dance has gradually evolved from being a tool for travelling folk artists to earn a living to becoming a practice involving multiple subjects within the framework of the protection of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage. Concurrently, it participated in National Culture and Art Performances under the official organisation. This evolution also led to the development of Reba dance into a stage art performance form and the introduction of classroom teaching spaces on campuses.

Bourdieu (2020) and Huhn, Bourdieu and Johnson (1993) argue that structure, which influences and limits an individual's options, and agency, which is the capacity of individuals to make free choices, are two fundamental factors shaping human behaviour (Cresswell, 2019). Applying this perspective to the preservation of Reba dance, the will and policies of the state can be understood as structure, while folk groups and local intellectuals, as primary practical subjects. Bourdieu further points out that there is an intermediary between the structure and the agent, which is practice (Giddens, 1984; X. Li, 2011). While the practical subjects are affected by this structure, it also embodies their agency through this practice (Gell, 1998; Alkaf, 2023). Through localised interpretations and strategic responses to national policies as well as interactions among practical subjects, they foster innovation and reproduction of Reba dance.

Current research on Reba dance has mainly focused on exploring its historical origins (Gu, 1988; Juega, 2009; Tian, 2013) and the styles and genres of traditional Reba dance (Awang-Kecun, 1986; Tuxia, 1992), the autobiography of Reba Artist (Omi-Jiacan, 1998), conducting case studies based on individual Reba families and artists (Huang, 1962; Wang, 2005; Hongxing-Yangdzom, 2018;), examining traditional Reba art inheritance methods (X. H. Wang, Yang, & Sun, 2016), and analysing contemporary Reba dance works (Chen, 1984; Sangji-Dongzhi, 2012; Grizenga, 2019). In addition, existing research on the impact of national literary and artistic policies on folk traditional dance often emphasises the appropriation of folk art by state authorities (Gao, 2001; Z. P. Zhang, 2007, 2008; Y. H. Li, 2015) and the influence of local intellectuals on artistic expression and aesthetic standards (H. Y. Wang, 2010; Wang & Xie, 2012). However, theoretical and empirical research on the practices and contributions of practical subjects, particularly their agency, is largely neglected.

To address this problem, this research used a qualitative approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016) and ethnographic research methods, including textual analysis, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and reflection (Fetterman, 2010). The research commenced with a comprehensive review of relevant academic literature on Reba and national policy documents to understand the evolution of national cultural and arts policies and the historical and cultural context of Reba dance. In-depth interviews were conducted with local intellectuals and folk groups to gain a deeper understanding of their practical experiences, perspectives, and interpretations within the inheritance process of Reba dance. Interviews were conducted with individuals selected based on their active involvement in Reba dance preservation. The researcher also participated in and observed Reba dance performances and classroom teaching in universities to gather firsthand data on interactive practices. Finally, reflection played a pivotal role in this research, allowing for the integration and selection of field data within an ethnographic framework, given the researchers' dual roles as observers and participants during the observation and participation in Reba dance practices.

Overall, this research situates Reba dance preservation and inheritance within the broader state will and cultural policies context. Then it focuses on the evolution and inheritance of eastern Tibet Reba dance in this context. And emphasises the pivotal roles played by folk groups and local intellectuals, as the main practical subjects, in Tibet's Reba dance inheritance process. Furthermore, the study emphasises the agency of these

practical subjects and how they play their agency in their practice, thereby interacting with each other and responding to national cultural policies. In doing so, this research seeks to fill the gap in the existing research on Tibet's Reba dance and provide a new research perspective for the application of national culture and arts policy in protecting traditional folk art and intangible cultural heritage.

THE EVOLUTION OF EASTERN TIBET'S REBA DANCE

As a traditional Tibetan folk art, "Reba" is characterised by its comprehensiveness, performance elements, and ritual nature. It served multiple practical functions, including entertainment, spiritual engagement, and livelihood support, while closely related to the original Tibetan belief system, known as the Bon religion (Wang, 2020). The primary purpose of performing Reba was to convey sermons and deter malevolent spirits.

With the evolution of society, Reba gradually faded religious colours and developed into one of the most prominent Tibetan folk performing arts in Eastern Tibet. Reba dance was recognised as a dance form from Reba since the 1980s, it refers to the dance portion of the Reba performance, mainly focusing on bell drum dance.

The origin of the Reba dance can be traced back to ancient religious rituals of the Tibetan Bon religion, approximately during the 7th century AD. These rituals included the Witch Dance, Totem Dance, and Qiangm, which have continued to evolve through subsequent centuries (Danzeng-Ciren, 2000). The preservation and development of the Reba dance are of significant importance as they showcase Tibetan ethnic culture and aesthetics, and play a crucial role in building a sense of cultural identity.

The Integrated Chronicles of Chinese National and Folk Literature and Art

As Nahachewsky (2008) pointed out that the revival of folk dance typically involves a series of systematic steps, including the documentation, preservation, and re-performance of traditional dance forms. China began a major national literary and artistic project in the 1980s that would last for more than 30 years, that is, the compilation of Integrated Chronicles of Chinese National and Folk Literature and Art. The primary objective of this project was to study and promote China's rich cultural heritage, creating comprehensive and systematic historical documentation by collecting, organising, and textualising various aspects of folk arts and traditional representative folk culture. The scope of this project was extended at provincial and municipal levels, leading to an unprecedented effort to rescue Tibetan folk cultures and arts, including Reba dance. Numerous Cultural Heritage Salvage Teams comprising local cultural experts and supported by regional cultural authorities were dispatched to cities, towns, villages, and temples in the Tibet autonomous region to collect and organise Reba dance.

Ratification of UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 2003, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China initiated a pilot project for the protection of Chinese national and folk culture. In 2004, China ratified the UNESCO "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," merging previous national and folk cultural protection projects and forming the modern context for protecting intangible cultural heritage in China, as well as contracting the recognition system of representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage (Tian, 2013). In 2006, Reba dance (Dingqing Reba), was officially recognised as a national intangible cultural heritage of the People's Republic of China, receiving national protection, management, and support (Figure 1). In 2008, Danzeng-Quta and Zaxi-Quzhen were acknowledged as the national representative inheritors of the Reba dance (Figure 2).

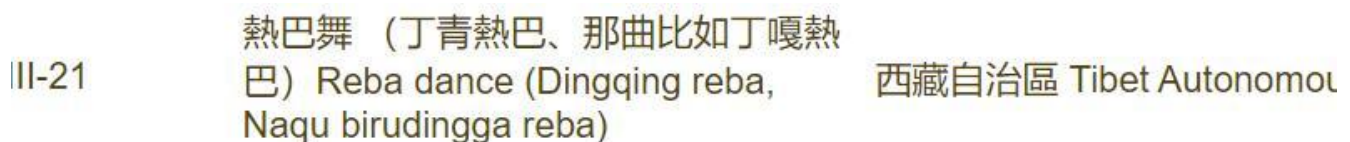
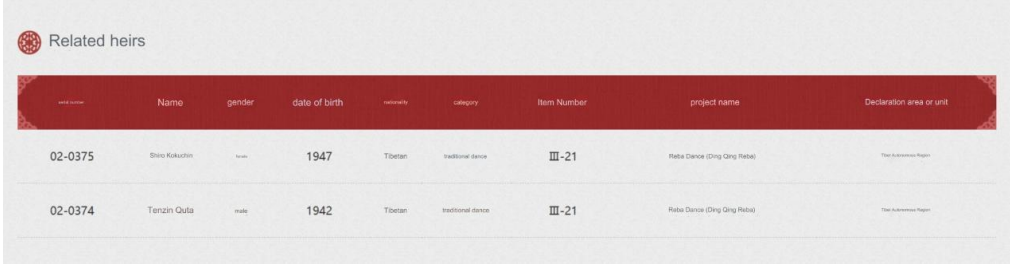


Figure 1. Chinese National Intangible Cultural Heritage: Reba Dance (Source: Intangible Cultural Heritage in China Website, 2006, retrieved from <https://www.culturalheritagechina.org/national-list-first-batch.>)



	Name	gender	date of birth	ethnicity	category	Item Number	project name	Declaration area or unit
02-0375	Shuo Kokuzin	male	1947	Tibetan	traditional dance	III-21	Reba Dance (Ding Qing Reba)	The Government of Tibet
02-0374	Tenzin Qula	male	1942	Tibetan	traditional dance	III-21	Reba Dance (Ding Qing Reba)	The Government of Tibet

Figure 2. The Representative Inheritors of Reba Dance (Dingqing Reba) (Source: China Intangible Cultural Heritage Website, 2006, retrieved from <https://www.ihchina.cn/art/detail/id/12942.html>.)

These measures, which included designating and safeguarding Reba dance as a national intangible cultural heritage, have profoundly changed how Reba dance is transmitted and performed in contemporary settings in a modern context, turning it from a traditional regional folk art into a nationally recognised and protected cultural heritage with widespread acclaim.

THE INHERITANCE OF EASTERN TIBET'S REBA DANCE UNDER NATIONAL CULTURE AND ART POLICIES

The intervention of the *State Presence* (Lu, 2013) has deeply influenced the inheritance and development of Reba dance, exerting a considerable impact through national policies and authority. The state's influence acts as a mechanism of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 2018) and has taken this traditional art form into new stages of development. Especially with a new stage of development, it has not only gradually facilitated Reba's transformation into a dance-based art form but also established its significance as a vital component in various cultural and art festivals, higher education dance programs, and artistic group creations. Moreover, it has had a substantial influence on the functions, inheritance models, performance spaces, and the redefinition of the identity and status of Reba artists in the realm of folk culture.

Change in Functions and Cultural Significance

Traditionally, Reba dance was primarily employed by wandering folk artists as a means of earning a living by performing. According to the recollections of the old Reba artist Zaxi-Quzhen during her lifetime, "Reba artists had no fixed abode; they would perform wherever the need arose, going wherever they were called" (personal interview, 2018). For example, the Chaya Reba and Dingqing Reba, are both family-based Reba troupes primarily engaged in wandering performances for a living in the Qamdo region of eastern Tibet. In addition to serving as a livelihood, Reba dance is also utilised for business promotion. For instance, the Guoqin Reba used Reba performances as a means of promoting silk sales (Guoqin means silk in Tibetan).

Moreover, traditional Reba dances were also performed as an errand at local temple events. While most Reba troupes in Eastern Tibet were wandering artists making a living through their performances, they also contributed to the activities and ceremonies of local temples, performing Reba dances in a devotional capacity in return for alms such as food and clothes (H. Wang, 2011). That is to say, no matter where the wandering Reba artists went to perform, they would return to perform at local temple activities or ceremonies. This conscious performance of Reba dance is closely related to the traditional beliefs of Tibetan folk communities.

With the Democratic Reform in Tibet in 1959, the civilians were allocated a piece of land by the government, including Reba artists. Thus, traditional wandering performances are no longer their only means of livelihood, while a few of them still choose to perform Reba dances during their spare time to supplement their household income.

In the 1980s and beyond, the tradition of wandering Reba dance performances gradually diminished. As a result, Reba dance transformed from being primarily associated with wandering performances, religious ceremonies, and commercial promotion. It transitioned into a settled, community-oriented form of Tibetan folk dance, giving rise to spontaneous Reba dance performances within local communities. This shift brought about changes in artistic expression and led to the development of more diverse means of artistic presentation.

Change in the Inheritance Mode

In the early stages, the inheritance of traditional Reba dance primarily occurred within families based on kinship and consanguinity. According to the old Reba artist Zaxi-Quzhen, the practice of passing on Reba skills was typically limited to within the family, not outside (Zeji, 2007). This traditional inheritance method ensured

that Reba dance performances often showcased the distinctive family style (X. H. Wang, Yang, & Sun, 2016). In this case, the traditional inheritance method is a guarantee for the competitiveness and characteristics of the Benreba family's performances and is also the responsibility of the Reba elders to family members.

In 2006, the Reba dance (Ding Qing Reba) was officially recognised as a national intangible cultural heritage of China. In 2008, Zaxi-Quzhen was appointed as the successor for the Reba dance of Eastern Tibet (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2007). Additionally, since the early 21st century, there have been curriculum experiments involving Reba dance at Tibet University. These developments have led to a significant transformation in the way Reba dance is passed down. Instead of relying solely on familial and kinship ties, Reba's transmission has diversified under the national organisation and the guidance of folk intellectuals.

The Expansion of the Inheritance and Performance Spaces of Reba Dance

Reba dance has undergone a remarkable transition, evolving from its origins as a traditional folk community performance to a multifaceted array of performance venues. Traditionally, Reba dance thrived within folk fields, spreading along with the itinerant artists.

After the implementation of the Democratic Reform in Tibet in 1959, Reba artists gradually transitioned from wandering to settlement. At this time, Reba dance shifted primarily from a means of livelihood to self-entertainment, although the space for the inheritance of Reba dance remained confined to folk communities.

Since the 1980s, under the organisation of the Tibetan Autonomous Government, various regions within Tibet have established "Wulan Muqi Performance Teams". Traditional Reba family performance activities, under the organisation of local governments, gradually evolved into important components of the cultural and artistic performances held in the twelve counties of the Qamdo region, culminating in the inaugural large-scale performance in June 1986 (Tuxia, 1992). This event marks the documented transition of Reba dance from folk performance spaces to official stage performances within the context of the national organisation. It received official recognition and has continued to thrive in the realm of performance.

Then, with the expansion of diverse ethnic and folk art performances and competitions, organised by the regional government, various cities and regions in Tibet have established people's art venues (Nilsson, 2016). These venues serve as platforms for creating stage productions that incorporate elements of local culture, enabling cultural exchange and presentation. The establishment of these venues has expedited the extension of Reba dance from folk domains to the realm of professional performances. Consequently, Reba dance, which once exclusively existed within folk fields, has gradually integrated into state-run cultural performances and institutions.

In addition to stage performances, the presentation of Reba dance extended to educational spaces. The extension is notably illustrated through the narrative of Zeji, who is known as the "Reba Queen" and as the most influential figure in the field of teaching and performing Reba dance in Tibet. Zeji had been a member of the Qamdo Regional Art Troupe and participated in the national culture project mentioned above in the 1980s to collect and study Tibetan folk dances, including the Reba dance (Zeji, 2022). During the process, she got opportunities to know many Reba dance inheritors and took Dongluo Reba's inheritor, Zaxi-Quzhen, as her teacher and learned this Reba dance systematically. In 2001, Tibet University began enrolling its first undergraduate dance major students, and Zeji was admitted to the undergraduate program of dance choreography this year. In 2004, the School of the Arts at Tibet University established the Dance Department and needed to expand its teaching staff. Zeji graduated in 2004, stayed in the dance department and began teaching Reba dance. This embarked on developing the curriculum and writing instructional materials for Reba dance, marking the expansion of Reba dance into education.

The Redefinition of the Identity of Reba Folk Artists

The roles of the performers shifted from folk artists to professional dancers, dance major students, and some even attaining the status of local intellectuals. As a result, the social status of these performers has risen.

Following the Democratic Reform in Tibet in 1959, with the policies of the state, Reba dance gradually evolved from a tool for wandering artists to earn a living to a form of folk dance for the general public to enjoy in their spare time. Some Reba artists were absorbed into national and local cultural institutions, thus becoming cultural workers. According to this research, Zaxi-Dawa was an active folk artist in the Chaya region before being absorbed into the Qamdo City Mass Art Hall in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Zaxi-Quzhen, the seventh-generation inheritor of the Kangsha Reba, has undergone a transformation from a marginalised wandering artist with a low social status to a folk artist, and further, to a nationally recognised representative inheritor of intangible cultural heritage. Outstanding folk artists who have not been officially recognised as inheritors have also been honoured with the title of folk artist. This elevation has shifted their

identities and social statuses to the rightful artistic positions they deserve.

Zeji acclaimed as the "Reba Queen," was a performing artist with the Qamdo Regional Song and Dance Troupe before entering Tibet University for study in 2001. After graduating in 2004, she remained at the university as an associate professor at the School of the Arts, Tibet University, and was appointed as a visiting professor at several renowned Chinese universities and art academies. She transitioned from a local cultural worker to a local intellectual and, eventually, a member of the local intellectuals.

The transformation in social status and identity reshaping has fuelled their passion for Reba art within the modern context and played an immeasurable role in preserving and inheriting Reba dance in this changing context.

THE KEY PRACTICAL SUBJECTS: LOCAL INTELLECTUALS AND FOLK GROUPS

This section explores the key roles and functions played by folk groups and local intellectuals, as main practical subjects in the preservation and inheritance process in Tibet, the overlap of knowledge between these two groups and the dynamics of individual identity among these subjects.

The Role and Function of Folk Groups

Reba dance is a result of the creative, expressive, and transmissive efforts of the folk groups within the Tibetan community. As a significant component of folk culture, the practice of Reba dance facilitates folk society communication and the spread of traditional Tibetan culture, religion and rituals. It has been passed down and developed within Tibetan communities over the years, carrying profound emotional connections and a strong sense of identity among the people.

Since Reba dance was initially used as a means of survival by early wandering artists, there existed competition among different Reba families. To ensure their survival, Reba artists continuously absorbed elements from other popular Tibetan folk arts, enriched the vocabulary of Reba dance, and created new forms of performance to maintain an advantageous position for their family's Reba artistry among various Reba families and other Tibetan folk performing arts. For example, Reba Xie incorporates elements of Xianzi (a Tibetan folk song and dance performance form) (Yang, 2007), while Reba drama integrates elements of Tibetan opera.

Within this context, a relatively fixed performance program was developed. The program typically consists of three main parts performed in a specific sequence: 1) "Sakya" - This part serves the purpose of purification, offering blessings, and warding off evil spirits; 2) Reba's Main Play - Also known as the Song and Dance Theater. This is a central part of the performance, which emphasises bell-drum dance. "Zaxijie" - Symbolizing joy and good fortune, this part marks the conclusion of the performance. In addition to the relatively fixed performance program, folk artists have also adapted performance styles involving the use of props. The basic drumbeat rhythms, as well as corresponding dance movement techniques. In addition, Reba dance has also formed the performance form of "the male dancer shaking the bell and female dancer beating the drum", the bell drum dance with a certain beat and circle formation, the application of props, instruments and costumes, such as yak tail, biwang (Tibetan erhu), tacha (netted skirt), masks, etc. [Figure 3](#) shows folk artists during the Reba dance.



Figure 3. Folk Group Performance (Dingqing Reba) (Source: the Sichuan Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection

Center, 2018, Qamdo, Tibet.)

In summary, the folk groups serve as the medium through which Reba dance has emerged, been passed down, and undergone innovations as a traditional folk dance in Eastern Tibet. The unique performance program, expressive forms, contents, and the utilisation of costumes and props in Reba dance, have been collectively created and developed by folk groups throughout history. This embodies the agency of folk groups, dynamically interacting with various elements within Tibetan folk culture. Their involvement has been crucial for the preservation and inheritance of the Reba dance.

The Role and Function of Local Intellectuals

In practice, the presence of the government is often realised through the participation of local intellectuals, who interpret and implement cultural policies. The state empowers local intellectuals to archive, research, and establish aesthetic standards for Reba dance. While their numbers are relatively small compared to the folk groups, they possess more economic, political, social, and cultural capital than those groups. They are often the connectors and coordinators of various social relationships and hold the right to represent folk groups in explaining traditional folk dance, such as Reba dance, to the outside world. According to the fieldwork, in actual practice, local intellectuals undertake much of the work related to the preservation and propagation of Reba dance within the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Local intellectuals, as another practical subject, possess rich cultural capital and were the first to identify and separate Reba dance from Reba. Some of these local intellectuals are researchers and experts affiliated with the Tibet Autonomous Region Institute of National Art, they archived and documented it as a form of folk dance. They studied its history, evolution, and cultural background. Their research contributed to the inclusion of Reba dance in the national intangible cultural heritage protection list and provided historical and cultural references as well as theoretical foundations for future preservation work.

Another group of local intellectuals comprises educators from Tibet University, particularly teachers from the Tibet University School of Arts. In the field of education, they possess extensive social and cultural capital. These educators, represented by Zeji, developed a Reba dance teaching system, authored Reba dance teaching materials, and disseminated Reba dance skills and knowledge in university classrooms. They gradually developed a performance-oriented style of Reba dance, fostering a pool of professional talent in Reba dance choreography and performance. Moreover, they expanded the scope of Reba dance transmission by being invited to give masterclasses in universities and educational institutions outside the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Other local intellectuals include the staff of the cultural department, especially members of the Qamdo Cultural Bureau. The Qamdo Cultural Bureau is under the jurisdiction of the Qamdo People's Government and is responsible for cultural, heritage, and artistic affairs throughout the city. As state officials, the staff possess political and social capital. They are responsible for the protection, inheritance, and promotion of cultural and artistic activities in Qamdo. They coordinate cultural events, performances, and competitions, thereby facilitating the dissemination and recognition of Reba dance within the local communities.

Overall, local intellectuals and folk groups play a crucial role as another main practical subject in the preservation and inheritance of Reba dance in eastern Tibet. By integrating and leveraging their respective resource advantages, they engage in innovative practices, research, education, and other activities. They offer localised interpretations of national cultural policies and provide strategic responses, thereby advancing the transmission of Reba dance.

RESPONSES TO NATIONAL CULTURE AND ARTS POLICIES AND INTERACTIVE PRACTICES

In this section, the authors will explore the interactive practices of local intellectuals and folk groups as the main subjects of practice. These practices represent strategic responses to national policies and serve as a manifestation of the agency exercised by the practical subjects (Figure 4). Through the exercise of agency, the practical subjects engage in interactions and collaborations in ways that align with mainstream values and national ideologies while promoting the preservation and inheritance of the Reba dance (Cheng, 2020).

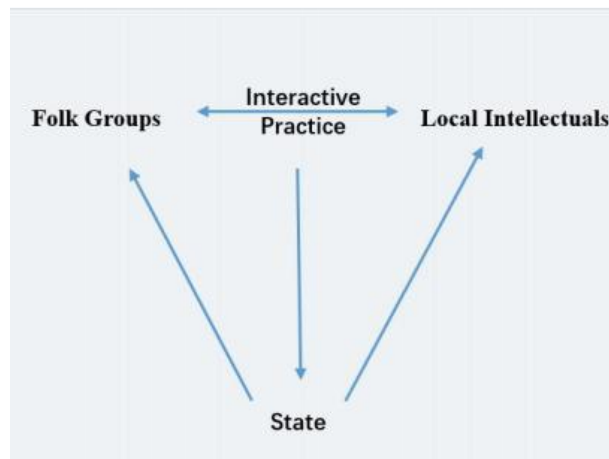


Figure 4. Interaction and Practice based on the Agency of Practical Subjects (Source: made by the author 1)

Strategic Responses to Cultural and Art Policies

The agency, as a capability of practical subjects, is first reflected in the responses to national policies of local intellectuals and folk groups (X. Li, 2011). This involves how they interpret and understand these policies in a localised context. These responses influence how they integrate policies with the inheritance of the Reba dance.

Since the 1980s, the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region began to organise folk art performance events. These events have brought together various professional and amateur performance groups from within the autonomous region, including various Reba families and Reba performance teams. Consequently, the venues for Reba dance performances have also expanded from grassroots settings to professional stages.

Notably, in June 1986, under the organisation of the Tibet Autonomous Government, the first Wulan Muqi folk culture and art performance event took place. This marked the first recorded national performance of the Reba dance in an official capacity. This event provided an opportunity for Reba Dance to transition from grassroots performance settings to official stages, securing official recognition. Since then, Reba dance has remained actively performed across various stages, and its legacy continues to thrive.

As a response to the policies, various cities in Tibet have established group art museums under the guidance of the regional government. They have also recruited a large number of folk artists to work as art workers in these museums. The establishment of these museums has expedited the transition of Reba dance from folk performance to professional stage performance. Consequently, Reba dance, which was originally confined to the folk field, has gradually extended into the national-level artistic stage and institution.

From the 1980s, a major national project for the preservation of folk culture began to be carried out, as mentioned in the introduction, with the compilation of the Integrated Chronicles of Chinese National and Folk Literature and Art. When the project was expanded to the Tibet autonomous region, the preservation of Tibetan folk cultures, including Reba Dance, was carried out on an unprecedented scale under the official organisation.

In order to investigate and archive Reba Dance, numerous Cultural Heritage Salvage Teams were dispatched to cities, towns, villages, and temples in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Zeji, as a member of the team, was assigned the task of collecting and studying Reba dance from various regions in Qamdo. Delving into Tibetan folk culture, and learning from folk Reba artists, Zeji and the team organised and refined the performance forms and content of Reba bell and drum dances within Reba art. According to these investigations, the intellectuals compiled a series of materials and books, including "Integrated Folk Dances of China - Tibet Volume" (This volume contains Reba dance). With the progress of this project, the inheritance and development of Reba dance entered a model led by the state, guided by intellectuals, and involving the participation of the local groups.

Since the 21st century, with the modern context of intangible cultural heritage protection developed in China, Reba dance (Ding Qing Reba) and its relevant inheritors have been involved in national protection, management, and support. This laid the groundwork for the maturity of the field of Reba dance inheritance and development, gradually attracting artists and scholars for greater engagement, experimentation, research, and presentation.

In this context, under the leadership of Zeji, Tibet University embarked on a process of refining, processing, and innovating traditional Reba dance. This process resulted in the creation of a Reba dance curriculum that aligned with higher education requirements, as well as the contemporary national aesthetic. Concurrently, faculty members from the Dance Department of Tibet University's School of Arts actively played their agency, utilising elements of Reba dance as a source for stage creation. They employed modern choreographic techniques to

develop a series of dance productions, intending to incorporate Reba drum dance into the "academic" curriculum for folk dance. These efforts brought Reba dance works to professional dance competitions and stage performances, gaining recognition from the academic field and the nation.

Overall, local intellectuals and folk groups effectively extended Reba dance from its traditional folk origins into the framework of national cultural and arts policy by exercising their agency to align the policy's principles with practical needs. Through their localised interpretation of national cultural and arts policy, they enabled Reba Dance to continue its tradition within the official discourse of national intangible cultural heritage protection.

Interactive Practices of Practical Subjects

As a strategic response to cultural and arts policy, local intellectuals and folk groups have demonstrated agency through cooperation and negotiation in localised practices. These practices mainly encompass various cultural events and activities based on the author's fieldwork. These include art exhibitions, ethnic and folk dance performances at cultural and tourism festivals, textbook compilations, educational system development, dance creation and competitions, cultural research projects, and forum events.

The government of the Tibet Autonomous Region has progressively arranged folk cultural and artistic events within the region since the 1980s. Reba families and Reba performance teams are among the professional and amateur performance groups from the autonomous region that have come together for these events. In addition to these folk groups, local intellectuals have also taken an active part in these events. Through cooperation, Reba dance transitioned from folk communities to being showcased on nationally organised stages. This transition not only expanded the presence of Reba dance to officially recognised professional performance venues but also served to better integrate Reba dance with national cultural and arts policy.

Reba Love

As a work combining ethnic history and historical background, the dance drama *Reba Love* (Figure 5) created and performed by the Tibet Autonomous Region Song and Dance Troupe in 1983 is of landmark significance. Being the first national dance drama in the history of Tibet, *Reba Love* reflects the oppression of serfs under the feudal serfdom system in Tibet before liberation, the hard life of Reba artists as vagabonding buskers and the love story between the serf woman Zhuoga and the Reba artist Zhandui. The dance drama retains the rich expression forms and drumming techniques of traditional Reba dance, integrates the movements and techniques of ballet and Chinese classical dance, and finally presents it on stage in the form of dance drama. The innovative use of choreography, performance themes and forms of expression enables this dance drama to respond to the democratic reform measures in Tibet and reflect the agency of the creative team.



Figure 5. Dance Drama "Reba Love" (Source: Dictionary of Chinese Minority Arts (Yin, 1991) published by Minzu Publishing House.)

Universities

Universities play a central role in inheriting folk arts, including Reba dance. Through the construction of the

teaching system, the organisation of academic forums, and the training of Reba dance performers and choreographers, intellectuals have mastered the forces of interpretation, transmission and reproduction of Reba dance in the contemporary context. In addition, they cooperated with social elites and government officials to actively construct and participate in ethnic and folk dance competitions. These initiatives have reshaped the public's understanding of folk dances, including Reba.

The teacher Zeji, who has the reputation of Queen Reba, is a typical case. She provided the necessary support for the promotion and inheritance of Reba dance by integrating the resources from folk groups and intellectuals. Through this integration, the teaching practice is carried out in different universities and institutions, and then the movement vocabulary, drum rhythm, functions and cultural meaning of Reba dance are constantly reproduced. Additionally, Zeji(2019) has played a pivotal role in the creation and compilation of Reba dance textbooks, Tibet women's drumming skills of Reba dance, which serve as essential resources for standardising and disseminating the dance form.

Tourism Culture and Art Festivals

Compared with the staged performance and the construction of the teaching system in colleges and universities, the tourism culture and art festivals provide a platform for folk groups to display local traditional culture and customs and create opportunities for them to understand, cooperate and exchange with local intellectuals and other practitioners (Wang, 2019). In these tourism culture and art festivals, dance performances have become an important part of the interaction between local intellectuals and folk groups.

In August 2018, the first Tibet Autonomous Region Reba Dance Performance and Reba Art Summit Forum were held in Qamdo, Tibet, where all folk groups, intellectuals, and people who work in the media industry gathered together. According to the author's fieldwork, these events were part of the 4th Sanjiang Tea Horse Culture and Art Festival in the Tibet Autonomous Region to promote local traditional culture and tourism resources. In the event, folk groups used the national literature and art policy to create regional cultural brands and connected with local intellectuals to win a place for Reba dance in the local tourism culture and art festival.

This performance not only involved traditional folk Reba dance but also Reba dance works from colleges and universities and local professional art groups. The first part was for folk dance works and the second was for a professional group competition. While showing the diversity of folk Reba dance, the performance was also full of the intellectual's aesthetic construction standards for Reba dance and the right to interpret Reba dance.

On the next day of the exhibition, there was a Reba Art Summit Forum. The content of the forum mainly covered the historical origin and development of Reba art. Participants in the forum discussion were mainly intellectuals from universities and cultural research institutions. In the forum activities, the organisers also invited three inheritors of Reba art to speak. According to the author's perspective, this phenomenon is a manifestation of the organisers' use of folk groups to create a "sense of place and ethnic affiliation."

From this, it can be seen that the Reba dance in the culture and art festivals is very different from the traditional Reba dance in terms of its expression, content and function. It is an interactive practice that combines the context of the times, literary policies, modern technology and expression, and presents the agency of the practical subjects. The intellectual-dominated Reba Dance Forum invited representative inheritors from folk groups to participate, aiming to emphasise that the original existence of the Reba dance is in the folk field and that Reba dance belongs to the folk groups rather than the intellectuals. Folk groups are willing to participate in the construction of the meaning of Reba dance in the present time by the sentiment of their national and regional cultures. Together with local intellectuals, they intertwine the historical tradition with the real situation and present the past with innovation, thus forming a diversified structure for the inheritance of the Reba dance.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the preservation and inheritance of Reba dance in Eastern Tibet, exploring the interactions and practices of folk groups and local intellectuals influenced by national cultural policies since the 1980s. Utilising ethnographic methods and Bourdieu's concept of agency, the study reveals the agency of local intellectuals and folk groups, who serve as practical subjects. In contrast to studies primarily focused on artistic strategies, this research contextualises the preservation and inheritance of Reba dance within the broader framework of state wills and cultural policies. While unveiling the impact of cultural policies on Reba dance inheritance, the study emphasises the pivotal roles played by folk groups and local intellectuals in the inheritance process of Reba dance in Tibet.

Firstly, the presentation of the state through cultural and artistic policies is crucial for the preservation and development of Reba dance. This becomes necessary because when performing Reba dance is no longer used as a

tool for folk artists to make a living and address practical needs, relying solely on a sense of identity with their traditional ethnic culture and a sense of historical mission, it becomes challenging to continue the inherit Reba dance. In this context, state intervention is essential for the continuation of the Reba dance.

Secondly, local discourse is essential for Reba dance preservation. Folk groups and local intellectuals, as practical subjects, play crucial roles in this process by playing their agency. Folk groups enrich Reba dance with a diverse movement vocabulary and expressive content, driven by their deep understanding and passion for their ethnic culture. Meanwhile, local intellectuals integrate traditional elements of Reba dance with contemporary context and cultural policies through practices such as choreography, teaching systems, textbooks, and forums, thereby promoting its preservation and inheritance.

Lastly, folk groups and local intellectuals, through localised responses to national cultural policies and interactive practices, fundamentally transform various aspects of Reba dance transmission and performance. These responses represent strategic mechanisms for the contemporary survival and continuity of the Reba dance, avoiding the monopolisation of interpretative rights and transmission by any single group. Moreover, they strengthen their positions and capital in the cultural field, achieving a balance between individual needs and national intentions.

As an ethnographic study, this research is dedicated to the protection of intangible cultural heritage and provides a reference for the formulation and implementation of policies for traditional dance culture in China. Additionally, this study reveals the agency and specific roles of local intellectuals and folk groups in the protection of Chinese intangible cultural heritage, and these findings can be applied to similar contexts of other intangible cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the inheritance of the Reba dance in Eastern Tibet within the context of Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage protection involves strategic interaction between state intentions and practical subjects. Preservation of Reba dance relies not only on national cultural policies but also on the active participation of folk groups and local intellectuals. This study reflects the two-way interaction between state wills and practical subjects through their strategic practices. Furthermore, it emphasises interactive practices of practical subjects to preserve the contemporary significance, vibrancy, and diversity of these traditional cultures by exercising their agency.

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