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A Study of Yuediao Folk Music Knowledge Development in Zhoukou, Henan Province, China

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Abstract

The qualitative method was used in this study of Yuediao opera knowledge development in Zhoukou, Henan Province, China. Based on the collected data, an interview form and questionnaire were used as research tools, and three key informants were selected. The study results are as follows: Yuediao opera is a unique local opera gradually formed by Henan dialect and local folk music. Yuediao opera has gone through the changes of the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the New China. It has a history of more than 300 years. Yuediao opera has gone from being a less famous local opera to becoming one of the most famous operas in Henan Province. Yuediao has performed for Chinese leaders in Beijing six times, and even some performing artists, plays, and vocals have become popular throughout the country. After the transformation of the Republic of China, "Shanglu diao" took the opportunity to revive and become the representative of Yuediao and has undergone great changes in the music system, performance style, aesthetic character, and other aspects through the evolution of "formal costume opera" to "informal costume opera" and then the reform of Chinese opera.

Keywords: Knowledge, Yuediao Opera, Chinese Opera Music, Henan Province, Opera Music Development

1. Introduction

Stretching some 480 km from north to south and 560 km east to west at its widest point, Henan spreads across sizable part of the North China Plain. Henan is bordered by Shanxi and Hebei to the north, Shandong and Anhui to the east, Shaanxi to the west and Hubei to the south. The Yellow River cuts through the northern tip of the province with about five-sixth of its land falling south of the river. Henan's name in fact means "South of the River". At an area of 167,000 square kilometers, Henan is slightly larger than Tunisia. Shang cities, for instance, were large and protected by massive walls up to 40 m wide and 10 m high, the largest of which are estimated to have required an investment of some 13 million labor days. "Oracle bones" – chicken bones and turtle shells – dating from the Shang time, record the first examples of Chinese character writing. These bones were used by rulers to consult ancestral spirits. Some of the most important Shang Dynasty cities were located by modern Shangqiu, Anyang, Yanshi, Anyang and Zhengzhou (Leet, 2023).

Man has been living in Henan since prehistoric times. Archaeological digs within Henan have found artifacts from early Yangshao and Longshan cultures. These early people's farmers as well as hunters and fishers with domesticated dogs and pigs. China's first dynasty, the Xia Dynasty, (2200-1600 BCE) ruled in large parts of what is modern day Henan. The Xia fell to the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046BCE). Archaeological evidence suggests that the early Shang Dynasty was quick to develop a political hierarchy and a complex economic and social system (Li et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2004; Lu et al., 2013; Chunqing, 2013; Li, 2015; Wang & Cui, 2021).

Yuediao is one of the three major local operas in Henan Province and an important part of Henan opera culture. Yuediao opera is a mature type of opera. It has a unique artistic style in many aspects, such as in music, literature, dance, stage tableaux, performance, vocal music, melody, and so on. In 1937, Zou Shaohe wrote that Bang Opera (referring to today's Henan Opera) was regarded as a real opera at that time in his essay *A Brief Study of Henan Opera*. Among many local operas in Henan, "In Henan Province, only Yuediao opera and Bang Opera are popular in the whole province, and the other operas are only popular in local areas." On May 20, 2006, Henan Yuediao was officially listed in China's first batch of national intangible cultural heritage (Wei, 2008; Xiaoqian et al., 2021).

The number of performances of Henan Yuediao opera is about 560. According to its content, genre, and performance system, Yuediao artists divide their plays into "formal costume opera" and "informal costume opera." "Formal opera" is used by Yuediao artists for the early plays, which has the meaning of authenticity and orthodoxy. "Informal costume opera" refers to the performance plays that rose in the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic of China. They are different from early plays in terms of script system, division of labor, performance style, and so on (Ma, Z., 2015).

Since the 1980s, when the market economy and different foreign cultures started to grow, there have been a number of problems with the way traditional Yuediao opera has grown in a market economy. Yuediao opera is facing a serious decline and even extinction. In recent years, with the launch and operation of the "intangible cultural heritage protection project" led by the Chinese government and with the strong support of the "National Art Fund," the Ministry of Culture, and other departments, the development of the whole opera industry began to improve, and the development of Yuediao opera also showed a good momentum. However, from an overall point of view, the overall inheritance and development of Yuediao opera are still not optimistic. Although Yuediao opera has made great progress through the efforts and innovation of government departments and troupe managers, the hard-won situation was soon swallowed up by the wave of the commodity economy. Therefore, it is urgent to rescue and protect Henan Yuediao opera (Zhao, 2009).

The researcher discovered and realized that the historical development of Yuediao opera in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China, analyzed the music characteristics of Yuediao in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China, and summarized the protection and development of Yuediao in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China, based on preliminary data. Exactly. I found that government policies, national strategies, the economy, cultural consumption, the art education system, innovation and technology of drama itself, social media, and other factors had adverse effects on the development and protection of Yuediao, which indirectly affected its social status, artistic role, and performance style. Therefore, I focus on ethnomusicology and combine the methods of sociology, anthropology, ethnography, and communication to conduct a field investigation and related research on the historical development, music characteristics, protection, and development of Yuediao opera in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China. in order to provide new theoretical support and reference for the inheritance and innovation of Henan Yuediao opera and also provide relevant information for those interested in further research.

2. Method

This study followed the ethnomusicology method of "putting music in the cultural context in which it comes into being." The formation of any musical phenomenon is closely related to its social and cultural background. Therefore, we should not only study the historical development of Yuediao opera in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China, but also study the musical characteristics of Yuediao opera. In this way, we can draw a more objective and reliable conclusion about the preservation and development strategy of Yuediao opera. I will

primarily use the field research method to observe the Yuediao opera living environment, observe and perceive the current development status and trend of Yuediao culture, record Henan Yuediao with music score, feel the diverse Henan Yuediao culture, interpret the function, function, and significance of Yuediao from various angles, and pursue the true connotation of Yuediao opera.

The research methods of this article are as follows: 1) Documentary data method: through collecting, sorting out, and identifying existing documents and forming a scientific method of understanding by studying these data. 2) Field investigation method: Field investigation is the basic method to obtain first-hand information. 3) Qualitative research method: Explain the collected data (Oun & Bach, 2014).

2.1 Research site

Henan Province is the birthplace of Yuediao opera. Yuediao opera is mainly spread in the western, central, and eastern regions of Henan Province. Since 1830, Yuediao opera has been the main representative of operas in Henan Province. Zhoukou City is the main carrier of contemporary Yuediao opera. Henan Yuediao Opera Troupe is located in Zhoukou City. Mr. Shen Fengmei, a famous Yuediao master, has been the leader of the troupe for a long time. Since the 1960s, Zhoukou City has been the main carrier of Yuediao opera.

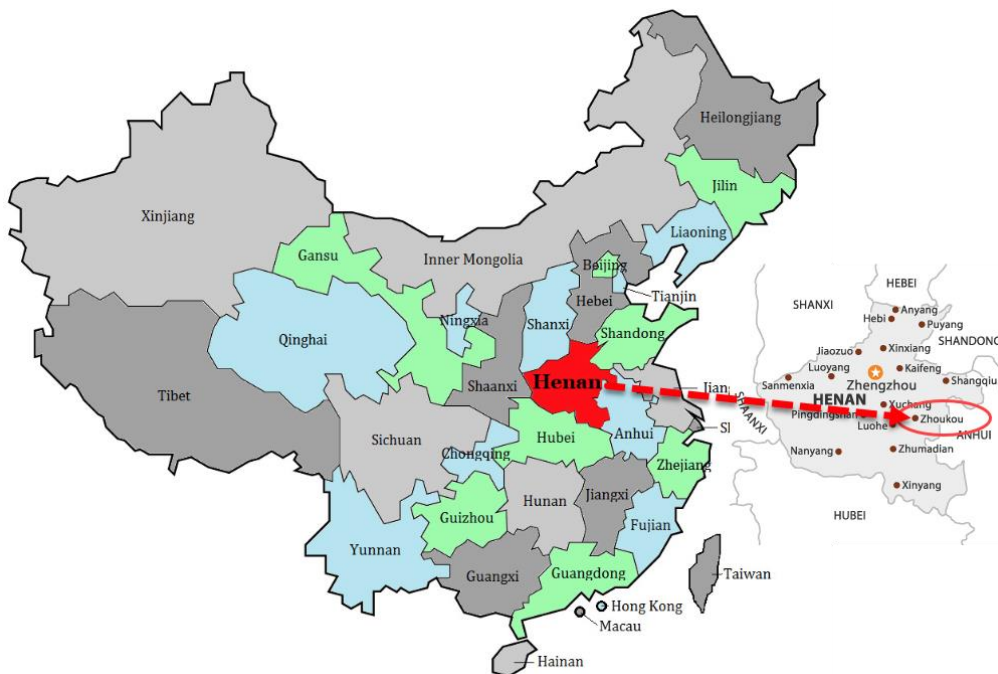


Figure 1: Map of Kaifeng, Henan Province, China

Source: <https://chinafolio.com/provinces/guangxi-province> & <https://country.eiu.com>, (2023)

2.2 Key informants

The criteria for selecting key informants were provided by Mr. Wang Bingcan, the inheritor of China's national intangible culture: They are:

- 1) They have been engaged in the creation, singing, or performance of Yuediao opera for at least 30 years.
- 2) They understand the history, culture, and development of Yuediao opera.
- 3) They have won the highest award in various Yuediao opera competitions.
- 4) They must be the government-awarded Yuediao opera inheritors at the above-provincial level.
- 5) They have made outstanding contributions to the dissemination and development of Yuediao opera.

The three key informants, including two scholars and one famous Yuediao opera actress, are also the inheritors of the Henan Province intangible cultural heritage of Yuediao opera. The three key informants are all very important informants, mainly because they provided me with a lot of data and information, including music scores, videos,

photos, books, newspapers, magazines, and so on. It provides great reference value. 1) Ms. Shen Xiaomei is one of the most famous actors in Yuediao opera. She is a national first-class actor. She has performed many classic dramas of Yuediao opera, won many first prizes in national competitions, and has rich experience in Yuediao opera performance. 2) Mr. Wei Tianbao and 3) Mr. Wang Bingcan are famous composers and theorists of Yuediao opera. They are a national first-class composer and have created many excellent Yuediao operas. They are very familiar with the historical development and musical characteristics of Yuediao opera, which will contribute to the subsequent research of this study. Table 1 lists eight general investigators and eight special investigators.

Table 1: Investigators

No	Name	Gender	Birth year	Site	Profession	Positional
1	Wei Fengqin	female	1964	Henan Yuediao troupe	Performer	Performer
2	Zhang Guoqing	male	1958	Henan Yuediao troupe	Performer	Performer
3	Ma Zichen	male	1933	Zhengzhou, Henan	Researcher	Professor
4	Zhang Li	female	1972	Yuediao Research Center	Scholar	Professor
5	Cheng Jun	male	1976	Yuediao Research Center	Scholar	Professor
6	Zhao Hua	female	1964	Yuediao Research Center	Scholar	Associate Professor
7	Li Ronghua	male	1971	Yuediao Research Center	Scholar	Associate Professor
8	Li Na	female	1981	Yuediao Research Center	Scholar	Associate Professor

2.3 Data collection

During the field investigation, I prepared two forms. One is the interview record; the other is the observation record. In both forms, I designed a variety of questions, including the age, gender, and ethnicity of the respondents. Form, singing language, singing occasion, whether to inherit Yuediao opera, etc. Through interview and observation, statistics are made on the historical and cultural inheritance, rhythm, mode, interval, melody, and other aspects of Yuediao opera so as to provide real data for future research.

2.4 Data analysis

Based on the original historical and oral history of Yuediao opera, the author conducted in-depth research on relevant performers, researchers, and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage through interviews, observation, participation in observation, group discussion, and a questionnaire survey. Try to sort out the history of the development of Yuediao opera more comprehensively and deeply.

3. Results

3.1 Yuediao opera before 1911.

Yuediao Opera is an ancient local opera. Due to the lack of historical documents, it is unclear why this opera is called "Yuediao" and when and where the Yuediao opera originated, but so far there are different opinions, which have hindered the research of this opera for a long time. According to the records of the ZhuangWang Temple Monument in Shedian Town, Nanyang City, Henan Province, it has a history of at least 300 years and has been one of the three major local operas in Henan since 1830.



Figure 2: Sheqi County, Henan Province, the birthplace of Yuediao opera

Source: Lei Li, 2022



Figure 3: Sheqi County, Henan Province, the birthplace of Yuediao opera

Source: Lei Li, 2022

Zheng Linxi explores the origin of Henan Yuediao opera through the ancient books, such as the chronicles of rites and music in the New Tang Dynasty, the chronicles of historical music in the Song Dynasty, the general examination of literature, the general code, the phonology of the Central Plains, and the lost collections of operas in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. 1) In terms of music singing, Henan Yuediao and Kunshan Tune share components. Kunshan tune (i.e., Kunqu opera) was created in Kunshan by Wei Liangfu and others in the middle of the Ming dynasty during the reign of Ye Jialong (about 1566). However, Wei Liangfu studied Beiqu, which was also popular in the area at that time. The singing of Yuediao opera was found as early as in the Song and Yuan dynasties, so it is impossible to learn from the later-created Kunshan tune. On the contrary, Kunqu Opera may learn music and singing from Yuediao Opera. At least it is also from the Northern Song and Yuan dynasties. Yuediao's supporting instruments are primarily strings (four strand strings and Jiezi), indicating that it is older than Kunqu. 2) From the perspective of phonetics and phonology, Yuediao uses the Henan dialect (formerly known as Zhongyuan and Zhongzhou) and preserves many words of Yuanqu. Its lyrics are also compiled in Nanyang dialect. Its initial consonants are completely consistent with the 20 initial consonants in "Phonology of the Central Plains," and its consonants are clearly separated. The "Jiantuan" (dialect rhyme) of Beijing opera, for example, sing with a "Zhongzhou sound," which they obviously learn from Beiqu and Yuediao operas. What is more important is the rhyming method. The "yiqizhe" (rhyme of a dialect) of Yuediao includes words with the vowels "EI" and "UI." This kind of rhyming method is completely consistent with that in the previous Song and Yuan Opera Series. This is also true of many in the Yuan Opera. Although Henan Bangzi (Henan Opera) rhymes in this manner, it may imitate Yuediao opera due to its late age. The characters of "huiduizhe" (rhyme of a dialect) can be compared with "yiqizhe" (rhyme of a dialect), and "Fei" and "Wei" read "Vi" or "Vei," which is the old scale of "Qi Weiyun" (rhyme of a dialect) in "Central Plains phonology," which is consistent with the "Twelve She" (rhyme of a dialect) in the Ming dynasty. From the perspective of the history of Chinese phonology, the rhyme of Yuediao is a "living fossil" in the process of the thirteen Zhe (Zheng, 1985).

Zhou Yibai, a famous contemporary Chinese opera theorist, said in the *Outline of the History of the Development of Chinese Opera*: "After the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty (1799 AD), the Yuediao opera originated from the Nanyang folk song Xiaoqu, originally named four stringed, which specializes in singing the Yuediao opera and does not mix other songs." It is a variant of the Nanyang Bangzi opera. "The "Yuediao opera" of the four tones of local opera is "flat, back, side, and moon." The flat tone is the positive tone of the big voice, the back tone is the reverse tone, the side tone is the high tone, and the moon tone refers to the "yin tone," that is, "the reverse tone of the bass." He denied the recognition of "Yuediao opera" as one of the nine palace tunes in the north and south of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, on the grounds that many tunes of Yuediao opera are only used for accompaniment and many operas are common, but it contains many types of Bangzi tune, which is closest to the western Henan tune of Henan Bangzi opera. He believed that in its early stages, Yuediao opera only sang "Yuediao" and later absorbed the western Henan tune singing method. The main body of Nanyang Bangzi opera is the western Henan Yuediao opera, but it was not popular until later, and the monthly tune came into being in the local place. Therefore, Henan Yuediao opera "is actually a variant of Nanyang Bangzi opera." (Zhou, 1979).

Based on my fieldwork on Yuediao opera and my analysis of other documents on the origin of Yuediao opera, I believe that before 1911, Yuediao opera developed from a local folk small opera in Nanyang City, Henan Province. After development, it absorbed the musical characteristics of Bangzi opera and Pihuang opera. Now, Yuediao opera focuses more on the musical characteristics of Bangzi opera. Due to regional reasons, it also intersected with Han opera and Xipi opera. As far as the situation in modern times is concerned, I prefer Mr. Wei Tianbao's opinion that Yuediao is between Bangzi opera and Pihuang opera in terms of its voice, and Henan Yuediao is more focused on Bangzi. As for its final formation, it should not be later than the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1736–1850). In the absence of more documents to prove it, it can be traced back to the end of the Ming Dynasty (1644 AD). When did Yuediao opera first appear in Zhoukou? I am more inclined to agree with the views of Mr. Wang Bingcan and Mr. Li Ronghua. Yuediao was introduced into Zhoukou during Tongzhi's reign in the Qing Dynasty (1861–1875). It began in the famous Nanyang class in Xiangcheng, which starred Jiang Gao. In the era of Shen Fengmei, Zhou Kou Yuediao was famous in Henan and Beijing.

3.2 Yuediao opera from 1911 to 1949.

According to the available data, there were records of Yuediao performances in Wuhan, Hubei Province, during the Daoguang period (1821–1850) of the Qing Dynasty. From 1911 to 1949, Yuediao began to enter the city on a large scale. In 1917, Kaifeng City, Henan Province, set up a civilized tea house and began to perform in October. From the summer of 1928 to the autumn of the next year, the Yuediao Opera Troupe, led by Zhang Chunde, performed in Hankou City, Hubei Province, for more than a year, with more than 200 plays performed. After the Yuediao actresses appeared on the stage, they performed more in the city. When Zhang Xiuqing returned to the Wuyang Yuetiao Troupe at the age of 15 (1934), she had become famous in Zhoukou, Zhumadian, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, and other places and was known as "the most famous actor in Henan." Jinfeng Tower and Mao Ailian are in Xuchang, and Shen Fengmei is in Luohe. The performances are also very frequent. The two most famous Yuediao troupes in the city are the Wang Hongcen troupe and the Shi Daoyu troupe (Zhang, 2014).

Zhou Zesheng examines the biographies of famous senior Yuediao opera artists in Neixiang County. This paper gives a general overview of three senior artists who had a great influence on the art of Yuediao in Neixiang County from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. 1) Ma Fucai (born in 1873; the date of death is uncertain), a famous actor of Yuediao in Neixiang County He began to study Yuediao in 1885 and soon became the Yuediao actor with the highest artistic attainments in Zhenping County. In 1934, he was transferred to Kaifeng (the capital of the Henan provincial government at that time) to perform. Ma Fucai successively performed more than 10 plays, such as *Subordinate Jiang Wei* and *Empty City Plan*, which caused a sensation in the whole of Kaifeng City. The audience was amazed and said that his acting skills were superb. Ma Fucai devoted his whole life to performing Yuediao and can perform more than 200 plays. He can be called a great master. 2) Wang Zhenkui (1887—1973), a famous actor in Neixiang County. At the age of 14, he began to learn Yuediao and was successively employed as the main actor by several Yuediao troupes. Because of his loud voice and superb acting, he added brilliance to the troupe wherever he went and was deeply loved by the audience. In 1959, he was employed as a teacher at the Zhengzhou Opera School. Wang Zhenkui has deep attainments in opera art, and his performance is serious and

meticulous. He required strictness from students and taught tirelessly; he can be called a model worker. Liu Fuzhi (1892—1953) is a famous actor in Neixiang County. He began to learn Yuediao opera at the age of 13. He is famous in Wanxi County and has become a rare newcomer. He came to Neixiang County in 1930 and was successively employed as the main actor by many Yuediao troupes. Around 1940, Yuediao professional training class was established to cultivate high-quality talents such as Jiang Xigeng, which was praised by the local people (Zhou, 1985).

"Informal drama" refers to the plays that emerged in the late Qing Dynasty (before 1911) and the early Republic of China (after 1911). In terms of the script system, the division of work, and the performance style, they broke the pattern of "Waibajiao," a traditional play with excessive tunes. Its emergence has pushed Yuediao to a new height. "Informal dramas" are mostly "life plays," reflecting secular feelings and joys and sorrows. The use of more regional language and the absence of set performance routines were characteristics of "informal drama" during this time period. It was easy to understand, with a strong flavor of life and a strong local flavor. It was warmly welcomed by the working people. The lyrics of "informal drama" can be long or short, and its structure is flexible. There are more lyrics than words, moving to the other extreme. Many plays, such as Guixi Palace, have no other speeches except for the mutual appellation, summons, newspaper sharing, and brief questions and answers between the characters. Other plays, from the beginning to the end, are all composed of arias. With the increase in volume, dozens or hundreds of long sections of singing can be seen everywhere in the "informal drama." Under the influence of the style and characteristics of this play, "formal drama" has undergone a change into "informal drama," eliminating the stylized singing tunes, enriching the new aria, increasing the randomness of the performance, and even using "opera songs" and "living words" (Hao, 2010).

According to my fieldwork on Yuediao opera and the analysis of other documents on Yuediao opera, the researcher of this paper believes that from 1911 to 1949, Yuediao art played a very important role in the history of its development. It was a link between the past and the future, showing a characteristic that is different from tradition and tends to be modern. During this period, while inheriting the tradition, Yuediao was also influenced by the trend of the times, the exchange between brother dramas, and other factors, resulting in the trend of sprouting new shoots in the tradition. This is one of the main features of modern Yuediao. These accomplishments are the result of a large number of artists who have been honed and innovated, laying the groundwork for Yuediao's post-1949 development pattern. It is worth emphasizing that Yuediao is different from its parent "Nanyang Yuediao" through a series of music and performance reforms, "Zhoukou Yuediao," absorbing the musical elements of other operas and adding new plates such as [TongQi Tune], so as to better adapt to the tastes of the audience in eastern Henan. After hard reform, "Zhoukou Yuediao" has become the mainstream of Yuediao. It has developed rapidly since 1949. The Yuediao we see today is mostly "Zhoukou Yuediao." In a short period of more than half a century, the excessive changes were unexpected.

3.3 Yuediao opera from 1949 to 1966.

With a group of talented and courageous "new writers and artists" such as Zhao Baoheng, who closely cooperated with actors and actively reformed and innovated, "Shanglu diao" began to become the representative of Henan in the context of New China. The 1964 Peking Opera Modern Opera Viewing and Performance Conference set off a nationwide upsurge in the compilation and performance of modern operas. Since then, the Northeast, East China, North China, Central South, Northwest, and Southwest regions have successively held Peking Opera modern opera or modern drama performances. From July 1, 1965, to August 15, 1965, the Central and Southern Region Drama Performance was performed in Guangzhou. Forty-four performance groups from six provinces and regions, including Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi, as well as Wuhan Military Region and Guangzhou Military Region, participated in the performance, which covered 20 drama types, including Henan Opera, Beijing Opera, Flower Drum Opera, Gui Opera, Guangdong Opera, Henan Yuediao, Henan Opera, Han Opera, etc. The performance was divided into seven rounds. The delegation of Henan Province sent four opera companies, including Henan Opera, Quju Opera, Yuediao Opera, and Beijing Opera, to participate in the performance, and ten plays were performed. Among them, two plays, "Ba Melon Garden" and "Dou Shu Chang," were performed by Yuediao. From the perspective of the script, the play "Dou Shu Chang" has many reforms and innovations in artistic form. Because of the need for story development, a "play in play" performance situation has been set up.

In performance, it needs to learn from other people's artistic forms, such as allegro, two-clip string, etc. The Central and South China drama watching and performance in 1965 had an important impact on the whole country, especially these modern dramas, which not only trained the creation and performance teams of the participating groups but also will "continue to have a profound impact" on the performance of modern dramas by various types of drama, especially ancient ones, and famous "old" actors. Among them, Henan Yuediao's Ba Melon Garden and Dou Shuchang were recommended to perform in Beijing. After participating in the performance in the Central South District, these small plays were widely printed and published. Henan Yuediao's Ba Gua Garden and Dou Shuchang were transplanted and performed by several brother plays across the country, which is regarded as the honor of Yuediao. Yuediao, as one of the three major operas in Henan Province, was performed in Jinjing, which should be said to have been realized under the macro-decision of the national literature and art policy, the mutual assistance of new writers and artists, and the joint efforts of the government's important performances. The opera performance has become an important "catalyst" for the transition from Yuediao to mainstream discourse (Chen, 2015).

From 1949 to 1966, opera performances were closely linked to opera reform, which together formed an important proposition for contemporary opera. The Instruction on the Reform of Traditional Opera issued by the Chinese Government Council in May 1951 indicated that "whenever possible, a national opera competition should be held every year to show the improvement of various operas, encourage their excellent works and performances, and guide their development." The purpose of watching opera performances is to expand the communication between opera types and actors, set a benchmark by performing together, and then guide the future development of the opera industry. The important goal of drama reform is to achieve the "integrity" of the drama stage system, involving both content and form. To be specific, it is to improve the literariness of the script, enrich the music and singing, seek the unity of stage art style, inherit the realistic tradition of opera performance, and improve the directing system so that various artistic means can be integrated to serve the performance of the theme and shape the characters and ensure the clarity of the theme and the integrity of the characters. If the competition show is "a good way to promote the development of opera art," then the sorting and adaptation of the purpose of the traditional melodies and the creation of new plays will be closer to "integrity" on the one hand and become "demonstration" through the award-winning plays of the show. With the pursuit of "integrity," Yuediao's new style gradually emerges (Xia, 1985).

This study believes that, from the perspective of opera performances from 1949 to 1966, the transformation of Yuediao identity at the government level in the past 17 years has been investigated. The opera performances greatly promoted the transformation and development of Yue Dao and his self-innovation. Through two nationally influential theatrical performances, the first opera viewing performance in Henan Province in 1956 and the drama viewing performance in the Central and Southern District in 1965, this paper analyzes the "transformation" and "innovation" of Yuediao in the mainstream level of opera in the past 17 years. The Chinese opera from 1949 to 1966 was a vast world, which is reflected in all aspects of the cultural ecology of opera. By placing Yuediao, a local drama, in the theatrical arena from 1949 to 1966, the perspective of its research is naturally diversified. Its formation will be determined by the establishment and interpretation of mainstream discourse power, and the government-colored drama performance is simply a suitable space to spy on and analyze the ecology of Henan's Yuediao in New China. Yuediao has gone from improving the literariness of the script, enriching music, and singing, and seeking unity of stage art style to inheriting the realistic tradition of opera performance and improving the directing system so that various artistic means can be integrated to serve the performance of the theme and shape the characters, and then to ensure the clarity of the theme and the integrity of the characters. The two modern operas of Yuediao, Ba Melon Garden and Dou Shuchang, have been highly recognized by the opera circle, which is the best proof of Yuediao's success in "transformation" and "innovation." In the end, "Shangludiao" (represented by Zhoukou Yuediao) won the "attention" and "recognition" of opera experts and the general audience in the performance and began to become the spokesman of Yuediao in China from 1949 to 1966 and decades after.

3.4 Yuediao opera from 1966 to 1981.

Film was born at the end of the 19th century. By the 1920s and 1930s, it had become a popular form of entertainment in many parts of the world. However, in China at that time, in fact, the film "has not completely

replaced the art status of drama in the hearts of most Chinese audiences." Academics generally regard the 1905 release of *Dingjun Mountain*, the first Chinese opera short film, as the beginning of Chinese film, as it indirectly demonstrates the dominant position of drama stage performance in cultural consumption at the time and foreshadows future exploration of national films and "Chinese characteristics." As one of the three major operas in Henan, Yuediao did not have opera films until about 1965. As a relatively ancient drama, none of the traditional operas appeared on the screen. In fact, the theme of opera films during this period was "ancient life." Most of the drama films shot in this issue are presented in the form of "fragments." The Yuediao film *New Opera in Mountain Villages* is a combination of two stage dramas, "Couple" and "Selling Basket." As mentioned earlier, since 1963, a large number of modern operas have been created and performed in various parts of the country. It is against this background that two out-of-tune dramas were born (Chen, 2015).

From 1966 to 1981, compared with the previous development, this period of Yuediao art underwent a change to adapt to the new social changes and the evolution of the audience's aesthetic taste. If the performance of Yuediao in Beijing in 1963 was another prosperity of Yuediao dramas, then the Henan Yuediao Troupe went to Beijing to take part in film shooting in 1979, and as Mr. Shen Fengmei said, it was "prosperity again of Yuediao dramas." From the Yuediao "informal costume opera," Li Tianbao's *Hanging Filial Piety*, to the movie Li Tianbao's *Getting Married*, which is well-known throughout the country, objectively speaking, Yuediao Drama has made new progress in ideology and art. If opera is regarded as an "art," especially to be put on the screen, then this pursuit of refinement by Yuediao is also a necessity of historical development. To a certain extent, filming has promoted the innovation of traditional Yuediao. Of course, "stage" is the lifeblood of drama, and a drama performance outside the film should have a more "real" and vivid existence. However, at that time, those Yuediao films that were generally welcomed by audiences at all levels provided some successful experience for the development and inheritance of current Yuediao.

3.5 Yuediao opera since 1981.

In the 1980s, with the establishment of China's reform and opening-up policies, more attention was paid to the call for national policies, and a series of reforms were actively carried out. During this period, Yuediao created a large number of new historical plays, such as "The Mirror," "Wolong Self-Compiled," "Ah Dou Hen," "The Red Lady," "Just Out of the Thatched Cottage," "Guan Gong Sending Diao Chan," etc., which had new breakthroughs and developments in content and form. At the same time, although there are many traditional dramas and new historical dramas that have been reorganized and adapted for the Yuediao opera stage, there are still masterpieces of modern drama. The content of modern drama in an out of tune performance aims at cultural exploration, influenced by new literary and artistic trends of thought. The modern drama that first appeared on the stage, such as *Butterflies in Love with Flowers*, *Bitter Cauliflower*, *Red Aunt*, *Silence*, etc. With the deepening of reform and opening up, the creators' ideas have been further emancipated and broadened, and Henan local operas have gradually begun to transform from a simple "theory of reflection" to the excavation of the cultural field, which is a bold exploration in form. A number of explorative Yuediao opera modern dramas, such as *The Tearing Red Candle*, *The Marriage Mother*, *Ma Daha Looking for the Crutches*, and *Boss Qiao's Worry*, came into being (Chen, 2015).

Looking at the Yuediao ecology since the 21st century, on the one hand, Yuediao still faces the "dilemma" caused by the general weakness of the performance market. On the other hand, in the context of "intangible cultural heritage," which is gradually becoming the key word of the times, Yuediao people are committed to the creation of dramas that reflect cultural taste and deep artistic conception. Among them, the modern play "Spring Rain in the Far Mountains" is adapted from Jia Pingwa's novel "Heavenly Dog." It is a bold attempt to jump out of the perspective of traditional rural themes and focus on people's emotional instincts. In terms of traditional drama, it not only restored "Female General of Yang Clan" and "Chopping Yang Scene," but also reprocessed old dramas such as "No Jun Mansion," "Red Book Sword," "Li Shuangxi Borrows Liang," etc. The new historical dramas continue to maintain a strong momentum, and *Jane Tiehen*, *Devoted to Qishan Mountain*, *Prince and Minister in the Prosperous Age*, *Lao Tzu*, and others especially show the Yuediao way of self-presentation and the struggle for the right to speak in the new century. However, while active practice has become the "grand plan" of the national stage art boutique project, it has enhanced the Yuediao character of the times but is in danger of losing its "individuality" in this "dramatic" impact (Chen, 2015).

Since the 1980s, in response to the national policy call, Yuedai has actively carried out a series of reforms and achieved some good results. At this time, Yuediao created a large number of new historical plays and modern plays and made new breakthroughs and developments in content and form. In 1983, the Zhoukou Yuediao Troupe was reorganized and upgraded to the Henan Yuediao Troupe. After the 1980s, the main aria of famous actors such as Shen Fengmei became a popular classic. However, in comparison to the 1980s, Chinese opera in the 1990s entered a slump, and the situation in Yuediao is concerning. Some newly restored state-owned troupes were forced to cancel, and the talent drain from the troupes was serious. It was more difficult to pursue and explore the modernization of Yuediao. But at this time, Yuediao was still carrying out self-innovation. There are two trends in the creation of Yuediao in the 1990s: one is the deliberate pursuit of "form" in creation; the other is to seek the integration of "tradition and modernity," focusing on the cultural integration between historical stories and current audiences. On the one hand, looking at the moon carving ecology since the twenty-first century, Yuediao is still experiencing difficulties as a result of the market's poor performance. On the other hand, in the context of the government's "intangible cultural heritage" protection policy, Yuediao is committed to creating drama with cultural taste and deep artistic conception. At this time, Yuediao has made good achievements. For example, the historical drama *Lao Tzu*, created and performed by the Henan Yuediao Opera Troupe, is the first drama in China to show the image of Lao Tzu in the form of a drama. This drama is one of the "Top Ten Excellent Dramas" of the 2012 National Fine Stage Art Project. In terms of melody design, it adopts the inherent mode of Yuediao, with beautiful lyrics that fully demonstrate the unique charm of Yuediao vocal art. This drama can be called a classic work in the history of Yuediao development. It also helped the Henan Yuediao Opera Troupe get rid of the predicament successfully. However, Yuediao is also in danger of losing its traditional artistic personality while actively striving to become a national stage art boutique project. How will Yuediao "inherit" and "innovate" in the future? How do I open up a new stage? This will be the main issue that Yuediao insiders will face. At present, the Henan Yuediao Opera Troupe is actively exploring new innovation and development spaces and focusing on the local cultural resources of Zhoukou City.

3.6 Conclusion

It mainly introduces the development and formation of Yuediao opera in five parts: the Yuediao opera before 1911, the Yuediao opera from 1911 to 1949, the Yuediao opera from 1949 to 1966, the Yuediao opera from 1966 to 1981, and the Yuediao opera since 1981. Yuediao opera has survived the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and New China. It has a history of more than 300 years. Yuediao opera has changed from a less famous local opera to one of the most famous operas in Henan Province. Yuediao has performed for Chinese leaders six times in Beijing. Even some performing artists, plays, and vocal music are popular throughout the country because of the love of the people all over the country, which is inseparable from the joint efforts of Yuediao performing artists, creators, and audiences of all ages.

3.6.1 Yuediao opera evolved from a local folk small opera in Nanyang City, Henan Province, prior to 1911. After development, it absorbed the musical characteristics of Bangzi opera and Pihuang opera. Now, Yuediao opera focuses more on the musical characteristics of Bangzi opera. From 1861 to 1875, Yuediao opera was introduced into Zhoukou.

3.6.2 From 1911 to 1949, the appearance of actresses promoted the rapid prosperity of "Shangludiao" and also promoted the innovation of the music system in Yuediao. While inheriting the tradition, Yuediao opera was also affected by the trend of the times, brother drama exchanges, and other factors. Zhoukou Yuediao has become the main representative genre of Yuediao opera. The Yuediao opera we see today is mostly about the Yuediao opera in Zhoukou.

3.6.3 From 1949 to 1966, through the first drama performance in Henan Province in 1956 and the second in central and southern China in 1965, these two nationally influential drama performances greatly promoted the transformation, development, and self-innovation of Yuediao. The two modern operas of Yuediao, *Bagua Garden* and *Dou Shuchang*, have been highly recognized by the opera circle, which is the best proof of Yuediao's successful "transformation" and "innovation." In the end, *Shanglu Tune* (represented by Zhoukou Yuediao) won

the welcome of opera experts and the general audience in the performance and became the representative of Yuediao opera in China from 1949 to 1966 and decades later.

3.6.4 From 1966 to 1977, due to the government's policy of advocating the creation of "model plays," Yuediao opera suffered serious losses. Most Yuediao troupes were banned, stopped, or disbanded, leaving only Zhoukou, Xuchang, and Sheqi Yuediao troupes in the province. During this period, only Zhoukou Yuediao Theatre Troupe (the predecessor of Henan Yuediao Theatre Troupe), under the guidance of Peng Xiuwen, a famous musician, created and rehearsed large-scale modern plays such as Yuediao's "The Story of the Red Lantern," which had a great impact both inside and outside Henan Province. From 1979 to 1981, four drama films were made, including the Yuediao opera Zhuge Liang Holds a Memorial Ceremony to Zhou Yu. Yuediao opera has made great progress from script literature, director, and music to stage art. Overall, the innovations made by Yuediao opera in this period to adapt to the audience's aesthetic appreciation are mainly reflected in the following 4 aspects: first, to delete some unnecessary details so as to further refine the drama structure; second, to transform the characters in traditional Chinese opera and pursue the unity of characters; third, to delete some vulgar stories and lines; fourth, to promote the drama of the whole drama with comprehensive performance; and finally, to strengthen the comedy story plot of the drama plot in order to gain more audience. Objectively speaking, the recording and shooting of film operas promoted the self-innovation of traditional Yuediao to a certain extent.

3.6.5 In the 1980s, in response to the national policy call, Yuedai actively carried out a series of reforms and achieved some good results. At this time, Yuediao created a large number of new historical plays and modern plays and made new breakthroughs and developments in content and form. In 1983, the Zhoukou Yuediao Troupe was reorganized and upgraded to the Henan Yuediao Troupe. After the 1980s, the main arias of famous actors such as Shen Fengmei became popular classics. However, in comparison to the 1980s, Chinese opera in the 1990s entered a slump, and Yuediao's situation is concerning. Some newly restored state-owned theatrical troupes were forced to cancel, and the talent drain from the troupes was serious. It is more difficult to pursue and explore the modernization of Yuediao opera. But at this time, Yuediao is still carrying out self-innovation. There are two trends in the creation of Yuediao in the 1990s: one is the deliberate pursuit of "form" in the creation; the other is to seek the integration of "tradition and modernity," focusing on the cultural integration between historical stories and current audiences. Looking at the Yuediao in the twenty-first century, on the one hand, the Yuediao is still caught in a bind caused by the poor performance market. On the other hand, in the context of the government's "intangible cultural heritage" protection policy, Yuediao is committed to creating dramatic cultural taste and profound artistic conception.

However, while actively striving to become an excellent national stage art project, Yuediao is also facing the danger of losing its traditional artistic personality. How will Yuediao "inherit" and "innovate" in the future? How do I open up a new stage? This will be the main problem faced by Yuediao insiders. At present, the Henan Yuediao Opera Troupe is actively exploring new spaces for innovation and development and focusing on the local cultural resources of Zhoukou City. To make the development period of Yuediao opera clearer, I will summarize in table format.

Table 2: The Development of Yuediao opera in Zhoukou City, Henan Province, China.

Period	Factors	The Development	Effect of the development
Before 1911	Before 1911, the development of Chinese opera was very prosperous, which promoted the exchange of local operas. In this case, Yuediao opera actively sought to learn from other better operas in order to grow.	Yuediao opera absorbs the musical features of Bangzi opera and Pihuang opera. In terms of sound, Yuediao opera absorbs more characteristics of Bangzi opera music.	Yuediao opera has evolved from Henan Province's local folk small operas to three major operas. From 1861 to 1875, Yuediao opera was introduced into Zhoukou.
1911-1949	During this period, the Chinese government experienced the demise of the Qing Dynasty and the founding of the	Female artists can perform Yuediao opera on the stage and gradually gain a warm welcome from experts and	From 1911 to 1949, Shanglu Yuediao, which was best shown by Zhoukou Yuediao opera, was the most

Period	Factors	The Development	Effect of the development
	Republic of China. The appearance of female artists in Yuediao opera promoted the prosperity of Yuediao opera and the reform of the system.	the audience. Female artists promote the prosperity and development of Yuediao opera.	important type of Yuediao opera.
1949-1966	The founding of the People's Republic of China further promoted the prosperity of opera. These two nationally influential drama performances greatly promoted the transformation, development, and self-innovation of Yuediao.	Yuediao opera was made to achieve the "integrity" of the drama stage system, which means to improve the literary quality of drama scripts, add to music and singing, look for the unity of stage art style, carry on the realistic tradition of drama performance.	During this period, Shen Fengmei and a group of nationally known actors with Yuediao emerged. Zhoukou Yuediao has been the representative of Chinese Yuediao opera since 1949.
1966-1981	The government's policy of advocating the creation of "model plays," Yuediao opera suffered serious losses. Most Yuediao troupes were banned, stopped, or disbanded.	During this period, only the predecessor of Henan Yuediao Theatre Troupe, under the guidance of Peng Xiuwen, a famous musician, created and rehearsed large-scale modern plays such as Yuediao's "The Story of the Red" which had a great impact both inside and outside Henan Province.	To a certain extent, filming has promoted the innovation of traditional Yuediao. At that time, those Yuediao films that were generally welcomed by audiences at all levels provided some successful experience for the development and inheritance of current Yuediao.
1981-2021	With the establishment of national reform and opening-up policies the content of modern drama performed in Yuediao opera was aimed at cultural exploration. The plight of Yuediao is even worse, the brain drain is serious, and the pursuit and exploration of Yuediao modernization are even more difficult. On the other hand, under the care of the national policy of "intangible cultural Yuediao people are committed to promoting the local characteristic cultural taste and creating a deep artistic conception.	Yuediao created a large number of new historical plays, which had new breakthroughs and developments in content and form. At the same time, the content of Yuediao modern drama aims at cultural exploration. On the one hand, it is due to the lack of a performance market and various difficulties brought by audience appreciation; on the other hand, the slow recovery was supported by the national policy of "intangible cultural heritage."	Yuediao explored the cultural field and then made bold explorations in form. A number of experimental Yuediao modern dramas were created. The pursuit of traditional Yuediao in the creation of operas, and the other was the seeking of the integration of tradition and modernity. Creating cultural taste and deep artistic conception.

4. Discussion

Through field investigation and literature analysis, I think it is necessary to explore the development process of Yuediao opera from the perspective of historical development. Yuediao opera experienced the development of the Qing Dynasty (1636–1911), the Republic of China (1911–1949), and the New China (1949–present). It has a history of more than 300 years. In my opinion, Yuediao opera's transformation from a lesser-known local opera to one of Henan Province's most famous operas is inextricably linked to the collaborative efforts of successive generations of Yuediao performing artists and creators. In the historical process of its century-old development, Yuediao opera has gone from the heyday of "formal costume drama" to the prosperity of "non-formal costume drama," from the emergence of actresses in the Republic of China period to the great contribution made by actresses to the prosperity of Yuediao opera and has undergone tremendous changes in terms of music system, performance style, aesthetic character, and band system. All the above are due to the efforts of Yuediao's

performing artists and creators. At the same time, it is also inseparable from historical factors such as the Qing Dynasty that imprisoned human creativity, the Republic of China under the turmoil of the times, the literary and art policy of New China that promoted the prosperity and development of opera, and the mutual influence of multiculturalism in the contemporary world. In addition, there are profound social and historical reasons for the production and dissemination of Yuediao opera. Of course, this is an unavoidable result of cultural development, owing to the fact that the development of Yue Tiao music and art begins with the development of the social economy, and its artistic development is inextricably linked to social and economic development. This needs to be explored from the perspectives of socio-economic development and cultural development, and I think this is a necessary research method.

The results of my research are consistent with the following scholars' views: 1) During the Republic of China period's transformation, the "Shanglu Diao" of Yuediao opera took advantage of the opportunity to develop and become the main spokesperson of Yuediao opera in Henan opera (Chen, 2015). 2) After entering New China (1949–now), people have been paying attention to this ancient art, which has played an important role in the development and changes of Yuediao opera (Zhang, 2014). 3) Over the course of its development, Yuedao opera has changed from "formal play" to "informal play" and then to the reform of Chinese opera, with great changes in the music system and performance style (Ma, 1989).

The results of my research are consistent with my point of view in the field investigation. 1) The emergence of actresses during the Republic of China made a great contribution to the prosperity of Yuediao opera (Ms. Shen Xiaomei, interviewed in 2021). 2) Yuediao opera has changed from "formal play" to "informal play," which has prompted great changes in Yuediao opera in terms of music system, performance style, and band system (Mr. Wei Tianbao, interviewed in 2021). (3) During the period of the Republic of China, the prosperity of Yuediao opera "Shangludiao" made it the main spokesperson of Yuediao opera in Henan opera (Mr. Wang Bingcan, interviewed in 2021).

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