

# Anqing Huangmei Opera, Anhui Province, China: Re-Invention of Tradition in the Process of National Intangible Cultural Revitalization

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## Abstract

*The Anqing Huangmei Opera originated in Huangmei County, Hubei Province, dating back to the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty (1764-1786), approximately 230-260 years ago. In 2006, Anqing Huangmei Opera was rightfully included in the first batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage representative projects. This study employs a qualitative research methodology and utilizes the concept of "The Re-Invention of Tradition" as a framework to uncover the essential cultural practices of Anqing Huangmei Opera in the context of National Intangible Cultural Revitalization. The research focuses on three main objectives: (1) Examining the historical development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing; (2) Analyzing the foundations of innovation within Anqing Huangmei Opera; (3) Investigating the mechanisms of "Re-Invention of Tradition" as it pertains to Anqing Huangmei Opera in the process of National Intangible Cultural Revitalization. This study employs rigorous field investigations and in-depth interviews to gather relevant data, applying the "Re-Invention of Tradition" concept for comprehensive text and case analysis. The findings decisively illustrate that Anqing Huangmei Opera has consistently adapted and re-innovated its traditions to meet the demands of contemporary socio-political, economic, and cultural landscapes. This approach is not merely about restoring traditions; instead, it actively cultivates a strong sense of cultural identity and social cohesion that underpins the development of present-day society through the strategic re-invention of its traditions.*

**Keywords:** *Anqing Huangmei Opera, The Re-Invention of Tradition, National Intangible Cultural Revitalization.*

## Introduction

Anqing Huangmei Opera is one of the traditional Chinese operas; as early as 2006, it was selected for the first batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage representative projects list. Its origin can be traced back to Huangmei County, Hubei Province, in the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, about 230-260 years ago. In about 1764, the victims from Huangmei County in Hubei Province fled to Anqing City in Anhui Province and brought tea picking from Huangmei County to the local area. This tea-picking melody is based on the folk tunes of the Anqing area, absorbs various local opera elements, and eventually develops into the Anqing Huangmei Opera with distinct local characteristics (Lu Hongfei, 1985).

Anqing Huangmei Opera has experienced significant social and historical changes from the feudal dynasty period of China, the Republic of China period, the new socialist period, to the post-socialist reform and opening period. More than 30 years after the reform and opening, Huangmei Opera in Anqing has experienced the restoration and the great revival of intangible cultural heritage. The research experts on Huangmei Opera have increased their research on the origin, evolution, and development of the artistic forms of Huangmei opera, and there is much research on this period (Lu Hongfei, 1985; Anhui Institute of Arts, 2000; Ban Youshu, 2000; Wang Ping, 2011).

Since 2012, the Chinese government has aimed to build a strong socialist culture, revitalize China's excellent traditional culture with unprecedented cultural consciousness and self-confidence, and strive to seek creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture to activate the enormous potential of economic development contained in traditional culture and strive to achieve a double harvest of economic and social-cultural benefits. In this context, some scholars have expanded the research on the art noumenon of Huangmei Opera: from the perspectives of linguistics and art, the language arts and music tunes of Huangmei Opera in Anqing are discussed (Song et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2020); Review the

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historical development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing from the diachronic dimension (Lu Jundan, 2024; Ji Zhiqing, 2022); Study on the performance form changes of Huangmei Opera Troupe (Zhou Hongbing, 2018; Shen Houqing, 2016). From the perspective of geographical anthropology, some scholars take spatial production and identity construction as a theoretical basis to study the social and cultural significance of the spatial production and identity construction of traditional Chinese drama in modern urban public space (Zhu et al., 2023; Shao Min, 2015).

More studies are applied research and offer suggestions for the inheritance and development of Anqing Huangmei Opera in the new era. Some researchers focus on the protection and inheritance of Huangmei Opera and folk artists (Zhang Lang, 2014; Yin Xiaohua, 2006); Some discussed the innovative development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing from the perspectives of opera education, professional development and talent training (Liu Yang, 2020; Wang Qinglun, 2017); From the perspective of cultural industry development, some analyzed the development status and existing problems of Huangmei Opera in Anqing and put forward countermeasures (Song Jin, 2018; Liu Lihua, 2013); Some researches on ways and countermeasures to improve the effectiveness of exploitation and utilization of cultural resources of Huangmei Opera (Shao Min and Hao Yuanyuan, 2024; Wang Zhigeng, 2015); Some excavate the value of Huangmei Opera as a unique cultural resource of Anqing City in promoting tourism and rural revitalization (Shao et al., 2021; Yan Weiyang, 2019); Some scholars study the role of modern media or digital media in promoting the inheritance and development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing from the perspective of communication studies (Wang Xiaoling, 2023; Zhu Ye, 2022; Yu Shuyuan, 2018).

Through literature review, this study finds that existing studies have shortcomings in the following aspects: First, most studies tend to study the inheritance and development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing in the new era. The emphasis on applied research and the reconstruction of suggestions reflects the clustering and similarity of academic research under the guidance of the government's macro policy. Second, the basic research is insufficient, and the interdisciplinary perspective is seldom used to analyze the cultural practice of Anqing Huangmei Opera's vigorous innovative development. Creative transformation is a reproduction and re-invention of traditions. Therefore, as basic research, this study adopts qualitative research methods from the perspective of cultural anthropology, draws on the research results of cultural research, and takes "The Re-Invention of Tradition" as a conceptual weapon to study the cultural practice of the innovative development of Anqing Huangmei Opera in the context of National Intangible Cultural Revival, and reveals the cultural essence of the innovative development of Anqing Huangmei Opera.

### *Development History of Huangmei Opera in Anqing*

The history of Anqing Huangmei Opera has roughly experienced four stages of development: the germination and growth period of the Chinese feudal dynasty, the difficult development period in the war and turmoil of the Republic of China, the socialist transformation and decline period after the founding of New China, and the flourishing period of traditional opera culture revival and innovative development in post-socialist reform and opening period.

The germination and growth of China's feudal dynasty from the countryside to the stage (1764-1912)

The origin of Huangmei Opera in Anqing can be traced back to 1764-1786 years of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty, with a history of about 230-260 years. According to the Annals of Anqing City, at that time, Huangmei County in Hubei Province suffered from severe drought and flood disasters, and many victims fled to Anqing in Anhui Province, where they made a living by singing folk songs such as "tea picking" from door to door. The predecessor of Anqing Huangmei Opera was tea picking in Huangmei County. It is based on the folk tunes of the Anqing area and absorbs various opera elements such as Qingyang opera, Gao Opera, and Hui opera, and eventually develops into a dramatic art form with distinct local characteristics of Anqing (Lu Hongfei, 1985, pp. 4-5).

The Huangmei Opera in Anqing was mainly composed of traditional life operas only sung in the fields. During the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty (1821-1850), a temporary troupe began to appear in Huangmei Opera in Anqing. During the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty, Anqing Huangmei Opera

produced a large drama with a relatively complete plot, more tasks, and three or four hours of performance, which marked the final formation of the drama type (Lu Hongfei, 1985, pp. 26-27). Anqing is in the Yangtze River basin; the commodity economy is prosperous, businessmen for entertainment and social needs often sponsored the opera troupe, the emergence of "Peng Xiao Luo class," "Fang Yuzhen Class," "Tongsheng class" and "Xu Wenhe Class" and another famous troupe. As a result, Anqing Huangmei Opera transitioned from small-scale amateur clubs to semi-professional clubs (cited from Zhang Lang, 2014).

#### *The Difficult Development of the Republic of China During the War Turmoil (1912-1949)*

After the founding of the Republic of China in 1912, urbanization and national capitalism developed to a certain extent, which provided the driving force for the market demand for Anqing Huangmei Opera to enter the city from the countryside. In the 1920s, many counties under the jurisdiction of Anqing City established Huangmei opera troupes, such as the "Changchun Class" and "Double Happiness Class." In 1926, Huangmei Opera artist Ding Yongquan led the county opera troupe into the downtown area of Anqing, and Anqing Huangmei Opera began to turn from the countryside to the city. By 1934, the residents of Anqing began to move to Shanghai on a large scale, and theaters such as Yuehua Lou and Taiping Lou became their performance venues. Anqing Huangmei Opera has experienced the historical process of "entering Anqing three times and Shanghai once," basically completed its transformation from rural to urban and gave birth to many outstanding plays (cited from Zhou Hongbing, 2018, p. 92).

In 1937, the Anti-Japanese War broke out, Shanghai and other places fell one after another, and Anqing artists were forced to leave Shanghai and return to their hometown. The fall of Anqing in 1938 forced the artists who returned to Anqing to flee again and find their livelihood. Therefore, Anqing Huangmei Opera entered a difficult period of development.

#### *Rapid Development and Rapid Decline Under Socialist Literary Standards After the Founding of New China (1949-1978)*

In 1949, Socialist New China was founded. On May 5, 1951, The State Council issued the "Instructions on the Reform of Traditional Chinese Opera", the core concept of which was "reform of personnel, reform of opera, reform of opera" (quoted from Lu Jundan, 2024). The socialist literary and artistic standards that serve the masses of workers and peasants require that the repertoire of Anqing Huangmei Opera be carefully reviewed and revised to eliminate the bad thoughts and contents of feudalism and bourgeoisie and require the opera artists to constantly improve their political consciousness and cultural professional level. At the same time, the unreasonable system in the old troupe should be reformed to promote the healthy development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing.

In 1953, Anhui Huangmei Opera Troupe was formally established. Artists created plays such as Willow Well and New Affairs, reflecting the new trend of gender equality, freedom of marriage, and opposition to feudalism in the early days of New China (Yin Xiaohua, 2006). In 1954, the first National Opera Viewing and Performance Conference was held, and Anqing Huangmei Opera was brilliant in its performance. In 1956, the Huangmei Opera film Heaven Match was released in Hong Kong, which triggered the Huangmei melody film trend lasting more than ten years in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, making Huangmei Melody become the nostalgia of overseas Chinese (quoted from Shao et al., 2024).

From 1966 to 1976, China experienced the 10-year Cultural Revolution, which severely impacted the development of socialist culture. The traditional culture of Anqing Huangmei Opera, which was regarded as the representative of feudalism, was severely suppressed, the performance was banned, and the development of Anqing Huangmei Opera was seriously hindered and rapidly withered.

#### *Prosperous Period of Recovery and Innovative Development After Reform and Opening (1978 To Present)*

In 1978, the Chinese government held the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee, which established the development line and principles of reform and opening and socialist modernization. Through reform and opening, China entered a new era of socialist construction and development. Since the reform and opening, Anqing Huangmei Opera has experienced three stages: the recovery period, the

revival period of traditional opera culture, and the development and prosperity period of seeking innovative development and creative transformation.

#### *Recovery Period Since Reform and Opening Up (1978-2002)*

In 1978, the third Committee of the National Federation of Arts and Culture held its third expanded meeting, marking the revival of cultural undertakings. In 1983, The State Council put forward the task of cultural system reform in the "Government Work Report" and made further plans for business adjustment and institutional reform. In 1997, the Anhui Provincial Party Committee put forward the slogan of "Carrying forward emblem culture and singing Huangmei Opera". In 1998, the Huangmei Opera art year was established. In 1999, Anhui Province officially promulgated the "Anhui Province Huangmei Opera Art Revitalization and Development Program". In the same year, Huang Mei Opera actor Han Zaifen won several awards for her starring role in Huizhou Woman, adding luster to the development of Anqing Huangmei Opera. From 1985 to 1999, Huangmei drama won the Golden Eagle Award 13 times, creating a miracle in the history of drama and drama and becoming an important symbol of the Anhui cultural image in the new era (Shao et al., 2024).

#### *Revival Period of Traditional Culture as A National Cultural Heritage Representative (2003-2011)*

2003 China rose peacefully in the international community with sustained and stable economic growth. In October 2003, the Third Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee adopted the Decision on Several Issues Concerning the Improvement of the Socialist Market Economic System, emphasizing the coordinated development of cultural undertakings and cultural industries. In 2004, China acceded to the Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2006, Anqing Huangmei Opera was selected for the first batch of the national intangible cultural heritage list, and Anqing Huangmei Opera Hall was established. In 2009, the Anhui Huangmei Opera Museum was completed in Anqing, becoming China's first national museum with a theatrical theme.

#### *Development and Prosperity Period of Seeking Innovative Development and Creative Transformation (2012 to now)*

In 2017, The State Council issued the Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheriting and Developing Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture, emphasizing the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage, cultural exchanges, and mutual learning between China and foreign countries. In 2018, Anqing Huangmei Opera Art Theater's work "Jade Fairy·Dead on the LanKe Mountain" won an award at the Korean Theater Festival. In 2021, Anqing City passed the Regulations on the Protection and Inheritance of Huangmei Opera in Anqing City, which incorporated the protection work of Huangmei Opera in Anqing into the legal framework. Under the background of cultural power, the Anqing Municipal government actively promotes the integrated development of culture and tourism, constantly exploits the rich cultural resources of Anqing Huangmei Opera to build the city image and develop new quality productivity, and Anqing Huangmei Opera ushered in a real golden development period.

#### *The basis of the Innovation of Anqing Huangmei Opera: Advantages of Natural Geography, Historical and Cultural Resources*

Huangmei Opera originated from Huangmei in Hubei Province, took root in Anqing, Anhui Province, and eventually developed into a luxuriant branch. In 2006, under the first application of the Anqing Municipal Government, Anqing Huangmei Opera was successfully selected into the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage representative projects list. In the following 20 years of development, the Anqing Huangmei Opera has already become an important cultural symbol representing the image of Anqing city and enjoys a high reputation at home and abroad. The following will analyze the resource advantages of Anqing Huangmei Drama innovation from the aspects of Anqing's unique natural geographical conditions and rich social, historical and cultural foundation and inheritance.

### *Unique Geographical Conditions and Lifestyle Provide an Artistic Source for Anqing Huangmei Opera*

Anqing is located on the bank of the Yangtze River. Shipai Town, Huining County, Anqing City, as the key port of the Qianjiang River basin, not only carries the important water and land transportation functions of Qianshan, Taihu Lake, Wangjiang, Susong, and other places to Anqing but is also the only place to go from the Huangmei area of Hubei Province to Anqing, the capital of Anhui Province. This geographical feature and the convenient waterway gave birth to the conditions for disseminating Huangmei Opera in Anqing.

At the same time, this area has a suitable climate and is the main tea-producing area in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River with a long history of tea-producing. Two hundred years ago, tea farmers in Huining County, Anqing City, expressed their emotions by picking tea after work. This wide range of tea planting and tea-picking activities formed a melodious tea-picking melody, which provided a rich natural and cultural background for the drama creation of the Huangmei Opera in Anqing (Anhui Provincial Institute of Arts, 2000, p.9).

### *The Prosperity of Commerce and Trade in The Qing Dynasty Made Huangmei Opera in Anqing a Common Form of Entertainment*

In the 25th year of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty (1760), Anqing, as the capital of Anhui Province, assumed an important role as a political, economic, and cultural center. In this period, Anqing's commercial trade and agricultural handicraft industry flourished, especially to meet the needs of entertainment and social interaction; the merchants frequently funded the opera, thus promoting the widespread of Anqing Huangmei Opera among cities and towns. In 1790, the 55th year of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty, to celebrate the 80th birthday of Emperor Qianlong, the Sanqing Troupe from Yangzhou (formerly composed of three Anqing opera troupes) was recruited to Beijing. During this period, the Huangmei Opera of Anqing became an indispensable social and entertainment activity in the festival celebrations (Deng Xiangyun, 1999).

### *Unique Regional Dialects Give Birth to the Singing Characteristics of Anqing Huangmei Opera*

Anqing Huangmei Opera mainly uses Anqing Mandarin, which is close to Mandarin. The pronunciation position of the Anqing dialect is relatively in the front, and its unique, clear, and delicate pronunciation adds a soft and charming tone to Huangmei Opera. In the performance process, the actors usually sing in vowels and Mandarin, and the small drama says Bai in the local dialect of Anqing, and the singing is still sung in Jianghuai Mandarin. Its singing is divided into three categories: colortune, colortune, and main tune, among which Colortune is mainly based on small drama, the melody is simple and cheerful, and the Colortune is happy (Ban Youshu, 2000, pp. 121-130). The structure of the lyrics in the whole play is mostly seven-character sentences and cross sentences, of which the seven-character sentences are mostly "2+2+3" structure. For example, the famous lyrics in the play "Celestial Match" are "the birds in the tree are in pairs, the green waters and mountains are smiling", while the ten-character sentences are mostly "3+3+4" structure. This structure makes the lyrics catchy and easy to transmit.

### *Strong Policy Support and A Broad Mass Base Provide Impetus for The Development of Huangmei Opera in Anqing*

Anqing Municipal Government actively responds to the national cultural policy and promotes the healthy development of Huangmei Opera at an all-round and deep level through innovative government administrative management concepts, financial support, policy encouragement, legal protection, and norms. In 1982, the Anqing Huangmei Opera (Local Opera) Research Institute was established, responsible for the inheritance and protection of local opera. In 1992, the Anqing Municipal government held the first China (Anqing) Huangmei Opera Art Festival to expand the influence of Anqing Huangmei Opera. In 2006, the Anqing Municipal government actively declared that Huangmei Opera under Anqing was included in the national intangible cultural heritage list. In 2019, the Anqing Municipal government promoted the work of "Opera into campus", ensuring that students can watch opera performances for free



every year. In 2021, the Anqing Municipal government approved the "Regulations on the Protection and Inheritance of Huangmei Opera in Anqing City" to provide legal protection for Huangmei Opera.

Anqing Huangmei Opera has a broad mass base. Since it was listed as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage projects, Anqing Huangmei Opera has 51 representative non-genetic inheritors, including one national representative inheritor Han Zaifen, seven provincial representative inheritors in Anhui province, and forty-three representative inheritors in Anqing city. Anqing's professional troupes, such as Huangmei Opera Art Theater and Zaifen Huangmei Opera Theater, are solid foundations for inheritance and development. There are 11 folk troupes with more than 800 performers, more than 400 private Huangmei opera troupes and folk troupes, and 93 registered private troupes with more than 4,000 performers. Anqing Huangmei Opera Fans Association was the first NGO approved by the Civil Affairs Bureau and was awarded the 3A social organization assessment (quoted from Yu Shuyuan, 2018). It reflects the extensive and deep mass base and strong cultural identity influence of Huangmei Opera in Anqing.

*"The Re-Invention of Tradition " of Anqing Huangmei Opera in the Process of National Intangible Cultural Revitalization*

*Conceptual Connotation of "The Re-Invention of Tradition "*

" The Invention of Tradition " is a concept proposed by the British scholars Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1974. With detailed materials and vivid narration, the author reveals that tradition is not an unchangeable trace handed down from ancient times but a living creation of contemporary people. The seemingly ancient traditions that affect our daily lives have only a short history. We have always been, and must always be, in a tradition of invention, but in modern times, it has become more rapid.

Hobsbawm believes that the essential feature of "tradition" lies in its immutability, with certain fixed, formalized activities and repetitive behaviors. Traditions are natural and man-made. The natural tradition is the result of the continuous formation of history and is a kind of dense social practice. The essential feature of the tradition of the invention is that it is "factious," and its practice is the invention of a series of symbols and symbols concerning identity. The essence of inventing tradition is to artificially create a formalized and ritualized process associated with the past. The more in the era of social transformation, the more endless the tradition of invention. Old traditions could not adapt to the new society, and new traditions were born.

As a kind of opera art form, Anqing Huangmei Opera has been continuously changing with the great historical changes of Chinese society in the history of more than 200 years, and this process of change is the process of tradition being constantly "invented". Therefore, the Huangmei opera in Anqing, under the background of specific social times, has a distinct brand of The Times and ideological characteristics. The cultural traditions carried by Anqing Huangmei Opera are relative, and the development course of Anqing Huangmei Opera is a process in which the "new tradition" is constantly replacing the "old tradition", and it is also a process in which the "old tradition" is constantly re-invented and re-produced. Therefore, this study takes the concept of "The Re-Invention of Tradition" as a weapon to explain and reveal the essence of the cultural practice of the Anqing Huangmei Opera, as a "traditional" opera art form, which has been continuously re-invented and reproduced to serve the existing economic and cultural policies of the Chinese government and promote the unity of social organism and cultural identity in the post-socialist era of reform and opening.

*"The Re-Invention of Tradition " of Huangmei Opera in Anqing in the Process of National Intangible Cultural Revitalization*

Under the background of the Renaissance of intangible cultural heritage, Huangmei Opera in Anqing actively explores the paths, strategies, and methods of creative transformation and innovative development, which sets a benchmark and example for reference for the strong empowerment of intangible cultural heritage.

### *Re-Invent the Content Theme and Artistic Expression Form of Anqing Huangmei Opera*

Construct the new theme content that reflects the historical inheritance and the spirit of The Times

Through innovative repertoire and active adaptation, Anqing Huangmei Opera has become a vivid artistic carrier that actively reflects China's social and historical changes and the spirit and style of The Times. The theme of its content is closely centered on the core socialist values and vividly presents the excellent traditional Chinese culture, red revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture.

Through text analysis, this study summarizes the themes of discourse construction in Anqing Huangmei Opera as follows: First, it reflects the traditional Chinese virtues of filial piety and love for the elderly and the Confucian moral and ethical theme of caring for the world. "Six Feet Lane·Wide" carries forward the Chinese traditional virtues of "giving priority to rites, making people wise and making peace precious"; "Heavenly Match", "Female Emperor's Son-in-law," and "Luo Pa Ji" show the pursuit of ethical values such as filial piety, family responsibility, and integrity. "Zhang Henshui" and "Deng Jiaxian" praise their great spirit of dedication to the country and the people through interpreting the stories of famous people in history. Second, it reflects the spirit of the Red Revolution and the theme of patriotism, such as "The Bloody Arhats," "Sails of Dawn," and other plays. Third, the theme reflects the culture of clean government and harmonious relations between the party and the masses. "Zhenzha Yu Jiang," "Qing Lian," and so on show the clean image of party members and cadres. Dramas such as "Trivia of Grassroots Cadres" and "Kind and Incorruptible" show the original mission of Party members and cadres to seek happiness for the people. Fourth, the theme reflects the glorious history of the founding of the Communist Party of China and the heroic deeds of revolutionary martyrs. For example, focusing on the centennial of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the plays created are "Immortal Jiao Yang," "Red Candles in the Frost," "Communist Manifesto," and so on. Fifth, it reflects the theme of targeted poverty alleviation and rural revitalization. Dramas such as "After Live Broadcast" and "Phoenix Slope" reflect the Party and government's care for poor areas and precise poverty alleviation; "Wanshan Love", "Only for Homesickness", "Spring breeze blowing green Tea Garden Village" and other plays show national unity and strong local feelings under the background of rural revitalization.

### *Explore New Artistic Expression Forms Integrated with Opera and Drama*

While respecting tradition, Anqing Huangmei Opera actively explores the integration with modern art elements and innovates artistic expression forms to adapt to The Times's development and the audience's needs. For example, "The Lady Returns to the Hometown" integrates the singing style of Huangmei Opera with the Western opera style and adds popular elements such as a drum set and electro-acoustic music so that the singing rhythm is accelerated, breaking the traditional rhythm of Huangmei Opera and adding a modern sense to the repertoire. At the same time, Zaifen Theatre's Company adopts the form of "drama + singing", combining modern music and scene music, using Mandarin dialogue, and adding sketch elements to make the drama more relaxed and humorous.

### *Re-Invent the Media Communication Strategy and Stage Space of Anqing Huangmei Opera*

On the one hand, Anqing Huangmei Opera Troupe actively applies the network social media platform to create a diversified and composite media matrix for new media communication. For example, the number of fans of the TikTok account of Zaifen Huangmei Opera Club exceeds 500,000, and the video has been clicked millions of times. The club's official WeChat account, which publishes information on opera teaching and performances, has attracted about 100,000 readers. In addition, the first international Huangmei Opera election campaign in 2021 was promoted on platforms such as Kuaishou and TikTok, effectively promoting Anqing Huangmei Opera's international dissemination.

On the other hand, it actively seeks to combine with Two-dimensional animation culture and implements precision marketing to young audiences by carrying out animation on new media platforms. In the 2023 Qixi Festival, the Shanghai Animation team cooperated with Anhui Zaifen Huangmei Culture and Art Co., Ltd. to create a comic with the same name based on Han Zaifen's version of the opera stage play "Female

Emperor's Son-in-law", and quickly attracted wide attention from opera and second Yuan fans through the simultaneous launch of new media platforms such as Bilibili Comics, Fast Comics, Tencent Animation, iQiyi Comics.

### *Innovate the Opera Education and Training Mechanism, And Continue to Cultivate the Reserve Talent Team*

Take the lead and continue to carry out the "opera into campus" activities

In November 2016, Anqing City was identified as the first pilot city of the "Opera into campus" activity in Anhui Province. Since 2017, the campaign has been carried out in primary and secondary schools across the city. Anqing Municipal Government takes "comprehensive development and overall improvement" as the working idea and ensures that every primary and secondary school in the city can enjoy at least one opera performance through the combination of "campus performance" and "theater viewing", to normalize institutionalized and popularize the opera into the campus activities, to achieve full coverage. As of 2019, the activity has covered 16 schools in the city, and more than 300 teachers and students have jointly presented 17 programs such as Anqing Huangmei Opera melodramas, joint singing, singing, and dancing. In 2022, Anqing City also innovatively launched the "Huangmei Opera Recess Exercise" and successfully held the second Huangmei Opera Recess Exercise exhibition on September 24, 2023, attracting 23 teams, 1,200 students, and more than 330,000 people to watch. The "Opera into the campus" activity in Anqing City has responded, actively promoting lasting innovation and far-reaching influence.

### *The Traditional Opera is Deeply Integrated with Modern Education and Teaching*

First, in terms of curriculum setting, Anqing City has incorporated Huangmei Opera education into the teaching curriculum of grades four, five, and one, focusing on introducing opera general education. Ensure that at least 10 class hours are dedicated to Huangmei Opera teaching each semester and include it in the official curriculum. Secondly, regarding textbook construction and teaching methods, the school uses self-written textbooks to combine Huangmei Opera with music teaching to improve teaching effects and arranges for music teachers to receive professional training in opera to develop teaching methods suitable for students (Liu Yang, 2020). In addition, Anqing has strengthened the construction of opera clubs, supported schools to cooperate with youth palaces and youth activity centers in rural schools to carry out teaching activities, and encouraged more students to participate in the experience, learning, and practice of opera.

Deep integration with cultural and tourism industry development and rural revitalization to create a brand "IP" serving local economic development

Anqing Huangmei Opera actively seeks to closely integrate with the development of the local cultural and tourism industry to achieve two-way empowerment and mutual development. Since 2013, the Anqing Municipal Government has launched the brand "Golden Week·Huangmei Opera" during National Day and successfully created a new cultural tourism brand through the model of "visiting scenic spots during the day and watching Huangmei Opera at night"(Shao et al.,2021, p.127). Anqing City will be Linghu Park, Huangmei Opera Museum, Huangmei Opera Hall, and other attractions in series, launched the opera pilgrimage tour, opera museum tour, and other boutique routes.

At the same time, Anqing City actively promotes Huangmei Opera to play a key role in rural revitalization. The performance and related activities of Huangmei Opera in Anqing have become the core part of the villagers' spiritual life and have promoted the prosperity of rural tourism. Huangmei Village, Luoling Town, Yixiu District, Anqing City, as the hometown of Huangmei Opera master Yan Fengying, has been awarded the titles of "Anhui Ecological Demonstration Village" and "Anhui Beautiful Village Construction Demonstration Village" for its commitment to the inheritance and development of Anqing Huangmei Opera (Yan Weiyong, 2019, p.101).



## Conclusion

The history of Anqing Huangmei Opera distinctly unfolds across four pivotal stages of development. The initial stage marks its germination and growth during the Chinese feudal dynasty. This is followed by a challenging phase amid the wars and turmoil of the Republic of China. After founding New China, the opera faced a period of socialist transformation and decline. However, since the reform and opening up, we now witness a robust resurgence and innovative evolution of traditional opera culture. In the current National Intangible Cultural Revitalization climate, Anqing Huangmei Opera is boldly pursuing development through innovative practices. This dynamic evolution is firmly rooted in the region's natural geographical conditions, vibrant community life, diverse entertainment modes, and its wealth of historical and cultural resources.

Anqing Huangmei Opera is decisively redefining its traditions by capitalizing on its existing resource advantages in several critical ways: (1) It is actively reconstructing themes and art forms to resonate with contemporary society, all while staunchly upholding the core values of socialism through innovative audiovisual content. (2) The opera strategically harnesses new media platforms and technologies to significantly enhance domestic and international communication. (3) A robust new training mechanism is being implemented in opera education to ensure a continuous pipeline of talented performers. (4) Anqing Huangmei Opera is vigorously pursuing the deep integration of its art with the cultural tourism and rural revitalization sectors, thereby driving the sustainable development of the local economy.

This study examines the concept of "The Re-Invention of Tradition" from an interdisciplinary perspective to explore how Anqing Huangmei Opera continuously innovates while rooted in its traditional cultural revival. The aim is to re-invent and re-product existing traditions to address the needs of modern society. Over its more than 200-year history, Anqing Huangmei Opera has continually reinterpreted its traditions, reflecting a broader cultural trend in contemporary times. Analyzing the development of Anqing Huangmei Opera through a longitudinal perspective helps researchers understand its current historical context. Additionally, this study contributes to the foundational research on Huangmei Opera in Anqing.

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