

## The Role of Accordion Music in Guizhou Province, China

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the historical development, cultural significance, and challenges facing accordion music in Guizhou Province, China. The accordion, introduced to Guizhou in the 1950s, became an integral part of music education and cultural expression, blending with local folk traditions. Over the decades, it played significant roles in education, entertainment, and aesthetic enrichment. However, its popularity has declined due to shifting musical preferences, competition from electronic instruments, and insufficient teaching resources. Despite these challenges, the accordion remains a vital cultural artifact, reflecting both historical influences and regional identity. This research explores its historical trajectory, social roles, and current state while emphasizing the need for revitalization efforts through education, cultural integration, and innovation. By addressing the structural issues within Guizhou's accordion education system and performance landscape, this study provides insights into the preservation and future development of accordion music in the region. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening music education, encouraging new compositions, and adapting accordion traditions to contemporary musical trends, ensuring its continued relevance in Guizhou's evolving cultural landscape.

**Key words:** Accordion, Music Education, Cultural Heritage, Traditional Music, Modernization

## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

The accordion is a portable keyboard instrument widely used around the world. It can play harmonic and polyphonic music and can be performed solo, in a duet, or as an accompaniment. This study examines the historical development of the accordion, summarizes its performance techniques, interviews the creator of the Guizhou accordion representative work *Qingfu Miaoling*, analyzes two representative accordion works from Guizhou, and explores the social roles and transmission methods of the accordion in Guizhou over different periods (Wang, 2008; Zhang, 2018; Dorion, 2024).

The accordion originated in Europe and gradually spread to different parts of the world through population migration and cultural exchanges. During its early development, the cultural background and production methods of European society were integrated into the instrument, playing a crucial role in shaping accordion culture. This influence ultimately gave the instrument a distinct European character from its inception. Regarding its origins, the academic community generally believes that the accordion, as a reed instrument, was inspired by the traditional Chinese instrument *sheng*. Marco Polo introduced the *sheng* to Europe around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it did not receive much attention at the time. It was not until 1740 that John Wilder rediscovered

the *sheng* and contributed to its popularization (Liu, 2015; Greene, 2023).

The accordion has undergone 200 years of artistic development from its early forms to the present. Simultaneously, advancements in accordion manufacturing have significantly improved playing techniques and popularized its use. Conversely, the rapid progress in professional accordion music composition has further propelled the instrument's development. Soon, the modern double-system free bass accordion emerged, enabling performances as an accompaniment, solo, duet, ensemble, or concerto. This instrument can also play original versions of large-scale works by classical music composers from various genres (Gorbunova & Petrova, 2019; Li, 2020).

As a relatively young instrument, the accordion has gained popularity over the past half-century. Factories produce more than 60,000 accordions annually, with approximately 50,000 sold domestically, making China the country with the highest number of accordion players. However, since the mid-1990s, the rise of "piano fever," "electronic keyboard fever," and subsequent interest in orchestral and folk music led to a decline in accordion performances at major concerts. Consequently, the number of amateur accordion learners also began to decrease (Kwan, 2004).

The Chinese accordion is an example of Western musical influence on Chinese music culture. Over the past century,

the accordion has taken root in China, significantly impacting the musical lives of the general public. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the accordion was primarily used as an accompaniment instrument for instrumental and vocal music. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country's national accordion manufacturing industry contributed to remarkable progress in accordion performance, teaching, theoretical research, and music composition. In particular, the introduction of the free bass accordion in the 1990s provided an essential foundation for accordion performance and composition, broadening the scope of Chinese accordion artistry (Wu, 1997; Gao, 2003).

Today, the accordion remains one of the most popular musical instruments worldwide. Since its introduction to China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has undergone a century of development, leading to the emergence of numerous skilled performers, composers, and professional teachers. Their collective efforts helped the accordion reach two golden ages in China: one during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, and another during the 1980s and 1990s following economic reforms. During these periods, many widely recognized works were composed. Through various activities such as special concerts, community art performances, professional competitions, and academic forums, a large community of accordion enthusiasts flourished. By the late 1990s, China's accordion industry had diverged into two tracks: professionalization and amateurization. On one hand, major music colleges across China established accordion programs, leading to increasingly complex repertoires and improved performance levels. Many students pursued studies abroad, exchanging knowledge with international high-level performers and even competing on global stages. On the other hand, amateur accordion development became less prominent. Due to the dominance of outdated pop music and a lack of diversified approaches, amateur accordion playing gradually faded from public attention and entered a period of decline (Zhang, 2008; Cai, 2010; Liu, 2012).

Accordion music plays a crucial social role in Guizhou, contributing to entertainment, aesthetics, and education. As an instrument, the accordion carries the rich folk music traditions of Guizhou. It plays a significant role in ethnic music, aiding in the transmission and preservation of traditional culture. The accordion is widely used in festive activities, fostering interaction and connection among people. This musical engagement enhances community cohesion, serving as a medium for social gatherings and celebrations. In music education, the accordion is frequently used as a teaching instrument in schools and communities, helping young people learn traditional music while improving their musical literacy and fostering a sense of identity and pride in their ethnic heritage (Zhang, 2009; Zhang, 2011; Song, 2013).

As society progresses, the role of music continues to evolve, reflecting shifts in cultural ideologies. The accordion, as an imported instrument, differs from many traditional Chinese musical instruments in that it lacks deep-rooted ethnic cultural significance in Guizhou. While it spread widely after its introduction, it has not firmly "taken root" in the local cultural landscape.

However, in the current socio-economic context of Guizhou, alongside the increasing marginalization of modern art, the accordion's various social roles are gradually diminishing. Once a popular instrument in Guizhou, it has experienced a steady decline in interest, particularly among the younger generation, due to the emergence of modern instruments and changing musical preferences.

With the decline in amateur accordion learners and the gradual closure of amateur music schools, these changes have left accordion instructors feeling regretful and helpless. Professional accordion educators must critically reflect on the challenges they face and explore potential solutions to sustain the instrument's cultural relevance.

The study of accordion music in Guizhou is not only crucial for understanding and preserving local culture but also offers broader benefits for social development, cultural exchange, education, and economic progress (Yin, 2008).

Despite its academic and practical significance, research on the accordion's role in Guizhou's evolving cultural landscape remains limited. Compared to more mainstream forms of music, there is a lack of scholarly literature and systematic academic analysis on the subject.

Furthermore, the shortage of music education resources has led to a decline in accordion instruction in formal education, affecting its popularity and development among younger generations.

To promote research on Guizhou's accordion music, it is essential to enhance academic engagement in this field, encourage more scholars to contribute, establish a systematic research framework, and increase public awareness of accordion culture through education and social participation. These initiatives will help create a more supportive environment for the preservation and transmission of accordion music. We hope this study provides valuable insights for scholars studying accordion culture and contributes to revitalizing interest in this unique musical tradition.

### Research Objectives

1. To investigate the historical development of Accordion in Guizhou Province, China.
2. To investigate the role of Accordion in Guizhou Province, China.

### Research Questions

1. How has the historical development of accordion music in Guizhou shaped its cultural identity within the region?
2. What are the key social roles that the accordion has played in Guizhou, and how has its cultural significance changed over recent decades?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview of Guizhou Province, China

Guizhou Province, located in southwest China, is a transportation hub and renowned mountain tourist destination,

characterized by a diverse topography of plateaus, mountains, hills, and basins, making it the only province in China without plains. The region experiences a subtropical humid monsoon climate with mild winters, cool summers, and high precipitation, although its varied topography leads to micro-climatic differences and frequent natural disasters. Guizhou is home to 56 ethnic groups, including the Miao, Buyi, and Dong, whose rich cultural traditions have shaped the province's unique musical heritage. Traditional folk music, featuring local instruments and distinct ethnic influences, has provided a fertile ground for the integration of the accordion into Guizhou's music scene, where it has become an essential instrument for both accompaniment and solo performances. The fusion of the accordion with traditional music has enriched local musical expression, strengthened cultural identity, and fostered innovation, highlighting the diversity and vitality of Guizhou's cultural landscape (Xiong, 2013; Xia & Ma, 2022).

### Overview of the History and Development of Accordion

The accordion has a rich and complex history, originating from the Chinese *sheng* and evolving through centuries of cultural and technological exchange. Introduced to Europe by Father Amiot in 1777, its unique timbre inspired European musicians to develop what would officially become the accordion in 1828. The instrument gradually spread across Europe and was later introduced to China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by foreign settlers and artists. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the accordion gained popularity in China, particularly in Harbin, where Russian immigrants contributed to its widespread use. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century saw significant advancements, including the development of the Stradella bass system and the introduction of free bass accordions, which enhanced the instrument's versatility. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the accordion in China continued to evolve, influenced by international trends, professional music education, and cultural exchanges. However, challenges such as the rise of digital music and shifting musical preferences have led to a decline in its amateur use, particularly in regions like Guizhou, where professional accordion teaching systems remain underdeveloped. Despite these obstacles, the accordion retains a vital role in cultural transmission, education, and performance, and with continued academic attention and cultural initiatives, it has the potential to regain prominence in contemporary Chinese music (Guo, 2013; Gao, 2016; Li, 2016; Song, 2017; An, 2019; Wang, 2020).

### General Knowledge of Accordion

The accordion, a free reed wind instrument, has evolved significantly since its invention in 1829 by Austrian musician Damien, transitioning from a simple structure with limited range to a highly versatile instrument with extensive tonal capabilities. Today, two major types of accordions dominate: the button accordion, prevalent in the Soviet Union and Nordic countries, and the keyboard accordion, which is more widely used worldwide. With revolutionary advancements in manufacturing technology, playing techniques, and

professional music composition, the accordion has become a staple in professional, folk, and popular music. It holds a crucial role in music education, with dedicated institutions such as Germany's National Accordion Academy and the British Accordion Performers Academy contributing to its widespread adoption. In Guizhou, the accordion was initially introduced as a Western instrument, with informal learning methods and self-taught performers shaping its early development. Over time, it integrated with local musical traditions, combining with indigenous instruments such as the *suona* and *erhu* to create unique soundscapes. The emergence of electronic accordions has further expanded its expressive potential, allowing for greater diversity in timbre and sound effects. The accordion continues to play a vital role in traditional festivals, celebrations, and cultural exchange activities in Guizhou, where its playing styles have adapted to local music traditions. Its evolution in the region exemplifies the dynamic interplay between cultural adaptation and technological progress, demonstrating its enduring significance in both performance and education (Zhang, 2006; Wen, 2013).

### Playing Techniques of Accordion

Modern accordion playing techniques have evolved significantly, with research primarily focusing on the compilation and stylistic analysis of contemporary works. The integration of advanced composition techniques has increased the technical demands on performers, requiring mastery of elements such as finger flexibility, bellows control, and coordinated breathwork. The bellows, in particular, play a crucial role in musical expression, with techniques like flat, undulating, and shaking bellows influencing the style and interpretation of different pieces. In China, the rapid development of accordion art has been driven by cultural prosperity and international exchanges, enhancing performance, composition, instrument production, and education. However, there remains a strong call for more accordion compositions that reflect Chinese cultural identity. In Guizhou, accordion techniques have been adapted to local folk traditions, incorporating rapid bellows changes to mimic regional rhythmic patterns and using dynamic articulation to complement traditional dances. Performers often blend Western techniques with indigenous influences, as seen in *Qing Fu Miao Ling*, where bellows manipulation and voice changers vividly depict Miao life and landscapes. The study of Guizhou accordion techniques highlights the importance of bridging technical mastery with expressive musical storytelling, advocating for further innovation in both performance and education to strengthen the role of accordion music in China's cultural heritage (Zhang, 1996; Ruan, 2012; Wu et al., 2012).

### Theories Used in the Study

The theoretical framework of this study integrates multiple disciplines, including musicology, ethnomusicology, instrumental studies, Western and Chinese music theories, and qualitative research methodologies, to comprehensively analyze the role of the accordion in Guizhou. Musicology provides a foundation for understanding the structure,

cultural significance, and historical context of Guizhou accordion music, while ethnomusicology explores its social function, adaptation, and role in shaping regional identity. Instrumental studies examine the accordion's unique timbre, playing techniques, and cultural symbolism, reinforcing its importance as both a musical instrument and a component of local heritage. Western music theory offers a cross-cultural perspective on the accordion's harmony, melody, rhythm, and structure, while Chinese music theory contextualizes its integration within traditional scales and patterns unique to Guizhou's ethnic music. Additionally, qualitative research methods, including historical reviews, field investigations, interviews, and observations, provide essential data for understanding the instrument's evolution and impact. This interdisciplinary approach not only facilitates the protection and transmission of Guizhou's traditional music but also enhances cultural exchange and innovation by positioning the accordion within both local and global musical contexts (Beard & Gloag, 2005; Wu, 2012; Qin, 2016).

### **Literature and Related Research**

Theoretical research on the accordion in China began in the early 1980s, with contributions from leading scholars such as Chen Yiming, Li Cong, Song Liquan, and Wang Yuping, alongside a new generation of researchers like Gao Jie, Shen Bo, Yin Qi, and Lei Yanjia. While accordion studies in China have progressed significantly, research on the Guizhou accordion remains limited. Previous studies have largely focused on the history of Chinese accordion development, comparisons between Chinese and Russian accordion cultures, and the social functions of the instrument. Some studies have examined the interaction between accordion art and China's social and cultural environment, as well as issues in professional accordion education. In Guizhou, research has primarily revolved around accordion grading exams and local teaching initiatives, but there is a lack of systematic and comprehensive academic analysis. Given this gap, this study seeks to organize existing literature, conduct field research, and propose insights into the future development of the Guizhou accordion. By addressing this underexplored topic, the research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of accordion music in China and promote its preservation and evolution within Guizhou's cultural landscape (Meng, 2011; Chen Jianyi, 2022; Wang, 2023).

### **METHOD**

This study examines the historical development, playing techniques, and social role of the accordion in Guizhou Province, utilizing a comprehensive research methodology that includes field investigations, interviews, literature analysis, and data collection. The research focuses on the integration of the accordion into Guizhou's ethnic musical traditions, analyzing its historical trajectory and significance in local communities. The study site, Guizhou Province, was selected due to its rich cultural diversity and unique ethnic music influences, particularly among the Miao and Buyi communities. Key informants, including prominent accordion

educators and performers, provide firsthand insights into the development and challenges of the Guizhou accordion. Data collection involves interviews, observational studies, and document analysis, ensuring a well-rounded examination of the topic. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and data confidentiality were strictly adhered to, and rigorous data management protocols were implemented for reliability and validity. Through thematic analysis of interviews, musical scores, and archival materials, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the accordion's role in Guizhou, contributing valuable knowledge to the field of Chinese accordion studies.

### **RESULTS**

This section examines the historical development, cultural significance, and challenges facing the accordion in Guizhou. Since its introduction in the 1950s, the accordion has played a key role in music education and cultural activities but has faced decline due to changing musical preferences, competition from electronic instruments, and limited teaching resources. Despite its past prominence, its role in aesthetics, entertainment, and education has weakened. To preserve its legacy, revitalization efforts must focus on modernizing education, fostering new compositions, and integrating the instrument into contemporary music.

#### **Historical Development of Accordion in Guizhou Province, China**

The accordion was introduced to Guizhou in the 1950s and gradually integrated into local music culture. Initially popular among intellectuals, it later became part of formal music education, with institutions like Guizhou University and Guizhou Normal University playing key roles in its professionalization. The establishment of the Guizhou Accordion Association in 1981 further promoted academic exchanges and performances. Despite its historical significance and fusion with local folk music, the accordion has faced challenges such as declining popularity, competition from electronic instruments, and a lack of systematic teaching resources. This section explores its development, contributions, and current state within Guizhou's musical landscape.

#### **History and Development of the Accordion in Guizhou**

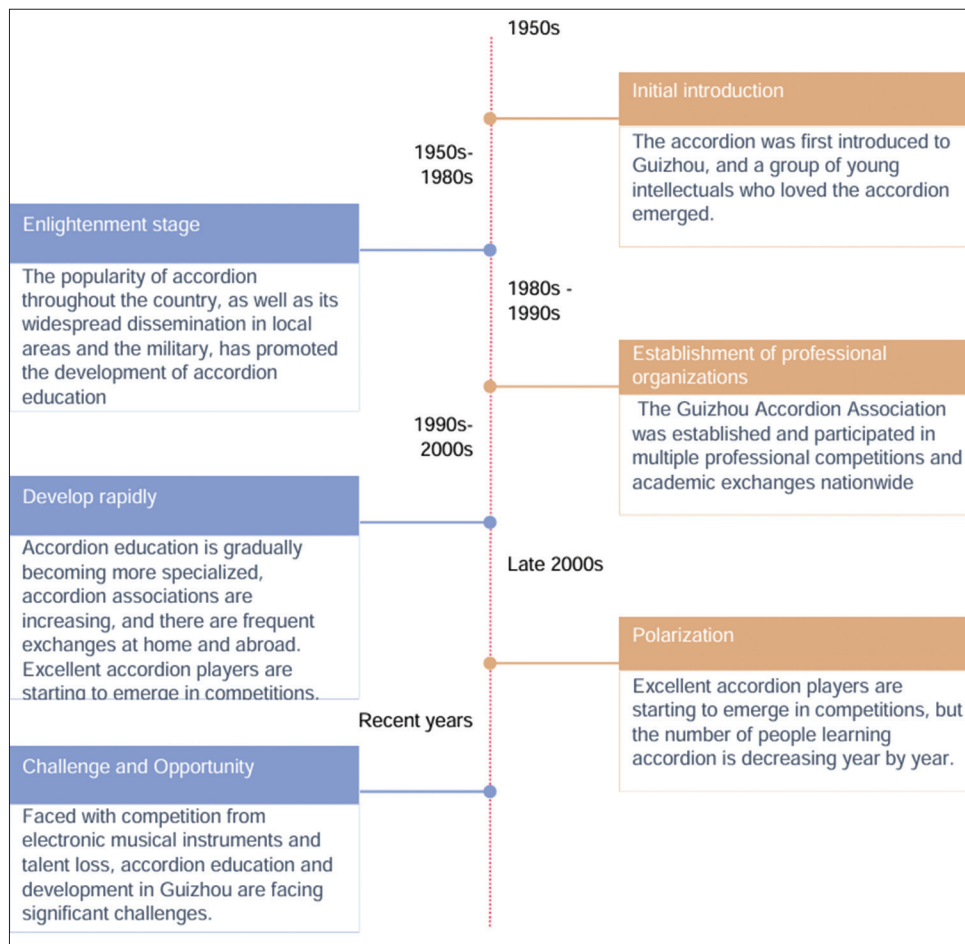
The history and development of the accordion in Guizhou reflect a dynamic process of cultural adaptation, professionalization, and innovation. Introduced in the 1950s, the accordion initially gained popularity among young intellectuals, despite the lack of formal training and teaching materials. Early pioneers such as Ren Junting and Qu Zhe laid the foundation for systematic accordion education, gradually transforming it from an amateur pursuit into a professional discipline. By the 1980s and 1990s, institutionalization took place, with universities such as Guizhou University and Guizhou Normal University incorporating accordion programs, further solidifying its role in formal music education. The establishment of the Guizhou Accordion Association

in 1981 facilitated academic exchanges, competitions, and performances, accelerating the professional development of accordion music in the region. During the 1990s and early 2000s, economic reforms and increasing cultural investment led to a surge in accordion performances, educational programs, and local compositions, with figures like Professors Yin Qi and Wang Zenggang playing pivotal roles in advancing the instrument's status (Figure 1). The fusion of the accordion with Guizhou's ethnic musical traditions has resulted in unique regional performance styles, integrating elements from Miao, Dong, and Bouyei folk music. Unlike other provinces that focus on Western classical and modern pop music, Guizhou accordionists emphasize traditional improvisation, rhythmic variations, and integration with local instruments. Today, while traditional and free-bass accordions remain dominant, electronic accordions are emerging as a tool for cultural preservation and modern adaptation. The accordion's evolution in Guizhou highlights its resilience and versatility, reinforcing its significance in music education, cultural identity, and artistic innovation within the province.

**The Current State of Accordion in Guizhou**

Since 2000, the development of the accordion in Guizhou has faced both progress and decline, characterized by an increase in professional-level achievements in competitions

but a significant decrease in the number of amateur learners. Despite efforts by universities and professional educators to elevate the instrument's status, the lack of widespread popularity has hindered further growth. Several challenges have contributed to this decline, including competition from electronic keyboards, which have attracted many former accordion students due to lower costs and greater accessibility. Additionally, the migration of talented accordionists out of Guizhou in search of better career opportunities has further weakened the local industry, with few professionals remaining to advance accordion education and performance. The shortage of experienced teachers, combined with an inconsistent level of instruction, has resulted in an unbalanced educational system where only a handful of students reach professional standards. Another major obstacle is the lack of systematic and widely available teaching materials. Unlike the piano, which benefits from a well-established curriculum, accordion instruction in Guizhou heavily relies on borrowed materials from piano studies, leading to technical challenges and a limited repertoire. The sporadic availability of music scores and the lack of opportunities for exchange with international accordion communities further constrain its development. As a result, the accordion in Guizhou is at risk of losing its cultural presence, and without strategic intervention—such as the development of localized teaching resources, improved accessibility, and stronger professional networks—the instrument may continue to decline in the region.



**Figure 1.** Guizhou accordion development timeline (Tu Hao, 2024)

### Main Common Types of Guizhou Accordion

At present, the variety of accordion instruments available in Guizhou Province is very limited. Based on the author's investigation, only the following types of accordion instruments can be found in Guizhou.

- Traditional Bass Keyboard Accordion

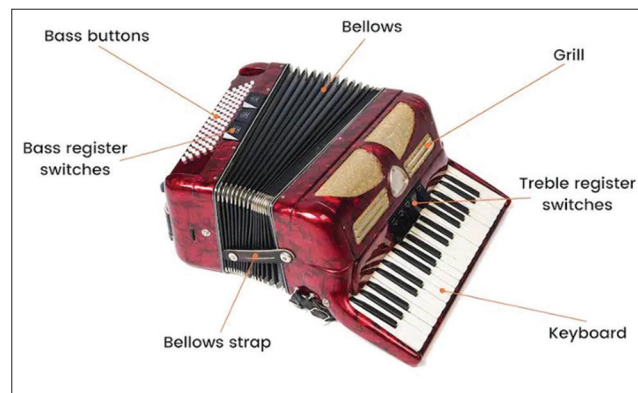
The traditional bass keyboard accordion is the most common type of accordion in Guizhou, widely used by students and performers due to its familiarity and practicality. Structurally, its right-hand keyboard resembles a piano, while the left-hand section consists of bass buttons arranged in a standard pattern, making it suitable for accompaniment and basic performance. The development of the keyboard accordion dates back to the 1860s, evolving alongside the button accordion, with both types maintaining prominence in various musical traditions. The instrument's tone changer allows it to mimic the sounds of different instruments, such as the flute, piccolo, and bassoon, adding versatility to its musical expression. Its widespread adoption stems from its ease of learning, accessibility, and adaptability to various musical genres, including traditional folk music and modern compositions. In Guizhou, the keyboard accordion plays a significant role in folk and community activities due to its lighter weight and convenient chordal accompaniment, making it the preferred choice for beginners and amateur performers. However, its limited bass range affects its overall expressiveness, prompting ongoing improvements by manufacturers and performers to enhance its musical capabilities. Figure 2 shows the basic structure of a traditional bass piano accordion.

- Dual System Free Bass Accordion

The dual-system free bass accordion (Figure 3), an evolution of the traditional keyboard accordion, significantly enhances the instrument's capabilities by expanding the left-hand bass range from one to four and a half octaves. This innovation allows performers to switch between traditional bass and free bass systems, enabling a broader repertoire and aligning the accordion with international instrumental music standards. In Guizhou, this advanced accordion is primarily used by professional students at institutions such as Guizhou University, Guizhou Normal University, and Guizhou University for Nationalities, often under the guidance of renowned professors. The most common model in Guizhou is the Russian-made 120-key dual-system free bass accordion, which features a right-hand keyboard with 41 keys and a left-hand convertible structure for transitioning between traditional and free bass modes. Free bass systems are categorized into B and C arrangements, with the B system following a chromatic structure that mirrors the right-hand keys of Russian button accordions. Due to its complexity, heavier weight, and technical demands, the free bass accordion is primarily used in professional settings, including university training, competitions, and music festivals, rather than in community and folk performances. Its presence in Guizhou's musical landscape highlights the increasing professionalization of accordion studies and its role in preserving and innovating local music traditions.

- Button accordion (also known as bayan accordion)

The bayan accordion, also known as the button accordion, features the same left-hand structure, bellows, and transducer as the free bass keyboard accordion but replaces the traditional keyboard with a serpentine arrangement of larger right-hand keys (Figure 4). This design grants the bayan accordion an extended range, surpassing that of the keyboard



**Figure 2.** Basic structure of a traditional bass piano accordion (Tu Hao, 2024)



**Figure 3.** Free bass accordion  
Source: Tu Hao from fieldwork (2023)



**Figure 4.** Bayan accordion  
Source: Tu Hao from fieldwork (2023)

accordion and making it second only to the piano in terms of range. Its tightly arranged right-hand keys enable performers to easily play within two octaves, an advantage even over the piano. Professional bayan accordions typically include three to five rows of right-hand keys, with additional rows serving as auxiliary keys for convenient fingering. They are also equipped with pitch changers and mute buttons to balance the sounds of both hands. Due to its complexity, the bayan accordion is primarily used in professional academic settings and is less common in folk music. In Guizhou, its presence is mostly limited to specialized music institutions where advanced accordion studies, including bayan and free bass accordion training, are available.

The development of the accordion in Guizhou reflects a complex journey from its introduction as a foreign instrument to its integration into local musical traditions, followed by periods of growth and decline. Although the accordion was originally invented in Austria, its sound production principle traces back to the ancient Chinese sheng. The historical evolution of the accordion includes its transition from early diatonic models to the emergence of the chromatic accordion and the development of the Tesla bass system and dual-system free bass accordion, which elevated its role in professional music. In China, and particularly in Guizhou, the accordion gained prominence in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, supported by educational institutions and cultural initiatives. However, the instrument now faces significant marginalization due to declining interest, competition from other instruments, and challenges in education and popularization. The key phases of the accordion's rise and decline in Guizhou reveal structural issues in its educational system and performance landscape. While theoretical discussions alone cannot resolve these challenges, practical efforts and ongoing commitment from musicians, educators, and cultural organizations will determine the future of Guizhou's accordion tradition. Further research should investigate the role of informal learning networks in sustaining accordion culture, ensuring that this instrument, with its deep cultural and historical significance, remains a vital part of Guizhou's musical heritage.

### The Role of Accordion in Guizhou Province, China

For experimental and quasi-experimental designs, there must be a description of the flow of participants (human, animal, or units such as classrooms or hospital wards) through the study. Present the total number of units recruited into the study and the number of participants assigned to each group. Provide the number of participants who did not complete the experiment or crossed over to other conditions and explain why. Note the number of participants used in the primary analyses. (This number might differ from the number who completed the study because participants might not show up for or complete the final measurement.)

### Intervention or Manipulation Fidelity

If interventions or experimental manipulations were used, provide evidence on whether they were delivered as intended. In basic experimental research, this might be the results

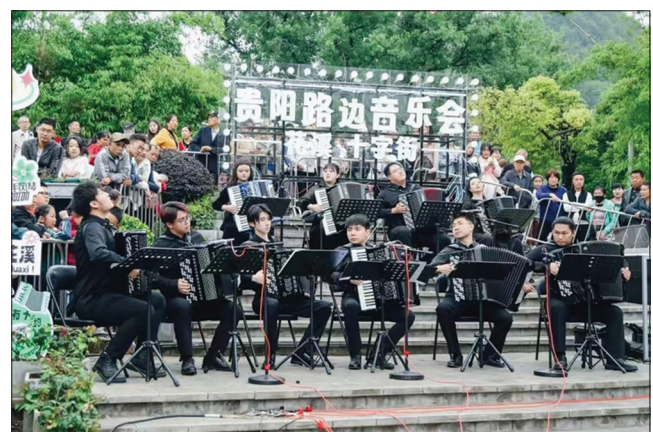
of checks on the manipulation. In applied research, this might be, for example, records and observations of intervention delivery sessions and attendance records.

### The Role of the Accordion in Guizhou

The accordion has played a significant role in Guizhou's cultural, aesthetic, entertainment, and educational landscape, evolving alongside the region's historical and social transformations. Initially introduced as a foreign instrument, it became deeply integrated into local music traditions, particularly in folk performances, revolutionary propaganda, and formal education. The aesthetic function of the accordion was once central to Guizhou's cultural identity, but as modern music styles such as pop and electronic music emerged, its prominence declined. Similarly, its entertainment role, once crucial in festivals, political campaigns, and community gatherings, has weakened due to competition from contemporary instruments and digital sound production. Despite these challenges, the accordion still holds cultural significance in traditional festivals and performances, though its academic and professional presence has gradually replaced its function as a community instrument. The educational role of the accordion has historically been vital, with institutions such as Guizhou University and Guizhou Normal University offering specialized programs, but enrollment has declined, and professional opportunities have become scarce. To sustain its relevance, new strategies are needed to modernize accordion education, diversify its performance styles, and integrate it with contemporary music trends while preserving its unique heritage in Guizhou's musical landscape. Figure 5 shows an accordion roadside concert in Guiyang in Guizhou Province.

### The Transmission of the Accordion in Guizhou

The transmission of accordion art in Guizhou has evolved over nearly eight decades, closely linked to the region's social, economic, and cultural transformations. While once widely popular, the accordion has faced marginalization due to shifting aesthetic preferences and competition from



**Figure 5.** Accordion roadside concert in Guiyang, Guizhou province

Source: Tu Hao, Interview (2024)

other musical forms. To ensure its survival and revitalization, several strategies must be implemented, including the popularization of accordion education, particularly through preschool programs that integrate engaging and interactive learning methods. Strengthening basic accordion instruction in primary and secondary schools can cultivate long-term appreciation, while universities should introduce specialized courses such as accordion duet and ensemble training, improvisational accompaniment, and multimedia integration to modernize instruction and expand professional opportunities. Encouraging the creation of new accordion works with strong folk influences is essential to preserving and promoting Guizhou's unique musical identity, as the lack of original compositions has hindered artistic innovation. Additionally, fostering a new generation of accordion composers and performers through systematic training will ensure the continuity of this art form. By combining cultural heritage with contemporary musical trends, Guizhou's accordion tradition can be revitalized, ensuring its continued presence in education, entertainment, and artistic expression.

The social role and transmission of the accordion in Guizhou highlight the intricate relationship between cultural preservation and adaptation. While the accordion once thrived in the region, its lack of deep-rooted national heritage and the rise of modern musical preferences have led to its gradual marginalization. Despite its historical contributions to aesthetics, entertainment, and education, the accordion's influence has diminished due to shifting social dynamics and economic changes. To revitalize Guizhou's accordion tradition, a diversified approach is necessary—one that draws from international experiences while fostering local cultural integration. This includes enhancing music education in schools, promoting theoretical research, and encouraging innovative compositions that blend folk traditions with modern performance techniques. Strengthening the accordion's presence in cultural activities and academic settings will ensure its continued relevance. Ultimately, for Guizhou's accordion music industry to flourish, it must embrace a path rooted in national identity while evolving with contemporary musical trends.

## DISCUSSION

The development and survival of accordion music in China, particularly in Guizhou, have been the focus of numerous studies since the late 1990s, with scholars analyzing its trajectory from different perspectives. Research highlights that the accordion, once a significant cultural and educational tool, has undergone shifts influenced by historical, social, and political changes. Wang Yuping (2000) pointed out that the turn of the century was a critical period for the development of accordion art in China and provided suggestions for its growth in Guizhou. Li Yuqiu (1994) emphasized the need for a distinctive Chinese accordion school, stating that the key to the instrument's development lies in both original compositions and strong performer promotion. Chu Xiaoming (2010) examined the interaction between Chinese accordion art and social and cultural environments, concluding that its social role in Guizhou has continuously

evolved, with various influences intertwining over time. Wang Yuping (2008) also explored the construction and development of the accordion major at Tianjin Conservatory of Music, outlining key issues and potential models for future expansion. Additionally, Zhu Jingbai (2009) discussed the need for accordion education reform, advocating for a modernized teaching approach aligned with contemporary demands. These viewpoints align with conclusions drawn through literature review and interviews with informants, demonstrating that the development of accordion music in Guizhou is shaped by a combination of external influences and local cultural adaptations. In an interview, Wang Ke (2024) mentioned that Guizhou accordion works draw inspiration from traditional Chinese music structures and performance techniques while integrating modern accordion sound effects. Furthermore, he highlighted the instrument's role in popularizing music education and fostering national pride through its lively melodies. Recognizing the globalization of culture and art, it is essential to establish a strong foundation of Chinese ethnic accordion works to develop a distinct national musical identity. The creation of more accordion compositions with Eastern stylistic characteristics will play a crucial role in this process. Although previous research has focused on the decline of accordion music in urban areas, this study reveals that in many parts of Guizhou, local traditions continue to sustain and adapt the accordion's presence. These findings align with Li (2016), who observed a decline in traditional accordion education due to evolving musical tastes. However, our study expands this perspective by identifying specific socio-economic factors that contribute to this shift. The integration of digital music platforms may serve as a potential revival strategy, allowing accordion compositions to reach wider audiences. Additionally, the role of government initiatives in sustaining traditional music remains crucial, as evidenced in recent cultural policies. Ensuring the future development of accordion music in Guizhou requires a strategic approach that includes fostering ethnic-inspired compositions, refining educational programs, and strengthening its artistic and cultural significance.

## CONCLUSION

The historical development of the accordion in Guizhou has followed a trajectory of introduction, growth, institutionalization, and decline. Initially gaining popularity in the 1950s, the accordion became an essential tool for cultural promotion and music education, supported by institutions such as Guizhou University and Guizhou Normal University. Despite its deep integration into local musical traditions and its role in political, educational, and entertainment spheres, the accordion has faced challenges due to shifting musical preferences, competition from electronic instruments, and a decline in professional educators. The performance techniques and musical characteristics of Guizhou accordion works, such as *Qing Fu Miaoling* and *Miaozu Qing*, demonstrate the instrument's rich artistic potential, yet its presence in contemporary music has waned. Unlike traditional Chinese instruments that have undergone cultural adaptation, the accordion remains an imported instrument that has



struggled to maintain its relevance. To revitalize Guizhou's accordion tradition, efforts must focus on education, cultural integration, and innovation, ensuring its survival through localized teaching methods, creative compositions, and increased public awareness.

Based on the findings of the current study, the following recommendations could be made for further research:

- Future studies should explore the historical origins of the accordion in Guizhou, focusing on its introduction, adaptation, and development within local musical traditions.
- The declining role of the accordion in Guizhou should be further analyzed by investigating its social functions across different historical periods, emphasizing its impact on cultural transmission, education, entertainment, and aesthetics.
- Future research should explore how the accordion can be integrated into modern education and communication models to enhance its relevance in contemporary society.

In addition, the research findings provide valuable reference material for scholars, educators, and accordion enthusiasts, offering insights into the instrument's historical significance and cultural value. The study can serve as a resource for students and teachers learning the accordion, enriching theoretical knowledge and supporting practical skill development. Applying the research findings to educational programs can promote the accordion's role in preserving and sustaining Guizhou's cultural heritage. The results can inform educational policies and curriculum development, encouraging the inclusion of accordion studies in music education programs across Guizhou. Finally, practical applications of this research can contribute to the broader cultural landscape, ensuring that the accordion remains a vital part of local traditions, performances, and artistic innovation.

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