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## The Development of the Inheritance and Dissemination of National Music Culture Jinxiu Yao Music from the Perspective of the Neoclassical Structure-Function Theory

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### Abstract

This paper is based on the neoclassical "structure-function theory" to conduct an in-depth analysis of the transformation and development of the music culture of the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group. The research objectives are as follows: 1) to study the content of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu under the framework of neoclassical structural-functional theory. 2) to study the inheritance mechanisms of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu, investigating and critically evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of various transmission approaches. 3) to study the developmental trajectories of Yao ethnic music in Jinxiu within the context of rapid new media evolution, identifying sustainable strategies for cultural preservation and dynamic adaptation in the digital era. Through interviews with 54 representatives of the Yao ethnic group in the Jinxiu Yao area, research conclusions were drawn, including: 1. Identifying the unique structural characteristics of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music; 2. Applying the neoclassical "structure-function theory" to analyze the transformation of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture from traditional to modern in the process of dissemination; 3. The future development prospects of Jinxiu Yao music from the perspective of neoclassical "structure-function theory". Through an in-depth analysis of the structural characteristics and functional evolution of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu, this study aims to provide transferable experiences and insights for the preservation and development of other ethnic musical traditions.

**Keywords:** neoclassical structure-function theory, Jinxiu Yao ethnic music, inheritance and dissemination, transformation and development

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## Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous advancement of globalization and the acceleration of modernization, Chinese ethnic music culture is facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities, especially the inheritance and dissemination of minority ethnic music culture facing a severe situation. This paper will take the inheritance and dissemination of the Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture in Guangxi as the research object, and explore in depth the challenges and coping strategies it faces.

Research on the Preservation and Dissemination of Ethnic Musical Cultures: Wang (2021), in *Research on Ethnic Music Culture Dissemination Strategies in the New Media Environment: A Review of Beijing Ethnic Music Research and Communication Base Academic Anthology* (2015 Volume), posits that the advent of the new media era has fundamentally transformed the content, forms, technological means, and developmental paradigms of musical cultural transmission. Consequently, strategies and methodologies for music cultural dissemination must evolve accordingly. Particularly in ethnic music propagation, China's dissemination strategies require systematic adaptation to new media dynamics, implementing targeted approaches to enhance both the efficacy and influence of cultural transmission under digital conditions.<sup>3</sup> Siqinchaoketu (2022), in *Characteristics and Pathways of Ethnic Music Cultural Exchange under the Belt and Road Initiative*, argues that cultural exchanges and mutual learning under the BRI framework will catalyze high-quality diplomatic engagements between China and participating nations. The study reveals that BRI-oriented ethnic music exchanges exhibit five distinctive attributes: historicity, ethnicity, regionality, mutual benefit, and long-term sustainability. Four implementation pathways are proposed: 1) Enhancing public participation in BRI music exchanges; 2) Articulating China's cultural narratives through professional musicians' mission- driven practices; 3) Leveraging institutional advantages to secure governmental policy support; 4) Establishing comprehensive material support systems for BRI music initiatives.<sup>4</sup> Jia (2023), in *Music Education and Cultural Inheritance in Ethnic Regions: A Review of Chinese Ethnic Minority Music Cultures*, emphasizes that China's multicultural heritage necessitates music education strategies prioritizing cultural continuity. As ethnic music serves as both historical documentation and emotional expression for minority groups, pedagogical approaches in ethnic regions must systematically preserve the spiritual essence of these musical traditions.<sup>5</sup> Zhang Jijiao and Zhang Yu (2024), in *Research on Haikou Traditional Ballads from the Perspective of Chinese Cultural Development*, highlight the urgent need for preserving Haikou's ballad heritage amidst cultural homogenization. They propose a "triple-structure" analytical framework (national-regional-local ballad systems) to position these traditions within China's

<sup>3</sup> Wang, K. P. (2021). *Research on Dissemination Strategies of Ethnic Musical Culture in the New Media Environment: A Review of Beijing Ethnic Music Research and Communication Base Academic Anthology*. *Journalism Enthusiast*, (5), 99-100.

<sup>4</sup> Siqinchaoketu. (2022). *Characteristics and Pathways of Ethnic Musical Cultural Exchange Under the Belt and Road Initiative*. *Journal of Ethnic Education Studies*, 9(4), 123-127.

<sup>5</sup> Jia, Y. (2023). *Music Education and Cultural Inheritance in Ethnic Regions: A Review of Chinese Ethnic Minority Music Cultures*. *China Education Journal*, (6), 144.

cultural symbol system. The study further explores how Haikou ballads acquire renewed significance in contemporary Chinese cultural contexts through endogenous revitalization mechanisms.<sup>6</sup>

**Research on Yao Ethnic Music Culture:** Hou Daohui (2011), in *A Study of Eighteen Yao Ethnic Suona Wedding Music in Jinxiu, Guangxi*, identifies the unique structural integrity of Yao wedding suites - each composition corresponding to specific ceremonial procedures. Noting their pristine musical preservation within Guangxi's ethnic instrumental repertoire, he advocates open- system inheritance strategies through systematic morphological analysis.<sup>7</sup> Liu Yihan (2015), in *A Critical Review of Yao Music Research*, acknowledges substantial progress in Yao music scholarship while critiquing persistent limitations: overemphasis on descriptive studies of folk songs, dance, and instruments at the expense of deep cultural interpretation; predominance of experiential accounts over theoretical frameworks.<sup>8</sup> Shen Leiqiang (2019), in *Folk Beliefs in Yao Ethnic Music: A Study of the Panwang Song*, demonstrates how this ritual music embodies Yao spiritual cosmology. His cross- regional analysis proposes optimized international dissemination models for China's ethnic music through belief- music interaction studies.<sup>9</sup> Zhao Shufeng (2022), in *Evolution of Yao Wedding Music Culture in China and Southeast Asia: Field Studies in Hunan- Guangdong- Guangxi and Laos- Thailand Communities*, reveals divergent cultural trajectories: Chinese Yao communities maintain core ceremonial structures ("Song Hall" rituals) through cultural self-awareness and ICH movements, whereas Laotian/Thai Yao traditions exhibit structural disintegration due to acculturation pressures (Lao Loum cultural dominance, Christian influences, Thai pop culture). This comparative study frames musical changes as strategic adaptations reflecting cross-cultural identity negotiations.<sup>10</sup>

Current scholarship on the dissemination and development of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu, Guangxi, encompasses five primary research trajectories: scholars have systematically investigated the intrinsic value of Yao musical traditions alongside persistent challenges in cross-cultural transmission; established critical connections between its developmental dynamics and profound cultural-semiotic significance; analyzed historical-contemporary dialectics to identify modern adaptability pathways; extended interdisciplinary inquiries to holistically decode its cultural complex; and deconstructed polyphonic elements and aesthetic paradigms within its musical syntax. Despite these advances, research remains fragmented and lacks systematic integration, a critical gap addressed by this study against the backdrop of China's intensified institutional commitment to ethnic musical heritage preservation. As governmental and societal stakeholders actively pursue innovative approaches to promote the development and dissemination of China's diverse ethnic musical traditions, this research adopts Jinxiu Yao music culture as a paradigmatic case, employing neoclassical structural-functional theory to conduct tripartite structural analysis (ontological, exogenous, and endogenous dimensions). By elucidating mechanisms of cultural transmission

<sup>6</sup> Zhang, J. J., & Zhang, Y. (2024). Research on Haikou Traditional Ballads from the Perspective of Chinese Cultural Construction. *Journal of Hainan Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 37(3), 121-131.

<sup>7</sup> Hou, D. H. (2011). A Study of Eighteen Yao Ethnic Suona Wedding Music in Jinxiu County, Guangxi. *Chinese Music*, (3), 115-118.

<sup>8</sup> Liu, Y. H. (2015). A Review of Yao Ethnic Music Research. *Northern Music*, (8).

<sup>9</sup> Shen, L. Q. (2019). A Study on Folk Belief Activities in Yao Ethnic Music Panwang Ge. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, (7), 117-121.

<sup>10</sup> Zhao, S. F. (2022). Development and Changes of Yao Wedding Music Culture in China and Southeast Asia: Case Studies from Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi (China), Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Vientiane (Laos), and Chiang Rai (Thailand). *Chinese Music*, (6), 120-132.

and sustainability, the study ultimately proposes globally oriented strategies to transcend geographical constraints, enabling Yao musical heritage to achieve transcultural resonance from mountainous communities to national and international arenas in the age of globalization.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the content of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu under the framework of neoclassical structural-functional theory.
2. To study the inheritance mechanisms of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu, investigating and critically evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of various transmission approaches.
3. To study the developmental trajectories of Yao ethnic music in Jinxiu within the context of rapid new media evolution, identifying sustainable strategies for cultural preservation and dynamic adaptation in the digital era.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **1. Research Planning**

Step one outlines the initial research direction: "Exploring the inheritance and development of Jinxiu Yao music culture from the perspective of the 'New Classical' structural-functional theory."

Step two involves preparing literature materials based on the initial research direction, categorizing, organizing, and studying relevant literature.

Step three defines the research content, organizes the research background, and formulates research questions based on the research content.

Step four specifies the research methods and samples, and prepares necessary research tools.

Step five applies research tools to conduct actual research, collecting and organizing data.

Step six includes quality checks on the survey process and analysis of the collected data.

Step seven draws research conclusions.

Step eight discusses the research conclusions and proposes reasonable suggestions based on the research results.

#### **2. Research Methods**

This study employs an embedded research design utilizing qualitative methodologies to holistically investigate the dissemination and developmental trajectories of Yao ethnic music culture in Jinxiu County, Guangxi. The multi-method approach systematically addresses distinct research dimensions through field studies, structured observations, archival analysis, and semi-structured interviews, ultimately synthesizing strategic recommendations for cultural preservation and innovation.

The fieldwork methodology integrates ethnographic documentation of musical transmission processes, combining in-depth interviews with inheritors, audiovisual recording of ritual performances, and immersive participant observation across three critical nodes: Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County (China), Yao diaspora communities in California (USA), and Yao villages in Chiang Rai (Thailand). As an indigenous researcher embedded within the

cultural ecosystem, I conducted longitudinal engagement through domestic ritual participation, transnational community cohabitation, and systematic phenomenological interpretation of musical practices.

Systematic observation protocols were implemented through insider-perspective ethnography, focusing on key cultural spaces and musical actors (traditional musicians, ensemble leaders, ritual specialists). This involved structured documentation of 37 musical events using triangulated recording modalities (audio-visual capture, performance notation, ritual transcriptions), supplemented by reflexive dialogue sessions to decode the interplay between musical syntax and socio-cultural contexts.

Archival research adopted a transdisciplinary framework synthesizing ethnomusicological analysis, policy archaeology, and social network mapping. Through critical examination of 163 historical documents spanning dynastic chronicles (e.g. Qing-era Yao tribute records), contemporary policy texts, and digital ethnography datasets, the study reconstructs the evolutionary trajectory of Jinxiu Yao music while identifying critical junctures of cultural transformation since 1949.

The structured interview protocol engaged 54 stakeholders involved in Yao musical culture, comprising Yao elders, community leaders, music educators, students, new media practitioners, ethnomusicologists, and government representatives. Research focus centered on Yao musical traditions, dance forms, and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) practices within Jinxiu Township, specifically investigating perspectives on cultural transmission mechanisms and adaptive modernization strategies. Methodologically, dual-phase data collection was implemented: face-to-face interviews conducted through on-site questionnaire administration in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, with responses documented in real-time during scheduled sessions; complementary telephone interviews employed guided discussion frameworks, utilizing a 60-minute conversational protocol to systematically capture the characteristics, current status, and evolving perspectives of Yao musical culture. This hybrid approach ensured methodological triangulation while accommodating diverse participant accessibility constraints.

### 3. Overall Design and Sample Data Source

This qualitative study conducted in-depth interviews with 54 strategically selected participants across six stratified groups within Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi, to systematically investigate the cultural transmission mechanisms of Yao music heritage. The research design prioritized engagement with core stakeholders through targeted phenomenological inquiry.

Cultural custodians comprising senior clan leaders and community authorities (6 participants, including provincial-level intangible cultural heritage inheritors and representatives from various Yao subgroups) provided oral histories detailing intergenerational transmission pathways. Dialogues centered on documenting the artistic characteristics of traditional music (melodic patterns, rhythmic structures, lyrical content, and stylistic variations), analyzing the socio-cultural functions of dance and festival practices, assessing linguistic erosion impacts on musical transmission, and evaluating government safeguarding initiatives.

Educational practitioners and learners (20 participants spanning preschool to tertiary education levels) revealed the operational dynamics of institutional music transmission. Investigations focused on curriculum

integration strategies for Yao musical elements, pedagogical challenges in bilingual instruction, student engagement methodologies, and resource optimization approaches within formal educational frameworks.

Digital innovators (5 new media professionals including independent musicians and livestream content creators) provided insights into technological mediation of musical transformation. Discussions explored creative synthesis of traditional motifs with electronic music arrangements, audience cultivation through short video platforms, and ethical considerations in balancing commercial viability with cultural authenticity.

Academic and policy experts (9 scholars and heritage protection specialists) elucidated the symbiotic relationship between theoretical research and practical conservation. Analytical dialogues addressed the symbolic dimensions of musical practices in constructing ethnic identity, theoretical frameworks for safeguarding intangible heritage, systemic integration with national education policies, and emerging digital preservation technologies.

Policy implementers (5 cultural administration officials) clarified governmental safeguarding strategies through critical examination of policy efficacy in resource allocation, interdepartmental coordination mechanisms, solutions for aging inheritor demographics, and cultural value enhancement in tourism development initiatives.

Cross-cultural observers (9 external participants including international ethnomusicologists and overseas Yao community representatives) offered evaluative perspectives on transmission efficacy. Their experiential accounts assessed ritual performance authenticity, community- led revitalization vitality, transnational cultural exchange significance, and safeguarding measures against exogenous intervention risks in heritage practice.

The interview design strategically selected 54 participants across six stratified categories, achieving comprehensive coverage and logical stratification of Jinxiu Yao musical culture's transmission ecosystem. This sample size in qualitative research methodology mitigates reductionist biases inherent in undersized datasets while ensuring analytical depth through targeted group segmentation. Each category represents critical nodes within the cultural transmission actor- network: Yao elders and community leaders, as traditional authorities, embody interpretive sovereignty over indigenous practices, their perspectives revealing both the survival status of musical DNA and risks of intergenerational disjunction; music educators and students function as pedagogical conduits, exposing tensions between tradition-modernity collisions and linguistic-value infiltration within institutional settings; new media practitioners (independent musicians, livestream influencers) epitomize technological reconfigurations of heritage, manifesting contradictions between innovative dissemination and commercialization; academic researchers provide theoretical legitimization for preservation frameworks, bridging fieldwork praxis with scholarly paradigms; government stakeholders reflect the efficacy and limitations of policy-driven cultural governance through resource allocation mechanisms; while peripheral participants (tourists, folk performers, international observers) offer polyphonic social feedback, simultaneously capturing endogenous community vitality (e.g., nuptial performance authenticity) and external cultural gazes (e.g., cross-civilizational dialogue demands). This categorical architecture constructs a dynamic cultural ecology map through multidimensional intersections of traditional-modern dialectics, policy-practice nexuses, academic-vernacular dynamics, and local-global interactions. It enables dual analytical capacities: tracking adaptive transformations of Yao music within contemporary socio-technological matrices, while diagnosing fracture points across transmission chains— linguistic erosion, intergenerational

detachment, and ritual commodification. Ultimately, this stratified design establishes an empirical foundation for formulating systemic preservation strategies that reconcile cultural integrity with developmental imperatives.

#### 4. Research Tools

The primary instrument of this research is an interview protocol, divided into four sections:

- 1) The first section comprises general questions designed to acquaint the researcher with the respondents' basic background.
- 2) The second part delves into the content and modes of transmission of the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group's musical culture.
- 3) The third section explores the analytical examination of Jinxiu Yao music culture through the lens of neo-classical "structural-functionalism."
- 4) Lastly, the fourth part discusses how the Jinxiu Yao musical culture is preserved and developed in the context of new media.

#### 5. Tools

This study utilized a self-designed interview protocol, with specific questions as follows:

| General issues   | Please briefly introduce your personal background.   |
|--|--|
| Content and Transmission   | <p>What do you consider to be the key components of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture?</p> <p><i>What methods do you employ to preserve and transmit Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture?</i></p>  |
| Analysis of Yao Music Culture through the Lens of Neo-Classical "Structural-Functionalism" | <p><i>What changes have occurred in the content of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture?</i></p> <p><i>How has Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture been transformed under external environmental influences?</i></p> <p><i>How have the functions of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture evolved over time?</i></p>   |
| Development and Preservation in the Context of New Media                                   | <p><i>What challenges does the inheritance and dissemination of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture currently face?</i></p> <p><i>How can new media be effectively utilized to preserve and promote Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture?</i></p> <p><i>What are your expectations for the future inheritance and development of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture?</i></p> |

#### 6. Quality Check

The study successfully conducted interviews with 54 participants, all of whom provided comprehensive and substantive responses to the predetermined protocol while proactively elaborating on related contextual dimensions. Cross-comparative analysis of interview transcripts revealed significant thematic consistency across

datasets, with inter-respondent corroboration rates exceeding 85% on core research parameters. This high degree of narrative convergence substantiated the methodological rigor of the interview process, confirming both the validity of the qualitative data collected and the cultural resonance of the investigated phenomena.

## Results

### 1. Introduction to the Jinxiu Yao Ethnic

Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, situated on the main range of the Dayao Mountains in east-central Guangxi, was established on May 28, 1952, as China's first Yao autonomous county. Encompassing 2,518 square kilometers, the county administers 3 towns and 7 townships comprising 77 administrative villages. With a total population of approximately 157,000, it hosts multiple ethnic groups including the Yao, Zhuang, Miao, and Dong, of which the Yao population constitutes 39.01% of the total. Recognized globally for its Yao cultural diversity, Jinxiu contains five distinct Yao subgroups differentiated by ancestral origins, customs, languages, and traditional attire: Pan Yao, Chashan Yao, Hualan Yao, Shanzi Yao, and Ao Yao, collectively forming a vibrant mosaic of Yao cultural traditions.<sup>11</sup> According to the Introduction to Yao Subgroups published on the county government portal, Jinxiu's Yao population primarily comprises the Shanzi, Pan, Chashan, Ao, and Hualan subgroups. The Major Data Report of the Seventh National Population Census (2020) issued by the County Statistics Bureau reveals detailed demographic composition: Han population totals 24,934 (19.13%), while ethnic minorities account for 105,379 (80.87%), including 55,849 Zhuang (42.86%) and 48,557 Yao (37.26%).<sup>12</sup>

### 2. The content of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture

The Yao ethnic group in Jinxiu comprises five distinct subgroups: Shanzi Yao, Hualan Yao, Chashan Yao, Pan Yao, and Ao Yao, each exhibiting unique linguistic, sartorial, and musical characteristics. While collectively belonging to the East Asian musical system, Jinxiu Yao music can be broadly categorized into two principal genres: folk songs and dance-accompanied music (alternatively classified as vocal and instrumental traditions). The melodic structures of Jinxiu Yao music encapsulate a comprehensive emotional spectrum ranging from jubilation to lamentation. Thematically, these musical expressions are further classified into mountain songs, love ballads, religious chants, ceremonial dance music, and children's rhymes characterized by melodiously exquisite tonal patterns, Jinxiu Yao folk songs serve as an ethnographically significant art form that meticulously documents the quotidian experiences of Yao communities. Through musical narratives, the Yao people articulate cultural aspirations, celebrate youthful vitality, and venerate natural forces. Whether chronicling productive endeavors during prosperous eras or migratory

<sup>11</sup> Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Ethnic & Religious Affairs Bureau. (2023, May 31). Yao Culture. *Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County People's Government*. Retrieved from <http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/zjjx/ftrq/t5766711.shtml>.

<sup>12</sup> Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County Bureau of Statistics. (2021, June 10). Main Data Gazette of the Seventh National Population Census in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County (2020). *Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County People's Government*. Retrieved from <http://www.jinxiu.gov.cn/xxgk/zfxgk/fdzdgknr/sjfb/tjgb/t11101673.shtml>.

hardships in turbulent times, from sacred rituals to life-cycle ceremonies (birth, marriage, funerals), their musical traditions function as a living archive of collective memory and ethnic identity.

Su Rongsheng posits that Jinxiu Yao folk songs predominantly feature heptasyllabic verse structures, thematically encompassing labor, courtship, and festive contexts. These are categorized into "Collective Work Chants" (performed during group labor or celebrations) and "Intimate Ballads" (sung in private settings like courtship), characterized by improvised lyrics set to flexible yet formulaic melodic frameworks.<sup>13</sup>

Li Rizhen emphasizes that Shanzi Yao music in Jinxiu employs tetratonic scales with melodies intrinsically tied to Yao linguistic tonality. The slow-paced rhythms accompany lyrics chronicling historical tribulations (e.g., migration narratives). Dance forms, predominantly percussion-accompanied (gongs and drums), synergize with music to manifest ethnic identity during festivals.<sup>14</sup>

Tao Xiaozhan advocates pedagogical transmission through school-adapted compositions (e.g., award-winning piece "Loyal Heart to the Party"), which preserve traditional musical idioms while incorporating contemporary lyrics. His methodology involves organizing student ensembles (dance troupes, choirs) and utilizing broadcast/digital platforms for cultural dissemination.<sup>15</sup>

Tao Ge proposes modernizing Yao music through strategic retention of primal elements (e.g., traditional modes) enhanced by harmonic innovations and live performance experimentation. His approach integrates study-tour activities, transforming ancestral melodies into interactive educational repertoires to engage youth.<sup>16</sup>

Zhang Guomin elucidates the ritual symbiosis between music and sacred dances (e.g., Yellow Clay Drum Dance, Panwang Dance), originally serving sacrificial and blessing ceremonies, now evolved into composite cultural performances. His choreographic work on the national ICH-listed "Yellow Clay Drum Dance" preserves proto-kinetic patterns while adapting to theatrical staging.<sup>17</sup>

Zhao Fujin, inheritor of the Pan Yao subgroup's Shenpai song tradition, identifies this genre as vital oral historiography chronicling migration sagas and agricultural wisdom. Characterized by D-tonic melodies avoiding C notes, its steady rhythms synchronize with Yao linguistic tones, maintaining authenticity through oral transmission.<sup>18</sup>

Li Lin theorizes dance as a rhythmic regulator for Yao vocal traditions, exemplified by Pan Yao's "Mountain Crossing Chants" where choreography enhances prosodic cadences. Ritual gestures (sacred hand signs, farming pantomimes) coalesce with music to express ecological reverence and historical consciousness. His analysis frames dance as visual theology, particularly in "Ordination Dance" mediating human-divine communication and reinforcing ethnic solidarity.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Source: Su Rongsheng, male, 71, provincial-level Xiangli Song intangible cultural heritage inheritor, personal communication, August 4, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Li Rizhen, male, 71, key Shanzi Yao culture bearer, personal communication, August 2, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Tao Xiaozhan, male, 54, Teacher at Jintian Primary School, Jinxiu County, personal communication, August 18, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Tao Ge, male, 55, independent musician, personal communication, August 11, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Zhang Guomin, male, 72, Jinxiu Yao dance choreographer, personal communication, August 10, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Zhao Fujin, male, 68, provincial-level ICH inheritor, personal communication, August 3, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Source: Li Lin, male, 64, former Director of the Jinxiu County Song and Dance Troupe, personal communication, August 19, 2024.

Liang Min interprets Chashan Yao dance as kinetic ethnography mirroring quotidian life (farming/hunting simulations) and emotional expression. Ritual dances during Panwang Festival and Merit Ceremonies serve as mnemonic devices for historical preservation and community cohesion. His modernization efforts blend traditional humorous styles (e.g., comic hunting pantomimes) with stagecraft innovations (lighting/costume design) to attract younger and tourist audiences.<sup>20</sup>

The Hua'lan Yao musical tradition exemplifies ritual-narrative symbiosis through its iconic "Li Guan" melody cycle. Characterized by elongated free-rhythm phrasing, this repertoire employs three distinct modal variants—"Guajia" (neighboring villages), "Liguan" (distant lands), and "Gazhi" (mountain-divided communities)—to vocalize migration histories via sparse three-tone scales (5-6-3), as exemplified in the foundational epic "Song of Origins". The narrative ballad tradition "Ji Dong Nuo" bifurcates into Liuxiang-style palace mode and Changtong-style horn mode, encompassing genres from love poetry to children's rhymes like the playful "Waving Hands, I Won't Return". Ritual music manifests in the "Sacred Hymns" of Ganwang worship ceremonies, where the pentatonic "Altar Opening Dance Music" projects divine majesty through suona oboes and ritual percussion. Ceremonial dances like the blessing-seeking "Incense Offering Dance" with its crouching tremolo steps and the thunder-god battle pantomime "Dance of Lei Wang" demonstrate kinetic theology through choreographed stick combat and meteorological mimesis. The predominance of bronze bells and wooden staves in instrumentation reflects the synthesis of mountain spirituality and historical consciousness.

Ao Yao's drum-centered tradition achieves global recognition through its millennium-preserved "Yellow Clay Drum Dance", featuring paired drums—the maternal drum's stout waist producing profound resonance and the paternal drum's slender form generating crisp tones, collectively conducting complex choreographies. Their musical dichotomy emerges in the grand unison "Epic Chorales" (yu mode migration narratives) versus intimate "Life Melodies" for daily labor and nuptials. Ritual music stratifies into Panwang worship chants, spirit procession recitatives, and Taoist requiem prayers. The dance repertoire juxtaposes sacred solemnity with folk humor, exemplified by the slapstick "Fishing Dance" satirizing divine authority through bumbling masked fishermen and the acrobatic "Eight Immortals Dance" blending religious symbolism with theatrical spectacle.

Chashan Yao's musical identity crystallizes in the love dialogue genre "Xiangli Song", featuring dramatic sixth-leap melodies in regional variants like the Jinxiu three-tone palace mode and Luomeng two-tone system. Children's songs employ staccato rhythms mimicking rainfall in playful ditties, while adopted Han melodies like the "Six-Section Tune" narrate creation myths through dramatic octave jumps. Ritual soundscapes bifurcate into shamanic "Hongmen Dance Music" and Taoist funeral suita "Ten-Stage Farewell". Their ceremonial dances manifest cosmological communication through precise bell-shaking motions in "Messenger Dance" and allegorical agricultural pantomimes in "Six Lang Drama Dance", culminating in the intricate textile-waving "Three Yuan Dance" honoring floral deities.

Pan Yao's UNESCO-listed "Shenpai Songs" preserve history through long-phrased historical narratives and short recitatives in Guiliu dialect, while initiation rite music employs syncopated rhythms in heroic "Bridge Building

<sup>20</sup> Source: Liang Min, male, 60, key Chashan Yao culture bearer, personal communication, August 3, 2024.

Chants". The millennium-old "Long Drum Dance" embodies cultural resilience through biomechanical symbolism—hunched "Twisting Postures" memorializing swidden agriculture and "Low Stances" commemorating hardships. Ritual choreographies range from the comedic turtle-catching pantomime "Run Turtle Dance" to the martial "Troop Deployment Dance" recreating ancestral battles through bronze swords and horn calls.

Shanzi Yao's musical ecology prioritizes quotidian authenticity in their free-rhythm "Doorstep Songs" mimicking birdsong through leaf whistles, contrasted with yu-mode shamanic chants addressing mortality. Exorcism dances like the rapid blade-work "Public Officer Dance" and feminist critique "Madam Ninth Sword Dance" combine ritual efficacy with social commentary. The coming-of-age "Ordination Dance" features acrobatic cloud-platform trials guided by ritual masters' blade oscillations, accompanied by bronze bells enforcing the sacred "3-3-9" step pattern. This tradition embodies ecological wisdom through functional music-dance integration addressing both supernatural mediation and community ethics.

### 3. The inheritance of Jinxiu Yao ethnic music culture.

The transmission of Jinxiu Yao musical culture is primarily sustained through an oral tradition characterized by intergenerational mentorship and familial inheritance, wherein elders impart vocal techniques, melodic structures, and rhythmic patterns to younger generations during daily labor and communal activities. This traditional master-apprentice paradigm operates through experiential osmosis rather than formal instruction—musical knowledge is transmitted via lived demonstration, with apprentices achieving proficiency through intuitive assimilation rather than didactic pedagogy. Complementing this oral framework, systematic documentation of lyrical anthologies, melodic notations, and instrumental scores has been implemented as a preservative measure, creating tangible pedagogical resources for future generations while mitigating risks of cultural erosion. Crucially, the perpetuation of this musical heritage remains intrinsically embedded in subgroup-specific ritual practices, manifesting through five distinct ceremonial complexes: Pan Yao's Panwang Vow Renewal Ceremony, Hualan Yao's Coming-of-Age Rites, Chashan Yao's Merit Festival, Ao Yao's Yellow Clay Drum Ritual, and Shanzi Yao's Ordination Ceremony. These ritualized performances function as dynamic cultural matrices where musical traditions are continuously regenerated through embodied practice, ensuring their ontological continuity across temporal and spatial dimensions.

### 4. The Musical Culture and Traditional Festivals of the Jinxiu Yao Ethnic Group.

The musical culture of the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group maintains an intrinsic symbiotic relationship with traditional festivals, which serve as vital platforms for cultural transmission and performative expression. Festivals such as the Panwang Festival and Merit Ceremony exemplify this interconnection, attracting multiethnic participation (Yao, Han, Zhuang) through musico-choreographic performances that simultaneously showcase cultural distinctiveness and foster intergroup solidarity. These calendrical rituals have become institutionalized as mandatory annual events, crucial to sustaining the county's identity as a cultural tourism destination. Through vibrant displays like the Panwang Festival's authentic Yao song-and-dance performances—collaboratively created by villages and

acclaimed for their cultural authenticity—and the White Horse Dance and Sword Dance during the Yao Archway Festival, musical traditions achieve dual objectives of heritage preservation and expanded visibility.

Such festival mechanisms enable Yao musical culture to transcend geographic and generational boundaries while reinforcing villagers' ethnic pride and transmission consciousness. The ritualized performances function as dynamic cultural matrices where traditional elements are continually regenerated—the Panwang Festival's village-crafted shows preserve indigenous musical syntax, while the Archway Festival's martial dances maintain historic kinetic vocabularies. This festival-driven transmission ecosystem not only safeguards Yao cultural DNA but also catalyzes its evolution into a multidimensional social capital, enhancing regional soft power through tourist engagement and cross-cultural dialogue.

### 5. Analysis of Jinxiu Yao Ethnic Music Culture from the Perspective of Neo-classical "Structure-Function Theory"

The neoclassical "structure-function theory" offers an analytical framework for examining the structural configurations, operational dynamics, and systemic interrelationships within social systems. By decoding the constitutive elements and operational mechanisms of sociocultural phenomena, this theory reveals fundamental patterns governing cultural evolution. Its application in ethnomusicology provides critical insights into the structural matrices, functional adaptations, and developmental trajectories of ethnic musical traditions. The theory's conceptual triad—comprising ontological, exogenous, and endogenous structural dimensions—enables comprehensive cultural analysis. The ontological dimension addresses cultural capital and resources manifested through tangible and intangible heritage, focusing on inherent attributes like historical lineage and artistic distinctiveness. The exogenous perspective situates cultural artifacts within spatial hierarchies (villages, towns, cities, nations), analyzing their societal roles beyond intrinsic qualities. The theory postulates that culturally embedded structures acquire self-perpetuating functionalities through resource allocation, evolving into structural legacies with autopoitic capacities.<sup>21</sup>

**First Analytical Dimension:** The first analytical dimension examines ethnic musical culture through its ontological structure, conceptualizing it as cultural capital and resource that embodies a nation's historical legacy, traditional wisdom, and spiritual ethos. As both a symbolic identity marker and cultural DNA, ethnic musical culture manifests through distinctive sonic architectures—unique melodic patterns, instrumental timbres, and performative modalities—that crystallize ethnic aesthetic sensibilities and artistic heritage. Crucially, this living tradition operates dialectically as a heritage requiring preservation and a creative catalyst for contemporary cultural innovation. Focusing on Jinxiu Yao music's ontological structure reveals its intrinsic composition through historical sedimentation and artistic uniqueness. The Pan Yao subgroup's Shenpai Song, designated as a regional Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) item, exemplifies this structural essence. Performed in Yao dialect through rigid seven-character quatrains (e.g., The Wooden Leaf Song), its lyrical narratives chronicle migration sagas and ritual protocols. Musically, it employs D-

<sup>21</sup> Zhang, J. J. (2020). Re-Examining the "Traditional-Modern" Transformation of Cultural Heritage: Neoclassical "Structural-Functionalism". *Northwest Ethnic Studies*, (3), 178-189.

tonic melodies avoiding C notes, with languid rhythms synchronized to Yao linguistic tonalities, creating profound narrative depth. During Du Jie initiation rites, ritual masters' syncopated rhythms in Bridge- Building Chants symbolically reconstruct ancestral heroism, demonstrating how musical syntax simultaneously preserves ceremonial functions and encodes historical memory.

**Second Analytical Dimension: Exogenous Structure:** This perspective situates Yao music within spatial-structural contexts (rural villages, towns, urban centers), analyzing how external sociocultural forces shape its transmission paradigms. Rural environments sustain traditional practices through close adherence to customary norms, as seen in Chashan Yao's Xiangli Song antiphonal singing during agricultural activities. Conversely, urban contexts catalyze transformative adaptations—a phenomenon illustrated by viral Douyin campaigns where Xiangli love ballads are reinterpreted with modern harmonies and sixth-interval leaps, garnering millions of views and fostering youth engagement through digital duets. The exogenous analysis reveals the dialectical tension between cultural preservation and innovative hybridization across different structural settings.

**Third Analytical Dimension:** The third analytical dimension focuses on the endogenous structure of ethnic musical culture, conceptualizing it as a structural product undergoing functional metamorphosis. Within the neoclassical structural-functional framework, this endogenous perspective reveals the dialectical interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors during cultural evolution. The creative transformation of intrinsic cultural genes—exemplified by Jinxiu Yao music's modernization of traditional elements like tri-tone sequences and Gong-mode systems—coupled with the role reconfiguration of transgenerational inheritors (elder ritualists preserving ceremonial authenticity versus youth innovators utilizing new media), drives the cultural system's self-adaptive generation of novel industrial formations. Externally, policy interventions (e.g., intangible cultural heritage safeguards, cultural-tourism integration), technological empowerment (short video dissemination, AI-powered digital preservation), and market demands (consumer preferences for authenticity and experiential engagement) synergistically catalyze the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital, manifesting in industrial clusters such as the "music + cultural tourism + creative industries" model. This is epitomized by Ao Yao's live-action performances of the Yellow Clay Drum Dance, which stimulate auxiliary sectors including gastronomy and handicrafts. Simultaneously, ethnic musical culture transcends traditional spatial constraints through globalization strategies like transnational festival collaborations and interactive Virtual Song Hall platforms, while establishing a closed-loop ecosystem of "cultural identity → economic valorization → resource reciprocation" rooted in community agency (e.g., villager cooperatives reinvesting tourism revenues into heritage preservation). This dual-axis transformation mechanism not only demonstrates the functional transition of cultural systems from "passive heritage" to "active capital" but also establishes a sustainable paradigm for regional revitalization through culture-driven industrial development and industry-nurtured cultural continuity.

## 6. The issues faced by the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group in the inheritance and dissemination of music

Firstly, there are issues related to funding and talent. The transmission of Jinxiu Yao music faces a shortage of financial resources, which complicates the collection and preservation of musical materials and restricts their dissemination and promotion. The lack of specialized personnel adversely affects the depth and breadth of its

inheritance. Secondly, there are challenges in promotion and dissemination. The methods employed for promotion and publicity are inadequate, failing to fully showcase and utilize the cultural values and characteristics; the effectiveness of dissemination through festivals, external recommendations, or social media is insufficient, limiting the reach and recognition of the works. Moreover, when selecting intangible cultural heritage projects for promotion, there is an emphasis on project initiation rather than on the utilization and development of these projects, with a lack of long-term planning and careful consideration, which diminishes the effectiveness of promotion. Thirdly, there are issues concerning education and training. There is insufficient education and training related to intangible cultural heritage within schools and communities, which hampers the cultivation of inheritors and teaching staff; there are relatively few teachers knowledgeable about Yao music in schools, resulting in inadequate dissemination of ethnic music education. Fourthly, there are problems related to cultural display and the creative transformation of projects. The regular display of intangible cultural heritage in county towns and scenic areas is insufficient, impacting visitors' and local residents' understanding and experience of intangible cultural heritage; the collected cultural materials lack dissemination and secondary creation, leading to a deficiency in the vibrancy of cultural resources. Fifthly, there are issues concerning government support and social awareness. The government's support for the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage is inadequate and requires specific measures to bolster its protection and transmission; the Yao community exhibits a lack of awareness regarding the importance of inheriting intangible cultural heritage, resulting in traditional music such as Yao songs being ineffectively transmitted. Lastly, there are other related issues. Traditional musical forms do not resonate with the interests of young people; the serious issue of the Yao language's decline necessitates collaborative efforts between families and cultural departments to foster an environment conducive to inheritance; the influence of the market economy leads young people to perceive traditional music as insufficient for their livelihood.

### ***Discussion***

In the context of new media, the dissemination of music culture among the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group has been transformed by globalization, transcending traditional methods. It now embraces modern technology and market mechanisms, embarking on a more open and diversified development path. This, in turn, presents an array of new possibilities and opportunities for the preservation and propagation of Jinxiu Yao musical heritage.

Under the neoclassical structural-functional theoretical framework, the structural evolution of Jinxiu Yao music culture—driven by dynamic interactions between intrinsic and extrinsic factors—has profoundly reconfigured its content, forms, and expressive modalities. The Chashan Yao subgroup's Xiangli Song exemplifies this transformation: while preserving its traditional essence as a love ballad featuring Yao linguistic tonality and six-degree melodic leaps within a triadic Gong-mode system, it has assimilated Han ethnic musical elements, notably the octave-jumping Zhi-mode techniques from the Han mountain song Fuxi Sisters Creating Humanity. This hybridization has birthed a novel style blending lyrical expressiveness with narrative depth. Further catalyzed by new media technologies, contemporary reinterpretations feature electronic harmonies and multilingual lyrics adapted as short video soundtracks on Douyin, achieving viral circulation (millions of views) that sustains core ethnic emotional communication while transcending cultural boundaries. Parallel structural adaptations are evident in the

Pan Yao subgroup's Shenpai Song, a Guangxi Intangible Cultural Heritage piece traditionally performed in Guiliu dialect to recount migration epics. Under policy support and cultural tourism demands, it has evolved from oral ritual to staged performances integrating the biomechanical "twisting postures" of Long Drum Dance with modern lighting design. This metamorphosis not only amplifies the visual impact of historical narratives but also positions the art form as a flagship IP for Dayaoshan ecological tourism. Such structural transitions reveal that Jinxiu Yao music's evolution transcends mere formal updates, representing instead a synergistic interplay between ontological DNA (Yao tonal linguistics, Gong-mode systems) and exogenous structures (interethnic exchanges, digital ecosystems). The cultural functions have thus escalated from intra-ethnic spiritual sustenance to multifunctional social capital—simultaneously constructing cultural identity, generating economic value, and facilitating cross-civilizational dialogue.

The demand and functional changes of Jinxiu Yao music culture in modern society are mainly reflected in aspects such as cultural identity, cross-cultural communication, cultural innovation, and entertainment consumption. Taking the need for cultural innovation and development as an example, the author created the original guzheng ensemble piece "Dun E Du Du" based on the adaptation of Chaoshan Yao folk songs. This piece retains the stylistic features of Yao language singing, lively and joyful, while combining traditional ethnic music with modern music elements through modern technology and innovative means, creating music works with more contemporary characteristics and modern sensibilities.

### **Conclusion**

As one of the ethnic minorities in China, the Yao ethnic group has a long history and rich cultural traditions, possessing characteristics of a world ethnic group. The Jinxiu Yao music, as a representative of Yao culture, is famous for its unique tones, rhythms, and melodies, containing diverse elements. It is not only a precious heritage of Yao culture, but also an important part of world cultural diversity. Against this background, this study takes the Jinxiu Yao ethnic group as an example to explore the dissemination and development of ethnic music culture. From the perspective of the new classical "structure-function theory", the dissemination and inheritance of Jinxiu Yao music culture are analyzed from three dimensions: ontological structure, external structure, and self-structure, in order to better understand, protect, and inherit ethnic music culture. Especially in the context of new media, through effective dissemination strategies, ethnic music cultures such as Yao can move out of the Guangxi, towards the whole country, and towards the world.

### **Suggestions**

The study proposes an integrated "digitalized living inheritance + community-driven endogenous preservation" mechanism to address the dual crises of linguistic erosion and intergenerational transmission fragility in Jinxiu Yao folk music. By establishing a Yao Music Genome Archive employing 3D motion capture and AI vocal synthesis technologies, core cultural elements like Chashan Yao's love ballads "Xiangli Ge" and Ao Yao's millennium-old "Yellow Clay Drum Dance" can be digitally preserved with millimeter precision. Community-engaged revitalization strategies should synchronize with ritual calendars (Panwang Festival, Ordination rites) through

immersive exhibitions, enabling youth to experientially comprehend the migratory histories and spiritual cosmologies encoded in musical practices. Drawing inspiration from Hezhou University's successful integration of "Butterfly Song" into modern pedagogy, the development of "Virtual Song Hall" interactive platforms utilizing wearable AR technology could recreate traditional antiphonal singing scenarios, achieving symbiotic integration of technological empowerment and cultural revitalization.

A "cultural genome decoding + cross-genre innovation" pathway is recommended to counter musical homogenization pressures. Building upon Zhang Jijiao's (2020) cultural semiotics theory, this approach involves extracting Yao music's genetic codes (tri-tone sequences, gong-mode systems) for creative fusion with electronic music and hip-hop aesthetics. For instance, Pan Yao's UNESCO-listed epic "Shenpai Ge" could be reimagined as electronic folk narratives retaining historical consciousness while incorporating contemporary rhythms, accompanied by viral "Yao Sound Remix" challenges on Douyin to stimulate youth engagement. Strategic government partnerships with music streaming platforms should establish incubation funds supporting boundary-crossing collaborations (e.g., shamanic chants with symphonic arrangements), complemented by university courses cultivating hybrid talents versed in both traditional ethnomusicology and digital composition.

The research advocates a sustainable "cultural tourism + equitable benefit-sharing" model leveraging Jinxiu's musical diversity. Development of a "Greater Yaoshan Music Corridor" could feature themed routes highlighting five Yao subgroups' distinct traditions - from Chashan Yao "Xiangli Song Homestays" integrating textile crafts and antiphonal singing experiences, to Ao Yao's landscape-embedded "Yellow Clay Drum Epic Theater" dramatizing migration narratives. Establishing community cultural cooperatives would ensure tourism revenues proportionally support inheritors while enabling grassroots cultural entrepreneurship through livestream commerce and artisan markets. This model operationalizes Siqinchaoketu's (2022) Belt-and-Road cultural reciprocity principles, activating endogenous development while mitigating commercialization-induced authenticity erosion.

A reinforced "policy-institutional + educational" support ecosystem is crucial for systematic preservation. Local governments should mandate Yao music integration into compulsory curricula per Guangxi's Ethnic Education Regulations, developing bilingual (Yao-Chinese) textbooks employing situated learning methodologies. Classroom simulations of Ordination rites could pedagogically decode the syncopated rhythms and sacrificial symbolism in "Bridge-Building Chants". Interdisciplinary research hubs at institutions like Hubei Normal University should bridge ethnomusicological scholarship with community praxis, transforming academic findings into inheritor training programs. Concurrently, policy mechanisms must institute "ICH Inheritor Stipends" and "Youth Heritage Scholarships" to reverse rural brain drain, directly addressing Jia 's (2023) warnings about education-practice disjunctions.

Finally, a "global branding + regional synergy" strategy is proposed to elevate Jinxiu's status as the "World Yao Cultural Research Hub". Transnational Panwang Festivals co-hosted with Southeast Asian Yao communities (e.g., Thailand's Chiang Rai villages) could foster intercultural dialogue through comparative musical forums. Domestically, a "Yao Folk Music Alliance" across Guangxi-Hunan-Guangdong enclaves would standardize preservation protocols while sharing resources. Emulating Yunnan's "Impression Series", an international "Jinxiu Soundscapes" festival could convene global musicians for co-creation projects, with multiplatform multilingual dissemination through

YouTube/TikTok channels, propelling innovative works like electronic-remixed "Dun E Dudu" to global audiences. This strategic alignment with Wang (2021) digital globalization framework would simultaneously strengthen cultural sovereignty and international soft power.

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