

Transmission of Yugu Folk Song Knowledge in Sunan County, Gansu Province, China

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Abstract

The qualitative research method is used in this study to investigate ways to transmit Yugu folk song knowledge in Sunan County, Gansu Province, China. The area was selected in Sunan County, Gansu Province, China. The fieldwork method is mainly used for collecting data, together with the information from the document. The study results are as follows: The origins of the Yugu people are not single but multiple. They are a new ethnic community formed by the integration of the ancient Uighurs and the ancient Mongolian tribes. The Yugu people are currently the best-preserved ethnic group in the world's Ancient Turkic language, due to the characteristics of the language and the geomorphological characteristics of the Yugu area, making the Yugu music unique and different from the music of the surrounding Han and other ethnic groups. The development of Yugu folk songs can be divided into five periods: 1) the Mobei period before 840 AD and the production period of Yugu ancestral folk songs; 2) from 840 AD to the beginning of the 16th century, the gradual development of the art of Hui folk songs; 3) from the beginning of the 16th century to 1953, the excavation period of traditional folk songs of the Yugu people; 4) from 1953 to 1990, the prolific period of Yugu folk song creation; 5) since 1990, the trough period of traditional Yugu folk songs and the development period of newly created songs.

Keywords: Yugu folksong, transmission, knowledge, Gansu province, China

1. Introduction

China's minority music is the crystallization of the wisdom of the Chinese nation (Guangqiang, 2020; Xu & Tang, 2022). These traditional folk songs, full of spirit, embody the great spirit of the nation and reflect the strong will, strength, and pursuit of the Chinese nation. Our 56 ethnic groups have a vast sea of colorful folk songs, which are an inexhaustible treasure house of art. The Yugu are one of 56 ethnic groups that live in China's Gansu province (Yao et al., 2011; Yao et al., 2012; He et al., 2018; Bai et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). Gansu province is in western China, at the intersection of the Loess Plateau, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and Inner Mongolia Plateau. The territory of the terrain is complex; mountains crisscross, there are altitude gaps, mountains, basins, plains, deserts, gobi, etc.; it is a mountainous plateau landform. Gansu has a complex and diverse landform, with mountainous, plateau, plain, valley, desert, and crisscross distribution. The terrain is long and narrow from the southwest to the northeast, 1,659 kilometers long from east to west, and 530 kilometers wide from north to south. It can be roughly divided into six regions, each with their own characteristics. Most of them are above 1000 meters above sea level and surrounded by mountains. The Yugu ethnic group is one of the ancient nationalities in Gansu Province with a long history (Dwyer, 1998; Jianchun & Daming, 2007; Zhanlong, 2007; Maoji, 2019). Industrious, honest, and hospitable, the Yugu people have been talented in singing and dancing since ancient times. The Yugu people have created a unique culture and art with a distinct national style through long-term production practice. Yugu music, culture, and art are not only one of the treasures in the treasure house of the Chinese nation but also an important part of Yugu's social and cultural foundation. Yugu folk songs are the overall reflection of the religion, culture, living customs, and national spirit of the ethnic group and are an important basis for studying the form of ethnic culture and aesthetic psychology (Jones, 2003; Stefanović-Banović, 2012; Irish et al., 2014; Hao & Hao, 2020; Liu et al., 2022).

The native culture of a nation is the "symbol" of the nation. The Yugu ethnic group has a long history and an ancient culture. Although the writing has been lost, the unique Yugu culture has been kept in mind, spoken, and passed down through generations for thousands of years. The Yugu ethnic group's distinctive national cultural characteristics tell the story of its long history. Yugu traditional folk songs accompanied the Yugu ancients through

thousands of years of history; “yao,” the title, appeared as early as 2400 years ago, when the Huns era had already appeared on the Mongolian plateau, which lasted for hundreds or even thousands of years of ancient folk songs recorded the Yugu’s thousands of years of history and gave priority to grazing in their lives. Traditional folk songs document history and the harmony that exists between people and history. The historical changes of Yugu ethnic group and the life course of Yugu people from place to place (Jianzhong, 2003; Jones, 2003).

From the perspective of Chinese history, Yugu music is not only the main cultural element of Yugu traditional culture but also an important part of Chinese minority culture. According to the basic law of the development of human culture, human culture is an organic whole system, and different national cultures influence and permeate each other objectively. Historically, Yugu culture was formed based on assimilation and integration of other ethnic cultures (Jianchun & Daming, 2007; An & Xiang, 2021; Quan et al., 2022). Cultural conflicts and integration are accelerating as cultural transmission becomes more convenient and direct and as influence and penetration become even more pronounced and intense. People’s pursuit of cultural life is increasing as the economy and culture continue to develop, and the Yugu people’s culture and art are also undergoing unprecedented cultural transformation. Many living habits, dress languages, folk activities, etc. It’s all modern. Traditional folk and folk songs are also in decline. The number of folk artists who have mastered Yugu customs is decreasing every year. It is difficult to find an artist who is fully proficient in the songs, tunes, and lyrics of various traditional ritual activities such as Yugu wedding ceremony songs, children’s hair shaving ceremony songs, and so on. Few people can complete the entire ritual. This phenomenon must make me feel anxious and reflective. Therefore, it is urgent to protect and inherit Yugu folk songs (Lyu, 2016; Jiang, 2018; Zhang, 2020).

Yugu folk songs are not only a part of the nation’s traditional culture but also an indispensable and brilliant wealth in the treasure house of Chinese folk music culture. Facing the increasingly serious problems of inheritance and protection of Yugu traditional folk music culture, it is necessary to combine the economic and social development of the Yugu region with the endangered status of Yugu traditional folk music culture, adopt feasible policies and measures, and continue to explore innovative ways to protect the heritage. The endangered traditional folk music culture has brought new vitality. For these reasons, the Yugu people have long had an interesting culture and heritage. With today’s young people, they have less attention. The Yugu people spread less traditional art, culture, and music. Therefore, researchers hope to study and collect the music culture knowledge of Yugu people, analyze it, and find a way to promote and protect it.

2. Research Objectives

To investigate ways to transmit Yugu folk song knowledge in Sunan County, Gansu Province, China.

3. Literature Review

Sunan County, and Sunan Yugu Autonomous County. It is the only Yugu autonomous county in China, located in the middle of Hexi Corridor and at the northern foot of Qilian Mountain.



Figure 1. Map of Gansu province (Source: <https://chinafolio.com/provinces/gansu-province>)

Sunan Yugur Autonomous County is in the Qilian Mountains, 400 kilometers long in the territory, generally 2000–3500 meters above sea level, with many peaks as high as 5000 meters. The Qilian Mountains are steep and lofty, with the main peak reaching 5547 meters. Snow and glaciers are present all year in the mountains above 4700

meters above sea level. It is one of the main water sources for agricultural irrigation in Hexi. Minghua District is located in the middle of the corridor, with an average altitude of about 1600 meters.

3.1 Basic Situation of Yugu Ethnic Group

The origin of the Yugu ethnic group is complicated, which has always been controversial in academic circles. Following the track of historical development and the investigation data, we believe that the origin of the Yugu people is no single but multiple, and it is a new ethnic community formed by the integration of the ancient Huihu branch and the ancient Mongolia branch.

Yugu has a long history. It can be traced directly to the Xiongnu in BC, the Turks, and the Ouigir in the 7th and 8th centuries. Ouigour, Yuigour, and Ouigour are different Chinese pronunciations of Yovhur or Uivhur (Different names). It's all about the same race. The name Yaoer, or Uyghur, first appeared 2,400 years ago and was known during the Xiongnu Empire.

In the early 13th century, Mongolia invaded the west. According to “Yuan History” and “Subutai Biography,” According to “Yuan History” and “Subutai Biography,” “the emperor’s order (Subutai) degree of moraine before Bingshu (AD 1226) captured Sala Wei Wuerte (Qin) and Chimin. They captured the Uighur and Huangtou Ohe grazing lands in Shazhou. It is also stated in The Burang Guest Chronicles of Mongolia that “Genghis Khan conquered the Vaur people and then formed an army from there.” He sent troops to attack the region of the Vaur people in Sali. He lived in the border area of present-day Gansu, Xinjiang, and Qinghai provinces. After that, the Yuan Dynasty brought the Turkic-speaking Saliwei Wuer into the ruling scope of Gansu Province; the provincial capital of Gansu Province at that time was Ganzhou (now Zhangye). Yugu folk stories do not take specific people, places, events, or objects as objects, and the content they tell is mostly uncertain.

Yugu ritual song is a traditional folk song composed by Yugu ancestors and passed down through the generations. These folk songs are closely related to the Yugu people’s distinctive production and lifestyle, ritual habits, and religious beliefs. Ritual songs are primarily sung at ceremonial events such as New Year’s Eve, disaster congratulations, weddings and funerals, and ancestor worship. With the development and progress of society and the frequent contact between different ethnic groups, some ritual activities have gradually died out, but some ritual songs related to them have been preserved by generations of folk singers.

4. Methodology

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

4.1 Key Information

Ms. Du Xiu-ying: She was born and grew up in Dahe Township, Sunan County. She is a local person who can sing Yugu folk songs the most and She is the national non-hereditary inheritor of Yugu ethnic group.



Figure 2. Ms. Du xiu ying (Source: Ma erjian (2021))

Ms. Bai Yufang: She is a native of sunan Yugu ethnic group, whose home is minghua Township, Sunan County, who familiar with the traditional Yugu culture and various etiquette.



Figure 3. Ms. Bai yu fang (Source: Ma erjian (2021))

4.2 Research Tools

The research tools used in this paper are mainly interviews and observations. To obtain research data, researchers designed questionnaires according to different research objects and designed corresponding interview and observation forms.

4.3 Data Collection

The researcher collected data through document analysis and field work. For further research, the researchers referred to literature from libraries and cultural centers and analyzed the literature using online platforms such as CNKI (China Knowledge Infrastructure). The researchers then planned to conduct a field survey at the study site (Sunan County, Gansu Province, China). The researchers will visit the factory to record Yugu music through interviews, observations, audio recordings, and videos.

4.4 Data Analysis

The researchers used information from all studies, through the use of concepts and theory as the core of the analysis.

5. Results

Yugu music, culture, and art are the treasures of Chinese culture and world art. It contains the cultural genes and spiritual norms of human civilization and progress. It has distinctive national characteristics, a strong influence in the world, a broad mass base, and profound academic theory. Yugu music is an important way for people to express their emotions, enjoy themselves, inspire their thoughts, and cultivate their emotions. It plays an irreplaceable and unique role in the transmission of excellent culture, cultivating the spirit of The Times, promoting Chinese aesthetic style, and improving the soft power of national culture. Yugu people love singing folk songs. Due to the loss of the nation's writing, folk singing has become the main form of Yugu music. The specific countermeasures for the transmission and protection of Yugu folk songs

5.1 The Establish and Improve the Protection Mechanism for the Transmission and Explore and Cultivate Folk Music Talents

As the number of Yugu folk singers is decreasing day by day, Yugu folk songs must find their roots to continue to develop, which is one way to avoid decline. The disappearance of a folk artist is like the disappearance of a folk song museum.

First, the government and non-governmental organizations should protect the original Yugu folk song resources and strengthen the protection of these old artists. On the one hand, they should receive lifelong comprehensive care and nursing. On the other hand, they should record and sort out the folk songs sung by the old people in detail.

Second, based on improving the protection mechanism for the transmission, more new musical talents should be explored and trained. For example, we can teach Yugu folk songs to young people in better conditions. Hua Jie, director of the Chinese Society Music Research Association and former director of the Folk Literature and Art Department of the Gansu Mass Art Museum, said, "It is said that fewer and fewer young people like folk songs now. This has something to do with the development laws of folk songs themselves, but there is also a guiding problem. Many young people are interested in folk songs, but they lack understanding and learning channels. So the government and cultural departments must first place a high value on folk songs and promote them as much as possible in order to organize activities that are beneficial to the spread and development of folk literature and art in poor areas. They should offer certain investments through activities that mobilize and encourage people's enthusiasm, allowing folk songs to truly fire up the people. Therefore, cultural units at all levels should attach importance to the training of folk songs as soon as possible and invite folk singers to teach their good songs and unique skills to young people. If they are interested in them and have good conditions, they can participate in various trainings in provinces, counties, and villages. This is a good way to solve the problem of loss.

In a nutshell, Yugu folk songs can only be effectively passed down by establishing and improving the transmission's protection mechanism, excavating and cultivating folk music talents, and starting from the root and expanding horizontally.

5.2 The Strengthen the Protection of Yugu Traditional Folk Songs and Do a Good Job in the Innovation of New Folk Songs

In light of the importance of traditional preservation in this era of changing economic bases and lifestyles, many countries around the world have consciously carried out museum-style preservation of their ancient traditional music. For example, Japan has preserved the court music learned from China in the Tang Dynasty, and Korea has also established a national Gugak Center to preserve the court music and sacrificial music of Korea in a museum style. Therefore, we can also adopt museum-style protection to maintain the original living state of Yugu folk songs so that they can survive and develop in their own ecological space.

First, government departments should strengthen the protection of Yugu traditional folk songs and support and regulate the living environment of Yugu folk songs. Although the living environment of Yugu folk songs has changed, we can use artificial factors to create an artificial living environment for them. In the music field, it has been proposed to construct an "artificial-natural environment" for Chinese traditional music "through the participation and regulation of human factors." However, it is worth noting that "the final formation of this new environment is not only dependent on the Chinese music circle but must combine the folk behavior with the government behavior, individual behavior, and collective behavior, so as to become a national conscious action." Researchers believe that the creation of an artificial environment requires the relevant government departments to provide more performance opportunities, retain the original performance forms and venues, and expand publicity to provide economic support when necessary; A specialized learning and performing art troupe was founded in Yugu autonomous county and township, with the participation of the government and social from all walks of life, and the actual funding of joint construction and development made the roots group the official national group of its own homeland, and Yugu folk song learning and performance in the entire group preserved the cultural heritage, a major task. The most essential way to preserve folk songs is through the self-transmission of the township.

Secondly, we should pay attention to the innovation and development of folk songs while protecting Yugu traditional folk songs. Innovation and development are the best safeguards for Yugu folk songs, as well as the primary means of postponing the exhaustion of traditional folk songs and preserving their vitality. As a result, it is critical to organize special personnel to create new folk songs with Yugu style and characteristics in order for Yugu folk songs to become increasingly prosperous as the country develops.

5.3 The Transmission of Yugu Folk Songs Needs Diversified Ways and Channels.

The folk songs in the Yugu autonomous region are very rich, but the cultural and artistic activities are a little deserted. This is because people's way of life is undergoing great changes with economic development, and the influence of local culture on spiritual life, the role of economic development, and the deep value connotation of culture and art are ignored. The economy and local culture and art should develop in harmony and promote each other. The Yugu traditional folk song contest that was held was Yugu folk song to survive and shows a way of Yugu folk singer that should encourage more invitations and let everyone hear authentic, original Yugu folk songs.

5.4 The Importance Should Be Attached to the Study and Dissemination of Yugu Folk Songs in School Quality Education

Yugu folk songs have accumulated traditional virtues, national wisdom, and artistic essence over their long history. The distinctive characteristics of this nation are the creation of artistic images of music and the way of expressing feelings, in the form of music and other means of expression. If students receive the edification of their national music culture from an early age, folk songs will become a part of their lives and grow up with them, so as to realize the transmission of folk songs through them. Due to the lack of clear educational guidance, singing folk songs is not taught in music education in most primary and secondary schools in Yugu communities. Folk music teaching is marginalized, and folk songs, opera, and folk-art courses are even cut without cause, resulting in many children who cannot sing their own folk songs. Hungarian music educator Kodaj once said, “The mission of folk tradition is not to provide content for people’s musical lives... It contains the essence and shape of a great folk music culture. “This culture must be developed and perfected... so that we may become one people.”

First, set up Yugu folk songs in local schools. Letting students learn to sing is the most direct and effective means of transmitting Yugu folk songs. Schools can hire excellent folk singers of the Yugu ethnic group as after-school instructors to teach students to sing authentic Yugu folk songs. In addition, special personnel can be hired to compile local teaching materials for “music education of the mother tongue” to learn the theoretical knowledge of this ethnic folk song so that students can understand the essence of Yugu culture and art and experience the life interest, thought, emotion, and artistic connotation of Yugu folk song.

In a word, a chain should be formed between learning Yugu folk songs in primary and secondary schools and professional study of Yugu folk songs in colleges and universities to promote each other to achieve in-depth development from basic music education to professional music education in colleges and universities. At present, a few colleges and universities in Gansu Province have begun using the advantages of human resources and environmental resources to protect the Yugu folk song, for example, by participating in the SuNa County Yugu Autonomous Region Investigation Tour, collecting all kinds of information related to the Yugu folk song, and bringing Yugu students to the attention of protection. The transmission and development of the Yugu folk song have further direction and goals.

5.5 The Accelerate Organization and Publication of Yugu Folk Songs and Original Ecological Audio and Video Materials

The characteristics of folk songs are always evolving and dying out. Yugu folk song collection and collection have lagged behind. The cultural department should find someone to record Yugu folk songs with music and words as soon as possible, organize them, and publish them into books so that future generations can have books to read and songs to sing. Many studies of Yugu folk song have been conducted by music scholars who traveled to Yugu pastoral areas for field trips and obtained first-hand audio and text information. In order to leave these valuable data for descendants, the organization should speed up the publication of the Yugu folk song set and the speed of the original audio and video data and reproduce Yugu’s original ecological flora and fauna.

At present, there are few collections and theoretical books of Yugu folk songs published, and only a few comprehensive books and theoretical monographs of Yugu folk songs can be found, such as Qiliansong, Yugu Song, Yugu Folk Customs, Sunan Zongzong, Yugu Folk Customs, etc. The original Yugu folk songs are also lacking in audio and video materials. Only some of the adapted folk songs and newly created Yugu songs have been made into the VCD “Bless the Grassland” and cassette tapes “Fragrant Grassland” and “Yugu Girl is Me.” Although this fills the void left by the Yugur people’s lack of their own tapes and CDs, the original Yugu ecological folk songs sung by folk singers have yet to be released, so they must be recorded.

6. Discussion

By collating the research results of previous scholars, we can understand the history and development of the Yugu people in Sunan County, Gansu Province, China, from the perspectives of historical origin and geographical distribution. The research of this paper is mainly the study of Yugu music. The researchers have conducted a comprehensive combing and introduction of Yugu music, from the classification to the characteristics of music, lyrics, tone, rhythm, song style, singing style, and other aspects of the study. Due to the influence of two languages, Yugu eastern folk songs have rough, bold, unrestrained characteristics, a tone between Mongolian patriarchal harmony and short tone, like Mongolian folk songs; the folk songs of the western Yugu people are gentle, peaceful, and deep, inheriting the tradition of western Uighur folk songs. The musical structure of Yugu folk songs basically belongs to a piece of body, most of which have very short melodies and are composed of two or more musical sentences. Yugu narrative songs are more of a feature; the song melody is only two to four sentences, but the lyrics are very long, directly telling a piece of history. In addition, the traditional folk songs of the Yugu people are

compared with the new folk songs. The new folk songs have both inherited and innovated based on traditional folk songs. These Yugu classic music score example analyses were done by researchers from the field who investigated, interviewed informants, and then recorded the completion of the score. Researchers on Yugu typical musical works translated the music score and the production of staves, and because the researcher is Yugu, the national language is more familiar, so from the language to some of the influence of music style and characteristics have been discussed. For example, because the word in Yugu is accented on the last syllable, the rhythm of short front and back length often appears in folk songs. Commonly used are 2/4 beat, 3/4 beat, 3/8 beat, single beat, loose plate, and so on. Yugu music now has some speaker information; it has only recorded the singing of the existing Yugu inheritors but has not yet been translated into staves for comprehensive analysis from a musicological point of view. After the researchers' analysis and combination, the promotion of Yugu music in colleges and universities will be more helpful and conducive to the complete preservation and promotion of Yugu music.

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