

UNVEILING THE MUSICAL HERITAGE OF WESTERN HUNAN, CHINA: AN APPRAISAL OF THE TUJIA AND MIAO ETHNIC GROUPS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

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Abstract

China's rich and diverse cultural landscape has long captivated scholars, artists, and historians. However, the intricate musical heritage of its ethnic minorities, particularly the Tujia and Miao, and its relationship to contemporary music remains relatively underexplored. To address this gap, this paper examines the musical heritage of Western Hunan, focusing on the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups' contributions to contemporary Chinese music. The study critically assesses how their traditional music has persisted and evolved to influence modern compositions. It further explores the historical development of Tujia and Miao music, analyzing its integration into contemporary compositions. This research employs historical and exploratory qualitative methods, drawing on high-quality secondary sources such as peer-reviewed articles, theses, and books. Data were analyzed thematically, with cultural transmission and Chinese music theories guiding the analysis. The study found that music is crucial in preserving the cultural heritage and identity of the Tujia and Miao communities, playing a key role in social events, rituals, and storytelling. However, modernization challenges their musical traditions, prompting efforts to safeguard and adapt them. The study recommends balancing innovation with authenticity to preserve the core of Tujia and Miao musical traditions while adapting to modern contexts. It also calls for increased documentation, government support, and educational initiatives to ensure these practices' longevity and cultural relevance. This research will benefit policymakers, musicologists, sociologists, and scholars in related fields and provide a foundation for further exploration of similar issues among other ethnic minorities in mainland China.

Keywords: China, Folk Songs, Musical Heritage, Modernization, Social Events.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Western Hunan is in the northwestern part of Hunan Province, China. This region consists of one city, Jishou, which also serves as the capital, along with seven counties of Baojing, Fenghuang, Guzhang, Huayuan, Longshan, Luxi, and Yongshun. The population predominantly comprises Tujia and Miao ethnic groups, constituting approximately 80% of the total population. The geographical environment of Western Hunan is known for its enigmatic landscapes, while its cultural heritage is abundant, with over 3,200 intangible cultural heritage projects identified in the region. Among these, the traditional music of Xiangxi

holds a special place and is celebrated for its diversity, rich cultural significance, and traditional music (Zhang & Liu, 2022).

Furthermore, traditional music is incredibly varied, with several forms of music listed in China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List. These forms include categories like folk literature, traditional music, traditional dance, and traditional drama. Within folk literature, important genres include Miao ancient songs, Tujia Timash songs, Tujia wedding lament songs from Yongshun County, and Tujia wedding lament songs from Guzhang County (Li & Zhang, 2021). The traditional music category features six types: Sangzhi folk songs, Tujia "Playing Luzi," Jiang River work songs (Youshui boatmen's songs), Miao folk songs, Tujia "Dongdong Kui," and Tujia folk songs. This rich musical variety reflects the region's profound connection to its ethnic roots and the significant role of music in the cultural life of the Tujia and Miao people.

In addition to traditional music, Xiangxi is also renowned for its traditional dances, many closely tied to the music. Six distinct forms of traditional dance are recognized in the region, including the Tujia hand-waving dance, Tujia "Sayirhe," Xiangxi Miao drum dance, Xiangxi Tujia "Maogusi" dance, Yao long drum dance, and the Sangzhi Zhang drum dance. These dances are important cultural expressions and serve as a means of preserving and transmitting the historical narratives, spiritual beliefs, and social customs of the Tujia and Miao people (Xu, 2020). These dances' rhythmic movements and unique choreography enhance traditional music's emotional and aesthetic experiences, creating a deep cultural synergy (Li, 2020; Zhou & Chen, 2022).

In the context of globalization, Xiangxi's traditional music has gained increasing attention from both national and international audiences. As cultural exchanges and technological advancements continue to bridge geographical distances, the music of Xiangxi finds itself more widely appreciated and studied. This growing recognition highlights the importance of preserving and promoting these cultural treasures in the face of modernization and global cultural homogenization (Liu & Tian, 2022). As a result, Xiangxi's traditional music is an invaluable part of China's cultural heritage and a significant contribution to the broader narrative of world music culture. Given the above, this paper asks what the key musical elements and cultural practices of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups have shaped contemporary music in Western Hunan. Thus, the objective is to investigate the traditional musical elements, instruments, and cultural practices of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups and their influence on the development of contemporary music in Western Hunan; additionally, despite the various works from the extant literature, including the works of Liu & Tian (2022), Zhou and Chen (2022), Xu (2020), Li (2020), Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) and Zeng & Onlamul (2023) evidence from the reviewed studies indicates that the perspectives of Musical Heritage of Western Hunan, China regarding the Tujia and Miao Ethnic Groups' Contributions to Contemporary Music are under research; thus this study fills the gap in the body of pieces of literature and contributes to the body of knowledge.

2. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. This type of research "refers to the meanings, concepts definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things" and not to their "counts or measures Creswell (2007). Given the above, this study employed historical and exploratory qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, emphasizing that qualitative methods are well-suited for unveiling societal phenomena and their cultural transmission. The research examines the musical heritage of Western Hunan, China, specifically appraising the contributions of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups to contemporary music. Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, located in Western Hunan, is culturally rich with over 3,200 intangible heritage projects. The region's traditional music, including Miao ancient songs, Tujia Timash songs, and various folk songs, is recognized in China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List ((Zhang & Liu, 2022; Li & Xie, Boonsrianun, 2023). Traditional dances, such as the Tujia hand-waving dance and Xiangxi Miao drum dance, also play a significant role in preserving the cultural and social customs of these ethnic groups (Xu, 2020; Li, 2020; Zhou & Chen, 2022).

Given the importance of this cultural heritage, the study gathered data from high-quality secondary sources, including peer-reviewed articles, theses, and books. These sources underwent a rigorous thematic analysis process involving abstract, keyword, and full-text screening to verify their authenticity and relevance. Literature with strong historical relevance was retained, while irrelevant materials were excluded. Thus, this method ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, particularly for readers interested in preserving cultural traditions.

The cultural transmission and Chinese music theories were also employed as a framework to facilitate data analysis. The study's findings are corroborated by evidence from literature that holds historical significance, reinforcing the exploration of the musical heritage of Western Hunan and the contributions of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups to contemporary Chinese music.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts cultural transmission and Chinese music theories to assess the musical heritage of western Hunan, China. It also examines the contributions of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups to contemporary music. The two main reasons that motivated the researchers to use these theories are to **demonstrate** how the foundational elements of Tujia and Miao music, such as scales and modes, influence their unique musical styles and equally, to **illustrate** how these traditions are preserved and evolved through generational and communal practices, showing the interplay between heritage and contemporary adaptation. Also, it is essential to note that most scholarly works regarding Western Hunan China's musical heritage concerning the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups did not combine the above theories to aid their analysis. As a result, this study fills this gap. In line with the above, Cultural Transmission Theory is a framework used to understand how cultural knowledge, beliefs, practices, and artefacts, including music, are

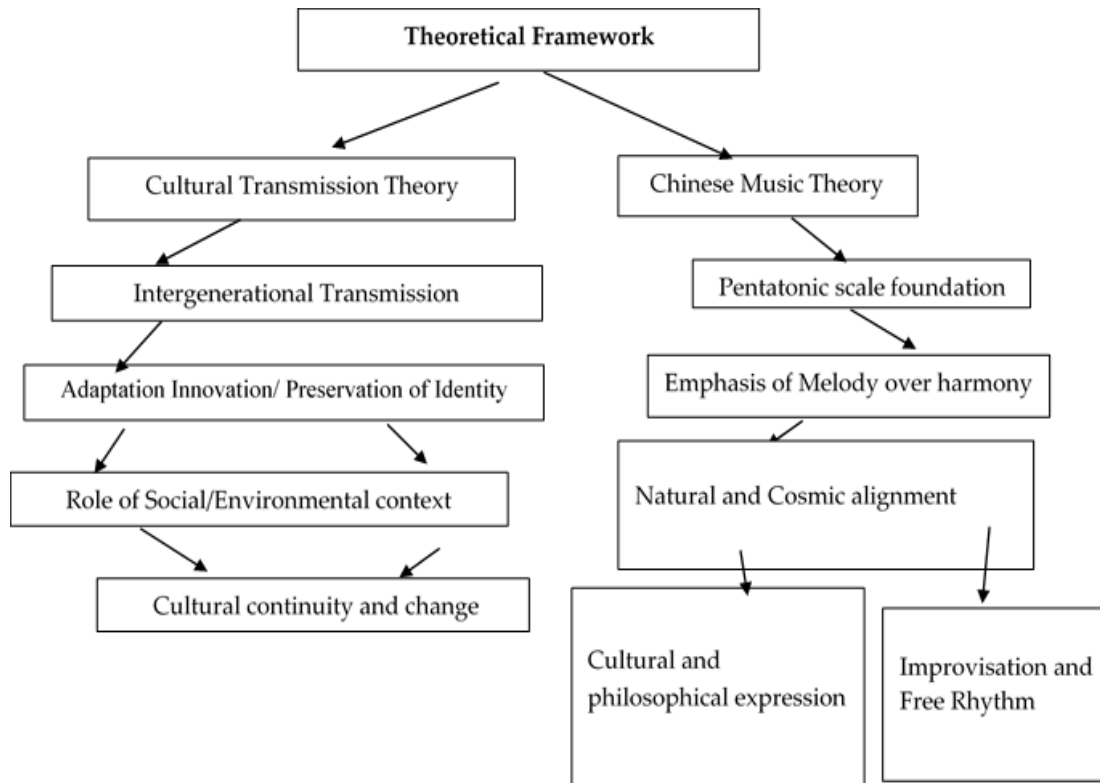
passed down from one generation to the next within a society. It explores the mechanisms through which culture is preserved, adapted, and modified over time. This is underpinned by Gabriel Tarde, who is considered a pioneer in this field. Tarde's seminal work, "The Laws of Imitation" (1890), introduced key concepts related to the spread of cultural practices through imitation and social diffusion (Tarde, 1890)

Concerning the above, Chinese music theory is often attributed to **Ling Lun**, a legendary figure in ancient Chinese history. According to myth, Ling Lun was a scholar during the reign of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), around 2697–2597 BCE. He is credited with creating the first bamboo pipes and establishing the fundamental tones of Chinese music by observing the natural sounds, particularly the song of birds. His work laid the foundation for developing the **pentatonic scale** and the relationship between music and cosmic order, which became central to Chinese music theory (Kárpáti, 1980). Furthermore, this theory centers around the **pentatonic scale**, a five-note scale (gong, shang, jiao, zhi, yu) foundational in Chinese music and reflects a more simplified harmonic structure than Western music's diatonic system. Chinese music emphasizes **melody and rhythm over harmony**, often conveying spiritual, social, and emotional narratives through fewer notes, allowing for greater focus on expression and natural flow. In his work "Music Research" and "The History of Chinese Contemporary Music Culture," Yun Liu (2006) stated that acceptance of "modern" music culture "deepens continuously, learning about western music creation technology, education system, discipline construction, and other music culture also become more comprehensive and professional, and this garden is full of life for all kinds of ideological trends.

Given the above, Chinese music theory provides a framework for analyzing the musical heritage of Western Hunan by focusing on the distinctive scales, modal systems, and tonalities used by the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups. These communities incorporate traditional Chinese theoretical elements while maintaining unique musical practices reflecting their cultural identities. The use of pentatonic scales and specific modes in their folk music aligns with broader Chinese musical principles, offering insights into how traditional theoretical concepts are adapted and preserved within their distinct musical expressions. Relatedly, Cultural transmission theory applies to the Tujia and Miao musical heritage and provides a framework for how these communities preserve and evolve their music through generational and communal transmission. This theory elucidates the processes by which traditional music is passed down orally and how it adapts as it is shared among different groups. The transmission of music from older generations to younger ones and among various ethnic communities highlights the dynamic nature of cultural preservation and adaptation, ensuring that traditional music remains relevant and vibrant in a contemporary context.

Consequently, applying these theories offers significant scientific contributions by providing a structured understanding of how traditional music adapts to modern influences while maintaining its cultural essence. Chinese music theory helps analyze the technical aspects of Tujia and Miao music, while cultural transmission theory explains the mechanisms behind the preservation and evolution of these musical traditions. Together,

these theories contribute to a deeper comprehension of the interplay between traditional and contemporary music, enriching the field of ethnomusicology and offering insights into the broader cultural dynamics of musical heritage; below are the key assumptions underpinning these theories.



Sources: Researchers (2024)

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Cultural Significance of Music in Tujia and Miao Communities

As stated by Roberts et al. (2018). When it comes to the rich cultural music of China's ethnic groups, traditions play a starring role. Because of this profound relationship between Tujia and Miao's musical traditions and their larger social, spiritual, and historical practices, music holds great cultural importance among these people. In these cultures, music serves as a medium for creative expression and a means of maintaining cultural identity and history (Zeng & Onlamul, 2023). According to Guoliang (2019), the Tujia and Miao people have a long history of employing music in storytelling, rituals, and ceremonies to convey their ideas, values, and communal experiences. It has played a crucial role in conveying group feelings, passing down knowledge, and keeping cultural customs alive. According to Xie and Boonsrianun (2023), the Tujia people consider music an integral part of their identity. Legends, historical events, and ancestral tales are frequently incorporated into their traditional music, characterized by its instrumental richness and vocal diversity. This is exemplified, according to researchers like Xia and

Karin (2021) and Fan (2020), by songs like "Nuo Opera" and other song-dance operas, which combine singing, dancing, and acting to portray the Tujia people's ceremonial and dramatic expressions. Music is, therefore, an integral aspect of many Tujia rites, serving to unite the participants and call upon the spirits. Their folk songs are filled with symbolic meanings to preserve their oral history and teach moral teachings. Music plays a vital role in Tujia culture, serving as a means of expression and preservation for the unique identity of the Tujia people.

Similarly, the Miao people, as a significant ethnic minority in China, have an equally profound relationship with music. Music in Miao society is interwoven with various social and religious practices, particularly during festivals, weddings, and funerals. As Sun (2020) bolstered, one of Miao culture's most distinctive musical traditions is the lusheng, a bamboo reed pipe used in social and ceremonial contexts. The lusheng dance represents the Miao people's harmony with nature and ancestral reverence. Additionally, scholars including Liu & Tian (2022) and Li (2022) maintained that the melodies played on this instrument reflect the rhythms of daily life and natural elements, further embedding music into the cultural and spiritual fabric of the community. Thus, Miao music, noticeably in the form of lusheng performances, becomes an avenue through which the community connects with its heritage, reinforces social bonds, and celebrates its unique identity.

Consequently, in both Tujia and Miao cultures, the transmission of music is a significant cultural practice that transcends generations. Traditional music is often passed down orally, with older generations teaching the younger ones the melodies, lyrics, and dances associated with various songs. This practice keeps the music alive and strengthens intergenerational ties within the community. As Liu & Tian (2022). Notes, this oral transmission of music is a form of informal education where children and adolescents learn their people's values, customs, and histories through musical participation. Nevertheless, Zeng & Onlamul (2023) claimed that in recent years, the influence of modern media, urbanization, and economic changes has posed a threat to the continuity of these traditions as younger generations increasingly adopt contemporary forms of music and entertainment, distancing themselves from their ancestral musical heritage.

Also, the continuous efforts to preserve and revitalize Tujia and Miao musical traditions have gained traction in academic and cultural institutions. Researchers, ethnomusicologists, and cultural preservationists have been working to document and archive traditional songs, dances, and instruments, ensuring that these cultural treasures are not lost to future generations. Projects that record and analyze the musical heritage of these communities have also brought greater visibility to their cultural practices, both within China and internationally. For example, the Tujia's "Nuo Opera" and the Miao's "Lusheng Festival" have been recognized as part of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage, highlighting their significance and promoting their preservation (Li, 2020 & Fan, 2020)). These efforts reflect a growing awareness of the need to safeguard the cultural significance of music in these communities while adapting to modernity in ways that do not erase their traditional practices.

4.2 Musical Instruments and Vocal Techniques in Tujia and Miao Heritage

The Tujia and Miao ethnic groups in China are widely recognized for their abundant musical heritage, extensively ingrained in their traditional customs. Therefore, a uniquely characteristic instrument in Miao musical culture is the lusheng, a reed pipe prominent in ceremonial and social settings. The lusheng is constructed from bamboo and incorporates several pipes of different lengths, resulting in harmonized tones. As Huang and Karin (2021) have observed, the lusheng is frequently performed at festivals, notably at the Lusheng Festival, where both men and women convene to execute collective dances accompanied by the instrument. The melody generated by the lusheng is conventionally perceived as a means of connecting the physical world with the spiritual, so assuming a significant role in ceremonies aimed at obtaining blessings from the ancestors or spirits that inhabit nature. The deliberate repetition and cyclical structure of the lusheng's music is intended to elicit spiritual vitality and foster collective engagement. Academics such as Sun (2021) have also highlighted that the building and playing methods of the lusheng instrument demonstrate the close connection between the Miao people and nature. This is because the materials used in its production are sourced directly from the environment, and its tones imitate natural rhythms.

Accordingly, the Tujia community holds the Tujia qin, a traditional instrument, in great esteem due to its distinctive tone and cultural importance. The quasi-zither string instrument is conventionally performed in a manner that combines vocal performance with instrumental accompaniment, frequently in narrative contexts. Based on the information provided, Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) observe that the Tujia qin has traditionally been employed in both festive occasions and funeral ceremonies, showcasing its adaptability in conveying diverse sentiments. The instrument is renowned for its profound and reverberating tone, often sorrowful and comforting. It is well-suited to the sad motifs prominent in most Tujia folk tunes. Therefore, the playing method of the Tujia qin involves delicate finger movements and string pressure, which enable intricate emotional expressions. However, Wenzhe and Karin (2022) assert that the instrument has seen a decrease in usage in recent decades. Nevertheless, there are ongoing initiatives to rejuvenate its playing tradition, and researchers are meticulously recording its historical and cultural background to safeguard it for future generations.

Conversely, the vocal techniques in Miao music are as distinctive as the instruments themselves. One of the most notable techniques is the practice of antiphonal singing, in which groups of singers perform in a call-and-response format. This style is commonly employed in festivals and social gatherings, where it engages the entire community in musical expression Liu & Tian, (2022). Observes that antiphonal singing among the Miao often reflects themes of love, nature, and historical events, with the alternating voices symbolizing dialogue between different generations, social classes, or even the human and spiritual worlds. The vocal techniques used in Miao antiphonal singing also demonstrate intricate control over pitch and rhythm, as singers must carefully synchronize to create a cohesive performance. Maintaining harmony and precise timing reflects social unity and collective memory within the community, passed down through oral tradition.

Furthermore, the Tujia people are renowned for their unique vocal technique, known as weeping marriage songs, performed during wedding rituals. These melodies, referred to as "kujiagui," feature the bride singing as she mourns her departure from her family while commemorating her recent marriage. Zhang & Liu (2022) emphasize the intricacy of this vocal heritage, as the singer is required to express both sadness and happiness by employing a combination of vocal techniques such as abrupt pitch shifts, prolonged notes, and shaking sounds. The Tujia's crying marriage songs have emerged as a renowned vocal tradition, representing the contrasting range of human emotions during social change. Contemporary Tujia weddings often feature professional singers performing these songs to preserve the tradition, as only a few young brides acquire intricate vocal techniques. Nevertheless, there are continuous endeavours to rejuvenate this heritage by promoting the engagement of younger generations with these classic melodies.

Accordingly, preserving traditional musical instruments and vocal techniques in Tujia and Miao communities faces significant challenges due to modernization, globalization, and urbanization. As younger generations increasingly move to urban areas and adopt modern lifestyles, traditional musical practices risk fading. However, scholars and cultural preservationists have been working to document and promote these practices. According to Xia and Karin (2021), initiatives such as ethnographic recordings, music festivals, and cultural exchange programs have contributed to the revival of interest in Tujia and Miao musical traditions. These efforts aim to ensure that the distinctive instruments, such as the lusheng and tujia qin, and the intricate vocal techniques, like antiphonal singing and crying marriage songs, remain a living part of these communities' cultural expressions. By bringing traditional music to new audiences, both within China and internationally, these preservation efforts are crucial in maintaining the cultural heritage of the Tujia and Miao people.

4.3 Folk Songs and Ethnic Identity in Western Hunan

The correlation between traditional music and ethnic identity in Western Hunan is a multifaceted and in-depth topic explored by several researchers, including Li (2020). Guoliang, Y. (2019) emphasizes music's crucial significance in forming, conserving, and manifesting ethnic identities. The Western Hunan region is inhabited by several ethnic groups, including the Tujia and Miao, who have traditionally used traditional songs to convey their cultural heritage and strengthen their distinct identities. As per Huang, Karin, K. (2021), 56 distinct types of folk songs exist throughout the 56 nationalities in China. These songs can be categorized into six groups based on their content: labour songs, political songs, ritual songs, love songs, children's songs, and life songs. The study conducted by T. Li (1993) on the Musical Characteristics of Hunan Folk Songs and Its Singing highlights that Hunan folk songs are highly valued resources of Hunan folk music due to their diverse range of genres, broad subject matter, exquisite melodies, and distinctive styles. The primary genres of Hunan folk songs include labour songs, folk songs, and minor tunes. Hunan folk songs possess distinct tonal features intricately linked to the local language and intonation conventions. Commonly, folk songs are performed with tones that incorporate both major and minor thirds.

Additionally, H. Xiang's (2013) "Research on the Structure of The Melody and Tone of Tujia Folk Songs" affirms that the structure of the melody and tone of Tujia folk songs is taken as the starting point to sort out and collect the different types and regions of Tujia folk songs. That is why scholars, including Xia and Karin (2021), maintained that folk songs serve as an artistic form of expression and a medium for transmitting historical, social, and moral values across generations. As such, folk songs in Western Hunan have become intertwined with the ethnic identity of its people, offering insights into their lived experiences, communal histories, and interactions with broader societal forces.

Likewise, Liu and Natayakulwong (2023) have noted that folk songs are pivotal in expressing ethnic identity within the Tujia and Miao communities. Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) observed that folk songs play a crucial role in everyday life and important occasions like festivals, weddings, and funerals by strengthening community and inclusion. The correlation between folk songs and ethnic identity is notably apparent in how these songs embody the history tales and cultural mythology of the Tujia and Miao people. Accordingly, Liu & Tian (2022) noted that folk songs frequently incorporate narratives of migration, challenges against foreign influences, and legendary stories of ancestor heroes, all contributing to consolidating a collective identity among the community members. Accordingly, by singing these songs, individuals belonging to these communities not only engage in conserving their cultural heritage but also confirm their shared recollection and unique ethnic identity.

Sun (2019) also asserted that folk music in Western Hunan serves as a means of opposing cultural assimilation and homogenization. Due to the substantial social and economic changes China has experienced in recent decades, the Tujia and Miao people have faced immense pressure to conform to the prevailing Han culture. Thus, folk songs have emerged as a means of safeguarding ethnic uniqueness and opposing the obliteration of culture. Despite rapid modernization, Sun (2019) emphasized that the Tujia and Miao have managed to preserve a robust feeling of ethnic pride and continuity using folk music. These songs, abundant in indigenous vocabulary, metaphors, and allusions to older traditions, function as a means of strengthening ethnic divisions and affirming cultural independence. In this context, folk songs serve as a manifestation of ethnic identity and a proactive instrument in safeguarding that identity against external influences.

Moreover, Folk songs are also deeply intertwined with the language of the Tujia and Miao people, and scholars like Zeng, A., & Onlamul, K. (2023) have noted the importance of this connection. Also, Xia and Karin (2021) observed that the use of native languages in folk songs serves to strengthen ethnic identity, as language is a fundamental marker of cultural belonging. For many Tujia and Miao, singing in their native tongue is a way of resisting linguistic assimilation and maintaining a connection to their cultural roots; however, Xia and Karin (2021). Often, folk songs contain linguistic features that are no longer commonly used in everyday speech, thus serving as a repository for preserving linguistic diversity within these communities. This linguistic preservation further

emphasizes the role of folk songs as cultural artefacts, preserving not only the content of ethnic identity but also its linguistic expression.

Furthermore, researchers have noted that language, musical form and style significantly influence ethnic identity through folk songs. Shun and Boonsrianun (2023) observed that the melodies, rhythms, and structures of Tujia and Miao folk songs stand apart from those of the prevailing Han musical traditions. These musical compositions frequently mirror the distinctive geographical and environmental circumstances of Western Hunan by including rhythms that imitate natural sounds like the meandering of rivers or the undulating of leaves. Therefore, Shun and Boonsrianun emphasized that these unique musical components are crucial for forming ethnic identity since they offer an aural manifestation of the Tujia and Miao people's emotional bond with their land and surroundings. By preserving these traditional musical forms, the Tujia and Miao safeguard their cultural heritage and establish their distinctiveness from the prevailing Han culture, strengthening their ethnic identity.

Finally, scholars have also emphasized the evolving nature of folk songs and their role in contemporary expressions of ethnic identity. Liu and Tian (2022) observe that while traditional folk songs have been passed down orally for generations, there has been a growing trend of adaptation and modernization. Young Tujia and Miao musicians have started to blend traditional folk elements with modern musical genres such as pop and rock, creating a new hybrid form of ethnic expression. Liu and Tian further stressed that this adaptation demonstrates the flexibility of folk songs as a cultural form and their continued relevance in shaping ethnic identity. Rather than seeing modernization as a threat to traditional culture, many scholars have argued that blending old and new forms allows for the dynamic expression of ethnic identity in contemporary contexts.

4.4 Transmission and Preservation of Tujia and Miao Music

According to Sun (2018), scholars consider the transmission and preservation of Tujia and Miao music to be crucial subjects of academic investigation, especially considering the difficulties presented by contemporary societal changes to the continuation of these cultural traditions. Sun elaborates that both tribes have traditionally transmitted their musical heritage through spoken communication, depending on continuous learning across generations to maintain their own musical styles, instruments, and folk customs. Within the context of the Tujia folk song "Golden Peacock Dancing" teaching activity, instructors facilitate students' comprehension of Tujia culture and the symbolic representation of the Golden Peacock. They employ multimedia tools to perform the musical composition of "Golden Peacock Dancing". This video animation captures students' attention and stimulates their cognitive awareness during the folk music performance of "Golden Peacock Gently Jumping". As a result, students can attentively listen to exceptional performances within a conducive music environment. According to Liu and Tian (2022), listening elicits distinct emotional responses from the performers, fostering a more profound comprehension and admiration of Tujia music culture among students.

Liu says that teaching folk songs should include instruction in singing them. To convey the meaning of folk songs, students must be conversant with the links and employ a variety of vocal music expressions. The entire process of performing a song involves using words and dialects, and lyrics are a special language used in music. Students can enter a particular place or ethnicity and interact uniquely with the spiritual world of that region or ethnicity by learning local or ethnic languages. They can also learn about both regional and ethnic cultures. Possess a special comprehension and information base. When learning to sing the lyrics to the Tujia folk song "Golden Peacock Gently Jumping," for instance, pupils are anxious about the terms "Golden Peacock," "Feather," "Bamboo House," "Rainbow," "Sunshine," "Xiaoxi," and "Children." Words like "clap hands" are well known, but you will feel very out of place when you read and sing the phrases "Xiao Bu Shao" and "Xiao Bu Mao". You will feel somewhat uncomfortable whether you are singing folk music or reading the words because it is impossible to adequately explain "Xiao Bu Shao" and "Xiao Bu Mao" in Chinese language and literature. The terms "young man" and "little girl" must be clarified in the Dai language. Thus, a lack of knowledge of the Dai people's native dialect will prevent pupils from learning the meaning of "Xiao Bu Shao" and "Xiao Bu Mao" and from being able to convey their true emotions while performing this folk song. The singing is quite stiff and choppy. 2020's Baidu Encyclopaedia

Consequently, Huang and Karin (2021) argue that the conventional method of transmission is facing growing challenges due to modernization, urbanization, and the impact of global media. Nevertheless, despite these obstacles, several scholars, Xin and Sensai (2022) assert that conserving Tujia and Miao music is feasible and crucial for upholding their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. Therefore, according to Sun (2018), communal gatherings, festivals, and family instruction have always been the main means of propagating Tujia and Miao music. These activities will enable the younger generations to acquire knowledge from their elders through active participation in performances and observing musical customs. The oral transmission modality has demonstrated its efficacy in preserving the fundamental aspects of their musical tradition. Scholars such as Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) supported this perspective by asserting that the acquisition of music through oral tradition is intrinsically linked to the cultural and social environment of the Tujia and Miao people. In this context, music functions not only as a source of amusement but also as a means of storytelling, ritual, and fostering community cohesion. Using these procedures, the Tujia and Miao communities have successfully conserved a dynamic musical heritage untainted by external cultural influences. However, Liu & Tian (2022) contend that the movement of younger generations to metropolitan regions and the growing impact of globalized media has diminished the effectiveness of these conventional methods of communication, thereby accentuating the urgency for formal preservation efforts.

Given the above, Zeng & Onlamul (2023) have stressed the importance of institutional efforts in preserving Tujia and Miao music. Xia and Karin (2021) argue that while oral transmission is vital, institutional support through educational programs, ethnographic documentation, and cultural policies is crucial to ensuring the survival of these traditions. Li further states that formal music education programs in local schools, alongside

government-sponsored cultural projects, can help revitalize interest in Tujia and Miao music among the younger generation. Similarly, Wang (2021) opined that the establishment of music festivals, museum exhibits, and archival projects dedicated to the preservation of ethnic minority music are instrumental in raising awareness about the cultural value of Tujia and Miao musical traditions. These efforts, according to Wang, provide platforms for cultural transmission that extend beyond the limits of oral tradition, ensuring that these musical forms are not only preserved but also evolve in response to contemporary challenges.

Concerning the above assertion, Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) contended that incorporating contemporary technologies into the conservation of Tujia and Miao music facilitates digital archiving and recording technologies, presenting novel opportunities for the long-term preservation and widespread distribution of traditional music. That is why contemporary technology can safeguard Tujia and Miao music by digitizing folk songs, musical performances, and oral histories, guaranteeing its availability to future generations. Furthermore, internet media can be utilized to effectively advertise these customs to a wider demographic, encompassing both domestic and global audiences. Therefore, Tao, G. (2021) supported this claim by asserting that the utilization of social media platforms, streaming services, and other digital media can enable the dissemination of Tujia and Miao music beyond conventional geographical limits, so ensuring the continued relevance of these musical traditions in a swiftly evolving world. Furthermore, digital recordings offer a precise and enduring method of recording the musical skills, styles, and repertoires that lie at the core of the cultural identities of these ethnic communities.

However, scholars such as Xia and Karin (2021). Caution that while modern technology offers significant advantages in preserving Tujia and Miao music, there are risks associated with its use. Li argues that commercializing and commodifying traditional music through global digital platforms could dilute its cultural significance. In particular, he states that presenting traditional music outside its original social and cultural context may risk transforming it into a mere product for consumption rather than a living tradition that holds deep meaning for the Tujia and Miao people. This concern is echoed by Xie and Boonsrianun (2023), who opine that efforts to preserve Tujia and Miao music must be careful to maintain the integrity of the music and its ties to cultural practices. In response to these concerns, scholars argue that preservation efforts should balance modern technology with a deep understanding and respect for the cultural and social context from which the music originates.

4.5 Influence of Tujia and Miao Music on Contemporary Chinese Music

Considerable research has been conducted on the impact of Tujia and Miao music on modern Chinese music. According to scholars such as Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) and Zhang and Liu (2022), the rhythmic structures and melodic lines of Tujia and Miao music have greatly influenced contemporary Chinese compositions, especially in folk-based classical music. The authors contend that contemporary orchestral compositions have integrated traditional Tujia and Miao music, distinguished by pentatonic scales and

recurring rhythmic patterns, by combining ethnic themes with Western musical approaches. Given the aforementioned, Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) highlight that the fusion of many forms has resulted in a distinctive kind of Chinese classical music that upholds its ethnic origins while incorporating worldwide influences. By way of illustration, the impact of the Tujia working song on society Transportation of Chongqing Tujia working song is primarily an oral tradition that is deeply ingrained and holds significant importance in the social lives of Tujia people. It serves as a means to express their emotions and share their joy. Likewise, they employ music as a means of artistic expression. The bitter love ballads of the Tujia working song, such as "Long Work is Hard", exemplify this concept most effectively. As said, "Men and women harbour resentments; hence they engage in singing." In addition, hungry individuals express their gastronomy, while hard-working people express their experiences in producing goods, as exemplified by the "Production Song" of the Tujia people. People acquire manufacturing expertise by studying it and achieve collective advancement through reciprocal interactions.

In their scholarly work, Zhang & Liu (2022) supported this perspective by highlighting that numerous modern Chinese composers intentionally incorporate aspects from Tujia and Miao music to elicit sentiments of nostalgia, identity, and cultural pride, especially in compositions that seek to depict the ethnic diversity of China. Additionally, Zhang & Liu contend that these integrations rejuvenate traditional music while attracting modern audiences.

Furthermore, Xia and Karin (2021) observed the impact of Tujia and Miao vocal methods on the current state of Chinese popular music. According to Li (2020), the unique vocal styles of these ethnic groups, which are distinguished by their high-pitched, resonant tones and elaborate ornamentation, have been incorporated into the vocal skills of contemporary Chinese pop artists. This effect is especially apparent in the artistic creations of ethnic minority artists who have achieved national acclaim. Li contends that these vocal skills, conventionally linked to the traditional customs of the Tujia and Miao, have been modified to suit the contemporary pop music environment, leading to a combination that amplifies the emotional profundity and cultural significance of the song. Hence, Li noted that this process exemplifies the wider pattern of cultural synthesis in modern Chinese music, where conventional components are reinterpreted and modified in new settings to generate inventive musical manifestations.

Sun (2020) elaborates that the impact of Tujia and Miao music extends beyond particular genres and has infiltrated many aspects of modern Chinese music, ranging from cinematic compositions to well-known folk groups. Sun contends that the rising prevalence of ethnic motifs in cinema and television soundtracks, especially in works highlighting China's ethnic breadth, indicates the expanding impact of Tujia and Miao musical customs. These musical compositions frequently integrate conventional instruments like the lusheng (a bamboo wind instrument utilized by the Miao) or the xiao (a vertical bamboo flute widely used in both Han and ethnic music), seamlessly combining them with contemporary orchestral arrangements to elicit a feeling of cultural opulence

and genuineness. Moreover, Sun contends that these integrations have not only popularised ethnic music but also fostered a more comprehensive recognition of the musical variety in China.

Several academics, including Liu & Tian (2022) and Tao (2021), have raised concerns about the commercialization and commodification of Tujia and Miao music in modern settings. The integration of ethnic music into popular genres can heighten recognition of these traditions, but it can also lead to the diminishment of their cultural importance. In numerous instances, the fundamental nature of Tujia and Miao music is diluted when modified for commercial objectives, namely in the pop music sector, where conventional aspects are frequently diminished to shallow exoticism. In the context of contemporary Chinese music, Liu argues that this tendency exemplifies wider conflicts between cultural preservation and innovation. Artists and producers are faced with the delicate task of balancing the preservation of traditional forms with the adaptation of these forms to cater to the needs of modern audiences. In support of his thesis, he emphasized preserving a harmonious equilibrium between novelty and genuineness when integrating ethnic music into modern stylistic forms.

Ultimately, the development of Tujia and Miao music in modern Chinese music has ignited debates on conserving ethnic musical heritage in a swiftly advancing culture. Tao (2021) contends that although the impact of Tujia and Miao music on modern Chinese music is discernible, there is a necessity for more focused endeavours to safeguard the authentic manifestations of this music, which face the peril of extinction as a result of urbanization and the diminishing population of practitioners. Tao asserts that government backing for cultural preservation efforts, such as music education programs and archival projects, is crucial to guarantee future generations' continued existence and active participation in the musical traditions of the Tujia and Miao societies. Furthermore, he emphasized that preserving these musical traditions is crucial for upholding cultural variety in China and enhancing the overall fabric of modern Chinese music. Supporting this perspective, Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) contend that it is essential to preserve the original forms of ethnic music to uphold the cultural authenticity of contemporary modifications.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

5.1 The Role of Music in Tujia and Miao Cultures

This paper reveals the cultural significance of music within the Tujia and Miao communities, highlighting its central role in preserving heritage and identity. Music serves as artistic expression and a vital tool for transmitting history, values, and beliefs. The findings show that the Tujia people have long used music in rituals, storytelling, and ceremonies, underscoring its importance in sustaining cultural practices. As Guoliang (2019) and Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) emphasize, music is essential to Tujia identity, with traditional performances like the "Nuo Opera" showcasing vocal diversity and instrumental richness. The paper also found that these performances are integral to rituals, conveying legends, ancestral tales, and moral teachings.

Similarly, the paper reveals that the Miao's musical heritage, particularly lusheng performances, reflects their deep connection to nature and ancestral reverence. The findings show that music is vital in social and religious events, such as festivals and weddings. However, the paper found that modernization and urbanization challenge preserving these traditions. Despite this, efforts to document and archive these musical practices continue, with Tujia and Miao music recognized as part of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (Li, 2020; Fan, 2020). These efforts highlight the need to safeguard their musical heritage while adapting to modernity.

5.2 Preserving Tujia and Miao Musical Heritage through the Traditional Instruments and Vocal Techniques

This paper found that the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups in China have a rich and enduring musical heritage deeply rooted in their cultural traditions. The Miao's lusheng, a reed pipe instrument, plays a significant role in their ceremonies and social events. Notably, the lusheng is featured in the Lusheng Festival, where its harmonized melodies are believed to bridge the earthly and spiritual realms (Sun, 2021). Similarly, the findings of this research show that the Tujia's qin, a zither-like instrument, holds immense cultural significance. Historically used in celebrations and mourning rituals, the Tujia qin conveys many emotions and is an important aspect of their cultural expression (Xie & Boonsrianun, 2023). These findings emphasize how integral music is in preserving the cultural identities of both the Tujia and Miao people. The paper also explores the distinctive vocal traditions of these ethnic groups. Miao antiphonal singing, a call-and-response style, is central to fostering community unity during festivals and social gatherings (Liu & Tian, 2022). For the Tujia, "crying marriage songs" uniquely blend sorrow and joy as brides express emotional transitions during weddings through complex vocal techniques (Zhang & Liu, 2022). Both traditions are vital in maintaining social cohesion and conveying shared values within these communities.

However, this study found that modernization, urbanization, and globalization pose significant challenges to preserving these musical traditions. These contemporary pressures risk diminishing the cultural practices integral to the Tujia and Miao identities. This study's findings show that various efforts have been undertaken to safeguard this heritage. Hence, initiatives include comprehensive documentation, ethnographic recordings, and the organization of music festivals to raise awareness and appreciation. The paper equally found that these measures are crucial in ensuring that the rich musical traditions of the Tujia and Miao are preserved and passed down to future generations, maintaining their cultural significance amidst evolving societal changes.

5.3 Folk Songs as Tools for Cultural Continuity and Resistance

This paper found that folk songs are crucial in shaping and preserving ethnic identity among the Tujia and Miao people of Western Hunan. Scholars such as Xia and Karin (2021). And Guoliang (2019) emphasize that these songs reflect and reinforce cultural heritage and communal identity. The paper notes that folk songs are integral to significant life events and daily activities, serving as a medium for transmitting historical and social

values (Xie & Boonsrianun, 2023); Liu and Natayakulwong (2023) found that these songs encapsulate historical narratives and cultural myths, reinforcing a sense of community and belonging.

The paper also reveals that folk songs act as resistance against cultural assimilation, with Sun (2019) highlighting their role in maintaining ethnic distinctiveness amidst modernization. Xia and Karin (2021) emphasize the linguistic aspect of folk songs, while Zeng & Onlamul (2023) expound on preserving native languages and strengthening ethnic identity. The study found that other scholars such as Shun and Boonsrianun (2023) stressed the musical forms and styles distinct from dominant Han traditions, reflecting the Tujia and Miao's connection to their environment. The study also underlines those contemporary adaptations of folk songs, blending traditional and modern elements, demonstrate their ongoing relevance and flexibility in expressing ethnic identity (Liu & Tian, 2022).

5.4 Strategies for the Transmission and Preservation of Tujia and Miao Musical Traditions

This paper reveals that preserving Tujia and Miao music is crucial due to modern societal changes threatening these cultural traditions. Sun (2018) emphasizes that traditional oral transmission, through communal gatherings and familial instruction, has been essential for maintaining Tujia and Miao's musical heritage. However, the paper found that Huang and Karin (2021) argue that this method is increasingly challenged by modernization and global media influences. However, despite these challenges, the findings of this paper, according to Xin and Sensai (2022), assert that preservation efforts are vital for maintaining ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

Additionally, other findings demonstrate that music education through oral tradition has historically effectively preserved cultural elements. Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) support this, noting that music is a storytelling, ritual, and community bonding medium. However, Liu and Tian (2022) point out that urban migration and global media have weakened traditional transmission, highlighting the urgent need for formal preservation efforts.

Consequently, the study found that Zeng and Onlamul (2023) stress the importance of institutional support, while Xia and Karin (2021). Argues that educational programs and cultural policies are crucial for revitalizing interest among youth. Hence, Wang (2021) advocates for music festivals and archival projects to raise awareness and preserve these traditions. Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) add that digital archiving and modern technologies offer new opportunities for preservation and dissemination, though Xia and Karin (2021) caution against commercialization risks. Thus, preservation efforts must balance technology with respect for cultural context to maintain the integrity of Tujia and Miao music.

5.5 Modern Music: The Tujia and Miao Traditions on Contemporary Chinese Compositions and Popular Culture

The paper reveals that Tujia and Miao's music significantly influences contemporary Chinese music. Xie and Boonsrianun (2023) and Zhang & Liu (2022) emphasize that the rhythmic structures and melodic lines of Tujia and Miao music have impacted modern Chinese compositions, particularly in folk-based classical music. They argue that traditional elements, such as pentatonic scales and repetitive rhythms, have been integrated into orchestral works, creating a unique form of Chinese classical music that blends ethnic motifs with Western techniques. Zhang and Liu (2022). Highlight that this hybridization respects ethnic roots while embracing global influences in which contemporary composers use these elements to evoke nostalgia and cultural pride.

Xia and Karin (2021) further illustrate the influence of Tujia and Miao vocal techniques on contemporary Chinese pop music. Li (2020) finds that the distinct vocal styles of these groups, characterized by high-pitched tones and intricate ornamentation, have been adopted by modern pop singers, enhancing their music's emotional depth and cultural resonance. This reflects a broader trend of cultural synthesis in contemporary Chinese music.

Lastly, the findings of this study, according to the Sun (2020), affirm that Tujia and Miao's music has influenced various contemporary genres, including film scores and popular folk ensembles. He argues that incorporating traditional instruments into modern arrangements helps to evoke cultural richness and authenticity. However, Liu & Tian (2022).) And Tao (2021). Express concerns about commercialization, which can dilute the cultural significance of Tujia and Miao music. They stress the need for a balance between innovation and authenticity to preserve the essence of these traditions while adapting to modern contexts. Tao, (2021). Advocates for government support in cultural preservation initiatives to maintain the musical heritage of the Tujia and Miao, ensuring it enriches contemporary Chinese music without losing its original form.

6. CONCLUSION

The musical heritage of Western Hunan, particularly the contributions of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups, holds a profound and enduring influence on contemporary Chinese music. These ethnic traditions, distinguished by their diverse collection of folk songs, distinctive vocal skills, and complex rhythmic patterns, have greatly influenced contemporary musical genres, including classical and popular music. Furthermore, the second section of the Study demonstrates that the traditional music from the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups not only functions as a cultural artefact but also actively and dynamically contributes to China's wider cultural picture. The unique characteristics of these traditions, particularly their incorporation of pentatonic scales and emotive vocal techniques, have enabled their smooth integration into modern compositions, enhancing China's musical repertoire. The integration mentioned above exemplifies a dynamic interaction between the conservation of ethnic origins and the adoption of contemporary

elements, therefore illustrating the potential of old customs to enrich novel and inventive modes of musical manifestation.

Furthermore, this study highlighted how Tujia and Miao's music has transcended its regional roots to become an integral element of China's national intangible heritage. Numerous modern genres, such as orchestral music, cinema scores, and popular music, exhibit this impact by integrating traditional instruments and melodies to elicit feelings of cultural pride and historical nostalgia. Nevertheless, the emergence of commercialization presents notable obstacles since the desire for widespread consumption can occasionally diminish the genuineness of these abundant musical customs. Hence, it is crucial to strike a careful equilibrium between innovation and preservation to retain the integrity and fundamental nature of Tujia and Miao music while accommodating contemporary preferences.

Consequently, to investigate these influences thoroughly, this study employed historical and exploratory qualitative methods for data collection, ensuring a broad and insightful understanding of the subject matter. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize and interpret the collected data effectively. At the same time, cultural transmission theory provided an essential framework for understanding how the music of the Tujia and Miao people has been passed down and adapted over time, particularly in the context of its influence on contemporary Chinese music. The combination of these research methods allowed a comprehensive exploration of the musical heritage of Western Hunan, underscoring the importance of these ethnic groups in shaping China's musical heritage.

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