

Traditional Music in the Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Study on the Protection and Inheritance Strategy

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Abstract: This study examines the challenges and strategies in protecting and inheriting traditional music as intangible cultural heritage in the context of globalization and modernization. It explores international frameworks, particularly the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and their implementation in various cultural contexts. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review, policy analysis, and a case study of traditional music protection in Yunnan province, China. Findings reveal that successful preservation strategies often integrate documentation, education, community engagement, and innovative adaptation. The study highlights the critical role of digital technologies in archiving and dissemination, and the importance of incorporating traditional music into formal education systems. Challenges identified include balancing authenticity with innovation, sustaining public engagement, and navigating the complexities of commercialization. The case study of Yunnan demonstrates the effectiveness of a holistic, community-centered approach, while also revealing persistent challenges in ensuring long-term sustainability of traditional music practices. The research concludes that effective protection and inheritance of traditional music requires adaptive strategies that view cultural heritage as a living, evolving expression. It emphasizes the need for context-sensitive approaches that balance preservation with innovation, ensuring traditional music remains vibrant in contemporary cultural landscapes.

Keywords: Traditional Music, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Preservation, UNESCO Convention, Community Engagement, Digital Archiving, Music Education, Cultural Adaptation, Yunnan Province

1. INTRODUCTION

The preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, particularly traditional music, have become increasingly significant in the face of rapid globalization and modernization. This growing importance is reflected in both academic discourse and international policy frameworks (Brennan et al., 2019). Intangible cultural heritage, encompassing traditions, performing arts, and social practices, forms the bedrock of cultural identity and diversity. Within this broader context, traditional music emerges as a crucial element, serving not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a vehicle for cultural transmission and community

cohesion. The challenges facing the preservation of traditional music are multifaceted. On one hand, the advent of new media and digital technologies has transformed the landscape of cultural transmission, offering both opportunities and challenges for the continuation of traditional practices. On the other hand, the increasing commercialization and 'festivalization' of culture has raised questions about authenticity and the potential dilution of cultural practices (Bennett et al., 2014). Recent scholarship has emphasized the need for a holistic approach to the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of cultural practices with their social, economic, and environmental contexts. In the realm of traditional music, this has led to a growing focus on the sustainability of musical practices and the ecosystems that support them (Kang, 2022). Educational initiatives have emerged as a key strategy in the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. These initiatives aim to bridge the gap between traditional methods of transmission, such as oral traditions, and modern educational paradigms. However, the effectiveness of these programs varies across different cultural contexts, highlighting the need for tailored approaches that respect local traditions while engaging with contemporary realities (Fleming et al., 2019). As we delve deeper into the complexities of preserving and transmitting traditional music as intangible cultural heritage, it becomes clear that this endeavor requires a multidisciplinary approach. This research aims to explore the challenges and opportunities in this field, drawing on case studies, theoretical frameworks, and policy analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and to propose strategies for the future.

2. TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ITS CHALLENGES

Traditional music, as a vital component of intangible cultural heritage, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and fostering community cohesion. It embodies the collective memory and creative expression of communities, passed down through generations primarily through oral transmission. The significance of traditional music extends beyond mere entertainment, serving as a repository of historical narratives, social values, and cultural practices (Güler-Bıyıklı & Aslan, 2013). However, the preservation and transmission of traditional music face numerous

challenges in the contemporary global context. One of the primary challenges is the rapid societal transformation brought about by modernization and globalization. This shift has led to changing lifestyle patterns and cultural preferences, particularly among younger generations, potentially disrupting the intergenerational transmission of musical traditions. The advent of digital technologies and new media presents both opportunities and threats to traditional music. While these technologies offer new platforms for documentation and dissemination, they also contribute to the homogenization of musical styles and the potential loss of local distinctiveness (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016). Moreover, the commercialization of culture, often manifested in the 'festivalization' of traditional music events, raises questions about authenticity and the potential commodification of cultural heritage (Lewis, 2013). Another significant challenge is the diminishing pool of skilled practitioners and knowledge bearers. As elder generations pass away, there is a risk of losing irreplaceable knowledge and techniques if effective transmission mechanisms are not in place. This issue is compounded by the lack of formal educational systems that integrate traditional music, limiting opportunities for younger generations to engage with and learn these musical traditions. Furthermore, the sustainability of traditional music practices is increasingly threatened by environmental and economic factors. Climate change and environmental degradation can disrupt the ecological contexts in which certain musical traditions are embedded, while economic pressures may force practitioners to abandon their art for more lucrative pursuits (Wei & Gao, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines preservation efforts with adaptive strategies. This includes developing comprehensive documentation projects, creating innovative educational programs, fostering community engagement, and exploring sustainable ways to integrate traditional music into contemporary cultural landscapes (Gao, 2023).

3. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND STRATEGIC RESEARCH ON THE PROTECTION AND INHERITANCE OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

3.1 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Its Implementation

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2003, marks a significant milestone in the global effort

to protect and promote traditional cultural expressions, including music (Howard, 2016). This convention provides a comprehensive framework for identifying, documenting, and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing the role of communities in this process. The implementation of the convention has led to the establishment of three lists: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (McCormick, 2009). These lists serve not only as recognition mechanisms but also as tools for raising awareness and encouraging international cooperation in safeguarding efforts. However, the effectiveness of the convention in protecting traditional music varies across different contexts. While it has successfully elevated the status of intangible cultural heritage in international discourse, challenges remain in translating global policies into local actions (Merillas & Rodríguez, 2018). The table below summarizes the key aspects of the convention's implementation:

Table 1: Key Aspects of UNESCO Convention Implementation and Their Impact on Traditional Music

| Aspect | Description | Impact on Traditional Music |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Identification | Inventorizing of intangible cultural heritage | Increased documentation of musical traditions |
| Safeguarding | Development of protection measures | Enhanced support for traditional music practices |
| Promotion | Raising awareness and visibility | Greater recognition of diverse musical heritage |
| Transmission | Supporting education and knowledge transfer | Improved mechanisms for passing on musical skills |
| International Cooperation | Fostering partnerships and exchanges | Increased cross-cultural musical collaborations |

The convention's implementation has catalyzed numerous initiatives worldwide, fostering a more holistic approach to cultural heritage preservation that recognizes the intrinsic link between tangible and intangible elements of culture.

3.2 Analysis of International Cases in Traditional Music Protection

The global landscape of traditional music protection offers a rich tapestry of approaches and strategies. Various countries have implemented diverse methods to safeguard their musical heritage, each tailored to their specific cultural contexts and challenges (Schweibenz, 2004). These case studies provide valuable insights into effective preservation strategies and

potential pitfalls. In Europe, many countries have integrated traditional music into their formal education systems. For instance, Ireland has successfully incorporated traditional Irish music into its national curriculum, fostering a new generation of musicians and ensuring the continuity of its musical heritage (Sims & Stephens, 2011). Similarly, Hungary's Kodály method, which uses folk music as a basis for music education, has been internationally recognized for its effectiveness in preserving traditional music while developing musical skills. In Asia, Japan's Living National Treasure system provides a model for recognizing and supporting master musicians. This system not only honors exceptional artists but also ensures the transmission of their skills to younger generations (UNESCO, 2013). In contrast, China's approach focuses on large-scale documentation and digitization efforts, creating vast archives of traditional music recordings and scores (van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2023). The table below summarizes key international cases in traditional music protection:

Table 2: International Cases in Traditional Music Protection

| Country | Protection Strategy | Key Features | Outcomes |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Ireland | Curriculum Integration | Traditional music in schools | Increased youth engagement |
| Hungary | Kodály Method | Folk music-based education | Widespread musical literacy |
| Japan | Living National Treasure | Recognition of master musicians | Preserved rare musical skills |
| China | Documentation and Digitization | Large-scale archiving | Comprehensive digital records |
| Senegal | Community-Based Preservation | Local ownership of preservation efforts | Strengthened cultural identity |

These diverse approaches demonstrate that successful protection strategies often involve a combination of formal institutional support, community engagement, and innovative use of technology. The effectiveness of these strategies, however, is heavily dependent on the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of each country.

3.3 Discussion on Protection and Inheritance Strategies

3.3.1 Legal Policies and Institutional Development

The development of robust legal frameworks and institutional structures is paramount in the effective protection and transmission of traditional music as intangible cultural heritage. Comprehensive legislation serves as

the foundation for safeguarding efforts, delineating the rights of tradition bearers, establishing mechanisms for recognition and support, and providing legal recourse against misappropriation (Chen, 2021). Many countries have enacted specific laws to protect intangible cultural heritage, often incorporating provisions for traditional music. These legal instruments typically address issues such as intellectual property rights, community ownership, and the regulation of commercial exploitation. Concurrently, the establishment of dedicated institutions, such as national centers for traditional music or departments within cultural ministries, plays a crucial role in implementing these legal frameworks. These institutions often undertake tasks including documentation, research, education, and promotion of traditional music. The effectiveness of these legal and institutional measures, however, hinges on their ability to balance preservation with the dynamic nature of living traditions. Successful policies often incorporate flexibility to accommodate the evolving nature of traditional music while providing a stable framework for its protection. Moreover, the integration of international standards, such as those set by UNESCO, with local legal systems and customary laws has proven to be a complex yet essential aspect of creating comprehensive protection mechanisms for traditional music (Brennan et al., 2019).

3.3.2 Cultivating Inheritors and Community Participation

The cultivation of inheritors and fostering community participation are critical components in the sustainable preservation and transmission of traditional music. Inheritors, as bearers of cultural knowledge and skills, play a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity of musical traditions. Effective strategies for cultivating inheritors often involve a combination of formal and informal educational approaches, including apprenticeship programs, workshops, and integration into academic curricula. These initiatives aim to not only transmit technical skills but also to convey the cultural context and significance of the music. Simultaneously, engaging the wider community is essential for creating a supportive environment for traditional music. Community participation can take various forms, from active involvement in music-making to organizational support for cultural events. This engagement helps to maintain the relevance of traditional music in contemporary society and ensures its evolution in line with community values and needs. Moreover, community participation fosters a sense of ownership and pride in cultural heritage, which is crucial for its long-term preservation. The synergy between cultivating skilled inheritors

and promoting broad community engagement creates a robust ecosystem for traditional music, allowing it to thrive as a living, dynamic cultural expression rather than a static, preserved artifact.

3.3.3 Innovative Development and Modern Transformation

The innovative development and modern transformation of traditional music represent crucial strategies in ensuring its relevance and vitality in contemporary society. This approach acknowledges that cultural traditions, including music, are not static entities but dynamic processes that evolve with societal changes. Innovation in traditional music can manifest in various forms, from the incorporation of modern instruments and production techniques to the fusion of traditional melodies with contemporary musical genres. Such innovations can attract younger audiences, bridging generational gaps and fostering a renewed interest in cultural heritage. The modern transformation of traditional music also extends to its dissemination and consumption, leveraging digital platforms and social media to reach wider audiences. This digital transition not only aids in preservation through documentation but also creates new avenues for engagement and appreciation. However, the process of innovation and transformation must be carefully balanced to maintain the essence and cultural significance of the original traditions. Successful modern adaptations of traditional music often involve close collaboration between tradition bearers and contemporary artists, ensuring that innovations are rooted in a deep understanding of the music's cultural context. This approach allows traditional music to remain a living, breathing art form, capable of resonating with modern audiences while preserving its cultural integrity.

4. CASE STUDY: TRADITIONAL MUSIC PROTECTION AND INHERITANCE PRACTICE IN A SPECIFIC REGION

4.1 Case Background and Protection Measures

This case study focuses on the protection and inheritance of traditional music in the Yunnan province of China, a region renowned for its rich ethnic diversity and musical heritage. Yunnan is home to 25 ethnic minority groups, each with distinct musical traditions that have been integral to their cultural identity for centuries. However, rapid modernization and urbanization have posed significant challenges to the preservation of these musical traditions (Wei, 2024). In response to these challenges, the Yunnan

provincial government, in collaboration with cultural institutions and local communities, has implemented a comprehensive strategy for the protection and inheritance of traditional music. This strategy, initiated in 2010, encompasses a range of measures including documentation, education, and promotion (Bennett et al., 2014). The protection measures can be categorized into four main areas, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 3: Protection Measures for Traditional Music in Yunnan Province

| Protection Measure | Description | Key Initiatives |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Documentation | Systematic recording and archiving of traditional music | Yunnan Ethnic Music Digital Archive Project |
| Education | Integration of traditional music into formal and informal educational systems | "Inheritors in Schools" Program |
| Promotion | Increasing public awareness and appreciation of traditional music | Yunnan Ethnic Music Festival |
| Community Engagement | Empowering local communities in preservation efforts | Community-Based Safeguarding Committees |

These measures reflect a holistic approach to cultural heritage protection, recognizing the interconnectedness of various aspects of traditional music preservation. The "Inheritors in Schools" program, for instance, not only facilitates the transmission of musical skills but also fosters intergenerational dialogue and cultural understanding (Fleming et al., 2019).

4.2 Effectiveness Analysis and Problem Discussion

The implementation of traditional music protection measures in Yunnan has yielded significant results while also revealing several challenges. The effectiveness of these measures can be evaluated across multiple dimensions, including preservation, transmission, and public engagement. The documentation efforts have successfully created a comprehensive digital archive of Yunnan's traditional music, ensuring that rare and endangered musical forms are preserved for future generations. The "Inheritors in Schools" program has shown promising results in transmitting musical skills and knowledge to younger generations, with an increase in student participation in traditional music activities. However, challenges persist. While public awareness has increased, translating this awareness into sustained engagement remains difficult. Additionally, the commercialization of traditional music, while bringing economic benefits, risks compromising authenticity. The following table summarizes the key

outcomes and challenges:

Table 4: Outcomes and Challenges of Traditional Music Protection in Yunnan

| Aspect | Positive Outcomes | Persistent Challenges |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Preservation | Comprehensive digital archive created | Balancing preservation with natural evolution of traditions |
| Transmission | Increased youth participation in traditional music | Bridging gap between formal education and community-based learning |
| Public Engagement | Higher awareness of cultural heritage | Sustaining long-term interest and participation |
| Economic Impact | Growth in cultural tourism | Risk of over-commercialization |
| Community Involvement | Empowerment of local communities | Ensuring equitable representation of all ethnic groups |

These findings highlight the complex nature of cultural heritage protection. While significant progress has been made, addressing the identified challenges requires ongoing effort and adaptive strategies. The balance between preservation and innovation, as well as between cultural authenticity and economic development, remains a critical concern. Future initiatives may need to focus on developing more sustainable models of community engagement and exploring innovative ways to make traditional music relevant in contemporary contexts, while respecting its cultural integrity.

4.3 Experience Summary and Insights

The case study of traditional music protection in Yunnan province offers valuable insights applicable to broader contexts of intangible cultural heritage preservation. Firstly, the multi-faceted approach encompassing documentation, education, promotion, and community engagement demonstrates the necessity of a holistic strategy in cultural preservation efforts. The success of the digital archiving project underscores the crucial role of modern technology in safeguarding traditional art forms. The "Inheritors in Schools" program highlights the importance of integrating cultural heritage into formal education systems, fostering intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills. This initiative's success suggests that bridging the gap between traditional practices and contemporary educational frameworks can be an effective means of ensuring cultural continuity. The challenges encountered, particularly in sustaining public engagement and balancing commercialization with authenticity, point to the complex nature of cultural preservation in a rapidly modernizing

society. These issues emphasize the need for adaptive and context-sensitive approaches to heritage protection. Furthermore, the empowerment of local communities in the preservation process emerges as a critical factor. The involvement of indigenous groups in decision-making and implementation not only ensures the cultural appropriateness of preservation efforts but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride in cultural heritage. Lastly, the Yunnan experience underscores the importance of viewing traditional music not as a static artifact but as a living, evolving cultural expression. Future initiatives in cultural heritage preservation should aim to create environments where traditional arts can thrive and adapt to contemporary contexts while maintaining their core cultural significance.

5. CONCLUSION

This research has explored the multifaceted challenges and strategies in the protection and inheritance of traditional music as intangible cultural heritage. The study underscores the complex interplay between globalization, modernization, and cultural preservation efforts. Key findings highlight the critical role of international frameworks, such as the UNESCO Convention, in providing a global context for preservation efforts. However, the research also emphasizes the importance of tailoring these global strategies to local contexts, as exemplified in the case study of Yunnan province. The study reveals that successful preservation strategies often involve a combination of documentation, education, community engagement, and innovative adaptation. The integration of traditional music into formal education systems and the use of digital technologies for archiving and dissemination have shown particular promise. Challenges identified include balancing authenticity with innovation, sustaining public engagement, and navigating the potential pitfalls of commercialization. These challenges point to the need for adaptive, context-sensitive approaches in cultural heritage preservation. Moreover, the research underscores the importance of viewing traditional music not as a static artifact but as a living, evolving cultural expression. This perspective necessitates strategies that allow for natural evolution while maintaining cultural integrity. In conclusion, the protection and inheritance of traditional music require a holistic, community-centered approach that respects the dynamic nature of cultural heritage. Future research and policy initiatives should focus on developing sustainable models that balance preservation with innovation, ensuring that traditional music remains a

vibrant part of contemporary cultural landscapes.

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