Reviewing the current status of the preservation of Gannan Tea Picking opera

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1. Introduction

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera, a national intangible cultural treasure with four centuries of history, represents a rich cultural tradition that must be carefully examined and preserved. The use of multimodal theory in the translation and review of this opera, emphasizes the importance of understanding and conveying not only textual elements but also nonverbal cues and cultural context for effective preservation (Xiaodong & Ping, 2018). Multimodal theory, which investigates the use of several modes of communication other than language, such as visual, aural, and spatial modes, can offer a comprehensive framework for the translation and review process. In the case of the Gannan tea-picking opera, this entails comprehending the interaction of language, singing, dance, and other symbolic aspects that contribute to the opera's distinct meaning and cultural relevance. These components are inextricably linked to the local culture, customs, and performance context, all of which contribute to the overall experience and message of the opera and are critical to its preservation (Wang, 2018; Gong et al., 2024).

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera, originating from Xiabang Township, Ganxian County, is a significant part of China's intangible cultural heritage and is closely linked to the area's traditional tea farming methods. Historical records show that tea growers sang to reduce tiredness during harvesting, which later developed into a formal opera style during the Ming Dynasty. The Chinese government acknowledged its cultural reverence by adding it to the national intangible cultural heritage list, highlighting the need for its conservation (Xingchen et al., 2021). The opera is encountering obstacles due to modernity, the rise of foreign music, and shifting cultural preferences, resulting in a decrease in its popularity and performance (Xu, 2022; Ye et al., 2023).

The existence of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera is at risk because of its elderly nature and insufficient scholarly focus. The significant decrease in artists and academic research emphasizes the critical requirement for thorough evaluation and conservation tactics. Efforts should prioritize recording, study, and the creation of educational programs to reinvigorate interest and guarantee the passing down of this historic art form to future generations. Preserving the Gannan Tea Picking Opera is essential for upholding China's cultural variety and enhancing the worldwide cultural scene (Cai et al., 2023; Seeyo et al., 2023).

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera, listed as a national intangible cultural treasure in 2006, has received less systematic investigation and scholarly attention. Thorough research must include more on the opera and its associated art forms. There needs to be a more informed focus on preserving and analyzing the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, especially within...
anthropological musicology. This divide impedes the comprehension and admiration of this distinctive cultural form and impacts the creation of educational resources and initiatives designed to preserve it (Holl, 2023).

This article reviews and preserves Gannan Tea Picking Opera, which is crucial for establishing a durable knowledge base that can be used in educational settings to maintain culture continuance. Researchers have delved into opera's historical, cultural, and artistic aspects more profoundly using an anthropological musicology approach. This method would assist in documenting its practices, comprehending its importance within the local community, and creating plans for its practical preservation. Improving the assessment and conservation of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera will protect this cultural treasure for future generations and ensure its continuance.

1.1. Research objective

To review the current status of the preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

1.2. Research question

What is the current status of the preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera?

2. Literature review

Considering its status since being listed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection list in 2006, a literature review of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera would address numerous crucial aspects. The following is how a literature review can be structured:

2.1. Society and Culture of Jiangxi Province

The lifestyle in Jiangxi Province is deeply rooted in its long agricultural history, shaping a community characterized by hard work, simplicity, and mutual assistance. Despite modern changes in consumption, clothing, food, housing, and transportation, these core values persist among its people, maintaining the essence of Jiangxi's traditional agricultural culture and civilization. This enduring lifestyle has molded the distinctive character traits of the Jiangxi populace, such as integrity and optimism, which continue to influence the region's social fabric (Chen, 1991).

In terms of language, Jiangxi is divided into two main dialects, the Northern Jiangxi dialect and the Gannan dialect, with Ji'an serving as the geographical demarcation. The northern Jiangxi dialect is prevalent in the northern region. In contrast, the Gannan dialect, which is closer to Mandarin and influenced by the Gan or Hakka languages, is common in the southern part of the province. This linguistic diversity reflects the rich cultural tapestry of Jiangxi and its historical interactions with neighboring regions (Xie, 2020). Jiangxi's rich cultural heritage is evident in its substantial contribution to China's national intangible cultural heritages, particularly in the arts, with many music-related projects. Music, deeply ingrained in the daily life of Jiangxi's people, plays a pivotal role in the province's cultural identity. This is underscored by numerous traditional music forms, including the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, which enriches the province's artistic landscape and serves as a testament to its vibrant cultural history (Liu & Chuangprakhon, 2024).

The profound understanding of Jiangxi's historical development, geographic setting, lifestyle, linguistic diversity, and artistic contributions provides an essential theoretical background for further music field research. This foundation is particularly relevant for exploring the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, enabling a comprehensive examination of its historical evolution, musical features, and ongoing efforts toward its preservation and development. Such insights are crucial for formulating effective strategies to safeguard and promote this unique cultural asset, ensuring its continued relevance and vitality in the context of Jiangxi's rich cultural heritage (Guocheng et al., 2022; Seekhunlio et al., 2023).

2.2. Cultural Significance of Gannan Tea Picking Opera

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera is a culturally significant art form that combines music, dance, and opera to create diverse creative representations. The composition's framework, comprising an introduction, opening song, and statement tune, is the foundation of performances, enabling a distinctive fusion of narrative and musical components. Adaptability is essential for continuously reviewing and preserving the art form, maintaining its relevance and connection with modern audiences while upholding its foundations. Scholarly critiques analyze how the opera integrates many art genres to enhance its artistic depth and complexity. The song features a variety of rhythms and intensities, blending singing, dancing, and vocal parts to highlight the depth of traditional Chinese music. The term "tuning" represents several aspects, symbolizing the balance between people and nature, a key topic in the opera's heritage (Ioven, 2010; Chen, 2021).

The preservation and review activities are focused on promoting the Gannan Tea Picking Opera to disseminate Chinese folk music and encourage cultural interactions. The objective is to modernize and showcase traditional music in a manner that captivates contemporary, especially younger, audiences, thus securing the art form's endurance and significance. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera connects China’s history with its future and significantly contributes to the world's cultural heritage (Chang, 2017).
2.3. Preservation and Transmission Chinese Opera

Traditional Chinese opera genres are often classified into two primary groups: national and local. National operas, including the Peking Opera, Yue Opera, Huangmei Opera, Pingju Opera, and Henan Opera, are recognized for their extensive outreach, nationwide shows, and significant audience numbers. These forms are acknowledged and appreciated in many regions of China, emphasizing their broad appeal and importance (Zhang et al., 2008). Local operas target regional or particular audiences and have less viewership than mainstream operas. There are 348 different genres, with 48 being trans-provincial operas present in at least two provinces and 300 being provincial-unique operas found only in one province. Jiangxi Province is a lively center for traditional local operas, including 33 distinct genres and five interprovincial operas. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera is a unique regional opera. The creation of ‘new opera’ in this context strives to enhance performance and instructional strategies to preserve and pass on traditional performing arts and their instrumental methodology (Zhang, 2022).

Jiao Juyin emphasized the importance of opera education and legacy while studying in France. He concentrated on developing emerging opera talent by providing technical instruction and cultural education and creating educational structures. Opera education switched priority under Communist Party leadership toward state propaganda, causing a difference in opera instruction and inheritance approaches (Jiao, 1986). Huangmei Opera and other opera genres are working to extend their performance market and industrialization despite facing hurdles. Lanfang Mei and others in Peking Opera are working to maintain and transmit art through oral traditions, media participation, and innovation. The Yue Opera and Pingju Opera showcase distinct methods of societal advancement and cultural conservation through government supervision and innovative strategies, each playing a role in preserving and safeguarding their opera traditions (Tsui et al., 2005).

2.4. Research Theory

An ethnomusicological review of the preservation status of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera involved analyzing its cultural significance, musical structure, preservation efforts, community engagement, and comparative context. This includes understanding its historical roots, performance practices, and how these reflect local traditions. The review also assesses efforts to teach and transmit the opera, the impact of modernization, and the community’s connection to this art form. Additionally, it considers audience reception, especially among younger generations, and compares the opera to other forms to identify unique challenges and opportunities. Ultimately, this review aims to provide insights into how the Gannan Tea Picking Opera can be sustained and revitalized in the face of changing cultural dynamics (Stone, 2015; Jones, 2003).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research scope and sites

This study highlights Jiangxi Province as a crucial region, especially for examining and conserving the Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Jiangxi Province is acknowledged as the origin of this distinctive art form, making comprehending the opera’s historical foundations and cultural richness essential. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera is a prominent representation of Jiangxi’s operatic heritage and is mostly common in the southern districts of the province. Concentrating on this specific geographic location to explore the opera’s beginnings and cultural importance can aid in the development of focused study and preservation plans. This method guarantees a thorough examination of the opera, including its historical origins, present conditions, and contemporary reinterpretations. It is designed to meet diverse research goals focused on preserving this local cultural legacy in Jiangxi Province, as shown in Figure 1.

3.2. Key information providers

By employing personal interviews and surveys, this study delves into the intricacies of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera in greater detail, which is vital for its review and preservation. with seven key informants who comprehensively understood and represented the opera’s tradition and evolution. The selection criteria for key informants included the following:

1) Having more than 20 years of experience in the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, providing a wealth of knowledge and historical context is essential for the opera’s review and effective preservation.
2) Being acknowledged as a recognized representative within this cultural domain ensures that the perspectives gathered are authoritative and influential for the preservation of the art form.
3) Contributing significantly to the development of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera or having been awarded for their efforts, highlighting their commitment to the enhancement and preservation of this tradition.

3.3. Research tools

To ensure efficient data collection, the study employs various research tools, including interview forms and questionnaires, to facilitate comprehensive fieldwork. The creation of these questionnaires aims to gather detailed

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information from key informants, a crucial element of the research process. Additionally, the research methodology encompasses a diverse set of tools to capture a wide range of data:

1) Formal Interview: Structured interactions with subjects, providing standardized responses for systematic analysis.
2) Informal Interview: Casual conversations that offer deeper, more personal insights into the experiences and opinions of the participants.
3) Participatory Observation: Active involvement in the community or setting, allowing for a first-hand understanding of Gannan Tea Picking Opera practices.
4) Non-Participatory Observation: Objective observation without direct involvement, providing an unbiased perspective on the opera's presentation and reception.
5) Focused Group: Group discussions that facilitate the collection of diverse viewpoints and foster dynamic exchanges on specific topics related to the Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

These tools are integral to the research strategy and were designed to provide a holistic view of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, aiding in its review and preservation.

3.4. Data analysis

The research team used a multimodal method during fieldwork, gathering diverse material, including documents, music, audio, and video recordings, to gain a thorough knowledge of Gannan Tea Picking Opera. The various data included conversational materials, music scores, audio recordings, and movies, providing comprehensive information for examination and conservation purposes.

Furthermore, the research team analyzed the differences between traditional Gannan Tea Picking Opera performances and contemporary -stage renditions. We analyzed field survey data to study the peculiarities of Gannan Tea Picking Opera music, aiding in investigating its current status.

This research sought to thoroughly analyze the present status of Gannan Tea Picking Opera using various materials, techniques, and instruments. This will help in reviewing the current status of the preservation of the ongoing life of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

4. Results

4.1. Development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera

The development of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera can be divided into three periods: from 1949 to 1966, from 1966 to 1976, and from 1976 to 2023. This journey reflects transitions between rural and urban settings, with efforts focused on preservation amidst political challenges. Despite disruptions, the Gannan Tea Picking Opera persisted, with retiring performers ensuring its transmission and preservation, as shown in Table 1.

4.2. Cultural Legacy of Gannan Tea Picking Staining Opera
Interviews with informants have provided insights into the importance of creativity in Gannan Tea Picking Opera. This innovation must be carefully considered with a dual emphasis on review and preservation since the opera mirrors Gannan life and represents the region’s cultural legacy. It is essential to maintain the basic aspects of the opera to preserve its core traits while incorporating new creative expressions. New plays may be created by combining these unique components with different art genres, promoting creativity while maintaining the authenticity of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

Advancements in Gannan Tea Picking Opera music should involve working with skilled musicians who accurately render the classic repertoire. Using contemporary recording technology to record historical performances can be a preservation method, establishing a basis for creativity while upholding the tradition’s ongoing existence. The recordings can inspire future educational or socially impactful works, fostering the knowledge and enjoyment of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.

Incorporating innovation into the inheritance process, particularly in educational settings, is essential for Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Integrating education with developing new plays helps maintain the opera’s fundamental nature while enabling creative inquiry. This method guarantees that Gannan Tea Picking Opera stays pertinent and connects with contemporary audiences while respecting its cultural heritage.

**Table 1 Development of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Key Events</th>
<th>Impact on Gannan Tea Picking Opera</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Liu Yilun introduced ‘three reforms’ to transform the opera system, people, and ideological substance.</td>
<td>- Formation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera Troupe and Gannan Art School, fostering exceptional talents and ensuring institutional support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 - 1976</td>
<td>- Cultural Revolution and imposition of political campaigns, leading to a reduction in creative expression.</td>
<td>- Disruption in preservation and transmission efforts, artists sent to rural locations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Return of Gannan Tea Picking Opera artists, contributing to the art form’s continuity.</td>
<td>- Struggle to maintain authenticity and continuity amidst political turmoil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976 - 2023</td>
<td>- End of Cultural Revolution, revival of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.</td>
<td>- Publication of Gannan Tea Picking Opera music and continued dedication of retiring performers to preservation and transmission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continued efforts by retiring performers to preserve, transmit, and disseminate Gannan Tea Picking Opera knowledge.</td>
<td>- Sustained growth and development of the art form, ensuring its continuity for future generations.</td>
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*Source: Junyong Chang (2023)*

### 4.3. The government provides support

In their study of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera, researchers discovered that government assistance, sometimes known as "the presence of the country," is critical to the preservation and succession of the opera. This assistance has allowed the opera to fulfill its social role and value, helping to build the rural cultural system and improving the social standing of its veteran artists. Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the government has stressed giving its inhabitants political, economic, cultural, and social opportunities. As material living conditions rose, there was an increased need for cultural enrichment, spurring the development of opera criteria and regulations for evaluation and preservation. President Mao Zedong developed a comprehensive strategy for opera reform, advocating preserving and resuscitating classic opera styles. This governmental backing has allowed Gannan Tea Picking Opera to uncover and perform traditional plays aggressively, providing the groundwork for future sorting and adaptation initiatives, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Governmental Support and Preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Government Support</td>
<td>- Governmental support, known as &quot;the presence of the country,&quot; significantly influences the protection and inheritance of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, fostering its social function and enhancing artists' status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Context</td>
<td>- Since 1949, the government has prioritized advancements in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres, prompting the formulation of opera guidelines and policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Initiatives</td>
<td>- President Mao Zedong’s policy advocated for the preservation of traditional opera forms, empowering Gannan Tea Picking Opera and laying a foundation for preservation efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Role</td>
<td>- The government provides policy input and services, guiding artists in creating exceptional works and fostering an environment conducive to innovation and preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Junyong Chang (2023)*

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The government's primary responsibility is providing policy input and services for Gannan Tea Picking Opera and guiding and encouraging artists to develop extraordinary work. The government hopes to motivate more artists to preserve the Gannan Tea Picking Opera's tradition for future generations by creating a climate suitable for creative creativity and preservation.

4.4. The Integration of Gannan Tea Picking Opera in Education and Community Engagement

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera has been actively integrated into educational institutions as a strategy for its preservation and inheritance. Recognizing the importance of instilling cultural appreciation from a young age, initiatives have been undertaken in Ganzhou city to introduce Gannan Tea Picking Opera into the curriculum of primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions. The School of Music at Gannan Normal University has spearheaded efforts to incorporate Gannan Tea Picking Opera into undergraduate classes. At the same time, similar endeavors have been observed in the music classes of Zhanggong District Second Primary School. This concerted effort aims to ensure that future generations are exposed to and influenced by the traditional art form from an early age, fostering its continued appreciation and preservation.

In addition to educational settings, Gannan Tea Picking Opera has also found its way into the broader market and community spheres, furthering its preservation and dissemination. Originating from folk traditions, the opera has undergone successive protection and inheritance efforts by dedicated artists. Subsequently, it has transitioned into the market and community domains. For instance, former Gannan Tea Picking Opera artists from the Gannan Literature and Art School have organized elderly community members to learn and perform opera songs and dances. This grassroots engagement within the community preserves the art form and ensures its continued relevance and accessibility to a wider audience, as shown in Figure 2.

In 2013, the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government authorized the merger of the Gannan Art School with Ganzhou Education College, which was renamed the Ganzhou Normal College. This enormous restructuring was a watershed point in institutional support for the assessment, preservation, and training of the Gannan Tea Picking Opera. The Gannan Art School has long been regarded as a cultural treasure that is committed to cultivating talent and conserving the Gannan Tea Picking Opera tradition. With its incorporation into Ganzhou Normal College, the school obtained more administrative and instructional resources, allowing it to broaden its reach and effect. The merger of the Gannan Art School and Ganzhou Normal College guaranteed the continuous development of talent in the Gannan Tea Picking Opera. Under the college's auspices, dedicated professors and resources may be set aside to study and preserve this historical art form.

Furthermore, incorporation into a larger educational institution enabled multidisciplinary cooperation and greater cultural interchange. Students and professors at Ganzhou Normal College could connect with many viewpoints and methods of Gannan Tea Picking Opera, increasing their understanding and contributing to its preservation in a dynamic and changing cultural scene, as shown in Figure 3.
4.5. Evolution of Music Tone in Gannan Tea Picking Opera

The Gannan Tea Picking Opera maintained the traditional five-tone style of "Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu" before and after the Cultural Revolution. However, after the Cultural Revolution, there was an increase in tone, indicating a shift toward greater musical experimentation and innovation while preserving the essence of the traditional style, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Similarities and Differences in Music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music aspects</th>
<th>Gannan Tea Picking Opera Before the Cultural Revolution</th>
<th>Gannan Tea Picking Opera After the Cultural Revolution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jue</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative tone</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongs and drums</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pause the tone</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide tone</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A brief change in sound</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, while both periods upheld the fundamental structure of Gannan Tea Picking Opera music, the post-Cultural Revolution era embraced a more dynamic and varied approach, showcasing a continued evolution of this cherished cultural art form.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The study of the current status of the preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera reveals a multifaceted environment marked by obstacles and prospects. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera, a traditional Chinese art with a long history, is currently at risk of extinction due to various contemporary challenges. Concerted efforts and strategic initiatives provide viable ways to preserve and revitalize it.

The main obstacle facing the preservation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera is decreasing interest and involvement, especially among younger people. Urbanization, changing cultural choices, and the strong impact of popular culture have decreased interest in traditional art forms such as the Gannan Tea Picking Opera. To preserve the life of the art form, it is crucial to generate new interest and engagement as audiences decrease and practitioners age (Fang et al., 2022; Guo, 2013).

Economic limits and resource limitations present substantial challenges to preservation efforts. Insufficient funding, limited institutional backing, and inadequate infrastructure are obstacles to the advancement and popularization of Gannan Tea Picking Opera.
Tea Picking Opera. Initiatives focused on documentation, education, and outreach may face challenges in gaining momentum and long-term viability without sufficient financial support and organizational support (Yun et al., 2022; Xiong, 2013).

Despite these limitations, there are significant chances for preserving and revitalizing the Gannan Tea Picking Opera. The heightened acknowledgment of intangible cultural heritage on national and international scales has raised the status of traditional creative forms, offering a stage for promotion and assistance. Advancements in technology and digital media provide new ways to share, educate, and engage audiences, enabling Gannan Tea Picking Opera to reach a wider and more varied group of people (Yue & Seekhunlio, 2024; Xiaodong & Ping, 2018).

Community involvement and grassroots activities are essential in the preservation process. Local cultural organizations, educational institutions, and grassroots community groups can lead initiatives to record, promote, and pass on Gannan Tea Picking Opera in their communities. By cultivating a feeling of ownership and pride among community members, these projects can help preserve and invigorate the art form (Li & Tsui, 2000).

In conclusion, to preserve Gannan Tea Picking Opera, a comprehensive and cooperative strategy is needed to address both overarching issues and specific requirements. Collaborating with government agencies, cultural institutions, civil society organizations, and local communities can help protect this valuable cultural heritage for future generations. The Gannan Tea Picking Opera can flourish as a vivid representation of Chinese cultural identity by making smart investments, implementing creative programs, and engaging with the community.

Acknowledgment

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Ethical considerations

Informed Consent: Before commencing the interviews and observations, we obtained informed consent from all participants. They were fully briefed on the study’s objectives, their rights as participants, and the strict confidentiality maintained for their responses.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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