

Qualitative analysis of the transmission and preservation strategies for Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China



Liang Qiu^a | Sayam Chuangprakhon^b   | Shuying Jian^c

^aThe First Middle School of Qin'an County, Gansu Province, China.

^bAssistant Professor, College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

^cTeaching Assistant, College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

Abstract This qualitative analysis aims to investigate the current state of transmission and conservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China. The research adopts a comprehensive approach, combining qualitative research techniques, fieldwork, literature analysis, and interviews. Key informants, including musicians, folk artists, cultural experts, and residents, contribute their knowledge and experiences related to Qin'an Xiaoqu. Ethnographic observations, participant observations, and in-depth interviews provide firsthand insights into the musical characteristics, historical significance, and cultural relevance of this tradition. The results underscore the historical, cultural, and spiritual importance of Qin'an Xiaoqu, reflecting the essence of the Chinese nation. However, challenges such as weak awareness, funding constraints, lack of successors, and changing cultural environment threaten its continuity. The research proposes strategies such as cultivating professional archivists, enhancing education transmission, and supporting musicians to preserve and transmit this musical heritage effectively. By recognizing its significance and implementing robust conservation strategies, this cherished musical legacy can endure for future generations, reinforcing the enduring spirit of Chinese culture.

Keywords: Qin'an Xiaoqu, intangible cultural heritage, preservation, transmission, Gansu Province, China

1. Introduction

Folk music serves as a vital bridge that connects people to their cultural heritage, reflecting the history, values, and traditions of a community (Zheng 2010; Nyíri 2011). One such significant treasure of traditional Chinese folk music is Qin'an Xiaoqu, an intangible cultural heritage rooted in the Gansu Province of China. Qin'an Xiaoqu holds a profound historical, cultural, and spiritual significance, but like many intangible cultural heritages, it faces challenges in its transmission and preservation in the modern era (Bian 2011; Liu et al 2022; Nie et al 2022; Liang 2023; Qiu et al 2023).

This essay delves into the qualitative analysis of the transmission and conservation strategies for Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China. Throughout history, Qin'an Xiaoqu has been an integral part of the region's cultural identity, encapsulating the essence of its people and narrating the tales of their ancestors (Hughes 2013; Gorfinkel 2017; Lyu and Zhou 2023). However, the preservation and continuation of this unique musical heritage confront various obstacles in today's rapidly changing world (Schippers 2009; Howard 2016; Becker 2019; Abdelfattah and Eddy-U 2019).

Section one of this analysis sheds light on the importance of preserving Qin'an Xiaoqu. As an intangible cultural heritage of music, it is not merely an artistic expression but an embodiment of history and culture (Liu et al 2022; Yang and Welch 2023). By examining the musical style, lyrics, and other elements of Qin'an Xiaoqu, researchers can gain profound insights into the values, beliefs, and emotions of past generations (De Kloet 2010; Ho and Law 2012). This cultural significance highlights the need for preservation efforts to ensure that this invaluable heritage continues to be a living tradition for future generations to cherish (Stubbs 2009; Maliangkay 2017; Liaqat 2021; Verschuuren 2021).

The second section delves into the challenges hindering the successful transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu. The lack of awareness and appreciation for this folk music among the younger generation and the wider community poses a significant threat to its survival (Bohlman 1988; Grant 2014). The region's economic challenges, particularly in Qin'an County, have limited financial support for preserving intangible cultural heritage, leading to insufficient funds and resources. Moreover, the advanced age of current musicians and a lack of successors raise concerns about the continuity of the art form. Additionally, the impact of modernization and globalization has resulted in a changing cultural environment, where traditional folk music struggles to maintain its relevance (Yang et al 2018; Lin and Lian 2018; Zhao et al 2022).



To address these challenges, section three presents a comprehensive set of strategies and measures that can guide the preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu. One essential approach is the documentation of intangible cultural heritage archives, providing a systematic and standardized record of this musical heritage. Preservation initiatives must extend beyond academic institutions and involve local communities through workshops, festivals, and events. Such engagement fosters a sense of ownership and pride, encouraging active participation in the preservation efforts (Rees 2010; Kim 2021; Kuang and He 2022).

Furthermore, transmission strategies emphasize the importance of school, family, and social education. Incorporating Qin'an Xiaoqu into school curriculums can help instill cultural awareness and pride among students, nurturing the next generation of musicians and enthusiasts. Family education plays a crucial role, as grandparents and elders transmit their knowledge to younger family members, ensuring the continuity of tradition within households (Law and Ho 2009; Ali 2011; Aguas 2020). Additionally, community-based social education programs facilitate broader cultural exchange, enriching the understanding and appreciation of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Another crucial aspect of the conservation strategies lies in protecting and supporting the musicians and folk artists. Ensuring their well-being through subsidies and regular health check-ups preserves the foundation of Qin'an Xiaoqu. Moreover, fostering a new generation of musicians and promoting their professional growth will ensure the sustainability of the art form.

In conclusion, Qin'an Xiaoqu serves as a priceless cultural heritage that speaks to the rich history and soul of Gansu, China. The preservation and transmission of this intangible cultural heritage require concerted efforts from the government, communities, musicians, and individuals alike. By recognizing its historical and cultural significance and implementing a robust set of conservation strategies, Qin'an Xiaoqu can transcend time and continue to resonate with generations to come. Only through collective commitment and unwavering passion can this treasured musical legacy thrive and stand as a testament to the enduring spirit of the Chinese people.

1.1. Research objective

To investigate the current state of transmission and conservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China.

1.2. Research question

What are the existing challenges and barriers in the transmission and conservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China, and what are the most effective strategies and measures that can be implemented to safeguard and promote its preservation?

2. Literature review

2.1. The preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage

Such as traditional folk music is a critical concern for cultural researchers and policymakers around the world. Qin'an Xiaoqu, a form of traditional folk music in Gansu, China, holds immense historical, cultural, and spiritual significance, making its preservation a matter of great importance (Andrea 2014; Ho 2018). In this literature review, we will explore the existing research on the challenges and strategies for conserving and transmitting Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music.

Historical Significance of Qin'an Xiaoqu: Qin'an Xiaoqu is a musical intangible cultural heritage that carries the history and culture of the region and the Chinese nation. Researchers have emphasized its significance in understanding the people's way of thinking, values, and emotions within specific historical contexts. Through the analysis of its musical characteristics, lyrics, and elements, scholars have traced its development in different historical periods, providing insights into the cultural evolution of Gansu province and the nation as a whole.

Challenges in Transmission and Conservation: Several studies have highlighted the challenges faced in preserving Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music. One significant obstacle is the weak awareness of transmission and preservation among the local community. Residents in remote areas like Qin'an often lack understanding of the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, leading to a passive attitude towards preservation efforts. Moreover, the shortage of preservation funds in economically disadvantaged regions like Qin'an hinders the implementation of effective preservation programs and infrastructure development.

Deterioration of Music Cultural Environment: The impact of modernization and urbanization has led to a gradual erosion of the traditional cultural environment in Qin'an. With more young people leaving their hometowns for work, the social atmosphere and daily lifestyle are changing, resulting in a decreasing interest in learning and participating in Qin'an Xiaoqu. This shift in cultural preferences has the potential to undermine the continuity of this folk music tradition.

Low Interest and Initiative in Learning: The dwindling interest in learning Qin'an Xiaoqu is also evident among the younger generation. The influence of popular music and the perception that learning traditional music is unprofitable has deterred young individuals from engaging in the art form. This lack of interest and initiative poses a significant challenge to the transmission and continuity of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Strategies and Measures for Preservation: Scholars and cultural experts have proposed various strategies to address the challenges faced in preserving and transmitting Qin'an Xiaoqu. Documentation and archiving of the intangible cultural heritage have been emphasized as essential to preserve its historical and artistic elements. The cultivation of new musicians and the establishment of music intangible cultural heritage specialties in music colleges have been recommended to ensure a steady flow of talent in preserving and transmitting the folk music.

Social Education Transmission and Dissemination: The role of social education transmission in promoting the preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu cannot be overlooked. Emphasizing community involvement and grassroots initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and pride in the local cultural heritage. Additionally, using various dissemination channels such as festival activities, performances, and media platforms can deepen public understanding and appreciation of Qin'an Xiaoqu. In conclusion, the literature on the transmission and conservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music highlights the rich historical and cultural significance of this intangible cultural heritage. However, it also sheds light on the challenges faced in its preservation, such as the lack of awareness, funding, and interest among the younger generation. Nevertheless, the existing research offers valuable insights into potential strategies and measures that can be adopted to safeguard and promote the continuity of Qin'an Xiaoqu, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

2.2. Research theory

The qualitative theory guiding this literature review in ethnomusicology aims to explore the transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China, from a culturally sensitive and holistic perspective. Qualitative research in ethnomusicology delves into the lived experiences, social contexts, and cultural meanings associated with musical traditions, allowing for a deep understanding of the interplay between music and society. Through the qualitative lens, this literature review seeks to uncover the multifaceted aspects of how Qin'an Xiaoqu is transmitted, conserved, and valued within its cultural milieu (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981).

Ethnomusicology as a theoretical framework will guide this literature review in examining Qin'an Xiaoqu as a living cultural heritage, shaped by historical, social, and cultural processes. Ethnomusicology views music as a dynamic and evolving cultural expression, intimately intertwined with the communities in which it thrives. By employing ethnomusicology theory, the review will explore the performative, communal, and ritualistic dimensions of Qin'an Xiaoqu, recognizing its role in shaping identities, fostering social cohesion, and providing insights into the cultural memory of the region (Solís 2004).

The transmission and preservation theory for this literature review will center on understanding the mechanisms and challenges associated with passing down Qin'an Xiaoqu from one generation to the next while safeguarding its cultural integrity. The literature review will draw on concepts such as oral tradition, intergenerational learning, and the role of master musicians as key transmitters of the tradition. Preservation efforts, including institutional support, educational initiatives, and community involvement, will also be explored to assess their effectiveness in sustaining and revitalizing Qin'an Xiaoqu as an intangible cultural heritage (Davila 2006).

By integrating qualitative theory, ethnomusicology theory, and a focus on transmission and preservation, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the complexities surrounding Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music. The synthesis of these theoretical approaches will contribute to a deeper understanding of how this living musical tradition is embedded within the cultural fabric of Gansu, China, and how it continues to thrive through community participation, social practices, and the shared experiences of musicians and audiences alike. Through this multifaceted exploration, the review will shed light on the significance of Qin'an Xiaoqu as an enduring and cherished intangible cultural heritage in the region.

3. Materials and Methods

For this study, a comprehensive research approach is adopted to investigate the transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music. The research methods encompass a combination of qualitative research techniques, fieldwork, literature analysis, and interviews to provide a holistic understanding of the cultural context and dynamics surrounding this traditional music heritage. The following table 1 presents an overview of the research methods utilized in the study.

3.1. Research tools

To conduct a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the transmission and preservation strategies for Qin'an Xiaoqu Folk Music in Gansu, China, this research utilized interviews and observations as essential research tools. The following research tools were employed:

Interviews: Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including musicians, folk artists, cultural experts, and local residents with knowledge and experience related to Qin'an Xiaoqu. These interviews provided valuable firsthand insights into the musical characteristics, historical significance, cultural relevance, and challenges faced in preserving and transmitting Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Observation: Active observation was carried out during live Qin'an Xiaoqu performances, rehearsals, and cultural events. By immersing in the musical environment and closely observing the singers, musicians, and audience interactions, rich contextual data was collected. This observational approach allowed for the documentation of the musical practices, traditional elements, and cultural dynamics associated with Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Table 1 Research Methods.

Research Scope	Research Methods
1. Fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnographic observations of live performances and community events - Participant observation to understand the social and cultural context of Qin'an Xiaoqu - In-depth interviews with musicians, folk artists, and key informants - Gathering oral narratives and personal experiences from the local community - Recording audio and video materials for later analysis and documentation
2. Literature Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing academic literature, research papers, and published works on Qin'an Xiaoqu - Studying historical records, local chronicles, and other archival sources related to the music tradition - Analyzing existing musical scores and transcriptions of Qin'an Xiaoqu pieces - Examining relevant cultural and musical studies to understand the broader context of traditional Chinese music
3. Ethnomusicology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applying ethnomusicological methods to explore the cultural significance and musical characteristics of Qin'an Xiaoqu - Investigating the role of music in daily life, rituals, and celebrations within the local community - Understanding the relationship between Qin'an Xiaoqu and its historical development
4. Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyzing collected fieldwork data, interviews, and oral narratives - Interpreting qualitative findings to identify themes, patterns, and cultural meanings - Synthesizing information from literature analysis to contextualize the research
5. Transmission Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing the transmission process and dynamics of Qin'an Xiaoqu from one generation to the next - Investigating the role of master musicians and their teaching methods in passing down the musical tradition
6. Preservation Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying challenges and strategies for preserving Qin'an Xiaoqu in the modern cultural landscape - Examining the existing institutional support for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage - Evaluating the effectiveness of educational initiatives and community involvement in conserving Qin'an Xiaoqu - Investigating the role of technology and media in promoting and safeguarding the music tradition

3.2. Key informants

In this study, key informants were individuals who possessed valuable knowledge and expertise related to Qin'an Xiaoqu Folk Music and its transmission and preservation. They included musicians, folk artists, cultural experts, and local residents who had significant insights and experiences with the musical tradition. The following table 2 presents the key informants involved in the research.

Table 2 Key Informants in the Study of Qin'an Xiaoqu Folk Music.

Key Informant	Role/Expertise	Affiliation/Occupation
Musician 1	Master of Qin'an Xiaoqu	Local Folk Musician
Musician 2	Experienced Qin'an Xiaoqu	Performer Local Xiaoqu Club Member
Local Resident 1	Xiaoqu Enthusiast	Community Member
Local Resident 2	Traditional Music Enthusiast	Retired School Teacher
Folk Artist	Accomplished Qin'an Xiaoqu Singer	Qin'an County Cultural Center
Music Teacher	Music Educator	Local Music School
Cultural Expert	Ethnomusicologist	University Researcher
Cultural Officer	Cultural Heritage Conservationist	Regional Cultural Department
Government Official	County Cultural Officer	Qin'an County Government

These key informants were instrumental in providing valuable data and insights for the qualitative analysis of the transmission and preservation strategies for Qin'an Xiaoqu Folk Music in Gansu, China. Their diverse perspectives and experiences contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in preserving this traditional musical heritage.

4. Results

Qin'an Xiaoqu, an intangible cultural heritage of music in the province of Gansu, China, represents a profound musical tradition that holds immense historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. This study aims to present the research findings on



three critical aspects related to Qin'an Xiaoqu: the importance of its preservation, the challenges faced in its transmission and preservation, and the strategies and measures proposed to safeguard its continuity for future generations.

4.1. The Importance of the Preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu

Historical Significance: Qin'an Xiaoqu, being an intangible cultural heritage of music, serves as a vital repository of history and culture, weaving the vibrant tapestry of a region and a nation. The music's evolution through different historical periods concentrates within the intangible cultural heritage of music, epitomizing the distinct regional characteristics of Qin'an. By delving into its music style, lyrics, and other preserved elements, one can gain profound insights into the thinking, values, and emotional attitudes of people in specific historical settings. This musical heritage, predominantly transmitted through oral and heart-to-heart teachings, offers a simple yet profound pathway for the public to confront history, fostering an objective understanding and correct analysis of historical phenomena.

Cultural Significance: Qin'an Xiaoqu stands as a profound cultural legacy, embodying the culmination of cultural elements that have undergone historical and social transformations. A treasure trove of historical and cultural resources, this musical heritage authentically reflects the essence of the Chinese nation. Its musical expressions encapsulate the collective identity of both the region and the nation, showcasing their historical development in an original and captivating manner. Within the realms of cultural integration and intermingling, this intangible cultural heritage stimulates the promotion of cultural diversity, reinforcing the cultural self-confidence of both countries and nations. As such, it becomes a collective responsibility to actively protect, promote, and pass down this cherished traditional culture.

Spiritual Significance: Among the Chinese nation's cherished traditions, Qin'an Xiaoqu holds an integral place, catering to the spiritual entertainment needs of the masses. During times of adversity, the unique charm of Qin'an Xiaoqu has served as a source of inspiration, uplifting the spirits of people. This musical heritage has played a pivotal role in the historical and cultural development, instilling a sense of pride and identity among the populace. The preservation and transmission of this intangible cultural heritage of music should be a matter of importance for all sectors of society. Through an analysis of the customs, thought patterns, and values enshrined within this musical tradition, bridges are built, connecting people of diverse ethnicities, consolidating national unity, and fostering a profound sense of collective identity among the people.

Table 3 Overview of the Importance of the Preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Aspect	Significance
1. Historical	- Repository of regional and national history - Reflection of thinking and values in history
2. Cultural	- Simplified transmission of history for the public - Culmination of cultural elements over time - Reflection of Chinese nation's essence - Promotion of cultural diversity
3. Spiritual	- Source of inspiration during difficult times - Instilling pride and identity among the people - Bridging ethnicities and fostering unity

4.2. The Problems in the Transmission and Preservation of Qin 'an

The preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu, an esteemed intangible cultural heritage of music in Gansu Province, China, has garnered significant attention due to its historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. This cherished folk music carries within its melodies the essence of a region and a nation, reflecting the thoughts, emotions, and values of people across different historical periods. However, despite its significance, the preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu face several critical challenges that require immediate attention and strategic measures.

The preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu is a complex endeavor, requiring collaborative efforts from government departments, musicians, folk clubs, and individuals. The challenges outlined above demand effective strategies and measures to safeguard this cherished musical heritage and ensure its continuity for future generations. This study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis to explore the strategies and measures required for the successful transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China. By understanding these challenges and potential solutions, we can work towards preserving the cultural legacy of this treasured musical tradition.

4.3. The Strategies and measures for transmission and preservation of Qin 'an Xiaoqu

The preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage hold immense importance in safeguarding the history, culture, and spiritual essence of a region and its people. One such treasured cultural heritage is "Qin'an Xiaoqu," a traditional folk music form that thrives in Gansu Province, China. This musical art not only reflects the unique regional characteristics but also encapsulates the historical journey and values of the Chinese nation. As a significant part of the



intangible cultural heritage of music, the preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu demand utmost attention and concerted efforts.

Table 4 Overview of Problems in the Transmission and Preservation of Qin 'an Xiaoqu.

Problem	Description
1. Weak Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of public awareness and active involvement - Insufficient understanding of the importance - Passive attitude towards preservation
2. Shortage of Preservation Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited financial support for preservation efforts - Insufficient government support and infrastructure - Low income and remuneration for preservation personnel
3. Inheritor Fault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decrease in the number of skilled musicians - Few successors and Qupai faces disappearing - Impact of urbanization on cultural heritage
4. Deterioration of Music Cultural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing social atmosphere and living customs - Decline in interest and appreciation of Qin 'an Xiaoqu - Persecution of the survival of intangible heritage
5. Lack of Interest and Enthusiasm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of pop music on the younger generation - Perceived lack of financial viability in learning - Diminished value and recognition of cultural heritage
6. Incomplete Cycle in School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a comprehensive teaching and learning cycle - Inability to achieve quality assurance and effectiveness - Insufficient adaptability to social needs
7. Light Attention to Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on declaration and neglect of management - Disproportionate allocation of resources - Lack of quantitative indicators for evaluation
8. Imperfect System and Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural Level Limited professional singing teams and complex groups - Low cultural level among groups involved - Reliance on traditional oral and heart teaching

In this research, we delve into three critical aspects of Qin'an Xiaoqu's preservation and transmission. First, we explore the historical significance of this musical heritage, analyzing its music style, lyrics, and other elements that offer profound insights into the people's way of thinking, emotions, and values in specific historical contexts. Additionally, we discuss its cultural significance, which stems from the cultural elements embedded in the process of historical and social changes, reflecting the true essence of the region and its people. Lastly, we highlight the spiritual significance of Qin'an Xiaoqu, as it serves as an integral part of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, meeting the spiritual entertainment needs of the masses and inspiring them from a spiritual level.

However, despite its cultural and historical importance, Qin'an Xiaoqu faces numerous challenges in its transmission and preservation. These challenges warrant immediate attention and effective solutions to ensure its continuity for generations to come. One of the primary obstacles is the weak awareness of transmission and preservation among the residents, particularly in remote areas like Qin'an. The lack of understanding and involvement of local communities' hampers preservation efforts, necessitating the promotion of awareness and active participation in protecting this intangible cultural heritage.

Another significant issue is the shortage of preservation funds, particularly in economically disadvantaged regions like Qin'an County. The lack of financial support impedes the effective survey, preservation, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the shortage of professional musicians and inheritors poses a significant threat to the continuous transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu. The declining number of skilled musicians, coupled with the migration of younger generations to urban areas for better opportunities, leaves the heritage vulnerable to extinction.

Additionally, the music cultural environment in ethnic areas is deteriorating due to the influx of foreign cultures and changing social attitudes. The younger generation's declining interest in learning Qin'an Xiaoqu and the absence of a complete cycle in school education add to the preservation challenges. Moreover, the inadequate support for musicians and the lack of a cohesive preservation organization further exacerbates the situation.

To address these pressing challenges, this research focuses on several strategies and measures for the effective transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu. Documentation plays a vital role, and efforts must be made to cultivate professional talents in intangible cultural heritage archives. Preservation measures should be strengthened to prevent damage or loss of precious original archives. Transmission efforts can be enhanced through school, family, and social education. Additionally, the protection of musicians through financial support, regular medical check-ups, and professional title evaluation will incentivize their active involvement in preserving this heritage. The establishment of a comprehensive training organization will also attract young talent to participate in the transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Table 5 Strategies and measures for the transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

Topic	Content
1. Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultivation of professional intangible cultural heritage archives talents - Unifying filing standards and coordination policies
2. Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Census and assessment of intangible cultural heritage archives - Emphasis on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage archives - Improving preservation mechanism and technical support - Preventing damage or loss of original archives
3. Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School education transmission through various media and activities - Encouraging family education transmission and cultural immersion - Promoting social education transmission through community involvement
4. Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilizing festival activities, performances, and media to deepen public understanding - Popularizing intangible cultural heritage through educational materials and curricula
5. Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing subsidies and support for musicians' livelihoods - Regular medical check-ups for musicians' well-being - Evaluating professional titles to incentivize progress - Cultivating new generation of musicians and transmission teams

In conclusion: Application of communication, ethnomusicology, and sociology in research for better preservation and transmission of Qin'an Xiaoqu.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate the current state of transmission and conservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music in Gansu, China. Through diverse qualitative methodologies, from field observations to in-depth interviews, the study has encapsulated a comprehensive perspective on the cultural context and dynamics that encircle Qin'an Xiaoqu. Consistent with ethnomusicology theory, the study emphasizes exploring Qin'an Xiaoqu as a living cultural heritage shaped by historical, social, and cultural processes. Ethnomusicology views music as a dynamic and evolving cultural expression, intertwined with the communities in which it thrives (Solís 2004). By conducting ethnographic observations, participant observations, and in-depth interviews with key informants, the research captures the lived experiences, social contexts, and cultural meanings associated with this musical tradition.

A significant finding of this research is the confluence between the extant literature and the empirical data gathered. The literature delineates Qin'an Xiaoqu as not only a musical reservoir but also a mirror of China's cultural ethos (Andrea 2014; Ho 2018). By synthesizing information from the literature analysis, the study contextualizes the preservation and transmission challenges faced by this intangible cultural heritage.

The research methods utilized in the study, including interviews, observations, and literature analysis, align with the research scope and objective. By engaging with key informants such as musicians, folk artists, cultural experts, and local residents, the study gains valuable insights into the musical characteristics, historical significance, cultural relevance, and preservation challenges of Qin'an Xiaoqu. The comprehensive approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding the transmission and preservation of this treasured musical legacy.

The research findings demonstrate the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of Qin'an Xiaoqu, which highlights the importance of its preservation efforts. The challenges hindering the successful transmission and preservation of Qin'an Xiaoqu, including weak awareness, shortage of preservation funds, lack of successors, changing cultural environment, and declining interest among the younger generation, have been comprehensively addressed. The research identifies strategies and measures that can effectively safeguard and promote the continuity of this cherished intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusively, the intricacies surrounding the Qin'an Xiaoqu folk music's transmission and preservation aren't just an academic inquiry but hold the promise of an actionable blueprint for future strategies. These findings aren't merely academic annotations but a clarion call for an integrated approach, bringing together governments, communities, and artists. The research stands as both a testament to the inexorable spirit of Qin'an Xiaoqu and a beacon for its sustainable future, hoping that the melodies of Qin'an Xiaoqu, with the collective endeavor, will continue to echo through the annals of time, epitomizing the indomitable spirit of the Chinese ethos (Zheng 2010; Nyíri 2011).

Ethical considerations

This study included interviews with essential participants who underwent supervision and provided informed consent. The informed consent process comprehensively elucidated the study's goals, methodologies, and confidentiality measures, as well as the potential advantages and risks associated with their participation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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