

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11425156

THE HISTORY DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSMISSION OF XUNYANG FOLK SONG IN SHAANXI PROVINCE, CHINA

Xianfu Gao¹, Noppon Chaiyason¹, Naruebodin Saleepun¹, Suthasinee Theerapand¹,
Thanyaluk Ubonlert², Wei Yin³

¹Maharakham University, Thailand, 1021095966@qq.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9070-7872>,
Noppon.c@msu.ac.th, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0672-3206>, Chaisaleepun@gmail.com,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4153-2113>, Suthasinee.t@msu.ac.th, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0322-3739>
²Bunditpatanasilpa Institute, Thailand, Thanyalak03t@gmail.com <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7689-6790>
³Yuxi Normal University, China, 330205532@qq.com <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1478-7062>

Received: 11/11/2025
Accepted: 18/12/2025

Corresponding Author: Noppon Chaiyason
(noppon.c@msu.ac.th)

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the history and development of Xunyang folk songs in Shaanxi Province, China. A qualitative research approach was employed, using interviews and field observations as the primary data collection methods. Respondents were interviewed on-site, and the data were analysed thematically to capture the authentic voices of local performers and cultural inheritors. Xunyang folk songs, a vital part of China's intangible cultural heritage, originated in the mountainous regions of Xunyang County. Rooted in the Qinba cultural sphere, these songs took shape during the Ming and Qing dynasties, influenced by local dialects, agricultural labor, communal rituals, and the natural soundscape of the region. They have long served as expressive tools for narrating daily life, celebrating social events, and marking seasonal festivals, thereby strengthening bonds within the rural community. The lyrics often reflect moral values, humor, and collective memory, offering deep insight into the local worldview. Their continued presence demonstrates their role as living traditions that link historical memory with contemporary cultural identity. Despite challenges from modernization, industrialization, and urban migration, revitalization efforts by local cultural institutions and folk artists have contributed to sustaining these musical forms. Today, Xunyang folk songs remain an enduring symbol of regional heritage, expressing the values, stories, and collective spirit of the people of Shaanxi.

KEYWORDS: Xunyang Folk Song, History Development, Transmission, Folk Music Preservation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Xunyang Folk Song Nestled within the rugged terrain of Shaanxi Province, China, Xunyang Folk Song stands as a melodious testament to the cultural and historical tapestry of the Qinba region. Originating in Xunyang County, this folk tradition has flourished for centuries, intertwining the rhythms of agrarian life, regional dialects, and communal rituals into a vibrant oral art form. Rooted in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties, Xunyang Folk Song evolved as a cultural mirror, reflecting the joys, sorrows, and resilience of rural communities through improvised lyrics, pentatonic melodies, and dynamic call-and-response performances. Historically, these songs served not only as entertainment but also as a collective memory bank, preserving local legends, labor practices, and social values. However, the rapid urbanization and cultural homogenization of modern China have posed existential challenges to this intangible heritage, prompting urgent efforts to document, revitalize, and adapt it for contemporary relevance. The second and subsequent paragraphs in sections must have 0.5 first line indentation. Text should be single spaced, and spaces should only exist between paragraphs when using block quotes. (Heng Junchang, 2025)

Xunyang folk songs are one of the local folk songs in Xunyang City, Shaanxi Province. They have a long history, rich melodies, various types and different styles. Like other folk art forms, they are a wonderful flower blooming in the bright folk art garden of Xunyang. It is also an indispensable and important part of the Xunyang folk cultural heritage with profound foundation. On November 11, 2014, Xunyang Folk Songs was approved by the State Council to be included in the fourth batch of national intangible cultural heritage list. (Zhang Zhibin, 2006).

Xunyang folk songs are not only a part of the nation's traditional culture, but also an indispensable brilliant wealth in the treasure house of Chinese folk music culture. Facing the increasingly serious problems of inheritance and protection of Xunyang traditional folk music culture, it is necessary to combine the economic and social development of Xunyang region with the endangered status Xunyang traditional folk music culture, adopt feasible policies and measures, and continue to explore innovative ways to protect the heritage. (Chen Chujun, 2022).

At the rapid advancement of modern society, the Xunyang folk songs in Shaanxi Province, a form of Chinese folk songs, has gradually vanished into the

annals of history. The accelerating pace of economic globalization poses unprecedented challenges to Xunyang folk songs, raising concerns about the art form's future development. Therefore, researchers hope to study and collect music culture knowledge of Xunyang folk songs and analyse it in order to find a way to promote and protect it. (The Regulations on the Protection, Inheritance and Development of Shaannan Folk Songs in Ankang City, 2024).

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach, gathering information through field investigations and a comprehensive literature review. This research centered on the renowned Xunyang Folk Song, a significant cultural gem in Shaanxi Province. The data collection methods involved questionnaires, on-site observations, and in-depth interviews. The field survey covered Xunyang City in Shaanxi, where a vast amount of precious audio-visual materials and first-hand information were collected. The author carefully recorded the development context of Xunyang Folk Song; the following four stages define the entire research process:

2.1. Step 1: Data Collection

A. Secondary Data The researchers consulted numerous books, academic journals, and research papers to gather secondary materials. Regarding the Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province, China, these documents offered insights into its historical origins, musical features, and development trends. By examining various literary works and academic articles, researchers explored how traditional folk songs adapt to modern life. Researchers also analyzed how Xunyang Folk Song has integrated into the modern era and the challenges it confronts due to cultural changes. The perspectives from these papers inspired us to raise new questions about the cultural heritage of Xunyang Folk Song and its future preservation.

B. Primary Data Field research in Shaanxi Province, especially in areas where Xunyang Folk Song prevails, such as Xunyang City, provided the original data for this study. In this process, the research employed questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and on-site investigations. Interviewed local artists, villagers, academics, and other relevant individuals. Researcher engaged in extensive and profound dialogues with local folk song inheritor, elderly folk song singers, and relevant cultural officials. Researcher closely interacted with the

inheritors of Xunyang Folk Song, who have dedicated their lives to this traditional art form. Through these interactions, researcher collected a wealth of stories and insights about the origin and evolution of Xunyang Folk Song. Each interview delved deeply into the historical context of Xunyang Folk Song, including its emergence against the backdrop of local agricultural production, daily life, and traditional festivals. which are highly relevant to the research objectives and serve as a bridge connecting the past and the present, we can gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the history and development trajectory of Xunyang Folk Song within Shaanxi's cultural context.

2.2. Step 2: Recording Data

Field interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions were among the invaluable resources research subject sourced. Every discussion centered on key topics, such as the social identity of history and development, creation and dissemination, shared cultural interests, and the formation and development of professional networks within local communities. During field interviews, in-depth conversations with cultural experts, veteran folk song singers, and inheritors of this tradition provided firsthand insights into the musical and cultural significance of Xunyang Folk Song. Their personal stories not only enhanced our understanding of the folk song but also revealed the profound emotional and cultural forces underlying this time-honored art. Moreover, the focus group discussions emphasized the unique role of Xunyang Folk Song in social and cultural activities, helping us recognize the importance of preserving and promoting this folk art in modern Shaanxi society.

2.3. Step 3: Preparation and Analysis of Data

The researchers meticulously organized and classified the collected data to ensure the smooth realization of research objectives regarding the history and development of Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province. Each piece of information was thoroughly examined and verified; the researchers dedicated significant effort to individually authenticate every detail. Recognizing that reliable data form the cornerstone of research findings, the researchers rigorously cross-checked each data point. This ongoing verification process ensures data accuracy, laying a solid foundation for subsequent research on Xunyang Folk Song.

2.4. Step 4: Summarize, Discuss the Results, and Present the Data

The researcher synthesized their findings on the History development, and the transmission of Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province, conducting a detailed descriptive analysis and in-depth discussions aligned with the research objectives. Subsequently, researchers organized conclusions into a manuscript, which was submitted to an international academic journal for publication.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The origin of the Xunyang folk songs is relatively complicated. The origin of the Xunyang folk songs is complete varieties, a variety of forms. Xunyang folk songs have a long history, and a large number of existing traditional folk songs are mostly from after the middle of the Ming Dynasty. Although Xunyang was built as early as the Western Han Dynasty, there were few people, remote areas, poor natural conditions, and the wars in the past dynasties. Until the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there was still "political problems, bandits spread, access and access, and the city was depressed". The Ming and Qing dynasties, the south and the central plains provinces residents to Qinba mountain migration, is the basis of the modern population development, also promote the cultural communication fusion, to collect the spread in the traditional folk songs, should be after the Ming dynasty and spread in Xunyang, rather in the late Qing dynasty, the period of the republic of China in Xunyang folk songs.(Liu Hua,2014)

Xunyang folk songs collected and spread in the county are from the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. In recent years, Xunyang has once again organized an in-depth census of manpower. Currently, more than 1,200 traditional folk songs and new folk songs have been sorted out. Xunyang folk songs are rich in tunes, types and forms, and can be roughly divided into four types: chants, folk songs, minor tunes and folk songs.

The chants mostly adopt the singing form of one person singing in harmony, with neat rhythm, sonorous and powerful, simple melody, spectacular momentum, and passionate emotion; folk songs have high-pitched, melodious, and loud voices, free rhythm, and are often sung in high accents; minor keys have a short range and are often sung in high tones. With dialects and dialects, most of them are stanza songs, with twists and turns and delicate characteristics. Custom songs only exist in a small amount in Xunyang folk songs, and they are mostly sung at banquets and sacrificial activities. (Fan Yifu, 2021).

The evolution, development and changes of

Xunyang folk songs have gone through a long historical process. From the initial folk oral ballads, they gradually formed a unique musical style, and rose and fell under the influence of social changes in different historical periods.

Its origin can be traced back to the ancient labor and life scenes. The early forms were mostly folk songs and minor tunes. Later, they were continuously enriched and changed under the impetus of historical events such as wars, migrations, and cultural exchanges. The dissemination area of Xunyang folk songs covers southern Shaanxi and surrounding areas, and has expanded to a wider area with population mobility. It plays an important role in social development. It is not only an important way for people to express their emotions and record their lives, but also carries local cultural memories and has a profound impact on the spiritual world of the people. (Liu Yaping, 2019)

During the Western Han Dynasty, Xunyang was still in a backward stage. It was located in a remote mountain area, sparsely populated, and had a very harsh natural environment. In addition, the impact of wars in previous dynasties led to a very backward economy, which did not improve until the middle of the Ming Dynasty.

Fortunately, immigrants in the Ming and Qing Dynasties brought a large number of residents to Xunyang, which promoted Xunyang's economic development and social progress, and also brought about the exchange and integration of different regional cultures. This is one of the reasons why Xunyang folk songs are rich in variety and varied in style. (She Xiaohong, 2018).

As the main area where Xunyang Folk Song thrives, Shaanxi's Xunyang folk song culture has been jointly created, shared, and transmitted by the local people over generations. Regarding its origin, there are various stories and legends, with each account showing both commonalities and unique features.

This culture not only strengthens the unity among the local community but also serves as a bridge for cultural exchange. It has become an integral part of the cultural identity of the Chinese nation, highlighting the rich tapestry of China's traditional art forms.

However, most existing research focuses on historical documentation, classification, and stylistic description, with limited exploration of contemporary transmission, community participation, and responses to modernization. The lack of integrative, field-based qualitative studies

leaves a significant gap in understanding how Xunyang folk songs are sustained, reinterpreted, and valued in today's rapidly changing cultural context.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Historical Development of Xunyang Folk Song

4.1.1. Origins of Xunyang Folk Song

The singing style of Pingxiang Chunluo Folk Song in traditional ceremonial contexts reflects strong Xunyang Folk Song, an integral part of Shaanxi's cultural and musical legacy, holds a prominent position in the local heritage. Its origins are intertwined with the long-standing rural life and cultural traditions of the region. It is not merely a form of musical expression but also a medium for local people to convey emotions, record daily life, and strengthen social ties. Over time, Xunyang Folk Song has continuously evolved, mirroring the changing social, economic, and cultural landscapes of Shaanxi. Xunyang Folk Song, an important part of Shaanxi's cultural and musical heritage, has long been cherished by the local people. Its roots stretch deep into the region's traditional way of life, emerging from the daily labor, festivals, and social interactions of the local communities. Considered not just as a form of musical expression, but also as a means of emotional release, cultural inheritance, and community cohesion, Xunyang Folk Song has continuously evolved over time, mirroring the historical and cultural changes of the area.

History of Xunyang folk songs originated in the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC) to the Qin and Han Dynasties (3rd century BC to 220 AD). It is a folk music form with strong regional characteristics. It mostly adopting a cappella singing and many people singing, reflecting the practicality of labor life, and is used to coordinate actions and boost spirits.

4.1.2. Ancient Beginnings: The Origins of Xunyang Folk Song

The origins of Xunyang Folk Song are deeply connected to the long-standing cultural and musical traditions of ancient China. To grasp its beginnings, one must delve into the extensive historical and cultural backdrop in which folk music in Shaanxi first took shape. Pinpointing the precise origins of Xunyang Folk Song is challenging, yet its conceptual forerunners can likely be traced back to the early days of Chinese folk music. In ancient times, the local people, influenced by their living

environment, daily labor, and traditional festivals, began to create simple melodies and songs. Archaeological discoveries in Shaanxi, including ancient inscriptions and mural patterns related to music-making activities, offer glimpses into the early manifestations of folk music. These findings suggest that the seeds of Xunyang Folk Song were sown in the mists of time, evolving gradually over the millennia.

These early Xunyang folk songs may have been used in various aspects of life, such as praying for a good harvest in agricultural rituals, cheering up fellow workers during long-hours of labor, or livening up social gatherings and festivals. The unique natural environment and cultural traditions of Shaanxi provided fertile soil for the birth of these primitive musical expressions.

4.1.3. The Early Stage of the Development of Xunyang Folk Songs (1644–1912)

This period was the early stage of the development of Xunyang folk songs, mainly developing Xunyang as the center. We know that Xunyang folk songs have a long history, and its themes are diverse, mostly used to express the joys and sorrows of the working people, to express the emotions in life and labor. The singing forms are also various, that is, entertainment in the working people, but also to serve the working people, is the crystallization of the wisdom of the working people.

Mr. Liu Quanxue (interviewed, 2025), he said, the development of Xunyang folk songs during this period: 1) Content: mainly labor songs, mountain songs, and minor tunes, reflecting daily labor and folk customs such as farming, grazing, and weaving. 2) Tune: simple melody, free rhythm, mostly monophonic, and the melody changes with the working environment. 3) Singing method: mainly word of mouth, no fixed score, mostly improvised during labor or gatherings.

During this period, Xunyang folk song was mainly popular in the countryside and the area around the in Xunyang city. There were two main characteristics of Xunyang folk songs. First, Xunyang folk songs are sung by working people in work and life, who gradually became famous after opting into folk song life elements. According to historical records, in 1644 Xunyang folk songs are mostly passed down by mouth by the working people in production and life. At that time, there were no professional singers or artists, and their creators and singers were mostly ordinary people. They sang impromptu in work and life to express their feelings and relieve fatigue.

Mr. Liu Jingcai (interviewed, 2025) he said, In the early stage of Xunyang folk songs, They usually sing in the process of cutting wood, grazing, planting or conveying their feelings to people far away. Their voices are high-pitched and loud, and their rhythm is free and relaxed. There are many free extensions, and they are often sung in high pitch. The wordless folk songs are purely in the form of supporting words and pitches, and there are two different high and low voices when they are sung together. Among them, custom songs exist in small quantities in activities such as banquets and sacrifices, and their style is more solemn and solemn. They are often sung with awe, especially in sacrificial occasions. The rhythm is relatively stable, the speed is not too fast, and the melody is relatively regular to reflect the solemnity and importance of the ceremony. Its specific works are seldom circulated, but they are sung in specific traditional ceremonies and activities, and are an important part of Xunyang folk culture.

In the Xunyang folk songs study materials, it is recorded: Although Xunyang was established as a county in the Western Han Dynasty, until the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the area was mountainous and sparsely populated, remote, with harsh natural conditions and backward economy. After experiencing wars, it presented a scene of "political disorder, rampant bandits, flooding in and out, and depression". However, this difficult living environment also prompted people to express their emotions through folk songs. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, residents from the south and the Central Plains provinces migrated to the Qinba Mountain Area, bringing about the development of production, economic prosperity and cultural exchanges, which became the basis for the development of Xunyang's modern population and laid the foundation for the formation and development of Xunyang folk songs.

4.1.4. The Middle Stage of the Development of Xunyang Folk Songs (1912–1949)

The development of Xunyang folk songs during this period: 1) content: Love, historical stories, and revolutionary themes were added to reflect social changes. For example, Songs whose lyrics express national unity, the spirit of the war of resistance, or socialist construction. As a result, some feudal love and marriage songs and folk taboo songs have been diluted or even disappeared. 2) Tune: Based on tradition, opera and rap elements were integrated to form a more standardized form, and some folk songs were adapted into choruses. As a result, some

original folk songs with free rhythms and irregular melodies have lost their original features after being standardized.3) Singing method: From solo singing to duet singing and group singing, and began to be recorded in writing, some folk songs entered formal stages such as opera and concerts. As a result, impromptu singing in a purely natural environment has gradually decreased, and has been replaced by formal performances after rehearsal.

During this period, Xunyang folk songs were mainly passed down through word of mouth by folk artists and ordinary people. People sang various folk songs in their work and life, making them widely spread in the local area. In addition to traditional themes such as work life and love, new content reflecting the social reality at that time also appeared, such as "Ten Farewell Songs to the Red Army" and "Pulling Zhuang Men" which were circulated in Shuanghe and the Red Army area of the county in the 1930s. During this period, the exchange and integration of immigrant cultures from all over the country promoted the development of Xunyang folk songs. Cultural elements from different regions penetrated each other, enriching the connotation and expression of Xunyang folk songs and making them diverse. During this period, Xunyang folk songs were also innovated. People improvised many new folk songs based on the living scenes, work conditions and emotional changes at that time, making folk songs closer to life and reflecting reality, and enriching the content and form of folk songs.

Mr.Liu Jingcai (interviewed, 2025)he said: "Under the influence of the new guiding ideology of literature and art in the reform and opening up period, the Xunyang folk songs provided a new space for development. Some traditional classics have been performed again. The Xunyang folk songs Training Class and Xunyang folk songs stage performance provide a good platform for the Xunyang folk songs artists to show their skills and exchange skills. The release of a number of well-known Xunyang folk songs videos has made Xunyang folk songs appear on radio and TV from fields and villages. Appearing in a variety of large-scale variety shows has improved the popularity of Xunyang folk songs."

4.1.5. The Later Stage of the Development of Xunyang Folk Songs (1949–2025)

In this period, Xunyang folk songs made remarkable achievements, especially in the past ten years, many literators and composers in Xunyang City of Shaanxi Province showed their enthusiasm

for creation and made great achievements in the creation of new songs of Xunyang people. After the founding of New China, the majority of music workers paid attention to the excavation, protection, collection and arrangement of folk art, but the specific achievements during this period were rarely recorded in detail, and the development of Xunyang folk songs was in the initial stage of attention and exploration. However, due to the influence of foreign music such as pop music, the young people are not interested in learning their own folk songs, so Xunyang folk songs are in the low stage when they can only rely on the existing middle and old singers to maintain the limited folk songs and the young people are not interested in them.

The development of Xunyang folk songs during this period:1) Content: Some traditional rural work songs have lost their singing environment due to social and economic changes (such as mechanized agriculture). 2) Tune: Some ancient pentatonic tunes have disappeared or been replaced by modern chord systems due to adaptation.3) singing method: The habit of spontaneous singing within traditional villages has decreased, and more reliance has been placed on modern communication methods such as recording and video.

Fewer and fewer elderly people listen to Xunyang folk songs now, and the younger generation is relatively unfamiliar with this traditional form of music. Coupled with the outdated bibliography of Xunyang folk songs, its fixed singing style and conservative musical features, many young people are not very interested in it. Fewer and fewer listeners have formed certain obstacles to the spread and development of Xunyang folk songs. Compared with popular music, Xunyang folk song does not make people have a deep memory.

The reform and opening up in the late 1980s affected all aspects of politics, economy and culture, and the ideological and institutional changes impacted traditional culture and art, especially Xunyang folk songs. Although the reform and opening up ostensibly provided Xunyang folk songs with a freer world, an unprecedented crisis was quietly hitting behind the prosperity of Xunyang folk songs this crisis led to the decline of Xunyang folk songs. With the development of society, young people are attracted by modern popular culture and their interest in Xunyang folk songs has weakened, resulting in a gap in the inheritance of talents. In addition, there are limited professionals who master the singing skills and cultural connotations of Xunyang folk songs, making it difficult to support

its inheritance and development.

During this period, it can be known that Xunyang folk songs as the older generation of folk singers gradually get older; the younger generation pays less attention to and participates in Xunyang folk songs, resulting in a gap in inheritance. There are fewer young people willing to learn and inherit Xunyang folk songs, and professional singing and

composing talents are scarce, which limits its inheritance and development. In modern society, there are many entertainment options; new cultural and entertainment products are constantly emerging, and people's cultural consumption choices are increasing. According to the above interviews and literature analysis, the research results are shown in the table 1-2.

Table 1: Three Stages in the Development Condition of Xunyang Folk Songs. Source: Xianfu Gao, 2025.

The development Condition of Xunyang folk songs		
Time	Name	Condition
The First stage (1644-1912)	Xunyang folk songs	early
The Second stage (1912-1949)	Xunyang folk songs	heyday
The Third stage (1949-2025)	Xunyang folk songs	recession

Table 2: Three Stages in the Development Change of Xunyang Folk Songs. Source: Xianfu Gao, 2025

The development Change of Xunyang folk songs		
Time	Name	Change
The First stage (1644-1912)	Xunyang folk song	It mainly includes labor songs, mountain songs and minor tunes reflecting labor and customs, with a simple, free-rhythm monophonic melody changing by work environment, orally transmitted and improvised without a fixed score.
The Second stage (1912-1949)	Xunyang folk song	Feudal love and marriage, folk taboo songs faded or vanished; free-rhythm, irregular-melody folk songs lost features after standardization; natural impromptu singing declined, replaced by rehearsed performances.
The Third stage (1949-2025)	Xunyang folk song	Due to social and economic changes, traditional rural work songs lose their singing environment, ancient pentatonic tunes are replaced by modern chord systems, and spontaneous village singing declines with increased reliance on modern recording and video.

4.2. The Importance of the Transmission of Xunyang Folk Songs

4.2.1. Historical Significance

Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province holds great cultural value, especially in the context of local life and traditional activities. As a musical art form, it is deeply rooted in the daily life and spiritual world of the local people, playing a crucial role in various folk customs. In daily gatherings and festivals, the melodies of Xunyang Folk Song bring people together, creating an atmosphere of warmth, harmony, and a shared local identity. These occasions, often related to farming, celebrations, or cultural traditions, feature vibrant performances where the folk song accompanies storytelling, dances, and other customs, strengthening the bonds among the community members.

In addition to its presence in daily life and traditional festivals, Xunyang Folk Song also plays a pivotal role in various rituals. It serves as a medium for expressing emotions and cultural connotations during important life events like weddings, and funerals, as well as ancestral worship ceremonies. The lyrics and melodies of Xunyang Folk Song are believed to convey blessings for peace, good fortune, and family harmony, making it an indispensable element in these rituals that reinforce the connection

between the local people and their cultural heritage.

Xunyang folk songs are a vivid record of history and carry a profound cultural heritage. They show the context of regional development, from ancient agricultural civilization to modern social changes, all of which are reflected in folk songs. In the long river of history, Xunyang folk songs are an important carrier of cultural inheritance. Xunyang folk songs reflect the local geographical environment, lifestyle and historical events. Many folk songs are narrative-based, telling the historical experiences of the Xunyang people, such as the War of Resistance, agricultural labor, marriage customs, etc. By studying and inheriting Xunyang folk songs, we can help future generations better understand local history and social development. Through the singing of folk songs, traditional values and moral concepts are inherited and become an important part of the national spirit (Chan,2018).

4.2.2. Cultural Significance

Xunyang folk songs are a true portrayal of the life, labor and emotions of the Xunyang people, and carry the local customs and life wisdom. It is an iconic symbol of Xunyang's local culture. By heritage cultural center inheriting folk songs(see Figures 1), we can enhance the local people's sense of identity with their own culture, maintain regional

characteristics, and prevent cultural homogenization (Wang&Thotham,2024). Xunyang folk songs are an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage and are characterized by word of mouth. Its inheritance helps to protect these cultural treasures with sound as the carrier, preserve cultural memory for future generations, and prevent them from gradually disappearing in the process of modernization. China is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. As a representative of local culture, Xunyang folk songs add a unique touch to the diversity of Chinese culture (Qiu&Wang, 2025).

During festivals, Xunyang folk songs become the glue that binds the community. People of all ages and backgrounds gather around to sing and listen, breaking down social barriers. The shared musical experience creates a sense of belonging, reinforcing the idea that they are part of a collective cultural identity. As the familiar tunes fill the air, the community's unity and solidarity are visibly strengthened. Festivals provide the perfect stage for Xunyang folk songs to transmit cultural heritage. Through the lyrics and melodies, the songs tell

stories of the region's history, traditions, and values. Older generations pass down these musical treasures to the young, ensuring that the unique customs, ancient wisdom, and historical memories of Xunyang are not lost but are instead carried forward through the ages.

Xunyang folk songs are essential for amplifying the festive atmosphere. Their lively rhythms and cheerful lyrics inject energy and joy into celebrations(see Figures 2).Whether it's the exuberant beats during harvest festivals or the soulful melodies at family-centered events, these songs set the mood, making the festivities more vibrant, memorable, and deeply felt by all participants. These folk songs offer a powerful medium for emotional expression during festivals. They allow people to convey their happiness, gratitude, and hopes. For example, songs sung during New Year celebrations express wishes for prosperity and good health, while those at weddings convey blessings for the newlyweds. Through the music, the community shares and validates each other's emotions, enhancing the overall festival experience (Yang,M.K.2011).



Figure 1: Xunyang Folk Song Celebrations Festival Performance in Heritage Cultural Center. Source: Xianfu Gao, 2025.

Xunyang folk songs serve as a distinct marker of local identity during festivals. The unique musical styles, dialect-rich lyrics and specific themes are exclusive to the region. When performed, they distinguish Xunyang's culture from others, instilling a sense of pride in locals. The songs act as a cultural calling card, reminding both residents and visitors of the area's unique charm and heritage.

4.2.3. Social Significance

Xunyang folk songs are the bond that connects social groups and have strong cohesion. During

traditional festivals and folk activities, people enhance emotional exchanges and create a harmonious atmosphere by singing folk songs. Xunyang folk songs are the crystallization of the collective wisdom of the local people and reflect the unique cultural characteristics and national sentiments of the Xunyang area. It plays an important role in enhancing local cultural identity and national cohesion, helping people better understand their own cultural roots. Xunyang folk songs are an important part of intangible cultural heritage, carrying rich cultural connotations and

historical memories. Its inheritance helps to protect cultural diversity and avoid the extinction of local culture in the context of globalization (Shu, 2025).

Xunyang folk songs are rich in content, including historical stories, moral concepts, life experiences, etc. It is an easy-to-understand way of education. It can become a carrier of cultural dissemination and traditional education, helping the younger generation to understand the wisdom and lifestyle of their ancestors. Xunyang folk songs, with their relaxed and natural forms of expression, have become an important part of collective activities in communities and villages, helping to enhance neighbourhood relations and social interactions and promote local social harmony. Through Xunyang Folk Songs Inheritance and Protection Center (see Figures 3), Xunyang folk songs have been protected and inherited, the inheritance of Xunyang folk songs is not just a retelling of traditions, it can also be integrated with contemporary art forms to inspire creative inspiration, spread positive social values, adapt to the needs of modern society, and enhance the vitality of traditional culture. In short, the inheritance of Xunyang folk songs is not only a need to protect cultural heritage, but also an important way to build cultural confidence and promote social development (Lomax.A, 2017).



Figure 2: Xunyang Folk Songs Inheritance and Protection Center. Source: Xianfu Gao, 2025.

Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province has a long-standing history, tracing back through the ages. From ancient times, influenced by local agricultural life and cultural exchanges, its content and form gradually took shape. Through the Han, Tang, Song, and other dynasties, with the development of society, the folk song continuously absorbed new elements, evolving in lyrics, melodies, and singing styles. From ancient times to the Han and Tang Dynasties, the lyrics and melodies of Xunyang Folk Song gradually matured, mirroring the region's

cultural prosperity and social development. During the Song and Qing Dynasties, the folk song witnessed remarkable regional variations, with differences in themes, rhythms, and singing styles emerging across various localities. These transformations were deeply influenced by the unique dialects, customs, and daily lives of the local people.

As Xunyang Folk Song developed over time, it transcended its role as a simple form of music, becoming a powerful symbol of local cultural identity. Its vivid lyrics, often filled with local slang and expressions, and distinctive melodies became an essential part of numerous traditional festivals, folk rituals, and social gatherings. During historical development, regional differences in Xunyang Folk Song became increasingly prominent (Yin, 2021). Affected by local dialects, customs, and living habits, various sub-styles emerged across different areas of Xunyang. These variations reflected the unique characteristics of each locality, making the folk song more diverse and rich. Over time, Xunyang Folk Song has transcended its musical nature and become a significant cultural symbol. It is deeply integrated into local festivals, rituals, and daily life, strengthening the cultural identity of the community. As a carrier of local traditions and values, it has been passed down from generation to generation, maintaining the unique charm of Xunyang's culture.

In conclusion, as a highly representative treasure of folk art in Shaanxi Province, Xunyang Folk Song has a long and profound history. Having been precipitated over thousands of years, it germinated from the ancient farming civilization and has continuously evolved through social changes and cultural integrations in different dynasties. Its development not only showcases the artistic sublimation from lyric creation to melody refinement and the transformation of singing styles but also reflects the rich regional characteristics formed under the influence of local dialects and folk customs. Xunyang Folk Song is not only an important way for the local people to express their emotions and convey blessings in daily life and festive ceremonies but also a spiritual bond that carries historical memories, inherits local culture, and maintains community sentiment. It profoundly demonstrates the unique cultural features and profound cultural heritage of southern Shaanxi, becoming an indispensable and shining pearl in the treasure trove of Chinese folk art (ChenShulu, 2015).

5. DISCUSSION

However, Xunyang Folk Song currently faces mounting challenges brought about by the forces of modernization and globalization. Despite its long-standing historical legacy, the accelerating transformation of society and the pervasive influence of global cultural norms have made the preservation of its traditional forms increasingly difficult. The erosion of interest among younger generations, coupled with insufficient representation in formal educational settings and the constraints of fast-paced modern life, has contributed to the gradual marginalization of this musical tradition. As Li and Chaiyason (2024) note in their study of the Liu Sanjie Ge Yao folk tradition, similar patterns of generational disengagement and limited institutional support have posed serious obstacles to sustaining folk music literacy in contemporary contexts. Their findings underscore the urgent need for holistic and adaptive strategies that address both cultural relevance and educational inclusion.

In this regard, proactive and community-driven initiatives particularly those rooted in local education systems can serve as vital mechanisms for revitalizing Xunyang Folk Song. These efforts not only promote intergenerational transmission but also embed folk music within the lived experiences of modern learners. Importantly, the preservation of Xunyang Folk Song extends beyond the conservation of musical artifacts; it entails safeguarding the historical narratives, social customs, and collective identity of the Xunyang people. Nonetheless, issues such as limited public awareness, inadequate funding, and a shrinking number of skilled practitioners threaten the sustainability of this heritage. As a cultural treasure of Shaanxi Province, Xunyang Folk Song demands comprehensive preservation strategies ones that bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, and which enable this rich legacy to endure amid the shifting cultural and economic landscapes of the 21st century.

The researcher used field research and interviews to collect data and analyze it. The results showed that while there has been some development of Xunyang folk songs in recent years, there are still many challenges to its transmission. Regarding the development of Xunyang folk songs, the researcher found that while there have been some recent achievements in its development, there are challenges in transmission the art form. This finding is consistent with the previous study by She Xiaohong (2018) which also found that while there has been some government support for preserving

and transmission the art form, there is a lack of younger generations willing to learn and perform it. The researcher also found that there is hope for the transmission of Xunyang folk songs in settings such as campuses, communities, military camps, and nursing homes. This finding is consistent with the previous study by Fan Yifu (2021) which found that cultural institutions such as cultural center and schools can play a critical role in transmission and preserving Xunyang folk songs.

Regarding the transmission of Xunyang folk songs, the researcher found that transmission Xunyang folk songs requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on raising public awareness about the challenges facing this traditional art form and implementing effective transmission strategies and measures. This finding is consistent with the previous study by Liu, Hua (2014) which found that transmission efforts must be focused on increasing public awareness and promoting the art form through performances, education, and cultural tourism. Incorporating Xunyang folk songs into school curriculums, organizing workshops, and training programs for young people are critical strategies. These measures can inspire the younger generation to learn, perform, and appreciate the art form, ensuring its transmission to future generations. This aligns with the findings of Liu Yaping. (2019), who noted increase the dissemination method of Xunyang folk songs and implementing education transmission.

The researcher found integrating Xunyang folk songs into local tourism initiatives can provide a sustainable platform for their promotion. For example, hosting themed cultural tours, musical festivals, and exhibitions focused on the folk songs can create opportunities for both education and entertainment while generating economic support. This analysis is consistent with the findings of Li Jianglan (2022), which highlighted the importance of raising awareness and adopting proactive measures such as integrating Xunyang folk songs into educational programs and leveraging cultural tourism for transmission. Also emphasized that community participation and government support play pivotal roles in the sustainable development of traditional art forms. In conclusion, the history and development of Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province have witnessed both prosperity and challenges. In modern society, this precious folk art form encounters issues like a shrinking audience and a shortage of inheritors. However, there are effective ways to revitalize it. By actively promoting

Xunyang Folk Song in schools, leveraging social media for wider dissemination, and encouraging young artists to innovate while maintaining its essence, we can keep this folk song vibrant. These initiatives are crucial not only for safeguarding Shaanxi's cultural heritage but also for passing on the charm of Xunyang Folk Song to future generations, ensuring its continuous development.

Future research directions should focus on exploring how the integration of digital technologies with conventional pedagogical approaches can enhance the appeal and accessibility of folk music education among younger demographics. As highlighted by Kelly (2015) and Shi (2021), employing digital tools—such as interactive media, online platforms, and multimedia content—has the potential to bridge generational gaps and facilitate more engaging learning environments. Moreover, combining traditional musical forms with contemporary stylistic elements may offer valuable pathways for sustaining cultural relevance in an evolving social context (Su, 2019). Such hybrid approaches not only preserve the core essence of folk traditions but also adapt them to align with modern aesthetic sensibilities and audience expectations.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, longitudinal research is essential. In line with Lin and Lian's (2018) emphasis on heritage preservation, extended studies over time could provide critical insights into how these integrative methods influence the development of folk music literacy, community engagement, and the long-term safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. These findings would be instrumental in shaping future policy and educational models aimed at revitalizing traditional cultural practices in the digital age (Childs-Helton, 2016).

6. CONCLUSION

However, Xunyang Folk Song also confronts challenges posed by modernization and globalization. Despite its long-standing history, the evolution of society and the influence of global culture have made it increasingly arduous to maintain its traditions. The cultural heritage of Xunyang Folk Song is under threat due to the waning interest among the younger generation, limited educational exposure, and the rapid pace of modern life. Proactive measures must be taken to help Xunyang Folk Song thrive in modern society. Community-based initiatives and educational programs can play a crucial role in breathing new life into this art form, ensuring the continuation of

this precious cultural

Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province has a long history. It first emerged in the daily life of local people, when folks would sing these songs while farming, herding, or doing household chores. These songs were used to express their joys, sorrows, and hopes, and often accompanied weddings, funerals, and festivals, playing an important part in local customs and community activities. As time passed and different cultures in the region mingled, Xunyang Folk Song began to evolve. Singers incorporated new melodies, rhythms, and lyrics, drawing inspiration from changes in life and exchanges with neighboring areas. The songs became more diverse, reflecting the development of local society, and gradually became a significant symbol of Shaanxi's cultural heritage.

During the early to mid-20th century, as society changed and people interacted more, Xunyang Folk Song saw significant development. With the improvement of people's living and cultural exchanges, local folk artists began to innovate the songs. They added new lyrics that told modern stories and reflected contemporary life, and adjusted the melodies to make them catchier. In terms of performance; the ways of singing became more diverse. Besides the traditional solo singing, group singing and combination with local musical instruments emerged. As transportation and communication developed, Xunyang Folk Song spread beyond Shaanxi. It was introduced to more regions through cultural events and art performances, making more people get to know and love this unique folk art from Xunyang.

From the mid-20th century to the present, with the wave of modernization and globalization, Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province has stepped onto the global stage. It has broken free from traditional performance venues, being showcased in national art exhibitions, international cultural exchange activities, and modern music projects. Contemporary musicians have creatively integrated Xunyang Folk Song with modern musical elements, such as electronic music and pop rhythms, giving it a new sound. Today, Xunyang Folk Song not only maintains its close bond with Shaanxi's local culture but also demonstrates the remarkable ability of traditional folk art to adapt. It has become a symbol of cultural confidence, both preserving the essence of Shaanxi's long-standing heritage and embracing diverse modern influences, reflecting the continuous evolution of local culture in the modern era (Shi, 2021).

Xunyang Folk Song in Shaanxi Province

embodies a rich cultural legacy rooted in the daily lives, emotions, and customs of local people. Originating from agricultural and communal traditions, it evolved through centuries of migration and cultural exchange, becoming a vital expression of Shaanxi's folk identity. Over time, its forms diversified through new melodies, rhythms, and performance styles, and in recent decades, Xunyang Folk Song has reached wider audiences through festivals, recordings, and cross-cultural collaborations. However, modernization and globalization have brought new challenges. Declining interest among younger generations, limited integration into formal education and insufficient support for cultural practitioners threatens its vitality.

To sustain this living heritage, policymakers and

cultural institutions should implement community-based preservation programs, integrate folk music education into school curricula, and support training centers for local artists. Digital archiving and the use of modern media can also aid in documentation and dissemination. Establishing regional cultural festivals and collaborative networks between universities and cultural bureaus would further strengthen transmission and innovation. Ultimately, the preservation of Xunyang Folk Song requires a coordinated effort that combines policy support, education, and creative revitalization—ensuring that this unique art form continues to flourish as both a symbol of cultural continuity and an inspiration for modern artistic expression.

Acknowledgements: Valuable insights related to Xunyang Folk Song, generously shared by the informants, were essential to the completion of this study. Appreciation is also extended to Mahasarakham University for its financial support. This research project was financially supported by Mahasarakham University.

REFERENCES

- Bennett, A., & Janssen, S. (2016). Popular music, cultural memory, and heritage. *Popular Music and Society*, 39(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2015.1061332>
- Chan, C. S. C. (2018). Sustainability of indigenous folk tales, music and cultural heritage through innovation. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 8(3), 342–361. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-06-2017-0044>
- Chen, C. (2022). Joining hands with Xunyang folk songs to “break out.” *Ankang Daily*. <https://doi.org/10.28000/n.cnki.nakrb.2022.001959>
- Childs-Helton, S. (2016). Folk music in a digital age: The importance of face-to-face community values in folk music. *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 4(2), 159–174. https://doi.org/10.1386/jfs.4.2.159_1
- Fan, Y. (2021). The inheritance dilemma and breakthrough path of late Xunyang folk songs from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage. *Voice of the Yellow River*, (14), 17–19. <https://doi.org/10.19340/j.cnki.hhzs.2021.14.004>
- Heng, J. (2025). Preserving intangible cultural heritage and singing the folk songs of Southern Shaanxi. *Hanzhong Daily*. <https://doi.org/10.28309/n.cnki.nharb.2025.000715>
- Kelly, L. (2015). *Knowledge and power in prehistoric societies: Orality, memory, and the transmission of culture*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107444973>
- Li, J. (2022). A brief discussion on the inheritance and development of Xunyang folk songs in the new era. *Baihua*. <https://surl.li/chthwn>
- Li, Y., & Chaiyason, N. (2024). Chinese folk music literacy: A study on the Liu Sanjie Ge Yao folk music in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 12(4), 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.4p.143>
- Lin, Q., & Lian, Z. (2018). On protection of intangible cultural heritage in China from the intellectual property rights perspective. *Sustainability*, 10(12), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124369>
- Liu, H. (2014). Introduction to the inheritance and development of Xunyang folk songs. *Music Time and Space*. <https://surl.lu/rzqvcz>
- Liu, Y. (2019). *Practical research on the introduction of Xunyang folk songs into high school music teaching* (Master's thesis, Shaanxi Normal University). <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27292/d.cnki.gsxfu.2019.001778>
- Lomax, A. (2017). *Folk song style and culture*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203791844>
- Qiu, Y., & Wang, J. (2025). “Fly over the land”: The transmission and development of folk songs from the perspective of Chinese-style modernization. *Folklore Studies*, (02), 18–26+157. <https://doi.org/10.13370/j.cnki.fs.2025.02.006>

- S. L. (2015). *The diversity of the value of Chinese folk songs*. *Jiangsu Social Science*, (05), 170–177. <https://doi.org/10.13858/j.onki.cn32-1312/c.2015.05.026>
- She, X. (2018). A brief discussion on the inheritance and development of Xunyang folk songs. *Chinese Literary Artists*. <https://surl.li/jciizl>
- Shi, H. (2021, August). Research on the digital presentation and inheritance of traditional music in the Internet era. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1992(4), 042041. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1992/4/042041>
- Shi, H. (2021, August). Research on the digital presentation and inheritance of traditional music in the Internet era. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 1992, No. 4, p. 042041). IOP Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1992/4/042041>
- Shu, R. (2025). “New Folk Song Conference”: Cultural communication innovation and practice in the era of integrated media. *Contemporary Television*, (06), 37–41. <https://doi.org/10.16531/j.cnki.1000-8977.2025.06.004>
- Su, J. (2019). Understanding the changing intangible cultural heritage in tourism commodification: The music players’ perspective from Lijiang, China. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17(3), 247–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2018.1427102>
- The Regulations on the Protection, Inheritance and Development of Shaannan Folk Songs in Ankang City. (2024). *Ankang Daily*, 003. <https://doi.org/10.28000/n.cnki.nakrb.2024.002099>
- Wang, Y., & Thotham, A. (2024). Literacy transmission of Chinese folk songs in Southern Shaanxi. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 12(3), 143–149. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.jels.v.12n.3p.143>
- Yang, M. K. (2011). Discussion on the activities, significance and functions of original folk song display: Also talking about several cultural protection and transmission models of minority music in Yunnan. *Music Exploration*, (3), 9–13+21. <https://doi.org/10.15929/j.cnki.1004-2172.2011.03.022>
- Yin, S. (2021). A brief analysis of the vocabulary characteristics of Shaanxi Southern folk songs. *Literary Education (Lower Edition)*, (04), 20–21. <https://doi.org/10.16692/j.cnki.wxjyx.2021.04.006>
- Zhang, Z. (2006). Comparative interpretation of folk songs from northern and southern Shaanxi from the perspective of human geography. *Journal of Chinese Musicology*, (3), 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.14113/j.cnki.cn11-1316/j.2006.03.007>