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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIBETAN DANCE MUSIC IN GANZI PREFECTURE: HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the historical development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan, China, with particular focus on two representative forms: Duixie (tap dance music) and Xianzi (string dance music). Drawing upon ethnomusicological theory and cultural ecology, the research constructs a systematic analytical framework to investigate how these traditions have evolved across three major historical periods: the Origin Period (before 1950), the Development and Prosperity Period (1950–1999), and the Transformation Period (1999–2024). Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study integrates documentary analysis, fieldwork interviews with cultural inheritors, and comparative musicological perspectives. A four-dimensional analytical framework—comprising social-cultural context, development of dance forms, transmission methods, and performance forms and venues—is applied to enable cross-period comparison and structural interpretation. The findings reveal that Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture demonstrates a dynamic process of cultural continuity through adaptation. During the Origin Period, dance music was deeply embedded in religious practices, community life, and oral transmission systems. The socialist era (1950–1999) introduced systematic state intervention, leading to processes of standardization, suppression, and subsequent institutional revival. In the contemporary period (1999–2024), marketization, digital technologies, and cultural heritage policies have transformed these traditions into hybrid cultural forms balancing authenticity, commercialization, and global dissemination. The study highlights the resilience of Tibetan dance music as an adaptive cultural system that negotiates shifting socio-political environments while maintaining core musical and cultural identities. By providing a structured historical analysis, this research contributes to ethnomusicology, cultural heritage studies, and the broader understanding of how traditional performing arts sustain continuity in the context of modernization and globalization.*

**KEYWORDS:** Tibetan Dance Music, Ganzi Prefecture, Cultural Transformation, Ethnomusicology, Intangible Cultural Heritage.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tibetan dance music constitutes an essential component of the cultural heritage of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, reflecting the integration of music, movement, and social life within Tibetan communities. Among these traditions, the dance music of Ganzi Prefecture, located in the western part of Sichuan Province on the south eastern edge of the plateau, represents a distinctive regional system shaped by its geographical environment and historical interactions (Tian, L. T., 2014). As a core area of Khampa culture, Ganzi has cultivated unique artistic forms, particularly Duixie (tap dance music) and Xianzi (string dance music), both of which have been recognized as national-level intangible cultural heritage and embody the aesthetic values and cultural identity of Tibetan society (Gesang, Q. J., 2019).

Historically, Ganzi Prefecture served as an महत्त्वपूर्ण cultural corridor along the Tea Horse Road, facilitating exchanges among Tibetan, Han, Yi, and other ethnic groups. These interactions contributed to the development of complex musical systems characterized by pentatonic modal structures, distinctive rhythmic patterns, and integrated performance practices combining music, dance, and poetry (Chen, X., & Wei, X. M., 2023). Duixie emphasizes rhythmic embodiment through coordinated footwork and six-string accompaniment, creating a composite musical texture that integrates bodily percussion and instrumental sound. In contrast, Xianzi highlights melodic expression and lyrical movement supported by erhu-based accompaniment, representing a refined artistic form that integrates poetic, musical, and choreographic elements (Gesang, M. D., 2012; Tian, L. T., 2012).

Together, these forms constitute a complementary artistic system within Khampa culture, balancing communal participation and aesthetic sophistication. Despite its rich cultural heritage, Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture faces increasing challenges in the context of modernization and globalization. Traditional transmission systems based on oral instruction, family inheritance, and community participation has been disrupted by socio-economic transformation, urban migration, and changing educational structures (Deng, T., 2023).

Furthermore, the influence of state cultural policies, tourism development, and digital media has led to processes of standardization, commercialization, and reinterpretation, raising critical concerns regarding cultural authenticity and sustainability (Juega, 2023). The decline in

intergenerational transmission and the limited engagement of younger generations in traditional practices further exacerbate the risk of cultural discontinuity.

Existing research on Tibetan music and dance has provided valuable insights into cultural background, performance contexts, and general characteristics. However, significant gaps remain. First, previous studies have not established a systematic historical periodization that links musical development with broader socio-political transformations (Yin, Z., 2021). Second, there is a lack of integrated analytical frameworks that examine dance music across multiple dimensions, including social context, artistic form, transmission systems, and performance environments. Third, insufficient attention has been given to the dynamic processes through which traditional performing arts maintain continuity while adapting to changing historical conditions, particularly in the context of Ganzi Prefecture as a representative Khampa cultural region.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture through a structured analytical approach. Drawing on theories of cultural ecology and ethnomusicology (Steward, 1955; Nettl, 2005; Rice, 2014), the research adopts a four-dimensional analytical framework—social-cultural context, development of dance forms, transmission methods, and performance forms and venues—to examine the transformation of Duixie and Xianzi across three historical periods: the Origin Period (before 1950), the Development and Prosperity Period (1950–1999), and the Transformation Period (1999–2024). Through comparative analysis across these dimensions, the study aims to reveal how Tibetan dance music sustains cultural continuity while adapting to shifting socio-political environments.

This research contributes to ethnomusicology and cultural heritage studies by providing a systematic model for understanding the historical development of traditional performing arts in transitional societies. It further offers insights into the mechanisms of cultural resilience and adaptation, highlighting how intangible cultural heritage can maintain vitality in the face of modernization, globalization, and digital transformation.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to investigate the historical development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China, with particular focus on two representative forms: Duixie (tap dance

music) and Xianzi (string dance music). A qualitative approach was adopted to enable an in-depth exploration of cultural practices, historical transformation, transmission systems, and performance contexts within their natural socio-cultural environment. This methodology is particularly suitable for ethnomusicological research, where understanding the relationship between music, culture, and society requires contextual and interpretive analysis.

### **2.1. Research Design**

The research design integrated ethnographic fieldwork with documentary and historical analysis. This study adopted a qualitative case study approach, selecting Duixie and Xianzi as representative cultural forms that embody the musical and cultural characteristics of Khampa Tibetan society in Ganzi Prefecture. The analysis was structured using a four-dimensional analytical framework, consisting of: (1) social-cultural context, (2) development of dance forms, (3) transmission methods, and (4) performance forms and venues. This framework enabled systematic examination and cross-period comparison of Tibetan dance music across three historical periods: the Origin Period (before 1950), the Development and Prosperity Period (1950–1999), and the Transformation Period (1999–2024).

The study also employed purposive sampling to select six representative traditional works (three Duixie and three Xianzi), ensuring authenticity, representativeness, and expert validation. In addition, six key cultural inheritors at national, provincial, and prefecture levels were selected as primary informants to provide authoritative insights into performance practice and transmission systems.

### **2.2. Data Collection**

Data were collected through multiple qualitative methods to ensure comprehensive and reliable analysis. The primary data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, field observation, documentary analysis, and audio-visual documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six recognized cultural inheritors, including national-, provincial-, and prefecture-level representatives, as well as local performers and cultural practitioners. The interviews focused on their experiences of learning and transmitting dance music, performance techniques, historical changes, and perspectives on current challenges and future development. Field observations were carried out in Ganzi Prefecture during 2024–2025, including

participation in cultural activities, rehearsals, educational settings, and live performances. Particular attention was given to movement patterns, musical structures, performer interactions, and audience engagement.

Documentary and literature analysis included historical archives, government policy documents, intangible cultural heritage records, and scholarly publications related to Tibetan music, dance, and cultural development. These sources provided historical context and theoretical grounding for the study. In addition, audio-visual materials—including video recordings of performances, rehearsal processes, and interviews—were collected as primary data for analyzing musical characteristics, performance structures, and transmission practices.

### **2.3. Research Procedure**

The research process was organized into four interconnected phases. The first phase involved an extensive review of literature on Tibetan dance music, ethnomusicology, and cultural heritage studies, alongside the formulation of research objectives and analytical frameworks. The second phase consisted of fieldwork conducted in Ganzi Prefecture, during which interviews, observations, and audio-visual documentation were carried out. This phase emphasized direct engagement with cultural practitioners and community contexts. In the third phase, collected data were systematically organized, categorized, and coded using qualitative analysis methods. Analytical tools such as NVivo were employed to identify key themes related to historical development, transmission systems, performance practices, and socio-cultural transformation. The final phase involved interpretation and synthesis of findings through a comparative analytical approach based on the four-dimensional framework. The results were examined within broader theoretical perspectives of cultural ecology and ethnomusicology, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the development and transformation of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture.

### **2.4. Research Reliability and Validity**

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, data triangulation was applied by cross-verifying information obtained from interviews, field observations, and documentary sources. The selection of multiple informants across different generational and institutional levels ensured diverse perspectives and reduced bias. Continuous comparison between field data and existing literature

strengthened analytical consistency. In addition, the use of systematic analytical frameworks and qualitative data coding methods improved the transparency and replicability of the research process. These measures ensured that the findings accurately reflect the cultural realities and historical development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tibetan dance music constitutes a significant component of the cultural system of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, reflecting the integration of music, movement, and social life within Tibetan communities. Among the various Tibetan regions, Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan Province occupies a distinctive position as a core area of Khampa culture, characterized by unique linguistic, musical, and artistic traditions shaped by its geographical environment and historical interactions (Tian, L. T., 2014). Situated along important cultural exchange routes such as the Tea Horse Road, Ganzi has historically facilitated interactions among Tibetan, Han, Yi, and other ethnic groups, contributing to the formation of a complex and hybrid musical system (Gesang, Q. J., 2019). Within this context, Tibetan dance music has developed as a composite art form integrating instrumental performance, vocal expression, poetic elements, and bodily movement, serving both social and ritual functions within the community (Chen, X., & Wei, X. M., 2023).

Scholarly research has identified Duixie (tap dance music) and Xianzi (string dance music) as two representative forms of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture, both of which are recognized as national-level intangible cultural heritage. These forms demonstrate distinctive musical characteristics that differentiate them from other regional traditions. According to Tian Liantao (2012, 2014), the music of Ganzi belongs to a specific musical color area within the Kang cultural zone, characterized by pentatonic modal systems, unique melodic contours, and structured rhythmic patterns. Duixie is primarily defined by its strong rhythmic foundation, in which coordinated footwork and bodily percussion are integrated with six-stringed instrumental accompaniment, producing a dynamic interplay between movement and sound (Gesang, M. D., 2012). In contrast, Xianzi emphasizes melodic development and lyrical expression, typically supported by erhu accompaniment, and is characterized by flowing melodic lines and a close relationship between music and dance movement (Tian, L. T., 2012). These two forms together represent complementary aesthetic

approaches within Tibetan dance music, reflecting both communal participation and refined artistic expression.

The evolution of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi has been shaped by continuous processes of cultural integration and adaptation. As noted by Chen, X., & Wei, X. M. (2023), local musicians have historically incorporated elements from folk songs, religious ritual music, and labor-related musical practices, resulting in a sophisticated musical system with rich expressive capacity. However, despite this dynamic evolution, contemporary studies have highlighted significant challenges facing the sustainability of these traditions. Deng, T. (2023) points out that traditional transmission systems based on oral instruction and community participation have been disrupted by socio-economic changes, including urban migration and shifting occupational patterns. At the same time, the influence of modern media and global cultural flows has altered audience preferences and reduced engagement with traditional forms, contributing to a decline in intergenerational transmission.

Furthermore, recent research has emphasized the complex impact of cultural policies and heritage protection initiatives on traditional performing arts. While the designation of Duixie and Xianzi as intangible cultural heritage has enhanced institutional support and public visibility, it has also introduced processes of standardization, stage adaptation, and commercialization that may reshape original performance contexts and meanings (Juega, 2023). These transformations reflect broader tensions between preservation and innovation in the context of globalization.

Despite the contributions of existing scholarship, several research gaps remain. Previous studies have largely focused on descriptive accounts of cultural background and performance practices, with limited attention to systematic historical analysis across different periods (Yin, Z., 2021). In addition, there is a lack of integrated analytical frameworks that examine the interrelationship between social context, artistic development, transmission systems, and performance environments. More importantly, insufficient research has addressed how traditional performing arts maintain cultural continuity while adapting to changing socio-political conditions, particularly in regions such as Ganzi Prefecture that represent important cultural crossroads. To address these gaps, this study draws upon theoretical perspectives from ethnomusicology and cultural ecology, which emphasize the dynamic relationship between music, culture, and environment (Steward,

1955; Nettl, 2005; Rice, 2014). By integrating these perspectives, the research aims to provide a systematic understanding of the historical development and adaptive transformation of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture, contributing to broader discussions on cultural resilience, continuity, and sustainability in the context of modernization and globalization.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Theoretical Framework for Historical Periodization

This study adopts a systematic theoretical framework to examine the historical development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture. The periodization is grounded in cultural ecology theory, which emphasizes the adaptive relationship between cultural practices and changing socio-political environments (Steward, 1955), together with the perspective of historical materialism, which highlights the influence of socio-economic transformations on cultural production and transmission. Based on these approaches, the development of Tibetan dance music is divided into three major periods: the Origin Period (before 1950), characterized by a traditional feudal-religious social structure; the Development and Prosperity Period (1950–1999), shaped by socialist transformation and state cultural policies; and the Transformation Period (1999–2024), marked by the expansion of the market economy and the impact of digital globalization.

To ensure analytical rigor, this study further employs a four-dimensional framework derived from ethnomusicological methodology (Nettl, 2005; Rice, 2014), encompassing social-cultural context, development of dance forms, transmission methods, and performance forms and venues. This integrated approach enables systematic cross-period comparison while revealing how Tibetan dance music has maintained its cultural essence through

processes of adaptation and transformation.

The analysis is based on multiple sources, including historical documents, archival materials, and scholarly literature, complemented by oral history data collected through field interviews with cultural inheritors and practitioners during 2024–2025. A comparative analytical strategy is employed to cross-validate findings with existing ethnomusicological studies. This multi-source approach enhances the reliability of the research while addressing the limitations of historical documentation, particularly in the early period where oral traditions provide essential insights into cultural continuity and development.

### 4.2. Theoretical Framework for Historical Periodization

#### 4.2.1. Social-Cultural Context

The development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture during the origin period was shaped by the interaction of political governance, religious systems, and intercultural exchange. Under the Qing Dynasty's policy of "governing according to local customs," Tibetan regions were allowed to preserve their traditional cultural practices, providing a stable institutional foundation for the continuity of local dance traditions (Tian, L. T., 2014). At the same time, the integration of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion formed the spiritual core of dance music, transforming performance into a culturally and ritually significant practice (Gesang, Q. J., 2019). Furthermore, Ganzi's position along the Tea Horse Road facilitated continuous cultural exchange among different ethnic groups, contributing to the formation of a hybrid musical system. The hierarchical structure of Khampa society also played a role in shaping differentiated cultural functions, allowing dance forms to develop according to the needs of both community and elite contexts.



Figure 1: Xianzi Dance Troupe of Ba'an Youth, 1940s. Source: Zhang Yulin (Reprinted), Courtesy of the

*Batang County Department of Culture and Tourism.*

#### 4.2.2. Development Of Dance Forms

During this period, Duixie and Xianzi dance emerged as two complementary artistic systems with distinct characteristics. Duixie emphasized rhythmic expression through coordinated footwork, six-string accompaniment, and bodily percussion, forming a composite musical aesthetic in which movement and sound are closely integrated. In contrast, Xianzi developed as a more refined artistic form centered on melodic expression and erhu accompaniment. Its integration of music, dance, and poetic elements reflects a sophisticated aesthetic system emphasizing lyrical movement and expressive depth. Together, these two forms fulfilled different cultural functions, with Duixie associated with communal participation and festive activities, and Xianzi representing higher levels of artistic refinement.



*Figure 2: Duixie Performance During Tibetan New Year Celebration, 1940s.*  
Source: Courtesy of Ganzi County Bureau of Culture and Tourism.

#### 4.2.4. Performance Forms and Cultural Space

Performance practices during this period were influenced by both environmental and cultural factors. The diverse geographical conditions of Ganzi Prefecture contributed to regional variations in dance styles, while ongoing cultural exchange through trade routes and religious networks enriched the artistic characteristics of both Duixie and Xianzi traditions. Performance spaces ranged from religious sites to community gatherings, reflecting the dual function of dance music as both ritual practice and social expression. The openness and inclusiveness of the regional cultural environment allowed these traditions to evolve while maintaining their core identity.

In summary, the origin period established the foundational framework of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture. Supported by flexible governance,

#### 4.2.3. Transmission Methods

The transmission of Tibetan dance music during the origin period was primarily based on community-centered systems, including master-apprentice relationships, family inheritance, and monastic education. These interconnected systems ensured both the preservation of technical skills and the continuity of cultural values through oral instruction and embodied practice. Festival rituals played a particularly important role as platforms for transmission, providing regular opportunities for performance, participation, and intergenerational learning within the community. Through these processes, dance music traditions were maintained as living cultural practices rather than static forms.

religious integration, and intercultural exchange, Duixie and Xianzi developed into mature and complementary artistic forms. Their transmission was sustained through community-based systems and ritual practices, while regional diversity and cultural openness contributed to their continued vitality. These elements collectively laid the groundwork for subsequent historical development and transformation.

### 4.3. The Development and Prosperity Period of Tibetan Dance Music in Ganzi Prefecture (1950–1999)

#### 4.3.1. Social-Cultural Context

The period from 1950 to 1999 marked a fundamental transformation in the socio-cultural environment of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture. Under socialist integration policies,

traditional governance systems and cultural institutions were gradually replaced by state-controlled structures, redefining the conditions for cultural production and transmission. Early policies initially allowed limited cultural continuity; however, this shifted toward more intensive ideological control, culminating in the Cultural Revolution, during which traditional religious and cultural institutions were systematically dismantled. Following 1978, reform policies enabled partial cultural revival within state-regulated frameworks. Although traditional practices were gradually restored, they operated under institutional supervision, reflecting a new balance between cultural preservation and political control (Wu, 2014).

#### 4.3.2. *Development Of Dance Forms*



*Figure 3: Ganzi Duixie Performance During Tibetan New Year In 1987.*  
Source: Courtesy Of Mr. Sheng Longduo, Provincial-Level Inheritor of Ganzi Duixie.

#### 4.3.3. *Development of Dance Forms*

The transformation of transmission systems represents one of the most significant changes during this period. Traditional networks based on master-apprentice relationships, family inheritance, and monastic educations were largely replaced by state-controlled educational institutions. During the Cultural Revolution, these traditional transmission systems were severely disrupted, and knowledge holders were often marginalized. However, elements of traditional knowledge survived through informal and family-based transmission. In the reform period, hybrid transmission models emerged, combining institutional education with elements of traditional practice. These new systems allowed for partial reconstruction of cultural knowledge while maintaining state oversight.

#### 4.3.4. *Performance Forms and Venues*

During this period, Duixie and Xianzi dance underwent three major stages: standardization, suppression, and revival. In the early stage, traditional dance forms were transformed into standardized performance formats suitable for state-sponsored cultural activities. Improvisational and ritual elements were reduced, and choreographic structures were fixed to align with political and aesthetic requirements (Nettl, 2005). During the Cultural Revolution, both forms were largely suppressed or replaced by revolutionary performances, resulting in the disruption of traditional artistic continuity. In the reform era, these dance forms re-emerged within institutional frameworks, though often in modified forms adapted for stage presentation and cultural representation. This process created tensions between authenticity and standardization that continue to influence their development.

Performance practices shifted from community-based ritual contexts to formalized stage presentations. Traditional performances, once embedded in religious ceremonies and community life, were restructured into staged productions designed for political representation and cultural display. During the Cultural Revolution, traditional performance spaces were largely eliminated or repurposed, and dance practices were replaced with politically oriented performances. In the reform era, performance venues were gradually restored, but within modern theatrical frameworks that emphasized standardization, visual presentation, and audience-oriented formats. This transformation altered the participatory nature of traditional dance, shifting it toward professionalized artistic performance.

In summary, the period from 1950 to 1999 represents a critical *مرحلة* of transformation in the

history of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture. Through processes of standardization, suppression, and revival, Duixie and Xianzi dance were reshaped within new political and institutional contexts. Traditional transmission systems were replaced by formal educational structures, and performance practices shifted from community-based rituals to staged representations. Despite these disruptions, elements of traditional culture survived through adaptation and partial preservation, enabling their continuation into the contemporary period. This era established the structural and institutional foundations for modern cultural preservation while fundamentally redefining the relationship between tradition and modernity in Tibetan dance music.

#### 4.4. The Transformation Period of Tibetan Dance Music in Ganzi Prefecture (1999–2024)

##### 4.4.1. Social-Cultural Context

The period from 1999 to 2024 represents a major turning point in the development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture. Unlike earlier periods shaped mainly by traditional community life or political control, this era has been characterized by marketization, digital transformation, and cultural heritage policy. China's Western Development Strategy accelerated infrastructure construction, tourism expansion, and regional economic integration, fundamentally reshaping the social and cultural environment in which Tibetan dance music operates (Rice, 2014). At the same time, digital technologies introduced new opportunities for cultural dissemination and preservation, while also disrupting traditional systems of transmission. Social media, mobile communication, and online cultural resources expanded access to Tibetan cultural

content, but they also shifted authority away from older community-based learning systems toward younger, digitally literate generations. Educational reforms and increasing Mandarin-medium instruction further weakened traditional language environments, creating new challenges for cultural continuity. These socio-economic and educational changes collectively altered the conditions under which Tibetan dance traditions were practiced, taught, and understood.

##### 4.4.2. Development Of Dance Forms

During this transformation period, Duixie and Xianzi underwent significant but unequal adaptation. Duixie experienced the most visible commercial transformation, evolving from a locally rooted harvest and festival dance into a broader cultural product used in tourism, school activities, and state cultural representation. Performance formats became shorter, more theatrical, and more inclusive in terms of gender and age participation. This transition increased visibility and economic value, but also introduced tension between traditional function and commercial presentation. Xianzi, especially Batang Xianzi, received stronger support through intangible cultural heritage designation and institutional preservation efforts. Compared with Duixie, Xianzi showed a more conservative mode of adaptation, retaining stronger links to its traditional regional identity and performance structure. However, it was also increasingly incorporated into educational and staged contexts. Overall, both forms demonstrate a process of negotiated adaptation in which cultural authenticity, heritage protection, and market demands coexist in an uneasy balance.



Figure 4: Batang Xianzi Stage Performance In 2025.

Source: Fieldwork Documentation by the Author.

##### 4.4.3. Innovation In Transmission Methods

Transmission methods in this period became

increasingly diversified. Traditional oral and embodied learning continued, but they were supplemented by digital documentation, online dissemination, school-based instruction, and heritage programs. Audio-visual archives, social media platforms, and virtual technologies created new channels for knowledge circulation, making Tibetan dance music more accessible to wider audiences and younger generations. Educational institutions also became more active in heritage

transmission by incorporating traditional dance into formal and informal curricula. At the same time, community-based initiatives remained essential. Elder practitioners, village networks, and local cultural leaders continued to play a central role in maintaining authenticity and intergenerational continuity. As a result, the transmission of Tibetan dance music during this period can be understood as a hybrid system that combines traditional pedagogy with modern technological and institutional support.



**Figure 5: Provincial-Level Ganzi Duixie Inheritor Teaching Students In 2024.**

Source: Courtesy of Sheng Longduo, Provincial-Level Inheritor of Ganzi Duixie.

#### **4.4.4. Cultural Preservation and Development Outcomes**

The transformation period also witnessed a major expansion of cultural preservation policy. Through legal frameworks, heritage designation, and large-scale financial investment, Tibetan cultural forms in Ganzi Prefecture gained increased institutional recognition and public visibility. This included support for performance groups, infrastructure development, tourism integration, and cultural education. Such measures contributed to economic growth, employment creation, and broader awareness of Tibetan cultural heritage. However, preservation outcomes were not without contradictions. State-led heritage management often emphasized visibility, branding, and tourism value, which could encourage simplification, staged representation, and partial decontextualization of traditional practices. Concerns also remain regarding uneven community participation, language loss, and the long-term sustainability of authentic cultural transmission. Thus, while the transformation period brought significant resources and recognition, it also intensified debate over the relationship between protection, commercialization, and cultural integrity.

The period from 1999 to 2024 marks a new phase in the history of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture, defined by modernization, digitalization, and heritage institutionalization. Duixie and Xianzi

were transformed from community-based cultural practices into multifunctional forms that now operate in tourism, education, media, and heritage discourse. This period demonstrates both cultural vitality and structural tension. On the one hand, new technologies, policy frameworks, and institutional support have expanded opportunities for preservation and dissemination. On the other hand, commercialization, language shift, and changing social structures continue to challenge the authenticity and continuity of traditional practice. The transformation period therefore reveals that Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture survives not through static preservation, but through ongoing negotiation between tradition and change.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The findings indicate that Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture has developed through adaptive interaction with changing socio-political environments rather than through linear continuity. This supports Cultural Ecology Theory (Steward, 1955), which conceptualizes cultural forms as dynamic responses to environmental pressures. However, this study extends the theory by demonstrating that, in contemporary contexts, such pressures are no longer limited to ecological or subsistence factors but increasingly include state governance, market economies, tourism industries,

and digital infrastructures. In this sense, Tibetan dance music can be understood as part of a broader cultural system embedded within multi-layered socio-technical environments, aligning with recent expansions of cultural ecology into globalized and mediated contexts. During the socialist period (1950–1999), state intervention significantly reshaped Duixie and Xianzi through processes of standardization and institutionalization, consistent with ethnomusicological perspectives on music and power (Nettl, 2005). However, rather than framing this transformation as cultural loss, the findings suggest a process of “recontextualized continuity,” in which traditional forms were selectively adapted to fit new ideological and institutional frameworks. This resonates with Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of *habitus*, where embodied practices are not static but are continuously restructured within shifting fields of power. For instance, while Duixie experienced reduced improvisational freedom, its incorporation into staged and institutional contexts enhanced its visibility and sustainability, illustrating how constraint can coexist with cultural persistence.

In the transformation period (1999–2024), the dominant forces shifted toward market dynamics and digital media. The findings align with existing research (Bai & Rice, 2014) suggesting that tourism often promotes simplification and standardization of cultural forms. However, this study contributes further by demonstrating that the degree of transformation is mediated by internal musical structures and performance characteristics. Duixie, characterized by strong rhythmic patterns and visual expressivity, adapts more readily to commodification and digital circulation, whereas Xianzi, with its more complex melodic and structural features, retains greater resistance to simplification. This supports the view in ethnomusicology that musical form itself can act as an agent in shaping cultural adaptation, rather than being a passive outcome of external pressures.

The study also contributes to ongoing debates on authenticity in cultural and music studies. Rather than viewing authenticity as an inherent or fixed quality, the findings demonstrate that it is socially negotiated among multiple stakeholders, including elder inheritors, institutional actors, tourists, and digital audiences. This aligns with Henrion-Dourcy (2017), but further suggests that differing notions of authenticity reflect broader shifts in cultural function and identity. In this context, authenticity becomes a performative and relational construct, shaped by context, audience, and purpose, rather than a static reference to the past.

In terms of transmission, the findings confirm that institutional education and digital media have significantly disrupted traditional master-apprentice systems, as noted by Human Rights Watch (2020). However, rather than resulting in cultural decline, the study identifies the emergence of hybrid transmission models, combining formal education, digital dissemination, and community-based practice. This reflects broader theoretical discussions on cultural hybridity and mediation (e.g., Appadurai, 1996), where cultural knowledge circulates across multiple platforms and contexts. Importantly, the findings also challenge heritage preservation frameworks that prioritize documentation and archiving. Consistent with Klein (1994), the study demonstrates that essential musical knowledge—such as timing, coordination, and embodied interaction—remains tacit and experiential, and cannot be fully captured through notation or recording. This underscores the importance of living cultural practice and embodied transmission as central to sustainability.

Finally, the study highlights critical tensions between accessibility and authenticity, as well as between quantitative expansion and qualitative depth. While tourism and digital media have increased the visibility and reach of Tibetan dance music, this expansion does not necessarily correspond to deeper cultural understanding or transmission. This finding resonates with critiques in cultural studies regarding the commodification of culture in global capitalism, where visibility and consumption may overshadow meaning and practice. Therefore, the study calls for more nuanced evaluation frameworks that balance cultural reach, depth of transmission, and community agency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture persists through a process of adaptive continuity, in which transformation is not opposed to preservation but is a necessary condition for it. However, the long-term sustainability of these traditions depends on maintaining community-centered practices, embodied knowledge systems, and local agency within increasingly complex institutional, economic, and technological environments.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the historical development of Tibetan dance music in Ganzi Prefecture is best understood as a process of adaptive transformation shaped by changing socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions. Through a three-period analysis—Origin Period (before 1950),

Development and Prosperity Period (1950–1999), and Transformation Period (1999–2024)—the findings reveal that Duixie and Xianzi have continuously evolved while maintaining core cultural characteristics.

In the origin period, Tibetan dance music was embedded in a feudal-religious system supported by community-based transmission and ritual practices, forming a stable cultural foundation. During the socialist period, state intervention led to standardization, suppression, and institutional reconstruction, fundamentally altering transmission systems and performance contexts while enabling partial preservation through adaptation. In the contemporary period, marketization, digitalization, and cultural heritage policies have further transformed these traditions into multifunctional cultural forms operating across tourism, education, and media environments.

Across all periods, the study finds that cultural continuity has been maintained not through static

preservation but through dynamic negotiation between tradition and change. While modern developments have expanded visibility and economic value, they have also introduced challenges related to authenticity, transmission depth, and cultural sustainability. The emergence of hybrid transmission systems—combining community practice, institutional frameworks, and digital technologies—highlights the adaptive resilience of Tibetan dance music. Overall, this research contributes to ethnomusicological and cultural heritage studies by demonstrating that the sustainability of traditional performing arts depends on the balance between transformation and continuity. The findings suggest that future preservation efforts should prioritize not only documentation and promotion but also the maintenance of living cultural contexts in which embodied knowledge and community participation can continue to thrive.

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