



The Contemporary Status of Pingxian Folk Songs and Their Educational Significance in Qinghai Province Through Anthropological Analysis

Yang Jing¹ and Suthasinee Theerapan²

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

¹ E-mail: 64012051037@msu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1609-0732>

² Email: suthasinee.t@msu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0322-3739>

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Abstract

Background and Aims: This anthropological study delves into the contemporary status and educational significance of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province, China. Pingxian folk songs are known for their delicate melodies. This research aims to analyze the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province and their educational significance through anthropological analysis.

Materials and Methods: The research is situated primarily in Qinghai Province, specifically focusing on Xining City, a central hub of Pingxian folk songs. Data collection involves in-depth interviews and systematic observation of performances, facilitated by structured interviews and observation forms. Four key informants, including local musicians, community elders, and music educators.

Results: These songs have transitioned from local folk art to distinct local folk music, embracing diverse musical elements and the emergence of professional troupes. They continue to thrive through regular performances, preserving local dialects, and enchanting melodies, and serving as living repositories of history and culture. Furthermore, Pingxian folk songs play a pivotal role in fostering cultural identity, nurturing creativity, and enhancing social cohesion among learners, contributing to cultural heritage protection and the rejuvenation of Chinese traditions.

Conclusion: Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province epitomize a dynamic cultural heritage that resonates with audiences today. Their enduring legacy, enriched by historical evolution and contemporary vitality, underscores their significance in education and cultural preservation. As valuable tools for instilling cultural identity and fostering creativity.

Keywords: Pingxian Folk Songs; Qinghai Province; Cultural Heritage; Education; Cultural Preservation

Introduction

In the realm of Chinese folk music, Pingxian folk songs hold a unique and cherished position, encapsulating the essence of a rich and enduring tradition. As integral components of China's diverse musical heritage, these songs emanate from Qinghai Province, nestled within its picturesque landscapes. Celebrated for their delicate and graceful melodies, they represent a captivating fusion of regional and national influences, serving as musical chronicles of life, traditions, and the passage of time. To understand the significance of Pingxian folk songs within the broader spectrum of Chinese folk music is to grasp the vibrant tapestry of China's cultural diversity (Ho & Law, 2012; Howard, 2016; Ye et al., 2023). This study aims to analyze the contemporary status and educational significance of Pingxian folk songs within Qinghai Province, delving deeper into their historical evolution, cultural resonance, and their potential to endure as a vital thread in the fabric of China's cultural heritage (Yü, 2015; Wang et al., 2022; Qifei, 2022; Chen, 2022; Yao et al., 2023). Yet, as time ceaselessly marches forward, the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs faces both novel challenges and promising opportunities that beckon exploration (Ma, 2019; Gibbs, 2021; Zhao, 2023).

The story of Pingxian folk songs is steeped in history, intricately woven with threads of tradition and innovation. These songs have held an esteemed place in Qinghai's cultural heritage, their gentle and elegant melodies resonating through generations, akin to a musical chronicle of life, traditions, and the passage of time. It was in the mid-20th century that a pivotal chapter unfolded in the evolution of these songs (Lin, 1965; Huang, 2019; Yao & Chaotamrat, 2023). Daring artists hailing from Qinghai Province and the original Pool Qin Troupe embarked on audacious explorations, venturing into uncharted territory. Their endeavors bore fruit in the form of groundbreaking performances such as "Autumn Jiang," "The Marriage," and "Zhao Orphan." These pioneering endeavors not only enraptured audiences but also laid the foundation





for the establishment of the Pingxian folk song experimental troupe, accumulating a treasure trove of invaluable experiences (Rea, 2006; Mok, 2011; Lu et al., 2023).

Amidst their mellifluous tunes and cultural significance, Pingxian folk songs face a contemporary challenge: to adapt, evolve, and remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. The research problem at hand centers on the current status of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province (Peng, 2017; Chen et al., 2023). In this dynamic and ever-shifting landscape, it is crucial to understand how these songs persist, resonate, and contribute to the cultural fabric of Qinghai. The core question guiding our exploration is: "What is the current status of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province?" This question serves as a compass, leading us through the multifaceted aspects of Pingxian folk songs in the present day. We seek to unearth their educational significance, their cultural resonance, and their potential for continued vitality (Jacobs, 2008; Qin & Feng, 2019; Fangying & Karin, 2022).

The significance of this research extends far beyond academic inquiry; it is a torchbearer for the preservation and celebration of Pingxian folk songs. It provides a platform to understand their contemporary relevance, their role in education, and their contribution to the larger cultural narrative of Qinghai Province. By shedding light on the significance of these songs, we hope to inspire future research, preservation efforts, and a deeper appreciation for the rich cultural heritage they embody (Wong, 2010; Gao, 2015; Tang & Sornyai, 2023; Wu, 2023).

In essence, our anthropological exploration embarks on a journey to unveil the present-day vitality of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province. It serves as a testament to their enduring legacy, a documentation of their adaptability in the face of change, and a tribute to the profound cultural heritage they represent. Through this research, we aim not only to illuminate the path these songs have traveled but also to guide their way into the future, where they will continue to resonate with the hearts and minds of generations to come (Gao, 2015; Von Oswald & Tinius, 2020; Prakobboon, 2022).

Objective

To analyze the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province and their educational significance through anthropological analysis.

Literature review

In the realm of cultural heritage and ethnomusicology, Pingxian folk songs, as a unique and enduring facet of Qinghai Province's cultural tapestry, have drawn the attention of researchers, scholars, and enthusiasts alike. This literature review explores the existing body of work related to Pingxian folk songs, encompassing their historical evolution, cultural significance, and educational potential.

Historical Evolution of Pingxian Folk Songs: Pingxian folk songs' historical trajectory is crucial for understanding their contemporary status. They have been influenced by various factors, including local culture in Qinghai Province, and have evolved from Ming and Qing dynasty immigrants. This integration of musical elements and styles has resulted in the unique "gentle and elegant" characteristic that defines these songs today. Researchers like Zhang Xia have traced the development of Pingxian folk songs through the lens of Quyi, highlighting their evolution and integration into local opera (Zhang, 2020; He & Sornyai, 2023).

Cultural Significance of Pingxian Folk Songs: Pingxian folk songs serve as a living repository of cultural heritage. They bear the imprints of regional history, local dialects, and the emotional resonance of the Qinghai people. Scholars, including Zhang Xia, have emphasized the profound cultural significance of these songs. They are not merely melodies but vessels that carry the stories, traditions, and emotions of a community. As such, Pingxian folk songs are often described as a "living museum of local history and cultural information." Their power to evoke a sense of place and belonging makes them invaluable in preserving and celebrating Qinghai's cultural identity (Zhang et al., 2023; Zhou & Chuangprakhon, 2023).

Educational Potential of Pingxian Folk Songs: The educational value of Pingxian folk songs extends beyond their cultural significance. These songs have the potential to be powerful tools for education, offering insights into language, history, and artistic expression. The integration of Pingxian folk songs into educational curricula can foster a deeper connection between students and their cultural heritage. Zhang Xia's work underscores the importance of recognizing the educational implications of these songs and their role in inspiring a love for traditional culture (Law & Ho, 2009; Guan et al., 2023).





Contemporary Status of Pingxian Folk Songs: While historical accounts provide a foundation, the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs is the focal point of this research. Contemporary researchers such as Zhang Xia have observed the transformation of these songs from local Quyi to local folk songs. The staging of traditional dramas, like "The Orphan of Zhao," marked a pivotal moment when Pingxian folk songs were officially recognized as local folk songs. The decision to "put Pingxian Quyi on the stage and develop local folk songs in Qinghai" signified a commitment to preserving and promoting these songs. Today, Pingxian folk songs continue to enchant audiences and serve as a vital component of Qinghai's cultural landscape (Gao, 2012; Liu, 2013).

Furthermore, while the review emphasizes the educational potential of these songs, it lacks specific examples or case studies of their integration into educational curricula and their impact on students' cultural identity and learning outcomes. Finally, a more extensive discussion of the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs could delve into the challenges they face in the modern era, such as globalization and changing cultural dynamics. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Pingxian folk songs within the broader context of Chinese folk music.

Theory Used

While anthropology, including cultural and historical anthropology, provides valuable insights into the cultural, social, and historical contexts of Pingxian folk songs, it also comes with certain limitations. It's important to recognize these limitations to ensure a well-rounded approach to studying Pingxian folk songs:

Anthropology plays a crucial role in understanding the cultural, social, and historical contexts of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province. It provides a framework for understanding their significance, practices, and deeper meanings. Historical anthropology helps trace the evolution and migration of these songs, examining historical records, artifacts, and narratives to understand external influences (Asad, 1979; Lewis, 2017).

Musicology studies Pingxian folk songs' composition, structure, and emotional resonance, revealing regional variations and influences. Music education theory explores pedagogical approaches to teach and preserve these songs, focusing on their potential to inspire appreciation for traditional culture and foster creativity, cultural identity, and social cohesion among learners. This perspective enhances understanding of how these songs can be effective tools for education and cultural preservation (Williams, 2020; Irawan & Hidayatullah, 2022).

Conceptual Framework

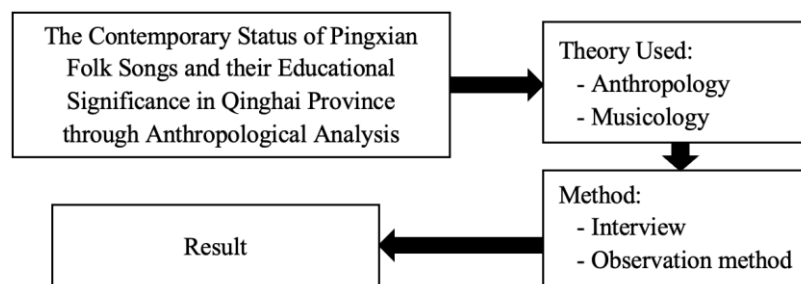


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research site: The primary research site is Qinghai Province, which offers a rich and diverse cultural context due to its historical connection to these songs and its status as the epicenter of Pingxian folk song culture. Xining City, a sub-site within Qinghai Province, is also considered a valuable sub-site for more focused research. Xining City, often considered the center of Pingxian folk songs, has a long history of

cultural significance related to these songs, providing a micro-level view of the contemporary status and educational practices associated with these songs.



Figure 1 Map of the research site in Xining City, Qinghai Province

Source: Hsieh & Falkenheim, 2023, December 8

Key Informants: Four key informants with in-depth knowledge and experience of Pingxian folk songs. These include local musicians, community elders, and music educators. Local musicians and performers can provide historical context and personal experiences, while community elders can offer historical context and personal experiences. Music educators can offer pedagogical perspectives on how Pingxian folk songs are integrated into education and foster identity among students.

Research tools and data analysis: A combination of research tools will be employed. These tools include Observation Forms, which allow for systematic data collection through direct observation, and Interview Forms, which facilitate structured interviews with key informants. The gathered data will undergo rigorous analysis to draw meaningful conclusions, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Research Tools and Data Analysis

Research Tool	Step for Creation	Steps for Use	Data Analysis
Observation Form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define the research objectives and specific aspects to be observed 2. Identify the criteria for assessing the contemporary status of songs 3. Develop a structured form with predefined 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Researchers visit Pingxian folk song performances and events 2. Researchers use the form to systematically record observations 3. Make detailed notes regarding song lyrics, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data collected through observation is categorized 2. Patterns and trends in song performance are identified



Research Tool	Step for Creation	Steps for Use	Data Analysis
	categories for data collection 4. Include space for additional remarks or contextual information	musical aspects, and audience reactions 4. Ensure non-intrusive observation to avoid disrupting performances	3. Statistical analysis may be used for quantitative data 4. Qualitative analysis for insights into cultural context
Interview Form	1. Determine the key research questions and themes for interviews 2. Develop a structured interview form with open and closed-ended questions 3. Ensure cultural sensitivity in formulating questions and conducting interviews 4. Include space for additional comments and reflections from informants	1. Identify and approach key informants (musicians, elders, educators) 2. Conduct interviews with informants, using the form as a guide 3. Create a comfortable and respectful interview environment 4. Record audio or video interviews for accuracy	1. Transcribe and code interview responses for the organization 2. Thematic analysis to extract key themes and narratives 3. Cross-referencing responses to validate findings 4. Interpretation and synthesis of qualitative data

Results

This anthropological analysis of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province has unveiled critical insights into various facets of this traditional art form, shedding light on their historical significance, evolution, contemporary performance, costumes, and educational implications. Here are the key findings:

The Historical Inheritance of Pingxian Folk Songs: Pingxian folk songs have a rich and storied history, deeply intertwined with the cultural tapestry of Qinghai Province. This section explores the historical lineage of Pingxian folk songs, shedding light on the diverse influences that have shaped this unique musical tradition. From the early migrations of Ming Dynasty immigrants to the cultural exchanges of the Qing Dynasty era and the regional integration that followed, Pingxian folk songs have evolved into a harmonious blend of northern and southern elements, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Historical Influences

Historical Influences	Key Characteristics
Ming Dynasty Immigrants	One of the primary threads in the historical fabric of Pingxian folk songs is the influence of Ming Dynasty immigrants. During this period, individuals and communities migrated to Qinghai Province from various regions, bringing with them their unique musical traditions and lyrical styles. These early Ming Dynasty immigrants played a pivotal role in shaping the nascent Pingxian folk songs, infusing them with diverse cultural elements
Qing Dynasty Influx	The Qing Dynasty left its mark on yet another significant chapter in the history of Pingxian folk songs. This period witnessed an influx of cultural exchange and artistic interactions. Qinghai Province became a melting pot of diverse artistic expressions, leading to the fusion of different musical forms and lyrical nuances. The Qing Dynasty era contributed significantly to the evolution of Pingxian folk songs as they absorbed various regional influences



Historical Influences	Key Characteristics
Regional Cultural Integration	Pingxian, located at the heart of Qinghai Province, served as a crossroads for various cultures and traditions. As a result, Pingxian folk songs benefited from the amalgamation of northern and southern influences. The local dialects, musical melodies, and narrative themes found in Pingxian folk songs bear witness to this cultural integration. These songs became a mirror, reflecting the coexistence and synergy of distinct cultural elements
A Blend of Northern and Southern Influences	Pingxian folk songs, born from this historical backdrop, embody a harmonious fusion of northern and southern Chinese musical traditions. The melodies capture the elegance of southern tones while retaining the cadence of northern lyrical styles. This unique blend of influences has rendered Pingxian folk songs a cherished and distinctive form of cultural expression

From Table 2: The historical inheritance of Pingxian folk songs is a testament to the enduring spirit of Qinghai Province's cultural heritage. Rooted in the legacies of Ming Dynasty immigrants, enriched by the cultural influx of the Qing Dynasty, and nurtured through regional cultural integration, these songs have evolved into a unique musical form. This blend of northern and southern influences has rendered Pingxian folk songs a cherished cultural expression, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of Qinghai's artistic traditions, as shown in Figure 2. Understanding this historical context enhances our appreciation of the contemporary status and educational significance of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province.



Figure 2 Pingxian folk song musician performance

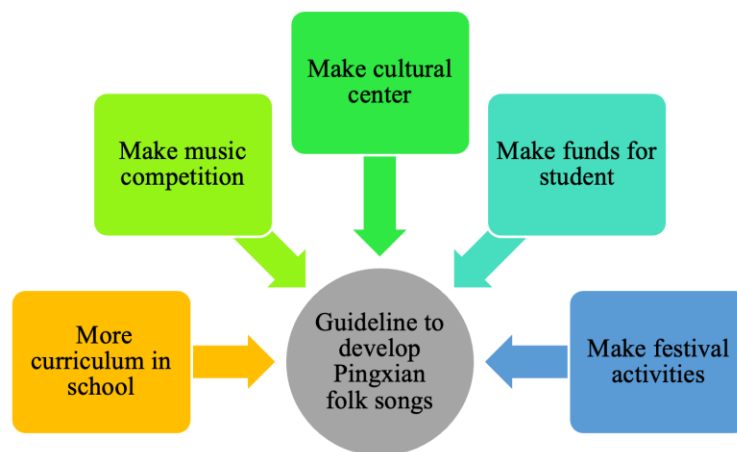
Source: Yang Jing, from fieldwork in July 2023

The Development of Pingxian Folk Songs: The evolution of Pingxian folk songs from their roots in local folk art to a unique form of local folk music is a testament to the dynamic nature of cultural expressions. This section delves into the remarkable journey of Pingxian folk songs, exploring their growth, development, and the factors that have shaped their distinctive identity. From the incorporation of diverse musical elements to the emergence of professional troupes, the development of Pingxian folk songs has been a fascinating and enriching process, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** Development Milestones

Development Milestones	Description
Origins in Local Folk Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Early Pingxian folk songs were an integral part of local folk art. They were simple and often associated with traditional customs and celebrations- These songs served as a reflection of the everyday lives of Qinghai's people, conveying stories of love, labor, and the joys and sorrows of life
Transformation into a Distinct Local Folk Song	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A significant turning point in the history of Pingxian folk songs was their transition into a distinct local folk song- This transformation allowed for greater depth and complexity in the music, giving rise to diverse song styles and melodies
Incorporation of Diverse Musical Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pingxian folk songs are renowned for their openness to various musical influences- They absorbed elements from different regions and traditions, enriching their musical tapestry- This openness to diverse influences contributed to the adaptability and resilience of Pingxian folk songs
The Emergence of Professional Troupes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The establishment of professional troupes dedicated to Pingxian folk songs marked a significant milestone in their development- These troupes played a pivotal role in elevating the status of Pingxian folk songs, fostering greater artistic expression, and ensuring their preservation and propagation

From Table 3: The development of Pingxian folk songs has been a remarkable journey characterized by transformation and enrichment. Originating in local folk art, these songs have evolved into a unique form of local folk music. A transition that allowed for more depth and complexity during this evolution led to a wide variety of song styles and melodies. The incorporation of diverse musical elements from various regions and the emergence of professional troupes further contributed to the art form's adaptability and elevated its cultural significance, the guideline to develop Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province, China, as shown in Figure 3. Understanding the development of Pingxian folk songs provides valuable insights into their contemporary status and educational significance in Qinghai Province.

**Figure 3** Guideline to develop Pingxian folk songs



The Current Pingxian Folk Songs Performance: The vibrant presence of Pingxian folk songs in contemporary Qinghai Province is a testament to their enduring cultural significance. This section delves into the current landscape of Pingxian folk song performances, highlighting their regularity and the distinctive elements that define these captivating presentations. From the preservation of local dialects to the enchanting melodies, the performances serve as living repositories of regional culture and history, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Performance Aspects

Performance Aspects	Description
Regular Performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pingxian folk songs continue to thrive with regular performances held in Qinghai Province- These performances serve as a cultural bridge between generations, ensuring the songs' longevity and cultural relevance
Preservation of Local Dialects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pingxian folk songs maintain their authenticity by preserving unique local dialects in their lyrics and delivery- This linguistic richness adds depth to the performances and reinforces their connection to the region's cultural heritage
Enchanting Melodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pingxian folk songs are renowned for their gentle and elegant melodies- The music captivates audiences, evoking emotions and showcasing the artistic charm of the songs
Living Repository of History and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- These performances serve as living repositories of local history and cultural information- They offer insights into the region's traditions, values, and the collective memory of its people

From Table 4: Pingxian folk songs continue to thrive in contemporary Qinghai Province through regular performances, as shown in Figure 4. These presentations play a vital role in preserving the regional cultural identity by maintaining unique local dialects and enchanting melodies. Beyond their artistic appeal, Pingxian folk songs serve as living repositories of local history and cultural information, providing a window into the rich heritage of Qinghai Province.



Figure 4 Qinghai Provincial Performing Arts Group
Source: Yang Jing, from fieldwork in July 2023



The Pingxian Folk Song in Education: Pingxian folk songs play a pivotal role in education within Qinghai Province. Beyond their artistic and cultural value, these songs hold significant educational importance. They serve as a valuable tool for instilling a strong sense of cultural identity, nurturing creativity, and fostering social cohesion among the local population. The preservation and promotion of Pingxian folk songs align with broader objectives related to cultural heritage protection and the revitalization of Chinese traditions, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Educational Significance

Educational Significance	Description
Cultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pingxian folk songs are instrumental in instilling a profound sense of cultural identity among learners- They connect students to their regional heritage, fostering pride in Qinghai's rich cultural tapestry
Creativity Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engaging with Pingxian folk songs encourages creativity and artistic expression- Students are exposed to diverse musical styles and can explore their own creativity within this traditional framework
Social Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Learning and performing Pingxian folk songs promotes social cohesion and community bonding- These shared cultural experiences strengthen connections among residents
Cultural Heritage Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Education involving Pingxian folk songs contributes to the broader goal of cultural heritage protection- It ensures that these songs are passed down to future generations and remain a vibrant part of Qinghai's cultural landscape
Rejuvenation of Chinese Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The preservation and promotion of Pingxian folk songs align with national efforts to rejuvenate Chinese traditions- They embody the spirit of cultural revival and preservation

From Table 5: Pingxian folk songs hold significant educational significance within Qinghai Province. They actively contribute to the development of cultural identity, creativity, and social cohesion among learners. Additionally, their role in cultural heritage protection and the broader rejuvenation of Chinese traditions underscores their importance in contemporary education. Through Pingxian folk songs, students not only connect with their cultural roots but also participate in the preservation and revitalization of Qinghai's rich heritage.

Discussion

The study provides valuable insights into the contemporary status of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province. The research findings indicate that Pingxian folk songs continue to thrive with regular performances in the region. These performances serve as a cultural bridge between generations, ensuring the songs' longevity and cultural relevance. Furthermore, the preservation of local dialects in the songs' lyrics and delivery is emphasized, which adds depth to the performances and reinforces their connection to the region's cultural heritage. This observation aligns with the theoretical principles of cultural anthropology, emphasizing the significance of language and tradition in maintaining cultural identity (Asad, 1979).

The study's findings regarding the historical inheritance and development of Pingxian folk songs shed light on the rich and dynamic evolution of this traditional art form. Pingxian folk songs have a complex history deeply rooted in the mingling of various cultural influences, including those from the Ming and



Qing Dynasties. This historical analysis is consistent with the research's anthropological approach, which seeks to understand the cultural and historical contexts of Pingxian folk songs (Lewis, 2017). The transformation of Pingxian folk songs from local folk art to a distinct local folk song is a testament to the dynamic nature of cultural expressions and aligns with theories of cultural evolution (Lewis, 2017).

The research findings emphasize the educational significance of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province. These songs play a pivotal role in instilling cultural identity, nurturing creativity, and fostering social cohesion among learners. This aligns with the theoretical perspective of using music as a tool for education and cultural preservation (Guan et al., 2023). The study highlights that beyond their artistic and cultural value, Pingxian folk songs actively contribute to the development of cultural identity, creativity, and social cohesion among learners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings demonstrate that Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province have a rich and enduring cultural heritage, serving as a living repository of history and culture. These songs have successfully adapted to contemporary times, maintaining their authenticity and relevance through regular performances and the preservation of local dialects. From an educational perspective, Pingxian folk songs have significant value in instilling cultural identity, enhancing creativity, and promoting social cohesion among learners.

The theoretical principles of cultural anthropology, musicology, and education have been effectively applied to understand and analyze Pingxian folk songs' historical, cultural, and educational dimensions. The study's findings are consistent with these theoretical perspectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary status and educational significance of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province.

Recommendation

1. This research recommends in-depth fieldwork in Qinghai Province, specifically in Xining City, to gain firsthand experiences and insights into the contemporary status and educational practices associated with Pingxian folk songs. A linguistic analysis could provide valuable insights into the linguistic aspects of cultural preservation. Audience perspectives should be included to provide a holistic view of the songs' impact. Comparing the educational use of Pingxian folk songs in Qinghai Province with similar traditional music forms can offer insights into the broader applicability of these songs as educational tools.

2. The recommendations for future research on Pingxian folk songs. These include cross-disciplinary studies with experts from different fields, longitudinal studies that look at how the status and teaching methods of Pingxian folk songs have changed over time, comparative regional studies that look at how these methods vary across different parts of China, and studies that look at how Pingxian folk songs affect cultural identity, creativity, social cohesion, pedagogical approaches, cultural policy analysis, and digital preservation. These recommendations aim to enhance current research and encourage further exploration of Pingxian folk songs and their cultural significance. They also suggest examining the influence of cultural policies and government initiatives on the preservation and promotion of these songs.

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