



## Xinyang folk songs, development and transmission process in Henan province of China

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### Abstract

This article uses qualitative research and interview methods with the objective to study the development and transmission of Xinyang Folk songs in Henan province, China. The area was selected in Henan city, China. The field work method is mainly used for collecting data. together with the information from the document. Xinyang folk songs have evolved chronologically depending on social changes, the Xinyang folk songs were approved by the State Council to be included in the national intangible cultural heritage list, the Xinyang municipal government began to pay attention to the inheritance and protection of Xinyang folk songs. The method to transmission of Xinyang folk song are; 1) Establish the original ecological folk village and cultivate the living space of folk songs 2) Use new online media to expand the influence of folk songs and 3) Establish intangible cultural heritage training courses to train successor of Xinyang folk songs.

**Keywords:** Xinyang folk songs, Folksong, Transmission process, Henan province China

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### 1. Introduction

Xinyang is part of Henan Province of China, and is in the southernmost part of Henan Province and the upper reaches of the Huai River. The terrain is high in the south and low in the north, forming a diversified stepped landform with hills and mountains alternating with mountains and plains in the north.

Xinyang is in the transitional region from subtropical to warm temperate zone, with obvious monsoon climate, with a total area of 18,900 square kilometers. Xinyang is an important channel for economic and cultural exchanges in central China. It is located at the junction of the three national economic growth plates of the Central Plains Urban

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Agglomeration, Wuhan Urban Circle, and Anhui-Jiangsu Urban Belt and the hinterland of the two economic belts of Beijing-Guangzhou and Beijing-Jiulong (Hong Kong). The strategic location between the two is the transition zone of geography, climate, and culture between north and south of China. Within a radius of 300 kilometers, there are three major capital cities, they are Zhengzhou, Wuhan, and Hefei. Xinyang's regional culture blended with Henan and Chu. After the Shang, Zhou, Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, the Chu culture and the Central Plains culture merged here, forming a unique cultural style and music style of "Yu Feng Chu Yun" (Website of Xinyang Municipal People's Government, 2020).

Xinyang Folk Song is a traditional folk song music originated in Xinyang City, Henan Province. It was listed as one of the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage with the approval of the State Council of China in June 2008. The original Xinyang folk songs originated from various activities such as labor production and sacrifices. With the development of the times and social changes, Xinyang folk songs have become more and more abundant.

The forms of Xinyang folk songs are changeable. The tunes can be slow and long, but also stable and introverted. The lyrics and music echo each other, forming a seamless integrated art. As a typical Han folk song, it is influenced by the blending of North and South cultures. The tune of folk songs has the delicate and gentleness of southern folk songs and the boldness and roughness of northern folk songs. Xinyang folk songs originate from various activities such as labor life and sacrifices. With the development of society, the types of Xinyang folk songs have become more abundant, gradually covering all aspects of social life (Hanqing, 2018).

Xinyang is known as the "Hometown of Songs and Dances". Xinyang folk songs are the main symbol of Xinyang's folk music culture. Like Xinyang culture, it combines the characteristics of north and south music. It has a wide variety and unique style. In the "Chinese Folk Songs Collection Henan Volume", Xinyang folk songs account for 23% of the total volume of folk songs and are an important part of Henan folk songs. Xinyang folk songs cover a wide range of subjects, covering all the social life content of the past dynasties, with a distinctive style and far-reaching influence (Rui, 2016).

Based on the above research materials and research foundation, the researchers wants to study and collection information are provided for researchers who are interested in protecting and transmission Xinyang folk songs.

## **2. Review literature**

Xinyang is located in southern Henan, between 113.45'~115.55' east longitude and 30.23'~32.27' north latitude, the upper reaches of the Huai River, the northern foot of the Ta-pieh Mountains, Anhui to the east and Hubei to the south. It is about 205 kilometers

long from east to west and 142 kilometers wide from north to south. Xinyang area is about 18,915 square kilometers, accounting for 11% of the total area of Henan province, with a population of 8.02 million, accounting for about 8.3% of the province's total population.



Figure 1. Map of Xinyang

Xinyang is in the Central of China, adjacent to the developed coastal areas in the east, and the frontier of the central and western development areas in the west.

### 2.1 *The history of Xinyang folk songs*

Xinyang folk songs have a long history and cultural origins. According to historical research, Xinyang folk songs are recorded in "Zhao Nan" and "Chen Feng" in "The Book of Songs". (Yulan, 2002) At the same time, a bamboo panpipe (it is the earliest bamboo wind instrument discovered in China) was unearthed in the tomb of the Huang Guojun and Meng couples during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period more than 2,000 years ago.

The Warring States chime unearthed in Xinyang Changtaiguan No. 1 tomb of the Warring States Period in 1953 indicates that the music in Xinyang during the Warring States Period has used a twelve-tone scale close to the twelve equal temperament. The destination of Confucius's travels around the countries and the place where Zilu settled in Xinyang, the story of Sima Guang smashes the cylinder (a classic Chinese children's story with educational significance), and the story of sheep running away and mending the sheep pen (a classic Chinese children's story with educational significance) also took place in

Xinyang, with a solid cultural heritage It provides fertile soil for the development of Xinyang folk songs.

During the Han, Wei, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the "Xianghe Song" of "Silk and Bamboo are more harmonious, the Song of the Festival Holder" has a great influence on Xinyang folk songs. For example, local ceremonial songs used for weddings and celebrations, lantern songs for entertaining gods, and field songs used for farming in traffic and water, etc., all use the form of singing and dancing. They are both instrumental players and main singers. This form of singing has always been continuing to this day. After thousands of years of long years, Xinyang folk song reached its peak, not only the content of the concert, all-encompassing theme, in the form of singing is more colorful and varied (Wenyang, 2013).

According to artist legends, folk music flourished during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. Since the beginning of Qianlong, the "Vulcan Society" on March 17 and the "Singing Festival" on the first month are the grandest. In the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty, Xinyang folk music developed to its heyday, and folk "music classes" were quite popular in places such as Shangcheng and Huangchuan. Almost villages have built "bands", which shows the flourishing development of folk music at that time. During the Tongzhi reign of the Qing Dynasty, Zhou Zupei, a Shangcheng native, was awarded a bachelor of "Wenhua Temple Tiren Pavilion". Since then, Shangcheng County has frequent exchanges with Kyoto and successively exchanged trades with wealthy merchants in the south, bringing political and economic prosperity to the city and the neighboring areas. Subsequently, the cultural exchanges between the North and the South were promoted, and the folk songs (small songs, minor tunes, small chants) also developed greatly (Xinyang Institute of Cultural Relics, 1998).

## *2.2 Classification of Xinyang Folk Songs*

Xinyang folk songs are a typical Han folk song with ancient traditional culture. It has various forms, rich types, and complete system. According to Xinyang folk song theme is broadly divided into a chant, folk songs, Tian Ge, custom songs, minor, light songs, children's songs, selling eight categories of tone, together with other kinds of revolutionary history folk songs and new folk songs, a total of more than ten species. The chants are loud and enthusiastic, the folk songs are loud and long, the field songs are humorous, the minor tunes are euphemistic, the revolutionary historical folk songs are enthusiastic, and the children's songs are full of fun. Each has its own unique style, which truly and vividly records the society of people in different periods and different regions in Xinyang. Life practice, and inner emotions, thoughts, and hopes (Rui, 2016).

The Style and Singing Techniques of Henan Xinyang Folk Songs, mainly divides Xinyang folk songs into (1) soothing, graceful, lyrical, and gentle; (2) light, cheerful, and hearty according to the mood and style of music; (3) Rough, high-pitched, and agitated; (4)

Elegant, funny, humorous, lively, and other styles. It further explained the relationship and influence of dialects on music style, and summarized the concentrated singing methods of Xinyang folk songs: high-pitched singing, flat-tuned singing, low-pitched singing, straight singing, broken-tune singing, gliding singing, tremolo singing, wave tone singing, quickly speak and sing, etc (Jingzhou, 2003).

The music styles of folk songs in Xinyang area are longer than ordinary folk songs, and are mostly multi-segment structures, generally composed of three to four sentences, five sentences, and upper and lower sentences. Generally, the rhythm is mostly medium speed. For example, folk songs are mostly in four or two beats, and narrative folk songs are mostly in four or four beats. Some folk songs also have works in scattered beats and eight or nine beats. The works are mainly multi-stage works, and most of them are singing with one melody and multiple melody (Renli, 2015).

### 3. Method

The main research method in this article is qualitative research. The researcher has chosen the research area is Xinyang area of Henan Province, China. I take representative folk artists as my insiders and take some representative folk songs as the main research objects.

#### 3.1. Key informants

- Mr.Yu Difu, was born in 1962 in a family of folk songs in Shangcheng County, Xinyang. His grandfather and father are both influential local folk singers. Since the age of 16, Yu Difu followed his father to learn Xinyang folk songs. Because of his family heritage and frequent exchanges with folk singers in mountain villages, Yu Difu can sing more than 300 Xinyang folk songs. Among them are lantern songs, ceremonial songs, chants, etc., which are rich in content and diverse in forms.



Figure 2. Mr.Yu Difu, the transmit of Xinyang folk songs

- Mr.Liu Hongkui, was born in April 1958, a native of Shangcheng Country. He is a senior theoretical expert in Xinyang folk songs and a national first-class composer. He has served as the chief director and artistic director of Xinyang Spring Festival Gala and large-scale art gala for many times. He has been engaged in mass cultural work for more than 30 years, and has long persisted in the research of folk music theory and music creation. Liu Hongkui is determined to be the guardian of Xinyang folk song treasure house.



Figure 3. Mr.Liu Hongkui, the composer and successor of Xinyang folk songs

- Ms.Chen Hui, was born on June 29, 1977. She is a key music teacher in Xinyang Primary School and who is currently a music teacher at Hongqiao Primary School in Xinxian County. Chen Hui was born in a small mountain village. Her grandfather, grandfather, father, and mother are all well-known local folk artists. The family often sings folk songs in the fields, after tea and dinner, and on New Year's Day. She can sing if the folk songs the family can sing. In her spare time, she is often active on the stage of the common people, getting acquainted with folk artists from all over her hometown, and learning a lot of authentic folk songs. Chen Hui is not only a practitioner of Xinyang folk songs, but also a transmission of Xinyang folk songs. She has practiced and trained many students who are keen to sing Xinyang folk songs.



Figure 4. Ms. Chen Hui, the transmit and practitioner of Xinyang folk songs

### *3.2. Research tools*

The research tools used in this paper are mainly interviews and observations. In order to obtain research data, the researcher will conduct follow-up interviews with the insider, and record audio and video to obtain information about the insider's singing of Xinyang folk songs.

### *3.3. Data collecting*

The author will collect data through file analysis and field surveys. In order to conduct in-depth research, researchers refer to the literature of libraries and cultural centers, and use network platforms such as CNKI (China Knowledge Infrastructure) to complete literature analysis. Then the author plans to go to the research site (Xinyang area, Henan Province, China) for fieldwork. Researchers will record the singing and teaching process of insiders through interviews, observations, audio recordings, and video recordings.

## **4. Results**

### *4.1. The development of Xinyang folk songs*

The long historical development process of Xinyang folk songs, coupled with the geographical location of Xinyang's north-south intersection, made Xinyang folk songs gradually lose its original ecological appearance. Nowadays, only a few left-behind old people and a small number of tea farmers sing in the form of self-entertainment. The younger generation chooses to go out to work or engage in other industries. Because they don't sing for a long time or no one sings them, there are many Xinyang folk songs. Valuable traditional ballads have been gradually lost. The dissemination group of Xinyang folk songs is gradually shrinking, facing the dilemma of no successor.

Since the Xinyang folk songs were approved by the State Council to be included in the national intangible cultural heritage list, the Xinyang municipal government began to pay attention to the inheritance and protection of Xinyang folk songs. The local cultural department actively organizes literary and art workers to sort out the lyrics and music of old folk songs, and create new folk songs with the flavor of the times and strong local characteristics, making Xinyang folk songs more novel in singing style and lyrics content. In addition, the organization of folk songs has also made great progress. In the early 1980s, the "Xinyang Area Folk Songs Volume" published by Zhongyuan Farmers Publishing House selected more than 1,500 folk songs from nearly 10,000 folk songs. "Xinyang Regional Songs Volume" edited by Wang Daoyun and Chen Youcai included more than 2,000 Xinyang folk songs; "Chinese Folk Songs Collection Henan Volume" included a total of 224 Xinyang folk songs, accounting for 1/5 of the total Henan volume; "Henan Folk Literature Collection" "Xinyang Regional Ballad Volume" contains 849 various folk songs

of Xinyang; "Xinyang Folk Songs" compiled by Xinyang City Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center contains 387 various folk songs of Xinyang with a CD.

The government departments have also set up special funds for inheritors of folk songs to ensure their basic lives and allow them to create and teach folk songs without any worries. These measures have preserved many folk songs that are on the verge of disappearing, and the recording and archiving of folk songs has also been well developed.

#### *4.2. The Transmission of Xinyang Folk Songs*

Since the Xinyang folk songs were included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List with the approval of the State Council in 2008, Xinyang folk songs have ushered in new development opportunities, but they also face a series of problems and challenges. The main problems are as follows:

- Advances in technology and economic development have caused folk songs to lose their growing. With the continuous development of the times, changes in production methods and social life, the urbanized lifestyle makes folk songs lose their original social significance. In the traditional farming society, folk songs are an important part of people's daily life. Folk songs are the carrier of their ethnic memories, a tool for expressing feelings, a medium for choosing couples, and the most important way for people to entertain and relax. In other words, folk songs are an indispensable part of people's lives in farming society.
- The impact of new media has caused folk songs to lose their development market. In the contemporary society that emphasizes efficiency, fast food culture is deeply loved by everyone. People are more willing to use new media social software such as Tencent and WeChat to communicate and contact. Sending text messages and phone calls is much easier than singing a folk song. Coupled with the increasing abundance of entertainment activities, the increase of TV programs and entertainment facilities, singing folk songs is no longer the main way of entertainment for people, and the entertainment function of folk songs has gradually been forgotten and has only become a means of publicity.
- The generations of the inheritors have caused a gap in the spread of folk songs. Researchers have discovered through fieldwork and fieldwork that the older generation of folk artists has passed away, and there has been a gap in the inheritance of folk songs. Due to the great difference between intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural heritage, it is closely related to people's lives, especially the original ecological culture that relies on oral inheritance such as folk songs. Xinyang folk songs are the original ecological art passed on by word of mouth. The older generation of folk singers are gradually getting old. Young people either go out to earn money or pursue fashion. They have no deep feelings for folk songs. Folk songs gradually function as people's emotional communication and emotional expression. decline. The researchers learned from the



survey that the current age levels of artists who can teach and sing Xinyang folk songs are very different, and there are very few young people willing to sing folk songs.

From the data the researcher found the methods for Transmission of Xinyang folk songs as follow: 1) Establish the original ecological folk village and cultivate the living space of folk songs. With the upsurge of intangible cultural protection, the original ecological folklore tourism has become more and more popular. The Xinyang government can increase investment to establish small-scale original ecological folk songs and folk villages in areas where the original ecological environment is well preserved and folk songs are more concentrated. This will not only provide the living soil for the development of folk songs, but also drive the development of tourism in Xinyang City. It can also use the income from the development of folk tourism to provide financial support for the protection of folk songs and achieve a win-win situation. 2) Use new online media to expand the influence of folk songs. The advent of the information age has promoted the rapid development of various online self-media. Although folk songs are the product of farming society, they must keep up with the pace of the times and use new media to vigorously promote folk traditional music culture. For example, we can actively "go out" with the help of Xinyang's "Tea Culture Festival" stage. Or use the public platform of the Internet to shoot documentaries about Xinyang folk songs, set up a Xinyang folk song public account, and regularly push knowledge and information about folk songs, so that more people can understand and fall in love with Xinyang folk songs. 3) Establish intangible cultural heritage training courses to train successor of Xinyang folk songs. Xinyang folk song is a kind of intangible cultural heritage sung orally, and the successor is its carrier. Government departments should improve relevant protection measures, set up training institutions, and regularly hold intangible cultural heritage training courses. Invite famous local folk song successors to provide professional training to people who are interested in folk songs, so that more people can master the singing skills of Xinyang folk songs. Another important reason for the failure of the successors is that people are relatively indifferent to the protection of folk songs and do not understand how to protect the intangible cultural heritage of folk songs. The local government can invite experts and scholars in folk songs to explain the knowledge of Xinyang folk song protection to local cultural department personnel and folk song successors responsible for the protection of intangible cultural heritage, so that they can understand the relevant policies of intangible cultural heritage and master relevant protection measures.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusions**

Xinyang folk songs are as luxuriant as the Ta-pieh Mountain thatch. She is deeply rooted in the culturally fertile soil of southern Henan and has a rich life foundation. It fully demonstrates the life scenes and thoughts and feelings of the people of Xinyang, who live

and work, happy, angry, sad and happy. The art reproduces the group image of the ancestors who are hardworking, kind, brave and intelligent, and unpretentious, as a Xinyang folk song that incorporates the cultural characteristics of folk songs from many places (Yang, et.al., 2021; Guo, et.al., 2021; Zhang, et.al., 2022). It is a typical folk song of the Han nationality, and it is a gorgeous flower in the folk-art garden of our country.

Generally speaking, because Xinyang area is located in the center of China, it integrates the different musical characters and cultural characteristics of the south and the north. At the same time, Xinyang has a profound culture and a long history, which has continuity in the inheritance and dissemination of culture. In historical musicology, the development of music history is closely linked with cultural migration, cultural evolution, economic and social development. Therefore, the style and style of Han folk songs can be exemplified in Xinyang folk songs. This is the commonality of Han folk songs. As far as Xinyang folk song is concerned, it has its own unique artistic characteristics (Lei, (2018). In summary, there are three aspects, that is, the distinctive local color, the humorous style, and the strong mark of the times.

In the information age of economic globalization, as the local people's entertainment and leisure methods are mainly directed to electronic devices such as televisions and the Internet, the inheritance environment of Xinyang folk songs has also undergone tremendous changes. Although the government's cultural department pays attention, especially the Xinyang folk songs are listed as national cultural heritage, but because the popularization and publicity of folk songs have not been implemented to the folks, the successor and protection of Xinyang folk songs have only remained on the water. It's just that the cultural departments and non-governmental organizations of counties and cities are working hard on their own initiative, and the spread and protection of Xinyang folk songs are still in a severe situation.

Therefore, from the perspective of cultural dissemination, under the current state of economic and cultural development, there are more favorable conditions for the dissemination and protection of music, which requires the government and the people to establish cultural self-confidence and national self-confidence in their own nation, and make use of modern The preservation and dissemination of music by technological means. At the same time, it will be more difficult. The protection of music and art is the protection of people. If we want to protect the precious music culture, we must first properly protect and cultivate folk artists who sing and perform folk music. as one of China's national intangible cultural heritage, Xinyang folk songs are precious. To protect Xinyang folk songs is to protect the colorful Chinese culture. However, in view of the current dissemination and development of Xinyang folk songs, a more effective way of dissemination and development is needed.

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