



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOLK SONG STYLES IN THE HUIZHOU REGION

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Abstract

The folk songs of the Huizhou region in Guangdong Province, China, are richly diverse and embody the area's profound cultural heritage. This study examines three distinct regional folk songs: the Huiyang Jiege, Ruhu Fishing Song, and Huidong Fishermen's Song, aiming to delineate their musical styles and cultural expressions and how they mirror the local culture. Utilizing both questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, this research engages with 326 residents and 16 cultural experts from various counties within Huizhou City. The study methodically evaluates the artistic features of these folk songs—including melody, theme, and lyrics—and investigates their transmission in contemporary times. The findings reveal that while these songs stem from a common cultural background, they exhibit distinct regional traits in their expression and social roles. For instance, the Huiyang Jiege is noted for its simple structure, whereas the Ruhu Fishing Song and Huidong Fishermen's Songs focus more on emotional expression and social interaction. The study advocates for enhanced local government support and collaborative research initiatives with universities. Additionally, it suggests leveraging modern media technologies to promote and preserve these folk songs as vital cultural assets. By thoroughly analyzing these locally distinctive folk songs, this research contributes to the academic field of ethnomusicology and offers valuable insights into the preservation and perpetuation of regional culture.

Keywords

Huizhou Folk Songs, Artistic Characteristics, Cultural Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage

Introduction

Huizhou, located in the southeastern part of Guangdong Province, China, also known as Goose Town, is a city with a long history and a unique geographical location. It is located at the junction of Guangdong, Fujian and Gan provinces, and thus has historically been an important node of cultural exchange (Xie, 2023). The region is blessed with rich natural landscapes such as the Dongjiang River and a rich cultural heritage that includes Hakka and Chaoshan cultures. This cultural diversity provides a unique background for the folk songs of Huizhou, making them an important vehicle for the cultural heritage of this region (Zhou, 2022). The folk songs of Huizhou not only preserve much ancient historical information and reflect the local society's lifestyle, philosophy and social structure (Xue, 2019). Historically, Huizhou belonged to the Hundred Yue "Bound Lou" small state during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, then belonged to the Nanhai County in the Qin and Han Dynasties, and was the seat of Xinle County during the North and South Dynasties. In 1020, to avoid Prince Zhao Zhenwei's name taboo, the town name was changed from "Zhen" to "Hui," which is still in use. The Ming and Qing Dynasties for Huizhou Province, the Republic of China for Huiyang County. In 1988, it was upgraded to prefecture-level city, jurisdiction of Huicheng District and Huiyang County, Huidong County, Longmen County (Tu, 2019). Today, Huizhou city covers an area of 412.2 square kilometers. The city has long been an important military, economic and cultural center in the Pearl River Delta region (Gao, 2021).

Before 1949 (the founding of New China), the main residents of Huizhou were Han Chinese, also including the She ethnic group. After the liberation, the ethnic minority population increased slightly (Du, 2022). According to the 1964 census, there were ten ethnic groups living in Huizhou, including Han, Mongolian, Hui, Manchu, Zhuang, Miao and Tujia, with a very small number of non-Han ethnic groups (Zeng, 2017). Between 1990 and 2023, the changes in the resident population of Huizhou are illustrated in Figure 1.

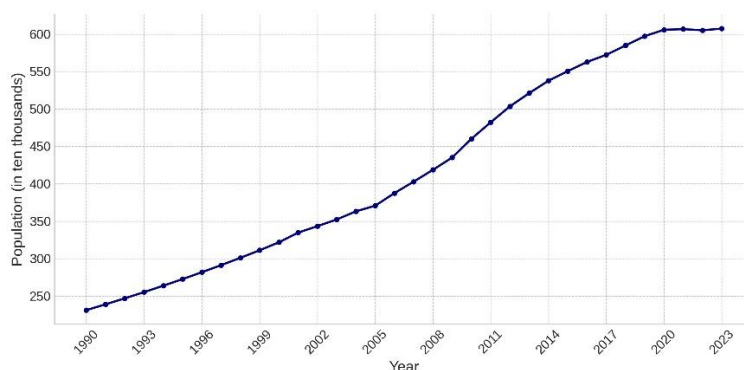


Figure1. Population Trend in Huizhou (1990-2023)

As an important intangible cultural heritage, Huizhou regional folk songs carry rich historical and cultural values in the process of inheritance and development. In recent years, research in this field has gradually increased, and scholars have explored the artistic characteristics and social functions of Huizhou folk songs and their inheritance and protection strategies in modern society from different perspectives.

Ye Lin and Xie Rongrong's research focuses on Huidong fishermen's songs' history and social and cultural background (Ye, 2008; Xie, 2023). They documented in detail how Huidong fishermen's songs reflect the lifestyle and social structure of the region, pointing out that these songs are not only musical expressions, but also an important part of the community's history and cultural identity. Mr. Ye Lin, who was the former Art Commissioner of the Ministry of Culture, has published a paper on the fishing songs of the Huidong region of Huizhou, in which he has recorded the process of contacting and collecting the fishing songs of Huidong from the 1970s to the present day, focusing on the introduction of the history, and writing a detailed record of how the fishing songs of Huidong reflect the traditional lifestyle of the region.

In addition, Du Wenxi and Deng Shengnan conducted an in-depth analysis of the stylistic characteristics of Huidong songs and their development (Du, 2022; Deng, 2015), emphasizing the influence of dialect and local tradition on the formation of folk song styles. Wang Guangde briefly analyzes the classification and stylistic features of Huidong fishermen's songs at the level of compositional techniques. Chen Zhixiang and Liao Zhitao of the Huidong County Cultural Center write analytical essays on Huidong fishermen's songs regarding the genre of love songs. As early as the beginning of the last century, Liao Fushu, the famous music educator and musicologist, who was born in Huizhou native, had published an analysis of the lyrics of the wailing songs in Ruhu area of Huizhou, and he analyzed the stylistic characteristics of the fishing songs of Ruhu in Huizhou from the perspective of dialect rhyme. In the information on traditional arts in Dongjiang provided by the Huizhou City Record (2008 edition of the China Bookstore), traditional Dongjiang folk tunes are introduced, such as the Wooden Fish Book Rap, the Hakka Dragon Boat Rap, the Wujuban, and the Spring Cow Tunes, etc., and the music of these genres is briefly described and categorized. It also describes the local musical creations through the ages.

In terms of intangible cultural heritage preservation, Liu Dajian and Cai Jing's study provides a preservation mechanism and strategy based on Huidong fishermen's songs (Liu, 2017; Cai, 2012). They explored how to preserve and promote these traditional songs through modern education systems and public policies, and how to utilize modern media technologies to record and disseminate folk songs. In addition, the work of Berlin Lin, Huang Hong, and Li Fang focuses on the current situation and future conservation strategies of Huidong fishermen's songs discussing how to balance conservation and innovation in the process of globalization and modernization (Bai, et al., 2014).

In terms of research on the function of folk songs in modern society, Qiu Haiquan's chronicle work documents how Huidong fishermen's songs have demonstrated their unique charm in local and national cultural events (Qiu, 2019; 2020). These documents show that folk songs play an important role in cultural festivals and fulfil their unique social functions in education and community building.

By comprehensively analyzing these literatures, it can be seen that the study of Huizhou folk songs is shifting from traditional text collection and classification to deeper cultural significance, social functions and their modern inheritance. In the wave of contemporary globalization, traditional culture faces challenges. As part of the regional intangible cultural heritage, Huizhou folk songs carry rich historical and cultural values and serve as a bridge between the past and the present. An in-depth study of the styles of folk songs in different regions of Huizhou can help to analyze the cultural logic and historical lineage behind them, and effectively protect and pass on these cultural heritages. This study will not only be of great value to academics but will also enhance public respect for traditional culture, promote innovation in local culture, and contribute to the preservation and development of global cultural diversity. Therefore, this study proposes two research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of Huiyang Jiege, Ruhu Fishing Songs, and Huidong fishermen's songs in terms of melody, form, and lyrics?
2. What strategies and methods can effectively promote these folk songs' sustainable development and cultural inheritance in the context of modernization and globalization?

Methodology

In this study, we used both questionnaires and in-depth interviews to explore the artistic characteristics of Huizhou folk songs and their strategies for inheritance and innovation. To ensure the breadth and depth of the study, residents of different counties within Huizhou City (Huicheng District, Huiyang District, Huidong County, etc.) were selected as participants for the questionnaire, with a total of 326 adults participating. All these participants had Huizhou household registration or had lived in Huizhou for more than 1 year, ensuring the representativeness and statistical efficacy of the data. Stratified random sampling was used for sample selection, and individuals who had not been exposed to Huizhou regional folk songs were excluded.

The questionnaire was designed to contain three sections: demographic information, knowledge of and exposure to folk songs, and attitudes and values toward folk songs. Data were collected through both online and paper questionnaires to cover groups of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. The online questionnaire was distributed through social media and email, while the paper questionnaire was distributed at local community centers and cultural events. The collected data were entered and cleaned through statistical software (SPSS) to ensure accuracy in the analysis. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and inferential statistics to understand the differences in attitudes and knowledge of folk songs among different populations.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 representative folk song performers, local culture scholars and folk song enthusiasts. The interviews were semi-structured, utilizing a pre-developed and detailed interview guide, and included a series of open-ended questions focusing on participants' perceptions of the artistic characteristics of folk songs, the function of folk songs in the community, and insights into inheritance and innovation. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-recorded to obtain detailed data for post hoc analysis. After the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed into text, they were coded and thematically analyzed using qualitative analysis software (NVivo) to identify common themes and patterns. In this way, we were able to explore in depth the cultural meanings of folk songs and their deeper implications in social functioning. In terms of data analysis, the qualitative analysis of the interview data helped us to reveal the role of folk songs in cultural transmission and social interaction, providing a scientific basis and practical strategy for the protection and innovation of Huizhou folk songs. The interview contained the following series of open-ended questions as a guide (including but not limited to):

1. How would you describe the melodic and tonal characteristics of Huizhou folk songs with which you are familiar?
2. What are the unique features of these folk songs in terms of melodic structure and rhythm?
3. What themes are usually addressed in the lyrics of folk songs? How do these themes reflect Huizhou's local culture and history?
4. What role do folk songs play in the cultural life of your community?
5. How do you see the role of folk songs in maintaining community ties and transmitting cultural heritage?
6. How do you think the status and function of folk songs have changed in modern Huizhou society?
7. What factors do you think are most affecting the transmission of Huizhou folk songs?
8. How do you think the folk songs of Huizhou should be effectively protected and inherited?
9. What do you think about the combination of traditional elements and modern innovations in the inheritance process?
10. Does Huizhou's education system provide support for the preservation and inheritance of folk songs? How is it done?
11. What measures can the government and related organizations take to preserve and promote folk songs?
12. How have modern technologies (e.g., the Internet, social media) affected the dissemination and acceptance of Huizhou's folk songs?
13. How do you evaluate the role of digital means in protecting and promoting folk songs?

Result

In this study, charts were drawn to show the age distribution of the residents who participated in the Huizhou Folk Song Questionnaire to gain a deeper understanding of the participation and attitudes of different age groups towards local folk song traditions. The results show that the age group of 31 to 45 years old has the highest percentage of 45%. This reflects the central role of the middle-aged layer in cultural maintenance and transmission.

In contrast, the younger generation (18-30 years old) and the older age group (46 years old and above) had relatively low participation, accounting for 35% and 30% of the total, respectively (See Figure 2).

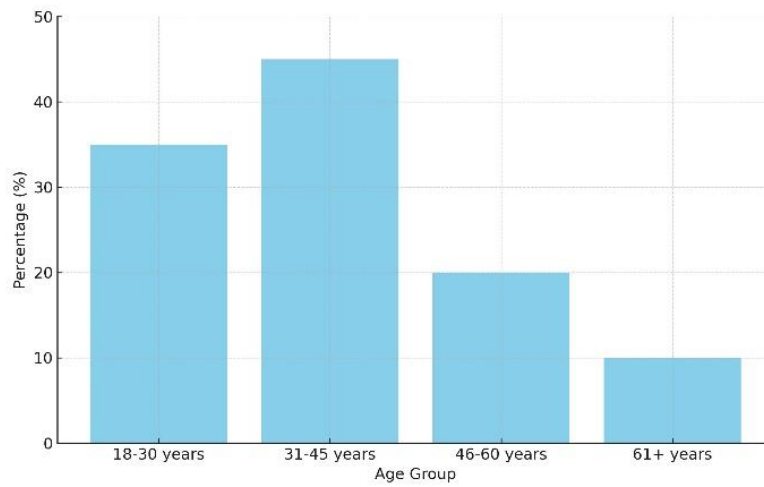


Figure 2. Age Distribution of Survey Participants in Huizhou

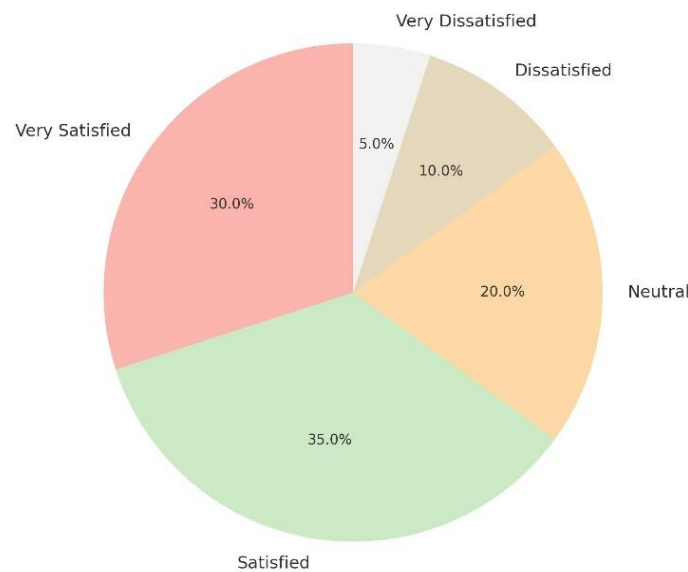


Figure 3. Satisfaction with Huizhou Folk Songs

This study assessed audience satisfaction with Huizhou folk songs using a 5-point Likert scale, and the results revealed its wide acceptance and support in the local community. The data showed that 65% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with Huizhou folk songs, a high percentage that reflects the success of folk songs in maintaining cultural heritage and providing community entertainment. Neutral ratings accounted for 20%, indicating that while there is some acceptance, there are potential problems that need further exploration and addressing. Meanwhile, only 15% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction or very dissatisfaction, suggesting that while most people have a positive view of Huizhou folk songs, there is still a need to focus on and improve the consumer experience for minority groups (See Figure 3).

Ruhu Fishing Song

As one of the traditional folk arts in Huizhou, Ruhu Fishing Song has unique artistic characteristics, which are reflected in its singing form, melody characteristics, lyrics content and social functions.

Firstly, Ruhu Fishing Songs are sung in a variety of forms, including solo, duet and fight songs. These forms show the diversity of fishing songs and reflect the local people's love and creativity for music expression. Among them, the fighting song reflects a special way of musical conversation, which is competitive and interesting (Wang, 2021). Secondly, the tunes of Ruhu Fishing Songs are in pentatonic mode, with a wide range, a gentle traveling tone and a strong aria. This tune makes the fishing song closer to the folk life when expressing emotions and narrating stories, so people can deeply feel the emotions and connotations. Moreover, the lyrics of Ruhu Fishing Songs are wide-ranging and rich in themes, covering nine categories, such as love songs, marriage songs, white affair songs, labor songs, life songs, landscape and place names songs, music songs, children's songs, and miscellaneous songs, etc (Yuan, 2021). These lyrics reflect the local people's feelings and stories and are also very popular among the local people. The content of these lyrics reflects the living conditions, cultural traditions, and values of the local people, and has a high degree of localization and literature.

In addition, Ruhu Fishing Songs also have important significance in social function. In the past historical period, fishing songs were an important carrier for the production life and social interaction of the boat-dwelling people, and an important way for them to record their lives and express their emotions. Nowadays, despite the challenges to the inheritance of fishing songs, the protection and inheritance of fishing songs are underway with the efforts of the local government and all sectors of the community, to stimulate the new vitality of fishing songs and allow this traditional folk art to be inherited and developed.

Through in-depth interviews, the researchers learned that from 1949 to the 1960s, most of the boat-dwelling people of Ruhu, both men and women, could sing fishing songs, of which Mr. and Mrs. Liu Hua were the leaders. As the representative inheritor of the Ruhu fishing songs, Liu Hua is 87 years old this year, and has heard and witnessed the interpretation of fishing songs since childhood. Ruhu prevalent fishing songs, Liu Hua under the influence of her husband Zhai, will sing more than 100 fishing songs, the content has become more extensive.

According to the customs of boat-dwelling families, boat-dwelling women must sing the song of crying marriage when they get married. Not singing the song of crying marriage is regarded not filial piety to their parents, thus each boat-dwelling women must learn to sing fishing songs. Liu Hua said, when he got married before, he needed to prepare for three months to sing a good wedding song.

The person in charge introduced that the boat-dwelling people put their daily labor and what they see and hear in fishing songs, sing stories about getting along with people and pursuing love, and melt the scenery they have seen and the road they have traveled into the songs. Liu Hua observed, "Fishermen sing to each other and couples engage in singing bouts, embedding their dialogues with wit, humor, and even emotional outbursts like laughter and anger. Songs serve various life events: weddings and funerals, laborious tasks, and romantic courtships. People of all ages know at least a few lines by heart, making each fishing song a cherished chronicle of life's moments."

To protect and pass on the Ruhu fishing songs, Ruhu Town government has taken a series of measures, including a comprehensive and systematic collection, recording, classification and cataloging of fishing songs, to confirm its historical evolution, distribution area and inheritance genealogy (Liu, 2021). Recently, The Culture, Broadcasting, Tourism and Sports Bureau jointly Ruhu Town carried out Ruhu fishing song picking and creation activities. Huizhou City Musicians Association of composers and research local Huizhou dialect experts went to Ruhu Town water community picking, in-depth excavation of fishing song material. The fishing songs collected by Ruhu will be organized and compiled into a songbook. After screening, the representative and singable works will be selected, and the Huizhou Musicians Association will arrange for vocal teachers to enter the campus to carry out teaching and singing activities. Subsequently, the Huicheng District Ruhu Township Government and the Huicheng District Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports will take the lead in the implementation, and the Huizhou Musicians Association will create ten new Ruhu Fishing Songs works based on the original music materials (Yang, 2017). These works will be presented at the launch and exhibition and compiled into an anthology of Ruhu fishing song songs together with the original fishing song material. This series of activities aims to facilitate the protection and inheritance of Ruhu Fishing Song and its innovation and promotion, to stimulate its new vitality, and to lay the foundation for the declaration of provincial and national non-legacy projects.

Huiyang Jiege

Huiyang Jiege, also known as "Jiege songs," are a branch of Hakka songs in the Dongjiang Valley of Huizhou. Early Hakka immigrants came to the Dongjiang Valley from the central plains of China, bringing with them the characteristics and styles of folk songs from the central plains, such as mountain songs, ditties, and xintianyou. After a long period of inheritance and development, these songs evolved into the folk songs sung by the Hakka people of Huizhou in the Hakka dialect with distinctive folk-art characteristics (Tang, 2013). Because of

their wide range, strong attraction, and popularity, they are called "all songs," broadly divided into three types: Yonghu all songs, Chuniu tunes and Huiyang mountain songs. Huang Hongying, a hereditary heir, promotes the Huiyang Jiege through performances and lectures.

From the song structure aspect, the Huiyang Jiege is usually a four-sentence song with a neat structure, which is often a repetition or variation of a two-sentence song with slight variations. Another special structure is the "five-sentence board," also known as the "bamboo board song," "Jianghu tune" or "beggar's song." It is also known as "Bamboo Board Song," "Jianghu Tune" or "Beggar Song." It has two main types of structure: a+b+a+b+c and a+b+c+c'+a. The locals believe the creation of this structure to be the result of the singer's skill in incorporating the Nianbai style into it, which makes the lyrics rich in content, the length of the phrases staggered, and the sparseness and tightness of the word sounds orderly, thus expanding the overall structure of the four-sentence form (Deng, 2021).

From the point of view of music ontology, most of the Huiyang Jiege are characterized by lyricism and descriptiveness. Its melody is mainly lyrical, and its range is not wide, controlled within one octave, which makes the songs sound especially close to the tone of the Hakka dialect, gentle and soft, with very few intervals skipping in the melody, and this kind of friendly "conversation" greatly closes the distance between the listeners and the singers. The melodic aspect contains the following features:

Firstly, many songs praise the Communist Party of China (CPC), the great leader Chairman Mao, local revolutionary heroes, and the new society. These songs are a way for the people of Huiyang to express their love for the CPC, respect for the people's leader and revolutionary heroes, and express their feelings for the people's life after a hard time. Secondly, most love and playful songs express amusing, question-and-answer, and intellectual content. Although it is customary to use the feather tone in these songs, the addition of such liner notes as "golden peony" and "golden phoenix" to the lyrics, together with changes in rhythm, tempo, and intensity, can also result in a light, joyful, and peaceful musical atmosphere. Thirdly, there are many sad songs in Huiyang Jiege's repertoire, which are songs of lamentation and complaints to express accusations against social injustice (Deng, 2021). These songs usually contain simple tunes, smooth melodies, and downward-ending phrases.

From the lyric perspective, it contains the following features:

Firstly, spoken dialect expression of lyrics is unique. The lyrics of Huizhou songs reflect the colloquial expressions of the Hakka people in their daily lives, showing the charm of the local Hakka language. For example, the Huizhou dialect nursery rhyme "Palm Cowboy" describes the difficulties of life, using "palm cowboy" to refer to the cowherd children, emphasizing that they could not have good food and could only take simple "stinking wind and pickles," which vividly depicts the living conditions of that time. In addition, the song "Auntie Rang Chai Look at Lanterns" describes the scene of an auntie looking at lanterns with her child, showing the warmth and joy of the family by depicting the actions and scenes of the auntie and the child. These lyrics are easy to understand and full of local emotions, reflecting the unique charm of Huiyang Jiege.

Secondly, comparison and rising techniques in lyrics writing can be widely seen. The lyrics of Huiyang Jiege not only embody colloquial expressions, but also use the rhetorical techniques of comparison and rise. For example, the metaphorical approach often found in the lyrics makes the content of the lyrics more meaningful and deeper. For example, in the song "People Don't Work, They Don't Do Anything," the phrase "A painted eyebrow can bark but can't cry, a drum can't beat a cow's skin, a flute doesn't blow in vain, people don't work, they don't do anything," cleverly expresses the importance of labor by comparing people's daily work to the skills they must master. In addition, the song "Vine Born Tree Dead and Tangled" compares the vine and the tree to the relationship between a man and a woman, expressing the purity and irreplaceability of love. These metaphors make the lyrics more poetic and expressive and show the deep ethnic cultural connotation of Huiyang Jiege.

Thirdly, the expression of lyrics with repeated chapters and phrases are common. Huiyang Jiege often use overlapping chapters and phrases to promote the song's plot and bring the song to a climax. For example, "Sister Shy Da Da" describes the scene of the river flowing, the sun shining on the earth, and the sisters going to pick tea. The last sentence, "singing all the way to shy da da" pushes the emotion to the climax through overlapping chapters and phrases and expresses the joyful atmosphere. This writing technique makes the lyrics more expressive, combining content and expression.

Finally, the expression of double entendre in the lyrics are adopted. Huiyang Jiege often use the technique of double entendre, for example, in "From the head to the bottom of the feet," it reads, "Remembering the time when the ploughman plowed the fields, the bitter melon hung on the yellow lotus tree, the pig's guts buried under the yellow lotus tree, and the bitterness from the head to the bottom of the feet." The words "yellow lotus," "bitter melon" and "pig's gall" are all bitter foods, but they are used in the lyrics to describe the hard life of the plowman. This clever pun makes the lyrics more vivid and witty, showing not only the bitter experience of the people in the old society, but also the optimistic spirit of the Hakka people.

Huidong Fishermen's Song

Huidong fishermen's songs, commonly known as "Hou Boat Songs," "Hou Boat Songs" or "City Songs," is a form of music with rich traditions and deep cultural heritage, belonging to the "Guangdong Fishing Songs." It is a form of music with rich tradition and deep cultural heritage and belongs to the shallow sea fishing song category of the "Guangdong East Fishing Songs." This form of music is mainly popular in the coastal area of Huidong County, Guangdong Province, China, including the fishing villages of Xunliao, Nishan and Yanzhou, and has been listed as China's national intangible cultural heritage (Zhong, 2013).

The origin of Huidong fishermen's songs can be traced back to the Song Dynasty, when a group of fishermen from Fujian and Chaozhou migrated to Huidong, and their music and culture were imported and blended with the local characteristics, gradually developing into the unique Huidong fishermen's songs (Wu, 2015). This kind of song is the comfort of the fishermen's soul in difficult years and an important part of their social and cultural life. Fishermen's songs are performed in various forms, including solo, chorus and duet, and are often sung at important festivals, weddings, family gatherings and other social occasions.

In terms of song structure, Huidong fishermen's songs mainly use two types of lyrics. One is an alternating question-and-answer style, which usually contains liner notes or phrases to enhance the expressive power of the song; the other is a four-line structure in which some lines need to be rhymed (Zhang, 2020). The lyrics are usually straightforward and emotional, covering descriptions of the sea, praises of fish, the hardships of life, or thoughts of family, typically reflecting the lives and emotions of generations of fishermen. In terms of tuning and melody, Huidong fishermen's songs show a rich variety of tunings and scales, of which the pentatonic scale is a common basis, but also includes the hexatonic or septatonic scales, giving the songs a freer form of expression. The music's melody is mostly composed of small jumps and sharp arrangements, sometimes incorporating glissando techniques to make the melody smooth and expressive (Bao, 2018). This musical form not only contains elements of local opera, but also integrates the melodies of temple music, showing its musical diversity and local characteristics.

Huidong Fishermen's Song has had a positive influence on modern music creation. Its melodies and lyrics have not only provided rich inspiration for modern musicians but have also been widely borrowed for their ability to extract themes and emotions from life (Wang, 2016). These songs are a form of artistic expression and an important medium for cultural transmission and emotional communication, demonstrating their ability to evolve and adapt in modern society.

Li Futai, born in 1942 in Huidong, began learning fishing songs at the age of eight. Huidong fishermen's songs reflect the daily life of fishermen. He recalled that before the founding of People's Republic of China, the life of fishermen, including his own family's, was hard, and thus Huidong fishermen's songs were sad and bitter in lyrics and tunes. After the establishment of People's Republic of China, fishermen began to go ashore, and his father and mother found jobs, and life got better every day. At this time, the fishing songs he heard became cheerful in tune.

Discussion

From the characterization of folk songs in the above three regions, we can compare the characteristics of different folk songs in Huizhou region from the following aspects:

From the mode and melody, Ruhu fishing songs exclusively utilize the Yu mode, while Huiyang Jiege incorporates three different scales. The extensive repertoire of Huidong allows for a broader array of modes. Ruhu songs refrain from using ornaments, which contrasts with Huiyang Jiege songs that employ them more liberally to enhance their musical texture. In Huidong fishermen's songs, ornament is even more prevalent, with frequent use of clear tones and shifts in modal pitch, particularly on strong beats and within decorative passages.

The folk songs from these areas exhibit a progressive increase in the complexity of modal scales and ornaments. The Ruhu Fishing Song and Huiyang Folk Song share similar tonal scales and employ downward melodic progressions, establishing a mournful basic key. Additionally, Huizhou folk music features a variety of freely structured compositions, such as seven-syllable triplets and variable-length phrases, which reflect the unique syntactic structure shaped by the local dialect.

For lyrics, the folk songs of Huizhou districts are closely related to the Hakka Mountain songs in terms of structural forms and lyric styles. Huizhou folk songs have a basic structure of seven lines and four stanzas common to Hakka Mountain songs, and the language is vivid, interesting, subtle, and well-conceived, similar to that of Hakka Mountain songs. Huidong fishermen's songs use more words in the liner notes and have more scale in the phrases than folk songs from other regions. In addition, although most of the folk songs are influenced by Hakka Mountain songs, the language of some works is more plain and mundane and less scribal, which is one of the characteristics of Huizhou regional folk songs.

Huizhou folk songs can be categorized into rhymed and unrhymed. Rhymed folk songs include songs and rumors, which have a strong sense of music and rhythm, and are easy to sing and widely circulated; unrhymed folk

songs have a higher literary value, with elegant language and free lines, similar to reading dialogues. Although the number of unrhymed folk songs is relatively small, the high literary value of these songs makes them influential.

The Inheritance and Development of Huizhou Folk Songs

As one of the representatives of Hakka folk songs, Huizhou folk songs carry rich cultural connotations and historical heritage and are important in cultural exchanges. To better inherit and develop Huizhou folk songs, folk song performers, local cultural scholars and folk song enthusiasts put forward the following suggestions:

Firstly, protection mechanism construction and cultural exchange are heavily used. As a kind of Hakka folk song, Huizhou folk song has taken an important task in cultural exchange. With a long history, Huizhou folk songs reflect the life and emotions of local people and are valuable intangible cultural heritage. In the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, Huizhou folk songs have great potential for development. Relevant departments should take the lead in building a comprehensive protection mechanism and formulating protection policies and measures to promote the inheritance and development of Huizhou folk songs. Those who specialise in music should support the re-creation of Huizhou folk songs with more professional knowledge, promote them to the world, and promote the spread of Chinese traditional culture around the globe (Lin, 2013). By introducing and promoting the culture of Huizhou folk songs with the fast-growing impact of the Internet, TV, radio and other media, as well as combining it with cultural tourism to create activities such as the Huiyang Music and Culture Tourism Festival, people's understanding and recognition of Huizhou folk songs can be enhanced, and their diversified development can be promoted.

Secondly, changes in singing style to promote adaptation to modern society are key to adapt the fast-changing society. It is necessary to promote the change of Huizhou folk songs' singing method. Huizhou folk songs usually reflect people's daily life, mostly found in the countryside and fields, with lyrics and tunes that emphasize true feelings and no embellishment. However, presenting this kind of folk songs on the modern stage may seem monotonous and boring, and does not meet the aesthetic needs of modern listeners (Cai, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to promote the change of Huizhou folk song singing method based on maintaining its characteristics, so as to make it more adaptable to the development trend of modern society and attract the attention and love of the public.

Thirdly, new media communication paths provide new opportunities for developments of Huizhou folk songs. In the era of new media, short video platforms and other emerging media have become an important way for people to obtain information, providing a brand-new communication path for the dissemination of Huizhou folk songs. The production of diversified and brilliant Huizhou folk song videos can attract more people's attention and improve the public's awareness of Huizhou folk song (Yue, 2010). Utilizing new technologies and new media platforms to disseminate Huizhou folk songs to a wider audience helps stimulate the society's interest in Huizhou folk songs and promote its inheritance and development.

Finally, cultural policy guarantee and university research input reveal new potential of Huizhou folk songs. In the inheritance of Huizhou folk songs, relying on folk power is not enough, and it is necessary to strengthen the cultural policy and scientific research input from universities. Government departments should guide the formation of a positive traditional cultural inheritance atmosphere, through the development of policies and measures to protect the inheritance of Huizhou folk songs. Colleges and universities, as a strong promotional force, can increase scientific research investment, set up relevant funds to carry out research, through field surveys and other forms of understanding the level of people's love for Huizhou folk songs. Colleges and universities can also carry out a series of related collective activities, such as the introduction of Huizhou folk songs into the classroom, clubs, etc., to enrich the lives of students, broaden their horizons, and enhance their knowledge of Huizhou folk songs (Deng, 2021). These initiatives help to create a favorable inheritance environment for Huizhou folk songs.

As a kind of Hakka folk song, Huizhou folk song carries rich cultural connotation and historical background and has an important position in cultural exchange. Protecting Huizhou folk songs, promoting changes in singing methods, utilizing new media to spread the songs, and strengthening cultural policy protection and scientific research input from universities are key measures to promote the inheritance and development of Huizhou folk songs. Through the efforts of various aspects, Huizhou folk songs can be better adapted to the development needs of the modern society, go to the world, and be inherited for a long time.

Conclusion

This study takes a comprehensive look at the folk songs of the Huizhou region, highlighting the potential of these songs as an important carrier of cultural heritage and for sustainable development in the face of the challenges of globalization and modernization. By analyzing folk songs from different regions of Huizhou, such as Huiyang Jiege, Ruhu Fishing Songs and Huidong Fishermen's Songs, we depict in detail their distinctive features in terms of melody, lyrics, and structure, and explore their profound connections to deep cultural traditions. The study suggests

that despite these folk songs' transmission challenges, their modern transformation and global dissemination can be effectively promoted through appropriate conservation strategies and innovative approaches.

Our findings emphasize the central role of local governments and cultural institutions in preserving and promoting Huizhou folk songs, while also pointing to the potential of universities and research institutes in the study and educational dissemination of folk songs. By adopting modern educational tools and media technologies, these valuable cultural heritages can be better documented, preserved and disseminated, ensuring that they are accepted and appreciated by a wider audience.

In conclusion, Huizhou's folk songs are not only a reflection of regional culture, but also a voice of social change and long history. Their continued inheritance and innovative development have an irreplaceable value in promoting cultural diversity and strengthening cultural self-confidence. Future research should further explore the role of these folk songs in global cultural exchanges, and how these unique forms of cultural expression can be integrated into the cultural ecosystem of modern society through strategic cultural policies and educational programs.

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