



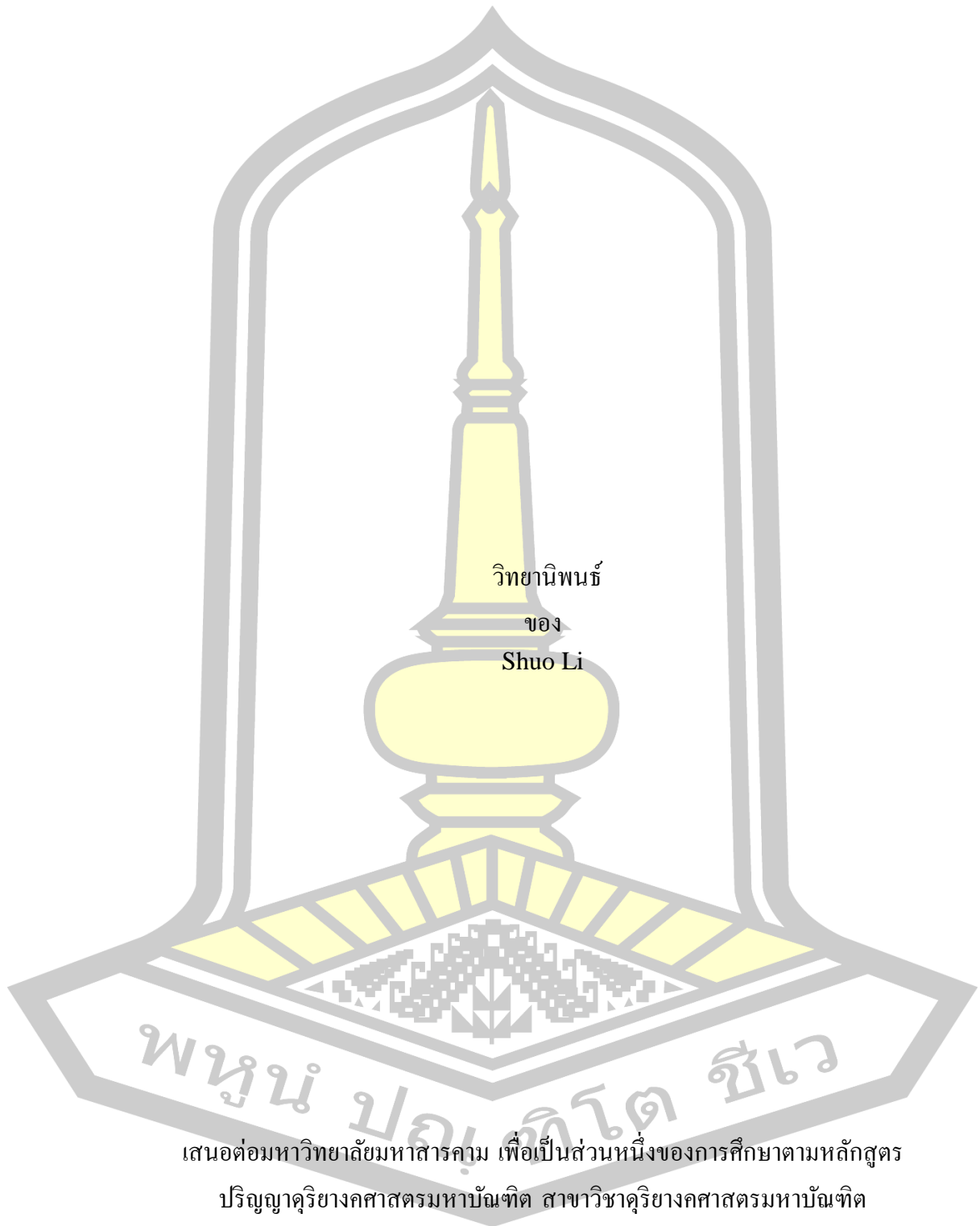
The Biography and Singing Techniques of Axi Axi in Chinese Wedding Folk Songs

Shuo Li

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
degree of Master of Music in Music
February 2025

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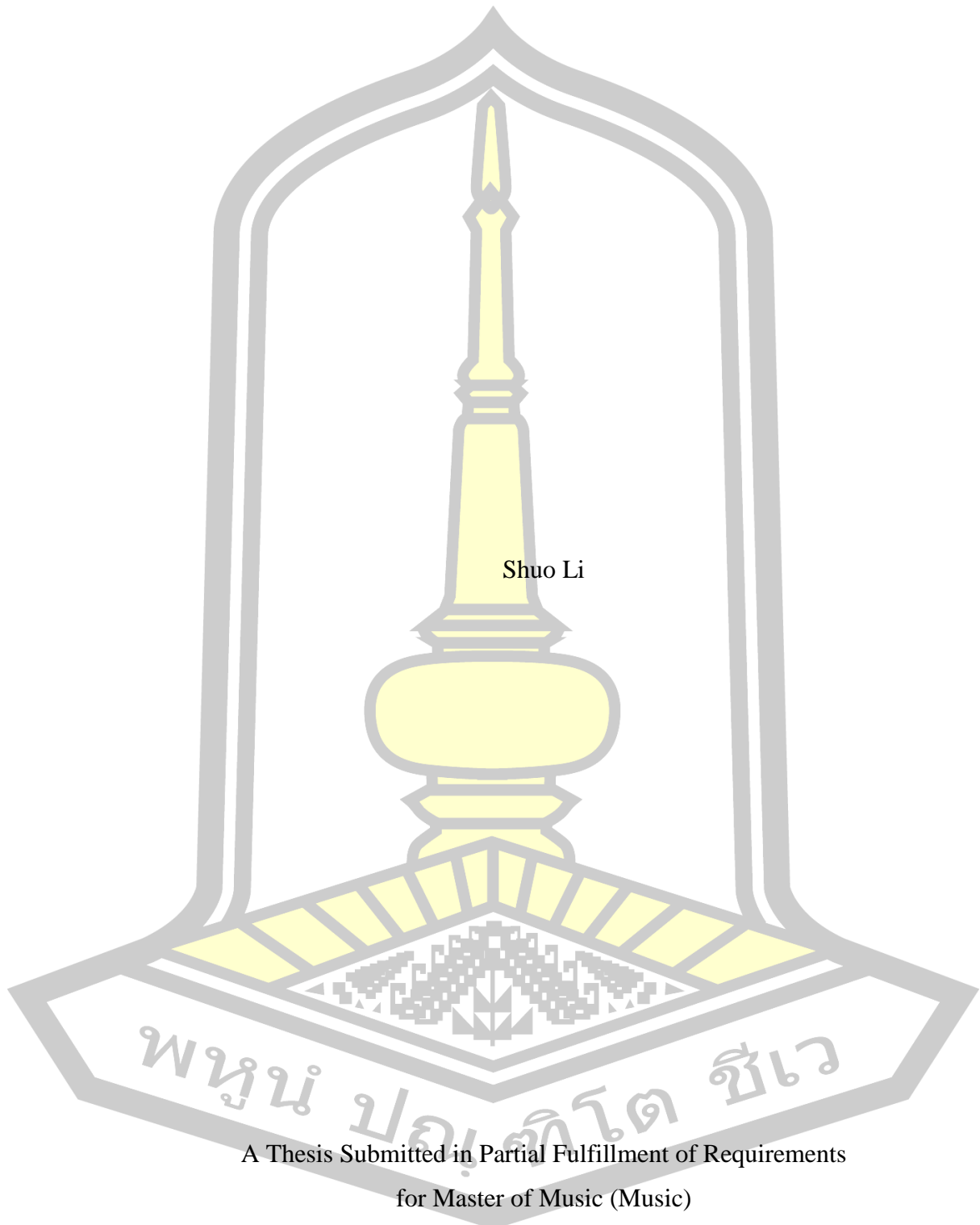
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February 2025

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the Biography and Singing Techniques of Axi Axi in Chinese Wedding Folk Songs. Combining fieldwork, interviews, and literature analysis has two objectives: 1) the study of the biography and 2) the analysis of the singing techniques of wedding folk songs. The results of this research are as follows:

1. Axi Axi's biography details her personal and artistic journey. Drawing on fieldwork, interviews, and archival materials, the research reconstructs her life story, from her early immersion in Yi traditions to her achievements as a cultural ambassador and preserver of intangible heritage. This investigation highlights her dual role as a devoted mother and a torchbearer of Yi's cultural identity.

2. The singing techniques employed by Axi Axi in performing Yi wedding folk songs. Her vocal artistry combines traditional Yi vocal styles with her unique interpretations. The study examines her mastery of techniques such as natural chest breathing, oral and mixed resonance, the transition between true and false voices, clear articulation, and ornamentation. These techniques are explored in the context of two main themes in Yi wedding folk songs: the crying wedding tunes, which express profound emotions of parting and anticipation, and the narrative tones, which recount the legends, history, and cultural wisdom of the Yi people.

The research provides valuable insights into Axi Axi's role as a cultural inheritor and the significance of her vocal techniques in preserving and transmitting Yi wedding folk songs. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on ethnomusicology and highlight the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in contemporary contexts.

Keyword : Axi Axi, Yi wedding folk songs, Traditional singing techniques, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture

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A special acknowledgment goes to Axi Axi, my key informant, whose invaluable knowledge and personal insights into Yi music and folk traditions were instrumental in deepening the scope of my study. Throughout this research, I also had the privilege of engaging with scholars, artists, and administrators who generously shared their expertise on the inheritance and performance techniques of Yi music, adding profound depth and richness to my findings.

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Shuo Li

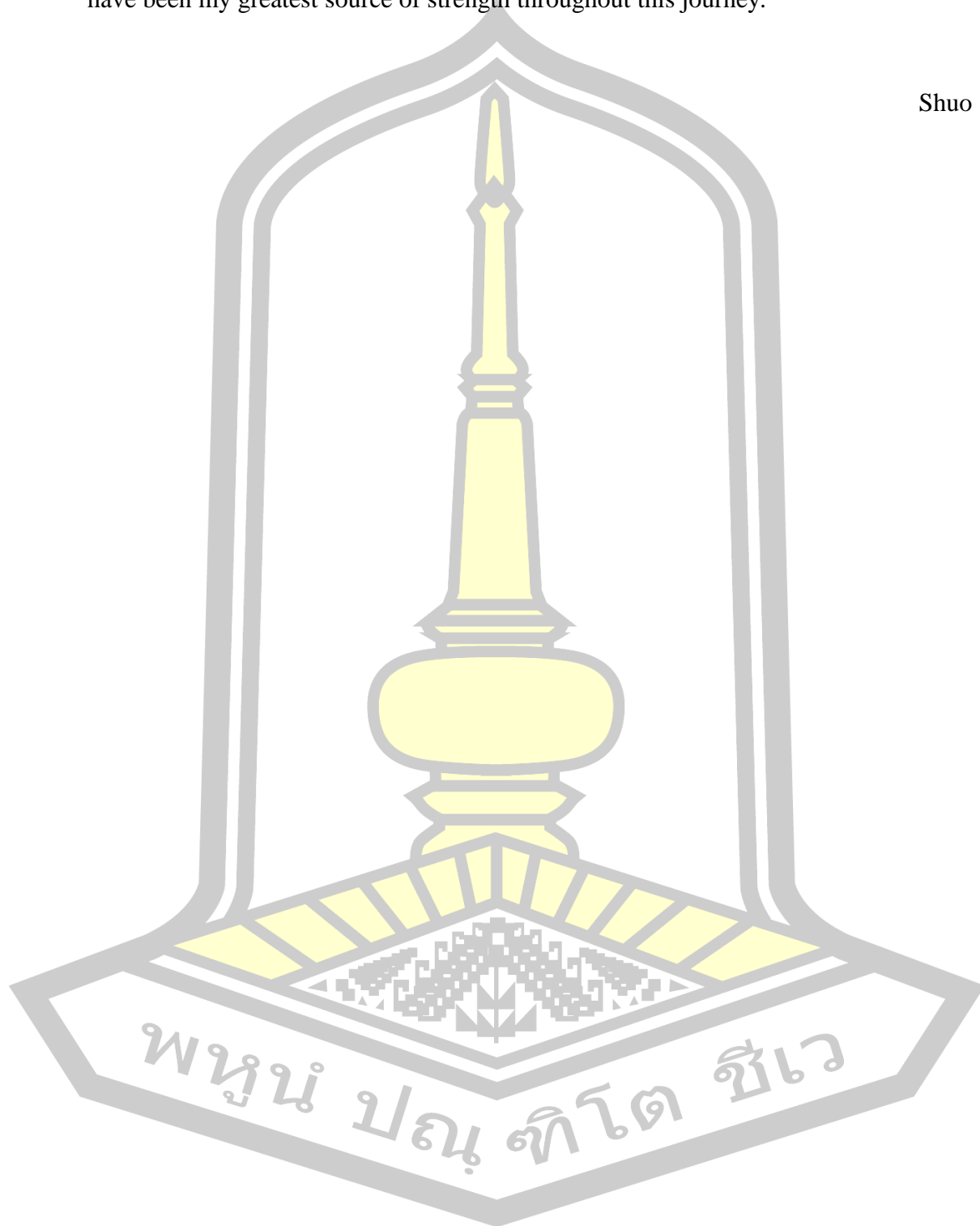
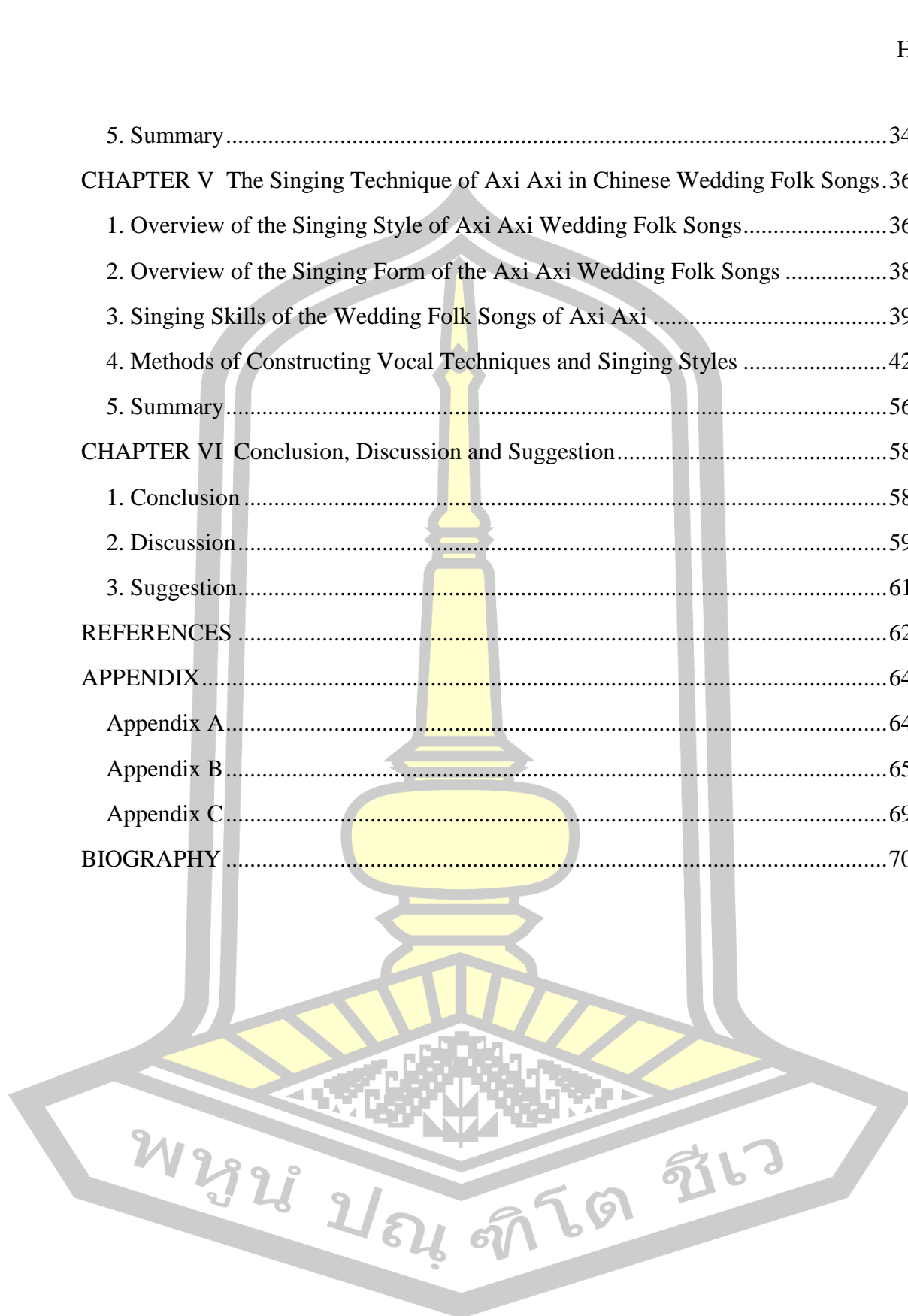


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Research Background

Xide County, known in Yi language as "Xi Duo La da," means the place where armor is made. It is also home to the standard pronunciation of the modern Yi language. Xide County has a long history, and modern archaeology shows that as early as the Neolithic period, there were human beings who thrived here. In the Western Han Dynasty, it was also the place where the "ancient Qiong people," one of the main ethnic groups in southwest China, lived in ancient times. Xide is located in the Anning River Basin in the middle of Liangshan and was the transportation artery of the ethnic minorities in the southwest in ancient times. There are many ancient cultural sites and large stone tombs made of ancient megaliths in the territory (Liu Hui, 2023).

During the slavery period of the Yi ethnic group, arranged trade was practiced, and the marriage system and form were profoundly affected, and the marriage customs still retained a strong matriarchal social heritage. In addition, the ceremony needs music to set off the atmosphere and express feelings, and the wedding songs of the Yi ethnic group are produced in this environment. In the customs of the Yi nationality, it is even believed that the more the bride cries, the deeper the feelings for her parents and the happy life after marriage, which is also the most different place between the Yi nationality and the Han nationality and other ethnic groups in the marriage customs. (Wang Siyin, 2017).

Therefore, on the eve of a girl's wedding, girls from the same village and women from her closest relatives come to "cry with her." Some cry deeply and sorrowfully, while others cry to the sky and the earth, which makes people cry. By the time the bride is married, she has cried until her voice is hoarse, her mouth is dry, and she is like a madman. The Liangshan Yi "crying songs" are important materials for understanding the life and fate of Yi women. They highlight women's understanding and attitude towards marriage, reflect their cognition and understanding of society, men, and themselves, and also reflect their ability to control their own destiny (Wang Meiyong & Shama Riti, 2014).

The Sichuan intangible cultural heritage project "Amonire" is a unique cultural treasure of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. "Amonire" is one of the repertoire of Yi wedding folk songs, and its style is typical narrative lyricism, which occupies an important position in the Yi wedding folk songs with the main line of referring to thousands of women in Yi folk. A typical soprano folk singer, Axi Axi was born and raised in the northern dialect area of the Yi nationality (centered in Liangshan Prefecture) and was proficient in traditional folk songs before becoming the transmitter of the intangible cultural heritage of Sichuan Province. Axi Axi is good at seeing the scene lyrically, good at combining ancient and modern, good at feeling and feeling, and the listener bursts into tears. Therefore, in January 2012, the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture named the representative transmitter of the Sichuan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project "Amonire." During this period, as a representative transmitter of intangible cultural heritage, Axi Axi was invited to projects funded by the National Arts Fund and the Sichuan Provincial Art Fund and served as an important performer and disseminator. In the long run, it has made important contributions to the communication path and its cultural connotation (Xide County Cultural Center, Liangshan Prefecture, 2021).

The general characteristics of Liangshan Yi music are that the melody is repeated and simulated by the human voice, and the melody structure and form are relatively simple. The Yi ethnic group can make people feel the local characteristics of the nationality the most, and there is no more than the folk song and dance activities of the Yi nationality. The Yi people are very good at singing, not only talking about love and conveying their hearts with songs but also narrating history and expressing sorrow and joy with songs. For example, the long lyrical poems "Amonire," "Ayi Ajia," "Are Niu," "Asi Niu Niu," etc., which are widely circulated in the history of the Yi ethnic group, are all sung in the form of songs. The folk songs of the Yi nationality are extremely distinctive and infectious (He Lv, 2011).

The main research object of this study is the transmitter of the wedding folk song, "Axi Axi." In the singing skills and dissemination of music, the efforts of the transmitters are often indispensable. Named as the representative transmitter of the Sichuan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project "Amonire" by the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture in 2012, Axi Axi shoulders the national historical

responsibility of cultural protection and transmission. The widespread singing of works with local and folk characteristics in the form of Yi poetry is the result of the gradual improvement of generations of transmitters. It is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions or cultural history of the Yi people in Liangshan. Axi Axi also plays the role of confirming cultural identity. Based on Yi women, the transmitters tell the characteristics between the melody and the lyrics in the most moving and direct way, expressing the life journey from birth to death. By analyzing Axi Axi's life and the singing skills in wedding folk songs and comprehensively recording and analyzing the works, the study also aims to propose guidelines for the effective transmission of wedding music, ensuring that this cultural treasure continues to thrive in modern times.

2. Research Objectives

- 2.1 To investigate the biography of Axi Axi.
- 2.2 To analyze the singing techniques of wedding folk songs by Axi Axi.

3. Research Questions

- 3.1 What is the biography of Axi Axi?
- 3.2 What is the singing technique used for wedding folk songs by Axi Axi?

4. Research Benefit

- 4.1 We can know the biography of Axi Axi.
- 4.2 We will know the singing technique of wedding folk songs by Axi Axi.

5. Definition of terms

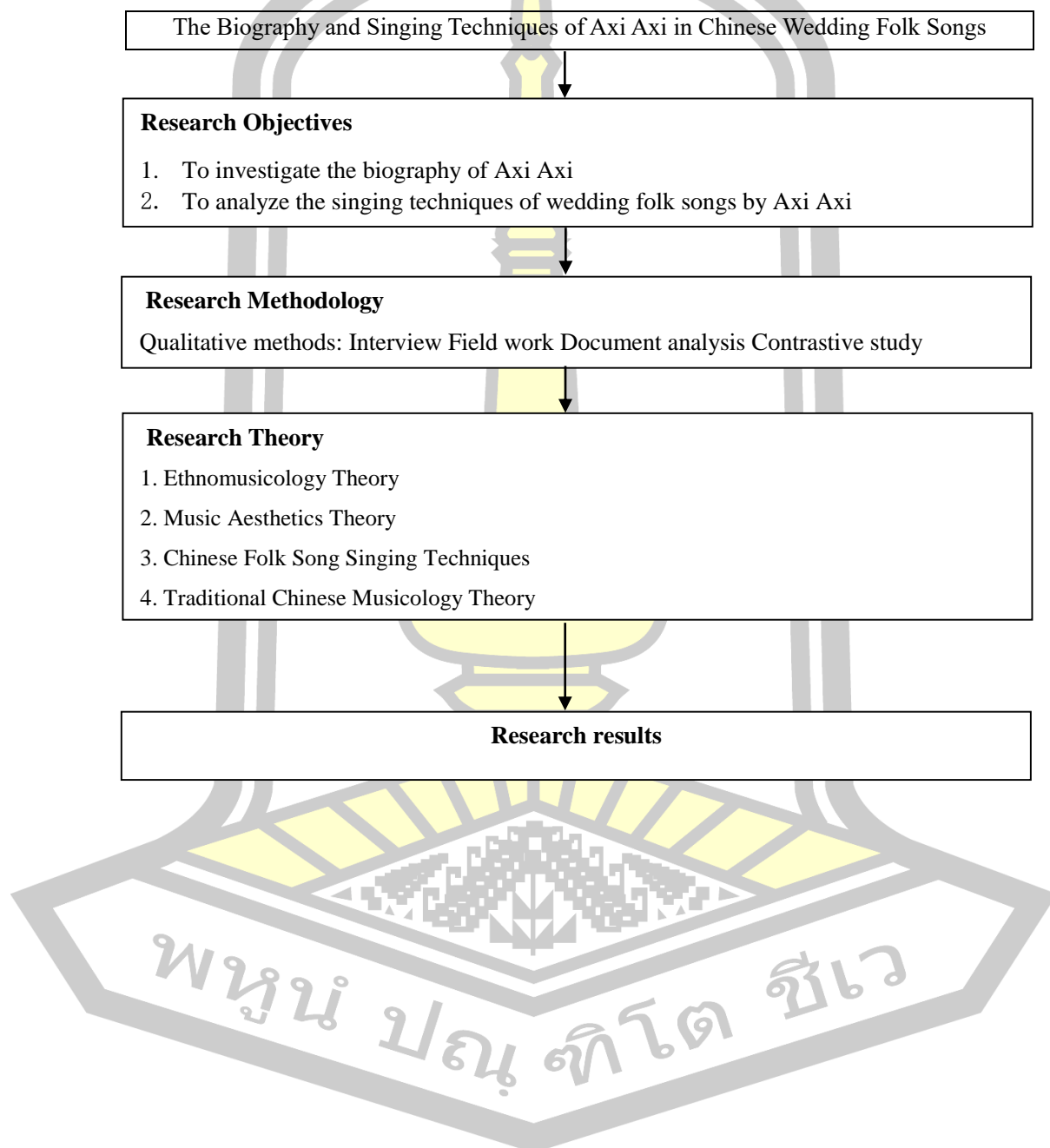
5.1 Wedding Folk Songs: A form of folk song in the Yi ethnic group, characterized by their unique singing technique. These songs are a significant part of the cultural heritage in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, China.

5.2 Bibliography refers to the learning experience, life experience, and acting experience.

5.3 Singing techniques: The particular approaches and styles that singers employ when performing songs, encompassing elements like breathing, oral resonance, true and false vocal techniques, lyrics, ornamental notes and emotional expression, etc.

In the context of wedding folk songs, this refers to the traditional methods employed by Yi singers.

6. Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER II

Literature Review

In the subject about Axi Axi's biography and singing technique of the wedding folk songs of Yi Ethnic Group in Xide, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, China. The researcher reviewed the document to obtain the most comprehensive information for this thesis. With a review of various documents according to the following topics.

1. The General Knowledge about Xide, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, China
2. The General Knowledge of Wedding Folk Songs in Xide County
3. General Knowledge of Chinese Folk Song Singing Technique
4. The Theory used in This Research
5. Related Documents and Research

1. The General Knowledge about Xide, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, China

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture is located in the southwest of Sichuan Province and covers an area of 60,100 square kilometers. It includes 17 counties, cities, and 616 townships and towns, including Xichang, Dechang, Huili, Huidong, Ningnan, Puge, Butuo, Zhaojue, Jinyang, Leibo, Meigu, Ganluo, Yuexi, Xide, Mianning, Yanyuan, and Muli Tibetan Autonomous County. It is the country's largest Yi-populated territory, as well as the largest ethnic group and minority population in Sichuan Province. The state's entire population is 4,154,800, with 1,815,500 Yi citizens accounting for 43.79% of the total. The capital of Xichang City is located 1500 meters above sea level. Because of its high altitude, the sky is clear and clean, the moon is crystal clear, earning it the elegant name "Moon City" and the distinction as the world-famous Chinese Aerospace City. There are evergreen trees there year-round, and the city is home to undefeated flowers at four o'clock. (Lu Jufang, 2023)

Xide County is located in the southwest of Sichuan Province and the north-central part of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. It borders Yuexi to the north;

Zhaojue to the east and southeast; Mianning County and Xichang City to the west and southwest. It is 78 kilometers south of the prefecture capital Xichang City and 483 kilometers north of Chengdu City. The county covers an area of 2,206 square kilometers and has jurisdiction over 24 towns, 170 administrative villages, and 3 communities, with a total population of 223,000, of which 90.5% are Yi people and 91.1% are agricultural people. It is an agricultural-based county inhabited by Yi people in mountainous areas. It was listed as a national poverty-stricken county in 1993, a key county for national poverty alleviation and development in 2001, and a poverty alleviation county in the Wumeng Mountain area in 2010. It is the location of the modern standard pronunciation of the Yi language and is known as the "mother tongue hometown," "lacquerware hometown," and "wine hometown" of the Yi people. (Niza Niwei, 2007)

Xide County is located between Daliang Mountain and Xiaoliang Mountain, with high terrain in the northeast and low terrain in the southwest. The terrain in the county is mainly medium-sized mountains, accounting for 75% of the total area. The highest altitude is 4500.4 meters, and the lowest altitude is 1580 meters. The area is 2207.44 square kilometers, with 220,400 mu of perennial cultivated land, a forest coverage rate of 25.8%, and more than 1 million mu of natural grassland. The total population of the county is 137,600, of which 84.6% are Yi people. It is a typical Yi-inhabited county. (Lei Kang, 2005)

Xide has outstanding geographical advantages, and it is the only place for Yuexi and Ganluo to enter Xichang in the south, and it is also the throat road for southern counties and cities to go out of the state and enter the province. Xide is the location of the standard pronunciation of modern Yi in China, with a unique cultural landscape and splendid Yi culture, and is known as the hometown of the Yi people. In the Han Dynasty, the "Wuhe Stone Tomb Group," the Ancient Tea Horse Road—Dengxiangying Ancient Post Station, and the Laomian Mountain Camp Ruins are national key cultural relic protection units. There are many lists of Yi intangible cultural heritage, among which "Yi Lacquerware Decoration Skills" is a national intangible cultural heritage list; "Mamutey" and "Leotey" belong to the national and provincial intangible cultural heritage list. At the same time, the folk customs of Shengzha in the

county are rich, gorgeous, and colorful, and the culture is extremely thick. (Xide County Local Chronicles Office, 2019)

2. The General Knowledge of Wedding Folk Songs in Xide County

Daliang Mountain, located in the south of Sichuan Province, is an important Yi nationality-inhabited area in China. "Ayi Azhi" is especially spread in the vast Yi villages such as Yuexi, Xide, Mianning, Zhaojue, and so on in Daliang. Ayi Azhi's singing varies in different regions, and the most influential singing in Daliang comes from the vicinity of Xide County. In the wedding customs of the Yi people, the singing of wedding folk songs occupies an important position. Generally, Yi girls must learn to sing wedding folk songs in their teens, and the commonly used wedding folk songs are "Mother's Daughter," etc., which are mainly sung by the women to praise the hard work of parents in raising their daughters, or the beauty of the bride. "Ayi Azhi" is a crying wedding folk song. In Yi wedding customs, "Ayi Azhi" will be sung the day before the wedding and will be used as an important part of the day before the wedding. The hymn will not be sung by the parents but by the respected women of the local area, with the aim of educating the brides to always remember the nurturing grace of their parents, no matter how far away they marry. (Wang Nan, 2020)

1956 Before the democratic reform, the Liangshan Yi District of Sichuan still retained the slave social system. In terms of the marriage system, slave owners have strict regulations on marriage and implement the system of intra-clan marriage, hierarchical intra-marriage, and non-family branches; that is, they do not intermarry with foreign clans, and they cannot intermarry between different ranks and different family branches. In terms of forms of marriage, there are forms such as aunt and uncle cousin marriages, arranged marriages, sales marriages, transfer marriages, and son-in-law marriages, and monogamy is the mainstay. In terms of these marriage institutions and forms, there are both vestiges of matriarchy in primitive societies and obvious features of patriarchy in slave societies. (Chen Lian & Chen Wenli, 2014)

It can be seen that the weeping wedding folk song occupies an important position in the hearts of the Yi people, because in the past, the Liangshan Yi people had been in a slave society for a long time, and the status of women was very low, especially under the strict hierarchical system of "hierarchical marriage, family branch

marriage," "buying and selling marriage," and "house transfer." Women have actually become slaves and tools of production and childbirth and have no human rights at all. "Mother's Daughter" reflects the tragic fate of Yi women and their pursuit of free marriage. Through a girl who married to a distant place, it cried about her sad life, put forward a strong accusation and protest against the slave society's system of buying and selling marriage, and expressed the Yi women's desire for free marriage and a happy life. Nowadays, the weeping wedding folk song is not music that pours out the suffering life, but a musical act that expresses the traditional customs and music culture. (He Lv, 2011)

3. General Knowledge of Chinese Folk Song Singing Technique

"Whoever knows how to breathe can sing." This is a saying in the music industry that illustrates the importance of breathing in the art of singing. For the singing of national folk songs, the use of combined chest and abdomen breathing is a more advanced and scientific method, which can fully mobilize the active role of the singing respiratory organs, so that the chest and abdomen can be well coordinated and coordinated with each other, and at the same time complete the breath control. Combined chest and abdomen breathing can expand breath volume, enhance breath control, and regulate the strength of breathing. When we perform combined chest and abdominal breathing, the intensity of the breath and the method of exhalation vary according to the song being sung. (Zhou Lei, 2014)

Treble is a singing technique that uses falsetto singing in the high register and is widely used in various genres of folk songs. From the southern mountain songs, fishing songs, and labor horns to the northern mountain songs, Xintianyou, the unique treble effect fully shows the infinite charm of high-pitched falsetto singing skills. The high-pitched tone mostly appears at the beginning or end of the song, and the appearance of the high-pitched tone at the beginning mainly plays the role of an introduction, which can attract the listener as soon as the cavity is opened. The high cavity at the end is used to create the climax of the whole piece. The singing of the high-pitched voice is very expressive and tends to produce a strong dramatic effect. The practice of singing with a high cavity must first have a deep breath, and secondly, there must be a high position of head cavity resonance. The high-pitched voice sings in a

high or super high voice, and it is precisely because the high note is difficult to sing that falsetto is used to help, especially for boys. The singing of the high cavity mainly uses the mixture of true and false voices, or the real voice is replaced with falsetto; no matter which way is used, the high cavity needs to use a large number of falsetto, which requires strong breath support and good head cavity resonance. Therefore, when practicing singing in a high-pitched voice, it is necessary to avoid shouting directly with the voice or shouting with force alone; otherwise, a little carelessness will cause damage to the voice, such as in the score "Bao Leng Tune." (Qin Wenhao, 2018)

From a macro point of view, the folk songs of the Yi nationality in Liangshan can be roughly divided into three color areas: Shengcha language, Adusodi language, and Yinuo language. Although the three color zones all originated from Liangshan, they each nurtured a different style of Yi music culture. Generally speaking, the Yi people of the Aduso-speaking language are rough and bold, and the folk songs are generally high-pitched and bright, strong and bold, especially the high-pitched ah ya gur and torch festival songs are typical representatives; The Yi people of the Shengcha language are delicate and gentle, the folk songs are euphemistic and low, soft and delicate, there are many narrative folk songs, and the high-pitched ones are rarely circulated: the Yi people of the Yinuo language are bold and upright, and the folk songs are rigid and soft, tactful and melodious, especially with Ajaniu and Boha Niuniu as their typical representatives, and there are a small number of high-pitched oral traditions. Some of these colorful, high-pitched tones have a long-lasting charm and profound meaning; some are depressed and have a lot of thoughts; some have a broad vision and are willing to linger; some are humorous and fun. As the poet He Qifang praised: "The high tone of the Butuo Yi Adu is very special, just like the strange and charming music that suddenly appears in the distant lonely valley." (Chen Jianlin, 2013)

There are many cases of using lining words and lining words in Sichuan Yi folk songs, and various types of lining words and lining words are effectively used, showing the language habits and singing skills of Yi folk songs. The lining words and lining words can not only be used as the introduction at the beginning of the song but also scientifically echo with the main part of the lyrics, as a useful supplement to the lyrics and sentences, and play a role in helping and making up the tone for the song and gradually form a unique lining sentence. For example, the singular lining: "Wow," the

long lining: "Seroli color," the short linings: "Ruohey," and so on. In the Sichuan Yu folk songs, the words used in the lining words show the real life, customs, thoughts and emotions, and singing skills of the Yi people. (Mao Yaxiong, 2014)

4. The Theory used in This Research

4.1 Ethnomusicology Theory

Ethnomusicology is a discipline that studies the deep cultural phenomena contained in music from the perspective of music representation and has a multidisciplinary and multi-angle research nature. As an independent discipline, it has unique methods and modes of music interpretation. This paper will focus on the summary of the methods of music interpretation in ethnomusicology, that is, music analysis methods. (Wu Zeiqin, 2020)

The researcher will use this theory to investigate the historical development background of Yi wedding music and study the profound cultural process contained in the music from the perspective of musical expression, which is the core focus of ethnomusicology. Based on this core focus, researchers can explore the musical expression of Yi wedding music from the aspects of Yi culture, history, religious beliefs, and social structure and use field surveys to visit Yi communities in depth based on the visual perspective of music performance and obtain first-hand information through recording and video recording. These materials help to restore the expression form and evolution process in actual wedding.

4.2 Music Aesthetics Theory

"Ancient for the present" mainly refers to the differences between traditional and contemporary Chinese national vocal art in many aspects, such as creation, singing, and aesthetics. Contemporary Chinese national vocal art is formed on the basis of traditional vocal aesthetic thoughts, and many of its excellent artistic ideas and aesthetic concepts are the transmission and innovation of the essence of traditional vocal art. "Foreign for Chinese use" means that in terms of musical expression, we should learn to learn from the scientific, reasonable, and progressive singing skills and aesthetic concepts in the aesthetic ideas of Western countries and learn to selectively and purposefully absorb the positive factors contained in them. On the one hand, it scientifically and reasonably absorbs the performance and singing methods such as

breathing, resonance, and voice position in the vocal art of Western countries and endows the Chinese national vocal art with a unique aesthetic feeling and auditory experience of Western vocal art aesthetics in terms of performance form and singing. The creative aesthetic characteristics of "the past is for the present, and the foreign is for the Chinese" are also perfectly presented in the artistic creation of Chinese national vocal music. It is not difficult to find that the current Chinese folk vocal art has an obvious modern flavor in terms of melody, rhythm, harmony, and soundtrack. China's vocal art is a collection of Chinese national vocal art and Western vocal art ideas, Chinese traditional vocal art and modern national vocal art, Western silent art and opera art as one of the artistic expressions, various forms of vocal art on the stage of Chinese national vocal art, a hundred schools of thought, a hundred flowers bloom, is a symbol of the wisdom and creativity of the Chinese working people. (Wu Biling, 2008)

The researcher will use this theory to analyze the different views of Chinese national vocal art in the theory of musical aesthetics. This passage emphasizes the integration and innovation of Chinese national vocal art. Through "the past for the present," national vocal music transmits the essence of traditional vocal aesthetics in the creation and singing and innovates to meet the needs of contemporary aesthetics. Through "foreign for Chinese use," drawing on the scientific skills and aesthetic concepts of Western vocal art, the expressiveness and beauty of national vocal music in terms of performance form and singing skills are enhanced. This combination of Chinese and Western creative methods not only enriches the connotation of national vocal art but also endows it with a sense of modernity and diversity, reflecting the principles of integration and innovation in music aesthetics. Chinese folk vocal art brings together different cultures and artistic traditions, embodies the artistic vitality of a hundred flowers in multiple forms of expression, and symbolizes the creativity and inclusiveness of Chinese culture.

4.3 Chinese Folk Song Singing Techniques

Language is the signal of human thoughts and feelings, and language itself conveys feelings in singing, so it must be "conveyed in words." This alone is not enough; it is necessary to express a certain musical image and style through the pronunciation of words in order to "contain form in words." Accents and lyrics with

emotional meanings should be emphasized and polished with special singing methods so that they can be interesting and full of charm. At the same time, in the process of musical melody and artistic expression, it is necessary to deal with the rhythm, charm, weight, speed and slowness, modulation, and intonation and tone of the singing language so as to achieve the artistic effect of "the words are inexhaustible." (Shan Lumi, 2020)

The researcher will use this theory to analyze the use of language itself in Chinese folk song singing techniques. This passage emphasizes the organic combination of language and music in singing. First of all, singing should not only convey the emotion of the lyrics but also show the image and style of the music through accurate pronunciation, so as to achieve the effect of "conveying love in the words" and "containing form in the words." Secondly, the accent and emotional lyrics need to be polished with special singing skills to make the song interesting and charming. In the process of singing, we should also pay attention to the subtle changes in the rhythm, charm, weight, speed and slowness, modulation, and frustration of the language so as to form a rich level of intonation expression and finally realize the artistic realm of "inexhaustible words." This delicate language processing method is a unique technique in Chinese folk song singing, which helps to enhance the appeal and expressiveness of the song.

4.4 Traditional Chinese Musicology Theory

In the eyes of Western rational music, "music is a science established by rules." It can also be said that the European music system is like a systematic project. Its research on the material of sound can be qualitative and quantitative and can be verified through experiments, which can be used as the universal law of the mathematical model of the musical sound system. In scientific thinking, all music must be considered by scientific methods and tested by experiments. Therefore, mathematics, physics, and logic are like rulers, attached to the side of folk music. We know that there are a lot of "non-uniform rhythm" phenomena in Chinese music. Behind this phenomenon is the uneven mass distribution of sound pitch, strength, and timbre, forming a special sound state or voice "phoneme" different from the Western music sound system and leading to open behavioral operations controlled by intuitive experience of music micro-time details. These highly "personalized" open behavioral operation modes occupy an

extremely important position in traditional Chinese music. However, from the perspective of the scientific time view of "Basic Music Theory," the crystallization of Western music, musical sound, and time rhythm are "slow-speed movements" of mechanical laws. Using this concept to look at the "non-uniform rhythm" phenomenon of Chinese music cannot be explained. (Wang Zhe & Li Tingting, 2022)

The researcher will use this theory to analyze the musical context of Yi wedding folk songs. The author mentioned in the article that "music is a science established by rules," that is, the European music system is like a systematic project. Its research on the material materials of sound can be qualitative and quantitative and can be verified through experiments, which can be used as a universal law of the mathematical model of the musical sound system. Based on this ruler-like logic applied to Yi wedding folk songs, the pitch, strength, and timbre of the sound will produce a special sound feeling different from the Western music sound system. However, when summarizing Yi wedding folk songs, researchers often explore whether similar pentatonic or heptatonic scales are used or whether there is a unique local scale system, all of which are reflected in the special musical background of ethnic minorities.

5. Related Documents and Research

Yang Mingkai (2015) The method of music analysis is a method of interpreting musical works, which includes the study of music ontology in terms of musical structure, vocal principles, scale composition, etc., as well as the culture conveyed by music in human activities such as rituals, weddings, and weddings. Funerals, marriages. The analysis of music in ethnomusicology includes two aspects: music ontology and music cultural connotation. Music ontology is an analysis of musical works based on the analysis of harmony and musical form, and it is also a music analysis in a narrow sense. The connotation of music culture is based on the study of music itself to interpret the cultural phenomenon behind music. Professor Rong Hongzeng of the University of Pittsburgh, United States, divided melody analysis methods into three categories according to the characteristics of ethnomusicology: biological taxonomy, genetic taxonomy, and culture-based methods.

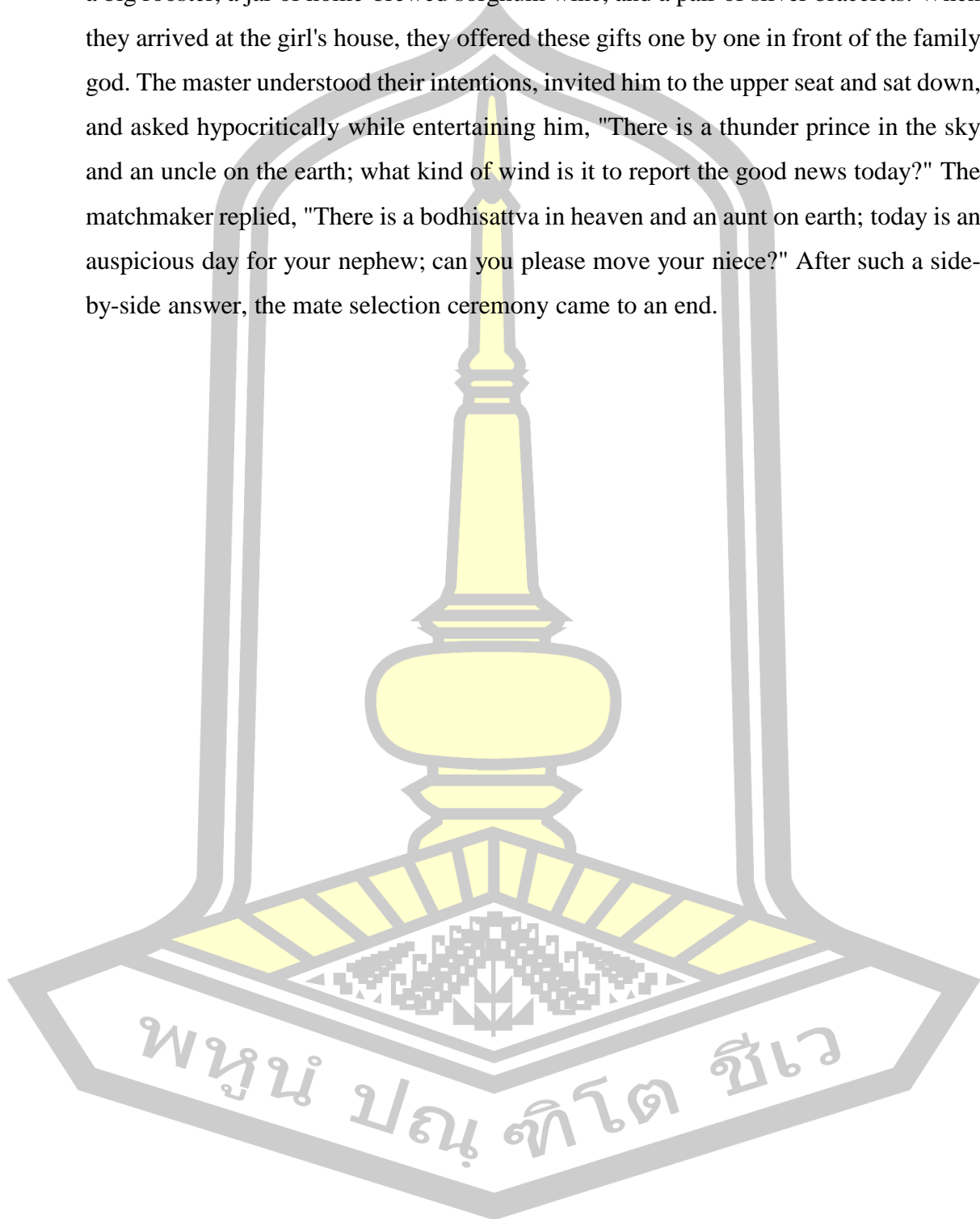
Fan Zuyin (2019) In the past two years, with the suspension of most national competitions, people have become less enthusiastic about the debate on terms such as

"original ecology," but if you browse the articles on folk songs in music magazines, as well as the published songbooks and audio tapes, you can still see some titles for folk songs with prepositions, such as "new folk songs" and "new classical folk songs." This situation is quite similar to the understanding of folk songs in society before the introduction of "original folk songs." It seems that there is a real need for the music industry to correct the name of "folk songs." So, should we reemphasize and reuse the name "original folk song"? I don't think it's necessary. Although I have said before that "original folk songs" are already conventional and there is no need to further study and change the name, the limitation of "original ecology" has caused the singing of folk songs on different occasions to be restricted and criticized. For example, someone asked me, "Can a folk song be called a primitive folk song when it is on stage and has left the original ecological environment?" The answer, of course, is no. Therefore, I now believe and advocate that folk songs are folk songs and that the original meaning of the word "folk songs" should be returned.

Songa Yimu & Liu Haiqing (2023) These ancient Yi folk songs are interpreted as Yi ancient songs in a broad sense, and in modern times, with the historical changes in social life and social relations in the Liangshan area, the Yi folk song culture has made great progress, creating a large number of love songs, custom songs, labor songs, nursery rhyme songs, etc. These folk songs not only integrate the wisdom of ancient songs but also evolve into solo, chorus, and duet singing forms that are all-encompassing and very imaginative, from which we can not only understand the historical origin, myths, and legends of the Yi people but also understand their customs and folk customs and spiritual culture.

Zhang Fu (1993) The Yi family must choose a mate within the same class and outside the same clan, so according to the practice of the Yi family, it is most appropriate to marry the aunt and uncle's middle table or staggered subordinate marriage. According to customary law, if the uncle's family has a man and a girl, the uncle's family has the right of priority to determine the daughter of the aunt's family, so the aunt's family does not dare to marry a woman in his family. The man of the anti-aunt family also has the same priority over the daughter of the uncle's family. Most of the time to choose a mate is when the aunt and brother hold a coming-of-age ceremony. At that time, an elderly member of the family will be asked to report on behalf of the

former cousin's family. The traditional gifts you carry with you are: six pieces of bacon, a big rooster, a jar of home-brewed sorghum wine, and a pair of silver bracelets. When they arrived at the girl's house, they offered these gifts one by one in front of the family god. The master understood their intentions, invited him to the upper seat and sat down, and asked hypocritically while entertaining him, "There is a thunder prince in the sky and an uncle on the earth; what kind of wind is it to report the good news today?" The matchmaker replied, "There is a bodhisattva in heaven and an aunt on earth; today is an auspicious day for your nephew; can you please move your niece?" After such a side-by-side answer, the mate selection ceremony came to an end.



CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

Research on the biography and singing technique of the wedding folk songs by Axi Axi, is qualitative research and ethnomusicology in the study, with preliminary research from the study and collection of academic documents, textbooks, reports, concepts, theories, and articles from various related journals. In addition, the researcher conducted a study using fieldwork data from key informants, casual informants, and general informants for analysis. The study topics are divided as follows:

1. Research Scope
 - 1.1 Scope of Content
 - 1.2 Scope of Time
2. Research Process
 - 2.1 Selection of Research Site
 - 2.2 Selection of the Key Informants
 - 2.3 Selection of Songs
 - 2.4 Research Tools
 - 2.5 Data Collection
 - 2.6 Data Management
 - 2.7 Data Analysis
 - 2.8 Data Presentation

1. Research Scope

1.1 Scope of content

1.1.1 Investigate the biography of Axi Axi: This chapter introduces the personal life experience of Axi Axi, the transmitter of Yi wedding folk songs, including her growth experience, learning experience, performance experience, etc. At the same time, it introduces the honors won by Axi Axi, the transmitter of Yi wedding folk songs, and her contribution to Yi music education, and provides evidence for her contribution to Yi wedding folk songs.

1.1.2 Analyze the Singing Technique of Axi Axi in Chinese Wedding Folk Songs. This chapter focuses on Axi Axi's breathing, pronunciation, skills, lyrics, stage image, and so on, as well as the transmitter Axi Axi's skills in song processing of Yi wedding folk songs, to demonstrate the uniqueness of becoming an intangible cultural heritage project in Sichuan Province.

1.2 Scope of Research Site

January 2023 to March 2025

2. Research Process

2.1 Selection of Research Site.

Xide County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province: The following are the main reasons why I chose this area as the research site. 1. The regional specificity of wedding folk songs of Yi ethnic groups; 2. The characteristics of singing techniques; 3. It is named as a provincial intangible cultural heritage project.

Secondly, Xide County, as the birthplace of the standard language of the Yi people, has a high degree of unity in the written language and is officially defined by the Liangshan region as the highest standard of the Nuosu Yi people. The wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in this area have the most root-like narrative style, and there is a way of spreading and singing by word of mouth among the people, which poses a great challenge to the recording and transition of wedding folk songs in music scores. With the rapid development of today's era, ethnic minority villages have gradually forgotten their own ethnic musical language and writing system with the changes of the times. Therefore, the study of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group is particularly important.

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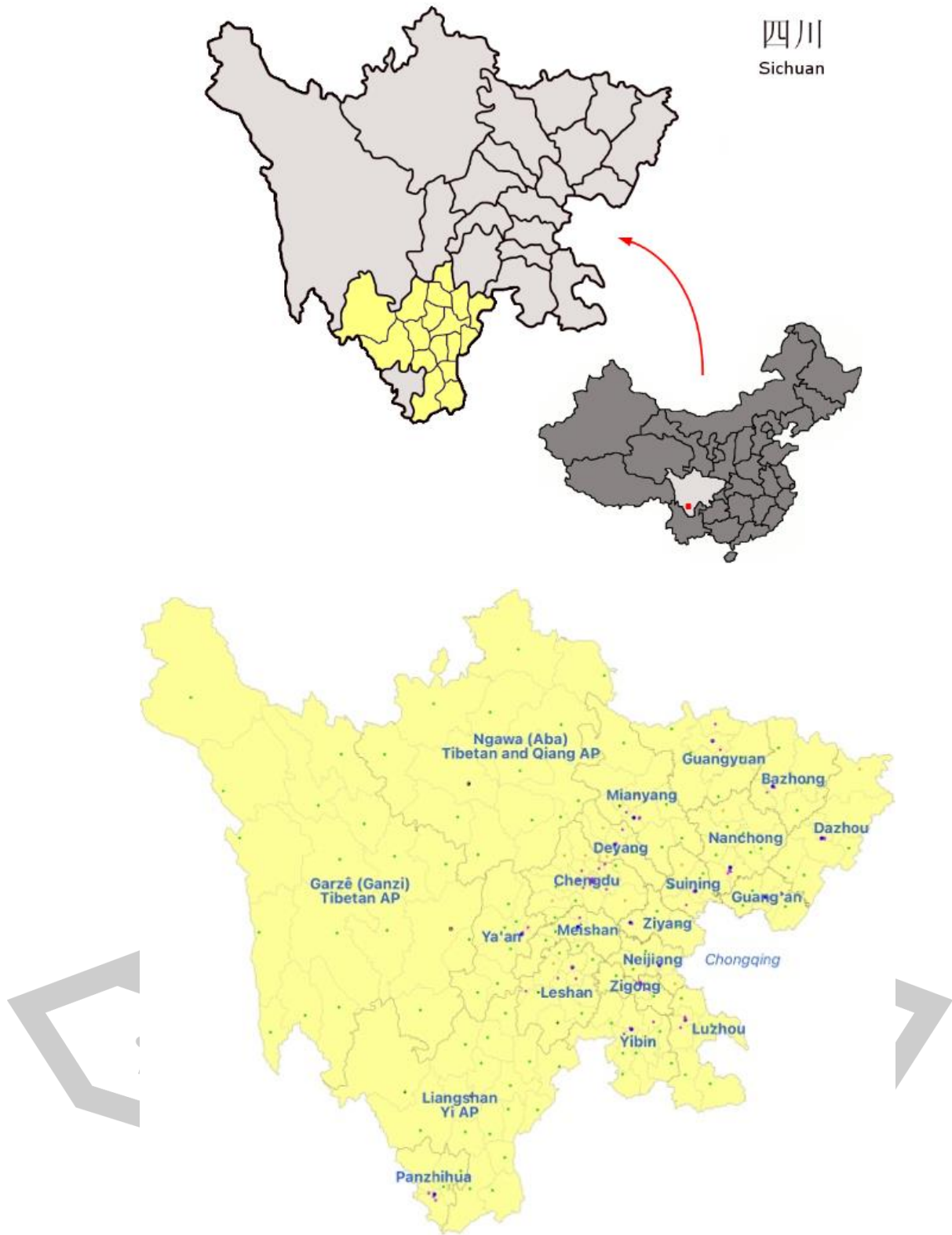


Figure 1. Map of Sichuan Province, China.

Source: www.wikipedia.org (2024)

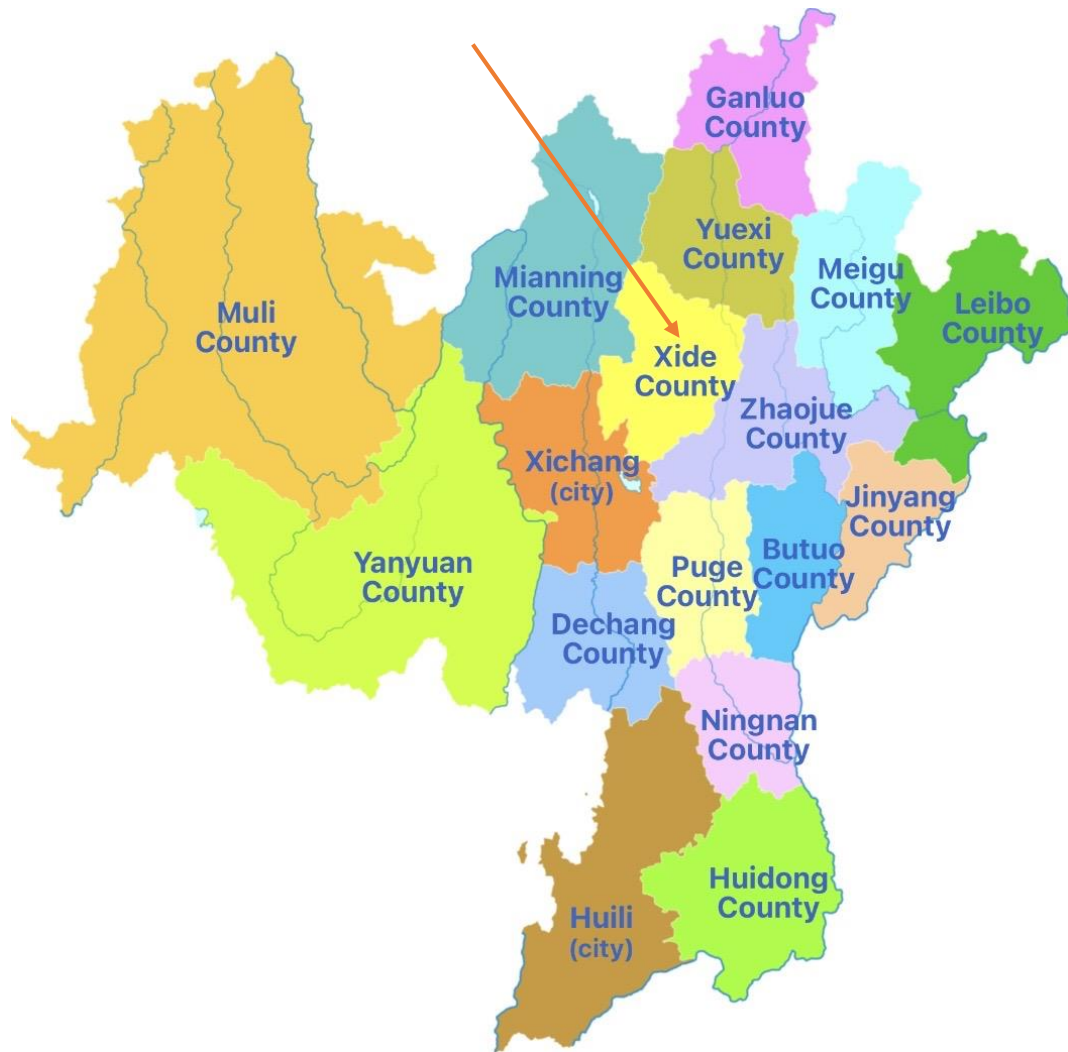


Figure 2. Map of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China.

Source: www.wikipedia.org (2024)

2.2 Selection of the Key Informants

The reasons for choosing Axi Axi as the key source of information are as follows:

1. In 2012, Axi Axi was recognized by the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture as the representative transmitter of the "Amonire" Sichuan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project. ("Amonire" means mother's daughter).

2. The wedding folk songs sung by Axi Axi are rich in types, including crying wedding folk songs and narrative songs, which can fully protect and transmit the wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group and, at the same time, make them praise and protect the traditional female narrative culture of the Yi ethnic group.

3. Axi Axi's singing skills are quite distinctive, in which the combination of breath and rhyme and the improvisation of the lyrics make the singing as smooth as one go. The uneven combination of each sentence seems to describe the helplessness and fear of women in the face of marriage, as well as the reluctance to leave their parents' home.

4. Axi Axi was invited as a performer of the Sichuan Provincial Art Fund to provide reference research value for the majority of university scholars.

5. Axi Axi has long been committed to promoting and performing Yi wedding folk songs and has become the representative transmitter of "Amonire."



Figure 3. Axi Axi

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

2.3 Selection of Songs

For the type of wedding folk song, I have selected the following five songs, which are sung in the following styles:

Crying Wedding Tune: "Ayiwuge," "Agazhizhi."

Narrative Tune: "Jingu Xingu," "Ayimuga," "Amonire."

2.3.1 Select songs Criteria:

The criteria for selecting these five songs are as follows: Identity of the transmitter:

1. Axi Axi is the representative transmitter of the intangible cultural heritage project of Sichuan Province, and the songs she sings are authoritative.

2. Genre diversity: The selected songs are the crying and narrative tones in the wedding folk songs, showing the diversity of the forms of the Yi wedding folk songs due to the female characters.

3. Cultural value and social value: The weeping marriage tone expresses the emotional expression of women's emotional expressions, such as the strong prevalence of male power leading to the emergence of arranged marriages, making women afraid of marriage and complaining about their miserable fate. The narrative tone gives women a delicate side of emotion, using scenery or object metaphors to express their love for their families and gratitude to their mothers for nurturing them.

4. Representative works: This kind of song is widely circulated in the Xide area of the Yi ethnic group, reflecting the historical background of women's helplessness, customs, and social relations in the face of powerful pressure.

2.3.2 Importance of the Songs:

1. "Ayiwuge" is a crying marriage tune, which mainly tells the story of two siblings who grew up together since childhood, thinking that their fate would be the same as that of their brother, but they were discarded by their brother when they were young and sent to marry. It expresses women's complaints about inequality between men and women and against the power system of arranged marriages.

2. "Agazhizhi" is a crying marriage tune, using the Yi mantra to petition to expose the inner struggle of women who yearn for freedom and do not want to marry far away and even hope that their husband's family will die with them, but they are afraid that animal creatures will peck at their beautiful eyes and are afraid of the fragility of fear and entanglement.

3. "Jingu Xingu" is a narrative tune because the Yi people attach importance to family affection; they cannot give up their love for their relatives and simply express their feelings of missing their family and relatives and friends.

4. "Ayimuga" is a narrative tune, lamenting that no matter how brilliant a life or life is, there will be a day of decay with the passage of time. Just like the women

in the song, the happiness of the moment is short-lived, and I will fade away with the passage of time.

5. "Amonire" is a narrative tune, this song is a female long narrative tune, which means a mother's daughter. As a representative repertoire of intangible cultural heritage in Sichuan Province, the whole song conveys and celebrates the power of women. Mother's love and its greatness: women are extremely difficult in the social relations of the old era, and at the same time, the self in the song is about to become a mother, expressing the traditional spiritual and cultural values of women's fortitude and tenacity.

2.4 Research Tools

The research tools in this thesis are mainly a combination of fieldwork and interviews. Before conducting the survey, the authors prepared materials such as laptops, cameras, cell phones, tape recorders, etc., to facilitate the recording and collation of the findings. On this basis, I have specified the following. Be prepared with questions to ask when meeting with the bearers and take notes of the interviews. The questionnaire questions are as follows:

Table 1. Questionnaire

Number of questions	Investigate the question
1	Please briefly describe your life, upbringing, and writings?
2	What are the Yi customs and living environment that you have been adhering to so far?
3	What techniques are used to sing Yi wedding folk songs?
4	What do you think of the current situation of Yi wedding folk songs?
5	What is the history of Yi wedding folk songs?

2.4.1. After the questionnaire was ready, I went to Xide County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, to visit the transmitter teacher Axi Axi, asked questions according to the questionnaire and recorded them, and then filmed and recorded several videos of Axi Axi singing the wedding folk song.

2.4.2. Collect and organize interview records and singing videos, and analyze the singing skills of Yi wedding folk songs in the materials.

2.5 Data Collection

For the study of Axi Axi, the transmitter of Yi wedding folk songs, I will adopt a comprehensive research method from multiple perspectives, such as preliminary preparation, interviews, literature analysis, and fieldwork. After identifying the key lineage, Axi Axi develops the necessary research tools, including interview guidelines and questionnaires.

2.5.1 The study site selected for this study was Xide County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with Axi Axi, the transmitter of Yi wedding folk songs, and found a book about the publication of "Yi Classic Songs" in Xide Middle School. By asking the local people if they know or like the wedding folk songs in traditional Yi weddings and their opinions. Through a variety of methods, the researchers have obtained a wealth of field data and have a relatively comprehensive research value for the understanding of Yi wedding folk songs.

2.5.2 Interview with the transmitter Axi Axi and the local people to learn about the life of Axi Axi and the singing skills of the Yi wedding folk song. The entire interview process is recorded and analyzed to ensure that the interviewee's point of view is accurately reflected. Participatory observation will include participating in and documenting performances of Yi wedding folk songs, rehearsals, and educational workshops, as well as documenting Yi wedding folk songs through detailed on-site notes and photographs.

2.5.3 Conduct a thorough literature review to identify areas of research in the subject matter and existing areas that require further research. This review will synthesize information from journals, papers, performance videos, and interview transcripts to provide a theoretical basis and context for the research. All collected data will be organized, securely stored, and analyzed using qualitative research methods.

2.6 Data Management

2.6.1 Axi Axi Resume:

1. Collect and organize works, archives, and interview records related to Axi Axi and provide detailed information about personal life background, music

education background, large-scale academic performances and performance experiences, etc.

2. Record Axi Axi's participation in important large-scale academic exhibitions, exchanges, Yi cultural festivals, etc., and pay special attention to her performance and value in these activities.

2.6.2 Analysis of Axi Axi Yi Wedding Singing Skills:

1. Singing Technique Analysis: Collect Axi Axi's singing skills when singing Yi wedding folk songs, including her control of breathing, use of resonant cavities, and the poignancy and expressiveness of the actual singing emotion. The combination of Yi language and rhythm highlights the resonance of breath and sound.

2. Vocal Range and Melodic Control: Record how the transmitters in different emotional and narrative contexts control both types of tunes.

3. Rhythm and lyrics control: In the actual singing of the Yi wedding folk song, the performers will improvise the lyrics based on the actual story background. Learn how the transmitter mix rhythms and lyrics just right.

4. Emotional Expression Skills: analyze how Axi Axi uses subtle changes in voice in wedding folk songs to express her emotional feelings. (e.g., timbre, dynamics, etc.)

2.7 Data analysis

The data analysis for this research on the wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group will be conducted using both qualitative methods to address the research objectives comprehensively. The analysis will focus on two main areas: The life of Axi Axi and the singing skills of Axi Axi in the Yi wedding folk songs.

2.7.1 To investigate the biography of Axi Axi, adopt a qualitative research approach. The qualitative analysis focused on examining Axi Axi's life, identifying topics that were relevant to her studies, performances, and personal life. Through a comprehensive analysis of Axi Axi's studies, performances, and personal life, we can gain a deeper understanding of her life.

2.7.2 To analyze the singing technique of wedding folk songs by Axi Axi. This thesis uses a combination of two research methods to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Axi Axi's singing skills through interviews, including lyrics, melody, singing methods, etc.

This study ensures a thorough and meticulous understanding of the transmitter of Yi wedding folk songs, Axi Axi, conducts a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of each research objective, and provides a more in-depth introduction to Yi wedding folk songs through systematic analysis methods, which makes important contributions to the protection of transmitters and the study of Yi wedding folk songs.

2.8 Data Presentation

This thesis is divided into six chapters.

2.8.1 Chapter I: Introduction

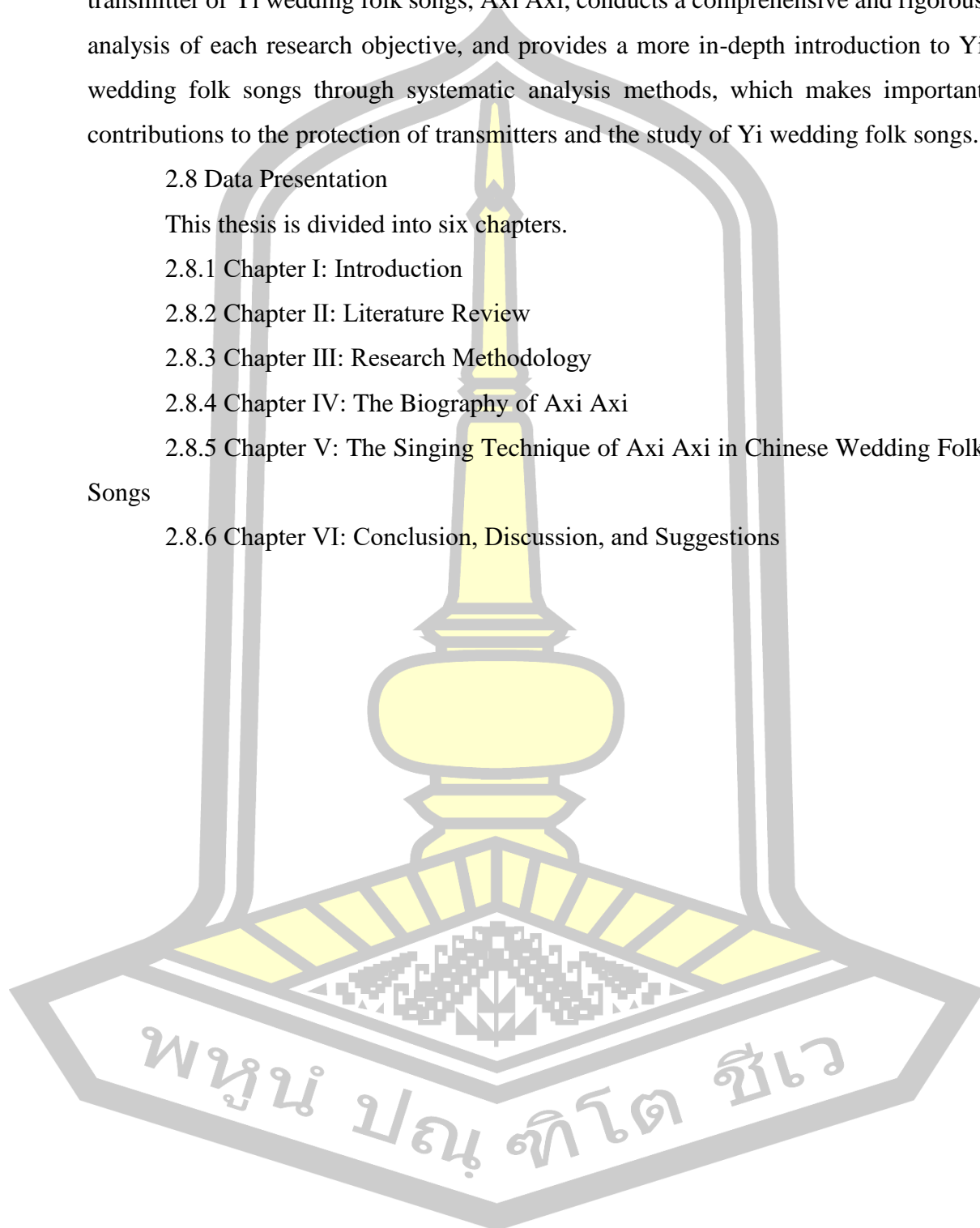
2.8.2 Chapter II: Literature Review

2.8.3 Chapter III: Research Methodology

2.8.4 Chapter IV: The Biography of Axi Axi

2.8.5 Chapter V: The Singing Technique of Axi Axi in Chinese Wedding Folk Songs

2.8.6 Chapter VI: Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions



CHAPTER IV

The Biography of Axi Axi

This chapter discusses the biography of Axi Axi and includes the following topics:

1. A Brief Biography of Axi Axi
2. Axi Axi's Personal Life
3. Axi Axi's Artistic Biography
4. Axi Axi's Transmission of Yi Singing Culture
5. Summary

1. A Brief Biography of Axi Axi

Proverb from Yi: "A child who is good at words is also good at singing." Axi Axi was born in April 1964 in Xide County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, a culturally rich region. When information was passed down through word of mouth, the Yi people comprehended and transmitted the art of singing while living a humble lifestyle. Singing is a reflection of life itself, and Axi Axi is a vibrant example of this tradition.

Growing up in a typical Yi family, Axi Axi has formed an indissoluble bond with traditional Yi songs since she was a child, and this love has taken root in her heart like a seed. At the age of 15, she made her debut on the stage of her hometown and was known as the "girl with the most beautiful singing voice" in the Yi community. The long-term cultivation of the traditional culture of the Yi ethnic group has undoubtedly provided an inexhaustible source of life inspiration for her singing path.

She proudly stated, "I am most proud of the fact that I have had the privilege of listening to and learning the purest and most complete Yi wedding folk songs passed down by word of mouth from my predecessors since I was a child, and this luck stems from the fact that I am a child of the Yi ethnic group." She continued: "Although I never received a formal vocal education, life itself has given me more wisdom and skill in singing."

2. Axi Axi's Personal Life

Arranged weddings were like an unseen shackle, closely linking the fate of many men and women, and became a distinguishing feature of that era. Children, particularly females, are frequently programmed to follow a road to marriage, as if the end of life is to put on a bridal gown and cross the threshold of another household. However, along this seemingly predestined path of fate, Axi Axi is like a distinct vivid color, adding a new footnote to this history.

Axi Axi, a woman from a traditional Yi family, has achieved her own balance between tradition and modernity with uncommon persistence and insight, even if her life is free of trivial daily problems. She not only returned to traditional family life, but also took on the role of a concerned and caring mother, demonstrating the magnificence and selflessness of maternal love by actual actions.

On the road to interview Axi Axi, you can already hear several legends about her family from the villagers. They went on: "In the whole of Xide County, there are only a handful of families that can produce three high-achieving students, and Axi Axi's family is one of them." Her two kids, like eagles flying high, have returned from higher education institutes such as China University of Geosciences and Beijing Police College. Not to be surpassed, her daughter graduated from Sichuan University with high marks. Among these statements is not only deep admiration for the accomplishments of Axi Axi's family education, but also envy and adoration from the people.

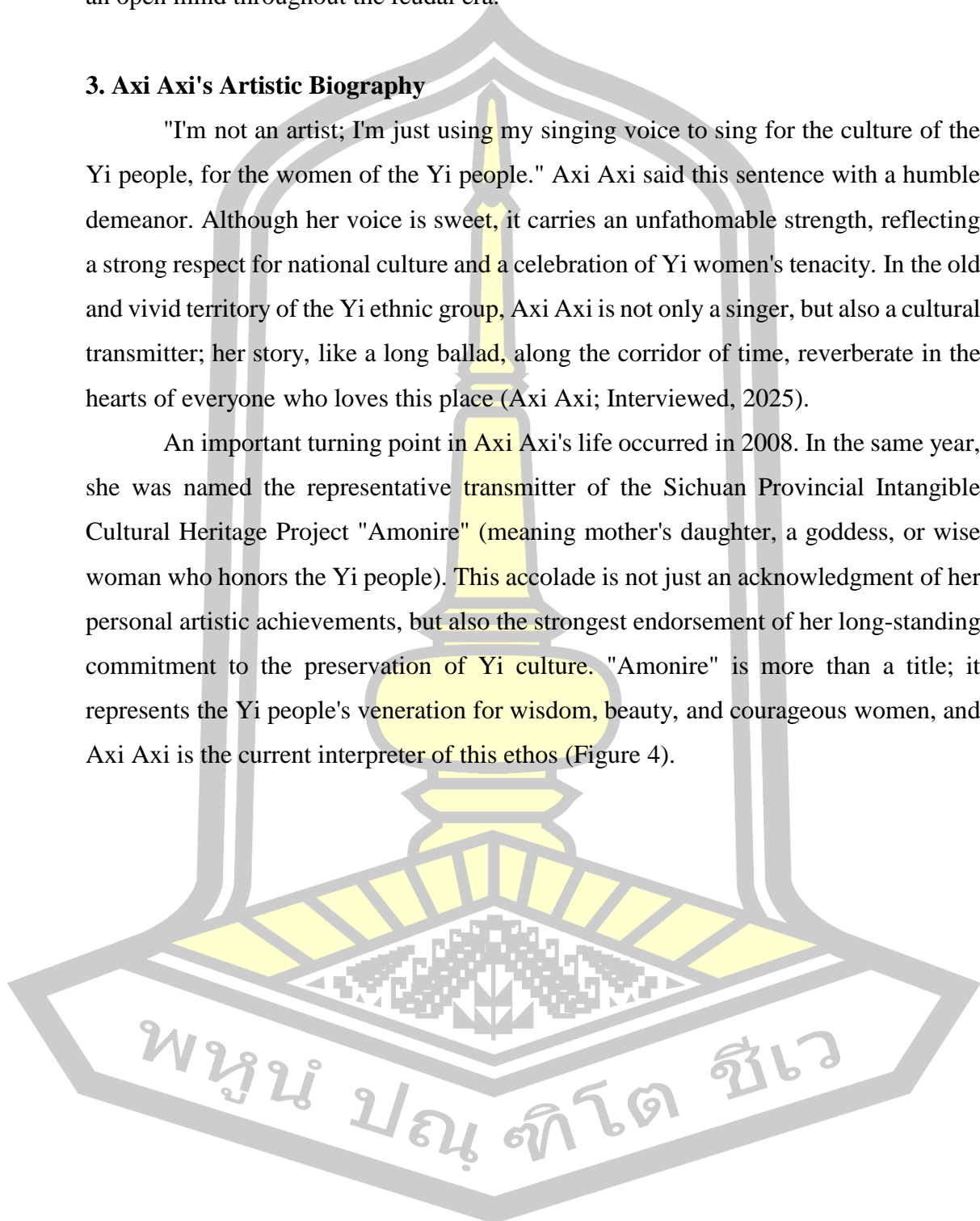
In the face of these compliments, Axi Axi always smiled indifferently, and her eyes shone with the light of motherhood. "My three children, they are not only an extension of my life, but a part of my personal life, if not the whole of it," she was saying. Today, one of the two boys shines in the Xichang Municipal administration, while the other keeps the city safe at the Xichang Municipal Police Station; the daughter works in the local administration of Xide County and contributes to the growth of her community. They've both formed their own little families, with loving partners and adorable children. When I see their happy faces, my heart is filled with pride and warmth. This is my proudest accomplishment as a mother and the most valuable treasure in my life. Axi Axi's remarks express her great love and expectation for the

children, as well as how she inspired others to pursue freedom, equality, and goals with an open mind throughout the feudal era.

3. Axi Axi's Artistic Biography

"I'm not an artist; I'm just using my singing voice to sing for the culture of the Yi people, for the women of the Yi people." Axi Axi said this sentence with a humble demeanor. Although her voice is sweet, it carries an unfathomable strength, reflecting a strong respect for national culture and a celebration of Yi women's tenacity. In the old and vivid territory of the Yi ethnic group, Axi Axi is not only a singer, but also a cultural transmitter; her story, like a long ballad, along the corridor of time, reverberate in the hearts of everyone who loves this place (Axi Axi; Interviewed, 2025).

An important turning point in Axi Axi's life occurred in 2008. In the same year, she was named the representative transmitter of the Sichuan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project "Amonire" (meaning mother's daughter, a goddess, or wise woman who honors the Yi people). This accolade is not just an acknowledgment of her personal artistic achievements, but also the strongest endorsement of her long-standing commitment to the preservation of Yi culture. "Amonire" is more than a title; it represents the Yi people's veneration for wisdom, beauty, and courageous women, and Axi Axi is the current interpreter of this ethos (Figure 4).



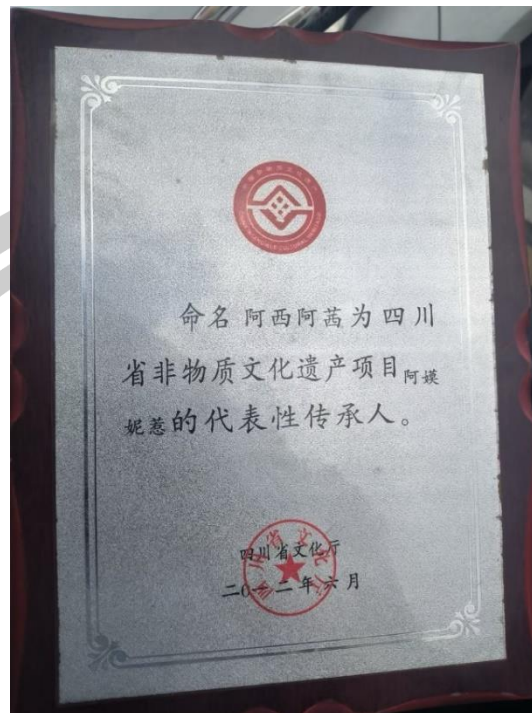


Figure 4. Axi Axi obtained a representative transmitter certificate from the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

Since then, Axi Axi's name has spread throughout Sichuan's Yi cultural circles and beyond. She has been invited to take part in a number of high-level cultural and creative activities, and she has established a link between tradition and contemporary, academic and practice. First of all, a special invitation from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music provided her with the chance to travel to Xide County for field study and collection in order to demonstrate the attractiveness of the Yi intangible cultural heritage project. The event was carefully planned by Xide County Cultural Radio and Television Station, aiming to explore and present the unique charm of Yi culture through the perspective of artists. Standing on the ancient land, Axi Axi told the history and legends of the Yi people with her singing voice, and every lyric seemed to tell the joys and sorrows of this land, which moved every listener present (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Axi Axi investigated and documented the Yi intangible cultural heritage program on stage in Xide County.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

Immediately afterwards, in the 2024 Lantern Festival Cultural Performance and New Year Garden Tour hosted by the Xide County Government, Axi Axi once again became the focus. In this festive atmosphere, she was dressed in gorgeous Yi costumes and amazed the audience with a song, "Agazhizhi.". This song not only shows her excellent singing skills but also conveys the Yi women's yearning and pursuit of a better life, as well as their awe of all things in nature. The audience was immersed in the weeping singing of Axi Axi, as if they had traveled through time and space and had a spiritual dialogue with the ancient Yi civilization (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Axi Axi's singing stage at the 2024 Lantern Festival Cultural Performance and New Year Garden Tour.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

The annual Xide County Square Torch Festival is an important occasion that Axi Axi cannot be absent from. Hosted by the Xide County Tourism and Culture Bureau, this event is a traditional festival for the Yi people to celebrate a good harvest and pray for peace. Returning to her hometown stage, Axi Axi also wore traditional Yi costumes, singing the peace and joy of the coming year; her singing was like the brightest star in the night sky, illuminating everyone's heart and transmitting the joy and peace of the Torch Festival to everyone present. At this moment, Axi Axi is not only the transmitter of culture but also the messenger of national unity and harmony (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Axi Axi's performance at the Torch Festival event in Xide County Square.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

4. Axi Axi's Transmission of Yi Singing Culture

These academic, cultural, and artistic activities have not only made Axi Axi's artistic talent widely recognized, but more importantly, they have become an important force in promoting the protection and transmission of Yi traditional culture. Axi Axi is well aware that the continuation of intangible cultural heritage is inseparable from the participation and love of the younger generation. Therefore, she decided to selflessly pass on her skills to more people, especially those young people who are passionate about Yi culture.

As a result, Axi Axi began to recruit apprentices and passed on the essence of the traditional wedding songs of the Yi ethnic group from generation to generation in the most traditional way. Her teaching is the teaching of skills and the transmission of a spirit. Axi Axi often said to his disciples, "Singing is our language and the bridge of our hearts." Every song carries our history, culture, and emotions. Only by truly understanding and loving this land can we sing the most moving songs. Under her careful teaching, batch after batch of young singers gradually grew up. Up to now, 15 people have become teachers and have become a new force that can independently sing

the traditional wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group, and 10 people are in the process of learning, and the team is growing.

In addition to face-to-face teaching, Axi Axi also actively participates in the promotion of various online platforms, using modern technology to spread the traditional songs of the Yi people further afield. She recorded a series of teaching videos and shared them on social media and online learning platforms, attracting the attention and learning of a large number of domestic and foreign enthusiasts. Through the bridge of the Internet, the voice of Axi Axi has crossed the boundaries of geography, allowing more people to understand and fall in love with the Yi culture (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Axi Axi's online singing lesson screen.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

The traditional wedding songs of the Yi ethnic group have not only been effectively safeguarded and transmitted thanks to Axi Axi's efforts, but they have also been gradually integrated into modern life, serving as a link between the past and the future, tradition and innovation. Her journey, like a long ballad, encourages more people to discover, appreciate, and transmit their own national culture. Through her

acts, Axi Axi demonstrates that any regular person may become a cultural steward and make a distinctive contribution to the world in her own manner.

5. Summary

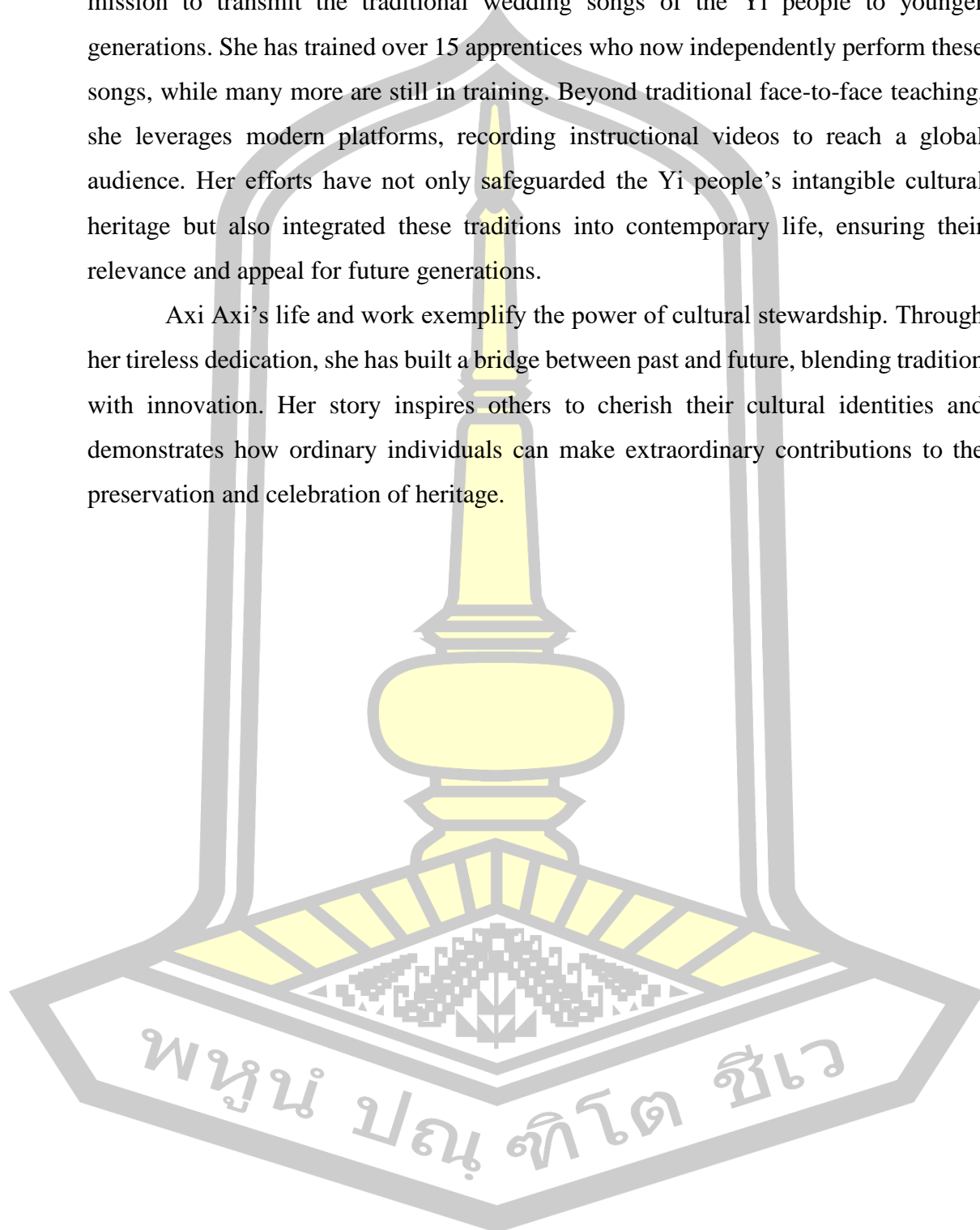
Axi Axi, born in 1964 in Xide County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, grew up deeply immersed in the cultural traditions of the Yi people. Her early exposure to the oral traditions of Yi folk songs shaped her lifelong passion for singing and preserving her heritage. At the age of 15, she gained widespread recognition in her community as the "girl with the most beautiful singing voice," establishing herself as a torchbearer of Yi cultural traditions. Despite never receiving formal vocal training, Axi Axi attributes her mastery of singing to life experiences and the rich cultural environment of her upbringing, which instilled in her a profound respect for Yi oral traditions.

In her personal life, Axi Axi has achieved a remarkable balance between honoring tradition and embracing modernity. While rooted in the customs of a traditional Yi family, she has demonstrated persistence and insight in charting a progressive path for herself and her children. As a mother, Axi Axi takes pride in her children's achievements, with all three excelling in higher education and professional careers. Her two sons have become influential figures in Xichang's municipal administration and police force, while her daughter contributes to her community through local government service. Through her family's successes, Axi Axi embodies the values of resilience, maternal dedication, and the pursuit of equality and opportunity.

A significant milestone in Axi Axi's artistic journey came in 2008, when she was named the representative transmitter of the Sichuan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project Amonire—a title symbolizing the wisdom, beauty, and courage of Yi women. This recognition underscores her dual role as a singer and cultural ambassador. Her performances at major cultural events, such as the 2024 Lantern Festival and Xide County's annual Torch Festival, have captivated audiences with their authenticity and emotional depth. Through songs like Agazhizhi, she celebrates the strength of Yi women and their yearning for freedom, while promoting unity and cultural pride.

As a passionate advocate for cultural preservation, Axi Axi has made it her mission to transmit the traditional wedding songs of the Yi people to younger generations. She has trained over 15 apprentices who now independently perform these songs, while many more are still in training. Beyond traditional face-to-face teaching, she leverages modern platforms, recording instructional videos to reach a global audience. Her efforts have not only safeguarded the Yi people's intangible cultural heritage but also integrated these traditions into contemporary life, ensuring their relevance and appeal for future generations.

Axi Axi's life and work exemplify the power of cultural stewardship. Through her tireless dedication, she has built a bridge between past and future, blending tradition with innovation. Her story inspires others to cherish their cultural identities and demonstrates how ordinary individuals can make extraordinary contributions to the preservation and celebration of heritage.



CHAPTER V

The Singing Technique of Axi Axi in Chinese Wedding Folk Songs

The traditional wedding folk songs of the Yi people are not merely musical expressions but are deeply intertwined with cultural identity, history, and community life. Within this rich heritage, Axi Axi has emerged as a masterful singer and preserver of these songs, infusing her unique artistry into their performance. Her singing embodies the essence of Yi traditions while offering an evolved interpretation that resonates with contemporary audiences. By examining her approach to wedding folk songs, this chapter aims to explore the technical and stylistic dimensions that make her performances distinctive. This chapter delves into four key aspects of Axi Axi's vocal artistry.

1. Overview of the Singing Style of Axi Axi Wedding Folk Songs
2. Overview of the Singing Form of the Axi Axi Wedding Folk Songs
3. Singing Skills of the Wedding Folk Songs of Axi Axi
4. Methods of Constructing Vocal Techniques and Singing Styles
5. Summary

1. Overview of the Singing Style of Axi Axi Wedding Folk Songs

Upon revisiting the interview with Axi Axi, the custodian of Yi culture, I was profoundly captivated by her heartfelt rendition of Yi wedding folk songs, particularly the two distinctive melodies she presented—the lamenting wedding tune and the narrative tune. Axi Axi, a woman possessing a glimmer of wisdom in her eyes, employs her ethereal voice to convey to the author the extensive history and deep significance of Yi wedding folk songs. In the wedding ceremony of the Yi ethnic group, music serves not only to create a celebratory ambiance but also as a crucial medium for emotional expression and cultural transmission. The two principal topics of Yi wedding folk songs express distinct emotions and cultural values, and their amalgamation creates the distinctive allure of Yi wedding music.

1.1 Crying wedding tune, as the name suggests, is a tune in which the bride sings on the eve of her wedding or on the wedding day to express her feelings of parting,

gratitude, and reluctance to her parents, as well as her longing and worries for her future life. It is not only a form of music but also a kind of emotional catharsis and maternal call, and it is the most real emotional expression in the heart of Yi women in the face of major turning points in their lives. Axi Axi said, "The crying wedding tune is the most touching tune. It's a complex emotional intertwining rather than only a depressing cry. In the singing, the bride not only expressed her gratitude to her parents for their nurturing grace, but also revealed her deep attachment to her hometown and relatives; at the same time, she expressed her best wishes for her future married life, as well as her anxiety and expectation of an unknown fate.

In Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, the singing style of the crying wedding tune varies from region to region, but whether it is the big trouser leg area, the middle trouser leg area, or the small trouser leg area, the crying wedding tune touches the heartstrings of every listener with its unique melody and lyrics. The crying wedding tune in the big trouser leg area, with its beautiful and lyrical melody, is like a clear spring in the mountains, flowing slowly, making people feel the delicacy and tenderness of the bride's heart. The crying wedding tune in the middle trouser leg area shows more of a jumping rhythm, as if the bride's heart is intertwined with the expectation and anxiety of the future. The crying wedding tune in the trouser leg area is like the wind on the grassland, drifting freely with its long melody, conveying the bride's yearning and desire for the vast world.

1.2 Compared with the crying and marrying tune, the narrative tune bears more of the heavy responsibility of telling the history, legends, and folk culture of the Yi people. In the wedding ceremony, the narrative tone transmits the culture and wisdom of the Yi people from generation to generation by telling the stories of ancestors, heroic deeds, and legends of love. "The narrative tone is a treasure in the Yi wedding folk songs, which not only allows us to understand the history and culture of the Yi people but also makes us feel the wisdom and courage of the Yi people."

The singing of the narrative tone is often accompanied by rich body language and props, such as exquisite costumes and headdresses, making the whole performance process like a vivid historical drama, allowing the audience to feel as if they have traveled through time and space and had a dialogue with the ancients. In the big trouser leg area, the melody of the narrative tone is melodious and lyrical, like an echo between

the valleys, making people feel the weight of history and the profundity of culture. The narrative tone of the middle trouser leg area tells the story vividly and interestingly with its unique tone and rhythm, allowing people to learn the knowledge and wisdom of the Yi people in appreciation. The narrative tone of the trouser leg area, with its long melody and soulful singing, brings the audience into a world full of mystery and romance, allowing people to feel the cultural charm at the same time but also appreciate the emotional world of the Yi people.

2. Overview of the Singing Form of the Axi Axi Wedding Folk Songs

When deeply discussing the singing form of Yi wedding folk songs and the cultural and social background behind them, it is not difficult to find that the form of solo singing occupies a pivotal position in it. This is not only because solo singing can express the singer's emotions and mood in the most direct and purest way but also because, under specific historical and social conditions, solo singing has become an important way for the Yi people to express themselves and vent their emotions. Especially in Xide County, this traditional custom has been vividly displayed.

In Xide County, Yi wedding folk songs are sung in a variety of forms, but the most common and distinctive is the solo. Solo singing is not only an artistic expression but also a direct expression of emotions. In the daily life of the Yi people, whether it is to relieve sorrow, self-pity, or to vent their sadness, they often sing wedding folk songs alone to comfort their souls and seek comfort. This form of singing does not require a gorgeous stage or complex accompaniment, and only the singer's voice and emotions can interpret every note and every lyric in the song to the fullest.

In Yi wedding folk songs, the solo form is particularly widely used. Whether it is a crying tone that expresses the feeling of parting or a narrative tone that tells historical stories and heroic legends, solo singing can perfectly present the emotions and artistic conceptions in the song to the audience. Crying tunes, such as "Ayiwuge" and "Agazhizhi," with their deep, slightly sorrowful melodies and heartfelt lyrics, touch listeners. Narrative tones such as "Jingu Xingu" and "Amonire" evoke the vastness and profundity of Yi culture through vivid and intriguing narratives and philosophical lyrics. These songs, when played by soloists, appear to come to life and serve as a bridge between the past and the present, tradition and modernity.

When discussing the reasons for the popularity of the solo form of Yi wedding folk songs in Xide County, we have to mention the absence of instrumental accompaniment. This phenomenon is not accidental but has been influenced by both history and society. In the past, in a slave society, the Yi people were deeply oppressed by class and had no personal freedom, and their songs were often full of desire for freedom and resistance to class oppression. In order to maintain its dominance, the ruling class tried to prohibit the Yi people from singing rebellious songs and even imposed strict controls on musical instruments. In this context, the Yi people can only convey their inner emotions and demands through solo singing. This form of singing is not only a form of self-expression but also a kind of silent struggle. In addition, the improvisation of Yi wedding folk songs is also one of the reasons why the musical instruments are inconvenient to accompany them. When the Yi people sing folk songs, they often improvise and adapt the songs according to the atmosphere of the scene, the reactions of the audience, and their own emotional changes. This style of singing requires the singer to have a high level of musical literacy and improvisational ability, and the instrumental accompaniment is difficult to keep up with such rapid tempo changes. Therefore, solo singing has become the most flexible and free form of Yi wedding folk songs singing.

3. Singing Skills of the Wedding Folk Songs of Axi Axi

3.1 As a bright pearl in traditional Chinese culture, the crying wedding tune in the wedding folk songs carries profound national emotions and cultural connotations, especially in the Yi community. It is a form of musical expression and a concentrated expression of Yi women's memories of their past lives, their longing for the future, and their reluctance to cling to their relatives before they get married. The singing skills of the crying and marrying tune especially test the singer's artistic accomplishment and improvisation ability because it requires the singer to be able to improvise and weave lyrics that fit the situation and are infectious according to the atmosphere and emotional fluctuations of the scene under the fixed melody framework, which is undoubtedly the source of the vitality of the crying and marrying tune. Although the melody of the crying wedding tune follows the established pattern, under the interpretation of Axi Axi, each

note seems to be given life; they jump and linger, leading the listener through time and space into those stories of love and parting.

In particular, it is worth mentioning that Axi Axi's free transition between true and false voices constitutes a unique musical language in the crying and marrying tune. She began to sing affectionately in her true voice, conveying her personal emotions directly and sincerely to every listener, as if she was telling the most simple story about her reluctance to leave home and the anxiety about the unknown life. Subsequently, she re-sang the song in an almost detached falsetto, transposing the song to a subordinate key, which is not only an innovation in the musical structure but also a progression of emotional depth, like a whisper of the soul, allowing the listener to experience a deeper emotional resonance in the repetition of the melody.

In the process of singing, Axi Axi skillfully used the unique "Runqiang" technique of the Yi ethnic group, which made the crying and marrying tone more colorful and full of regional characteristics. "Runqiang," this term contains the wisdom and aesthetics of the Yi people passed down from generation to generation; it is not only a technical treatment but also a way of cultural and emotional expression, expressed through leaning, legato, ornamental sound, etc. The use of "Runqiang" in the crying wedding tune not only enriches the expressiveness of music but also adds a unique color to the marriage culture of the Yi ethnic group. It is not only a beautification of sound but also a profound depiction of the delicate emotions and complex psychology of Yi women. Through "Runqiang," Axi Axi's singing voice is like a mirror, reflecting the unique understanding and respect of Yi society for marriage, family, and family relationships, and also reflecting the inner fluctuations and emotional struggles of Yi women in the face of major turning points in their lives. In addition, the use of the technique of "Runqiang" also deepened the audience's understanding of the deep emotions contained in the Yi marriage culture. It makes people feel that even in the joyful wedding atmosphere, it is inevitably mixed with the sorrow of parting and the deep attachment to the past life. This kind of emotional interweaving reflects the Yi people's cherishing of family affection and their love for life and beautiful expectations for the future. In short, through her exquisite "Runqiang" skills, Axi Axi vividly interprets the traditional art form of crying and marrying tunes, which not only shows the unique charm of Yi music but also conveys the rich emotional connotation of Yi

marriage culture at a deeper level. Every time she sings, it is an affectionate tribute to traditional culture, and it is also a profound exploration of the emotional world of the Yi people, allowing the audience to feel the warmth and strength across time and space in the flow of music.

3.2 The narrative tone of wedding folk songs is specific and varied. The Yi people will have a beautiful and soft tune, a continuous melody and vivid image, and the strong mountain atmosphere is vividly compared to everything seen in life. I have to say that the Yi people tell moving stories through small things, and this kind of nation with collective wisdom is relatively rare. The previous transmitter, Axi Axi, mentioned that in terms of language and singing, different regions of Liangshan have different styles in terms of narrative tone. Xide County is located in the small trouser leg area, and the plain melody is prominent, and the lines are elongated. Axi Axi instantly changes her mood during the singing process, giving feelings and personalities to the things that the narrative tone refers to. The biggest singing technique of the narrative tone lies in the use of long breath and the transformation of small breath. Once the breath is not well controlled, there will be a phenomenon of insufficient singing or dissatisfaction. Throughout the interview, the transmitter, Axi Axi, connected the whole melody line in place, and since each section is an irregular phrase, the change of breath is also a kind of refinement and test for the singer.

The narrative tone of the wedding folk songs is presented in its various and diverse expressions. The Yi people's ability to see the big from the small and tell moving stories through small things not only demonstrates their unique artistic creativity but also reflects their profound collective wisdom and vividly shows the rich life scenes and delicate emotional world of the Yi people. In the magical land of Liangshan, the style of narrative tone varies according to regional differences. As the transmitter, Axi Axi said, from language to singing, different regions of Liangshan show a unique charm of narrative tone. Xide County, located in the small trouser leg area, where the narrative tone stands out with its plain melodic lines and long melodies. In the process of singing, she is able to instantly change her mood, giving rich emotions and distinct characters to the things referred to in the narrative tone, making every lyric and every note full of vitality.

The singing technique of the narrative tone is particularly exquisite, in which the use of long breaths and the transformation of small breaths are the key. In the narrative of wedding folk songs, the melody is often composed of a series of irregular phrases, which requires the singer to have excellent breath control ability to maintain the coherence and flow of the melody line during the singing. Once the breath is not properly controlled, there may be insufficient singing or dissatisfaction, which will affect the overall musical effect. When Axi Axi sings, her breath is controlled just right, and she seems to be able to adjust her breathing as she wants, like a gossamer, connecting the whole melody line in a meticulous way, which is breathtaking. The change of stinging breath is another highlight of Axi Axi's singing process. Between irregular phrases, she always finds the most appropriate time to switch the breath, which not only ensures the coherence of the melody but also adds to the layering and dynamic beauty of the music. This technique not only tests the singer's musical literacy but also reflects his deep understanding and unique interpretation of the narrative tone.

4. Methods of Constructing Vocal Techniques and Singing Styles

After sorting out the scores of the Yi wedding folk songs and the narrative tune, the singing and oral description of the transmitter Axi Axi and his own singing, the author found that the vocal skills of the two types of tunes have their own characteristics, which are worthy of in-depth discussion and excavation. Therefore, the study is carried out from the aspects of breathing, resonance, the use of true and false voices, the articulation of words, and the use of ornamental sounds.

4.1 Breathing

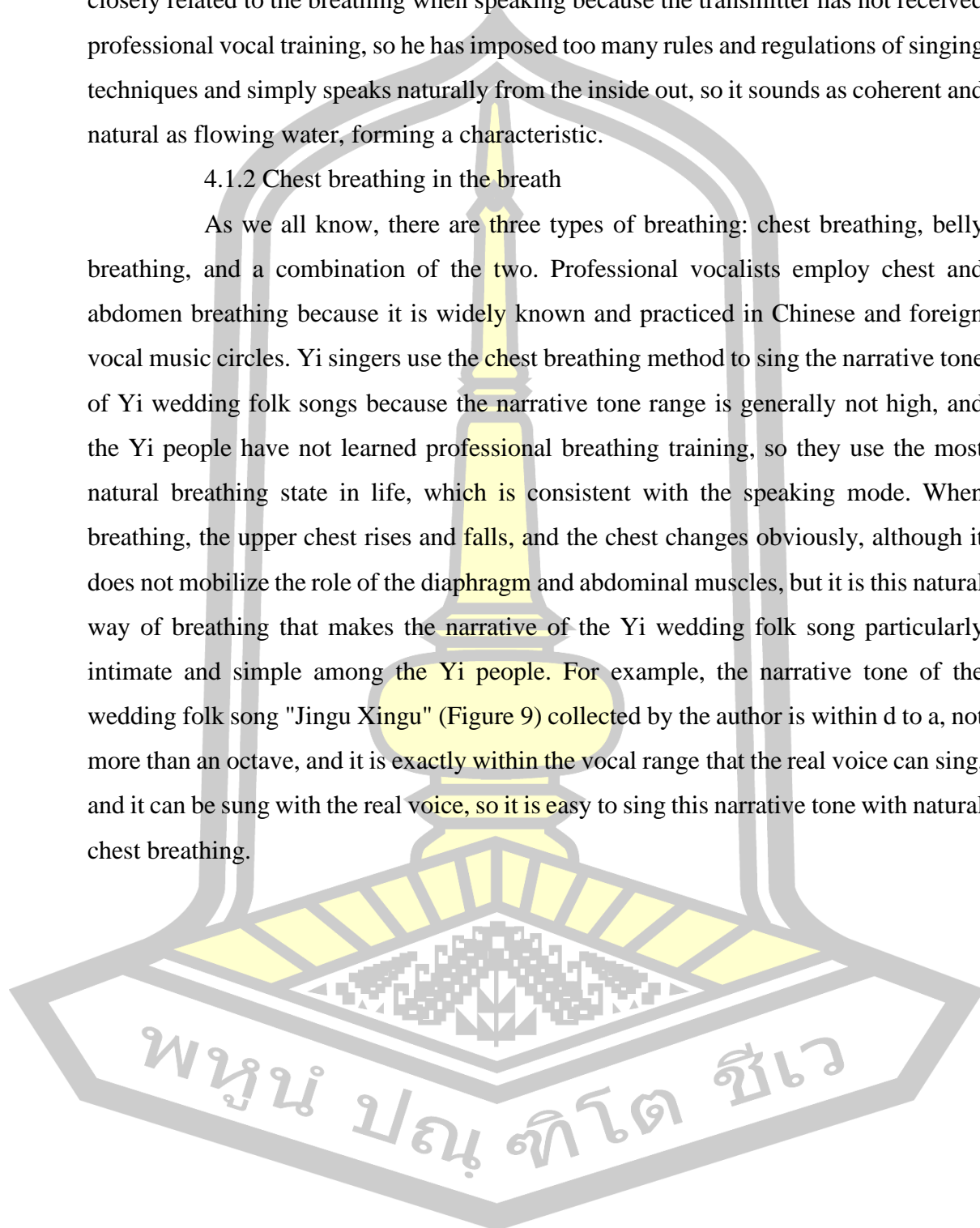
Breathing is the driving force of all sounds, and the ancient vocal theory believes that "those who are good at singing must first tune their breath," "voice" relies on "breath," and "breath" is the basis of "voice.". The singing of Yi wedding folk songs is no exception. When the transmitter, Axi Axi, sings the wedding folk song, the breathing is closely related to the breathing when speaking, because the transmitter has not undergone professional vocal training, so he has put down too many rules and regulations of singing techniques and just speaks naturally from the inside out, so it sounds as coherent and natural as flowing water, forming a characteristic.

4.1.1 The rhyme is natural and consistent

When the transmitter, Axi Axi, sings wedding folk songs, the breathing is closely related to the breathing when speaking because the transmitter has not received professional vocal training, so he has imposed too many rules and regulations of singing techniques and simply speaks naturally from the inside out, so it sounds as coherent and natural as flowing water, forming a characteristic.

4.1.2 Chest breathing in the breath

As we all know, there are three types of breathing: chest breathing, belly breathing, and a combination of the two. Professional vocalists employ chest and abdomen breathing because it is widely known and practiced in Chinese and foreign vocal music circles. Yi singers use the chest breathing method to sing the narrative tone of Yi wedding folk songs because the narrative tone range is generally not high, and the Yi people have not learned professional breathing training, so they use the most natural breathing state in life, which is consistent with the speaking mode. When breathing, the upper chest rises and falls, and the chest changes obviously, although it does not mobilize the role of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, but it is this natural way of breathing that makes the narrative of the Yi wedding folk song particularly intimate and simple among the Yi people. For example, the narrative tone of the wedding folk song "Jingu Xingu" (Figure 9) collected by the author is within d to a, not more than an octave, and it is exactly within the vocal range that the real voice can sing, and it can be sung with the real voice, so it is easy to sing this narrative tone with natural chest breathing.



Vocal range: 

Jingu Xingu

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=70 Homesickness and longing for family



O yi ya ya me a mu si ni la si gua si nie

6
yo yi ya a ya me gun ma sa ci ri go lio



Figure 9. Jingu Xingu

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.2 Use of oral resonance

The oral cavity is one of the resonance organs of singing and plays an important role in the resonance regulation of singing. The singing of wedding folk songs in Xide County also uses resonance, mainly oral resonance, and appropriately uses mixed resonance.

4.2.1 Oral resonance is dominant

The crying wedding tune comes from nature and life, so in the singing of the Yi folk songs, crying and marrying tune in Xide County, after the vocal cords are vocalized, it is similar to the resonance of speaking because the singers basically use the real voice to sing, so most of the voices vibrate in the oral cavity and produce oral resonance. It's just that when singing, the breath will be fully prepared, and the mouth will be opened so that the singing of the joy song is like talking but not talking.

In the singing video of the crying and marrying tune "Agazhizhi" (Figure 10) collected by the author, most of the resonance of the singer's singing voice is located in the mouth, and this part of the vocal range is from the B tone to the B₁ tone; especially in the singing of the two-beat long note in this range, the voice can be clearly felt

directly from the oral cavity, and the volume of the voice is not small, indicating that the singer's mouth is in a relaxed state.

Vocal range: 

Agazhizhi

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩} = 75$ Longing, vulnerable



A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie o sha nie nen

5
en a zhi zhi yei mo luo lie suo pu nie mo ve o sha nie nen

9
A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie ei zhi zhi cai nie nie ri ge luo ve o sha nie nen



Figure 10. Agazhizhi

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

For example, in the singing video of the crying wedding tune "Ayiwuge" (Figure 11) collected by the author, the singer Axi Axi did not do any pre-singing practice before singing. The timbre of singing is the same as the timbre of speaking, especially the "ge" sound of "A mo wu ge" in the first stanza and the "ze" sound in the last bar, both of which are the lowest notes of the whole piece. At this point, its voice state is almost the same as speaking. And the pitch corresponding to "ge" and "ze" is on the a note, which is exactly in the range in which it speaks. When Axi Axi sings, she can clearly feel that most of her voice vibrates in her mouth, as natural and smooth as speaking.

Ayiwuge

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Sadness, unfairness

A mo wu ge a le zhi la yi jia ge le

5
A mo wu ge wu ze ni re ni zha yi o ze da re



Figure 11. Ayiwuge

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.2.2 Mix resonance appropriately

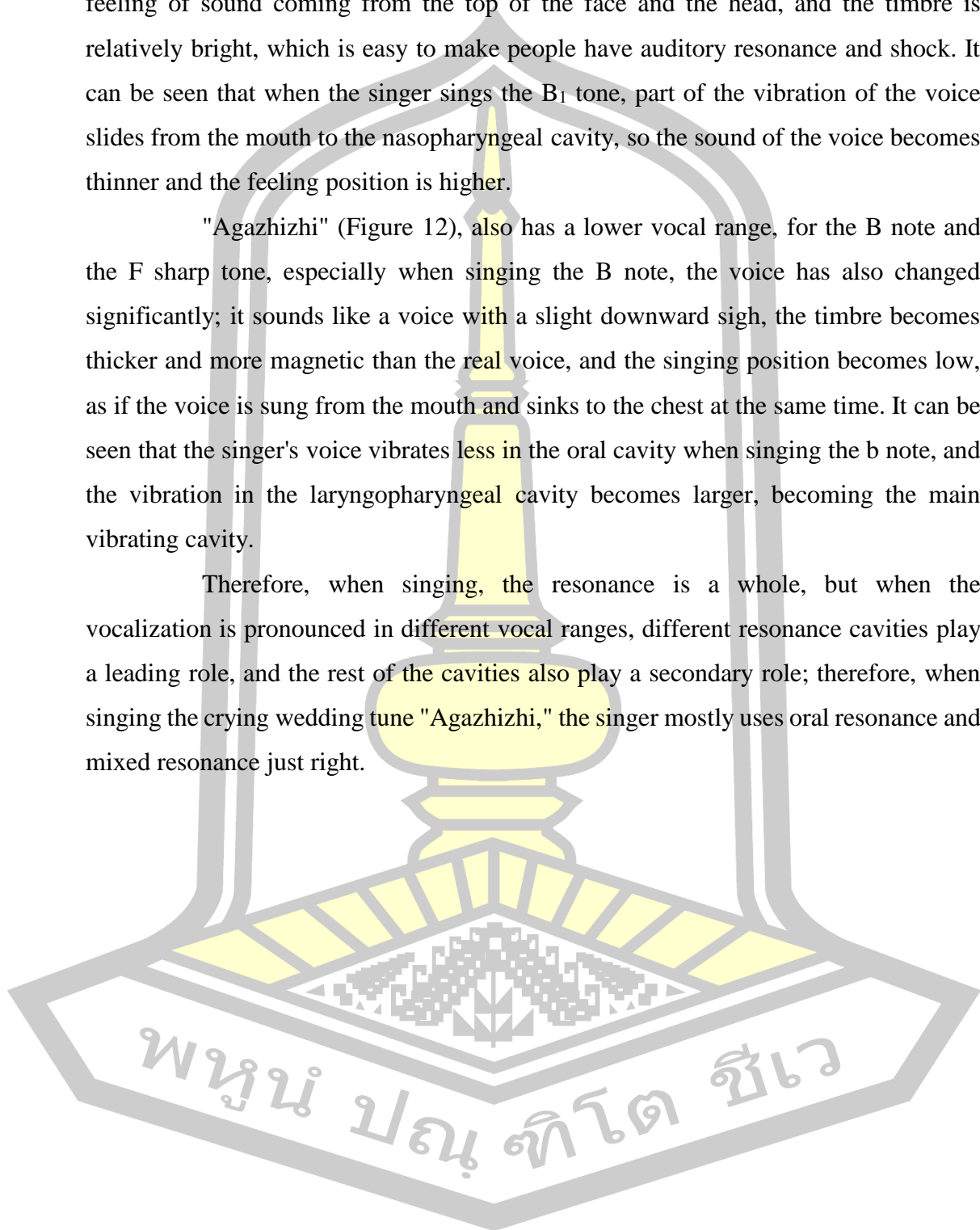
The connection is universal. The various parts and elements within each thing are also interconnected. The resonance of singing is the joint action of various resonance cavities composed of countless vocal organs, and each resonance cavity is inextricably linked. In a Yi wedding folk song, the crying and wedding tune will contain the sound of the high vocal area, the sound of the low vocal area, and the middle vocal area in between, and when the singer encounters the sound of the high vocal area, the proportion of the sound vibrating in the nasopharyngeal cavity is larger than that of the oral cavity and laryngopharyngeal cavity. When encountering the sound in the middle vocal area, it will naturally use the resonance of the oral cavity, and the nasopharyngeal cavity and laryngopharyngeal cavity have less effect. When singing in the lower vocal area, laryngopharyngeal resonance plays a major role, but the nasopharyngeal cavity and oral cavity also play a role.

For example, in "Agazhizhi" (Figure 12), the B₁ tone is sung by the singer in falsetto, and when singing this sound, the singer's voice can be clearly heard, and unlike the previous tone sung with the real voice, the volume becomes smaller, the position of the voice becomes higher, and the timbre becomes brighter. When the Yi singers sing to a higher vocal range, most of the sound is vibrating in the

nasopharyngeal cavity, producing nasopharyngeal resonance, which will give people a feeling of sound coming from the top of the face and the head, and the timbre is relatively bright, which is easy to make people have auditory resonance and shock. It can be seen that when the singer sings the B₁ tone, part of the vibration of the voice slides from the mouth to the nasopharyngeal cavity, so the sound of the voice becomes thinner and the feeling position is higher.

"Agazhizhi" (Figure 12), also has a lower vocal range, for the B note and the F sharp tone, especially when singing the B note, the voice has also changed significantly; it sounds like a voice with a slight downward sigh, the timbre becomes thicker and more magnetic than the real voice, and the singing position becomes low, as if the voice is sung from the mouth and sinks to the chest at the same time. It can be seen that the singer's voice vibrates less in the oral cavity when singing the b note, and the vibration in the laryngopharyngeal cavity becomes larger, becoming the main vibrating cavity.

Therefore, when singing, the resonance is a whole, but when the vocalization is pronounced in different vocal ranges, different resonance cavities play a leading role, and the rest of the cavities also play a secondary role; therefore, when singing the crying wedding tune "Agazhizhi," the singer mostly uses oral resonance and mixed resonance just right.



Agazhizhi

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Longing, vulnerable

A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie o sha nie nen
True voice

5
en a zhi zhi yei mo luo lie suo pu nie mo ve o sha nie nen
True voice

9
A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie ei zhi zhi cai nie nie ri ge luo ve o sha nie nen
True voice



Figure 12. Agazhizhi

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.3 Use of true and false voice vocal techniques

True voice is commonly known as the original voice, and the true voice is based on the pronunciation mechanism of people in the natural state of speech, and the pitch, range, and flexibility are limited. Falsetto is commonly known as the small voice, and the vocal music industry is used to calling it the head voice. When a falsetto is issued, the vocal cords vibrate locally, and the falsetto has a high frequency and high vocal range, a slender voice, and good flexibility. In the wedding folk song singing video collected by the author, the transmitter, Axi Axi, used the true and false voices very freely when singing the wedding folk songs; the true and false voices cooperated with each other, and the transition between the true and false voices was very natural.

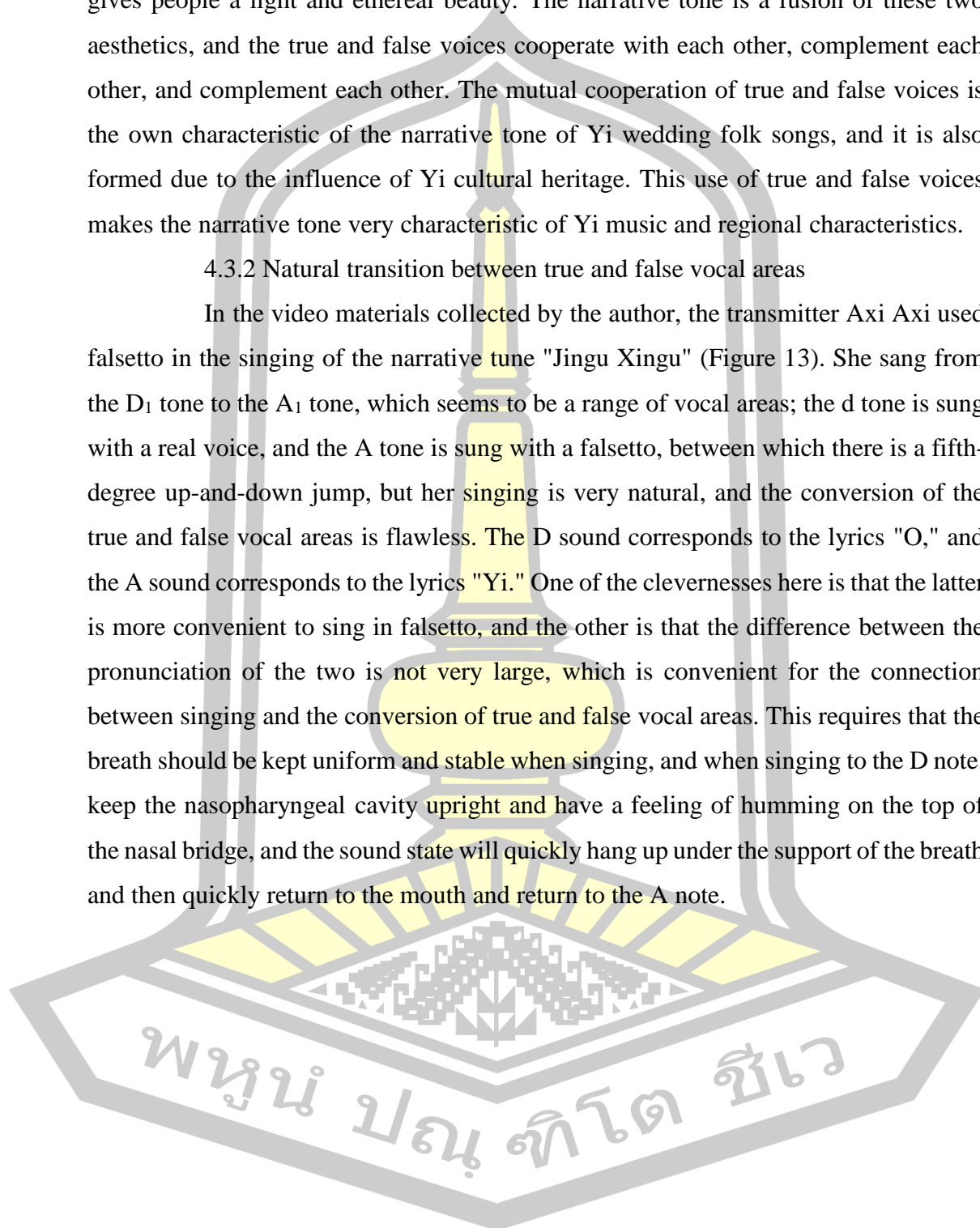
4.3.1 True and false voices interact with one another

In narrative tone singing, it is more frequent to sing with real voice, and falsetto is uncommon, but the clever combination of true and false voice is one of the most distinguishing features. The real voice when singing gives people a passionate and

powerful beauty, closer to the position and state of speaking, while the falsetto voice gives people a light and ethereal beauty. The narrative tone is a fusion of these two aesthetics, and the true and false voices cooperate with each other, complement each other, and complement each other. The mutual cooperation of true and false voices is the own characteristic of the narrative tone of Yi wedding folk songs, and it is also formed due to the influence of Yi cultural heritage. This use of true and false voices makes the narrative tone very characteristic of Yi music and regional characteristics.

4.3.2 Natural transition between true and false vocal areas

In the video materials collected by the author, the transmitter Axi Axi used falsetto in the singing of the narrative tune "Jingu Xingu" (Figure 13). She sang from the D_1 tone to the A_1 tone, which seems to be a range of vocal areas; the d tone is sung with a real voice, and the A tone is sung with a falsetto, between which there is a fifth-degree up-and-down jump, but her singing is very natural, and the conversion of the true and false vocal areas is flawless. The D sound corresponds to the lyrics "O," and the A sound corresponds to the lyrics "Yi." One of the clevernesses here is that the latter is more convenient to sing in falsetto, and the other is that the difference between the pronunciation of the two is not very large, which is convenient for the connection between singing and the conversion of true and false vocal areas. This requires that the breath should be kept uniform and stable when singing, and when singing to the D note, keep the nasopharyngeal cavity upright and have a feeling of humming on the top of the nasal bridge, and the sound state will quickly hang up under the support of the breath and then quickly return to the mouth and return to the A note.



Jingu Xingu

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=70 Homesickness and longing for family

O yi ya ya me a mu si ni la si gua si nie
True voice Falsetto

6
yo yi ya a ya me gun ma sa ci ri go lio
True voice Falsetto



Figure 13. Jingu Xingu

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.4 Lyrics

Language is the beginning of singing, and one of the necessary conditions for singing is to articulate the words clearly and the articulation of singing will directly affect the expression of the emotion, content, and style of the song.

4.4.1 The lyrics are a combination of singing and speaking.

One of the distinctive features of Yi wedding folk songs is that they are sung while they are spoken, and they are said in singing. This characteristic is more evident in the narrative tone, which skillfully combines speaking and singing. And most of the narrative tuning range is within an octave, which seems to be closer to the feeling of speaking. For example, "Amonire" (Figure 14) is almost in the bass range, and it is sung with real voices. This natural tone of speech is reflected perfectly in measures 3-7, with the dotted rhythmic pattern in the melody, and they are all of the same pitch, positioned in the naturally occurring range, providing the sense of speaking while singing and singing while speaking.

Amonire

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=60 Delivering and praising women

Ve o yi a mo ye o yi ya o ni o nia ye o yi yo o len pa ye

5
o yi ya ve ci o pa ye o yi ya ve en o o yi ya ve ci ve la



Figure 14. Amonire

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.4.2 The lyrics are pronounced clearly and naturally

Judging from the crying wedding tune of "Agazhizhi" (Figure 15), after the author marked its singing language in Chinese pinyin (the lyrics are bold), the initials y, g, l, p, zh, s, etc. can be clearly heard from the singing of the transmitter Axi Axi, which is decisive and clean and powerful; and finals a, o, e, i, u, ei, ai, etc., soft and rounded. The pronunciation of "ve" in the notation example is not found in Chinese Pinyin, and the focus of the pronunciation of "v" here is between the lips and teeth; that is, the lower lip touches the upper row of teeth. The singer pronounces this labial-dental fricative with moderate dynamics and rapid pronunciation, with breath slowly flowing from between the lower lip and between the teeth, and finally the final note rests on the vowel e, which is particularly clear and natural.

Agazhizhi

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Longing, vulnerable

A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie o sha nie nen

5
en a zhi zhi yei mo luo lie suo pu nie mo ve o sha nie nen

9
A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie ei zhi zhi cai nie nie ri ge luo ve o sha nie nen



Figure 15. Agazhizhi

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

In a sense, the Yi wedding folk songs, just like their language, play an important role in the production and life of the Yi people, such as communication, transmission of emotions, and telling traditional stories. If even such a singing language is not clear, then the Yi wedding folk songs will not be able to assume such an important role, and there is no way to pass on such a unique "way of speaking."

4.5 Use of ornamental notes

The small notes used to decorate the melody and some special marks that replace the melody are called ornaments. The ornamental notes in the wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in Xide County are mainly posterior and forward-leaning tones, and the use of these ornamental tones makes the wedding folk songs more exquisite and highlights the unique style of wedding folk songs.

4.5.1 Back Portamento

Post-portamento is a type of portamento, and both belong to ornamentation. Post-portamento is common in wedding folk songs, such as "Amonire" (Figure 16) with a portamento mark at the end. The portamento symbol appears behind the F sharp note

of the original note, and the direction of the arrow points downward; that is, when singing, it slides down from the F sharp note to the pitch below the F sharp note, because there is no other sound after the arrow, so there is no destination when sliding, and it goes down naturally, similar to the feeling of sighing, but when singing the portamento, it is necessary to maintain the unity of the singing state and breath and also to ensure the accuracy and timing of the previous note. When singing this sound, the voice is in the oropharyngeal cavity, and then gradually reduces the space in the mouth with the feeling of sighing downward, and the position of the voice is very close to the front teeth, slowly extending outward and downward in the direction directly opposite the face, and finally disappearing below the front teeth and the outside of the mouth.

Amonire

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩} = 60$ Delivering and praising women

Ve o yi a mo ye o yi ya o ni o nia ye o yi yo o len pa ye

5
o yi ya ve ci o pa ye o yi ya ve en o o yi ya ve ci ve la



Figure 16. Amonire

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

4.5.2 Pre-ornament

The ornamentation before the main note is the forward-leaning tone, and the ornamental note after the main note is the backward-leaning tone. Most of the leaning tones in the wedding folk songs of Xide County are backward-leaning sounds, and there will also be a very small number of pre-leaning sounds. When singing the back note, the shorter the better, and do not take up too much time for the main note. Only one minor note in the upper right corner of the main note is a single leaning note, and if there are two or more minor notes, this leaning note is a compound leaning note. When

singing, the small notes that follow will be faster, and the main time will still fall on the main note. At the same time, it should be noted that the time of the original beat should not be increased because there is an additional ornament before or after the original note, and the accuracy of the two beats should be ensured.

In the middle of the song "Amonire" (Figure 17), the anterior note appears, and the accent is placed on the main note rather than on the leaning note when singing. Since the pitch here belongs to the natural vocal area, you only need to keep the chest relaxed, inhale well, and see the ups and downs in the chest, and then in the case of the pitch determination, according to the speed of the song, the speed of singing the leaning tone cannot be too slow, so as not to occupy the time length of the main note, and it cannot be sung too shortly, about a quarter of the time length of the main note. At the same time, it should be noted that the time of the original beat should not be increased because there is an additional ornament in front of the original note, and the accuracy of the two beats should be ensured. When singing with exhalation, most of the voice is still in the mouth, and the "o" lyrics is sung directly from the "F" to the "E" sound, without any glissandos in between. The breath is stable, ensuring the roundness and fullness of the "E" sound.

Amonire

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩} = 60$ Delivering and praising women

Ve o yi a mo ye o yi ya o ni o nia ye o yi yo o len pa ye

5
o yi ya ve ci o pa ye o yi ya ve en o o yi ya ve ci ve la

Figure 17. Amonire

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

The other two songs all have a posterior compound tone (Figure 18). The singing method is more similar to the single leaning tone, except that the two double leaning notes are sung a little faster than the single leaning notes mentioned above, and the singer must ensure that the breath is stable and the singing is short while still ensuring the intonation, which is the most elaborate part of singing ornamentation.

Ayiwuge

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Sadness, unfairness

A mo wu ge a le zhi la yi jia ge le

5
A mo wu ge wu ze ni re ni zha yi o ze da re

Agazhizhi

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Longing, vulnerable

A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie o sha nie nen

5
en a zhi zhi yei mo luo lie suo pu nie mo ve o sha nie nen

9
A o A ga luo luo zhi zhi nie ei zhi zhi cai nie nie ri ge luo ve o sha nie nen

Jingu Xingu

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=70 Homesickness and longing for family

O yi ya ya me a mu si ni la si gua si nie

yo yi ya a ya me gun ma sa ci ri go lio

Figure 18. Ayiwuge, Agazhizhi, Jingu Xingu

Source: Shuo Li (2025)

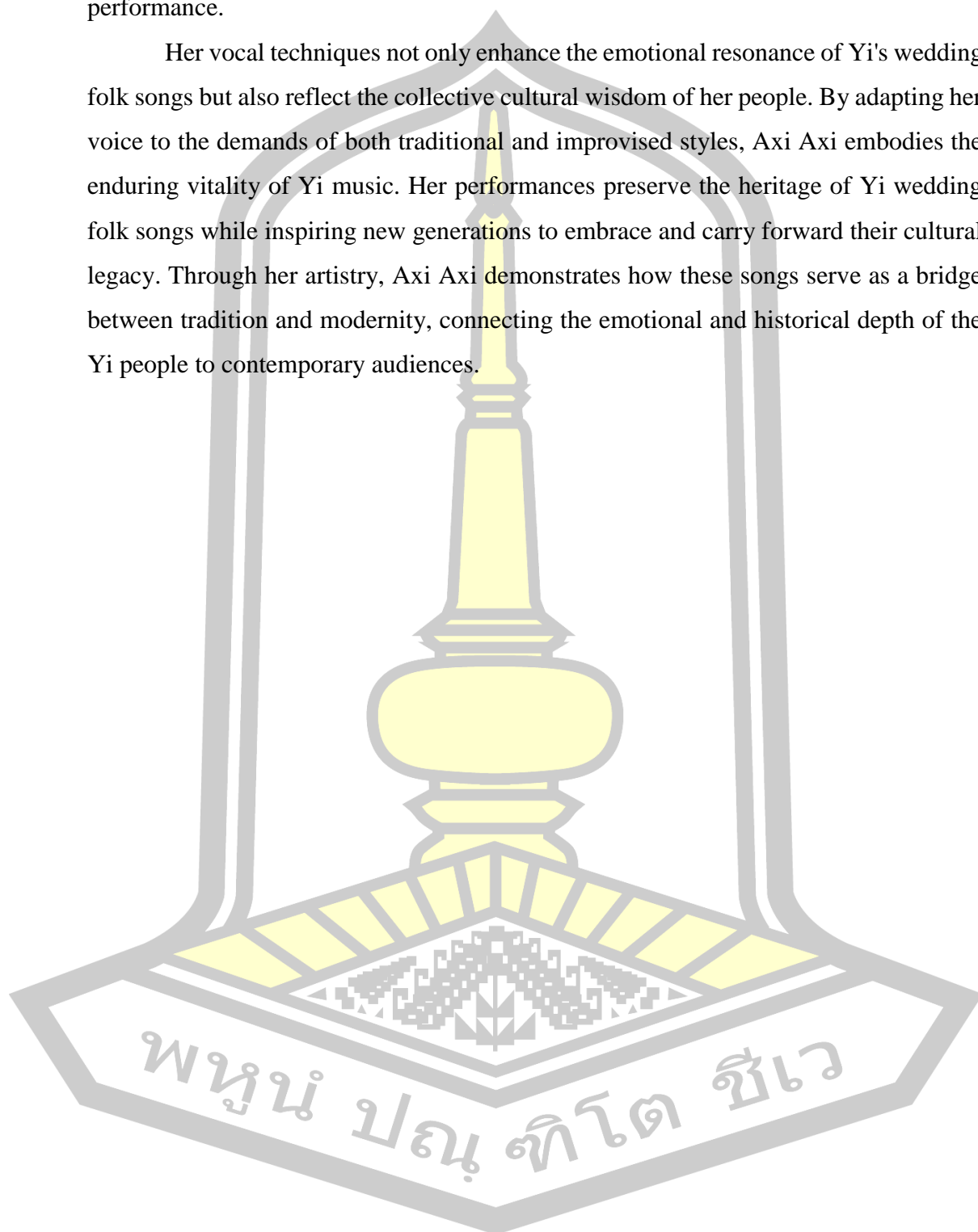
5. Summary

Axi Axi's singing techniques for Yi wedding folk songs represent a masterful blend of tradition and individuality, rooted in the cultural essence of the Yi people. Her interpretations bring life to both the crying wedding tunes and the narrative tones, each reflecting unique emotional and cultural expressions. The crying wedding tunes encapsulate the bride's feelings of parting, gratitude, and anticipation, delivered with heartfelt emotional depth. Meanwhile, the narrative tones recount Yi history, legends, and folk wisdom, embodying the cultural richness of the community.

Axi Axi's singing style is characterized by intricate techniques that showcase her artistry. Her use of breathing integrates natural chest breathing, mirroring the speaking patterns of daily life, to create an intimate and authentic vocal quality. Through the skillful use of resonance, particularly oral and mixed resonance, she enhances the emotional and tonal depth of her performances. The interaction of true and false voices demonstrates her ability to transition seamlessly across vocal ranges, lending both power and delicacy to her songs. Furthermore, her clear articulation ensures that the cultural narratives and emotions embedded in the lyrics are effectively conveyed. Finally, her strategic use of ornamentation, including portamento and

leaning tones, adds a layer of elegance and expressiveness that enriches the overall performance.

Her vocal techniques not only enhance the emotional resonance of Yi's wedding folk songs but also reflect the collective cultural wisdom of her people. By adapting her voice to the demands of both traditional and improvised styles, Axi Axi embodies the enduring vitality of Yi music. Her performances preserve the heritage of Yi wedding folk songs while inspiring new generations to embrace and carry forward their cultural legacy. Through her artistry, Axi Axi demonstrates how these songs serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity, connecting the emotional and historical depth of the Yi people to contemporary audiences.



CHAPTER VI

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestion

This study has the following two objectives:

1. To investigate the biography of Axi Axi
2. To analyze the singing techniques of wedding folk songs by Axi Axi

Based on two research objectives, the following results were reached:

1. Conclusion

1.1 Axi Axi's life and work stand as a testament to the enduring power of cultural heritage and the vital role individuals play in its preservation. Born and raised in the culturally rich Yi traditions of Xide County, her journey from a young girl with an extraordinary voice to a revered cultural ambassador has been marked by resilience, dedication, and innovation. Her ability to balance the preservation of Yi wedding folk songs with modern interpretations has revitalized these traditions and ensured their continued relevance in contemporary society. Her contributions go beyond mere performance; they encompass education, mentorship, and cultural advocacy. By training apprentices and leveraging digital platforms, Axi Axi has expanded the reach of Yi's cultural heritage, introducing it to new audiences both locally and globally. Her work highlights the significance of oral traditions as a living, dynamic force that connects communities to their past while inspiring future generations.

Through her artistry, Axi Axi has become a symbol of Yi women's strength, beauty, and wisdom. Her performances, which evoke deep emotional resonance, have preserved the essence of Yi culture and fostered pride and unity within her community. Her legacy inspires us, reminding us of the transformative power of cultural preservation and one individual's impact in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. In celebrating Axi Axi's achievements, we are reminded of the importance of protecting intangible cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world. Her story demonstrates that cultural preservation is not merely about safeguarding the past but creating a future where tradition and innovation coexist, enriching lives and fostering a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

1.2 Axi Axi's singing techniques for Yi wedding folk songs exemplify a remarkable fusion of cultural heritage and individual artistry. By seamlessly blending traditional elements with her unique interpretations, she has brought new life to the crying wedding tunes and narrative tones, each resonating with profound emotional and cultural significance. Her performances, filled with heartfelt expressions and cultural depth, preserve the Yi people's stories, emotions, and wisdom, ensuring that these traditions remain vibrant and relevant in a rapidly changing world. Her mastery of intricate vocal techniques—natural chest breathing, skillful resonance, the interaction of true and false voices, clear articulation, and refined ornamentation—elevates her artistry and deepens the emotional impact of her music. These techniques enhance the musicality of Yi wedding folk songs and capture the essence of Yi's cultural identity, presenting it in a way that is both authentic and accessible to modern audiences.

Through her dedication and innovation, Axi Axi has become a bridge between tradition and modernity, connecting the past with the future. Her vocal artistry reflects the enduring vitality of Yi music, inspiring new generations to appreciate and preserve their cultural heritage. By carrying forward these songs with reverence and creativity, Axi Axi demonstrates the timeless power of music as a vessel for cultural transmission, emotional expression, and community unity. Her contributions remind us of the importance of protecting intangible cultural heritage and the profound impact it can have on preserving the identity and spirit of a people.

2. Discussion

2.1 Life of Axi Axi and the Role of Field Research

Axi Axi's life reveals significant gaps in the Xide County Cultural Center materials, which only briefly list the names of transmitters and interview information. This suggests a lack of emphasis on promoting and preserving Yi cultural figures, possibly due to an undervaluation of their importance within the community. The findings from my fieldwork, which include interviews and firsthand information from Axi Axi and her daughter, provide a detailed and comprehensive view of her life, from adolescence to her personal and artistic achievements. These findings align with Yang Mingkai's (2015) emphasis on the importance of field research and direct engagement in ethnomusicological studies. Fieldwork is an indispensable tool for filling gaps left

by institutional neglect, ensuring a richer understanding of the cultural and individual significance of transmitters like Axi Axi.

2.2 Singing Skills of Axi Axi and Their Cultural Context

The analysis of Axi Axi's singing techniques demonstrates a blend of traditional vocal methods and unique interpretations. The emphasis on breathing, resonance, use of true and false voices, articulation, and ornamentation mirrors Yang Mingkai's (2015) discussion of the dual aspects of music analysis in ethnomusicology: music ontology (e.g., vocal structure, technique) and the cultural connotations embedded in musical practices. Axi Axi's singing exemplifies "natural and original taste," aligning with the idea that minority folk songs often emphasize natural vocal expression over technical rigidity. This reflects a connection between the vocal technique and Yi's wedding songs' emotional, narrative, and cultural dimensions.

Moreover, her singing style highlights the integration of spoken elements, a feature consistent with Fan Zuyin's (2019) assertion that folk songs, particularly in their original ecological context, are rooted in their cultural environment. Fan's critique of the "original ecology" label as limiting resonates with Axi Axi's ability to adapt folk songs to contemporary performance contexts without losing their authenticity. This adaptability supports the broader view that folk songs evolve with changing social and cultural landscapes.

2.3 Evolving Forms and Cultural Significance of Yi Folk Songs

Songa Yimu and Liu Haiqing (2023) describe the evolution of Yi folk songs from ancient songs into various forms, including solo, duet, and chorus, which reflects the dynamic nature of Yi music. Axi Axi's interpretations, particularly in the crying wedding tunes and narrative tones, embody this evolution by blending historical authenticity with imaginative artistry. Her singing showcases the emotional depth of Yi songs and their capacity to adapt to modern audiences while preserving their spiritual and cultural essence.

2.4 Cultural Practices and Marriage Customs in Yi Traditions

The cultural backdrop of Yi wedding folk songs is intertwined with the marriage customs of the Yi people, as described by Zhang Fu (1993). These customs, which dictate mate selection within specific familial and societal parameters, influence the themes and emotional undertones of Yi wedding songs. The crying wedding tunes, for

instance, reflect the emotional complexity of arranged marriages, including gratitude, reluctance, and anxiety, while the narrative tones encapsulate the cultural and historical aspects of marriage traditions. Axi Axi's singing brings these themes to life, serving as both a form of cultural preservation and a reflection of the social structures embedded within Yi customs.

3. Suggestion

3.1 General Suggestions

1) Future studies should delve deeper into Axi Axi's singing techniques, particularly her true and false voice conversion, and explore other genres like Yi labor songs and ceremonial music for a broader understanding of Yi culture.

2) Local governments should strengthen mechanisms to promote transmitters beyond festivals, including cultural exchanges and recognition programs while integrating Yi music into school curricula to preserve cultural heritage.

3) Provide financial aid, mentorship programs, and workshops to ensure the effective transmission of knowledge and skills from transmitters like Axi Axi to younger generations.

4) Promote a balance between traditional and modern culture to create a "cultural collision effect" that preserves heritage while embracing progress.

3.2 Suggestions for Future Research

1) Expand the scope of research to include other Yi musical traditions, such as labor songs and ceremonial music, to gain a broader perspective on the cultural and musical diversity of the Yi ethnic group.

2) Conduct comparative research between Yi music and the traditional music of other ethnic groups to uncover shared themes, differences, and cultural connections.

3) Investigate the role of integrating Yi traditional music into school curricula in preserving cultural heritage and fostering intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

4) Adopt interdisciplinary approaches, integrating ethnomusicology, cultural anthropology, and education, to deepen the understanding of the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of Yi music.

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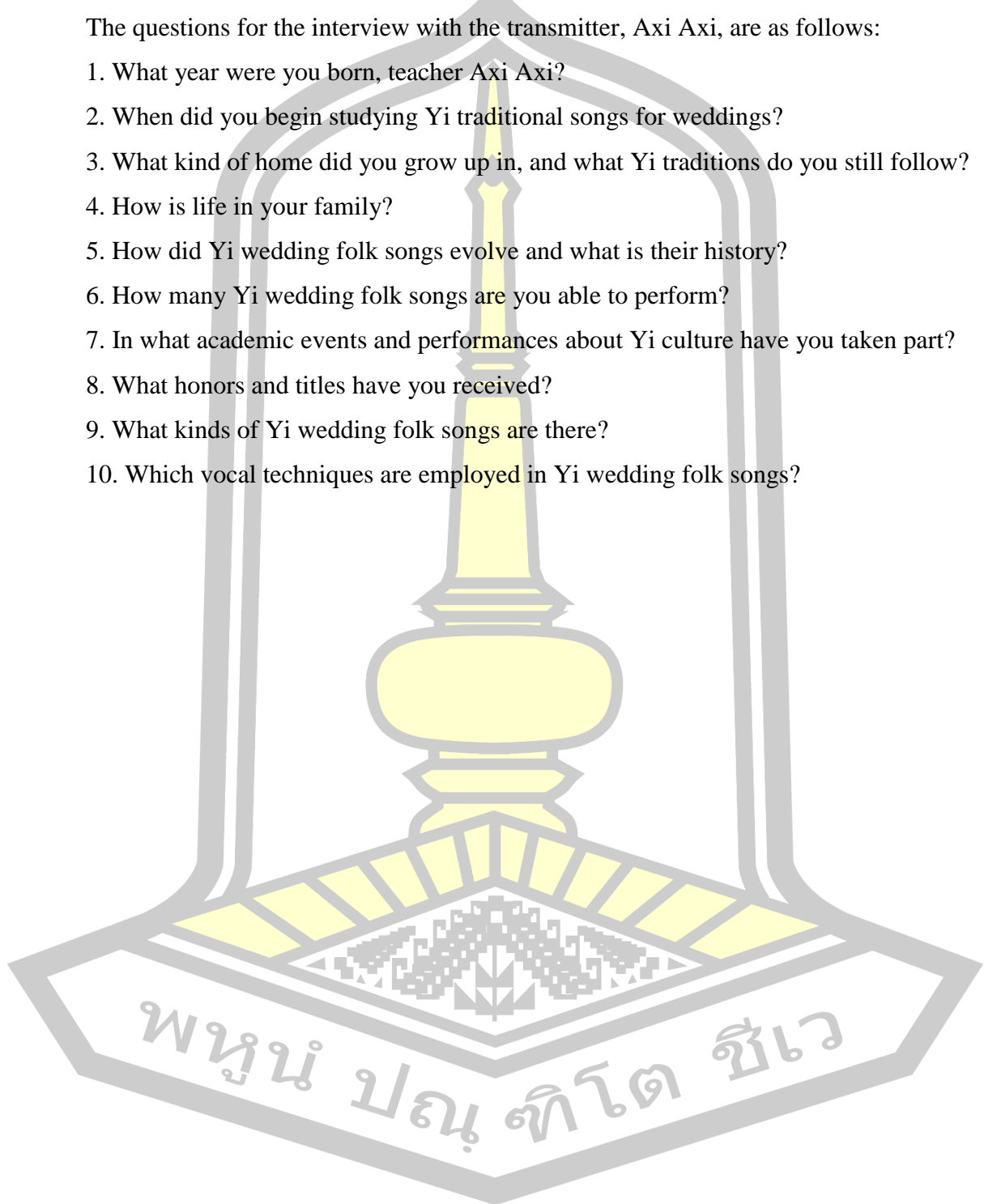


APPENDIX

Appendix A

The questions for the interview with the transmitter, Axi Axi, are as follows:

1. What year were you born, teacher Axi Axi?
2. When did you begin studying Yi traditional songs for weddings?
3. What kind of home did you grow up in, and what Yi traditions do you still follow?
4. How is life in your family?
5. How did Yi wedding folk songs evolve and what is their history?
6. How many Yi wedding folk songs are you able to perform?
7. In what academic events and performances about Yi culture have you taken part?
8. What honors and titles have you received?
9. What kinds of Yi wedding folk songs are there?
10. Which vocal techniques are employed in Yi wedding folk songs?



Appendix B

The complete score in the appendix is sung by the transmitter, Axi Axi herself, which is widely circulated and is now sung in Yi wedding ceremonies. However, with the development of modern civilization, the younger generation of Yi people is no longer able to sing such songs. This fieldwork gave me the opportunity to get in touch with the traditional wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group, so I analyzed them and organized them for easy analysis.

Ayimuga

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩} = 65$ Sad, nostalgic

A yi ya yi mo mu ga nio nio xi ge nie

3
ya yi mo nio nio ma se a la nio yei ni la so ge si mo ye

5
nia yi nia si la si la ma en xi ge ye ei gu ye ei

7
en a ei en ye du a la da moye ya yi cua so le yu la yi jia

9
xi ge ye ei age ye ei ya lin cuo du a la da moye



Ayiazhi

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩}=58$ Lyrical, expansive



Ayiwuge

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

$\text{♩}=75$ Sadness, unfairness



พหุพันธ์ ปณฺทิตโต ชีเว

Agazhizhi

The wedding crying tune of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=75 Longing, vulnerable



Jingu Xingu

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=70 Homesickness and longing for family



พหุบัน ปณ ทิโต ชเว

Amonire

The Narrative tunes of wedding folk songs of the Yi ethnic group in the Xide area of Liangshan

Singer: Axi Axi

♩=60 Delivering and praising women

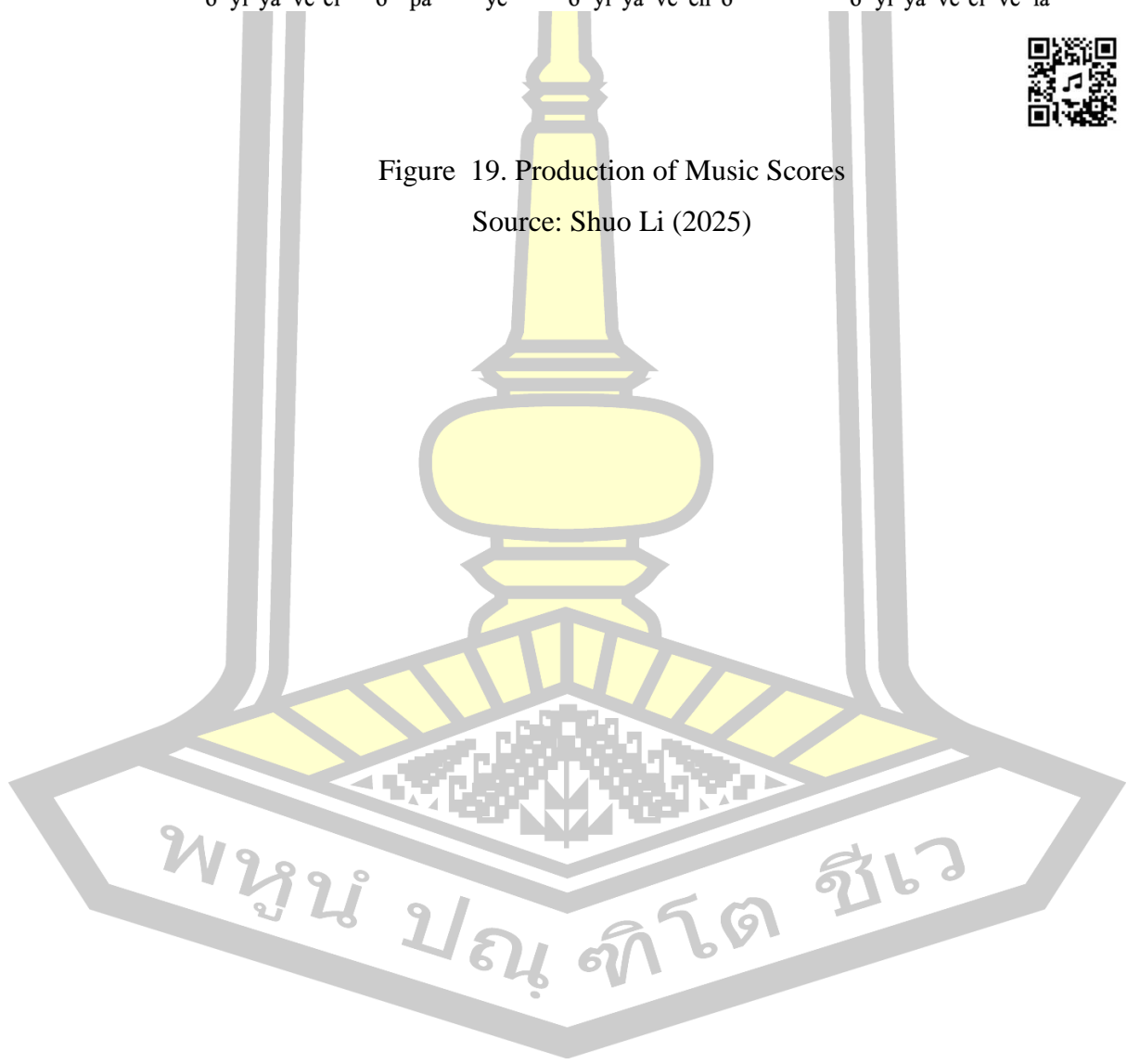
Ve o yi a mo ye o yi ya o ni o nia ye o yi yo o len pa ye

5
o yi ya ve ci o pa ye o yi ya ve en o o yi ya ve ci ve la



Figure 19. Production of Music Scores

Source: Shuo Li (2025)



Appendix C



Figure 20. The transmitter, Axi Axi, is interviewed and photographed, and the other is the key introducer and translator.

Source: Shuo Li (2024)

BIOGRAPHY

NAME	Shuo Li
DATE OF BIRTH	09/04/1991
PLACE OF BIRTH	Chongqing, China
ADDRESS	Renhe Street, Yubei District, Chongqing, China
POSITION	Teacher
PLACE OF WORK	Chongqing Beixinbashu Secondary School
EDUCATION	2010 - 2015 (Bachelor degree) Sichuan Conservatory of Music 2023 - 2025 (Master degree) College of music, Mahasarakham University

