



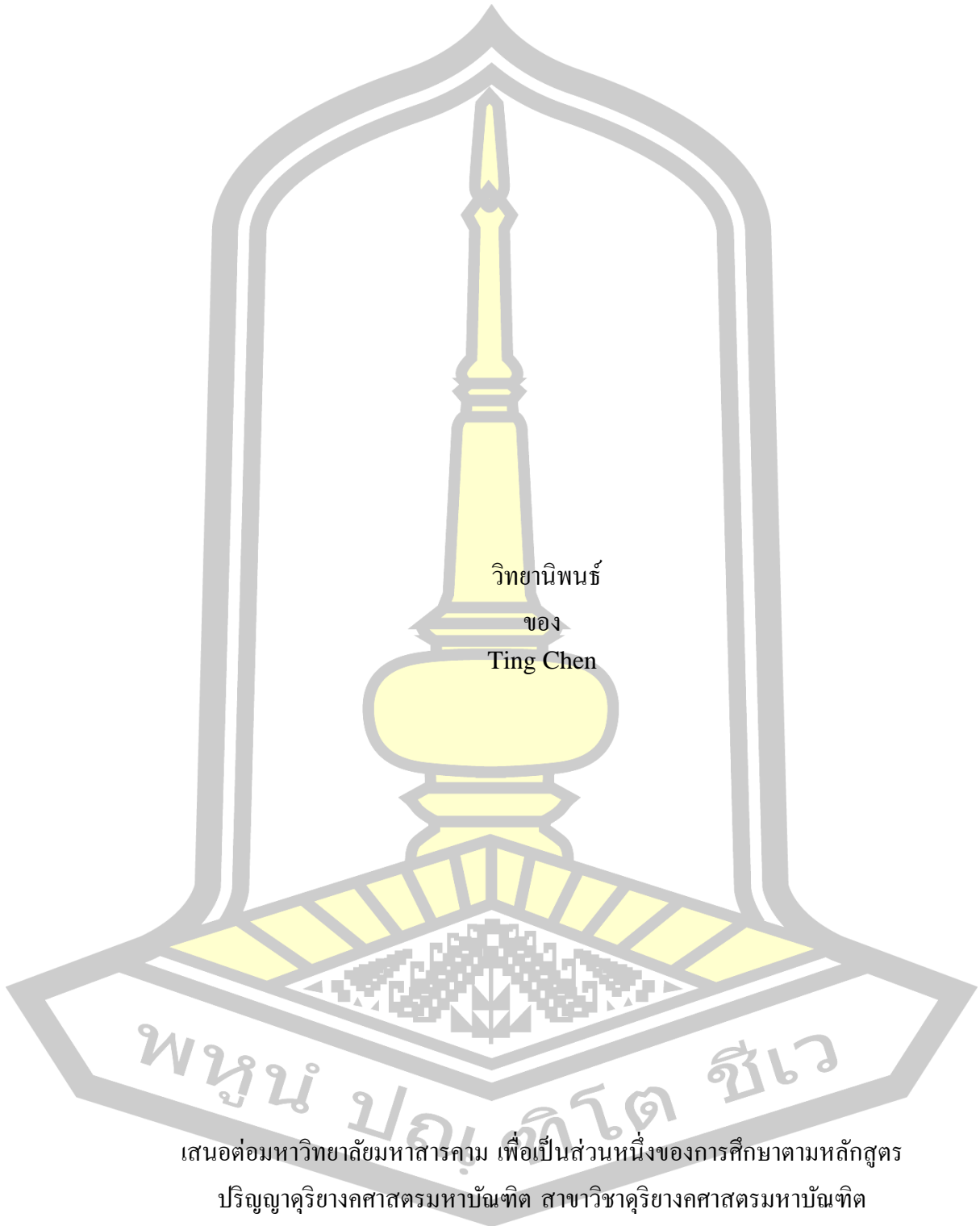
Naxi Folk Songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China

Ting Chen

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

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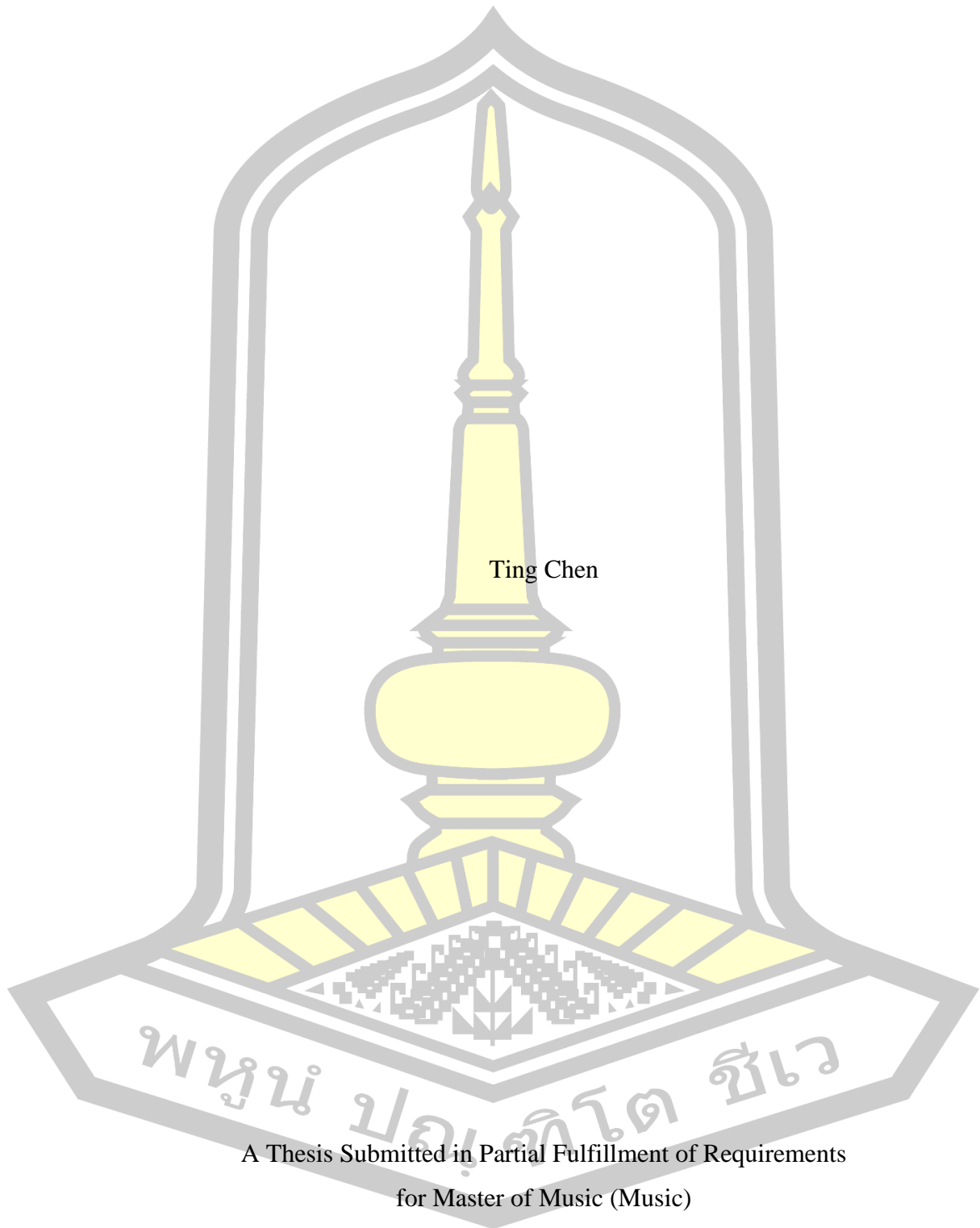
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ลิขสิทธิ์เป็นของมหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

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May 2025

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ABSTRACT

Naxi folk songs are a crucial component of the cultural heritage of the Naxi people in Lijiang, Yunnan, China. The objectives of this dissertation were to: 1. Investigate the historical development of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China. 2. Analyze the musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China. This research employed qualitative research methods, utilizing interviews, field observations, and document analysis as primary data collection tools. Data were collected on-site through interviews with key informants, including folk musicians, scholars, and community elders, and then systematically analyzed. The findings reveal that:

1. The historical development of Naxi folk songs highlights their deep connection to Naxi cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and historical experiences. Rooted in the Dongba religious tradition, these songs played a central role in rituals, agricultural activities, and storytelling. Over centuries, external influences from Han, Tibetan, and Bai cultures contributed to their evolution. The introduction of musical instruments such as the pipa and erhu, along with linguistic integration, diversified the musical repertoire. Political changes, including the Communist reforms and the Cultural Revolution, affected their transmission, while contemporary revival efforts have aimed at restoring their significance.

2. The musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs include distinct melodic structures, rhythmic patterns, and performance techniques. The songs are predominantly pentatonic, with simple yet expressive melodic lines, often incorporating ornamentation such as glissando and vibrato. Traditional Naxi instruments, including the hulusi and Dongba drum, accompany performances, reinforcing the spiritual and communal nature of the songs. The lyrics, structured in an A-B form, convey themes of nature, love, history, and spirituality, often using call-and-response patterns and flexible vocal techniques.

Keyword : Naxi folk songs, Chinese folk music, Historical development of Naxi folk songs

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As my master's journey draws to an end, I look back on my time at Mahasarakham University with deep appreciation and gratitude. These years have been filled with learning, growth, and valuable experiences that I will carry with me into the future. The academic knowledge I have gained, along with the friendships and mentorships I have developed, have made this period one of the most rewarding chapters of my life.

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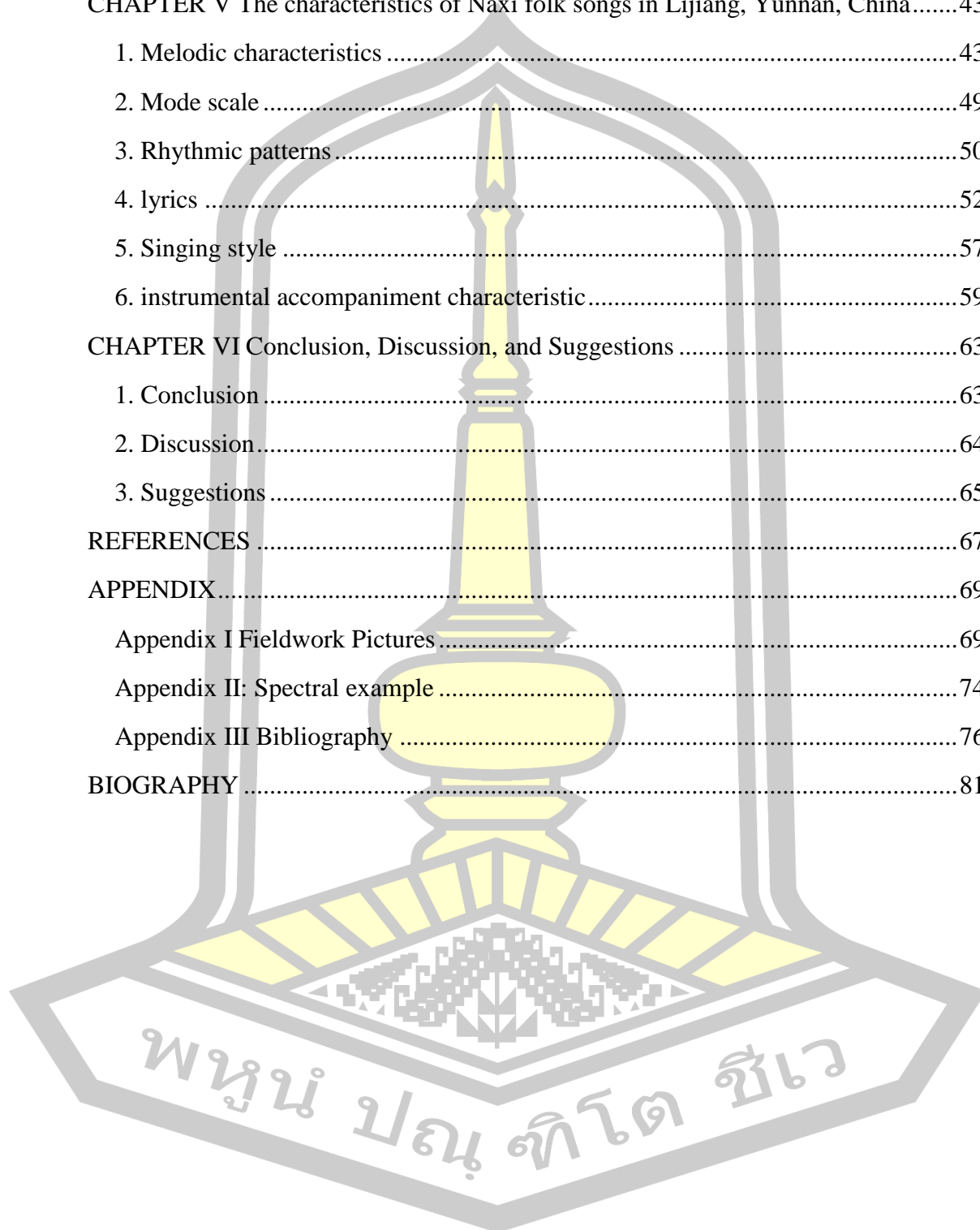
In conclusion, I feel incredibly fortunate to have been surrounded by such supportive and inspiring individuals. This journey would not have been possible without each of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Ting Chen

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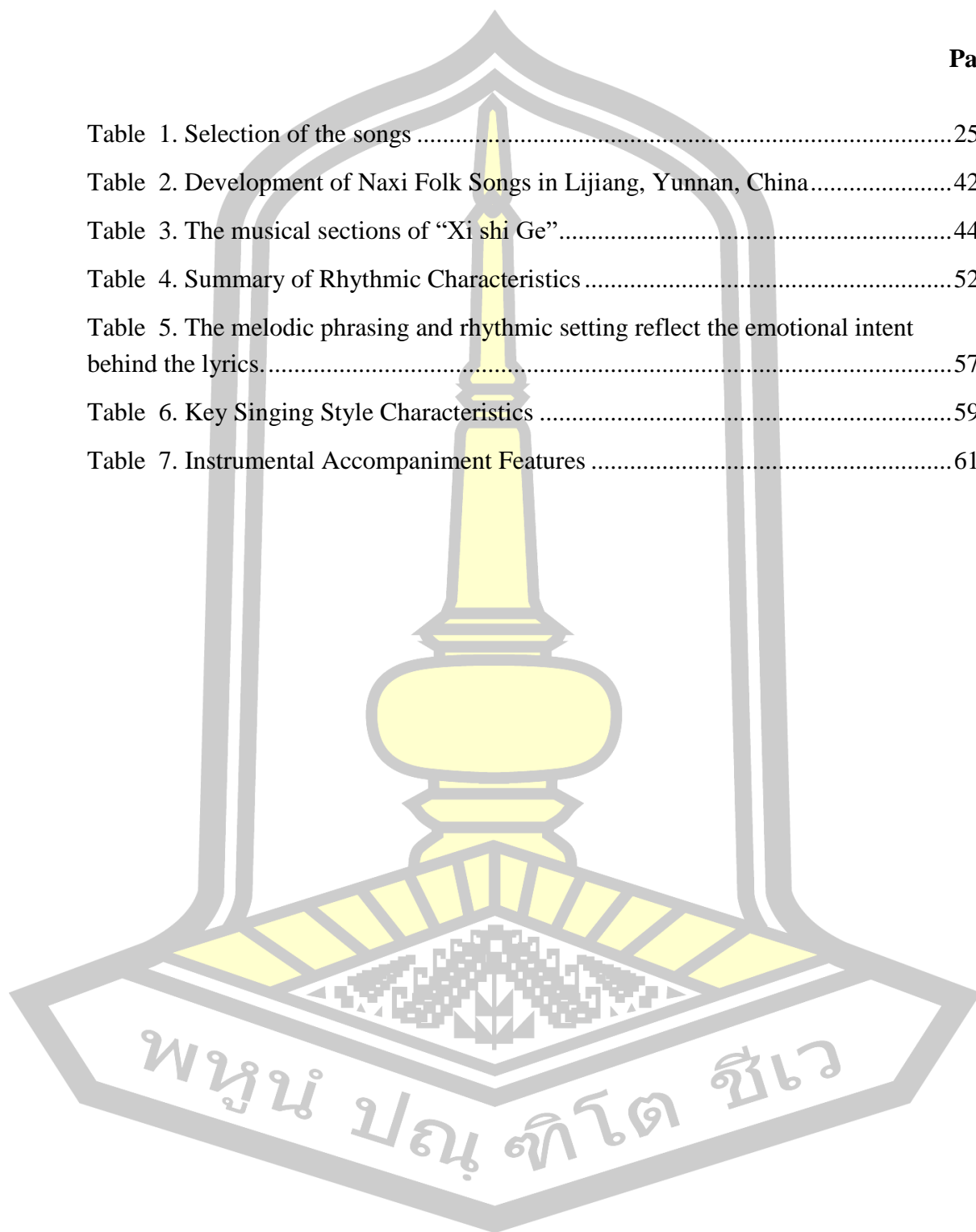
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Research Background

In the ancient streets of Lijiang, Yunnan, Naxi folk songs fill the air during vibrant traditional festivals like Sanduo and Torch. These songs, essential to the Naxi cultural heritage, intertwine with festival celebrations, reflecting the community's rich history. However, modernization and tourism threaten their authenticity. This research investigates the relationship between Naxi folk songs and festivals, aiming to understand how these cultural expressions can be preserved and revitalized amidst contemporary challenges, ensuring the enduring legacy of the Naxi people's unique traditions.

Lijiang, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is not only renowned for its picturesque landscapes and ancient architecture but also for its vibrant cultural traditions. The city has been a crucial center for the preservation and transmission of Naxi folk songs. However, the rapid modernization and tourism development in recent years have posed significant challenges to the survival of these traditional songs. Younger generations are increasingly disconnected from their cultural roots, and the influence of mainstream music is leading to the gradual erosion of Naxi folk traditions (Xu Xinjian,2020).

Despite these challenges, there is a growing awareness within the Naxi community and among cultural preservationists about the importance of safeguarding Naxi folk songs. Various efforts have been made to document and preserve this musical heritage, but there is still a need for more in-depth research to fully understand the characteristics of these songs and to develop effective strategies for their preservation and transmission.

This research seeks to address these needs by analyzing characteristics of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, and by proposing strategies to ensure their continued transmission within the Naxi community. By doing so, this study aims to contribute to the broader efforts of preserving Naxi cultural heritage and to provide insights that could be applicable to the preservation of other forms of intangible cultural heritage in China and beyond(Guo Ya,2021).

The background of this study highlights the critical role of Naxi folk songs in maintaining cultural identity and the urgent need for strategies to preserve this tradition in the face of modern challenges. Understanding the current state of Naxi folk songs and developing sustainable preservation methods are essential for ensuring that this rich musical heritage is passed down to future generations(Li Ling,2019).

In this study The researcher realized the importance of Nazi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China, to analyze the characteristics of Nazi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China, and to propose strategies for preserving and transmitting Nazi folk songs within. Nazi Community, Lijiang, Yunnan Province, and will be beneficial to the study, inheritance, preservation, and dissemination in academic circles of Nazi folk songs in Lijiang.

2. Research objectives

- 1.To investigate the development of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China
- 2.To analyze the music characteristics of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China

3. Research Questions

1. What are the investigate the development of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China?
2. What are the music characteristics of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China?

4. Research Benefits

1. We will know the historical trajectory and cultural significance of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang: By investigating the development of Naxi folk songs, this research will illuminate how historical, social, and cultural factors have influenced their evolution. This understanding not only contributes to the preservation of an important cultural heritage but also highlights the ways in which Naxi folk songs serve as a means of cultural expression and continuity for the Naxi people.

- 2.We will know the unique musical characteristics that define Naxi folk songs: Through analyzing the musical structure, melody, rhythm, and other distinct features of Naxi folk songs, this study will offer insights into their unique aesthetic and artistic value.

Such knowledge provides a deeper appreciation of Naxi musical traditions and enriches the study of ethnic music in China, aiding efforts in preservation and cultural education for future generations.

5. Research Definitions

1. Naxi Folk Songs refer to Traditional songs that originate from the Naxi ethnic group in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China. These songs are typically passed down orally through generations and are performed in various social and cultural contexts, reflecting the values, beliefs, and experiences of the Naxi people.

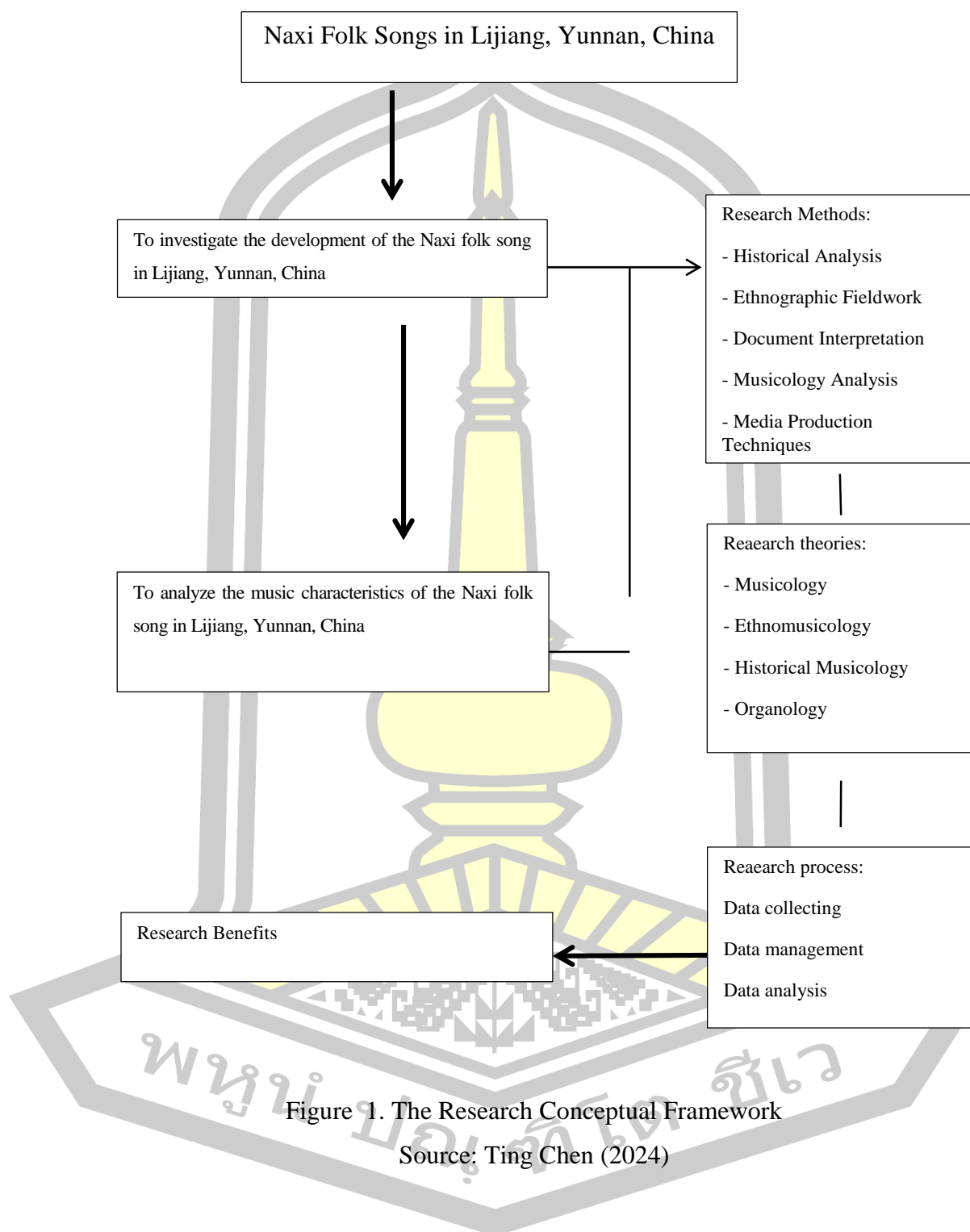
2. Music characteristics refer to Musical characteristics refer to the characteristics of Naxi folk songs, including but not limited to their "Melodic characteristics", Mode scale", Rhythmic patterns, lyrics' Singing style, instrumental accompaniment characteristics"

3. Development refer to Historical Origins, Post-Reform Era (20th–21st Century)

6. Conceptual Framework

The study employs qualitative research methods, including questionnaires, observation forms, and interviews, to gather comprehensive data. It is grounded in research theories from musicology, ethnomusicology, and anthropology. It follows a detailed research process that includes selecting research sites and key informants, selecting songs, utilizing research tools, and systematically managing and presenting data. The research seeks to contribute significant insights into the cultural and musical heritage of the Naxi Folk Songs, ensuring its preservation and continued transmission in contemporary society.

พหุ ม ประถมศึกษา



CHAPTER II

Literature review

In this chapter, the literature related to Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, is reviewed to obtain comprehensive data that can be utilized for this study. The review is conducted in alignment with the research objectives, which are to analyze the characteristics of Naxi folk songs and to propose strategies for their preservation and transmission within the Naxi community. This literature review will cover historical, cultural, and musical aspects of Naxi folk songs, as well as the theoretical frameworks and methodologies relevant to the study.

1. The General Introduction of Yunnan Province, China
2. The General Introduction of Lijiang City, Yunnan Province, China.
3. The General Introduction to Naxi Folk Songs
4. Theories Used in Research
5. Research related
6. Summary

1. The General Introduction of Yunnan Province, China

1.1 City history

Yunnan Province, located in the southwestern part of China, is renowned for its extraordinary ethnic diversity and rich cultural heritage. Often referred to as a "museum of natural history," Yunnan is home to 26 of China's 56 officially recognized ethnic groups, making it one of the most culturally diverse regions in the country. This diversity is reflected in the province's languages, customs, festivals, and, significantly, its music.

The ethnic groups in Yunnan, including the Naxi, Bai, Dai, Yi, Hani, and others, have each developed unique cultural traditions over centuries, with music playing a central role in their cultural expressions. Folk music, in particular, has been a vital medium for preserving and transmitting the histories, beliefs, and values of these communities. The province's mountainous terrain and relative geographic isolation have allowed these traditions to flourish in distinctive ways, often untouched by external influences (Wu Qiong, 2023).

In addition to its ethnic diversity, Yunnan's cultural heritage is also shaped by its historical significance as a crossroads of ancient trade routes, including the Southern Silk Road. This history of cultural exchange has further enriched the region's musical traditions, blending indigenous styles with influences from neighboring regions and countries.

Yunnan's music, including the folk songs of various ethnic groups, is characterized by its deep connection to the natural environment, religious practices, and communal life. The melodies, rhythms, and instruments used in Yunnan's folk music often reflect the landscapes and lifestyles of the people, with music serving as both a form of artistic expression and a means of maintaining social cohesion.

In the context of Naxi culture, Yunnan's broader cultural and musical landscape provides a critical backdrop for understanding the unique characteristics of Naxi folk songs. As one of the ethnic groups in Yunnan, the Naxi have developed a rich musical tradition that is deeply intertwined with their cultural identity. The study of Naxi folk songs within the framework of Yunnan's ethnic diversity and cultural heritage offers valuable insights into the ways in which music functions as a living tradition, adapting to changing social and environmental conditions while preserving its core elements (Yang Juan, 2023)

1.2 Geography

Yunnan Province, located in the southwestern region of China, is known for its strikingly diverse and complex geography. This landscape has played a crucial role in shaping the cultural and musical traditions of the various ethnic groups that inhabit the region, including the Naxi people of Lijiang. Yunnan is characterized by its mountainous terrain, with the Hengduan Mountains running through the northwest, creating a rugged and dramatic topography. The province is also home to several major rivers, including the Lancang (Mekong), Nu (Salween), and Jinsha (Yangtze), which carve deep valleys through the mountains. These rivers not only provide essential resources for agriculture and livelihoods but also serve as natural corridors that have historically facilitated cultural exchange and trade (He Qunxing, 2020).

The province's elevation varies significantly, ranging from the lowlands in the south, near the borders with Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, to the high-altitude regions in the north, where peaks reach over 6,000 meters. This variation in elevation

results in a wide range of climates, from tropical in the south to temperate and even alpine in the north. These diverse climates support a rich variety of flora and fauna, contributing to Yunnan's reputation as a global biodiversity hotspot.

Lijiang, situated in the northwestern part of Yunnan, exemplifies the province's complex geography. The city is located on a plateau at an elevation of approximately 2,400 meters above sea level, nestled between the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain to the north and the Tiger Leaping Gorge to the west. This strategic location has made Lijiang a significant cultural and economic center for centuries, influencing the development of its unique cultural practices, including its music. The geographical isolation of many communities within Yunnan, including those in Lijiang, has fostered the preservation of traditional cultural practices, including folk music. The mountains and rivers that define Yunnan's landscape have acted as both barriers and conduits for cultural transmission, helping to maintain the distinctiveness of local traditions while also allowing for the gradual exchange of ideas and influences (Yang Juan, 2023)

Moreover, the natural beauty of Yunnan's geography is deeply reflected in the region's folk music, including that of the Naxi people. The melodies, rhythms, and lyrics often draw inspiration from the surrounding environment, celebrating the mountains, rivers, and natural phenomena that shape the daily lives of the people. This deep connection between geography and music underscores the importance of place in the cultural expressions of Yunnan's ethnic groups.

Yunnan's geography, with its mountains, rivers, and varied climates, has profoundly influenced the cultural development of the region. The geographical features of Lijiang, in particular, have contributed to the preservation and unique evolution of Naxi folk songs, making them an essential part of the region's rich cultural tapestry. Understanding the geography of Yunnan is thus critical to appreciating the context in which Naxi folk songs have developed and continue to thrive.

1.3 Population and Ethnicity

Yunnan Province is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China, home to a mosaic of ethnic groups that contribute to the province's rich cultural heritage. With a population of approximately 48 million people, Yunnan is distinguished not

only by its sheer diversity but also by the harmonious coexistence of its many ethnic communities. The province is officially recognized as the home to 26 of China's 56 ethnic groups, making it a focal point for the study of ethnic cultures and traditions. Among these ethnic groups are the Han, who make up the majority population in China, as well as numerous minority groups including the Naxi, Bai, Dai, Yi, Hani, Miao, and Lisu, among others. Each of these groups has maintained distinct cultural practices, languages, religions, and artistic traditions, many of which have been preserved through centuries of relative geographic isolation.

The Naxi people, who are the focus of this study, represent one of the prominent ethnic groups in Yunnan. With a population of around 300,000, the Naxi predominantly reside in the Lijiang region, although smaller communities can be found in other parts of Yunnan and neighboring Sichuan Province. The Naxi are known for their unique Dongba religion, their pictographic script, and, notably, their rich tradition of folk music, which plays a central role in their cultural identity.

Yunnan's ethnic diversity is also reflected in its linguistic landscape. The province is home to a wide array of languages and dialects, with many ethnic groups speaking languages that belong to distinct language families. For instance, the Naxi language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, and it has its own script, known as Dongba script, which is used primarily for religious texts. This linguistic diversity adds another layer of complexity to the cultural interactions and exchanges that occur within Yunnan. The cultural traditions of Yunnan's ethnic groups, including their music, are closely tied to their communal and religious practices. For many of these groups, folk music is not merely a form of entertainment but a vital means of preserving and expressing their cultural heritage. The songs often recount historical events, tell stories, or convey moral teachings, serving as a living repository of the community's collective memory (He Qunxing, 2020).

Summary

In the case of the Naxi people, their folk songs are integral to various aspects of life, including religious ceremonies, festivals, and daily activities. These songs help to reinforce social bonds within the community and play a key role in the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. The preservation of Naxi folk songs is therefore not only about maintaining a musical tradition but also about

sustaining the cultural identity of the Naxi people. Yunnan's diverse population and the strong cultural identities of its ethnic groups make it a unique region within China, where ancient traditions continue to thrive alongside modern influences. This rich ethnic tapestry is a critical context for understanding the development, characteristics, and preservation of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, as it reflects the broader cultural environment in which these songs have evolved.

2. The General Introduction of Lijiang City, Yunnan Province, China.

Lijiang City, located in the northwestern part of Yunnan Province, China, is one of the most historically and culturally significant cities in the region. Nestled on a high plateau at an elevation of approximately 2,400 meters, Lijiang is surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, including the majestic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain to the north and the dramatic Tiger Leaping Gorge to the west. The city's unique geography has not only shaped its cultural development but also made it a key destination along ancient trade routes, contributing to its rich and diverse heritage. Lijiang is best known for its ancient town, which has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1997. The Old Town of Lijiang, with its well-preserved architecture, cobblestone streets, and intricate waterway systems, offers a window into the city's long history. The town's layout reflects the ingenuity of the Naxi people, who designed a network of canals and bridges that integrate harmoniously with the natural environment, ensuring a continuous flow of water from nearby rivers into the town.

Historically, Lijiang served as a crucial junction along the Ancient Tea Horse Road, a network of trade routes that connected Yunnan with Tibet, Sichuan, and beyond. This position made Lijiang a melting pot of cultures, where traders, travelers, and locals exchanged goods, ideas, and cultural practices. The city's role as a trading hub facilitated interactions between various ethnic groups, including the Naxi, Bai, Tibetan, and Han, fostering a rich cultural tapestry that is still evident today.

Lijiang is predominantly inhabited by the Naxi people, an ethnic group with a distinctive culture that includes their own language, script, religion, and music. The Naxi are particularly known for their Dongba religion, a shamanistic belief system that incorporates elements of animism and ancestor worship. The Dongba script, one of the few remaining pictographic writing systems in the world, is still used in

religious texts and rituals, making Lijiang a living repository of ancient cultural practices.

Culturally, Lijiang is renowned for its vibrant traditions in music and dance, with Naxi folk songs being among the most significant expressions of the region's heritage. These songs, passed down through generations, are performed during festivals, religious ceremonies, and communal gatherings, reflecting the Naxi people's connection to their land, history, and spirituality. Lijiang's status as a cultural center has helped preserve these musical traditions, even as the city has modernized and attracted increasing numbers of tourists.

In addition to its cultural and historical significance, Lijiang is also noted for its natural beauty. The Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, which rises to over 5,500 meters, is not only a stunning backdrop to the city but also a sacred site for the Naxi people. The mountain's glaciers, forests, and meadows are intertwined with Naxi mythology, and it is often featured in their folk songs and stories. The nearby Lugu Lake, another site of natural beauty, is home to the Mosuo people, a subgroup of the Naxi, who maintain a matrilineal society and unique cultural practices.

Lijiang's development in recent decades has been marked by a growing emphasis on cultural tourism. The city's inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list has brought global attention, leading to efforts to preserve its ancient architecture and traditional customs. However, this influx of tourism has also posed challenges, including the commercialization of cultural practices and the pressures of modernization on traditional lifestyles. Despite these challenges, Lijiang remains a vital center for the preservation of Naxi culture. The city's cultural institutions, including the Dongba Culture Research Institute and local museums, play an important role in documenting and promoting Naxi traditions. These efforts are essential for ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of Lijiang, particularly its music, continues to thrive in the face of change.

In summary, Lijiang City is a place where history, culture, and natural beauty converge. Its unique position as a crossroads of ancient trade routes and its status as a cultural heartland of the Naxi people make it an essential focus for studying the preservation and transmission of Naxi folk songs. Understanding the historical and cultural context of Lijiang is crucial for appreciating the significance of Naxi music

and the challenges involved in preserving this intangible cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world.

3. The General Introduction to Naxi Folk Songs

Naxi folk songs are a vital component of the cultural heritage of the Naxi people, an ethnic minority primarily residing in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China. These songs, which have been passed down through generations, are not only a form of artistic expression but also serve as a living repository of the Naxi community's history, beliefs, and values. Deeply intertwined with the social, religious, and cultural life of the Naxi people, these folk songs offer a unique window into the world of one of China's most distinctive ethnic groups.

The origins of Naxi folk songs can be traced back centuries, embedded in the daily lives of the Naxi people. Historically, these songs were composed and performed by members of the community to mark significant events, celebrate festivals, and accompany rituals and ceremonies. Over time, Naxi folk songs evolved, incorporating elements from various cultural influences due to the Naxi people's interactions with neighboring ethnic groups and their involvement in regional trade routes, such as the Ancient Tea Horse Road. Despite these influences, Naxi folk songs have retained their distinctiveness, reflecting the unique cultural identity of the Naxi people.

These songs were traditionally transmitted orally, with elders teaching the younger generations through performance. This oral tradition has contributed to the rich diversity of Naxi folk songs, as each community or even individual singers could introduce variations in melody, lyrics, or style, depending on local customs or personal interpretation. As a result, Naxi folk songs are not a monolithic genre but a dynamic and evolving tradition that continues to adapt to the changing social and cultural contexts of the Naxi people.

Naxi folk songs cover a wide range of themes and subjects, reflecting the daily lives, beliefs, and emotions of the Naxi people. Common themes include love, nature, work, and religious devotion. Many of these songs are deeply connected to the natural environment, with lyrics that describe the beauty of the mountains, rivers, and landscapes that surround Lijiang. The Naxi people's close relationship with nature is

evident in their music, where natural elements are often personified and depicted as integral parts of their spiritual and communal life.

Religious themes are also prominent in Naxi folk songs, particularly those related to the Dongba religion, the traditional shamanistic belief system of the Naxi. Songs associated with Dongba rituals often involve invocations to deities, recount the deeds of mythological figures, or serve as a means of communicating with the spiritual world. These religious songs are typically performed during ceremonies and festivals, reinforcing the community's spiritual beliefs and cultural identity.

Love songs are another significant category of Naxi folk songs. These songs often explore the joys and sorrows of romantic relationships, expressing emotions of longing, devotion, and heartbreak. The lyrical content of these songs can be deeply personal, drawing on the experiences and feelings of the singers, yet they resonate universally within the Naxi community, reflecting shared cultural values and norms regarding love and relationships.

Work songs, which accompany agricultural activities, are also common in Naxi folk traditions. These songs not only provide rhythm and motivation for labor but also serve as a means of social interaction and solidarity among workers. The lyrics of work songs often recount the challenges and rewards of farming, herding, and other forms of labor, offering insights into the economic and social life of the Naxi people.

Summary

Naxi folk songs are an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Naxi people, primarily residing in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China. These songs, passed down through generations, reflect the Naxi community's history, beliefs, and values, and are deeply intertwined with their social, religious, and cultural life. Originating centuries ago, Naxi folk songs were created to mark significant events, celebrate festivals, and accompany rituals, evolving over time with influences from neighboring cultures while maintaining their unique identity. These songs were traditionally passed on orally, leading to variations in style and content across communities. Naxi folk songs cover themes such as love, nature, work, and religion, with particular emphasis on their connection to the natural environment and the Dongba religion. They remain a

dynamic tradition, reflecting the Naxi people's relationship with nature, spirituality, and social life.

4. Theories Used in Research

4.1 Musicology

Theme is a crucial component in western music theory, expressing a complete musical idea and serving as the core of music. It is simple, meaningful, interesting, easy to hear and remember, and refreshing. The theme is the foundation of musical development and the starting point of the musical process. Music analysis is the process of capturing, identifying, understanding, and grasping the subject. Musicians are the main body in the development of music history, establishing a musical style and reflecting the characteristics of their time. They use their works to express emotions, tell their hearts, and deduce their own life.

Music analysis is a comprehensive analysis of harmony, polyphony, form structure, orchestration, main melody, mode, rhythm, and other factors in the study of western music. Thematic analysis is an essential part of music analysis, as it helps understand and grasp the leading ideas of music works. When the theme expresses feelings and scenes in a certain environment, it can cause a corresponding connection in the listener's mind. Thematic analysis is the correct expression of the emotion shown by the analyst when resonating with the theme image of music. The appropriate method of theme analysis affects the audience's understanding of music.

4.2 Ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology includes investigating and studying the music characteristics of different ethnic groups, countries, and regions; exploring the relationship between these music and geography, history, and other cultures; compiling ethnomusicology or regional music, and drawing some conclusions related to music from it. It belongs to a category of musicology and is closely related to ethnology and folklore. It is a science that investigates and studies the national music of different countries and regions with different social systems and different levels of development, and finds out various laws related to music. Fieldwork is the basic way to obtain research materials. The predecessor was European Comparative Musicology. In addition, things like

comparative instrumentology and comparative music history are all research topics in this discipline.

The theory of ethnomusicology involves the general sense of music (perhaps sound), specific musical traditions, music in a series of related communities, or cognitive, artistic, experiential, social, and cultural related to music. The description, classification, comparison, explanation and generalization of the topics, topics and processes of political,

political and economic issues. Ethnomusicology theory may be derived from scientific, social or musical theories, but fundamentally speaking, it does not borrow ideas from other disciplines, although it may be necessary to do so as a starting point. At the same time, it may originate from our own and previous observations.

In my research, I will use the theory of national music science to investigate and study the characteristics of Naxi folk songs: exploring the cultural relationships, descriptions, classification, comparison, interpretation, and impact on the Naxi people, as well as the aesthetic influence of Naxi folk songs on the Naxi community. I will summarize these findings and draw relevant conclusions.

4.3 Qualitative research

A qualitative research uses depth interviews and observations for data collecting. Qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon involving quality. Some of the characteristics of qualitative research/method are:

- 1) It is non-numerical, descriptive, applies reasoning and uses words.
- 2) Its aim is to get the meaning, feeling and describe the situation.
- 3) Qualitative data cannot be graphed.
- 4) It is exploratory.
- 5) It investigates the why and how of decision making

The process of qualitative research:

- 1) Selection of a site and definition of problems, concepts and indicators.
- 2) The researcher chooses a strategy to move into the researcher.
- 3) Selecting people and events to observe.
- 4) Develop relationships with the participants.
- 5) Analyze and observations.
- 6) Final analysis and interpretation.

In my research, I use the theory of qualitative research to collect data through in-depth interviews and observations. I use an interview table and observation table. Ask questions according to the research goals.

4.4 Field research

Fieldwork is recognized as the basic methodology of anthropology and the earliest anthropological methodology. It comes from the basic research methodology of cultural anthropology and archaeology, that is, the practice and application of the "direct observation 23 method". It is also a prerequisite step to obtain first-hand original data before the research work is carried out. Field research techniques are in which the researcher goes deep into the life background of the research phenomenon, through participating in observation and inquiry, to perceive the behavior of the research object and the cultural content behind these behaviors, so as to gradually reach the object and its social life. understanding. Collect information by participating in observations and unstructured interviews, and use qualitative analysis of these data to understand and explain phenomena in social research. It is the only research method with qualitative characteristics. It can be said to be a collective term for participating in observation and case studies.

4.5 The literature research method

The literature research method is a method to obtain information through investigating the literature according to a certain research purpose or subject, so as to fully and correctly understand and master the research problem. The literature research method quilt is widely used in the research of various disciplines. Its functions are as follows: (1) Be able to understand the history and current situation of related issues and help determine research topics. (2) It can form a general impression about the research object, which is helpful for observation and visit. (3) Comparative data can be obtained from actual data. (4) Help to understand the whole picture of things.

4.6 Music analysis

Music analysis, as a method and means of understanding music, is of great significance in human music activities. The definition of analysis is to divide a thing, a phenomenon, and a 24 concept into relatively simple components, and find out the essential attributes of these parts and the relationship between them. Music analysis is

the study of decomposing a kind of music structure into a relatively reduced component and the function of certain factors in the structure." Music analysis takes music as its research object. As an independent subject, music analysis must have its own distinctive characteristics. First of all, the research object is a clear musical work. All analysis and research are based on music scores and music scores.

Secondly, the purpose of music analysis is to promote music creation and understanding of music works, and to study the formation rules of musical works themselves. It is a kind of rationality. Musical behavior with strong characteristics. Finally, the basic function of music analysis is based on empirical practice. It is a highly practical technical analysis. Its starting point is the technical phenomenon in music, rather than those peripheral and extended events. Music analysis always tends to move closer to the essence of science.

5. Reserch related

Song,Siming(2023) Through consulting this paper, we can gain more knowledge about Naxi folk songs in different regions, which is helpful in understanding the factors affecting Naxi folk songs in Yunnan in this study.

Zhong,Jingyuan(2023) This paper has detailed records on the time and reasons for the revival of Naxi folk songs. By referring to this paper, we can determine the specific research period of Naxi folk songs in this study.

Yang,Shuzhen (2021) This paper explains the origin of Naxi folk songs and proposes two sources of Naxi folk songs. This document provides certain reference opinions for the historical development of Naxi folk songs in this study.

Guo Ya (2021) This paper explains the origin of the name of Naxi folk songs and provides historical traceability data for this study, which can be referred to in this study.

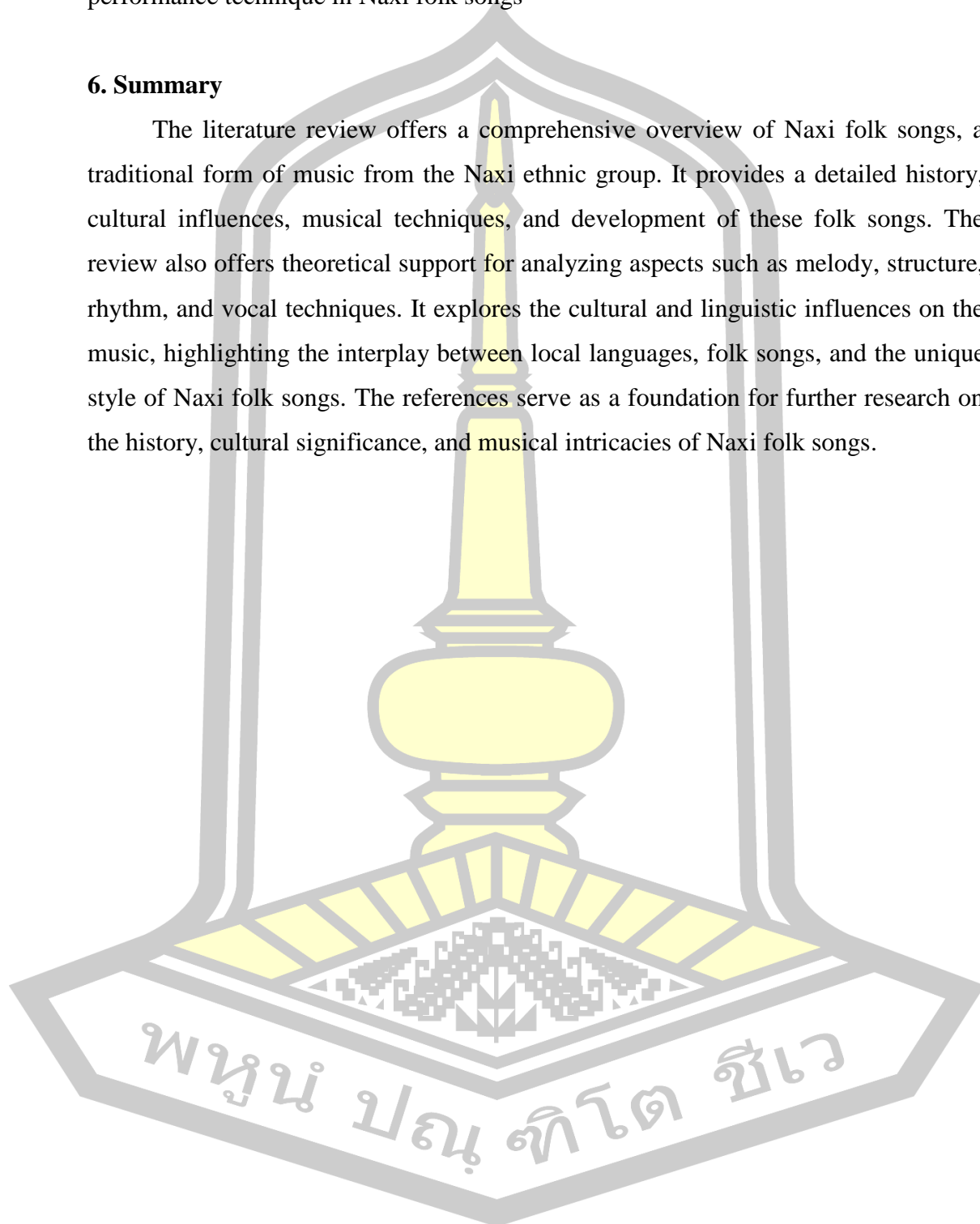
He Qunxing (2020) This paper gives a detailed introduction to the vocal techniques of contemporary Naxi folk songs. In this study, the research results on vocal techniques expounded in this paper are taken as the theoretical basis for a deeper study on the vocal techniques of Naxi folk songs.

Huang Xiaofeng (2020) This paper provides a detailed introduction to the contemporary left-hand pressing technique used in Naxi folk songs. Based on the

research results, this study offers relevant theoretical support for the tremolo performance technique in Naxi folk songs

6. Summary

The literature review offers a comprehensive overview of Naxi folk songs, a traditional form of music from the Naxi ethnic group. It provides a detailed history, cultural influences, musical techniques, and development of these folk songs. The review also offers theoretical support for analyzing aspects such as melody, structure, rhythm, and vocal techniques. It explores the cultural and linguistic influences on the music, highlighting the interplay between local languages, folk songs, and the unique style of Naxi folk songs. The references serve as a foundation for further research on the history, cultural significance, and musical intricacies of Naxi folk songs.



CHAPTER III

Methodology

This research is qualitative. fieldwork survey, collected data and sought ancestors. Therefore, my methods are as follows.

1. Research scope
 - 1.1 Scope of content
 - 1.2 Scope of time
2. Research process
 - 2.1 Selection of the research sites
 - 2.2 Selection of the key informants
 - 2.3 Selection of the song
 - 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 The current status of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, is comprehensively investigated in various aspects. This survey includes the exploration of the historical development of Naxi folk songs, the evaluation of the current status of Naxi folk song inheritors, the current methods of transmitting Naxi folk songs, and the investigation of educational institutions engaged in Naxi folk song research.

1.1.2 The musical characteristics and vocal techniques inherent to Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan Province. This includes the analysis of melody, modal structures, rhythmic patterns, and vocal techniques.

1.2 Scope of time

The study was conducted from September 2024 to January 2025. Field research was conducted from September 2024 to January 2025, including interviews,

2) The person was born and raised in the Naxi area of Lijiang, Yunnan Province.

3) The person is knowledgeable about the cultural development of Naxi folk songs.

4) The person is older and has many years of experience in performing or preserving Naxi folk songs.

5) The person is a representative inheritor of Naxi folk songs at or above the provincial level or enjoys high prestige in the local area.

Based on the above criteria, three key informants were selected for this research: He Jingfeng, He Jie, and He Yanli. These individuals represent different dimensions of Naxi folk music, including grassroots transmission, professional performance, and generational continuity. He Jingfeng is a rural folk artist from Xiangyang Village, Yulong County. Despite having only a primary school education, she is recognized as the inheritor of the original Naxi folk song singing style, making her a valuable source for understanding traditional vocal practices in their most authentic form. He Jie is a professional Naxi singer and a soloist with the Lijiang Ethnic Song and Dance Troupe. Trained at Kunming Arts Vocational College, he has received multiple awards in provincial competitions and is widely acknowledged for his contribution to the preservation and stage presentation of Naxi folk music. He Yanli, born in Yulong County, was selected for formal music training due to her exceptional vocal talent. Having grown up immersed in Naxi folk songs, she brings insight into the emotional depth and stylistic richness of the tradition, especially as it is passed on to younger generations.

During the research process, these three key informants unanimously recommended “Xi Shi Ge” (喜事歌曲) as a representative category for in-depth study. This category holds a central place in Naxi social life, being widely performed at weddings, communal rituals, and festive gatherings. According to the informants, wedding songs not only carry musical and poetic beauty but also express cultural values such as blessing, harmony, and collective joy. Therefore, based on their recommendation, one representative wedding song was selected for detailed musical analysis in this study. This song exemplifies the melodic, rhythmic, and cultural

characteristics of Naxi celebratory folk music and reflects both continuity and vitality within the Naxi oral tradition.



Figure 3. He Jinfeng

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

He jingfeng, 56 years old, is a native of Xiangyang Village, Xinshan Village Committee, Baisha Town, Yulong County, and an ordinary rural woman. Although she only has primary school education, she is an amazing disseminator of Naxi culture! She is the inheritor of the original folk song singing style of the Naxi people

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Figure 4. He Jie

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

He Jie – Naxi Ethnic Singer and Traditional Music Inheritor, He Jie is a Naxi ethnic singer from Lijiang, Yunnan Province, and a solo performer with the Lijiang Ethnic Song and Dance Troupe. He is recognized as one of the preservers of traditional Naxi folk music. In 1992, He Jie graduated from Kunming Arts Vocational College, majoring in Performance and Program Hosting. The following year, in 1992, he made his stage debut, participating in the Lijiang Youth Singer Competition, where he won first place with his performance of "Liuniu Tune". In 1994, his unique vocal talent earned him admission to the Yulong County Ethnic Song and Dance Troupe in Lijiang, where he became a solo vocalist. Over the years, he has achieved notable success in various music competitions: 2006 – Won the Gold Award at the 8th Yunnan Ethnic Minority Traditional Sports Games. 2007 – Secured the Silver Award in the Traditional Music Category at the 2nd Yunnan Youth Singer Television Grand Prix. 2009 – Competed in the 3rd Yunnan Youth Singer Television Grand Prix. He Jie's deep connection to Naxi traditional music and his remarkable vocal style have made him an important figure in preserving and promoting ethnic music in Yunnan.



Figure 5. Mu Lifang

Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

He Yanli was born in Yulong County, Lijiang, Yunnan Province, the only Naxi Autonomous County in China. Growing up singing Naxi folk songs, she developed a deep connection to her ethnic musical heritage. She describes Naxi folk singing as diverse in vocal styles and rich in content, with a reserved and subtle emotional expression as its defining characteristic. These songs are widely circulated among the people, reflecting different periods of Naxi life and culture. In 2000, renowned vocalist and songwriter Hu Songhua established the Hu Songhua Art Research Studio and conducted free music lectures and talent selection programs in Lijiang and Diqing, Yunnan. Due to her exceptional talent, He Yanli was selected to study music in Zhuhai. Among the chosen students was Gesang Dunzhu, who later became her husband.

2.2.2 General Informants

The criteria for selecting general informants are:

- 1) The person was born and raised in the Naxi area of Lijiang, Yunnan Province.
- 2) The person is knowledgeable about the cultural development of Naxi folk songs.

3) The person is older and has many years of experience in performing Naxi folk songs.

4) The person has years of experience teaching Naxi folk songs.

2.2.3 Casual Informants

The criteria for selecting casual informants are:

1) The person was born and raised in the Naxi area of Lijiang, Yunnan Province.

2) The person is knowledgeable about the cultural development of Naxi folk songs.

3) The person is older and has many years of experience in performing Naxi folk songs

Audience representatives Sampling Strategy:

A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to select individuals who have a deep understanding and experience with Naxi folk songs in the Naxi community.

2.3 Selection of the Song

These selected Naxi folk songs from Lijiang, Yunnan, have greatly influenced our research. The criteria for selecting songs are as follows:

2.3.1 Recommendations from respected inheritors of "intangible cultural heritage.

Songs recommended by esteemed Naxi folk artists who are officially recognized as bearers of intangible cultural heritage, ensuring the authenticity and cultural significance of the materials.

2.3.2 Representative works of Naxi folk music.

Songs that are widely acknowledged within the Naxi community and academic circles as emblematic of Naxi folk music, reflecting various traditional forms such as ritual songs, labor songs, and love songs.

2.3.3 Songs that incorporate Naxi musical characteristics.

Pieces that embody distinct musical features of Naxi folk music, including pentatonic melodic structures, characteristic rhythmic patterns, and the use of traditional Naxi language and stylistic ornamentation.

Table 1. Selection of the songs

No.	Style Category	Description	Number of Songs	Remarks
1	Ritual Songs (仪式歌)	Songs performed during religious rituals and Dongba ceremonies	12	
2	Labor Songs (劳动歌)	Songs sung during agricultural work and daily labor	15	
3	Love Songs (情歌)	Songs expressing romantic feelings	18	
4	“Xi Shi Ge” (喜事歌曲)	Songs performed during weddings, birthdays, and festive occasions	10	Category selected
5	Narrative Songs (叙事歌)	Songs that recount historical events, legends, and ancestral stories	10	
6	Children's Songs (儿童歌谣)	Songs sung by or for children	9	

Within the category of Wedding and Celebration Songs, this study focuses on the analysis of a single representative song, titled [Xi shi Ge].

The reasons for selecting this specific piece are as follows:

1) Recommendation by an Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor

The selected song was personally recommended by a respected Naxi folk artist who has been officially recognized as an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage. Their recommendation ensures the authenticity, cultural authority, and representative value of the piece within the Naxi community.

2) Representative Value

This song encapsulates the essential musical features typical of Naxi wedding and celebration songs, including melodic contours, rhythmic patterns, and lyrical themes associated with festivity and communal bonding.

3) Artistic and Cultural Significance

The song is widely performed during significant Naxi ceremonies and festive occasions, and it is considered a vital work for preserving and transmitting traditional Naxi cultural expressions.

4) Depth and Complexity for Analysis

Compared to other pieces in the same category, this song demonstrates a richer melodic variation, more intricate rhythmic structures, and more profound lyrical content, offering a deeper level of material suitable for comprehensive musical analysis.

5) Practical Considerations

Given the limited scope and timeframe of this study, concentrating on a single, highly representative and culturally significant piece allows for a more thorough and focused exploration, providing meaningful insights into the stylistic and cultural characteristics of Naxi folk music.

2.4 Research Tools

To achieve the research objectives of this project — (1) to investigate the development of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, and (2) to analyze the musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs — the main research tools used in the research process are as follows:

2.4.1 Observation Form

The observation form is designed to systematically collect field research data related to the study of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan Province.

1) Creation: The observation form was developed by defining study objectives, identifying key observable elements (such as performance settings, singing styles, accompaniment, and audience interaction), structuring detailed sections for each observable factor, providing space for visual documentation (photos, sketches), captions, observer notes, and including sections for the observer's signature and date to verify authenticity.

2) Use: During field research, the observation form was printed and brought to performance venues such as community celebrations, wedding ceremonies, and traditional gatherings. Details such as singer posture, vocal technique, audience engagement, and environmental context were recorded. Visual materials were also collected using cameras and mobile devices, timestamped, and annotated. Completed observation forms were securely stored for later analysis.

2.4.2 Interview Form

The interview form is designed to organize and record interviews regarding the development and musical features of Naxi folk songs.

1) Creation: The interview form was designed by defining interview objectives, identifying key interviewees (such as Naxi folk singers, cultural scholars, and intangible cultural heritage inheritors), introducing the purpose and importance of the interview, formulating clear open-ended questions, planning for probing and clarifying responses, ensuring informed consent, and providing areas for recording equipment notes and interviewee signatures.

2) Use: Interviews were conducted by first explaining the purpose, obtaining consent, and then asking structured open-ended questions about the history, style, and cultural significance of Naxi folk songs. Responses were audio- or video-recorded, notes were taken, and signed consent was obtained from participants. All data were properly verified and securely stored.

2.5 Data Collection

1) Interview:

During data collection in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, the researcher selected three groups of informants:

Key informants: including national or provincial representatives and inheritors of Naxi folk music traditions.

Casual informants: including researchers, local historians, and musicians familiar with Naxi musical culture.

General informants: including music teachers, students, and community members with everyday experience of Naxi folk music. Interviews were flexible and tailored to each group while aligning with the overall research objectives.

2) Observation: Field observations were conducted at various cultural sites and events where Naxi folk songs were performed. Using mobile phones, DSLR cameras, video cameras, and audio recorders, detailed documentation of live performances, informal gatherings, and ceremonies was carried out. Performances were carefully recorded, and field notes were systematically maintained. Visual and audio data were securely stored in SD cards, hard drives, and USB storage devices.

3) Questionnaire: A questionnaire was developed to gather supplementary data on the understanding, transmission, and stylistic diversity of Naxi folk songs among local residents. Respondents were asked about their familiarity with traditional songs, participation in singing activities, and their views on the role of folk songs in Naxi culture. Data collected from the questionnaire supported the selection of representative works and provided insights into the living transmission of the tradition.

4) Document Analysis: Relevant documents were reviewed, including historical records of the Naxi people, educational materials, policy documents related to cultural preservation, and existing ethnomusicological studies on Naxi folk music.

2.6 Data Management

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews and observations. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were protected throughout the study.

Validity and Reliability: To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by using multiple data collection methods — interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis. Cross-referencing different data sources ensured a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the development and musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs.

Evaluation of Methods: Cultural Theory: Cultural theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how Naxi folk songs are deeply embedded in the social

and cultural life of the Naxi people. By applying cultural theory, the study explores how folk songs serve not only as musical expressions but also as carriers of collective memory, rituals, and social values. The theory also helps in analyzing the impact of modernization on the preservation and transformation of Naxi folk music.

Ethnomusicology: Through an ethnomusicological lens, this study examines Naxi folk songs within their cultural context, focusing on how they function in ceremonies, festivals, and daily life. Ethnomusicology helps reveal how musical elements reflect broader cultural identities and the transmission of traditions within the Naxi community.

2.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Interviews were transcribed, and both transcripts and field notes were coded for emerging themes, which were then analyzed in relation to the research objectives.

2.7.1 Objective 1: Analysis of the Development of Naxi Folk Songs

Data collected through interviews with key cultural inheritors, document analysis, and field observations were analyzed to trace the historical development, social functions, and cultural transformations of Naxi folk songs. Thematic analysis highlighted the influences of religion, migration, political change, and globalization.

2.7.2 Objective 2: Analysis of the Musical Characteristics of Naxi Folk Songs

Audio and video recordings of live performances, musical notations, and interviews with singers and musicians were analyzed to identify and categorize musical elements such as melodic structure, rhythmic patterns, lyrical content, language use, vocal techniques, and stylistic ornamentation. This analysis illuminated how Naxi folk music differentiates itself from neighboring musical traditions and contributes to the distinct cultural identity of the Naxi people.

Through systematic data analysis, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of both the historical evolution and the musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs, laying a foundation for further research and cultural preservation efforts.

2.8 Data Presenting

The dissertation will be presented in seven chapters.

1) Chapter I: Introduction

- 2) Chapter II: Literature Review
- 3) Chapter III: Methodology
- 4) Chapter IV: The development of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China
- 5) Chapter V: The characteristics of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China.
- 6) Chapter VI: Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions



CHAPTER IV

The development of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China

Naxi folk songs, an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Naxi people in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, have evolved over centuries, reflecting the socio-historical changes, cultural exchanges, and modernization processes that have shaped Naxi society. This chapter explores the historical origins, external influences, and contemporary developments of Naxi folk songs, offering an in-depth analysis of their transformation over time.

1. Historical Origins and Early Development

The historical development of Naxi folk songs is deeply intertwined with the cultural evolution of the Naxi people, whose unique traditions have shaped their musical expressions over centuries. This section examines the early roots of Naxi folk songs, highlighting their connections to religious practices, daily life, and the broader socio-political landscape of the region. By exploring the historical influences that contributed to the formation of Naxi musical traditions, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how these songs evolved and adapted over time.

The Naxi people, an ethnic minority in southwest China, have a rich cultural tradition, heavily influenced by their unique Dongba religious beliefs and interactions with neighboring ethnic groups. Historically, Naxi folk songs were closely linked to daily life, rituals, and communal activities, serving as a medium to express emotions, convey historical narratives, and strengthen social bonds(Guo Ya,2021)

1.1 Dongba Culture and Folk Music

The Dongba religion, the traditional belief system of the Naxi people, played a significant role in shaping early folk songs. The Dongba priests, who served as spiritual leaders and cultural transmitters, composed and performed folk songs during religious ceremonies. Many of these songs contained references to nature, mythology, and ancestral worship, reflecting the Naxi people's worldview and spiritual traditions.

Dongba folk songs were not merely religious expressions but also served as a means of cultural preservation and education. These songs often contained complex symbols and allegorical meanings, passed down orally through generations. The melodies and lyrics were deeply intertwined with the rituals and customs associated with the Dongba faith, reinforcing social cohesion within the community(Interview,He Jie,December 5, 2024)



Figure 6. Dongba Paper Mill

Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Additionally, the Dongba pictographic script—one of the few surviving hieroglyphic writing systems in the world—played a crucial role in documenting and preserving these folk songs. Some ancient texts contain musical notations or references to song performances, providing valuable insights into the historical evolution of Naxi music. The combination of oral tradition and written documentation has helped maintain the integrity and authenticity of Dongba folk songs despite external influences over time(Interview,He Yanli,December 5, 2024)

1.2 Traditional Performance Contexts

Naxi folk songs have historically played an essential role in various social and cultural functions, embodying the values, customs, and traditions of the Naxi people. These songs were not merely for entertainment but were also integral to religious,

agricultural, and storytelling practices, serving as a medium for intergenerational communication and community cohesion.



Figure 7. Dongba Canvas

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

In modern times, efforts to preserve Dongba folk songs have gained momentum through academic research, museum exhibitions, and community initiatives. Ethnomusicologists and cultural preservationists have worked closely with Naxi elders and Dongba priests to record and analyze these ancient songs, ensuring their survival for future generations. These efforts highlight the enduring significance of Dongba culture in shaping and sustaining the musical heritage of the Naxi people.

The Dongba religion, the traditional belief system of the Naxi people, played a significant role in shaping early folk songs. The Dongba priests, who served as spiritual leaders and cultural transmitters, composed and performed folk songs during religious ceremonies. Many of these songs contained references to nature, mythology, and ancestral worship, reflecting the Naxi people's worldview and spiritual traditions.

Rituals and Ceremonies: Songs were sung during weddings, funerals, and religious festivals to mark significant life events. They were often performed by elders or designated singers who preserved the oral tradition. Certain songs were believed to have spiritual significance, invoking blessings or guiding the spirits of the deceased to the afterlife(Tang Tingting,2010).

Agricultural Activities: Songs were used as work chants to coordinate labor, maintain morale, and alleviate the monotony of farming tasks. The rhythm of these

songs often synchronized with physical movements, creating a harmonious and efficient work environment. Some songs also contained instructions or farming knowledge passed down through generations.

Storytelling and Oral Tradition: Folk songs served as a means of preserving and transmitting historical events, legends, and moral teachings. Many songs depicted ancient tales of heroes, love stories, and moral dilemmas, embedding cultural wisdom into lyrical narratives. Through song, historical knowledge and ethical values were passed from elders to younger generations, ensuring cultural continuity.



Figure 8. Naxi sacrificial ceremony

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Social Gatherings and Festivals: During traditional community gatherings, folk songs were performed to celebrate seasonal changes, mark harvests, and express communal joy. Singing competitions and improvisational duets were common, showcasing the creativity and linguistic prowess of the performers. These performances often strengthened social bonds and reinforced shared cultural identity.

The traditional performance of Naxi folk songs continues to be a vibrant aspect of community life, though modern influences and commercialization have altered their context and meaning. Despite these changes, efforts to document and preserve these songs remain crucial in safeguarding the Naxi people's rich musical heritage(Li Ling,2019)

Naxi folk songs were traditionally performed in various social and cultural settings, including: **Rituals and Ceremonies:** Songs were sung during weddings, funerals, and religious festivals to mark important life events. **Agricultural Activities:** Songs were used as work chants to coordinate labor and alleviate the monotony of farming tasks. **Storytelling and Oral Tradition:** Folk songs served as a means of passing down historical events, legends, and moral teachings from generation to generation.

Summary

The historical development of Naxi folk songs is closely intertwined with the spiritual, social, and cultural life of the Naxi people. Rooted in the Dongba religion, these songs were originally performed by priests during rituals and ceremonies, serving not only religious functions but also as tools for cultural education and preservation. With strong connections to nature, mythology, and ancestral worship, Dongba folk songs reflect the worldview and values of the Naxi community. Beyond their ritual use, folk songs played vital roles in daily life—accompanying agricultural labor, narrating legends and historical events, and enriching communal celebrations. These songs were a primary medium for oral transmission, fostering intergenerational continuity and reinforcing group identity. Despite modern challenges such as commercialization and cultural shifts, ongoing efforts by scholars and local communities continue to document, preserve, and revitalize Naxi folk songs, ensuring their enduring legacy as a cornerstone of Naxi cultural heritage.

2. Influences from Neighboring Ethnic Groups and External Cultures

Due to Lijiang's strategic location along the ancient Tea Horse Road, the Naxi people had extensive contact with various ethnic groups, including the Han, Tibetan, Bai, and Yi people. These interactions led to significant cultural exchanges, which influenced the evolution of Naxi folk songs.

2.1 The Tea Horse Road and Musical Exchange

The Tea Horse Road was a crucial trade route connecting Yunnan with Tibet and other regions, facilitating not only economic exchanges but also significant cultural interactions. Along with the trade of tea, horses, and other commodities,

merchants, travelers, and musicians carried diverse musical styles and traditions, enriching the Naxi folk song repertoire (Song, Siming, 2023).

One of the most notable impacts of the Tea Horse Road on Naxi folk music was the introduction of new musical structures and instruments. The exposure to Tibetan, Han, and Bai musical traditions brought variations in melody, rhythm, and instrumental accompaniment. Instruments such as the pipa, erhu, and guzheng were incorporated into Naxi music, blending seamlessly with traditional elements. These adaptations allowed Naxi folk songs to evolve while maintaining their distinctive character. Moreover, the migration of different ethnic groups along the trade route contributed to the linguistic diversity found in some Naxi folk songs. The lyrics of many traditional songs reflect a mixture of Naxi, Tibetan, and Mandarin phrases, illustrating the deep cultural fusion that took place. Performances along the Tea Horse Road were common in markets and inns, where musicians and storytellers entertained traders and travelers. These performances not only served as a form of artistic expression but also acted as a means of transmitting historical narratives, legends, and moral teachings across regions. The integration of new styles enriched the oral tradition, making Naxi folk music more dynamic and versatile (Wu Qiong, 2023)



Figure 9. Tea Horse Road

Source: Ting Chen, from research fieldwork (2024)

Today, the historical influence of the Tea Horse Road is still evident in Naxi folk music, with many traditional songs preserving the melodies and themes that originated from these cultural exchanges. Efforts to document and revive these historical influences have been instrumental in keeping the legacy of Naxi folk music

alive in the modern era. The Tea Horse Road was a crucial trade route connecting Yunnan with Tibet and other regions. Along with goods, merchants and travelers brought diverse musical styles that influenced Naxi folk melodies, rhythms, and instruments. The introduction of new instruments, such as the pipa and erhu, expanded the musical repertoire of the Naxi people (Xu Xinjian, 2020)

2.2 Han and Tibetan Influences

The Naxi people have had prolonged contact with both Han Chinese and Tibetan cultures, which has significantly influenced their folk songs. These influences are evident in the themes, melodies, instrumentation, and linguistic elements found in Naxi musical traditions. **Lyrical and Structural Changes:** During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Mandarin lyrics and poetic structures were gradually integrated into Naxi folk songs, leading to a blend of Naxi linguistic traditions with Han poetic and storytelling forms.

Musical Instruments: Instruments such as the pipa, erhu, and guzheng were introduced to Naxi music, expanding the range of sounds and performance techniques used in folk traditions. **Court and Classical Influences:** With increased interactions with Han culture, some Naxi folk songs adopted elements of Han classical music, particularly in their melodic structures and performance styles. Some songs performed in formal settings closely resemble Han opera or traditional Chinese court music.

Spiritual and Religious Themes: The deep spiritual connection between the Naxi and Tibetan cultures contributed to the incorporation of Buddhist themes in Naxi folk songs. Some songs reference Tibetan deities, religious stories, and the philosophy of reincarnation. **Chanting and Vocal Techniques:** The influence of Tibetan Buddhist chanting is evident in certain Naxi folk songs, particularly those used in religious ceremonies and festivals. Some Naxi songs have adopted the deep, resonant chanting style characteristic of Tibetan monks. **Ritualistic and Festival Songs:** In regions where Tibetan influence is stronger, Naxi folk songs are closely tied to religious rituals, pilgrimage songs, and spiritual invocations, often performed during significant Tibetan festivals and religious gatherings (Xu Xinjian, 2020)

These cultural influences, while modifying the original style of Naxi folk songs, have enriched their diversity, making them a unique blend of indigenous and external traditions. The synthesis of Han and Tibetan musical elements has allowed

Naxi folk songs to evolve while maintaining their distinctive identity. Han Chinese Influence: The integration of Mandarin lyrics and musical structures into Naxi folk songs reflected Han cultural influence, particularly during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Tibetan Influence: The deep spiritual connection between the Naxi and Tibetan cultures contributed to the incorporation of Buddhist themes in some folk songs.

Summary

The development of Naxi folk songs has been profoundly shaped by cultural exchanges along the ancient Tea Horse Road and sustained interactions with neighboring ethnic groups, particularly the Han and Tibetan peoples. These external influences introduced new instruments, lyrical styles, and melodic structures, enriching the Naxi musical tradition while preserving its distinct cultural identity. The integration of instruments like the pipa and erhu, along with the adoption of Mandarin poetic forms and Tibetan spiritual themes, exemplifies the adaptive and inclusive nature of Naxi folk music. This cross-cultural synthesis has expanded the expressive range of Naxi songs and reinforced their role as a living tradition reflecting both indigenous heritage and historical intercultural dialogue.

3. Changes in the Modern Era (20th–21st Century)

The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed significant changes in the structure, performance, and transmission of Naxi folk songs due to political, social, and technological transformations (Jie Bing, 2009).

3.1 Political and Social Impact

The development of Naxi folk songs has been significantly shaped by political and social changes throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The influence of government policies, societal transitions, and national movements has led to both the suppression and revitalization of these musical traditions.

Communist Reforms and Cultural Policies: Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the government implemented various cultural reforms aimed at promoting a unified national identity. As part of these efforts, folk songs were often adapted to reflect socialist values, with themes of collectivism, patriotism, and labor becoming prevalent. Traditional lyrics and melodies were

sometimes altered to align with state ideology, leading to the dilution of some authentic elements of Naxi folk music(Yang Shuzhen,2021).

Impact of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976): The Cultural Revolution marked a period of significant upheaval for Naxi folk songs. Traditional folk arts, including Naxi music, were labeled as remnants of feudalistic and superstitious culture. Many folk musicians were persecuted, and performances of traditional songs were discouraged or outright banned. Some musical traditions were lost, and only a fraction of the original repertoire survived through oral transmission in private settings.

Post-Reform Era and Cultural Revival (1980s–Present): With the economic reforms and cultural opening initiated in the 1980s, there was a renewed interest in ethnic minority cultures. Government policies shifted towards recognizing and preserving folk traditions, leading to increased documentation and promotion of Naxi folk music. Institutions such as cultural heritage protection agencies and ethnomusicology departments began archiving traditional songs and promoting their public performances.

Modern Social Transformations: The effects of urbanization and modernization have also played a role in transforming Naxi folk music. Migration to cities, economic changes, and shifts in lifestyle have reduced the prevalence of traditional communal singing. However, new efforts, including cultural festivals, music education programs, and digital preservation projects, aim to sustain and adapt Naxi folk songs for contemporary audiences(Yang Shuzhen,2021).

These political and social changes have had a profound impact on the trajectory of Naxi folk songs, leading to both challenges and opportunities for their preservation and evolution in modern China.**Communist Reforms:** In the mid-20th century, government-led cultural policies influenced the content and function of Naxi folk songs, promoting themes of patriotism and collectivism.**Cultural Revolution:** During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), traditional folk arts, including Naxi folk songs, were suppressed as remnants of feudal culture. Many traditional songs were lost or altered during this period(Interview,He jingfeng,December 5, 2024)

3.2 Contemporary Developments and Globalization

In the 21st century, Naxi folk songs have undergone significant transformations due to the rapid advancements in technology, globalization, and the changing cultural landscape. These developments have both positive and negative implications for the survival and adaptation of Naxi folk music. While digital media and international collaborations have helped expand its reach, commercialization and cultural homogenization pose potential threats to its authenticity(Zhao Yawei,2019).

3.2.1 Influence of Mass Media and Digital Platforms

The widespread use of the internet and social media platforms has provided new avenues for the preservation and dissemination of Naxi folk songs. Digital archives, video-sharing platforms like YouTube, and streaming services such as Spotify have made these traditional songs accessible to a global audience. This accessibility has led to increased interest in Naxi culture and heritage, fostering a renewed appreciation among both local communities and international enthusiasts.

Moreover, ethnomusicologists and researchers have taken advantage of digital recording technology to document and analyze Naxi folk songs in high fidelity. These efforts have helped ensure the longevity of these musical traditions, even as fewer young people engage with them in everyday life. Online workshops and virtual performances have also become more common, allowing musicians from Lijiang to showcase their art to the world without geographical limitations.

3.2.2 Fusion with Contemporary Music

With increased exposure to global musical styles, Naxi folk musicians have experimented with blending traditional melodies with modern genres such as pop, rock, and electronic music. This fusion has led to the creation of hybrid styles that retain elements of Naxi folk traditions while making the music more appealing to younger generations. Some prominent musicians have integrated traditional Naxi instruments, such as the Lusheng and Dongba drum, into contemporary compositions, thereby keeping traditional sounds relevant in the modern music industry. However, this blending of styles has also sparked debates regarding cultural authenticity. Some traditionalists argue that such adaptations dilute the essence of Naxi folk music, making it difficult to distinguish between authentic and commercialized versions. On the other hand, proponents of musical fusion believe that evolution is necessary to keep folk traditions alive and adaptable in changing times(Zhong Jingyuan,2023)

3.2.3 Role of Tourism and Commercialization

The booming tourism industry in Lijiang has had a profound impact on the performance and presentation of Naxi folk songs. Many performances are now tailored to tourists, focusing on entertainment rather than historical or cultural accuracy. While this has increased public exposure to Naxi folk music, it has also led to the simplification or modification of traditional songs to fit commercial interests. Despite these concerns, some cultural initiatives have aimed to strike a balance between authenticity and adaptation. Government-sponsored cultural programs and UNESCO heritage projects have sought to protect and promote traditional Naxi music by supporting community-based performances, educational programs, and archival efforts.

3.2.4 The Future of Naxi Folk Songs in a Globalized World

As globalization continues to shape the cultural landscape, the future of Naxi folk songs depends on a delicate balance between preservation and innovation. Encouraging youth participation through music education programs, digital outreach, and interdisciplinary collaborations will be crucial for sustaining these musical traditions. Additionally, initiatives to document, study, and promote authentic Naxi folk songs must continue, ensuring that this rich musical heritage is not lost amid the rapid cultural shifts of the modern era. By embracing both traditional and contemporary approaches, Naxi folk songs can continue to thrive in a globalized world while retaining their unique identity and historical significance (Zhao Yawei, 2019).

In the 21st century, Naxi folk songs have continued to evolve under the influence of globalization, digital media, and changing cultural preferences.

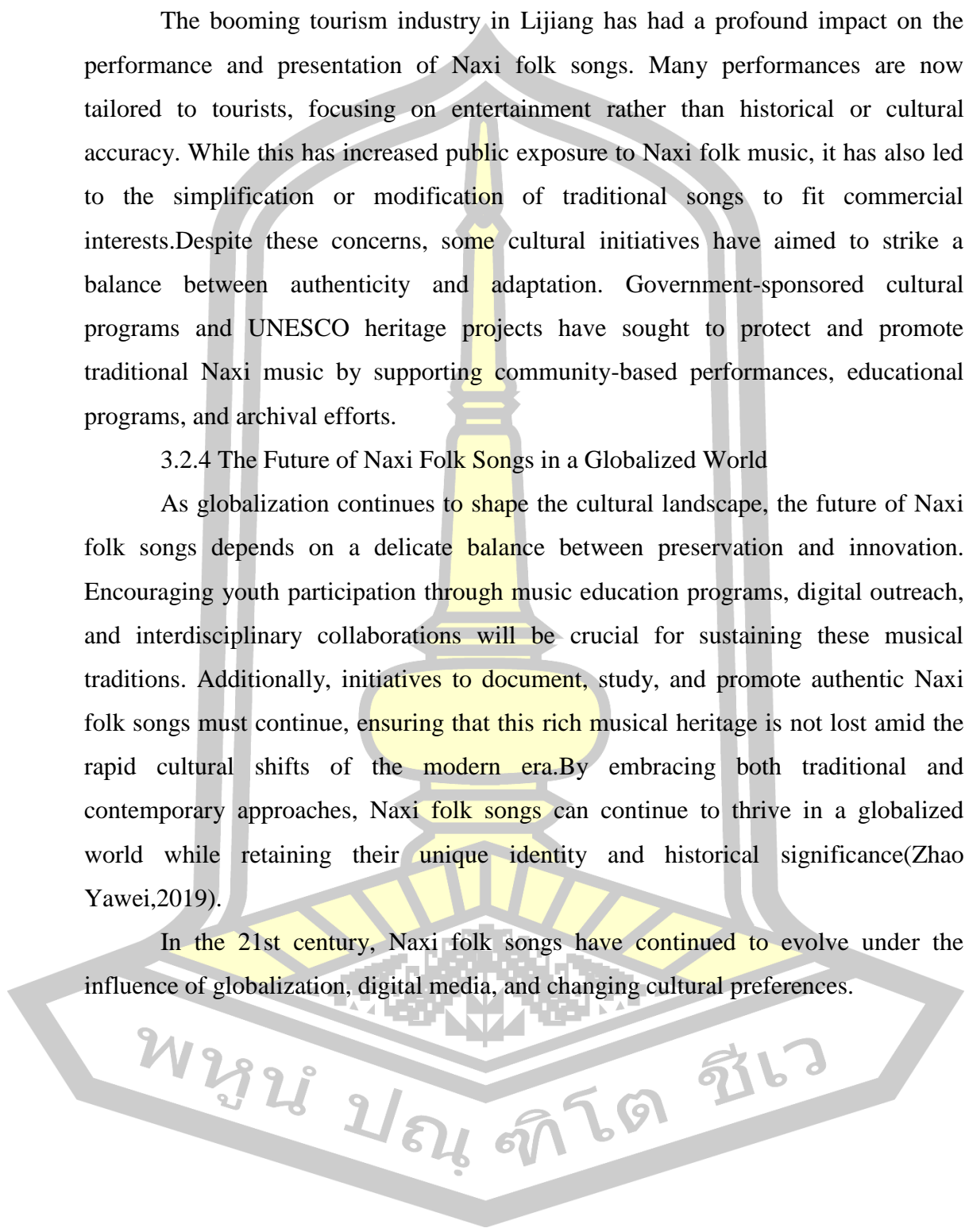


Table 2. Development of Naxi Folk Songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China

Period	Key Features	Influences & Changes
Historical Origins	Rooted in Dongba culture, rituals, and daily life.	Songs performed in religious ceremonies, agricultural work, and storytelling traditions.
Tea Horse Road Era	Cultural exchange with Han, Tibetan, Bai, and Yi groups.	New musical structures, instruments (pipa, erhu), and mixed linguistic elements.
Ming & Qing Dynasties	Han cultural influence on lyrics and melody.	Mandarin lyrics, poetic storytelling, and classical court music integration.
20th Century Political Changes	Communist reforms altered content and function.	Songs adapted for patriotism; suppression during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).
Post-Reform Era (1980s-Present)	Cultural revival and preservation efforts.	Increased research, museum archiving, and reintroduction into schools.

Summary

Naxi folk songs in Lijiang have evolved through historical, cultural, and political influences. Rooted in Dongba religious traditions, these songs played a crucial role in rituals, work, and storytelling. The Tea Horse Road facilitated musical exchange with Han, Tibetan, and Bai cultures, leading to new instruments and lyrical influences. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Mandarin lyrics and classical music elements shaped Naxi melodies. The 20th century saw political shifts that both suppressed and later revived these songs. In the modern era, globalization and digital media have expanded their reach, though commercialization remains a challenge. To sustain Naxi folk music, a balance between preservation and adaptation is essential.

CHAPTER V

The characteristics of Naxi folk songs in Lijiang, Yunnan, China

Naxi folk songs, deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of Lijiang, Yunnan, represent an essential aspect of the Naxi people's musical heritage. To provide an in-depth analysis, this chapter focuses on a representative song, “Xi Shi Ge” (喜事歌), which is frequently performed during festive occasions. This song encapsulates the melodic structures, Mode scale rhythmic patterns, lyrics, Singing style, and instrumental accompaniment characteristic of Naxi folk songs. Analyze the song from the following points:

“Melodic characteristics”
“Mode scale”
“Rhythmic patterns”
“lyrics”
“Singing style”
“instrumental accompaniment characteristic”

1. Melodic characteristics

“Xi Shi Ge” is a traditional Naxi celebratory song performed during weddings, festivals, and communal gatherings. It embodies the joyous spirit of the Naxi people and is an essential part of their cultural heritage. The song is often performed by both soloists and groups, creating a vibrant and engaging musical experience. Xi Shi Ge follows a pentatonic scale, common in Naxi folk music, and is composed of multiple verses that alternate between solo and choral responses. The structure includes:

The figure below shows the structure of the “Xi shi Ge” song, which can be divided into the following categories:



The detailed analysis of the musical form of "Xi shi Ge" is as follows:

Table 3. The musical sections of “Xi shi Ge”

Section	A	B
Measure	1-8	9-16
Tonality	E-flat Zhi Mode	
Tempo	66	
Beat	4/4	

This song, "Xishi Ge" (喜事歌), follows a Binary Form (A-B structure), consisting of Section A (measures 1-8) and Section B (measures 9-16). It has a simple and clear melody with a strong folk music character. As shown in the figure 10:

喜事歌
Xishi Ge

Transcription by Ting Chen

♩ = 66

Phrase A

Vocals
高山 花开 迎新 娘 玉龙 雪山 银红 妆 彩云 深处 歌悠 扬
gao shang hua kai ying xin niang yu long xue shang zhuo hong zhuang caiyun sheng chu ge you yang

Hulusi

Vocals
共成 双 东巴 经 文 祈 吉 祥 月光 洒 满 幸 福 堂 篝火 映 照 新 房 暖
gong chen shuang... dong ba jing wen qi ji...xiang yue guang sa man xing fu...tang gou huo ying zhao xin fang nuan

Hulusi

Vocals
想 守 翠 黛 长 手 牵 手 心 相 连 情 歌 绕 云 间 一 生 一 世 共 白 头
xiang shou ai mian chang shou qian shou xin xiang lian... qing ge rao yun jian yi sheng yi shi gong bai...tou

Hulusi

Figure 10. “Xi shi Ge”Section A
Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Section A consists of two nearly identical phrases, each lasting 4 measures (measures 1-4 and 5-8). The repetition of these phrases creates a sense of stability and musical coherence. Measures 1-4 (Phrase 1) The pitch movement is relatively smooth, primarily featuring seconds and thirds, making it fluid and natural. Measures 5-8

(Phrase 2): Largely a repetition of Measures 1-4, with possible slight rhythmic variations to avoid monotony. Ends with a Perfect Cadence, providing closure to Section A.

Range: The highest note is A5 and the lowest note is E4, covering more than one octave. Overall, the range is moderately wide, which aligns with the characteristics of traditional folk songs that are catchy and easy to sing. It is well-suited for group singing or impromptu performances at weddings and other festive occasions. As shown in the figure 11:

-66- Transcription by Ting Chen

Highest note

Vocals
高山花开迎新娘 玉龙雪山傲红妆 彩云深处歌悠扬
gao shang hua kai ying xin niang yu long xue shang zuo hong zhuang caiyun sheng chu ge you yang

Hulusheng

Vocals
共成双 东巴经文祈吉祥 月光洒满幸福堂 篝火映照新房暖
gong chen shuang dong ba jing wen qi ji xiang yue gung sa man xing fu tang gou huo ying zhao xin fang nuan

Hulusheng

Lowest note

Vocals
相守爱天长 手牵手心相连 情歌绕云间 一生一世共白头
xiang shou ai mian chang shou qian shou xin xiang lian qing ge rao yun jian yi sheng yi shi gong bai tou

Hulusheng

Figure 11. “Xi shi Ge”Section A Range
Source: Ting Chen, from research fieldwork (2024)

Harmony: The harmony in Section A is provided through the accompaniment of the hulusheng (gourd mouth organ). The hulusheng simultaneously plays the main melody while alternating between the tonic note (A \flat) and the dominant note (E \flat) to create harmonic support for the melody. These two notes are the most essential tones of the key, and this method of harmonization highlights the stability and consonance of the tonality. As shown in the figure 12:

Figure 12. “Xi shi Ge”Section A Harmony
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Melodic contour: The melodic contour of Section A features a small wave-like shape with moderate rises and falls. It begins with a descending stepwise motion from A^b4 to E^b4, followed by a leap of an octave up to E^b5. The melody then gradually ascends to the highest note of Section A, A5, and subsequently moves in stepwise motion around E^b5 before finally descending to the lowest note, E^b4. As shown in the figure 13:

Figure 13. “Xi shi Ge”Section A melodic contour
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Section B (Measures 9-16) – Contrasting Section As shown in the figure 14:

พูนุ ปณ ทิโต ชเว

Figure 14 shows the musical score for "Xi Shi Ge" Section B, measures 8-16. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a hulusheng line. The lyrics are in Chinese and Pinyin. A red bracket labeled "Phrase B" spans measures 9-12 and 13-16. The lyrics are: 相守爱更长 手牵手心相连 情歌绕云间 一生一世共白头 (xiang shou ai mian chang shou qian shou xin xiang lian qing ge rao yun jian yi sheng yi shi gong bai tou); 同舟梦相连 青楼酒芬芳 亲朋乐悠长 阿妈笑开颜 (tong zhou men xiang lian qing ke jiu fen fang qin peng le you yang a ma xiao kai yan); 阿妈笑开颜 良缘世无双 (a ma xiao kai yan liang yuan shi wu shuang).

Figure 14. "Xi Shi Ge"Section B

Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Section B introduces a contrasting theme, consisting of two distinct phrases (measures 9-12 and 13-16), adding variety and depth to the piece. Measures 9-12 (Phrase 1): More dynamic than Section A, with a slightly wider pitch range, creating a stronger sense of movement. The Hulusheng part includes more embellishments, making the passage more expressive. Ends with a Half Cadence, keeping the musical flow unresolved. Measures 13-16 (Phrase 2): Introduces further contrast, enhancing the emotional expression of the piece. Cadence: Concludes with a Perfect Cadence, giving the song a strong and definitive ending. Form: Binary Form (A-B) Section A (Measures 1-8) Consists of two repeated phrases (measures 1-4 and 5-8). Ends with a Perfect Cadence. Section B (Measures 9-16) Consists of two contrasting phrases (measures 9-12 and 13-16). Features a more expressive melody. Ends with a Perfect Cadence, providing a strong resolution. This A-B structure gives the song a simple yet expressive framework. Section A provides a stable and repetitive foundation, while Section B introduces contrast to enrich the musical expression. The overall design makes it an ideal choice for festive wedding occasions.

Range: In Section B, the music spans one octave, with E^b5 as the highest note and E^b4 as the lowest note. As shown in the figure 15:

Figure 15. “Xi shi Ge”Section B Range
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Harmony: The harmony in Section B is also provided through the accompaniment of the hulusheng (gourd mouth organ). The hulusheng simultaneously plays the main melody while alternating between the tonic note (A^b) and the dominant note (E^b) to create harmonic support for the melody. These two notes are the core tones of the key, and this method of harmonization reflects the stability and consonance of the tonality. As shown in the figure 16:

Figure 16. “Xi shi Ge”Section B harmony
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Melodic contour: Section B begins with E^b 5 and descends by a fourth to B^b 4, followed by a repeated cycle of the motif introduced in measure 9. It finally concludes on E^b , the dominant note of the key of A^b .As shown in the figure 17:

相守爱更长 手牵手心相连 情歌绕云间 一生一世共白头
xiang shou ai mian chang shou qian shou xin xiang lian qing ge rao yun jian yi sheng yi shi gong bai tou

同舟梦相连 青楼酒芬芳 亲朋乐悠杨 阿妈笑开颜
tong zhou men xiang lian qing lou jiu fen fang qin peng le you yang a ma xiao kai yan

Figure 17. “Xi shi Ge”Section B Melodic contour
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

2. Mode scale

2.1 Pentatonic Scale and Modal System

This piece follows a Chinese pentatonic scale, which consists of five core pitches without semitones. In the context of E-flat Zhi Mode, the primary scale structure is:

Figure 18. Map of E-flat Zhi Mode
Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

A-flat (宫) serves as the tonal center. E-flat (徵) is emphasized, defining the Zhi Mode. The absence of G and D reinforces the pentatonic nature, avoiding Western diatonic tendencies. Zhi Mode Characteristics The Zhi Mode (徵调式) is bright, uplifting, and often associated with celebratory themes, fitting the wedding context. A-flat (宫) acts as a resting tone, while E-flat (徵) gives the melody energy and drive. The modal framework allows for a smooth, flowing contour, without strong harmonic tension.

2.2 Melodic Progression and Ornamentation

Melodic Contour & Motion The melody follows a wave-like motion, with frequent ascending leaps of a third (A-flat → C, B-flat → E-flat) and descending stepwise motion (C → B-flat → A-flat). There is a balance between leaps and stepwise movement, avoiding excessive angularity. The climactic points often highlight E-flat (徵), reinforcing the mode. **Cadences and Phrasing** The A Section (1-8 measures) features stable melodic repetitions, creating a sense of grounding in A-flat (宫). The B Section (9-16 measures) introduces contrasting phrases, often emphasizing E-flat (徵), leading to a final resolution. **Ornamentation and Expressive Features** **Gliding Notes** (滑音, Portamento-like movement): Small slides between pitches, characteristic of Chinese folk singing. **Grace Notes & Neighbor Tones**: Brief embellishments, especially around E-flat (徵) and B-flat (商). **Slight rhythmic flexibility**: Although written in standard notation, it likely has elastic phrasing when performed in a folk style.

The song follows a Chinese pentatonic system, structured in E-flat Zhi Mode. A-flat (宫) functions as the tonal center, while E-flat (徵) drives the energy. **Melodic Features** The melody balances leaps and steps, staying within a fluid, pentatonic framework. Expressive ornamentation (slides, grace notes) enhances the folk style. The modal progression moves from stability (A-flat) to tension (E-flat), resolving naturally. This modal and melodic system contributes to the song's bright, celebratory character, making it a fitting choice for a wedding song.

3. Rhythmic patterns

The piece is in 4/4 time signature, which provides a stable, steady rhythmic foundation. The moderate tempo ($\text{♩} = 66 \text{ BPM}$) gives the song a graceful, flowing feel, suitable for its celebratory and processional nature in a wedding context. The melody exhibits two primary rhythmic motifs that recur throughout the piece. These motifs contribute to both the repetition in Section A and the contrast in Section B. As shown in the figure 19:

Figure 19. Map of Even Eighth-Note Flow

Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Even Eighth-Note Flow (Measures 1-4, 5-8) The vocal melody predominantly uses even eighth notes with occasional quarter notes at phrase endings. this steady eighth-note motion gives the piece a lyrical and narrative flow, typical in Chinese folk singing.

Dotted Rhythms and Syncopation (Measures 9-12, 13-16) As shown in the figure 20:

Figure 20. Dotted Rhythms

Source:Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

In Section B, the melody introduces dotted quarter notes and syncopated eighth notes. Example: M.9 (Vocals) The dotted rhythm adds weight to the first beat, emphasizing key melodic tones. Syncopation (off-beat accents) occurs subtly, making the second phrase more rhythmically engaging. The rhythmic structure is relatively symmetrical: 1st phrase (M.1-4) and 2nd phrase (M.5-8) have similar rhythmic phrasing. Mainly quarter and eighth-note patterns maintain a calm, stable feel.

The longer note values at phrase endings (e.g., measure 4, measure 8) create natural breathing points. Section B (Measures 9-16): Contrast and Rhythmic Expansion The rhythms become more varied, increasing tension and excitement: More dotted rhythms in M.9-12, making the section feel livelier. More longer sustained notes (half notes and dotted quarter notes) in M.13-16, giving a sense of resolution.

Table 4. Summary of Rhythmic Characteristics

Feature	Section A (M.1-8)	Section B (M.9-16)
Main Rhythmic Pattern	Even eighth notes	Dotted rhythms, syncopation
Feel	Flowing, steady	More expressive, animated
Repetition	High (phrase repeats)	Lower (variation in phrases)
Ending Cadence	Quarter note phrase endings	Sustained half notes

Even eighth-note motion dominates Section A, creating a stable, folk-like narrative rhythm. Dotted rhythms and syncopation in Section B create contrast and rhythmic vitality. The rhythmic variation between sections A and B aligns with the binary form structure, reinforcing the song's flow and development.

4. lyrics

This song is syllabic, meaning each Chinese character (syllable) corresponds to one note, with very few instances of melisma (multiple notes per syllable). This setting ensures clarity in text delivery, which is a common trait in Chinese folk music. Each character aligns with a single note, making the lyrics easily understood.

The melody mostly follows the natural inflection of the Chinese language, ensuring the text sounds natural when sung. Phrase division follows natural sentence structures, helping with lyrical phrasing and breath control. The alignment of lyric placement with melodic shape contributes significantly to the emotional expression of the song. Below, we analyze how the lyrics match the melodic movement in different sections.

gāo shān huā kāi yíng xīn niáng yù lóng xuě shān zuò hóng zhuāng
高山花开迎新 娘，玉龙雪山做红 妆。

(Alpine flowers bloom to welcome the bride, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain makes up).

cǎi yún shēn chù gē yōu yáng gòng chéng shuāng
彩云深处歌悠 扬 共 成 双。

(Deep in the colorful clouds, we sing melodiously and live together as a pair).

dōng bā jīng wén qí jí xiáng yuè guāng sǎn mǎn xìng fú táng
东巴经文祈吉 祥，月光散满幸 福 堂。

(Dongba scriptures pray for good luck and moonlight fills the house with happiness).

gōu huǒ yìng zhào xīn fáng nuǎn xiāng shǒu ài mián zhǎng
篝火映照新房 暖，相守爱眠 长。

(The bonfire illuminates the warmth of the new house, and the love between the couple lasts forever).

shǒu qiān shǒu xīn xiāng lián qíng gē rào yún jiān
手牵手心相 连，情歌绕云 间。

(Hand in hand, hearts connected, love songs linger in the clouds).

yì shēng yí shì gòng bái tóu tóng zhōu mèng xiāng lián
一生一世共白 头，同舟梦相 连。

(We will grow old together and share the same dreams).

qīng kē jiǔ fēn fāng qīn péng lè yōu yáng
青 稞 酒 芬 芳 ， 亲 朋 乐 悠 扬 。

(The barley wine is fragrant and the love songs are melodious).

ā mā xiào kāi yán ā mā xiào kāi yán
阿 妈 笑 开 颜 ， 阿 妈 笑 开 颜 。

(Grandma is smiling happily, Grandma is smiling happily).

liáng yuán shì wú shuāng
良 缘 世 无 双 。

(There is no better match in the world).

Phrase 1 (Measures 1-4) As shown in the figure 21:

The figure shows a musical score for two parts: Vocals and Huluseng. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 高山花开迎新娘，玉龙雪山银红妆。彩云深处歌悠扬，共成双。 The pinyin is: Gāo shān huā kāi yíng xīn niáng, yù lóng xuě shāng zhuō yín hóng zhuāng. Cǎi yún shēng chù gē yōu yáng, gòng chéng shuāng. The notes are placed on the lyrics, with some characters like '高', '花', '娘', '妆', '双' highlighted in red boxes. The Huluseng part is a melodic line that follows the vocal line.

Figure 21. Phrase 1 Lyrics

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Lyrics: 高山花开迎新娘 (Gāo shān huā kāi yíng xīn niáng) Melodic motion:

The melody ascends gradually as if depicting the blooming of flowers and the anticipation of the wedding. Syllabic structure: Each Chinese character gets one note, ensuring clear enunciation. Stress on important words: "高" (Gāo) and "花" (Huā) are placed on longer or higher notes, emphasizing their meaning (high mountains,

blooming flowers). "迎" (Yíng) and "娘" (Niáng) are also slightly emphasized melodically, aligning with their importance in the phrase.

Phrase 2 (Measures 5-8) As shown in the figure 22:

Figure 22. Phrase 2 Lyrics

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Lyrics: 玉龙雪山作红妆 (Yù lóng xuě shān zuò hóng zhuāng) Melodic repetition: The melody closely mirrors the previous phrase, reinforcing lyrical symmetry. Emphasis on key words: "雪山" (Xuě shān, "Snow Mountain") gets a slight descending motion, giving a sense of grandeur. "红妆" (Hóng zhuāng, "Red Bridal Makeup") ends on a longer note, adding warmth and emphasis.

Phrase 3 (Measures 9-12) As shown in the figure 23:

Figure 23. Phrase 3 Lyrics

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Lyrics: 东巴经文祈吉祥 (Dōng bā jīng wén qí jí xiáng) Melodic motion: More leaps and dotted rhythms than in the A section. Lyric-melody interaction: "东巴" (Dōng bā, "Dongba") receives a higher pitch, reflecting respect for the tradition."吉祥" (Jí xiáng, "Blessings") ends with a descending motion, evoking a calming resolution.

Phrase 4 (Measures 13-16) As shown in the figure 24:

Figure 24 shows a musical score for Phrase 4 (Measures 13-16). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: 青稞酒芬芳 亲朋好友杨阿妈笑开颜 良缘世无双. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written in Chinese characters with pinyin below them. The words '青', '杨', '阿', and '双' are highlighted with red boxes.

Figure 24. Phrase 4 Lyrics

Source: Ting Chen, from research fieldwork (2024)

Lyrics: 月光洒满幸福堂 (Yuè guāng sǎ mǎn xìng fú táng) Melodic motion: The phrase ascends in the first half, as if illuminating the scene with moonlight. The second half descends, reflecting the phrase's completion. Key lyric emphasis: "幸福堂" (Xìng fú táng, "Hall of Happiness") gets sustained notes, reinforcing its significance in the wedding context.

Breath Control and Phrasing The text setting allows for natural breathing points, ensuring smooth delivery. Breath Points and Line Breaks Each 4-bar phrase corresponds to a complete lyrical idea. Breath points naturally occur at the end of phrases, ensuring smooth articulation. The melody does not force unnatural word divisions, maintaining the integrity of the text.

Table 5. The melodic phrasing and rhythmic setting reflect the emotional intent behind the lyrics.

Musical Feature	Effect on Lyrics
Ascending Melodies (M.1-2, M.9-10)	Suggests joy, excitement, celebration
Descending Melodies (M.4, M.12, M.16)	Creates resolution, stability, warmth
Sustained Notes (M.8, M.16)	Adds grandeur and emphasis to key words
Dotted Rhythms (M.9-12)	Increases expressiveness and liveliness

5. Singing style

Bright and clear tone:The singer maintains a bright, open vocal tone, typical of Naxi folk singing. There is minimal chest resonance, suggesting a light and floating quality in vocal delivery. **Natural, speech-like tone:**The singing style closely follows natural speech patterns, ensuring clear enunciation. This makes the song highly expressive and easy to understand, which is crucial for wedding songs. As shown in the figure 25:

The figure shows a musical score for two parts: Vocals and Huluseng. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The score starts at measure 15. The lyrics are: 阿妈笑开颜 良缘世无双 (a ma xiao kai yan liang yuan shi wu shuang). The melody is simple and follows the natural rhythm of the speech.

Figure 25. Singing style Bright and clear tone

Source: Ting Chen, from research fieldwork (2024)

Precise enunciation of syllables:Each Chinese character aligns with one note, ensuring that the lyrics remain clear. The singer avoids excessive legato, making the words stand out distinctly. **Slightly detached articulation (non-legato phrasing):**Instead of smooth legato phrasing, the singer slightly separates each syllable. This technique enhances rhythmic clarity and makes the song energetic.

Sliding Notes (Portamento)Some notes have gentle slides between pitches, creating a folk-like ornamentation. Example: Descending endings on certain phrases feel more expressive due to these slides. **Grace Notes:**Quick ornamental notes appear

in some melodic leaps, adding folk music character. These decorations enrich the melodic flow and make the singing more engaging. Vibrato :Vibrato is used sparingly, mainly on longer sustained notes. The vibrato is slow and natural, keeping the singing authentic and heartfelt. As shown in the figure 26:



Figure 26. Singing style Precise enunciation of syllables

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

Ascending phrases convey excitement: When the melody rises, the singer naturally increases energy, reflecting a joyous mood. Descending endings feel warm and calm: Many phrase endings drop in pitch, giving a gentle, peaceful resolution.

Overall emotional expression: The singer conveys happiness and reverence, making the performance appropriate for a wedding.

Well-structured phrasing: Each 4-measure phrase has a clear breathing point, making the song easy to follow. The breath support remains steady, ensuring consistent vocal tone. Final phrase is extended for emphasis: The last few words are slightly stretched, reinforcing the song's festive closure.

พหุ ประถมศึกษา

Table 6. Key Singing Style Characteristics

Aspect	Performance Characteristics
Tone Quality	Bright, open, and speech-like
Articulation	Clear syllables, slightly detached phrasing
Ornamentation	Light portamento, grace notes, and minimal vibrato
Emotion	joyful, celebratory, and warm
Phrasing	Well-structured with natural breath control
Rhythm and Tempo	Moderate pace with slight rubato

The singing style of "Xishi Ge" is deeply rooted in Naxi folk music traditions, characterized by clear enunciation, expressive phrasing, and bright tone quality. The interaction between lyrics and melody makes the song engaging and emotionally meaningful, perfect for a wedding celebration.

6. instrumental accompaniment characteristic

Instrumentation and Timbre The primary accompaniment instrument appears to be the Hulusheng (葫芦笙), a traditional Chinese free-reed instrument commonly used in Naxi and Lisu folk music. As shown in the figure 27:





Figure 27. Hulusheng

Source: Ting Chen , from research fieldwork (2024)

The Hulusheng produces a sustained, drone-like sound, providing a rich harmonic foundation under the melody. The timbre is warm, nasal, and slightly buzzing, characteristic of traditional bamboo-reed instruments. The accompaniment mainly provides a harmonic drone, reinforcing the modal structure of the melody. No complex chord progressions are present, as the Chinese pentatonic system relies on implied harmony rather than Western-style functional harmony. The Hulusheng accompaniment often sustains pedal tones (typically A-flat or E-flat in this mode), creating a stable harmonic backdrop. The Hulusheng part follows a steady, repeated rhythmic pattern, complementing the melody's natural phrasing. Syncopation is minimal, as the rhythm maintains a flowing, dance-like feel.

The accompaniment does not overshadow the vocals, acting as a subtle rhythmic guide. The melody and accompaniment exhibit a call-and-response interaction, common in folk ensemble performance. The Hulusheng sometimes echoes melodic fragments, reinforcing important lyrical phrases. The balance between sustained drone notes and short rhythmic pulses gives the accompaniment a layered texture.

Table 7. Instrumental Accompaniment Features

Aspect	Characteristics
Instrument Used	Hulusheng (葫芦笙)
Timbre	Warm, nasal, slightly buzzing
Harmonic Function	Sustained drone with minimal harmonic movement
Rhythmic Role	Steady, flowing pulse with minimal syncopation
Interaction with Melody	Call-and-response, echoing melodic fragments

The instrumental accompaniment in "Xishi Ge" is simple yet effective, supporting the melody while reinforcing the traditional Naxi sound. The Hulusheng's drone-like quality enhances the modal structure, while its rhythmic pulses create a dance-like feel, making this piece suitable for a wedding celebration.

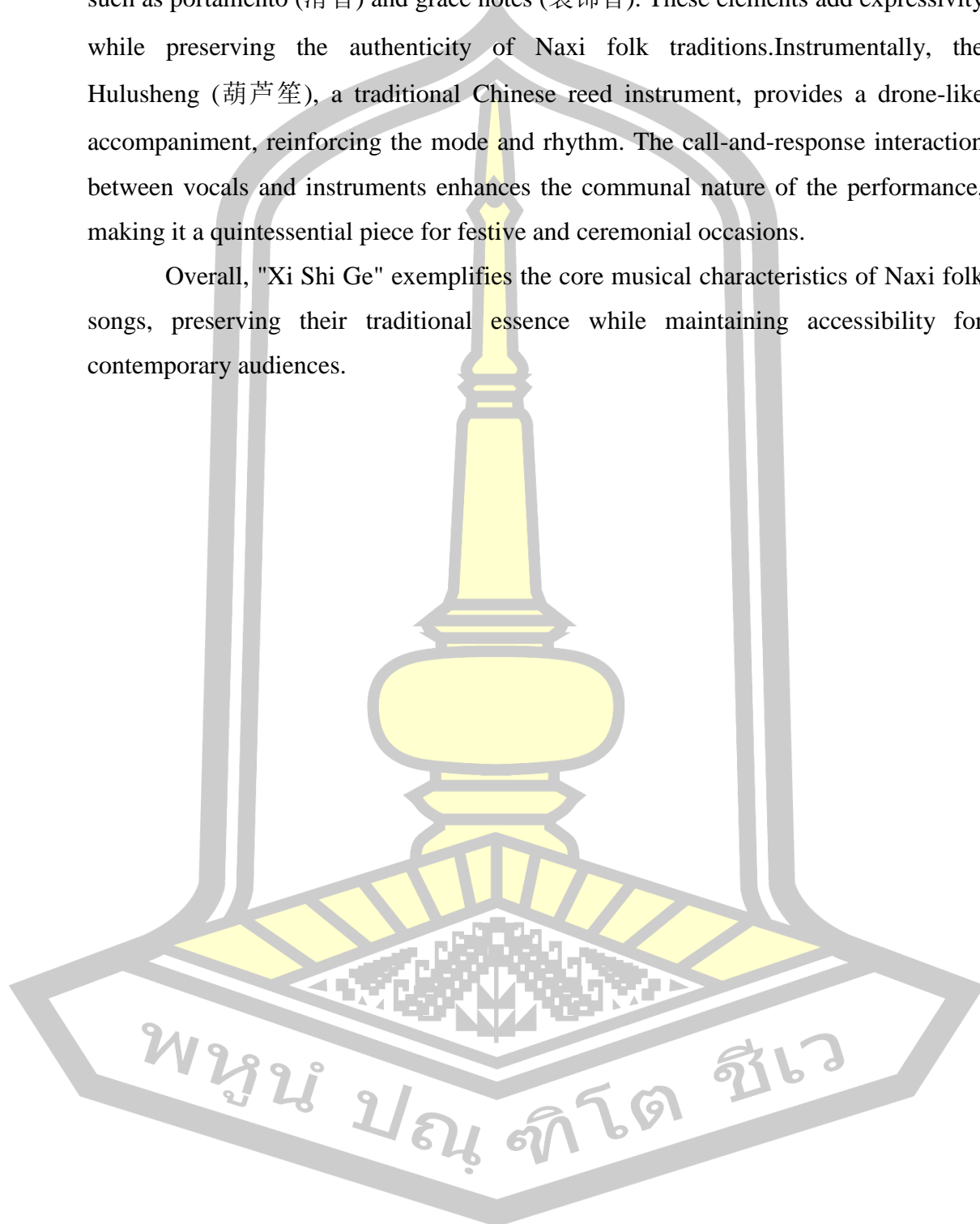
Summary

Naxi folk songs play a significant role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Naxi people in Lijiang, Yunnan, China. This chapter analyzes their melodic structures, modal scales, rhythmic patterns, lyrics, singing style, and instrumental accompaniment through the study of the representative song "Xi Shi Ge" (喜事歌), a celebratory wedding song. The melodic structure follows a binary form (A-B) with repetitive and contrasting phrases, enhancing its expressiveness and accessibility. The mode is based on the E-flat Zhi Mode (降E徵调式), a pentatonic scale emphasizing A-flat (高) as the tonal center. The melody exhibits a smooth, stepwise motion with occasional leaps, maintaining a lyrical and natural flow.

The rhythmic patterns are rooted in a steady 4/4 time signature, featuring even eighth notes in Section A and syncopation and dotted rhythms in Section B, creating contrast. The lyrics are syllabic, with each Chinese character aligning with one note, ensuring clarity and natural phrasing. The melody closely follows the speech intonation, enhancing the song's narrative and emotional impact. The singing style is

characterized by a bright, open tone, precise articulation, and slight ornamentation such as portamento (滑音) and grace notes (装饰音). These elements add expressivity while preserving the authenticity of Naxi folk traditions. Instrumentally, the Hulusheng (葫芦笙), a traditional Chinese reed instrument, provides a drone-like accompaniment, reinforcing the mode and rhythm. The call-and-response interaction between vocals and instruments enhances the communal nature of the performance, making it a quintessential piece for festive and ceremonial occasions.

Overall, "Xi Shi Ge" exemplifies the core musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs, preserving their traditional essence while maintaining accessibility for contemporary audiences.



CHAPTER VI

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

1. Conclusion

This research primarily focused on two key objectives: (1) to investigate the historical development of the Naxi folk song in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, and (2) to analyze the musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs. By gathering relevant literature, conducting field investigations, and engaging in interviews with key informants, this study provides deeper insights into the cultural and musical significance of Naxi folk songs and their impact on cultural preservation and transmission within the Naxi community.

1.1 On the Historical Development of Naxi Folk Songs

The research reveals that Naxi folk songs have deep historical and cultural roots, closely linked to the Naxi people's spiritual beliefs, social customs, and historical experiences. Initially performed in religious rituals, agricultural activities, and communal celebrations, Naxi folk songs evolved through various historical periods, including the Tea Horse Road era, the Ming and Qing dynasties, and the political changes of the 20th century. Despite challenges such as cultural suppression during the Cultural Revolution and the pressures of modernization, Naxi folk songs have retained their significance as a cultural marker of Naxi identity, supported by efforts in documentation and revival.

1.2 On the Musical Characteristics of Naxi Folk Songs

The study highlights the unique musical characteristics of Naxi folk songs, which include:

- Singing Style:** Emphasizing smooth melodic lines, a bright vocal tone, and a balance between repetition and variation to engage listeners.
- Musical Structure:** Many songs follow an A-B form with distinctive rhythmic and melodic features that reinforce their expressive nature.
- Instrumental Accompaniment:** Traditional instruments such as the hulusi, Dongba drum, and guzheng are commonly used, alongside modern additions like bass guitars and electronic keyboards.

Melodic Characteristics: The melodies are predominantly pentatonic, reflecting the traditional Naxi musical aesthetic, with occasional ornamentations such as vibrato and glissando. **Singing Techniques:** Performers employ flexible vocal techniques, integrating call-and-response patterns and dynamic expressions to engage audiences. Naxi folk songs play a central role in reinforcing community bonds and transmitting cultural heritage. However, modernization, commercialization, and declining participation from younger generations pose challenges to maintaining their authenticity and continuity.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing literature on the role of music in ethnic communities, reinforcing the idea that folk music serves as both a cultural and spiritual bridge in community celebrations. Ethnomusicologists have long recognized music as a powerful medium that enhances social cohesion and collective identity. While Naxi folk songs continue to thrive, several pressing concerns have emerged:

2.1 Impact of Modernization

The integration of contemporary music styles into traditional Naxi folk performances raises concerns about maintaining authenticity. While modernization offers new avenues for musical expression, the dilution of traditional elements risks altering the essence of Naxi folk music.

2.2 Decline in Traditional Music Education

With fewer young musicians learning traditional Naxi folk instruments and singing techniques, there is a growing risk of cultural erosion. The lack of formalized music education programs focused on Naxi folk music contributes to this challenge.

2.3 Commercialization of Folk Music

The increased popularity of Lijiang as a tourist destination has led to the commodification of Naxi folk songs. While this has generated economic benefits, it has also resulted in simplified and modified performances tailored to tourist preferences, potentially weakening the authenticity of traditional Naxi folk music.

Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that respects tradition while embracing modern developments to sustain the cultural and musical vibrancy of Naxi folk songs.

3. Suggestions

To ensure the preservation and continued development of Naxi folk music, the following recommendations are proposed:

3.1 Strengthening Inheritance and Succession Mechanisms

Establish government and institutional programs that support traditional musicians through funding and recognition.

Encourage the documentation and digital archiving of traditional Naxi folk songs to ensure their preservation for future generations.

Provide incentives for young musicians to learn and perform Naxi folk music through scholarships and mentorship programs.

3.2 Enhancing Educational Initiatives

Introduce Naxi folk music courses in schools to engage younger generations in the tradition.

Develop community-based music workshops where experienced artists can teach traditional singing and instrument-playing techniques.

Collaborate with universities and music conservatories to promote academic research on Naxi folk music and performance practices.

3.3 Promoting Community Engagement and Performances

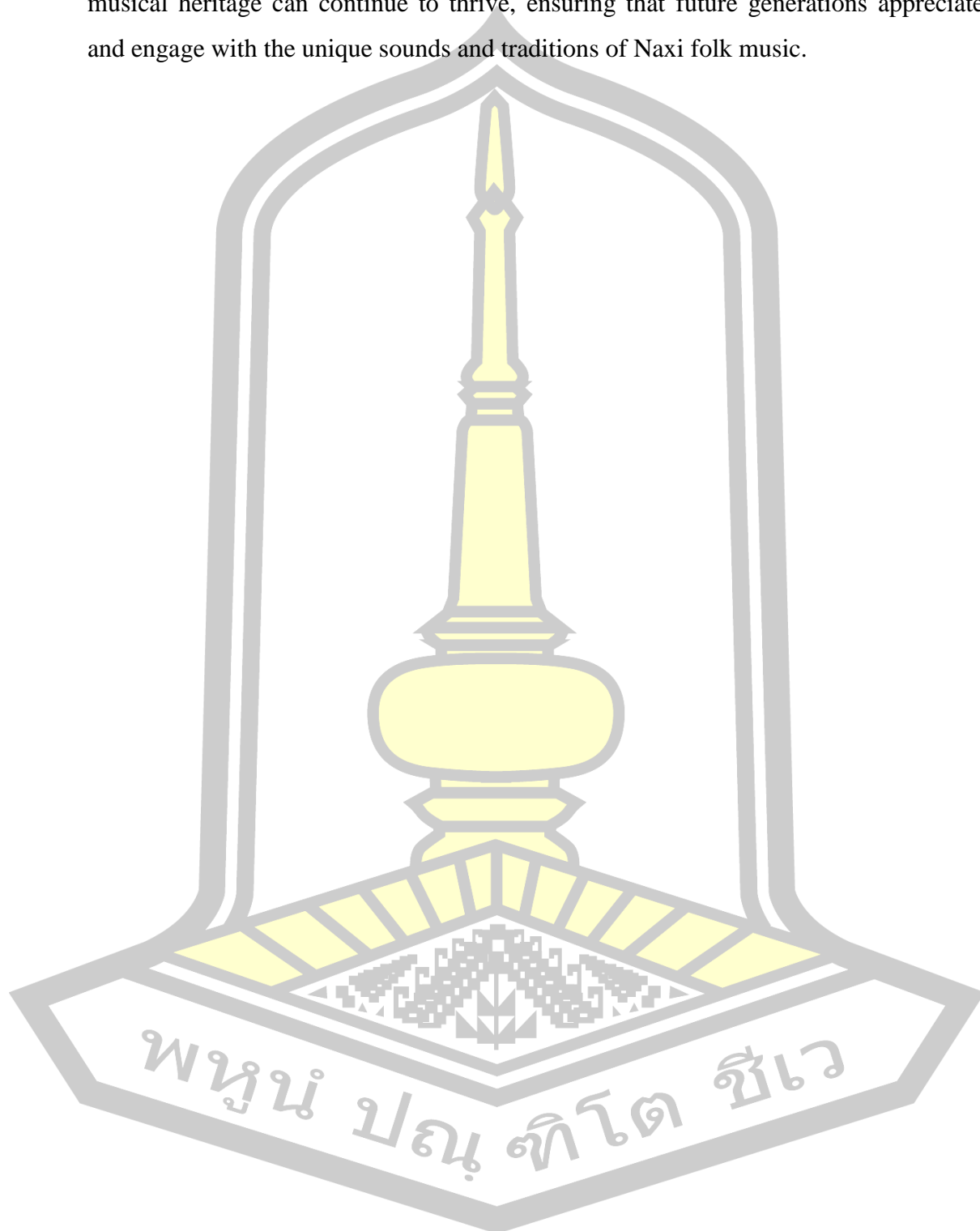
Encourage local and regional Naxi folk music competitions to inspire interest and participation among young performers. Organize regular public performances and cultural exchange programs to showcase Naxi folk music beyond Lijiang. Integrate Naxi folk music into multimedia platforms such as social media and online streaming services to reach wider audiences.

3.4 Balancing Tradition and Modernity

Support the development of contemporary adaptations of Naxi folk music while ensuring core musical elements remain intact. Establish guidelines for sustainable tourism to prevent the over-commercialization of traditional performances.

Promote collaboration between traditional and modern musicians to create innovative interpretations of Naxi folk music that appeal to both younger audiences and traditionalists. Naxi folk music in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, is a living tradition that embodies the cultural, spiritual, and social values of the Naxi people. While facing challenges from modernization and commercialization, it also presents opportunities

for cultural revival and innovation. By implementing the above suggestions, this rich musical heritage can continue to thrive, ensuring that future generations appreciate and engage with the unique sounds and traditions of Naxi folk music.



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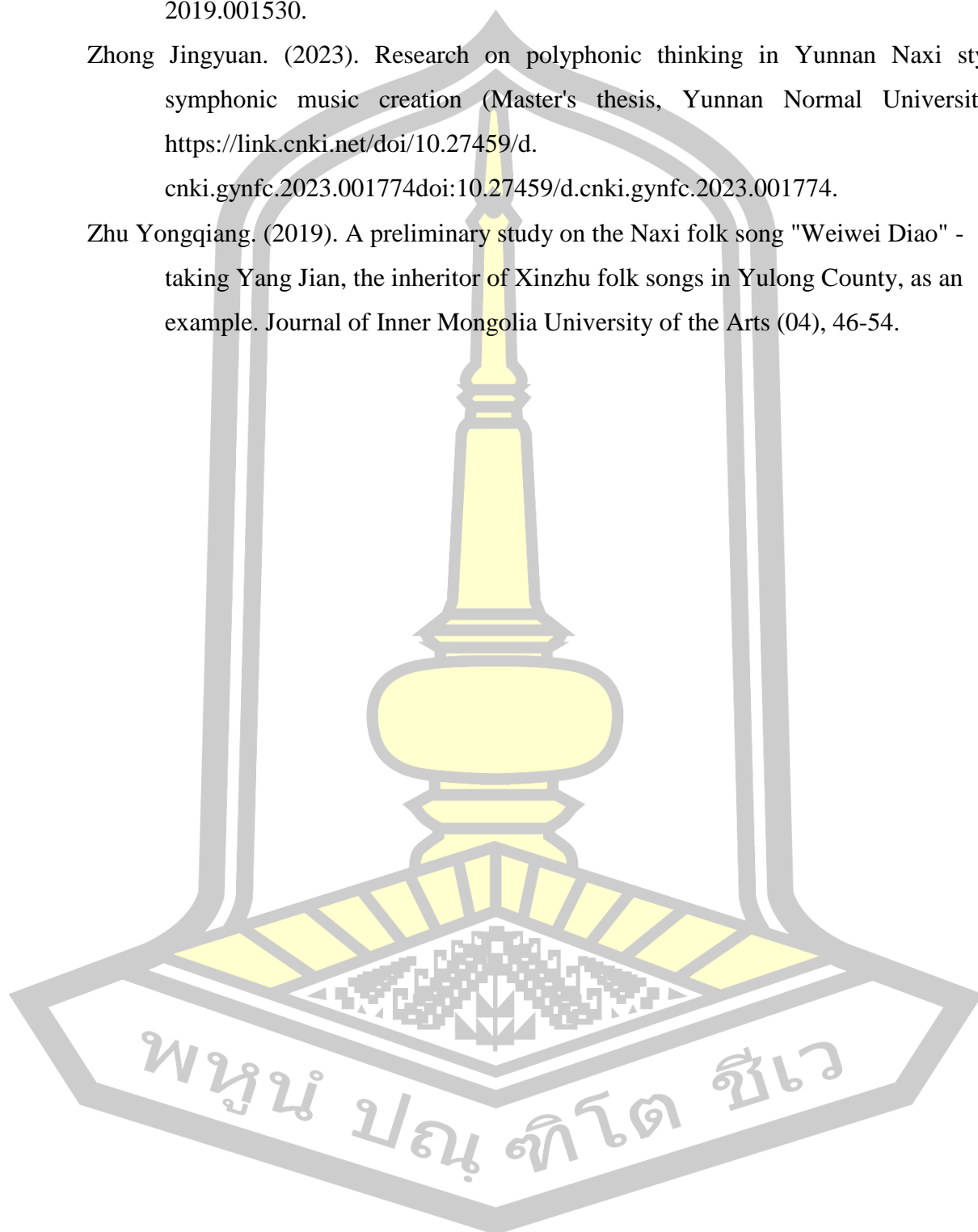
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APPENDIX

Appendix I Fieldwork Pictures



Picture 1: Interview with the Naxi inheritors

พหุพันธ์ ปณฺ ทิโต ชีเว



Picture 2 Photo with the Naxi inheritors



Picture 3 Naxi Dongba characters and fabrics



Picture 4: Naxi people's houses





Picture 5 Naxi Dongba School





Picture 6 Naxi bonfire party



Appendix II: Spectral example

喜事歌 Xishi Ge

Transcription by Ting Chen

$\text{♩} = 66$

Vocals

高山花开迎新娘 玉龙雪山做红妆 彩云深处歌悠扬
gao shang hua kai ying xin niang yu long xue shang zuo hong zhuang caiyun sheng chu ge you yang

Hulusheng

4

Vocals

共成双 东巴经文祈吉祥 月光洒满幸福堂 篝火映照新房暖
gong chen shuang dong ba jing wen qi ji xiang yue gung sa man xing fu tang gou huo ying zhao xin fang nuan

Hulusheng

8

Vocals

相守爱厮长 手牵手心相连 情歌绕云间 一生一世共白头
xiang shou ai mian chang shou qian shou xin xiang lian qing ge rao yun jian yi sheng yi shi gong bai tou

Hulusheng

12

Vocals

同舟梦相连 青稞酒芬芳 亲朋乐悠杨 阿妈笑开颜
tong zhou men xiang lian qing ke jiu fen fang qin peng le you yang a ma xiao kai yan

Hulusheng

15

Vocals

Hulusheng

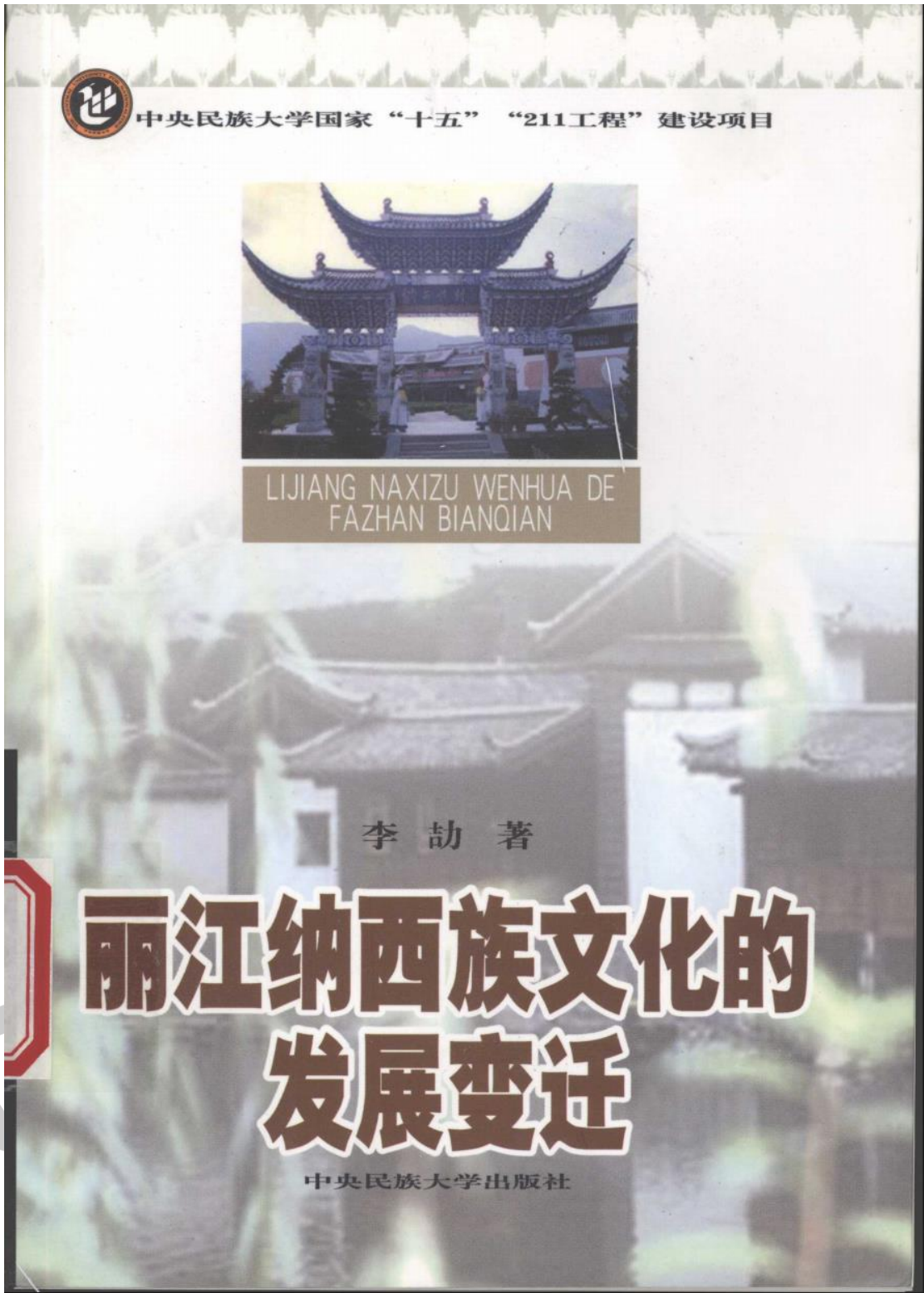
阿 妈 笑 开 颜 良 缘 世 无 双
a ma xiao kai yan liang yuan shi wu shuang



Picture 1Naxi song "xi shi ge"



Appendix III Bibliography



丽江纳西族文化 的发展变迁

李 劫 著

中央民族大学出版社

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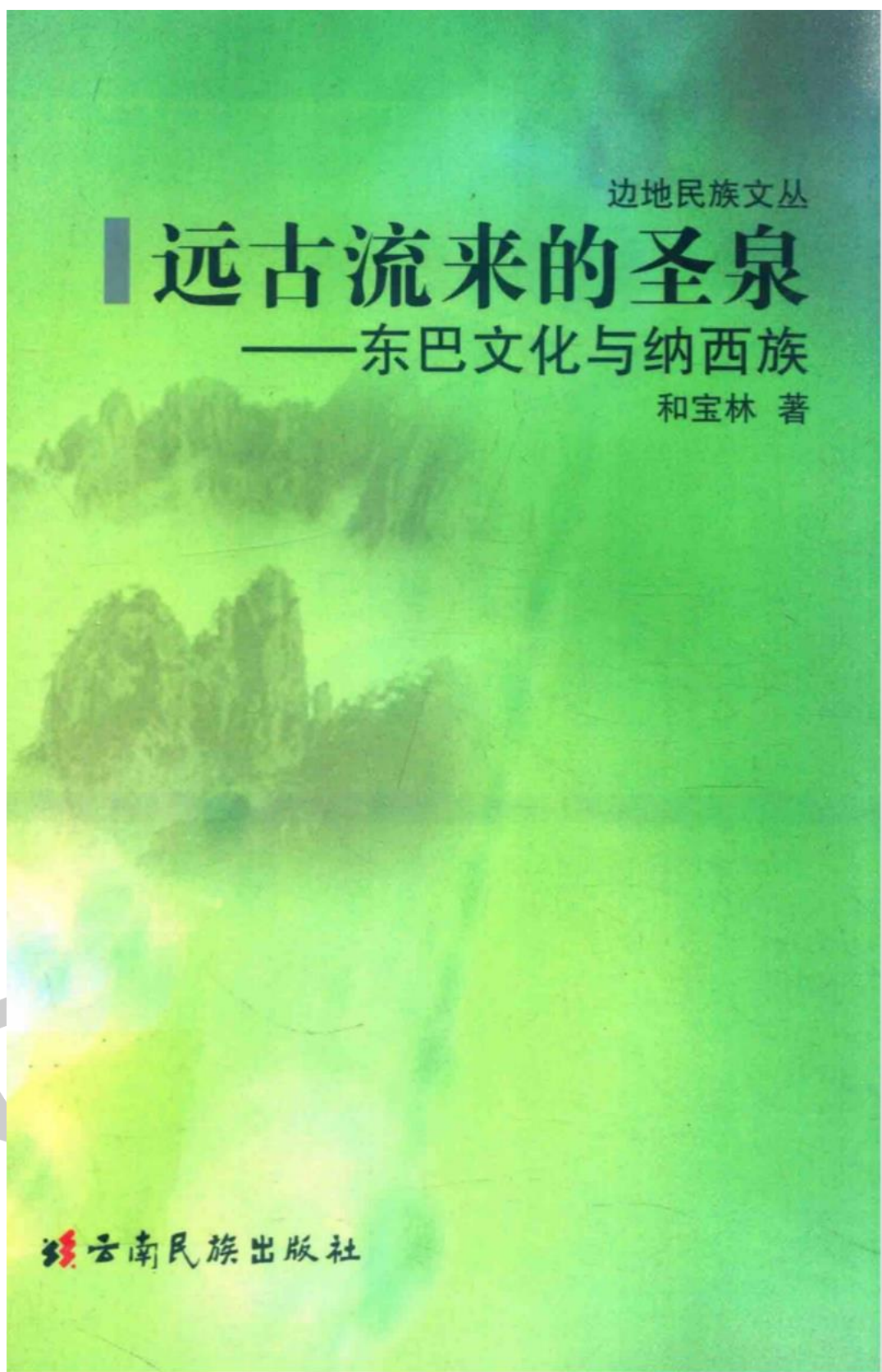
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边地民族文丛

远古流来的圣泉

——东巴文化与纳西族

和宝林 著

云南民族出版社

一 东巴经中的动物神话和纳西族祖先

东巴经是用象形文字记载的纳西族原始宗教经典。在东巴经中收录了许多纳西族的神话传说故事，可以说，这些原始宗教的经典主要是由这些一个又一个的神话传说故事组成的，其中有很大一部分是讲述人类起源，讲述纳西族祖先的。这些传说故事产生于远古时代的纳西族先民之中，又在一代又一代的纳西族民众中流传，最终载于东巴教经典之中。这些神话传说故事和纳西族一起，经历了几千年的历史，传说中的人物看起来有点荒诞无稽，但问题只在于我们怎样看。实际上，他们与记载在汉族神话故事中的尧、舜、禹以及炎帝、黄帝一样，具有历史的真实性，这一点是毋庸置疑的。

对于产生这些神话故事的纳西族先民来说，他们对其是深信不疑的。他们把这些神话人物统统纳入自己的祖先之中，对他们顶礼膜拜。在当时，甚至有可能把这些有关人类祖先的动物视为神圣的东西，对他们存在着种种忌讳。现在，我们虽然已经看不到这些忌讳了，但是每年在祭奠祖先的时候，人们都还要郑重其事地讲述有关他们的故事，拿出最圣洁的食物和各种东西，用最虔诚的态度来祭拜他们。如果纳西先民们觉得这一切都来自幻觉，来自某些人的编造，在几千年的历史之中，他们绝不可能对它一如既往地保持着这样高的热情。因而，这些神话传说故事，就成了珍贵的历史文化遗产，有了它们，我们就有条件进一步地探讨纳西族的历史，更进一步地探讨纳西族和其他民族的关系史，在这一方面很少有汉文史料的记载，更不用说其他的什么资

1

远古流来的圣泉

东巴文化与纳西族

……

BIOGRAPHY

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