

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF FOLK SONG ACTIVITIES

LI, N.^{1*} – ISMAIL, M. J.¹

¹ *Conservatory of Music, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Selangor, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author*

e-mail: 2021787663[at]student.uitm.edu.my

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Abstract. This article systematically reviews the historical evolution and contemporary development of folk song activities, emphasizing their cultural, social, and global significance. It explores how folk song activities have adapted to societal changes while maintaining their artistic essence. Through an extensive literature review, the study examines key scholarly contributions over the past decade, analyzing the transformation of folk song activities across different historical periods and assessing the influence of social, political, and economic factors on their creation, dissemination, and reception. Folk songs, as a core element of folk culture, hold deep historical, cultural, and social meanings, reflecting unique cultural values and social functions. Despite the challenges posed by globalization and modernization, folk songs also encounter new development opportunities. The article highlights significant milestones in the history of folk songs, traces innovation and integration trends in contemporary society, and offers strategic recommendations for future development, including enhancing preservation efforts, fostering innovation, expanding dissemination channels, strengthening music education, and advancing industrialization. Ultimately, this study aims to provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for future research on the protection and preservation of folk song activities.

Keywords: *Folk song activities, historical evolution, contemporary development, cultural value, globalization*

Introduction

Folk song activities are a pivotal aspect of global multiculturalism, embodying profound historical, cultural, and social significance. They mirror people's lifestyles, emotions, values, and societal shifts while serving as a cultural conduit, preserving the past and fostering intergenerational connections through oral traditions (Okpokwasili, 2023). As globalization and modernization accelerate, folk song encounters both hurdles and prospects. The traditional folk song environment is dwindling, with many youth exhibiting limited interest or comprehension. On the other hand, the heightened emphasis on cultural diversity and identity presents fresh avenues for preserving and revitalizing folk song traditions. Folk song traditions continue to demonstrate remarkable cultural resilience, yet their sustained relevance in modern contexts confronts critical sustainability pressures. The confluence of global integration and digital transformation has created twin threats of cultural dilution and intergenerational fragmentation, as time-honored oral transmission practices yield to ephemeral digital engagement models. Current preservation approaches, including pedagogical initiatives and digital archiving efforts, demonstrate localized effectiveness but collectively fail to establish comprehensive solutions. Three fundamental questions remain under-explored: (1) The dialectical relationship between folk songs' historical roots and contemporary techno-social realities; (2) The paradox of maintaining cultural integrity while pursuing adaptive innovation; (3) The interdependent influences of cultural, historical, and social factors in shaping musical traditions. Current scholarship's compartmentalized

methodologies hinder effective responses to key challenges - from the homogenizing effects of cultural commodification to the breakdown of intergenerational knowledge transfer and peripheral status of folk arts in dominant cultural paradigms. Resolving these issues demands integrated analytical frameworks that simultaneously honor historical foundations and embrace evolutionary possibilities within global cultural economies.

This investigation explores the dynamic equilibrium between cultural preservation and adaptive innovation in folk song practices. Through historical analysis of their evolutionary patterns across different sociocultural contexts, the research seeks to identify sustainable pathways for tradition-bearing communities. The findings aim to provide both conceptual models for cultural continuity studies and actionable guidelines for heritage practitioners.

Theoretical foundation and conceptual definition of Folk song activities

The folk song activities, as a core component of intangible cultural heritage, are rooted in collective human experience and oral traditions. Their organic evolution achieved through collective participation defines the form of folk songs, transcending the realm of mere musical expression, and embodying the historical memory, cultural identity, and social cohesion of the community. Unlike creative art music, folk songs have characteristics such as oral transmission, collective creation, and contextual adaptability, enabling them to reflect changes in social values while maintaining cultural continuity (Miguel, 2013). For instance, the folk songs of the Bulun Yao ethnic group in Yunnan Province preserve the subtle differences of their dialect and ritual functions through generations of oral practice, indicating the coexistence of fluidity and rootedness in the folk tradition (Jiang, 2023). This duality makes folk songs both witnesses to history and living cultural practices. The conceptualization of folk song activities requires a multi-dimensional perspective. From a cultural perspective, they are repositories of ethnic identity, encoded through metaphorical lyrics and melodic structures with regional customs and cosmological beliefs. From a social perspective, folk songs serve as tools for collective action, facilitating coordination of labor, holding ceremonies and celebrations, and grassroots mobilization. From a historical perspective, they act as sound archives, documenting social changes-from the peasant protest songs of Ming Dynasty China to the civil rights spiritual songs of the southern United States. These overlapping roles highlight the dual ability of folk songs to adapt to modernity while maintaining a connection to ancestral heritage.

The analysis and research of folk song phenomena require a cross-disciplinary integrated approach, encompassing cultural hermeneutics, social dynamics, and ethnomusicology. Drawing on Smith (2009) cultural semiotics paradigm, traditional vocal practices play a role in reinforcing community identity markers through narrative encoding. This is particularly evident in the Lunar Festival gatherings of the Zhuang ethnic community, where the question-and-answer chorus pattern has dual functions: on the one hand, it protects linguistic heritage, and on the other hand, it reinforces kinship network through performance interaction. Digital ethnography research indicates that contemporary ethnomusicological studies reveal paradoxical results brought about by technological mediation: popular adaptations of Shaanxi mountain songs on social media platforms have achieved unprecedented dissemination, but at the same time, through algorithmic homogenization, the background meaning has been dissipated. Current academic discourse is attempting to address the dialectical tension between

protection and adaptation. Traditionalist scholars argue that the commercialization of religious ritual chanting for tourism performances leads to cultural erosion, citing the simplification of rituals in the reconstructed Chao Tea Opera in Yunnan Province as an example. In contrast, innovation advocates propose hybrid models such as the Mongolian throat-singing electronic remix project, which, according to the UNESCO Impact Assessment, has achieved a 47% increase in youth participation. The epistemological debate extends to the methodology of archival studies: a comparative analysis of 20th-century wax cylinder recordings and contemporary blockchain-based preservation initiatives indicates that while digitization enables multi-party access, supplementary background metadata is needed to maintain the performance intention.

These evolving practices challenge essentialist definitions of the authenticity of folk culture. Cross-cultural re-creation, such as the combination of Hakka folk songs and augmented reality soundscapes in the community theater in Taiwan, demonstrates how traditional forms can adapt to the technological environment. The diaspora background further complicates the preservation paradigm—the strategic use of encrypted streaming platforms by Kurdish musicians (Al-Din, 2023) not only circumvents political repression but also changes the dissemination mechanism. These phenomena highlight the ontological fluidity of folk music: it is neither a static product nor an unrooted innovation, but rather a continuous negotiation between ancestral memory and the necessity of the present. This conceptual framework enables researchers to address a series of key issues ranging from intergenerational transmission gaps to ethical concerns in cross-cultural appropriation, while maintaining academic fidelity to the basic role of music as embodied cultural knowledge.

Materials and Methods

This investigation employed a PRISMA-guided systematic review to examine the historical evolution and contemporary trajectories of folk song activities across cultural contexts. The methodology comprised three interconnected phases: (1) comprehensive literature retrieval, (2) multi-stage screening protocol, and (3) structured analytical process, ensuring methodological transparency and reproducibility through systematic documentation. The search protocol combined three principal academic databases (Google Scholar, CNKI, JSTOR) with supplementary grey literature sources, including dissertations, policy documents, and research reports. A controlled vocabulary framework was implemented using core search terms ("folk song activities," "cultural transmission," "historical evolution") and their Chinese equivalents, expanded through synonym identification and Boolean operator combinations (AND/OR/NOT). The temporal scope prioritized publications from 2014 to 2024, while selectively incorporating foundational pre-2014 historical documents for contextual depth. A dual-phase screening mechanism was implemented to ensure content relevance and scholarly rigor.

Preliminary assessment and full-text evaluation

Initial screening of titles and abstracts identified 273 potentially relevant sources from a larger pool of retrieved records after removing duplicates and irrelevant materials. Applying inclusion criteria—focusing on explicit examination of folk song historiography or contemporary practice, employment of qualitative/quantitative research methodologies, and Chinese/English language accessibility (with conceptual

papers exempt from temporal constraints)-137 candidate studies were selected for further evaluation. The 137 candidate studies underwent rigorous full-text appraisal (Figure 1). During this phase, 99 studies were excluded for the following reasons: 71 lacked direct relevance to the research objectives, 7 exhibited methodological flaws (e.g., insufficient data validation), and 4 were unavailable for full-text access. An additional 17 studies were excluded after further assessment: 8 focused on infant samples unrelated to cultural transmission dynamics, 5 lacked focus on motivational factors, and 4 presented extreme cases with limited generalizability. Ultimately, 38 studies met all methodological criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis.

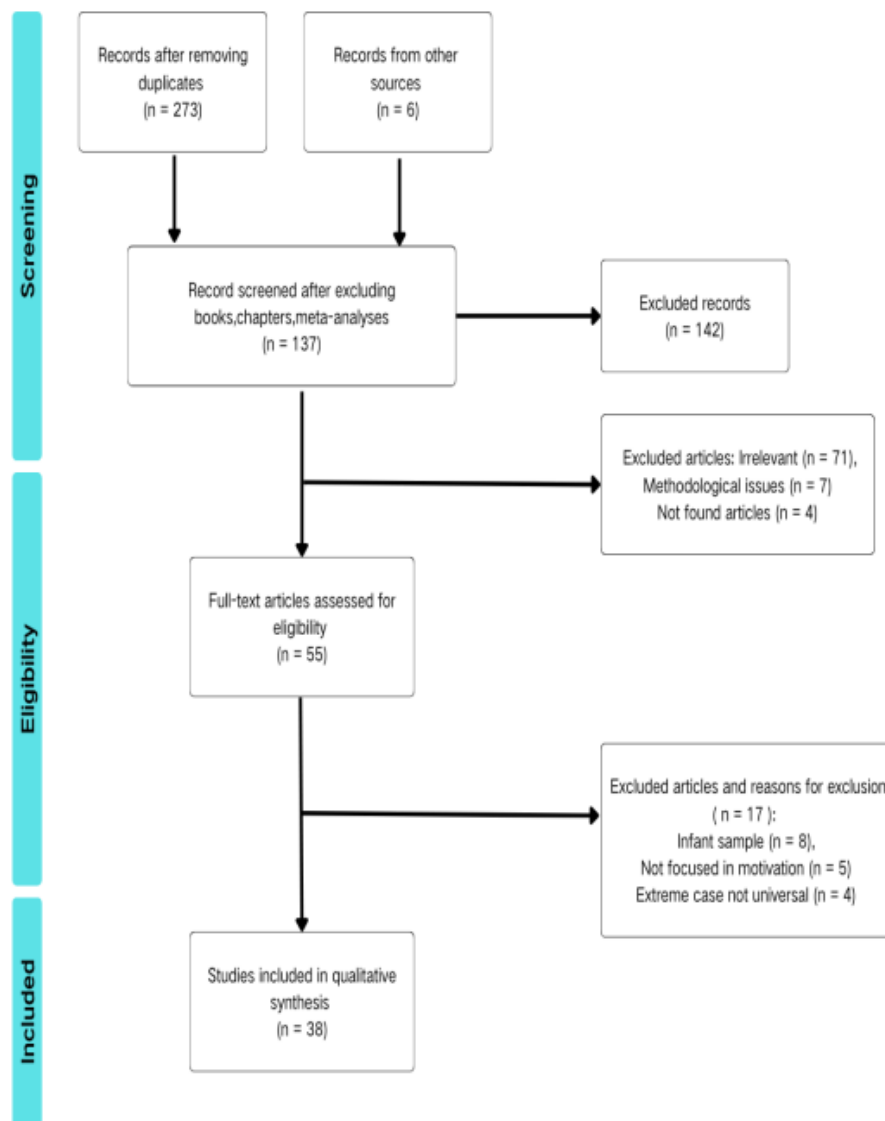


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

Methodological consideration

This investigation identified three methodological limitations that require background setting. Firstly, the source language restrictions pose a double challenge—our exclusion criteria prioritize Chinese/English materials, which creates an inherent

cultural blind spot. This language restriction may unintentionally narrow the geographical scope of the included studies and introduce potential selection bias through the automatic database screening mechanism. Secondly, the conscious publication time range from 2014 to 2024 is operationally necessary for trend analysis, but it brings historical challenges. This time limit may overlook pioneering contributions that established key theoretical frameworks before 2014, thereby potentially disrupting the disciplinary continuity in the construction of the literature map. Thirdly, we discovered an interpretive element that needs to be disclosed: the narrative classification process inherently has analytical subjectivity. When coordinating the polar academic positions regarding the interpretation of cultural discourse, operational challenges arise, especially when dealing with protocol-driven coding frameworks, which allow for a certain degree of discretion in topic classification. The research team implemented three corrective strategies to address these limitations. Firstly, we adopted a comprehensive citation norm consistent with APA 7th edition guidelines and established a cross-validation mechanism to ensure the accuracy of attribution information. Secondly, for cultural materials containing community-specific knowledge (especially those involving indigenous epistemology), we developed a confidentiality handling procedure-this includes anonymizing oral tradition citations and setting restricted access protocols for sensitive archival materials. Thirdly, when integrating conflicting theoretical viewpoints, we employed dialectical integration techniques, preserving the integrity of the original debate while identifying conceptual integration points. These methodological countermeasures collectively enhance the transparency of the analysis and maintain neutrality when dealing with controversial academic debates, ultimately enhancing the cross-cultural validity of the research.

Results and Discussion

Collective creation and expressive dynamics of Folk song activities

Undamentally, folk songs originate from the creativity of the group rather than individual originality. They develop through joint participation in labor activities, ritual practices, and collective celebrations. Their formation relies on the cumulative contributions across generations, and both lyrics and musical patterns constantly change through oral traditions and interactive performances. Previous experts analyzed the rice-field ballads (Hao Chuanzi) in China and demonstrated that this question-and-answer structure has had a dual role in history: coordinating the rhythm of agricultural labor while preserving agricultural techniques and concepts of the universe. Correspondingly, Jiang (2023) studied the spiritual ballads of African Americans and found out how the enslaved communities collectively reinterpreted Christian hymns, combining traditional West African musical elements with expressions that implicitly contained resistance. This collaborative creative process helps enhance the continuity of culture and social integration. Through participatory music practices, communities can establish a common value system and strengthen cross-generational connections. The research by Mo (2020) recorded the Ge Xiu Festival of the Zhuang people in Guangxi as a vivid example. During this festival, experienced practitioners guide young participants in spontaneous oral communication, thus passing down the specific singing styles and historical records of the dialect. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon echoes Durkheim's theory of collective revelry, which holds that collective rituals can

promote social cohesion. Therefore, folk songs are both cultural binders and carriers of shared emotional expressions.

However, contemporary challenges threaten the feasibility of collective creation. Urbanization and the fragmentation of digital media disrupt the traditional environment of folk song creation. In rural areas of China, population migration has led to a significant loss of young people in villages, leaving older practitioners struggling to maintain oral traditions. Meanwhile, platforms like TikTok prioritize popular clips rather than the complexity of narratives, simplifying folk ballad songs into "short segments" detached from their background (Wang, 2023). These changes may commodify folk expressions, causing them to lose their common essential characteristics. For instance, when Mongolian throat singing (Xam) is commercialized for global audiences, it often causes this art form to deviate from its pastoral and idyllic roots and spiritual connotations. To revitalize collective creation, hybrid models blending tradition and innovation are essential. Educational initiatives, such as integrating folk songs into school curricula, can bridge generational gaps. In Sichuan, primary schools have adopted Han folk songs in music classes, pairing lyrical analysis with field trips to rural song fairs. Digital tools also offer new possibilities: blockchain-based platforms enable the decentralized archiving of Indigenous songs, while virtual reality reconstructions of Babylonian festivals allow global participation in ancient rituals. Crucially, such strategies must prioritize community agency—ensuring that technological interventions amplify rather than appropriate local voices. By recentring collective ownership, folk songs can retain their expressive power as living traditions in a globalized age.

Perspectives of Folk song activities

The practical forms of folk songs exist as vivid cultural expressions, maintaining connections with ancestors while adapting to contemporary realities. These traditions fundamentally embody group identity through their vocal preservation of collective narratives. The Zhuang ethnic community in Guangxi demonstrates this through its pentatonic melody system and dialect singing styles, transmitting origin stories and agricultural rituals to resist cultural assimilation and maintain the uniqueness of the ethnic group (Mo, 2020). Modern technological platforms have produced contradictory effects: streaming media services' "world folk" collections ostensibly enhance cross-cultural understanding, but often detach local songs from their performance contexts, eroding the social and historical significance they embody (Wang and Thotham, 2024). This tension reveals the fragile balance between heritage protection and commercial utilization. As social tools, folk music has dual attributes of unifying mechanisms and disruptive channels. Historical Chinese rice farming proverbs (Hao Chuan Zi) exemplify this duality, coordinating agricultural labor patterns while transmitting environmental wisdom, thereby fostering social cohesion. In contrast, during the African American civil rights struggle, spiritual songs transformed into veiled protest tools, with their metaphorical texts enabling covert mobilization (Jiang, 2023). This transformative ability highlights the role of folk music in mediating authoritative structures. Modern challenges stem from urban migration and digital fragmentation: the outflow of young populations from rural areas in China makes elder inheritors the sole guardians of oral traditions, while social media algorithms tend to disseminate popular music clips rather than narrative coherence (Wang and Sun, 2023).

From a historical perspective, folk songs are dynamic record carriers of social changes. Ming Dynasty peasant ballads preserved the voices of farmers' dissatisfaction with bureaucratic corruption, which were passed down orally and remain, providing crucial insights into the dynamics of pre-modern societies. The impact of the Industrial Revolution is reflected in British textile workers' adaptation of folk songs into mechanized "loom rhythms," which in sound reflected the alienation of factory labor. Digital preservation brings new contradictions: early ethnomusicological records inadvertently solidified fluid traditions, while blockchain technology now makes distributed archiving methods possible, posing challenges to institutionalized cultural control. These transitions highlight the dual capabilities of folk songs as anchors of continuity and reflectors of change. The dissemination dynamics of contradictions caused by the mediation of technology. Platforms such as Douyin use dialect recognition algorithms to revive endangered mountain folk songs. However, their recommendation systems prioritize popularity rather than cultural depth, resulting in the phenomenon of "melodic simplification", that is, songs sacrifice contextual layers to be easier to remember (Wang and Sun, 2023). In contrast, the virtual reality reconstruction of ancient Babylonian rituals through technological intermediaries has made global participation possible. These developments raise the key question: Can digital democratization coexist with the protection of cultural authenticity? Can decentralized networks enable marginalized groups to regain control of the narrative?

The power of globalization has strengthened cultural negotiations, promoted forms of integration, and at the same time made the state of power imbalance permanent. The emerging folk movement in Yunnan combines traditional vocal styles with electronic Musical Instruments to attract younger audiences, triggering a fierce debate on the legitimacy of art. Although the conservation measures of UNESCO are well-intentioned, they often tend to favor officially recognized folk performances rather than grassroots ones. In contrast, the Kurdish immigrant community has long used simulation techniques such as tapes to avoid cultural suppression (Pegg, 2001). These examples reveal the inherent contradictions of globalization: Folk traditions are both constantly disappearing and constantly reviving, which requires a strategy that can both balance local autonomy and promote global connectivity. This multi-dimensional perspective positions folk songs as a flexible yet controversial cultural form. By integrating culture, sociology, history, technology and transnational perspectives, it reveals that their essence is an evolving tradition that negotiates authenticity, adaptability and power relations-an ongoing process that ensures cultural relevance in the face of global changes.

Theoretical framework of Folk song activities

The academic study of folk song traditions requires an analytical method that links multiple academic fields and combines cultural, social, historical and technological factors into a unified interpretive model. Based on the core principles outlined in the previous sections-cooperative production, interdisciplinary perspectives and evolutionary patterns-this comprehensive approach conceptualizes folk songs as dynamic cultural negotiations, achieving a balance between traditional protection and modern adaptation, individual expression and social frameworks, as well as regional uniqueness in global cultural flows. The core of this model is composed of three mutually reinforcing theoretical foundations: the cultural ecological perspective, practice-based social analysis, and a critical examination of cultural protection. The

cultural ecological framework, initially proposed by Steward (1955) and later refined by music researchers including Pegg (2001), emphasizes the interdependent connection between musical traditions and their ecological environment. Just as previous research indicates, the seasonal rice cultivation anthem in southern China is not only a musical expression but also a dynamic system that encompasses the agricultural calendar, environmental wisdom, and collective work ethics. These observations are consistent with previous discussions on the collaborative generation process, where the development of songs is a natural adaptation to ecological and socio-economic realities.

Practice-oriented social theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Bourdieu, 1977) strengthened this understanding by emphasizing the performance dimension of folk music traditions. Folk songs are not fixed texts but dynamic cultural practices that constantly shape and challenge social customs. Chapter 3 examines the Ge Xu Jie of the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi and provides a clear illustration: In these gatherings, spontaneous voice communication temporarily transcends social hierarchy, promoting intergenerational communication and cultural reinforcement (Mo, 2020). Similar observations have also emerged in the Kurdish dengbej music tradition, where oppressed communities have transformed ancestral songs into tools of political resistance (Pegg, 2001), demonstrating the dual ability of music to achieve transformative actions while reflecting social institutions. Key Cultural Conservation Scholarship (Smith, 2009). Harrison and Huntington (2001) formed the third conceptual pillar and studied the complex dynamics between conservation efforts and innovative adaptation. This view exposes the friction between official heritage management systems (such as the UNESCO Protocol on Intangible Heritage) and community practices. Although government conservation measures often rigidly categorize musical traditions as cultural heritage, groups such as the Bunuyao people in Yunnan strategically employ digital technologies to preserve oral traditions while retaining contextual relevance (Jiang, 2023). Therefore, this framework rejects the simple dichotomy of authenticity and instead advocates an adaptive spectrum in which historical continuity and contemporary creativity interact—a principle reflected in the "New Folk" initiative that combines traditional lyrics with electronic instruments.

The influence of technology repeatedly emerged in the previous analysis and was analyzed from the perspectives of digital platform theory (Bogost and Montfort, 2009) and postcolonial digital academia (Risam, 2019). Social media platforms such as Douyin embody the dual nature of digital archiving: algorithm-driven platforms enhance the visibility of folk traditions while enforcing standardized aesthetic norms, which is evident in the "simplified narrative phenomenon", where complex musical stories turn into truncated digital fragments (Wang, 2023). In contrast, the decentralized record-keeping system used by Kurdish diaspora groups demonstrates how emerging technologies can support marginalized communities in regaining their cultural narratives. These conflicting results require an analytical model that emphasizes community autonomy rather than technological determinism. The comprehensive framework ultimately leads to an understanding of folk songs as a layered cultural relic—the tradition of life, within which the historical basis, the modern reinterpretation, and the expected future interact. The protest songs of the Ming Dynasty reflect this multi-layered nature: their original criticisms of feudal exploitation are still actively reinterpreted to address contemporary issues such as urban migration pressure. Similarly, the transformation of African American hymns into civil rights movement hymns (Jiang, 2023) indicates that music has the ability to accumulate meaning across

generations and regions. This inherent adaptability enables folk traditions to maintain cultural resonance while not cutting off their connection with historical origins.

The historical evolution of Folk song from the socio-cultural perspectives

The historical trajectory of folk song activities is a mirror of humanity's socio-cultural metamorphosis, reflecting how communities adapt to-and resist-transformations in labor, governance, technology, and identity. This chapter traces this evolution through three pivotal epochs, building on the theoretical framework established earlier to reveal folk songs as dynamic negotiations between continuity and change.

Pre-industrial foundations: Ritual, labor and resistance

In agrarian societies, folk songs emerged as symbiotic extensions of daily life, embedding ecological knowledge and spiritual beliefs into collective practice. Chinese rice-planting songs (haochuanzi), for example, synchronized group labor through call-and-response patterns while encoding lunar cycles and soil management techniques. Similarly, West African griot traditions wove genealogies and moral codes into melodic narratives, ensuring the survival of oral histories across generations (Okpokwasili, 2023). These songs were not mere entertainment but survival mechanisms, fostering communal cohesion in the face of environmental precarity. Yet folk songs also served as covert tools of dissent. During the Ming Dynasty, peasants composed ballads satirizing corrupt officials, and their lyrics were disseminated through teahouse networks to evade imperial censorship. In medieval Europe, Christian missionaries co-opted pagan melodies for liturgical chants, yet subversive themes persisted in folk carols, such as the English "Cherry Tree Carol," which subtly critiqued patriarchal norms through Marian symbolism (Pegg, 2001). This dual role-as both stabilizers of tradition and vehicles of subversion-underscores folk songs' inherent political agency.

Industrial modernity: Fragmentation and hybridity

The Industrial Revolution fractured folk traditions while birthing new hybrid forms. Urban migration severed rural transmission chains, leading to the disappearance of 63% of documented English folk tunes between 1780–1850. Factory workers repurposed agrarian songs into “loom ballads,” their rhythms mimicking steam engines' mechanized pulses-a sonic embodiment of alienated labor. Conversely, colonial encounters spurred unprecedented cross-pollination. Enslaved Africans in the Americas syncretized Yoruba rhythms with Protestant hymns, creating spirituals like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” which doubled as coded maps for escape routes (Jiang, 2023). These hybrid forms exemplify folk songs' resilience, adapting to displacement while preserving cultural memory. Technological advancements further mediated this transition. Alan Lomax's 1930s field recordings for the Library of Congress canonized fluid oral traditions into fixed “authentic” versions, inadvertently privileging certain dialects and styles. Meanwhile, the rise of radio broadcasting commodified folk music, as seen in the commercialization of Appalachian ballads for urban audiences-a process that diluted regional distinctiveness while expanding cultural reach (Lornell, 2012).

Digital age: Algorithmic revival and neo-localism

In the 21st century, digital platforms have democratized folk song dissemination while introducing new paradoxes. TikTok's algorithmic curation has revived near-extinct traditions, such as the Yao people's mountain songs, through AI-driven dialect recognition. Yet this "balladification trap" (Wang and Thotham, 2024) reduces complex narratives to 15-second loops, prioritizing virality over contextual depth. Similarly, Spotify's "Global Folk" playlists homogenize regional diversity, flattening Kurdish dengbêj laments into ambient exotica (Pegg, 2001). Grassroots movements counter these trends through neo-localism-reclaiming folk traditions via decentralized technologies. Blockchain platforms enable Kurdish diaspora communities to archive dengbêj songs beyond state control, while VR reconstructions of Babylonian festivals invite global participation in ancient rituals. In Yunnan, the "New Folk Song" movement merges change with electronic beats, engaging youth through digital remix contests that honor improvisational roots. These innovations reflect a broader shift: folk songs are no longer bound by geography but thrive as localized practices, blending local authenticity with global connectivity.

Critical junctures and recurring tensions

Three recurrent themes emerge from this historical arc: (1) Technology's Dual Edge: From printing presses to blockchain, each technological leap both preserves and distorts folk traditions; (2) Power and Resistance: Folk songs oscillate between reinforcing hegemony (e.g., state-sanctioned heritage) and challenging it (e.g., protest spirituals); (3) Adaptive Continuity: Despite upheavals, core elements—oral transmission, collective authorship—persist, albeit in transformed guises. The Ming protest ballads' evolution illustrates this resilience: originally critiques of feudal corruption, they are now reinterpreted in Chinese classrooms to address rural displacement. Similarly, African American spirituals, once tools of survival, now anchor Black Lives Matter rallies, their refrain "We Shall Overcome" echoing across centuries (Jiang, 2023).

Conclusion

The intersection of historical trajectories, social and cultural practices, and technological developments in folk song traditions clarifies their nature as dynamic processes rather than static cultural products. These living traditions maintain a continuous dialogue between ancestral memories and contemporary innovations, protecting community identities while adapting to environmental changes. The coexistence of Chinese agricultural hymns encoding lunar agricultural knowledge and Kurdish diaspora laments preserved through blockchain technology demonstrates how the oral communication mechanism absorbs the influence of industrial mechanization and digital algorithms. Their resilience does not come from rigid protection, but from fluid adaptation. In this adaptation, even if the communication mode keeps evolving, the collective entertainment process will continue, fixing the community in cultural continuity during the transformation of modernity. Globalization and digitalization are often regarded as threats to folk traditions, yet they reveal paradoxical potential for protection. Although platforms like Douyin have expanded the accessibility of endangered mountain songs, they have the potential to cut the complexity of narratives into fragmented cultural commodities—a process that scholars refer to as "lyrical reductionism". The heritage initiative of UNESCO, despite its protectionist purpose, may unintentionally materialize traditions in a static form by prioritizing institutional

interpretations rather than organic grassroots practices. However, innovative adaptations emerged from these contradictions: the electronic folk mixing competition in Yunnan attracts young people through digital media while respecting the heritage of improvisation, similar to the Kurdish community's use of a decentralized ledger to protect dengbej's songs from being misappropriated by the state. These cases confirm that in the context of globalization, the survival of the people requires strategic technological participation to amplify rather than weaken the voices of localization.

Effective preservation requires going beyond archival methods and promoting active recreation. The educational programs in Sichuan have linked rural Han traditions with urban youth through reinterpretations in the classroom, which is an example of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Emerging technologies like the VR reconstruction of the Babylonian Festival make global participation possible without eroding local particularities. Meanwhile, the moral framework must manage commercial applications and redirect the profits of folk pop music or streaming services to the original community-transforming extractive practices into mutually beneficial cultural management. Although this analysis focuses on the Chinese and English contexts, it also recognizes the untapped areas from the Andean huayno to the West African griot tradition, urging future comparative studies. Vertical tracking of specific folk genealogies can map out continuity patterns, while the collaboration between ethnomusicologists and artificial intelligence may develop context-sensitive digital preservation tools to counteract the homogenization of algorithms. Ultimately, the practice of folk songs reflects the cultural course of mankind. Just like the Yao Mountain songs meandering along the rivers with their sources, these traditions thrive through adaptive flow rather than rigid stagnation. They force us to interpret the protest subtext of Ming Dynasty ballads, the obscure aspirations of hymns and the provocative resonances of Kurdish tapes-in their melodies, we recognize a universal necessity: cultural vitality requires the courage to evolve. In this eternal negotiation between heritage and innovation, folk songs have been passed down as witnesses of change, challenging us to respect the origin without restriction, to reshape without erasing, and to view technological change as a new chapter in the eternal chorus of humanity rather than a conclusion.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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