

On Modern Innovative Integration of Ethnic Music from the Perspective of Cultural Inheritance

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Abstract: From the perspective of protecting Chinese intangible cultural heritage, ethnic music embodies the historical context and spiritual characteristics of various ethnic groups, and serves as a living cultural carrier embodying the core of the national spirit. In the current process of cultural revitalization, ethnic music is facing a gap in the inheritance population and insufficient awareness among young audiences. Some innovative creations only focus on formal packaging, ignoring the indigenous cultural roots. This article takes cultural inheritance as the starting point and conducts empirical analysis based on official statistical data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and domestic practical cases. It explores the development laws of modern integration of ethnic music from five directions: technological application, cross-border creation, ecological construction, talent cultivation, and external dissemination, and points out the formal deviations in creative practice. Research has found that innovation in ethnic music cannot be separated from its own cultural connotation and artistic essence. It needs to conform to the trend of new media communication, conform to the aesthetic orientation of the public, and establish a sound long-term inheritance mechanism. Adhering to traditional foundations and innovating performances can promote the dynamic continuation of traditional music and parallel innovation of the times, and also provide some practical references for the innovative development of traditional music ICH.

Keywords: Cultural inheritance, ethnic music, modern innovation, cross-border integration, living inheritance.

1. Introduction

As of 2025, there are a total of 189 traditional music projects in China's national intangible cultural heritage representative project list, involving 431 declared regions and related units, and 475 national representative inheritors. These projects cover all provinces, regions, and cities across the country, encompassing 56 ethnic cultural forms. In China's intangible cultural heritage system, they are one of the categories with the widest geographical coverage and the deepest mass base. In the context of global cultural integration and the popularization of digital life, the original inheritance scene on which ethnic music relies for survival is gradually weakening, and the aesthetic preferences and cultural choices of young people are shifting accordingly. Many niche ethnic music genres and folk music genres are facing the dilemma of shrinking inheritors and narrow dissemination channels, and the pressure of intergenerational inheritance of traditional music is constantly increasing. Currently, the overall aging of national-level inheritors of traditional music intangible cultural heritage and the shortage of young reserve inheritors have become prominent issues in the protection of intangible cultural heritage. The disruption of inheritance groups further exacerbates the long-term inheritance pressure of traditional music.

In recent years, the state has continuously strengthened its protection and support for traditional music intangible cultural heritage. In the past three years, the central government has invested a total of 77.72 million yuan in special funds for the protection and inheritance of national-level traditional music projects, as well as subsidies for inheritors. At the same time, the country has successively issued special policies such as the "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage" and the "Notice on Promoting the Deep Integration and Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism",

providing institutional guarantees for the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture [1]. Promoting the modernization, innovation, and integration of ethnic music has become a feasible direction to alleviate the crisis of inheritance and continue the cultural heritage of ethnic music. This article takes cultural inheritance as the fundamental starting point, and avoids empty innovation divorced from the cultural core of traditional music. Combining official data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and practical cases from various regions, it systematically explores the modernization and innovation path of ethnic music, avoids the drawbacks of commercialization and formal innovation, and provides practical academic references and practical ideas for the long-term inheritance and development of ethnic music.

2. The Inner Logic and Core Values of Modernization and Innovation of Ethnic Music from the Perspective of Cultural Inheritance

The modernization and innovation of ethnic music is not a mechanical deconstruction of traditional paradigms, nor is it a superficial formal collage divorced from cultural roots. The core lies in adhering to the cultural connotation, artistic characteristics, and inheritance value of ethnic music, conforming to contemporary public aesthetics, adapting to new communication scenarios and carriers, and achieving creative transformation of traditional culture. From the perspective of the theory of dynamic inheritance, the long-term survival of traditional culture does not rely on closed and rigid specimen preservation, but adjusts itself to the times, maintaining vitality and achieving intergenerational succession of national cultural context [2]. The Law Enforcement Inspection Report on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China by the

Standing Committee of the National People's Congress shows that the inheritors of traditional music intangible cultural heritage are generally aging, with an average age of over 65 years old, and more than half of them are in their seventies. The proportion of young inheritors is less than 8%, and the traditional oral transmission method is no longer suitable for the reception habits of contemporary youth.

Starting from the practical needs of cultural inheritance, modern innovation is an inevitable choice for ethnic music to break through the bottleneck of development. According to statistics from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the proportion of traditional music among the sixth batch of national intangible cultural heritage inheritors is relatively low, and there is a significant shortage of young reserve talents. More than 30% of projects are facing the hidden danger of a discontinuity in inheritors' succession. Anda Group, Vaina Band, and others innovate based on traditional Chinese music, breaking down barriers within niche cultural circles and helping young people perceive the essence of traditional music, fundamentally alleviating the dilemma of a lack of successors in inheritance.

The innovative practice of adhering to the cultural bottom line can achieve the organic unity of multiple values. It can not only adhere to the cultural roots, inherit historical heritage, and strengthen national cultural identity, but also broaden the boundaries of art, enrich expression forms, enhance the vitality of traditional art, and extend the dissemination space, allowing ethnic music to integrate into public life and simultaneously enhance cultural and social value. It should be emphasized that any innovation cannot deviate from the original intention of cultural inheritance, and cannot dissolve the cultural core of traditional music by pursuing popularity and commercial gains unilaterally [3]. The audience feedback of the 2025 China Native Folk Song Festival also confirms that works that adhere to tradition and emphasize expression are more likely to gain market and industry recognition.

3. Empowering Digital Technology: Innovative Practices for the Digital Protection and Dissemination of Ethnic Music

Digital technology has been fully integrated into the protection and innovation of ethnic music, providing a feasible path for traditional music genres to be permanently archived, widely disseminated, and popularized by the public. Starting from the practical needs of cultural inheritance, digital means are also an important basis for promoting the modernization of ethnic music, with both fundamental and approachable characteristics [4]. After years of exploration and accumulation, the digital development of ethnic music in China has formed a mature pattern, constructing a complete system of salvage archiving, full media promotion, and lightweight creation in parallel. All practical explorations have always been based on the fundamental principle of preserving the authenticity of traditional music and continuing the roots of ethnic culture.

In the field of digital preservation, the "Memory of the World - Recording Archives of Traditional Chinese Music" digital platform, coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and constructed by the Chinese National Academy of Arts, collaborates with the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Digital Museum to carry out comprehensive and systematic digital sorting and collection for national-level

traditional music intangible cultural heritage projects. The platform strictly follows the industry standards for the collection and recording of intangible cultural heritage digital resources, standardizes and archives massive audio images, ancient musical documents, and inherited oral historical materials one by one, and publicly shares them with the society. This measure has effectively resolved the shortcomings of traditional audio and paper materials, such as being easily damaged, difficult to preserve, and limited in circulation. It has fully preserved the original cultural appearance of ethnic music and laid a solid foundation for subsequent artistic innovation. On the basis of completing digital archiving, new media technology has further expanded the dissemination channels of ethnic music.

The rise of the new media ecosystem has injected new vitality into the dissemination of ethnic music. Numerous renowned performers of traditional Chinese music and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage actively embrace the short video and live streaming tracks, popularizing music knowledge, performing classic songs, and promoting original works in a life-oriented way, successfully breaking through the inherent barriers of traditional art circles. At the same time, cutting-edge technologies such as AI audio restoration and immersive soundscape reconstruction are widely used in the restoration of old records and early field recordings, adhering to cultural authenticity while preserving native timbre and artistic quality to the greatest extent possible, and not making unfounded adaptations [5]. In essence, digital technology acts only as a supporting tool for cultural heritage, providing technical support for inheritance and cannot substitute the unique humanistic connotation and spiritual core of ethnic music.

4. Cross-border Fusion Creation: Artistic Innovation of Ethnic Music That Adheres to Traditional Foundations

In the contemporary transformation process of ethnic music, cross-border integration is an important way of presenting ethnic music in contemporary times, and it is also the most widely used innovative form in the industry. From the core of cultural heritage, the cross-border creation of ethnic music always adheres to the creative principle of "tradition as the body, modernity as the use", which is also recognized and advocated by official documents of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Any form of adaptation and re-creation should cherish the unique tonality, melodic charm, and local heritage of ethnic music, reject crude piecing together, deliberate distortion, and excessive commercial packaging, and prevent trendy adaptations from severing its long-standing cultural roots [6].

Looking at the current cultural scene, the cross-border growth of ethnic music has precipitated three naturally mature fusion forms, each supported by vivid practice. The integration and coexistence of traditional folk music and popular genres is the most common way of creation. The creators preserve the original melodic framework and ethnic charm of folk songs and music, reshaping their expression with modern arrangement and harmony ideas, which not only conforms to the aesthetic taste of contemporary people, but also preserves the spiritual core of ancient folk music. Encounter with Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs blends the rustic folk melodies of the Loess Plateau into a fashionable

style, preserving the regional flavor of the original singing style. Through the dissemination of cultural and artistic variety shows, it breaks out of the regional circle and allows the younger generation to understand the local sentiment behind the melodies.

The entry of ethnic music into film and television narrative and cultural tourism stages deepens the integration of ethnic music into narrative contexts, strengthening cultural expression [7]. Zhao Jiping's Fantasy Suite on the Silk Road incorporates many elements of traditional Chinese music such as guzheng, horsehead fiddle, and grassland long tune, using music as a pen to outline the Silk Road style and create a rich Eastern atmosphere for film and television storytelling. Live performances such as Impression Liu Sanjie also use Dong ethnic songs and folk silk and bamboo as the background, integrating ethnic music into the landscape scenes and achieving silent cultural popularization through immersive experiences.

The integration and growth of ancient melodies and modern stage arrangements are equally valuable. The Central National Orchestra's creation of The Red Sparkle respects the complete artistic structure of the original work, optimizes the stage appearance with new instrumental arrangements, and adapts to the appreciation habits of contemporary audiences. All cross-border innovations should ultimately focus on cultural heritage and should not become utilitarian creations that chase clout and cater to the market.

5. Collaboration between Culture, Tourism, and Education: Ecological Inheritance of Ethnic Music and Construction of a Long-Term Talent System

The contemporary innovation and integrated development of ethnic music is not only about creating and disseminating works, but also about building a complete inheritance ecology. Only by starting from the overall ecological construction can we effectively solve the practical problems of aging inheritance teams, shrinking practical inheritance scenes, and insufficient long-term development momentum in the industry. The deep linkage between the integration of cultural and tourism industries and the national aesthetic education system is a long-term way to build a healthy inheritance ecology for ethnic music, and sustains the steady progress of innovative practices. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has also given official recognition and policy endorsement to this collaborative development model in relevant government response documents.

In the dimension of integrated development of culture and tourism, the upgrading of local cultural and tourism formats has reconstructed folk heritage scenes for ethnic music [8]. Provincial cultural and tourism demonstration parks and key rural tourism areas in various regions have extensively explored local folk songs and ethnic instrumental music resources, shaping them into regional characteristic cultural symbols. Through various forms such as live performance exhibitions, construction of rural cultural and artistic venues, and development of immersive intangible cultural heritage experience projects, we aim to promote ethnic music to step out of the professional performing arts stage and reintegrate into the context of folk and rural life. This development model not only helps improve the quality and efficiency of local cultural and tourism industries, but also provides a stable

platform for intangible cultural heritage inheritors to showcase and exchange, teach skills, and pass on knowledge from master to apprentice. It effectively solves the practical bottlenecks of the scarcity of inheritance resources for traditional music, insufficient livelihood security, and difficulties in skill continuity. While adhering to the essence of art, it achieves the coordinated progress of cultural inheritance and industrial development.

The education system has cultivated a stable team of young people for the inheritance of ethnic music, and has now formed a full chain coverage pattern from basic education to higher education institutions. The Ministry of Education continues to implement the policy of introducing excellent traditional Chinese culture into schools, and many traditional cultural characteristic schools across the country have incorporated ethnic music into their regular aesthetic education teaching system. Music majors in domestic universities have successively offered core courses such as research on intangible cultural heritage inheritance, traditional score compilation, and ethnic instrumental performance. Many undergraduate colleges have added majors related to intangible cultural heritage protection, aiming to cultivate compound inheritance talents who possess both traditional artistic literacy and modern creative ability.

The cultural infiltration of cultural tourism scenes and the professional talent cultivation of the education system complement each other, improving the overall ecology from three dimensions: popularization of popular culture, cultivation of professional talents, and construction of inheritance scenes. This lays a solid cultural foundation, talent reserve, and sustainable development space for the modernization and innovative development of ethnic music [9].

6. International Communication Expansion: Promoting the Overseas Inheritance and Dissemination of Ethnic Culture through Innovative Integration

The modern and innovative development of ethnic music not only requires the intergenerational succession of local cultural context, but also undertakes the mission of spreading Chinese culture overseas and consolidating overseas cultural identity. Ethnic music is an artistic carrier that transcends regions and languages, featuring natural, subtle refinement. Through the moderate polishing of modern creative techniques and adaptation to international communication contexts, ethnic music works can adhere to their own cultural essence, naturally cross communication barriers, and convey the unique spiritual heritage and aesthetic interests of traditional Chinese culture to the world, completing the rooting, inheritance, and value extension of the ethnic music art system overseas. The relevant official documents of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also clearly support the innovative external exchange mode of ethnic music at the policy level, laying a solid foundation for the international dissemination layout of the industry and providing clear guidance for ethnic music to "go global".

The overseas dissemination of domestic ethnic music always adheres to its own cultural background, and never deliberately weakens the characteristics of ethnic art or dissolves the original charm to cater to foreign aesthetics. Professional folk music troupes and local music creators are

based on the core elements of traditional music, adapting to the artistic presentation of the international stage. They participate in various international music festivals, performances, and cross-border cultural exchange activities year-round, continuously conveying the unique charm of Chinese folk music. The European tour of Chinese folk music has entered multiple cities, showcasing the vibrant charm of traditional music to overseas audiences. The innovative project of Chinese folk music was presented at WOMEX (World Music Expo), showcasing the new face of Chinese folk music integration and innovation to industry practitioners around the world. High-quality ethnic music works have successively landed on mainstream music platforms overseas, gaining attention from international professional media and widespread recognition in the industry, gradually accumulating international recognition.

Ethnic music works adapted through modernization carry the cultural sentiment and sense of ethnic identity of overseas Chinese, and also provide an important carrier for international audiences to recognize real Chinese culture and break traditional stereotypes [10]. The existing academic research data is sufficient to clearly reflect that overseas audiences have a high acceptance and willingness to actively explore Chinese ethnic music. By relying on innovative integration to open up international communication paths, the global boundaries of traditional cultural inheritance have been effectively expanded, and the international influence of Chinese culture has steadily increased. The artistic vitality of ethnic music has also thrived in a multicultural exchange environment [11]. The integration of domestic inheritance and international communication has always been rooted in the core purpose of cultural inheritance, allowing ethnic music to shine with new vitality overseas.

7. Conclusion

This article is based on the perspective of cultural inheritance, focusing on the systematic analysis of the modernization, innovation, and integration of ethnic music, clarifying its internal logic and practical path. This article always adheres to the basic idea of inheritance as the root and innovation as the path, clarifying that its contemporary adaptation, cross-border creation, and dissemination upgrading of ethnic music must be rooted in ethnic characteristics, adhere to cultural authenticity, and not blindly cater to the market or dissolve artistic essence.

Research has shown that relying on innovative integration of ethnic music can effectively solve problems such as talent shortage, limited dissemination scenarios, and insufficient development support, and is the core path for long-term inheritance. Digital technology provides strong support for the restoration of collections and online popularization, cross-border integration enriches contemporary presentation, cultural tourism education collaborates to build inheritance and talent cultivation mechanisms, and international dissemination extends cultural values. The four dimensions complement and coexist, building an inheritance and innovation framework that is adapted to contemporary development. The study also clarifies that the industry needs to abandon the tendency of emphasizing form over core and commerce over inheritance, and safeguard the cultural genes and artistic characteristics of traditional Chinese music.

This article still has certain shortcomings: it only

macroscopically sorts out the path and cases, without conducting comparative analyses by region and music genre; Mainly based on theoretical induction, lacking quantitative empirical analysis on the effectiveness of inheritance and audience acceptance; International communication has not delved into the cognitive differences among overseas audiences.

Based on the above shortcomings, in the future, we can focus on conducting refined research on regional folk music and verify inheritance effects via quantitative analysis; Explore new scenarios of intelligent technology integration; Improve the linkage mechanism between culture, tourism, education, and communication, optimize the paradigm of talent cultivation and cross-cultural communication, and help ethnic music sustain its cultural lineage, realize long-term inheritance and global dissemination.

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