

**FORMULATING A FRAMEWORK FOR A
CULTURAL INHERITANCE STRATEGY TO
SUSTAIN THE TRADITIONAL FOLK SONGS OF
THE ZHUANG ETHNIC GROUP IN POYA
VILLAGE, YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2025

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I am especially thankful for my excellent supervisor, Dr. Johan Awang bin Othman, who gave me valuable advice during my PhD studies. I completed my doctoral thesis under his responsible, earnest, and sincere guidance and encouragement.

Second, I would like to thank all of the staff members and fellow students at the School of the Arts and the Music Department who have helped me during my research and dissertation improvement.

Additionally, special thanks go to all the contributors and interviewees who gave their time answering my questions and sharing their knowledge, without whom I would not have been able to develop this thesis. I am also very grateful to all the people who have fostered my interest in music and inspired me to study in this field, from my school teachers and my master's supervisor to my friends and family, who have helped me a lot. I would once again like to express my sincere thanks to all of you.

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**MERUMUSKAN RANGKA KERJA STRATEGI PEWARISAN BUDAYA
UNTUK MELESTARIKAN LAGU RAKYAT TRADISI KUMPULAN ETNIK
ZHUANG DI KAMPUNG POYA, WILAYAH YUNNAN, CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada mengekalkan lagu rakyat di Kampung Poya, Wilayah Yunnan, China, dalam persekitaran kontemporari. Siasatan awal mendedahkan bilangan generasi muda di Kampung Poya yang giat mempelajari lagu rakyat mereka sendiri telah menurun dengan ketara, dan tidak ada kesedaran tentang pemeliharaan lagu rakyat tradisional. Oleh itu, ia membawa kepada masalah bahawa lagu tradisi rakyat tempatan tidak boleh dikekalkan dengan baik. Selain itu, ramai sarjana menumpukan pada lagu rakyat itu sendiri, atau pendekatan pengekalan, dalam aspek kajian ini tanpa mengambil kira konteks yang lebih luas yang berkaitan dengan pengekalan lagu rakyat. Walau bagaimanapun, lagu rakyat Poya berfungsi sebagai manifestasi dan perpetuasi budaya kumpulan etnik Zhuang, bersesuaian erat dengannya. Oleh itu, kajian ini memilih lagu rakyat Kampung Poya di Wilayah Yunnan, China, sebagai sampel penyelidikan, menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan etnografi kualitatif sepenuhnya untuk mengkaji fenomena intrinsik antara budaya etnik Zhuang dan pemeliharaan lagu rakyat di Kampung Poya. Kajian ini menggunakan teknik pensampelan bertujuan, termasuk pensampelan kriteria untuk menentukan objek pemerhatian, 35 peserta temu bual, 7 pakar penilaian, dan data dokumen yang relevan, untuk memastikan ketepatan pengumpulan data. Seterusnya, data dikumpulkan melalui pemerhatian, temu bual, dan analisis dokumen; data tersebut kemudian dianalisis dan ditafsirkan menggunakan kaedah analisis tema dan kandungan. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan empat sebab utama yang menyumbang

kepada penurunan secara beransur dalam bilangan orang yang memelihara dan mempelajari lagu rakyat tradisional di kampung Poya: keadaan pembelajaran, media elektronik, faktor individu, dan ontologi muzik. Kajian ini kemudian mempertimbangkan sepenuhnya sebab penurunan bilangan orang yang memelihara lagu rakyat di kampung Poya dan, berdasarkan rangka kerja dan model yang sedia ada, bersama dengan budaya tradisional tempatan, merumuskan rangka kerja strategi pewarisan budaya. Ia bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran dan momentum untuk perlindungan dan mengekalkan lagu rakyat tempatan. Tambahan pula, rangka kerja tersebut telah disahkan melalui penilaian pakar untuk memastikan kesahihannya. Ia dijangka bahawa kerangka untuk Strategi Diwarisi budaya yang dibentuk oleh kajian ini boleh menyediakan idea baru untuk lagu rakyat dengan dilema yang sama yang mengekalkan dan dengan itu menyediakan kes rujukan untuk penyelidikan mengenai pengekalan budaya dan lagu rakyat.

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the sustaining folk songs in Poya Village, Yunnan Province, China, in the contemporary environment. Preliminary investigations revealed a significant decrease in the number of younger generations in Poya Village who aspire to learn their own folk songs, as well as a lack of awareness about the preservation of traditional folk songs. Therefore, it leads to the problem that the local traditional folk songs cannot be well sustained. Furthermore, many scholars focused on the folk song itself, or the sustaining approach, in this area of study without considering the wider context that relates to the sustaining of folk songs. However, the Poya folk song serves as a manifestation and perpetuation of the Zhuang ethnic group's culture, closely aligning with it. Consequently, this study selects the folk songs of the Poya Village in Yunnan Province, China, as the research sample, employing a purely qualitative ethnographic research design to examine the intrinsic phenomena among the Zhuang ethnic culture and the sustaining of folk songs in Poya Village. This study uses purposive sampling techniques, including criterion sampling to determine the observation objects, 35 interview participants, 7 evaluation experts, and relevant document data, to ensure the accuracy of data collection. Subsequently, data is collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis; the data is then analysed and interpreted using thematic and content analysis methods. The results of this study showed four primary reasons that contributed to the gradual decline in the

number of people who sustained and learnt traditional folk songs in Poya Village: learning conditions, electronic media, individual factors, and music ontology. This study then fully considers the reasons for the decrease in the number of people who sustain the folk songs in Poya Village and, based on the existing frameworks and models, in conjunction with local traditional cultures, formulates a cultural inheritance strategy framework. It aims to increase awareness and momentum for the protection and sustaining of local folk songs. It is hoped that the framework for cultural inheritance strategy formulated by the study can provide new ideas for folk songs with the same sustaining dilemma and thus provide a reference case for research on the sustaining of culture and folk songs.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The study focuses mainly on the continuity of the folk song in the contemporary environment in Poya Village, Yunnan Province, China. The choice of the topic stems from the preliminary investigation, which indicates that the ongoing continuation of traditional Chinese folk songs is declining and that Poya Village's traditional folk songs also encounter comparable difficulties in sustaining them. As a result, this study employs a purely qualitative ethnographic research design; data is collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis, from the investigation of the entire ethnic group to the individual and musical events to have a more comprehensive understanding of local music and culture. Then, the study delves into sustaining the folk songs in Poya Village and aims to formulate a cultural inheritance strategy framework with the goal of increasing motivation to sustain and learn the local traditional folk songs. The study anticipates offering case references for other folk songs that face similar circumstances.

The present chapter provides a succinct summary of the study's primary substance and structure. Then there is a review of the Poya folk songs, which aims to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding through a detailed description and introduction. The third section primarily delves into the current status of the folk song study and the historical context of the research on the preservation of Poya folk songs. The chapter then presents a summary of the literature, drawing on the research background and a survey of preliminary observations to identify the problem statement. Drawing from the problem statement, this chapter proposes three research objectives and questions to direct the follow-up research. Additionally, this chapter

delves into the study's main scope and significance. The study's scope primarily outlines the extent of the study location and the population. The study's significance clarifies its main contribution and implications for other scholars and related research. Lastly, the key terms are defined, and an outline of the thesis chapters is presented.

1.2 An Overview of Poya Folk Songs

1.2.1 Poya folk songs

The folk song of the Poya Village expresses the sentiments the ancestors had for nature, as well as for themselves in agricultural farming and daily life. Local individuals frequently express their feelings through singing as a means of fulfilling their spiritual requirements. Furthermore, in order to prevent future generations from forgetting this music, the elderly transmitted the musical tones, improvised performance approaches, and emotional expressions through verbal instruction. Accordingly, the folk songs of Poya Village gradually formed a stable musical and cultural tradition in the local cultural environment and can be passed from one generation to the next. The transmission of the Poya Song book is deeply rooted in the local Zhuang community's traditions and cultural practices. Before the year 2006, the preservation of this unique musical heritage primarily relied on oral transmission, reflecting the natural evolution of music within the community (Li & Karin, 2024). However, thanks to a fortuitous event, the Poya Village folk song became known to outsiders. In 2006, the Funing County Cultural Bureau undertook an extensive examination of the cultural resources belonging to the Zhuang ethnic group within the county. While documenting Zhuang folk songs in Poya Village, the local singer resorted to using paper painted with pictograms to help recall the lyrics when he forgot them. The unique pictogram and its distinct function captured the interest of these

cultural workers. During their investigation, they discovered that a fully intact original copy was being kept at the residence of another folk musician. With the assistance of folk musicians, they unearthed the original handmade fabric that preserved an extremely complete drawing of eighty-one pictograms. This is the original document that was subsequently identified by specialists as the ‘China Funing Zhuang ethnic group Poya Song book’. In the eighty-one pictograms, each pictogram on the cloth refers to a folk song, and this cultural heritage has attracted the attention of cultural officials, so Poya folk songs can enter the public’s field of vision, also known as the ‘Poya Song Book’. The ‘Poya Song Book’ has a recording of eighty-one folk songs that together form a love story. Each song is interconnected, and missing one would disrupt the narrative. It shows the complete process of a young man and woman belonging to the Zhuang ethnic group, starting with their initial meeting, progressing to developing an understanding of each other, then growing to appreciate one another, and finally culminating in a marriage.

It consists of a length of homemade cloth, one meter long and half a meter wide, painted with 81 icons, about 3.3 centimetres in diameter, and painted in cactus extract, symbolising the moon, rocks, bamboo, maple leaves, various fruits and vegetables, clothes, fish, and farm tools. Each icon represents a Zhuang love song (reporter JOY, 2015; refer to the image (figure 1.1)).



Figure 1.1 The Poya Song Book

Pictograms and symbols were the most primitive way of recording life before many ethnic groups in China had writing. During the era without paper, the clever Zhuang ethnic group recorded their music by drawing pictograms on cloth, a method that also helped the singers remember the lyrics of Poya folk songs. Poya folk songs cover the content of the Zhuang ethnic group's production, life, religious beliefs, and cultural connotations. Accordingly, on May 23, 2011, the Poya folk song was officially included in the third batch of the national intangible cultural heritage list, inheritance number I-113.¹ In response to this, Tian et al. (2019) further explained that the Poya Song Book is the third batch of national intangible cultural heritage in China. It is a collection of folk songs circulating in the Zhuang area of Funing County, Yunnan Province. It records the Zhuang folk songs on the coarse cloth with the original pictogram. It is the only document that used pictograms to record folk songs (Tian et al., 2019).

There are more than 20 kinds of Zhuang folk songs handed down from generation to generation in Poya Village. The folk songs are sung in the Zhuang ethnic group's native language. The singing forms include solo, chorus, duet, and male and female duets. Most of the sentences are five syllables, with four or dozens of sentences in every song. As an intangible cultural heritage of folk literature, each song in Poya's folk songs fully emphasises the free expression of personal feelings, has strong subjectivity, and expresses the singer's yearning for an ideal life. In its long-term evolution, the folk song of Poya Village exemplifies the persistent resilience of folk culture. Furthermore, it demonstrates the precious cultural values of the ancient people,

¹ https://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2011-06/09/content_1880635.htm

both in their creative form and content, as well as in their singing skills and sustainability. Moreover, the Poya Song book, an integral facet of Zhuang folk songs in Funing County, represents a distinctive cultural phenomenon. Beyond its role as a repository of traditional customs, it acts as a living testament to the Zhuang ancestors' affinity for song, preserving their cultural expressions through graphic texts (Sun & Maneewattana, 2024).

1.2.2 Poya Song Book Choir

Since the Poya folk song was discovered by the Cultural Bureau, it has been recomposed by composers, sung by a professional chorus team, and participated in various competitions, which have won corresponding awards and more people's attention. Before its inception, the 'Poya Song Book' Choir had a solid team foundation. In 2007, Funing County assembled a group of seven male music professors to participate in the second youth singer television competition in Yunnan Province. All of them have a strong foundation in music. To facilitate remembering, the team that participated in the competition was designated as the 'Baiyue Combination'. In order to better spread the 'Poya Song Book' from remote villages to a wider stage, the Funing Cultural Government decided to devote more energy to the Poya culture. In 2009, under the leadership of the government department, the original 'Baiyue Combination' became ten members, consisting of five men and five women. The group's name was then changed to 'Poya Song Book Folk Song Team'. The position of the 'Poya Song Book Folk Song Team' is to sing the original ecological folk songs, re-enacting the original musical tone of the Zhuang ethnic group's songs. In July 2009, the team participated in the Wenshan Prefecture Youth Singing Competition and emerged as the gold medal winners. In August of this exact year, participants in the

Yunnan Youth Singing Competition received the original ecological group gold prize. After continuously participating in prefecture-level and provincial-level singing competitions and winning the gold prize, the team competed in the 2010 14th CCTV Young Singers Competition. Viewers were attracted by their fresh, soft, and simple singing style on the CCTV stage. In 2010, Funing County formed a more specialised ‘Poya Song Book Choir’ to enhance the promotion of the Poya folk song. This initiative was undertaken under the leadership of professional music scholars and composers, building upon the foundation of the original ‘Poya Song Book Folk Song Team’. The guidance team used a multi-part chorus to alleviate the monotony and thinness of the former single-voiced, single-melody phrase. Harmony makes musical works more expressive. In March 2012, the ‘Poya Song Book Choir’, which is well-known in China, particularly in Yunnan, and exclusive to Funing, was officially established. Following a hierarchical selection process, the chorus team consists of 26 people, with the folk musicians from Poya Village serving as the main lead singers.

Table 1.1 The Process for Creating the ‘Poya Song Book Choir’

	Baiyue Combination	Poya Song Book Folk Song Team	Poya Song Book Choir
Time	2007	2009	2012
Gender/Number	Male (7 People)	Male (5 People) Female (5 People)	Male (13 People) Female (13 People)
Profession	Music Teacher	Music Teacher Folk Musician in Poya Village	Music Teacher Amateurs Folk Musician in Poya Village
Type of Work	Original Works	Original Ecological Works	Recomposed Choral Works
Harmonies	Two-Part Chorus	Two-Part Chorus	Multi-part Chorus

Subsequently, the Poya Song Book Chorus was also invited by the Confucius Institute at the University of Hawaii to visit and communicate in the United States. Moreover, the chorus emerged as the overall victor of the prestigious CCTV ‘Singing and Smile-Chorus Pioneer’ competition. On December 2, 2015, the ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ successfully selected the ninth World Chorus Competition, becoming the first minority choir to participate in the competition in Yunnan Province. The widespread understanding of the unique Poya folk song beyond the village can be attributed to the effective promotion efforts by the culture department of the Funing County government. Furthermore, the ‘Poya Song Book Choir’ continues to participate in various competitions and performances to enhance its public exposure, thereby increasing its recognition among a wider audience. Local government and cultural departments established protection groups and editorial committees dedicated to safeguarding the Poya Songbook (Li & Karin, 2024).

Table 1.2 The Choir’s Awards and Performing Experiences

Time	Awards and Performing Experiences
July, 2009	The ‘Poya Song Book Folk Song Team’ participated in the Wenshan Prefecture Youth Singing Competition and won the gold medal.
August, 2009	The ‘Poya Song Book Folk Song Team’ participated in the Yunnan Youth Singing Competition and received the original ecological group gold prize.
March, 2010	The ‘Poya Song Book Folk Song Team’ participated in the 14th CCTV Young Singers competition and won the original ecological group excellence prize and group third prize.
2015	The ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ emerged as the overall victor of the prestigious CCTV ‘Singing and Smile-Chorus Pioneer’ competition of the year.

July, 2016	The ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ attended the ninth world choir competition in Sochi, Russia, winning the gold prize in the folk song with a cappella category.
March, 2017	The ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ participated in the ‘Silk Road Culture Trip’ world tour, performing in Spain and Malta in Europe.
September, 2017	The National Tour ‘Love Code Poya Song Book: Poya Love Song Choral Concert’ officially opened at the Grand Theatre of Yunnan Province. The tour was funded by the National Arts Fund.
March, 2018	The ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ performed at the 60th anniversary party of the foundation of Wenshan Prefecture in Yunnan Province.
June, 2018	The team participated in the ‘Apologue 2047’ concept theatre show directed by Zhang Yimou at the National Grand Theatre.
2023	The ‘Poya Song Book Chorus’ was invited to participate in the opening performance of the National Grand Theatre’s August Choir Festival and hold a special concert.

1.3 Background to the Study

The traditional folk songs of the Poya Village, which the institute is concerned with, belong to traditional Chinese folk music, but with the development of the era, the transmission of many traditional folk songs has gradually fallen into challenge, facing the crisis of disappearance. Kuang and He (2022) emphasised that folk music has been very popular in the past and that the daily lives of ethnic groups are inextricably linked to folk music. With the changing economic development and social structure, paralleled by the emergence of modern media and entertainment, folk music is gradually losing its allure and prestige and is compelled to yield to modern music (Kuang & He 2022). Kuang and He (2022) further rationalised that the older generation of folk artists today only performs on extremely rare occasions and that in

some ethnic groups, the loss of a particular folk music treasure occurs when the last senior performers pass away (Kuang & He 2022).

Due to the pervasive impact of Western or popular music, the younger Chinese generations have progressively disregarded traditional folk music and become disinterested in learning about it. Consequently, the sustainability of folk music has been further challenged in the present context. For the subject, Haiyan (2019) construed that, especially with the rise of pop music after reform and opening up, an increasing number of younger generations in the ethnic groups prefer modern pop music culture while ignoring the traditional folk music of the ethnic groups, making the inheritance environment of traditional folk songs increasingly broken (Haiyan, 2019). The Poya folk song, like other traditional Chinese folk music, faces the same problem of being difficult to maintain. According to Dong and Lin (2020) in the article, the presentation of interviews for Poya folk song learners verified that some learners have difficulty learning Poya folk songs because of difficulty in mastering the singing skills, trouble understanding the lyrics, and a lack of familiarity with the cultural background of Poya folk songs. This has also led to a separation of Poya folk songs from their native cultural environment, making them difficult to sustain (Dong & Lin 2020). Additionally, Yu (2016) noted that the current social environment and material life impacted the residents in Poya Village, with many villagers leaving to earn a living and the willingness to sustain the folk song gradually dwindling (Yu, 2016). From the aforementioned discussions, it is clear that traditional Chinese folk music and even Poya folk songs face numerous challenges in the current environment, making it difficult to ensure their sustainable development in the future. Leung (2021) also concurred that if Western music continued to dominate East Asia, it would threaten the sustainability of traditional music in these countries and regions (Leung, 2021).

Addressing the vanishing of traditional folk music and the growing number of ethnic groups designating traditional music as intangible cultural heritage, scholars now pay more attention to the question of the transmission of folk music. Kuang and He (2022) explained that since the adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972, declining and even endangered folk music traditions have gained considerable attention in China (Kuang & He, 2022). In an example of sustaining traditional folk song in Poya Village, Dong and Lin (2022) analysed the potential conflict between local culture and modern education and proposed the development and practice of the school curriculum. It aims to combine the Poya folk song with the day-to-day learning courses of local students to promote the intergenerational sustaining folk song through classroom learning and extracurricular activities (Dong & Lin, 2022). They mainly provide educational ideas for sustaining intangible cultural heritage, combining the sustaining Poya folk songs with school education for sustenance and continuation, thus promoting the harmonious synergy of local education and traditional folk music. In the area of education to promote sustaining Poya folk songs, scholars have also supplemented the study of the introduction of the intangible cultural heritage of the Poya folk songs into primary and secondary schools to sustain and develop. Zhang (2019) further indicated that local government and schools can integrate Poya folk songs into school activities throughout the county, such as campus broadcasting, music courses, classroom activities, etc. (Zhang, 2019). In China, every intangible cultural heritage has its respective inheritors (folk artists). Folk musicians in the Poya Village are people who are recognised as representatives and influencers of a particular field of music. Furthermore, they are representative inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage and key figures in its protection and sustenance. As Guan (2021) emphasised, the representative inheritor of

intangible cultural heritage is an important part of inheriting and protecting the representative projects of intangible cultural heritage and is the key to the protection of intangible cultural heritage (Guan, 2021). Accordingly, in the study of the sustaining in Poya folk song, some scholars also take the inheritors (folk musicians) as the primary factor of consideration. Yang (2021) described the importance of the inheritors of the Poya Village, emphasising their protection while ensuring the continuation of the folk song in the sustenance of nature (Yang, 2021).

The folk song is an integral component of the traditional culture among ethnic groups, and its perpetuation is closely intertwined with traditional culture. Thereby, it is imperative to protect the Poya folk song, acknowledged as an intangible cultural heritage, inside the indigenous cultural milieu to ensure the perpetuation of this musical tradition. Also, Martínez-Rodríguez et al. (2022) rationalised that musical heritage is a part of that cultural legacy that we must protect, as it is one of the main areas of intangible cultural heritage, a reflection of cultural diversity (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2022). It is clear evidence of the close relationship between music and culture, and some scholars have examined the sustaining folk songs from a fundamental cultural perspective. As such, Wu et al. (2022) emphasised the advantages of culture over sustainability. Whether from the viewpoint of CCIs or glocalization, culture is undoubtedly a core resource for innovation and local sustainable development (Wu et al., 2022). In terms of the sustainability study of culture and music, Grant et al. (2021) further claimed that initiatives to develop a link between culture and the sustainability of music needed to emphasise community involvement and, more so, the participation of local cultures (Grant et al., 2021). Besides, Schippers and Grant (2016) also emphasised that using music culture as an ecosystem to understand music sustainability could better help communities shape the future of music

(Schippers & Grant 2016). Regarding the sustenance of the intangible cultural heritage of music, Cai (2020) concluded that protecting it on the basis of traditional cultures would enable the long-term, sustained development of the intangible cultural heritage of music. Furthermore, the sustaining and protection of music from the cultural ecosystem that is inseparable from its existence should pursue the continuation and development of music in the exploration of cultural diversity and sustainability (Cai, 2020).

The previous discussions have highlighted the challenges and urgency in maintaining Chinese folk music while also highlighting the importance and state-of-the-art research in this area. Scholars have examined the sustainment of Poya folk songs from an educational standpoint, as well as emphasised the distinct role of the inheritors, or folk musicians, in sustaining Poya folk songs. Additionally, in the study on the safeguarding of folk songs, researchers have also explored the positive effects of sustaining folk music from a cultural perspective, considering the tight relationship between folk music and culture. Nevertheless, the current research on the sustainability of the Poya folk song, which has its basis in traditional culture, lacks comprehensive examination.

1.4 Problem Statement

In China, many traditional folk songs are disappearing and are difficult to sustain. Kuang and He (2022) noted that the folk music, formerly widespread and deeply ingrained in the ancient lives of the indigenous ethnic groups, is now only performed under restricted circumstances by the older generation. Once the final senior performers of a specific folk music die, this invaluable masterpiece of folk art will be permanently forgotten and lost (Kuang & He, 2022). Leung (2021) underscored the

considerable hurdles that traditional music in East Asia is currently encountering in terms of its sustainability. Failure to intervene will result in the perpetuation of Western music's dominance and jeopardise the viability of traditional music in these countries and regions (Leung, 2021). The Poya folk song, which is the traditional folk music of Chinese Zhuang ethnic groups, inevitably faces the same problem. Concerning the sustaining folk songs in Poya village, Yu (2016) indicated that the villagers were forced to go out to earn money because of their lives, and their willingness to sustain the Poya folk songs gradually disappeared (Yu, 2016). When the sustaining of traditional folk songs in Poya Village was in trouble, Dong and Lin (2020) further stated that it is difficult to develop interest in Poya folk songs because the skills of Poya folk songs are difficult to master and the cultural content is difficult to understand (Dong & Lin, 2020). Furthermore, Ilukwe (2023) demonstrated that we cannot ignore the uniqueness of folk musicians and their capacity to sustain musical culture as oral performers (Ilukwe, 2023).

According to observations, the number of young people who stay in Poya Village for a long time has decreased, and the village's children go to town for school from Monday to Friday. Additionally, the participation in singing activities in Poya Village is also declining, and the frequency of holding activities is becoming less and less. Meanwhile, most young people in Poya Village focus their energy on other forms of entertainment and no longer prioritise singing folk songs. Moreover, the teaching activities of folk songs conducted by the local musicians in Poya Village were not able to produce excellent learning outcomes due to their low frequency and lack of systematisation. Consequently, based on literature discussions and preliminary investigations, it is evident that the number of people who sustain and learn the traditional folk songs in Poya Village is gradually decreasing. The local folk musicians

in Poya Village, as guides of traditional culture inheritance, have challenges in proving the sustaining folk songs.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study specifically examines the long-term sustainability of folk music in Poya Village, located in Yunnan Province, China. The primary research objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To investigate the reasons contributing to the gradual decline in the number of people sustaining and learning traditional folk songs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Poya Village.

2. To formulate a cultural inheritance strategy framework for local musicians in Poya Village to sustain traditional folk songs of the Zhuang ethnic group.

3. To evaluate the validation of a cultural inheritance strategy framework that has been formulated.

The study literature on traditional folk songs in Poya Village reveals that numerous researchers have raised significant issues that are difficult to sustain in the present environment. Nevertheless, the present study lacks a comprehensive examination of the reasons that contribute to the difficulties in sustaining Poya folk music. Simultaneously, in order to develop effective approaches and strategies for sustaining Poya folk songs, it is essential to thoroughly investigate the reasons that are causing their decrease. Hence, the first objective is to investigate reasons contributing to the decline in the number of people sustaining and learning traditional folk songs in Poya Village.

In order to ensure the continuation of traditional folk music, it is necessary to find strategies or methods to promote its sustaining effectiveness. In literature reviews and preliminary surveys, scholars have emphasised the importance of culture for sustaining folk songs, as well as the predominant position of the inheritors (folk musicians) in sustaining folk songs. According to the provided information, culture plays an important role in sustaining and learning contemporary folk music, particularly in emphasising the lead character of traditional culture. Consequently, the second objective is to formulate a cultural inheritance strategy framework for local folk musicians to better sustain traditional folk songs. Once it is formulated, the framework must prioritise validation in order to guarantee its appropriateness and reliability. As a result, the third objective is to evaluate the validity of the cultural inheritance strategy.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the problem statement and research objectives, the study will answer the following questions:

- 1.** What are the reasons contributing to the gradual decline in the number of people sustaining and learning traditional folk songs of the Zhuang ethnic group in Poya Village?
- 2.** How to integrate existing theories with the sustaining situation of folk songs in Poya Village to formulate a cultural inheritance strategy framework to sustain traditional folk songs?
- 3.** How is validation of a cultural inheritance strategy framework that has been formulated?

1.7 Scope of the Study

The continuation of traditional folk songs in Poya Village, Yunnan Province, China, is the focus of this study. There are 55 ethnic minorities in China, each of which has rich cultural connotations. Creswell and Poth (2016) stated that an ethnography focuses on an entire cultural group (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The Zhuang minority is the most populous ethnic group in China and has a long historical origin. In the course of historical development, the Zhuang minority has preserved a wealth of traditional culture and formed a cultural group with its own ethnic characteristics. In the traditional culture of the Zhuang ethnic group, music plays a particularly important role. Lou (2016) verified that the Zhuang people love songs and are proficient at singing; they are proficient at endorsing music; their artistic thinking is outstanding; and the singing culture is prosperous (Lou, 2016). Accordingly, the study will use the Zhuang ethnic group as its subject and scope.

Williams (2007) suggested that the initial step in the ethnography process is to gain access to a site (Williams, 2007). As the initial research step after determining the choice of cultural groups, the location of the study is Poya Village, Yunnan Province, China. The reasons are as follows: Firstly, Funing County, in Yunnan Province, is the researcher's hometown. The researcher possesses detailed knowledge of the ethnic culture, music, as well as customs, therefore facilitating the execution of additional enquiries. Secondly, Funing County, Yunnan Province, is a multi-ethnic gathering area, with the Zhuang minority serving as the representative ethnic group. Accordingly, the Zhuang ethnic group in Funing County, Yunnan Province, has excellent historical development and continuity, with a rich traditional culture and musical type. Finally, among the Zhuang ethnic groups in Funing County, the music culture of the Poya Village is the most representative; the folk songs are rich, and there are many kinds of

folk songs. The folk songs of Poya Village are well-known through re-composing and have gradually moved towards national and international perspectives. Lou (2016) construed that the 'Poya Song Book' has shined in China and even on the world stage and is known by more and more people (Lou, 2016). The 'Poya Song Book' is officially recognised as a national intangible cultural heritage. Lu (2011) further explained that the 'Poya Song Book' is a classic example of folk song culture inheritance (Lu, 2011).

Based on the above statements, the study will take the music of the Zhuang ethnic group in Poya Village, Funing County, Yunnan Province, China, as the research scope, explore the current status of the sustaining of traditional folk songs in their communities, and then explore more methods that are conducive to the sustaining of local folk songs.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study focuses on the sustainability of folk songs in Poya Village. The literature review reveals that while some Chinese scholars have studied Poya folk songs, the majority have concentrated on the ontology of music, music education, or examined it through text symbols. There is no comprehensive analysis or investigation that has been conducted on the influence of culture on sustaining folk songs, and not one researcher has examined the function of local folk musicians as keepers of cultural heritage in the continuation of folk songs. Consequently, the study will provide more ideas and contributions to sustaining folk songs in Poya Village. Likewise, it will facilitate the engagement of an increased number of individuals in the local community in the sustaining and learning of folk songs, then enhancing the sustainability of the local traditional music culture. Furthermore, the investigation into sustaining folk

songs in Poya Village has the potential to enhance current theoretical knowledge in the field of ethnomusicology in China. This research can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of sustaining folk music from various perspectives and serve as a valuable case reference for future studies on sustaining ethnic music.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Folk song: A folk song is defined as a traditional song of a particular region or group of people (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2009, p. 363). The folk songs addressed in the study refer to the traditional songs of the Zhuang ethnic minority in Poya Village. The contents of folk songs are the expression of ethnic life, and the singing form is musical dialogue in an antiphonal style.

Culture: Culture is defined as the customs and beliefs, art, way of life, and social organisation of a particular country or group (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2015, p. 364). The culture in the study refers to the traditional culture in the history of the Zhuang ethnic group in Poya Village, which includes folk songs, language, customs, and festivals.

Inheritance strategy: Inheritance is defined as the transmission of particular characteristics from generation to generation by means of the genetic code, which is transferred to offspring in the gametes (Oxford Dictionary of Science, 2010, p. 421). Strategy is defined as a long-range plan for achieving something or reaching a goal, or the skill of making such plans (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2009, p. 942). In the study, the inheritance strategy refers to formulating a cultural inheritance strategy for Poya Village and giving local people advice on sustaining folk songs so as to achieve the continuation of folk songs.

Sustain: Sustain is defined as providing enough of what somebody or something needs in order to live or exist; to make something continue for some time without becoming less (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2015, p. 1527). In the study, sustain refers primarily to the future continuation and maintenance of local folk songs in Poya Village.

Evaluate: Evaluate is defined as judging or calculating the quality, importance, amount, or value of something (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2009, p. 315). In the study, evaluate refers to the validation of evaluating the cultural inheritance strategy framework to ensure the accuracy and adaptability of the cultural inheritance strategy framework formulated in the study.

1.10 Organisation of the Thesis

This section organises the main study content into chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed account of the study and encompasses the background research on sustaining traditional Chinese folk music and Poya folk songs, problem statements, research objectives and research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the definition of terms, and chapter conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter focuses mainly on the discussion of concepts and ideas related to the research problem, which will be used to establish the theoretical and conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research design, the location, the sample population and sampling methods, the data collection and analysis, and evaluation methods.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the data findings of the three questions proposed in the study and then interprets the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the three research objectives and questions of the study and provides an overview of the significance, limitations, contributions, and future recommendations of the whole study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study explores possible approaches to sustaining the folk song of Poya Village, China, to formulate a cultural inheritance strategy framework. Thus, in this chapter, the literature review will be discussed with an overview of the intangible cultural heritage and its representative inheritors, with the aim of comprehending its significance. Because Poya folk songs are intangible cultural heritage, and it has been observed in preliminary studies that inheritors play an irreplaceable role in their sustaining, this part of the literature will be closely related to the overall research background and will provide key clues for the part on inheritors in the subsequent framework formulation. Subsequently, it will provide a synopsis of the relevant literature that scholars have found on sustaining the folk songs and further insights into the present status of the research on sustaining Poya folk songs. In this part of the literature, the main focus is on reviewing the current scholarly perspectives in this field, providing a reference for the study of sustaining Poya folk songs, and thereby facilitating the search for more comprehensive approaches to improve sustaining Poya folk songs. Furthermore, the study will investigate the relevant scholars' research on the cultural inheritance strategy and then conduct a comprehensive examination of the literature related to the framework evaluation. This part of the literature is closely related to the formulation of a subsequent cultural inheritance strategy framework in this study. By reviewing the relevant literature, it not only deepens the understanding of cultural inheritance but also provides a theoretical foundation and reference for the formulation of a framework. The relevant evaluation literature offers guidance on the evaluation methods and evaluation ideas of the research question three of this study.

According to the above literature discussion and combined research problem, the study deals with three concepts: first is music, including the concept of folk songs; second is behaviour, which also mainly covers the observed variables of sustain actions and learn actions; and last is cultural inheritance, which involves a number of activities and ideas related to cultural inheritance. These three concepts, as well as extended concepts and ideas, will form the theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage and Inheritors

2.2.1 Intangible cultural heritage

The intangible cultural heritage is an important component of the overall human heritage, and it has common and distinctive features. It serves as a manifestation of artistic and cultural diversity. This is a cultural inheritance that emerges from productive activities, encompassing not just the daily interactions of labourers but also the solidification of their shared knowledge.

According to Article 2.1 of the Convention (UNESCO, 2003), intangible cultural heritage is defined as:

The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible

with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development. It is also manifested in the following domains (Heritage, 2003):

(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship (Heritage, 2003).² (Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 2—Definitions)

According to the concept of intangible cultural heritage, its content and importance are reflected in the following aspects:

1) the concept of sustainability. Sustainability is the essential basis for ensuring its continuation, maintenance, and development. This is primarily achieved by implementing diversification methods in certain material carriers or among specific groups of people. Put simply, the intangible cultural heritage could potentially be perceived either as a material form or as the product of an individual's creative expression. They demonstrate specific cultural characteristics through intellectual creation, labour results, and skills. The intangible cultural heritage is frequently inseparable from the people's way of life, the social environment, and their ethnic history. It relies on specific agents to be passed down in the form of sounds, images, and skills. Unlike other living entities, whether animals or plants, people are not only objects of cultural preservation but also subjects. They are not only cultural carriers and transmitters but also agents in the heritage enterprise itself (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). The intangible cultural heritage, through its unique forms of expression, allows

² <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2>

for the sustainable demonstration of diverse cultural practices and ideas. Its sustainability plays a crucial role in shaping the cultural traditions of the respective era.

2) Spiritual significance. The intangible cultural heritage serves as the foundation for spiritual and cultural enrichment. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), made up of all immaterial manifestations of culture, represents the variety of living heritage of humanity as well as the most important vehicle of cultural diversity (Lenzerini, 2011). The cultural significance of intangible cultural heritage embodies the fundamental tenets of spiritual culture. Every intangible cultural heritage encompasses a distinct historical culture and ethnic sentiment and embodies a unique spiritual worth.

3) Cultural content. Intangible cultural heritage's cultural content is primarily reflected in how people produce and live. It relies mainly on the verbal instructions being passed on and preserves cultural diversity. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) creations include, amongst others, music, dance, singing, theatre, human skills, and craftsmanship. These cultural expressions are usually transmitted orally and/or using gestures and are modified over a period of time through a process of collective recreation (Dimitropoulos et al., 2018). The intangible cultural heritage undergoes ongoing development due to changing environments and historical production conditions, and its significance is reflected in its distinctive characteristics.

2.2.2 Inheritors

The intangible cultural heritage's uniqueness is demonstrated by its non-renewability and reliance on a carrier for its existence. People are the primary agents in the dissemination process. Protecting the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage is the key. Intangible cultural heritage is derived from the special way of life and production of the nation, and it is dependent on people. Heart-to-mouth transmission is its