

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KUNMING TUNE AND KUNMING CAVE SCRIPTURE MUSIC IN YUNNAN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage, such as Kunming tune and Dongjing music, faces significant challenges in an era marked by globalization and digitalization. The research objective of this study is to systematically examine and compare the post-2005 development trajectories and contemporary adaptation mechanisms of these two representative musical forms in Yunnan Province, with a specific focus on their inheritance status, functional transformation, and communication innovations. Methodologically, this research employs an integrated strategy, combining detailed musical form analysis (including comparative spectrographic and rhythmic studies of archival and contemporary recordings), structured digital ethnography (involving a systematic analysis of 120 short-video samples based on defined selection criteria and coding parameters), and multi-site fieldwork. The principal findings demonstrate that Kunming tune has pursued a path of "digital integration," successfully adapting to short-video platforms through measurable rhythmic acceleration and visual restructuring to reach younger audiences. In contrast, Dongjing music has developed a "sacred-secular" dual-track model, strategically expanding into cultural performance and tourism while preserving core ritual authenticity. Based on these findings, the study proposes and elucidates a "dynamic re-balance" theoretical framework. This framework analyzes the continuous negotiation between the internal cultural logics of each form and external modernizing forces, offering insights of both theoretical and practical significance for intangible cultural heritage policy and the sustainable modernization of traditional arts.

Keywords: Yunnan Province, Kunming tune, Kunming cave classic music, music development

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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on two representative forms of intangible cultural heritage in Yunnan Province, China: Kunming Tune and Kunming Dongjing (Cave Scripture) Music. Kunming Tune is a genre of Han folk song deeply rooted in the agricultural civilization of the Dianchi Lake Basin. Characterized by its improvisational antiphonal singing form, distinctive local dialect rhymes, and the absence of fixed lyrics allowing for on-the-spot lyrical creation (Chen Baolu, 2025), it serves as a vital repository of shared sonic memories and a medium of social entertainment for local communities. In stark contrast, Kunming Dongjing Music is a sophisticated form of ritual music that integrates elements from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism into a strict ceremonial system. It carries profound religious significance and embodies orthodox liturgical beliefs through its rigorous, procedural performance structure and instrumentations (Zhang Xingrong, 1998). Although both were inscribed on the Yunnan Provincial and national intangible cultural heritage lists around the mid-2000s, they originate from fundamentally different cultural spheres—secular folk art and sacred ritual practice, respectively, making them ideal subjects for a comparative study on differential adaptation.

The ecological context for the inheritance and development of these traditional arts has undergone a profound and accelerated transformation since the early 21st century. This period has been defined by the dual, intertwining forces of globalization and digitalization, which have reshaped cultural consumption and dissemination patterns worldwide. Concurrently, China's nationwide intangible cultural heritage safeguarding policies, initiated in the early 2000s, have provided a new institutional framework that simultaneously offers support and imposes new expectations on heritage practices. Within this complex milieu, the spatial and social contexts of these musical forms have radically shifted. Historically performed in fields and at folk festivals, Kunming Tune has now migrated to the algorithmic realms of short-video platforms like Douyin, adapting to a logic of virality and instant engagement (Guo Qingqing, 2019). Its performance venues have also evolved from rural settings to urban parks, reflecting broader demographic shifts (Chen Baolu, 2025). Similarly, Dongjing Music has expanded from the sacred, confined space of the temple scripture altar to the public, secular stages of folk custom exhibitions and cultural tourism performances. This fundamental shift in context encapsulates the central tension in contemporary cultural heritage management: the ongoing negotiation between “protection” and “development,” and the delicate balancing act between maintaining “authenticity” and embracing necessary “innovation.”

Conducting a systematic, in-depth comparative study of these two musics is of significant theoretical and practical urgency. Theoretically, it compels a move beyond static, museum-style preservation paradigms toward a dynamic understanding of “living heritage.” By examining their divergent adaptation practices over the past two decades, this research aims to reveal the specific mechanisms and internal logics each employs when confronting similar macro-social pressures. This can contribute significantly to mid-range theories of cultural change, acculturation, and the “living heritage” paradigm by providing a nuanced, empirically grounded comparative case. Practically, a clear understanding of their distinct strategic responses—Kunming Tune's path of ontological digital integration versus Dongjing Music's strategy of functional stratification—is not merely academic. It provides critical, evidence-based insights for policymakers and cultural practitioners. Such insights are essential for formulating more targeted, effective, and sustainable safeguarding strategies that respect the intrinsic nature of different heritage types, moving away from one-size-fits-all approaches.

Kunming Tune and Kunming Dongjing Music constitute an ideal pair for this comparative investigation. As prominent and officially recognized representatives of Yunnan's soundscape—often cited together as key local music varieties (Chen Baolu, 2025)—they share a common regional, historical, and policy environment. This shared context controls for many external variables, allowing for a clearer examination of how internal factors shape outcomes. Their core difference lies in their foundational “cultural genes”: one is folk-based, improvisational, and entertainment-oriented; the other is ritual-based, structured, and sanctity-

oriented. When faced with nearly identical external forces (digital media platforms, tourism markets, heritage policies), their responses are strategically divergent. This divergence offers a valuable natural experiment to dissect how different types of intangible cultural heritage develop unique adaptation mechanisms and to explore what constitutes a sustainable “dynamic balance” for each.

Despite their cultural significance and the scholarly attention they have received, existing research presents several interconnected limitations that this study directly addresses. First, there is a notable comparative gap. Most scholarship, including recent morphological studies (e.g., Chen Baolu, 2025), treats them as isolated cases. There is a lack of systematic research that places them within the same analytical framework to explicitly reveal and explain their differential adaptation strategies (e.g., Guo Qingqing, 2019; Hu Tuo, 2023). This oversight limits our understanding of the spectrum of possible heritage responses to modernity. Second, there is theoretical and analytical fragmentation. While existing studies have effectively described phenomena like “digitization” or “functional stratification,” their analytical frameworks often focus on single dimensions (e.g., media impact, policy analysis, or musical form). They frequently fail to integrate the multidimensional interplay between musical ontology, practitioner agency, policy engineering, market dynamics, and technological affordances into a coherent explanatory model. This makes the “how” and “why” of the adaptation process unclear. Third, methodological approaches can lack empirical rigor and transparency, particularly in the analysis of musical change (relying on description over precise measurement) and in the sampling strategies for digital content analysis. This affects the reliability, replicability, and persuasive power of the findings.

In direct response to these identified gaps, this study aims to systematically examine, compare, and theorize the post-2005 development trajectories and contemporary adaptation mechanisms of Kunming Tune and Kunming Dongjing Music. To achieve this, the research employs a triangulated methodological strategy designed for both depth and rigor: 1) Rigorous musical form analysis, comparing archival and contemporary recordings through precise notation, rhythmic, and spectrographic study to quantify ontological change; 2) Structured digital ethnography, involving the systematic analysis of a large sample (N=120) of short-videos based on transparent selection criteria and a multi-layered coding scheme; and 3) Multi-sited fieldwork, including interviews and participatory observation across both sacred and secular performance contexts. By synthesizing findings from these methods, the study constructs and applies a “dynamic re-balance” analytical framework. This framework seeks to explain how these traditional arts, guided by their distinct internal logics, continuously negotiate with external forces to find new, context-specific equilibrium points between preservation and adaptation. Ultimately, this work aims not only to deepen the scholarly understanding of these two specific heritage practices but also to generate transferable theoretical and practical insights for the broader, global challenge of sustaining intangible cultural heritage in the 21st century.



Figure 1 Tengchong Dongjing Music (2020)

Note: The people of Tengchong admire Dongjing and love Dongjing music.

Source: Tengchong Culture and Tourism (2020)

LITERATURE REVIEWS

1) Literature Review of Core Keywords

1.1 The Development of Kunming Tune

Centering around "the development of Kunming Tune", existing research mainly outlines its transformation trajectory from local folk songs to digital heritage. Early research focused on the ontological form and community foundation. For example, Xia Lu (2016) recorded the survival status of Kunming Tune around Dianchi Lake through field narratives. As research deepened, scholars began to systematically analyze its musical ontology. Chen Baolu (2025) comprehensively analyzed the style characteristics, melodic characteristics, and singing characteristics of Kunming Tune from the perspective of music morphology, and focused on exploring the internal relationships between it and local music genres such as Yunnan Dian Opera and Hua deng, aiming to restore its changing trajectory against the backdrop of social changes. His research pointed out that Kunming Tune has no fixed lyrics, has the characteristic of impromptu lyric - filling, and there are a wide variety of tunes. He also analyzed in detail the rhythm, line r words, and the combination characteristics of singing and reciting in tracks such as "Shua Shan Tune" and "The River Rises with Surging Sands" (Chen Baolu, 2025). Against the background of changes in the media environment, the research focus has shifted to digital dissemination. Guo Qingqing (2019, 2020) systematically investigated the melodic form of Kunming Tune, deeply analyzed the profound relationship between dialects (such as Yi - branch dialects and northern dialects) and melody composition, and innovatively explored its interaction strategies with modern urban life and new media platforms. Through musicological analysis of specific tracks such as "Cai Tune" and "Shua Shan Tune", her research revealed the morphological characteristics of Kunming Tune such as "colloquialism" and "combination of singing and reciting" (Guo Qingqing, 2020), providing a preliminary framework for understanding its "communication innovation". Recently, Shen Jiahao (2024) has paid attention to the changes in the melodic characteristics of Kunming Tune in the context of cultural integration. These achievements have laid the foundation for this study to understand the "digital integration" phenomenon of Kunming Tune from different aspects. However, most of the research on its digital practice still remains at the level of strategy description or morphological analysis, lacking empirical measurement and systematic evidence of the specific quantitative changes (such as precise rhythm acceleration, structural modularization, etc.) of the musical ontology in the process of digital dissemination.

1.2 The Development of Kunming Dongjing Music

Centered around "the development of Kunming Dongjing Music", the academic context clearly shows an evolution from historical review to functional analysis. Zhang Xingrong's (1998) groundbreaking work systematically expounded its history and rigorous system as a carrier of the combined Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism culture, laying a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent research. Subsequent studies delved into its contemporary transformation. Hu Tuo (2023), by constructing a functional genealogy, analyzed the expansion of Dongjing Music from religious rituals to the public cultural field and clearly pointed out the trend of its "functional stratification". These studies together confirm the phenomenon of the parallel development of the "sacred - secular" dual - track of Dongjing Music in contemporary practice, which is directly related to the "functional transformation" goal of this study. However, most of the existing analyses focus on phenomenon description or in - depth description of a single path (such as ritual or performance), lacking an integrated study that places the "sacred" and "secular" tracks within the same analytical framework to explore their co - existence logic, interaction mechanisms, and internal tensions.

1.3 The Development of Music (in the Context of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Yunnan Province)

In the macro - context of Yunnan's multiculturalism and intangible cultural heritage protection

n, discussing "the development of music" necessarily involves a dialogue between tradition and modernity. Existing research generally points out that the waves of globalization and digitalization, as well as top - down intangible cultural heritage policies, are the key external forces shaping the contemporary trajectory of traditional music (as stated in relevant policy research). This provides the legitimacy for this study to compare Kunming Tunes and Dongjing Music within the same modernization pressure field. However, existing literature often discusses influencing factors such as policies, the market, and technology separately, failing to fully reveal how these forces interact and link with the "cultural genes" inherent in music, thus giving rise to differential adaptation results. For example, most research separately discusses how policy support promotes inheritance or how the market changes the performance forms, but rarely deeply analyzes how these external forces specifically interact with the improvisational and open "folk entertainment genes" of Kunming Tunes or the sacred and ritualistic "religious ritual genes" of Dongjing Music, and ultimately lead to different development paths.

2) Review of Relevant Theoretical Perspectives and Research Limitations

To achieve the goal of "systematically examining and comparing development trajectories and adaptation mechanisms", this study needs to construct a more integrated and explanatory analytical framework based on existing research. Existing literature provides a partial perspective for understanding the two types of music, but there are the following key limitations:

2.1 The Separation and Integration Needs of Theoretical Perspectives

First, the research perspectives are in a state of separation. Most studies regard Kunming Tunes and Dongjing Music as independent cases. Although there are in - depth analyses of each (Chen Baolu's research on the form of Kunming Tunes in 2025; Hu Tuo's research on the functions of Dongjing Music in 2023), there is a lack of systematic comparison. The absence of such a comparison makes it difficult to reveal the different strategies and underlying logic adopted by traditional arts that are both in Yunnan, influenced by the intangible cultural heritage policy but rooted in different cultural genes (folk entertainment vs. religious sacredness) when facing similar modern - day pressures. Second, there is a problem of fragmentation in the analytical framework. Although research has touched on phenomena such as "digitization" (Guo Qingqing, 2019, 2020) and "functional stratification" (e.g., Hu Tuo, 2023), the analysis often limits itself to phenomenon description or the influence of a single factor (such as the media or the market), failing to incorporate multiple dimensions such as the musical ontology, inheritance subjects, policy environment, market dynamics, and digital technology into a coherent theoretical framework to systematically explain how they interact and jointly shape the development trajectory. For example, Guo Qingqing (2019) focused on the influence of new media platforms but did not fully integrate policy and market factors; Chen Baolu (2025) sorted out the relationship between musical forms and local varieties but did not extend to the deep - seated influence of contemporary digital communication. This makes the explanation of the adaptation dynamic mechanism seem scattered, and it is difficult to extract an analytical model of universal significance.

2.2 Construction of the Theoretical Framework of This Research

To make up for the above limitations, this study introduces and integrates the following theoretical perspectives to form the core framework of "dynamic rebalancing":

The theory of acculturation and change: As a macro foundation, this theory focuses on how cultural systems achieve continuity in the face of rapid external environmental changes through innovation, selective retention, and functional adaptation. This provides the fundamental logic for this study to analyze the migration of the two types of music from traditional contexts to new fields such as digital and cultural tourism.

The "Living Heritage" theory of intangible cultural heritage: This theory transcends the concept of static protection and emphasizes the vitality and inevitability of evolution of heritage in community practices. It supports this research to shift from adhering to "authenticity" to exam

ining how "heritage practices" themselves generate new meanings and functions in contemporary interactions, providing direct support for the proposal of "dynamic re - equilibrium".

Core analytical concepts: This research will specifically apply functional stratification/transformation (drawing on Hu Tuo's analytical approach in 2023) to analyze the evolution of social roles, and use digital survival/media transformation (combining Guo Qingqing's research perspective in 2019) to analyze how technology reshapes the musical ontology and its dissemination. Eventually, these will be integrated under the core concept of dynamic re - equilibrium. This concept aims to describe how traditional music, amidst multiple tensions such as "protection and development", "core genes and modern expressions", and "sacred and secular", seeks a creative and dynamic balancing process through continuous contextualized practices. This framework aims to overcome the fragmentation of existing research and provide an analytical tool capable of systematically explaining the differential adaptation mechanisms of Kunming Tune and Dongjing Music.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1) Literature research method

This method aims to build the historical and theoretical foundation of the research. Three types of literature were systematically collected and analyzed: First, basic historical literature research. Visits were made to the Yunnan Provincial Library and the Kunming City Archives to systematically retrieve and analyze the records of folk and religious ceremonies such as the "March 3rd Song Festival" and the "Wenchang Festival" in local chronicles like "Yunnan General Annals" and "Annals of Kunming Prefecture". At the same time, key attention was paid to the descriptions of music activities in central Yunnan in the literary notes of Yang Shen in the Ming Dynasty, such as "Records of Yunnan", in order to cross - verify and trace the historical context of the introduction and spread of Dongjing music. Second, modern academic literature and musical score analysis. Academic monographs, journal articles, and dissertations on Kunming tunes and Dongjing music were systematically sorted out to grasp the current research situation and theoretical frontiers. In addition, a detailed analysis was carried out on the manuscript of folk song collection in the 1950s stored in the Yunnan Provincial Art Archives (such as "Selected Kunming Folk Songs"), and it was compared with the authoritative notation in "Integrated Chinese Folk Music · Yunnan Volume", providing a reliable text and musical score basis for the accurate analysis of musical forms.

2) Interview method

To obtain the "tacit knowledge" and subjective interpretation behind the formal rules, this study conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants.

Interview design and implementation: Based on the principle of "purposeful sampling", 8 key informants were selected, including 3 representative inheritors and senior performers of Kunming melody and Dongjing music 3 local scholars who have long been engaged in the research of Yunnan traditional music; and 2 grassroots cultural cadres familiar with relevant community cultural activities.

Interview content and data processing: The interviews were carried out around three core dimensions:

- 1) Personal learning experience and specific ways of skill inheritance.
- 2) Personalized understanding and interpretation of core techniques such as the improvisation rules of "duoju" and the singing method of Jingqiang.
3. Personal observations on the functional changes and survival status of music in contemporary society.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim into text materials, and then thematic analysis was used for coding and induction to supplement and enliven the literature analysis.

3) Digital Ethnography Method

This method aims to systematically analyze the digital practice of Kunming Tune on short - video platforms. The research follows a clear set of sample - screening criteria and a content - analysis quality framework to ensure the systematicness and credibility of the study.

Sample - screening criteria: On platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou, after preliminary searches using keywords like "Kunming Tune" and "Yunnan folk songs", 120 videos were selected from over 300 initial videos as the final analysis samples according to the following three core criteria:

- 1) Communication influence: The samples should cover different levels of high (likes > 100,000), medium (likes 10,000 - 100,000), and low (likes < 10,000) to reflect the breadth of content reach.
- 2) Content integrity: The video should completely present at least one musical segment or performance event. Exclude content with only background music or extremely fragmented content (such as less than 15 seconds) without a core performance.
- 3) Representativeness of the creative subject: Ensure that the samples cover diverse publishing subjects such as official cultural institutions, certified intangible cultural heritage inheritors, amateur enthusiasts, and commercial accounts, to reflect the production logic under different motivations.

Content - analysis quality framework: The analysis of the selected samples adopts a framework that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure the depth and objectivity of the analysis.

- 1) Formal parameter measurement: Use audio - analysis software to measure core quantitative indicators such as rhythm speed, and compare it with the traditional recordings in the archives to accurately calculate the acceleration percentage; count the duration proportion of the "duoju" part to evaluate the structural changes.
- 2) Content coding system: Code the visual scenes of the video (field, stage, indoor, etc.), narrative strategies (whether cultural explanation subtitles are added), and interaction modes (challenges, co - shooting, etc.) to analyze the ways of meaning reconstruction.
- 3) Contextualized interpretation: Combine the above - mentioned quantitative and coded data with the context such as the title, comments, and publisher information of the video for a comprehensive interpretation, avoiding mechanical analysis divorced from the context.

4) Observation method

This method aims to comprehensively record the process, details and social interactions of music performances in natural settings.

Immersive observation of ritual scenes: After obtaining permission, full - length video recordings and multi - track audio recordings were made of two complete Taoist ritual activities at Zhenqingguan in the suburbs of Kunming and a Dongjing Association in a certain community. The observation focused on the precise correspondence between ritual behaviors (such as opening the altar, offering sacrifices) and specific musical procedures (such as playing "Kaijingji", striking the yunluo), as well as the body postures, expressions and interaction patterns of all participants (Taoist priests, musicians, believers) during the music performance.

Multi - point observation of folk activities: At folk occasions such as the "March 3rd" Folk Song Festival, dual - camera shooting was used to record the scene of antiphonal singing of Kunming tunes. In addition to recording the singing, the camera lenses especially focused on the micro - expressions and gestures of the singers when they improvised "duoju", as well as the immediate reactions (laughter, applause, comments) of the on - looking audience, in order to micro - analyze the competition, cooperation and social interaction mechanisms in their collective creation.

5) Research Tools

Data collection tools: Professional recording equipment and video equipment are used for field recording and video recording; interview outlines are used to guide semi-structured interviews; archives and databases are used for literature retrieval.

Data analysis tools: Audio analysis software (such as Audacity, Sonic Visualiser) is used to measure parameters such as rhythm and duration of the music itself; qualitative data analysis software (such as NVivo) or manual coding systems are used for thematic analysis of interview texts and field notes; a comparative analysis matrix is used to systematically sort out the similarities and differences between the two types of music in dimensions such as inheritance, function, and dissemination.

6) Data analysis and presentation

Data Analysis: Qualitative data (literature, interview transcripts, observation notes) is inductively analyzed through content analysis and thematic analysis to extract core categories and relationships regarding inheritance patterns, functional transformation, and adaptation strategies. Quantitative data (such as the duration of ritual music passages, the percentage of short - video rhythm acceleration) undergoes descriptive statistical analysis to provide objective evidence for qualitative judgments. Ultimately, all analyses are integrated within the theoretical framework of "dynamic re - balance" to systematically explain the similarities, differences, causes of the development trajectories and adaptation mechanisms of the two types of music.

Data Presentation: The research findings will be presented through analytical narratives, supplemented by tables (such as inheritor information, function comparison tables), graphs (such as development trajectory models, adaptation mechanism diagrams), and selected field video screenshots to clearly and multi - dimensionally display the research results and directly respond to the research objectives.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1) Define the contemporary inheritance trajectories of the two types of music: Coexistence of crisis and transformation

Through a diachronic investigation of the inheriting groups and inheriting practices, this study clearly reveals the common challenges and heterogeneous paths faced by the two types of music in the dimension of "inheritance status quo". The inheritance trajectory of the Kunming Tune presents the distinct characteristics of the coexistence of "accelerated digital migration" and "superficialization of skill inheritance". Field data shows that the average age of its representative inheritors reaches 68 years old, and the problem of aging of the inheritance subjects is severe. At the same time, its inheritance method has undergone a fundamental shift: from the traditional model relying on regional communities, based on "oral and mental instruction" and long-term immersion, it has rapidly shifted to standardized imitation and instant dissemination relying on short-video platforms. This transformation is intrinsically related to its inherent improvisational tradition (Chen Baolu, 2025) and communication strategies for adapting to new media (Guo Qingqing, 2019).

This research, through a one-year follow-up observation, found that the learning path of a young learner (surname Wang, 25 years old) for "Shua Shan Tunes" has undergone a fundamental change. Traditionally, learners need to participate in rural "song festivals" for a long time, and master the rhythms of improvised "duo sentences" and the skills of dialect rhyming through observation, antiphonal singing, and the immediate guidance of master singers. This learning method reflects the traditional inheritance logic of Kunming melody, which is transmitted orally and learned by heart, and improvised and composed during collective antiphonal singing (Chen Baolu, 2025; Guo Qingqing, 2020).

However, the main learning materials for this trainee are 15 - 30 - second short video clips released by the Douyin account "@Dianchi Singer". These videos usually only showcase the most exciting and fixed lines of antiphonal singing, accompanied by subtitles and special effects. Quantitative analysis shows that the average duration proportion of "duo sentences" in such short videos is only 63% of that in traditional live performances, and the melody and lyric structure are highly patterned. Another typical case is that in a certain online market activity during the "Third Day of the Third Lunar Month", the organizer - released Kunming tune challenge uniformly used a fixed accompaniment melody and a 30 - second duration template, encouraging users to "shoot the same style". This directly led to the rapid standardization of the performance form, but sacrificed the diversity and depth of improvisation, This creates a tension with the core feature of the Kunming tune, which is "no fixed lyrics, improvisational lyric - filling" (Chen Baolu, 2025).

The inheritance trajectory of Kunming Dongjing Music is characterized by the dual parallelism of "adherence to the ritual standard" and "diversion of exhibition practices". Example analysis: The authenticity adherence of the "sacred" track and the functional adaptation of the "secular" track. In core religious ritual occasions, its inheritance and practice strictly abide by traditional rituals. For example, during the "Wenchang's Birthday" ritual observed at Zhenqing Taoist Temple on the outskirts of Kunming in 2023, the entire set of rituals lasted nearly four hours. The musical procedures (including the opening chant, recitation of scriptures, sending off the saints, etc.) were highly consistent with the rituals recorded in the Ming Dynasty "Daozang". The performers were all senior members of the scripture association, with an average age of over 60 years old. Its inheritance has a clear pedigree and is closed , Aimed at maintaining its systematicness and sacredness as a carrier of the combined culture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Zhang Xingrong, 1998).

In sharp contrast, during the same period, the daily fixed-point performance of "Dongjing Ancient Music" for tourists in a certain ethnic village in Kunming. In order to adapt to the 90-minute performance duration and the tourism rhythm, the performance planners made significant adaptations to the traditional rituals: most of the longer and slower "main melodies" (such as "The Great Cavern Incantation") were eliminated, and instead, many melodious and fast-paced "miscellaneous melodies" (such as "Ode to Qinghe", "Sound of Auspiciousness") were strung together. Stage lighting, program narrators were added, and even simple dance choreography was added in some sections. This has formed inheritance and practice pedigrees serving different fields and following different logics (faith practice vs. cultural consumption) , The trend of "functional layering" is clearly presented (Hu Tuo, 2023).

2) Build an adaptation mechanism model: Strategic differentiation in terms of function and dissemination dimensions

In the face of the pressure of modernization, based on the vastly different "cultural genes" (folk/entertaining vs. ritual/sacred), the two types of music have developed distinct "contemporary adaptation mechanisms". The core of the adaptation mechanism of Kunming Tune lies in "ontological digital integration" and "scene - meaning reconstruction". Its social functions have shifted from field coordination and entertainment in an agricultural society (Chen Baolu, 2025) to contemporary digital cultural exhibitions and symbols of local identity. This study's quantitative and qualitative analysis of 120 popular short videos reveals their systematic adaptation strategies. A typical case is a video titled "Masters Are Among the People! Rap Showdown by Dianchi Lake" which has received over a million likes. In this video, the rhythm of the traditional song "Caidiao" was precisely accelerated by approximately 22% (from about 72 BPM to 88 BPM) through audio software to match the fast - paced and high - impact browsing habits of short videos. Visually, it uses rapidly switching close - up shots of the singers' faces and is accompanied by dynamic internet buzzword subtitles (such as "Hilarious Showdown", "King - like Dialect"), reconstructing the intellectual contest of

traditional antiphonal singing into a modern - entertainment - colored "rap battle". Although this in - depth integration strategy has successfully reached the youth group, it has also brought about "ontological dilution". The analysis shows that in more than 70% of the samples, the "duoju" (a kind of lyric pattern) has been simplified into a fixed three - to - four - sentence repeating melody module, losing the complexity of impromptu connection and the subtlety of rhyme in traditional antiphonal singing (Chen Baolu, 2025; Guo Qingqing, 2020), confirming the simplification trend under the principle of giving priority to communication efficiency. The adaptation mechanism of Kunming Dongjing Music is embodied in the "functional stratification" and "sacred - secular dual - track" model (Hu Tuo, 2023).

Research has found that it clearly differentiates into two parallel and relatively distinct tracks in the contemporary era. On the "sacred" track, for example, in the performance of "Bagua Melody" during the religious ceremony at Zhenqing Taoist Temple, the musicians close their eyes and concentrate, the tempo is steady, and the instrument configuration (sheng, guan, di, and gong) strictly follows the ancient system. The music serves to create a solemn and divine ritual atmosphere, and its "ritual function" is strictly maintained with extremely slow changes. This reflects the strict adherence to its inherent ritual system and musical procedures (Zhang Xingrong, 1998).

While on the "secular" track, such as the "Dongjing Music Appreciation" concert during the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Week" at the municipal cultural center, the practical logic is completely different. The musicians (sometimes even the same members of the religious association) will take the initiative to carry out "creative arrangements": they select melody - rich and aurally appealing melodies like "Shanpo Yang" and "Jixiang Yin" from different rituals and arrange them into a "concert suite" of about 40 minutes. In the performance, a program list is added, and the host explains the historical background. The speed and intensity of the music are also consciously enhanced to meet the tension required for stage performances and the aesthetic expectations of the audience. Its communication and innovation are mainly manifested as "expansion of the scene" rather than "reconstruction of the ontology" , This is its functional adjustment in response to the demands of the cultural and tourism market (Hu Tuo, 2023).

3) Pursue Dynamic Rebalancing: Interaction and Negotiation in Multiple Force Fields

The research further reveals that the above development trajectory and the formation of the adaptation mechanism are the result of the continuous interaction and negotiation between the internal cultural logic and external forces such as policies, markets, and technologies in a specific field, ultimately achieving a certain stage of "balance".

Examples of the shaping of policy forces: The intangible cultural heritage protection policy not only provides resources but also shapes standards. For example, in order to successfully apply for the "Provincial Inheritance Base of Dongjing Music", a certain county, under the guidance of the cultural department, organized experts and inheritors to jointly choreograph a set of "standard performance programs" with a duration of 60 minutes, including "Ritual Music Chapters" and "Elegant Music Chapters". This set of programs aims to comprehensively showcase its "rituality" and "artistry" and is used for inspections, evaluations at all levels and cultural exchanges. This policy behavior has inadvertently given rise to a kind of "new tradition" or "model drama" between the sacred and the secular, promoting the standardization of performances. This kind of standardized appeal is similar to the fixed template formed by the Kunming tune in short videos, both reflecting the pursuit of a "displayable and assessable" form under policy guidance.

Examples of the traction of market forces: The demand for cultural tourism directly drives the transformation of content. For example, a certain ancient town scenic area takes Dongjing music as the core tourist attraction and performs three shows a day. To meet the tourists' needs of "understanding and enjoying", the performance repertoire highly inclines towards melodious,

soothing and visually appealing segments (such as "Hezhang" accompanied by simple etiquette movements), and greatly compresses the "interlude" part of the instrumental performance. Regarding the Kunming tune, the market traffic logic has driven the interesting and hybrid transformation of its content. For example, many short - video accounts specifically create content that "mixes" or "parodies" the melody of the Kunming tune with popular songs to obtain more algorithmic recommendations and attention. This kind of hybrid creation can be regarded as another variant of the improvisational tradition of Kunming Diao (Chen Baolu, 2025) in the digital age to some extent, and it is a "selective borrowing" inspired by the market logic. Examples of the Reconfiguration of Technical Forces: The algorithms of digital platforms have directly reshaped the creative logic of Kunming Diao. The recommendation mechanism of short - video platforms (based on the completion rate, like rate, and comment rate) enables content that conforms to its logic (fast - paced, with conflicts and highlights) to achieve exponential dissemination. This leads creators (whether inheritors or enthusiasts) to subconsciously consider "what the platform likes" upfront when producing content, and thus make self - adjustments. The technical logic has strengthened the ontological adjustments (such as accelerating the rhythm) of Kunming Diao for the purpose of dissemination.

In contrast, the "sacred" track of Dongjing Music shows greater resistance to the direct impact of media technology. Its digital transformation is more reflected in the online dissemination of performance information and cross - regional score sharing (such as through the WeChat group "Dongjing Music" for communication). This is more consistent with its internal logic of emphasizing the integrity of the ritual and closed - door inheritance (Zhang Xingrong, 1998). Core conclusion: The development trajectories of the two types of music are a continuous process in which the inherent "flexibility" (Kunming tune) (Chen Baolu, 2025) or "stability" (Dongjing music) (Zhang Xingrong, 1998) genes continuously dialogue and game with external forces such as policies, markets, and technologies, and seek a dynamic balance point between "inheritance" and "development", "core" and "periphery", "sacred" and "secular". Kunming Tune has chosen to embrace the digital ecosystem in pursuit of "new life in integration" (Guo Qingqing, 2019), while Dongjing Music has opted to separate the sacred from the secular to achieve "continuation in coexistence" (Hu Tuo, 2023). This study conceptualizes this ongoing process of game - playing and adjustment as "dynamic re - equilibrium".

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Discussion

First, the findings of this study not only confirm the trends already pointed out in the literature, but also deepen our understanding through micro - mechanism analysis and differential comparison. The literature shows that existing studies have respectively outlined the "digital" transformation trend of Kunming melody (Guo Qingqing, 2019) and the "functional stratification" phenomenon of Dongjing music (Hu Tuo, 2023). This study further reveals that the "digital survival" of Kunming melody is not simply a content transfer, but involves a systematic adjustment of the musical ontology (such as a 15 - 20% acceleration of the rhythm). While this enhances its communication power, it also comes at the cost of "ontological dilution". The "sacred - secular" dual tracks of Dongjing music do not co - exist in a blurred way, but follow completely different practical logics and functional demands in different fields (such as Zhenqing Temple and folk art stages). More importantly, this study for the first time places the two in the same analytical framework for comparison, thus clearly revealing that when facing similar modernity pressures (globalization, digitalization, intangible cultural heritage policies), based on its folk and entertaining cultural genes, Kunming melody has chosen a "digital path based on ontological integration"; while based on its ritual and sacred cultural genes, Dongjing music has chosen an "adjustment strategy based on functional segregation". This comparative finding directly responds to the limitation of "separated

research perspectives" pointed out in the literature review. The above analysis further demonstrates that the ontological digital integration of Kunming Tune essentially represents an adaptive reconstruction of its tradition of "having no fixed lyrics and improvising lyrics" (Chen Baolu, 2025) in the digital context. The sacred-secular dual-track system of Dongjing music, on the other hand, strictly safeguards its ritual system as a carrier of the Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist composite culture (Zhang Xingrong, 1998), and only implements hierarchical expansion in its peripheral functions (Hu Tuo, 2023). Secondly, the theoretical framework of "dynamic rebalancing" proposed and verified in this research effectively integrates the problem of "fragmentation of the analytical framework" criticized in the literature review, providing a more powerful tool for systematically explaining its development mechanism. The research findings indicate that both the numerical adjustment of the Kunming melody and the functional stratification of Dongjing music are not the result of a single factor, but a dynamic process in which the internal cultural genes continuously negotiate with and seek new balance points in the force field jointly constituted by policies (project-based intangible cultural heritage protection), the market (cultural and tourism demands), technology (the logic of short-video platforms), and inheritance practices (aging, changes in the ways of inheritance and learning). For example, the standardization of inheritance and learning methods revealed in the "inheritance status" is the result of the joint action of policy-driven "standardized" inheritance and the market's demand for "teachable skills"; the simplification of ritual procedures in "functional transformation" is the product jointly shaped by cultural and tourism development under policy guidance and market demands. This framework incorporates the elements discussed separately in the literature into an interconnected explanatory system, thus more systematically clarifying the complexity and dynamics of its adaptation mechanism. The significance of the "dynamic rebalancing" framework lies in that it incorporates the attention to melodic patterns and dissemination in the Kunming tune research (such as Guo Qingqing, 2020) and the analysis of functions and systems in the Dongjing music research (such as Hu Tuo, 2023; Zhang Xingrong, 1998) into the same explanatory model, revealing how internal cultural genes lead to completely different paths under similar external pressures. This research focuses on core theoretical concepts such as "authenticity" and "living inheritance", and provides new insights through specific cases. Regarding the issue of "authenticity", this study supports a constructivist and dynamic perspective, engaging in a dialogue with the static conservation view that emphasizes "original flavor". The research finds that there are significant differences in the "authenticity" practices of the two types of music. In the "sacred" track (such as the religious ceremonies at Zhenqing Temple), Kunming Dongjing Music is committed to maintaining an "ritual authenticity" by strictly following traditional rituals and musical procedures, which is consistent with Zhang Xingrong's (1998) emphasis on its systematic nature as a carrier of the combined culture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The "authenticity" practice of Kunming Tunes is more fluid. In the dissemination of short videos, its core has shifted from complete and improvised field antiphonal singing to the extraction and repetition of "genetic symbols" such as dialectal charm and melodic fragments of the core "duoju" (a type of sentence structure). This has formed a kind of "symbolic authenticity". This transformation is supported by the internal logic of its tradition. As research points out, Kunming Tunes themselves have an improvisational tradition of "no fixed lyrics, and people improvise the lyrics" and a high degree of variability (Chen Baolu, 2025). This reveals that in the age of mediation, "authenticity" may not be a fixed and unchanging essence, but a dynamic consensus on "what are the core characteristics" jointly negotiated and constructed by the inheriting subjects and the audience based on the inherent genes of the art in different contexts. The discussion on "authenticity" in this study corroborates Guo Qingqing's (2019) observation on the reconstruction of the form and meaning of Kunming Tunes during their dissemination. It also further elaborates on Hu Tuo's (2023) description of the "adherence" to the ritual core by Dongjing music in its functional stratification. This discovery also deepens the understanding of the theory of "living inheritance". The research confirms that living inheritance is by no means passive preservation, but an active and strategic

cultural adaptation process. The practices of Kunming Tunes and Dongjing Music respectively represent two distinct "living" strategies: the former is "integrative living", which obtains vitality by deeply embedding itself in the new media ecosystem; the latter is "boundary living", which expands its living space under the premise of ensuring the stability of its core by clearly defining the practical boundary between "sacred" and "secular". Both strategies indicate that the essence of "living" lies in the exertion of the initiative of the inheritance subjects based on cultural self-awareness. The "integrative survival" echoes the consistent tradition of the Kunming tune absorbing various musical elements to form its own style in history (Chen Baolu, 2025), while the "boundary survival" reflects the wisdom of the Dongjing music in maintaining the stability of its ritual core during historical changes (Zhang Xingrong, 1998). The findings of this study have specified the macro "acculturation" theory and the meso "media change" theory in a micro - case. From the perspective of cultural acculturation, the two types of music have not moved towards a single assimilation or extinction, but have demonstrated the wisdom of "selective borrowing" and "creative transformation." The adaptation of Dongjing music to the cultural and tourism market is to transform its 宗教 connotations into an "cultural performance" for viewing, which can be regarded as a creative transformation of its functions; the adaptation of Kunming tune to the logic of short videos is the selective borrowing of formal elements such as rhythm and visual presentation. This process confirms the crucial role of subjective initiative in cultural change. From the perspective of media change, intangible cultural heritage has shifted from the physical field and one-way communication in the "First Media Age" to the virtual field and interactive communication in the digital age. The case of Kunming ditties is particularly typical. Short video platforms have not only changed their communication channels but also directly reshaped their musical ontology (acceleration and fragmentation) and creative purposes (pursuing traffic and interaction). However, the "sacred" rules of Dongjing music relatively resist the direct reconstruction of its ontology by this medium, and its digital transformation is more reflected in the online dissemination of performance information. This reveals that different types of intangible cultural heritage have different "sensitivities" to the impact of media technology.

Conclusion

This study takes the development trajectories of Kunming Tunes and Kunming Dongjing Music, which were included in the intangible cultural heritage list after 2005, as the research objects, and systematically examines and compares their contemporary adaptation mechanisms. The study finds that in the face of the challenges of modernity, the two have shown a clear path of differentiation: Kunming Tunes have successfully integrated into the short - video ecosystem through rhythm acceleration and visualization adaptation, achieving a digital transformation of the communication method and an expansion of the audience; Dongjing Music, on the other hand, through the functional stratification strategy of the "sacred - secular" dual - track, has effectively expanded its space for folk performances and cultural - tourism integration while maintaining the authenticity of the ritual. These findings directly respond to the exploration of "development trajectories" and "adaptation mechanisms" in the research objectives. The study also reveals that both face common structural challenges at the level of inheritance subjects, including the aging of the inheritance group, the transformation of the inheritance method of skills, and the risk of performance simplification under the tension between policies and the market. This indicates that the contemporary adaptation process is always accompanied by ontological adjustment and the negotiation of cultural logic.

Based on this, this study proposes a theoretical framework of "dynamic re - balance" to explain how traditional music constructs a creative and sustainable survival and development model through continuous practical dialogue between maintaining cultural genes and responding to the modern context. This research not only provides a systematic analysis for understanding the specific practices of Kunming Tunes and Dongjing Music, but its framework and conclusions also offer a reference with both theoretical explanatory power and practical

inspiration for the protection, inheritance, and innovative transformation of intangible cultural heritage in a broader sense.

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