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Original Research Article

Artistic Characteristics and Themes Analysis of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao Folk Songs

Cailing He¹; Rungkiat Siriwongsuwan²; Lingling Liu³

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Name of Author:

1 Cailing He

Faculty of Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand.

Email: s64563806014@ssru.ac.th

2 Assist.Prof.Dr. Rungkiat

Siriwongsuwan

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand.

Email: rungkiat.si@ssru.ac.th

Corresponding Author:*

3 Prof.Dr.Lingling Liu

Guangxi Arts University

Email: 927629451@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to delve into the artistic features and themes of the Jinxiu Yao folk songs, aiming to enhance understanding and preservation of this precious cultural heritage. The research objectives are as follows:

1. Investigate the artistic characteristics of Jinxiu Yao folk songs;
 2. Examine the themes and content of Jinxiu Yao folk songs;
 3. Explore ways to strengthen the understanding and preservation of Jinxiu Yao folk songs.
- The study is based in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi Province. Three inheritors of Jinxiu Yao folk songs in this area were selected for interviews, and based on the interview content, ten representative Jinxiu Yao folk songs were chosen. The research methodology employed was the interview method. The final research findings include: 1. Understanding the artistic features of Jinxiu Yao folk songs; 2. Summarizing the creative themes of Jinxiu Yao folk songs; 3. Proposing targeted suggestions for the protection of Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Introduction

The Yao, a minority in southern China, is widely distributed with a rich and ancient history. Their culture encompasses various forms of arts, including oral traditions, music, dance, painting, and sculpture. Among these, the folk songs of the Jinxiu Yao have garnered widespread attention due to their unique artistic features and local flavors.

Jinxiu Yao folk songs originated from the productive labor and daily life of the Yao people, constituting an essential part of their existence. Typically sung in the Yao people's native language, these songs feature symbolic lyrics conveying the history, culture, beliefs, and way of life of the Yao ethnic group. Simultaneously, their melodies and tones carry a strong ethnic character, instantly recognizable as Yao music.

However, despite the significant cultural and artistic value of Jinxiu Yao folk songs, they have not received sufficient academic research and attention. Many studies on Yao folk songs remain superficial, failing to delve into their artistic features and profound meanings. Additionally, with the acceleration of the modernization process, many traditional Yao folk songs are at risk of disappearing.

Therefore, this study aims to thoroughly explore the artistic features and themes of Jinxiu Yao folk songs, seeking to enhance understanding and preservation of this precious cultural heritage. Furthermore, through the analysis and interpretation of these folk songs, we hope to gain a deeper insight into the history, culture, and way of life of the Yao people.

Objectives of the Study

1. Investigate the artistic features of Jinxiu Yao folk songs.
2. Examine the themes and content of Jinxiu Yao folk songs.
3. Explore ways to strengthen the understanding and preservation of Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Research Methodology

1. Research Planning

The first step involves outlining the initial research direction focused on the study: "Artistic Features and Theme Analysis of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs."

The second step involves preparing literature materials based on the initial research direction, classifying, organizing, and studying relevant literature.

The third step involves defining the research content, organizing the research background, and formulating research questions based on the research content.

The fourth step involves specifying the research methods and sample, as well as preparing the necessary research tools.

The fifth step involves applying research tools to conduct practical research and collecting and organizing data.

The sixth step involves quality checks on the investigation process and analyzing the collected data.

The seventh step involves drawing research conclusions.

The eighth step involves discussing the research conclusions and proposing rational recommendations based on the findings.

2. Research Methods

1. Utilizing the literature review method to investigate the fundamental aspects of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

2. Employing the interview research method to conduct interviews with three inheritors of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

3. Using the inductive method to summarize the themes and content of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, and analyzing the artistic features of these songs based on the gathered information.

3. Overall Design and Sample Data Source

Research Population:

The overall sample population for this study consists of a total of 10 Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Sample Data Source:

The data for the 10 Jinxiu Yao folk songs are derived from interviews conducted by the researchers with local folk song inheritors in Jinxiu County, Guangxi Province. This information is complemented and summarized by local cultural preservation departments.

4. Data Providers

Name	Title	Affiliation
Feng Zhiming	Associate Professor	Guangxi Normal University
Zhang Shaoqing	Junior	Fangchenggang Tourism Group
Lan Yulei	Junior	Guangxi Beiran Music Base

5. Research Tools

The primary research tool for this study is an interview outline, which includes four parts:

The first part consists of general questions that researchers use to understand the basic background of the interviewees.

The second part covers questions related to the themes and content of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

The third part focuses on questions related to the artistic features of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

The fourth part addresses questions related to the inheritance and development of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

6. Tools

The research employs a self-designed interview outline with specific questions as follows:

Interview Outline on the Artistic Features and Themes of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs

1. General Questions:

- 1) Please introduce yourself, including your identity and your connection to Yao folk songs.
 2. In your opinion, what role does Yao folk songs play in your life?
-

2. Themes/Content of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs:

- 1) What do you consider the main themes or subjects of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs?
 - 2) Can you provide examples to illustrate how these themes or subjects are manifested in the folk songs?
 - 3) When expressing these themes or subjects in Jinxiu Yao folk songs, what techniques or methods are commonly used?
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3. Artistic Features of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs:

- 1) What are the unique musical aspects of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs? For example, melody, rhythm, and tonality.
 - 2) In terms of vocal techniques, what are the characteristics of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs? For instance, methods of vocalization, tone quality, volume. What are the distinctive features in the lyrics and singing style of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs?
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4. Inheritance and Development:

- 1) What are your views on the inheritance of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs?
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- 2) What measures do you believe should be taken to promote the development and dissemination of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs?
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7. Quality Check

In this study, interviews were conducted with three inheritors of Jinxiu Yao folk songs in the Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi. All three interviewees provided positive and detailed responses to the questions outlined in the interview script. Furthermore, they elaborated extensively on the extended aspects of the questions posed in the interview outline. The researchers conducted follow-up interviews with the three participants one week and one month after the initial interviews. Upon comparing the information received during these follow-up interviews with the responses from the initial interviews, it was observed that the information obtained was consistent. Based on this, it can be confirmed that the interviews were successful, and the information collected during the interviews has been verified through the follow-up checks.

8. Data Collection

Researchers gathered information on the main themes and content of the Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs through interviews. After the interviews, the researchers organized the Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs and selected ten representative works. The statistical results are as follows:

Serial Number	Song Title	Language	Lyric Theme	Melody Type	Category
1	"Moonlight"	Yao	Moonlight, Love	Melodious and lyrical	Love Song
2	"Tea-Picking Song"	Chinese	Tea-picking, Labor	Light and cheerful	Labor Song
3	"Farewell Song"	Yao	Farewell, Longing	Melancholic and moving	Lyrical Song
4	"Peach Blossom Ballad"	Yao	Peach blossom, Love	Sweet and joyful	Love Song
5	"Dance of the Spirits"	Yao	Ritual, Spirits	Solemn and dignified	Ritual Song
6	"Spring Water Song"	Yao	Spring water, Love	Soft and tender	Love Song

Serial Number	Song Title	Language	Lyric Theme	Melody Type	Category
7	"Beast Hunting Song"	Yao	Beast hunting, Labor	Enthusiastic and uplifting	Labor Song
8	"Homeland Melody"	Chinese	Homeland, Longing	Deeply affectionate	Lyrical Song
9	"Embroidered Fragrance Bag"	Yao	Love, Life	Light and lively	Love Song
10	"Harvest Celebration"	Chinese	Harvest, Celebration	Joyful and festive	Celebration Song

9. Data Analysis

Upon completing the collection and organization of the ten selected Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, researchers categorized these works by type:

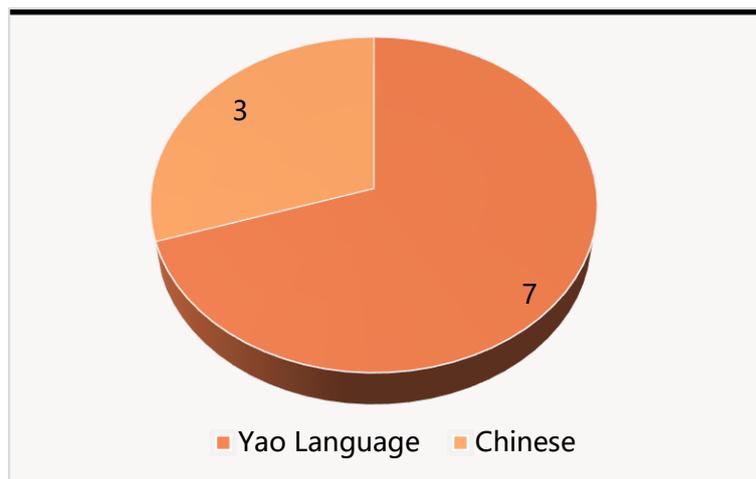


Figure 1 Language Distribution of Ten Jinxiu Yao Folk Songs.

Based on the above proportions, it is evident that in this study, among the ten selected Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, the ratio of songs using Yao language to Chinese is 7:3. Further research reveals that the Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs created and performed in Chinese are primarily of contemporary origin, whereas those composed and sung in Yao language often draw inspiration from traditional folk songs.

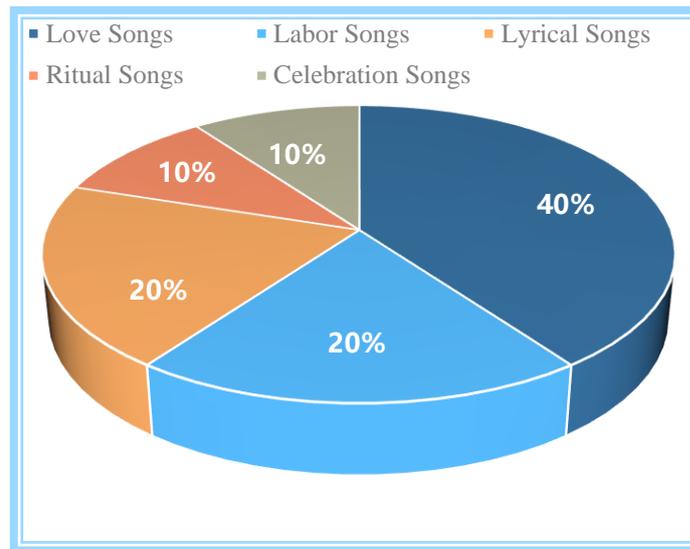


Figure 2 Distribution of Creative Themes in Ten Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Based on the above proportions, it is evident that among the ten selected Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs in this study, the creative themes primarily revolve around five main types: love songs, labor songs, lyrical songs, ritual songs, and celebratory songs. Specifically, there are four love songs, two labor songs, two lyrical songs, and one each of ritual and celebratory songs.

Results

1. History and Cultural Background of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs

(1) Origin and Development of Yao Folk Songs

Yao folk songs represent a traditional musical form in the southern regions of China, boasting a profound history and rich cultural significance. The origin of Yao folk songs can be traced back to the productive labor and daily lives of the Yao people, constituting an integral part of their existence. In the lives of the Yao people, folk songs serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a crucial means of cultural inheritance and emotional expression.

The development of Yao folk songs has undergone a lengthy historical process. In ancient times, the Yao people primarily transmitted folk songs through oral traditions, typically sung in their native language. The lyrics are imbued with symbolic meanings, conveying the history, culture, beliefs, and way of life of the Yao people. Over time, Yao folk songs gradually evolved into a distinct musical form with unique styles and characteristics (Tan Xiaoning, 2014).

In the modern era, the preservation and development of Yao folk songs face numerous challenges. With the acceleration of the modernization process, many traditional Yao folk songs are at risk of disappearing. Therefore, the protection and transmission of Yao ethnic folk songs have become a vital task for contemporary Yao people.

(2) Geographic and Cultural Background of Jinxiu Yao Folk Songs

Jinxiu County is located in the northeast of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, serving as one of the areas where the Yao people reside and playing a crucial role in the Guangxi Yao Autonomous Region. The geographic and cultural background of Jinxiu Yao folk songs has profound influences on their musical features and thematic content.

Situated in the northeastern part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Jinxiu County features complex terrain, undulating mountains, and a warm, humid climate, providing favorable natural conditions for the development of Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Over the long periods of productive labor and daily life, the Yao people in this region created numerous folk songs reflecting the natural environment and emotional experiences, and these songs have been widely disseminated and developed in Jinxiu County.

Additionally, Jinxiu County is a significant birthplace of Yao culture, boasting a rich history and cultural heritage. In the lives of the Yao people, folk songs serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a crucial means of cultural inheritance and emotional expression. In Jinxiu County, Yao folk songs have been widely inherited and developed, becoming an integral part of Yao culture (Nitzky, W. 2014).

2. Themes and Contents of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs

(1) Love Songs

In the Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, love songs represent a significant theme and content. Love songs typically portray the romantic lives of the Yao people, showcasing their sincere emotions and passionate love.

Within love songs, rhetorical devices such as metaphors, symbolism, and exaggeration are commonly employed to liken love to the most precious elements of life, as seen in lines like "Flowers bloom in red and purple, my love for you is heartfelt." These metaphors and symbols express the Yao people's yearning and pursuit of love. Additionally, love songs often delve into the complexities and tribulations of love, addressing themes such as separation and the agony of yearning between lovers. These themes not only reveal the Yao people's profound understanding of love but also illustrate their elevated aspirations for love.

(2) Labor Songs

Similar to love songs, labor songs are a primary creative theme in the Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Labor songs typically depict the productive labor of the Yao people, highlighting their industrious, simple, and persevering spirit.

Labor songs often touch upon Yao people's agricultural and handicraft activities, such as "Plowing Song" and "Weaving Song." These songs, presented in simple and straightforward language, express the Yao people's love for labor and their pursuit of a fulfilling life. Additionally, labor songs frequently involve collective labor and cooperative spirit, as seen in songs like "Cooperation Song" and "Labor Unity Song." These songs showcase the unity and cooperation of the Yao people in their productive labor, reflecting their collectivist spirit and social values.

(3) Lyrical Songs

Lyrical songs typically draw inspiration from the emotional lives of the Yao people, expressing their sincere feelings and profound emotional experiences.

In lyrical songs, various emotions such as love, familial bonds, and friendship are often explored, as seen in titles like "Yearning Song," "Farewell Song," and "Friendship Song." These songs, presented in simple and clear language, convey the Yao people's deep understanding of emotions and genuine sentiments. Lyrical songs also frequently delve into the life experiences and historical trials of the Yao people, as evident in titles like "War Song" and "Song of Displacement." These songs portray the hardships and setbacks endured by the Yao people in history and reality, reflecting their resilient, courageous, and optimistic spirit.

(4) Celebration Songs

Celebration songs typically center around the festivals and celebratory events of the Yao people, capturing their joyful, lively, and united atmosphere.

In celebration songs, traditional Yao festivals and celebratory activities are often featured, including the Spring Festival, Yao Song Festival, and Harvest Festival. These songs, characterized by cheerful and lively rhythms and melodies, express the joy and happiness of the Yao people during festivals and celebratory events. Celebration songs also often emphasize the unity and friendship of the Yao people, as seen in titles like "Unity Song" and "Harvest Song" (Jiang Xie & Xiang Jingjing, 2021). These songs depict the unity and camaraderie of the Yao people during festivals and celebratory events, similar to labor songs, primarily reflecting the collective spirit and social values of the Yao people in Jinxiu, Guangxi.

(5) Ritual Songs

Ritual songs typically draw inspiration from the religious ceremonies and traditional rituals of the Yao people, reflecting their devout, reverent, and traditional cultural values.

In ritual songs, themes often revolve around religious ceremonies and sacrificial activities, such as "Sacrifice Song" and "Worship Song." These songs, characterized by solemn and reverent atmospheres and melodies, express the Yao people's reverence and piety toward deities. Ritual songs also frequently involve traditional ceremonies and customs of the Yao people, including "Wedding Song" and "Funeral Song." These songs portray the Yao people's emphasis on and respect for traditional rituals and customs, reflecting their appreciation and preservation of traditional culture.

(6) Other Types of Folk Songs

In addition to the aforementioned types of folk songs, Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs encompass other types, such as children's songs and lullabies. These songs typically target Yao children and infants, showcasing the care and expectations of the Yao people for the next generation (Wei Guixi, 2014).

In children's songs, simple and lively melodies, along with humorous and witty lyrics, express affection for and emphasize the importance of educating children. These songs often possess playful and interactive elements, stimulating children's interest and engagement.

Lullabies are specifically crafted to lull infants to sleep. Characterized by gentle, soothing melodies and tender, comforting lyrics, these songs provide a sense of security and comfort for infants. Lullabies are typically sung by mothers or other close relatives, playing a crucial role in parent-child communication and emotional bonding.

While other types of folk songs may not be as predominant in Jinxiu Yao folk songs, they nonetheless reflect the emotions and lives of the Yao people, showcasing the diversity and richness of Yao culture. Through the study and preservation of these folk songs, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of Yao people's culture, history, and way of life.

3. Artistic Features of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs

(1) Musical Features

Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs are an integral part of Yao culture, possessing unique artistic characteristics. Among these, musical features stand out as one of the essential artistic traits of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs (Wei Guixi, 2015).

Upon analysis, researchers have summarized the musical features of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs into four aspects:

Firstly, Jinxiu Yao folk songs exhibit a melodic richness and variability, with smooth and dynamic melodic lines that carry strong emotional and expressive qualities. The melodies often build upon natural tones, integrating the language, emotions, and cultural characteristics of the Yao people, showcasing a rich local flavor and cultural connotation.

Regarding rhythm, Jinxiu Yao folk songs feature distinct and powerful rhythms, imbued with a sense of rhythm and dynamism. The rhythm typically relies on straightforward beats, incorporating the dance and life rhythms of the Yao people, resulting in a strong sense of rhythm and motion.

Secondly, Jinxiu Yao folk songs display rich and colorful harmonic expressions, featuring variety and depth in their harmonies. Harmony is usually based on simple chords, blending the voices and emotions of the Yao people, creating a strong sense of harmonic beauty and expressiveness.

In terms of instrumental accompaniment, Jinxiu Yao folk songs boast distinctive artistic characteristics, with accompaniment weaving patterns rich in local flavor and cultural connotation. Instruments typically include traditional Yao instruments such as lusheng (reed pipe wind instrument), bamboo flute, and banhu (a bowed string instrument), providing strong musical expressiveness and cultural significance.

(2) Lyrics Features

The lyrics of Jinxiu Yao folk songs possess unique charm, revealing profound emotions and depicting the life, emotions, and cultural characteristics of the Yao people. The lyrics typically express the emotions and thoughts of the Yao people in simple and clear language, carrying a strong emotional and expressive power. Furthermore, the lyrics of Jinxiu Yao folk songs are characterized by beautiful and colorful imagery, rich in poeticism and imagination. Themes often revolve around natural landscapes, character images, and traditional culture, blending the language, emotions, and cultural characteristics of the Yao people, showcasing a rich local flavor and cultural connotation.

(3) Singing Features

The singing features of Jinxiu Yao folk songs are crucial artistic traits, characterized by unique vocal techniques and singing styles. Firstly, the singing often combines both true and false voice techniques, a method that highlights the deep emotions and unique musical style of the Yao people. During the singing process, singers flexibly use true and false voices based on the emotional tone and style of the song, achieving the optimal musical effect. This unique vocal technique not only showcases the distinctive charm of Yao ethnic songs but also preserves and promotes Yao traditional culture.

Additionally, many works in Jinxiu Yao folk songs are sung in Yao language, constituting a unique appeal of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Yao language is the traditional language of

the Yao people in Jinxiu, Guangxi, with unique phonetics and pronunciation characteristics. This imparts distinctive artistic features to folk songs sung in Yao language. In Yao language singing, singers use unique pronunciation and intonation to control details such as breath and mouth shape, producing clear, bright, and soft tones. This singing style not only demonstrates the unique charm of Jinxiu Yao folk songs but also preserves and promotes Yao traditional culture.

In conclusion, Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs possess unique artistic features, including melodious and variable melodies, distinct and powerful rhythms, rich and colorful harmonies, instrument accompaniment with local characteristics and cultural connotations, sincere and profound lyrics with beautiful and colorful imagery, and unique singing styles and performance techniques. These artistic features make Jinxiu Yao folk songs a splendid treasure in Chinese ethnic music, contributing significantly to the inheritance and development of Chinese ethnic culture.

Discussion

Firstly, through the research and analysis of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, we can recognize their unique artistic features and cultural significance. These artistic features include musical characteristics, lyrical features, etc. Among them, the beautiful melody, lively rhythm, profound meaning of the lyrics, and varied singing techniques of Jinxiu Yao folk songs showcase the literary and artistic prowess of the Yao people and the aesthetic values of their music. Additionally, these features reflect the uniqueness and diversity of Yao culture.

Secondly, the themes of Jinxiu Yao folk songs encompass various aspects of the Yao people's lives, emotions, and cultural characteristics. These themes include the labor and production activities, customs, love stories, as well as historical legends, mythical stories, and religious beliefs of the Yao people. These themes not only mirror the Yao people's livelihoods and cultural heritage but also demonstrate their aesthetic tastes and values.

Lastly, through the discussion of the artistic features of Jinxiu Yao folk songs, the research elucidates the characteristics of Jinxiu Yao folk songs in terms of music, lyrics, and singing. These artistic features not only represent their intrinsic value but also contribute to the unique charm of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Conclusion

The study of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs reveals their profound artistic features and cultural significance. These songs, with their rich melodies, dynamic rhythms, meaningful lyrics, and unique singing styles, embody the artistic and aesthetic values of the Yao people. The themes of these songs encompass various aspects of the Yao people's lives, reflecting

their labor, emotions, customs, and cultural heritage. The preservation and development of Jinxiu Yao folk songs are crucial for maintaining the unique charm and cultural diversity of Chinese ethnic music. Efforts should be made to protect and promote these traditional songs, ensuring their transmission to future generations.

Recommendations

Through the research on Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs, the researchers not only clarified their artistic features and creative themes but also deeply recognized the importance and urgency of protecting, inheriting, and developing Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Based on this, the researchers have formulated three research recommendations, aiming to contribute to the inheritance and development of Guangxi Jinxiu Yao folk songs.

Strengthen research and conservation efforts for Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Jinxiu Yao folk songs are an integral part of Yao culture, with unique artistic features and cultural significance. It is crucial to enhance research and conservation efforts for Jinxiu Yao folk songs, promoting their inheritance and development.

Enhance the inheritance and development of Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Jinxiu Yao folk songs are a vital component of Yao culture with a rich historical and cultural background. Efforts should be made to strengthen the inheritance and development of Jinxiu Yao folk songs through various means such as music education, cultural exchanges, artistic creation, etc.

Intensify the promotion and publicity of Jinxiu Yao folk songs. Despite their unique artistic features and cultural significance, Jinxiu Yao folk songs may face challenges in terms of promotion and publicity. It is essential to enhance the promotion and publicity of Jinxiu Yao folk songs through various channels and methods, including concerts, cultural festivals, online dissemination, etc., to increase awareness and appreciation among a wider audience.

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