



Original Research Article

The Performance Form of Taoist Drumming in Xishan Guan, Guangfeng

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ARTICLE INFO

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Keywords:

Performance Forms, Taoist Drumming,
Artistic Styles

Article history:

Received: 12/02/2025
Revised: 25/04/2025
Accepted: 25/10/2025
Available online: 26/11/2025

How to Cite:

Meihan, Y. & Vasinarom, M. (2025). The performance form of Taoist drumming in Xishan Guan, Guangfeng. *Journal of Dhamma for Life*, 31(4), 793-808.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the artistic performance form of Taoist drum music practiced in Xishan Guan of Guangfeng, Jiangxi Province, a ritual musical tradition rooted in Taoist culture. Known locally for its distinctive drum-centered performance style, Taoist drum music serves as an essential component of the jiao-festival ceremonies conducted at Xishan Guan. Integrating elements of religious ritual music, local opera traditions, and regional folk blowing-and-percussion practices, this musical form presents a unique aesthetic that reflects both liturgical functions and local cultural identity.

The research aims to analyze the structural features, performance organization, and artistic characteristics of the four principal categories of Taoist drum music in Xishan Guan: Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui, and Xi Tang Hui. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative methodology that includes field observations, semi-structured interviews with ritual performers, and audio-visual documentation of ceremonial performances. The study population consists of Taoist priests, ritual musicians, and local cultural inheritors, with a purposive sample selected based on expertise and active participation in ritual activities. Research tools include ethnographic field notes, video recordings, and musical transcription, followed by analytical methods combining musicological analysis and comparative cultural interpretation.

Findings indicate that each category of Taoist drum music possesses a distinct instrumental configuration, rhythmic pattern, and performance function within the ritual sequence. Together, they form a cohesive musical system that embodies the spiritual symbolism, communal participation, and performative aesthetics of local Taoist culture. This research contributes to the preservation and understanding of an important regional intangible cultural heritage.



Introduction

Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming is a traditional form of religious music originating in Guangfeng District, Jiangxi Province, China. This musical practice carries a profound Taoist cultural heritage and reflects distinctive local characteristics. The origins of Xishan Guan date back to the Southern Song Dynasty when a Zhenyin Guan temple was constructed on Xishan Rock outside Guangfeng County, later renamed Xishan Guan (Wang, 2018). In Taoist terminology, "Guan" refers to a Taoist temple, signifying the religious context in which this music was cultivated. The Guangfeng Huoju Taoist musical tradition inherits elements from the Tang and Song dynasties' Jiao-tan music, while also integrating local popular songs from the Ming and Qing dynasties (Li, 2020). The repertoire primarily consists of wind and percussion instruments combined with vocal performance, commonly referred to as drum music songs. This musical form serves not only ritualistic functions but is also closely intertwined with the social and cultural life of the local population (Chen, 2019). Performance styles in Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming are diverse, encompassing four main categories: Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui, and Xi Tang Hui. While the first three categories are primarily associated with Taoist rituals, Xi Tang Hui is performed in social contexts, such as weddings, highlighting the dual religious and communal significance of this music (Zhou, 2021). The ensemble includes both Wenchang (literary) instruments, such as the Xian Feng, Yin Hua, Xiao Qing, flute, and bamboo xiao, and martial arts field instruments, including tai ping drums, war drums, and flat drums. These instruments vary in form and pitch, reflecting both musical complexity and cultural symbolism (Liu, 2017). Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drum music is more than a musical tradition; it is an essential aspect of northeastern Jiangxi's cultural identity. Taoism and Buddhism historically shaped the religious landscape of the region, influencing the development of local folk music, which often merges with customs and social rituals (Huang, 2016). As a result, this musical form represents a bridge between historical heritage and contemporary culture, offering insight into the interplay of religion, music, and local identity. Its preservation is critical for maintaining both Taoist musical traditions and broader cultural heritage.

Despite its cultural and historical significance, research on Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming remains limited. Existing studies largely focus on historical origins and ritual functions, often neglecting the following aspects: Musical Analysis: Detailed musicological analysis, including melodic structure, rhythm, and instrument-specific techniques, is scarce. Understanding these technical elements is crucial for documenting and preserving performance practices. Cultural Transmission: The mechanisms by which this music is transmitted across generations, including oral traditions, apprenticeship, and modern adaptations, have not been systematically explored. Socio-cultural Impact: While its role in rituals and local life is acknowledged, comprehensive studies of the music's influence on social cohesion, identity, and regional tourism are lacking and Modern Integration: Research has not fully addressed how contemporary influence such as digital media, urbanization, and changing religious practices affect the continuity and adaptation of this tradition.

Addressing these gaps would contribute to a deeper understanding of Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming and provide strategies for its preservation and revitalization in modern society.



Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

Research on Taoist ritual music in China has generally focused on its historical development, liturgical function, and regional variations. Scholars such as Liu Hong (刘红) and Zhou Ji (周吉) have emphasized the deep connection between Taoist music and religious ritual practices, noting that musical forms serve both symbolic and functional roles in ceremonial contexts. Studies on Taoist temple music in southern China highlight its integration of local opera elements, folk instrumental traditions, and regional sound aesthetics, illustrating how geographic and cultural environments influence ritual musical styles. Ethnomusicological research on Jiangxi Province has documented rich traditions of folk percussion and ritual ensemble music, but specific scholarly attention to the Taoist drum music of Xishan Guan remains limited. Existing studies on similar drumming traditions such as Fujian and Guangdong temple percussion ensembles—provide valuable comparative frameworks, noting shared features such as fixed rhythmic patterns, processional functions, and ceremonial symbolism. However, the distinctive categorization of Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui, and Xi Tang Hui within the Xishan Guan tradition has seldom been systematically analyzed in academic literature.

This gap underscores the need for detailed field-based documentation and analysis of Guangfeng's Taoist drum music, particularly regarding its performance practice, instrumental configuration, and ritual significance.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an interdisciplinary framework grounded in ethnomusicology, ritual studies, and intangible cultural heritage theory.

(1) Ethnomusicology and Performance Theory Merriam's (1964) tripartite model music as concept, behavior, and sound provides an analytical foundation for examining Taoist drum music as a social and cultural practice. Schechner's performance theory (2003) further supports analysis of ritual actions, performer roles, and the multi-layered structure of ceremonial performance.

(2) Ritual Theory Turner's (1969) concepts of liminality and communitas, along with Bell's (1992) theory of ritual practice, guide the interpretation of drumming as a symbolic act embedded in the Taoist jiao-festival system. These frameworks help explain how musical sequences structure the ritual, guide emotional transitions, and reinforce spiritual meanings.

(3) Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Theory Drawing on UNESCO's ICH Convention (2003) and China's national ICH research (Zhang Jing, 2011), the study situates Taoist drum music as a form of living heritage transmitted through apprenticeship and communal participation. This perspective highlights challenges of preservation, modernization, and cultural identity.



Conceptual Framework

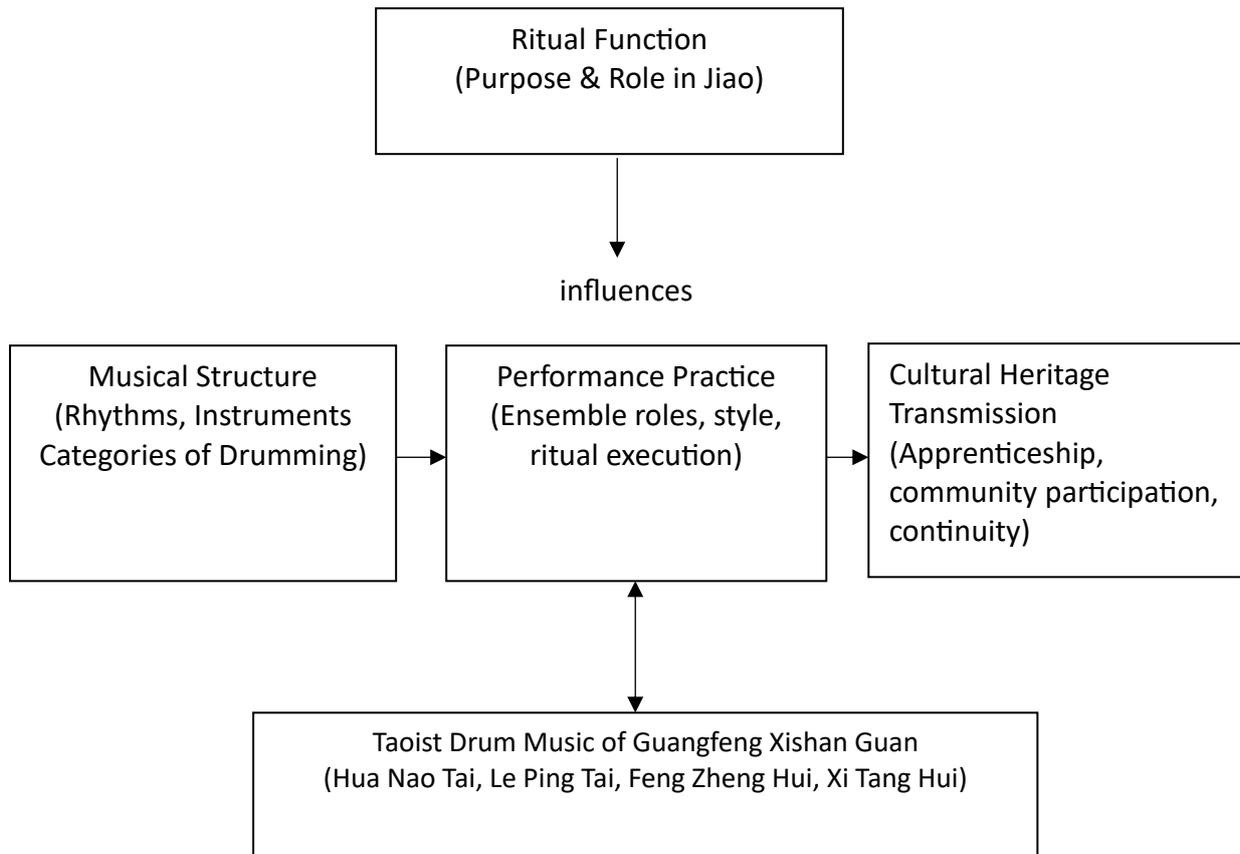


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

Objectives

1. To classify the performance forms of Taoist drumming in Xishan Guan, Guangfeng.
2. To analyze including the various types of music.
3. To investigate the range and functions of musical instruments used in Taoist ritual music at Xishan Guan.
4. To understand the specific applications of musical practices in Taoist rituals.

Methodology

Research Type

This study adopts a qualitative ethnographic research design, emphasizing in-depth exploration of ritual music within its cultural context. The approach integrates methods from ethnomusicology, anthropology, and ritual studies to document and interpret the artistic performance form of Taoist drum music practiced in Xishan Guan, Guangfeng, Jiangxi Province.

Study Population

The study population includes individuals directly involved in the practice, transmission, and organization of Taoist drum music at Xishan Guan. These consist of:

1. Taoist priests responsible for officiating jiao-festival rituals
2. Ritual musicians performing drum-centered music within ceremonial sequences
3. Local cultural inheritors and tradition bearers familiar with the historical evolution and performance conventions of the repertoire

Sample Groups and Selection Techniques

A purposive sampling technique is utilized to ensure that participants possess specialized knowledge and practical experience relevant to the musical tradition. The sample group includes:

1. Senior Taoist ritual specialists actively engaged in ceremonial performances
2. Experienced ritual drummers and instrumentalists involved in the four principal categories of drum music (Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui, Xi Tang Hui)
3. Community members recognized as custodians of local intangible cultural heritage

This sampling strategy ensures the inclusion of key informants able to provide authoritative insights into performance practice, ritual functions, and transmission processes.

Research Tools

1. Ethnographic field notes for documenting contextual, behavioral, and interpretive observations
2. Audio and video recordings capturing full performance sequences and instrumental interactions
3. Semi-structured interview guides for eliciting performers' perspectives on structure, meaning, and technique
4. Musical transcription and notation templates for analyzing rhythmic patterns, instrumental configurations, and formal structures

Research Procedures

1. Preliminary field visits to establish rapport, understand ritual schedules, and identify key informants.
2. Participant observation during jiao-festival ceremonies and related ritual activities, with continuous documentation of musical events.
3. Audio-visual recording of performances representing each of the four principal drum-music categories.
4. Semi-structured interviews with priests, musicians, and cultural inheritors focusing on repertoire classification, performance conventions, symbolic meanings, and historical transmission.
5. Compilation and transcription of recorded materials for systematic musicological analysis.



6. Cross-validation of findings through follow-up conversations and member feedback where appropriate.

Data Collection Methods

1. Direct observation of live ritual contexts
 2. Semi-structured interviews capturing insider perspectives
 3. Audio-visual documentation for subsequent analysis of musical structure and performance interaction
 4. Field-note writing to contextualize sensory observations and interpretive insights
- This multimodal approach ensures depth, accuracy, and cultural grounding in the collected data.

Data Analysis Methods

1. Structural music analysis of rhythmic patterns, instrumental combinations, and formal organization in each drum-music category
 2. Performance analysis examining ensemble coordination, ritual sequencing, and spatial-temporal aspects of musical execution
 3. Interpretive cultural analysis exploring symbolic meanings, ritual functions, and links to Taoist cosmology and local identity
 4. Comparative analysis across the four categories (Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui, Xi Tang Hui) to identify shared conventions and distinctive stylistic features
- These methods allow for a holistic understanding of how musical structure and ritual function interact within the Taoist cultural framework.

Results

Classification of Taoist Drumming Performance Forms

1. Hua Nao Tai

The flower stage in the Guangfeng Xishanguan Taoist drum music is a music form deeply rooted in folk tradition and integrated with Taoist rituals. The ensemble is distinguished by a diverse repertoire, which contributes to the establishment of a multifaceted and nuanced musical landscape. This is achieved through the alternation of sophisticated percussion instruments and Chinese folk orchestral instruments. The performance of Hua Nao Tai is not merely a musical presentation; it also encompasses the sacredness and symbolism inherent to Taoist rituals. In this context, it is typically employed in *dojo* pujas to augment the solemnity and mystique of the ceremonies. In the category of Hua Nao Tai, it is carried by the intersection of sounders and musical instruments. The loudspeakers are gongs and drums and other percussion instruments with loud and rough sounds, and the musical instruments are traditional Chinese orchestral instruments. The main sounding instruments include: large drum, small drum, large gong, large cymbal, small gong, small cymbal, bang, and cymbal. The main musical instruments are: flute, jinghu, erhu, banhu, small suona, and large suona. In terms of performance style, the Hua Nao Tai is characterised by a light and fast-paced approach, a bold yet uncluttered presentation, and a progressive performance style that generates a cascading



2. Le Ping Tai

The Chinese name Le Ping Tai is translated as "Joyful and Peaceful." It constitutes an essential element of Guangfeng Taoist drumming and is included in the Taoist canon of gongs and scriptures. It is mainly composed of Taiping drums, large gongs, hand gongs, large cymbals, small cymbals and other percussion instruments. It is usually used at the beginning of religious ceremonies to create a solemn and mysterious religious atmosphere. The performance of Le Ping Tai reflects the rhythmic beauty of Taoist music and shows the importance and unique use of music in Taoist ceremonies in Guangfeng. In terms of performance form, Le Ping Tai, with its majestic drums and resounding gongs and cymbals, complements the other Taoist drumming categories, and together they form a colourful musical landscape in Guangfeng Taoist ceremonies. The tuning of one of the drums undergoes seven changes, which is an important number in Taoism. This is reflected in the seven stars of the Big Dipper, which are believed to rain down good fortune. The playing techniques and rhythmic variations of the music platform reflect the artistic pursuit of Taoist music as it continues to innovate in its inheritance and development.



Figure 3 Some musical instruments from Guangfeng Xishan Guan

3. Feng Zheng Hui

The Feng Zheng Hui in Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist Drum Music is a unique form of musical performance, mainly based on the variants of North and South Songs, with a wide variety of tunes and a rich musical expression. It shows the diversity of local music and the deep heritage of cultural inheritance. In the context of performance, Feng Zheng Hui is employed in folklore, with Taoist priests required to wear Taoist vestments and perform in

public spaces, simultaneously playing and singing sutras. The performance style is typically characterised by the combination of percussion and orchestral instruments, which gives rise to a diverse range of performance types, including lead, ensemble and solo. Such performances play an important role not only in Taoist pujas but also in folk activities, where they have become an integral part of local culture. Feng Zheng Hui performances are usually accompanied by Taoist rituals, aiming to convey religious beliefs and cultural values through music. In addition, Feng Zheng Hui performances reflect the unique folk culture of the Guangfeng area, reflecting the lifestyle and spiritual pursuits of the local people.



Figure 4 Some musical instruments from Guangfeng Xishan Guan

4. Xi Tang Hui

Xi Tang Hui is a traditional Chinese art form that combines singing and seated performance, typically observed during red and white wedding ceremonies. This performance genre primarily comprises the recital of theatrical narratives, the musical content of which is characterised by a focus on the themes of male and female love. Its singing includes a variety of local tunes, 'Such as Sigong tune, Laoerban, Zhengerban, Huapiyi, Wuyuan tune, Laobazi, Pujiang tune, Xi'an tune, Tanhuang tune, etc. These tunes were transplanted from Shangrao

Xinhe tune, and the names and melodies are very original. It is a relic of the Luantan tune of Northeastern Jiangxi in the mid-Qing Dynasty'

Xi Hui Tang Hui, as a form of performance in Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming, is more than just a musical presentation; it is actually a comprehensive form of cultural expression that combines the essence of religious music, local theatre music and folk traditional blowing and beating music. This form of performance plays an important role in the red and white celebrations of folklore, and its music and performances not only carry the teachings and rituals of Taoism, but also reflect the beliefs and cultural life of the local people.



Figure 5 Guangfeng Xishanguan Taoist priests conduct Taoist rituals

Music and Instruments

1. Introducing the instrumentation of the cultural and martial arts arenas

The opera band is commonly known as "the scene" and is divided into Wenchang (orchestral instruments) and Wuchang (percussion instruments). The opera band plays an important role in both opera performance and appreciation." In Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming, the Wenchang and Wuchang are the two core parts of the orchestra, and together they form a complete musical performance. Wenchang is mainly responsible for accompanying singing and playing scene music, and the instruments used include bowed string instruments such as the huqin and erhu, plucked instruments such as the yueqin and pipa, and wind instruments such as the flute and suona. These instruments not only provide melodic support for singing, but also enhance the musical expression by playing specific tunes according to the needs of the plot.

The martial arts field is composed of percussion instruments. 'Phenomenally, percussion is simple and monotonous, but it is not. It is very colourful and expressive. It can be said that the function of each instrument has been maximised. The light, heavy, side, and counter-strike of the same instrument can express different musical effects. Their main task in Taoist drumming is to match the movements and singing of the actors to ensure the rhythm and intensity of the performance. The instrumental configuration of a martial arts venue usually includes drum pads, large gongs, small gongs and cymbals, etc. These instruments provide a strong sense of dynamics and atmosphere for stage performances through different striking styles and rhythms.

The melody of the music played by the instruments in the cultural field is inherently rhythmic, and the percussion of the instruments in the martial field also has an arrangement of pitch heights and lows, but in the performance of the opera, these two major types of instruments are after all functionally relatively biased, and they are divided and intertwined reflecting the flexibility of the many musical instruments.' In opera, the co-operation between Wenchang and Wuchang is indispensable; they complement each other and together shape the unique charm of opera music. The combination of the delicate melodies of the wenchang and the resounding rhythms of the wugang makes opera performances richer and more vivid in both emotional expression and technical display.

2. The role and symbolism of different instruments in performance

As a significant aspect of traditional Chinese culture, the configuration and utilisation of musical instruments in Taoist music are not merely concerned with the form of musical expression; they also serve to reflect Taoist religious beliefs and philosophical concepts. An understanding of the role and symbolism of musical instruments in Taoist music is essential for an appreciation of Taoist ritual music.

Early Taoist koan music was very closely related to shaman ritual music, and the drum was an important instrument in the ritual.' In the context of Taoist music musical instruments such as bells, chimes and drums are not merely functional objects; they are also imbued with symbolic significance, representing the notion of magical power. It is believed that the sound of the bell can summon the gods to descend and remove demons. The primary purpose of the sound of the chime is to inform the gods and avert disasters. In contrast, the sound of the drums serves the purpose of communicating with the gods and warding off evil spirits. The drums are struck to imitate the sounds of "winds, clouds, thunder, and rain," and are employed in conjunction with the recitation of Taoist scriptures.

The roles and symbolism of musical instruments and magic weapons in Taoist music are multifaceted and complex. In addition to their role in musical performances, musical instruments are also integral to Taoist rituals. They serve as conduits for communication between humans and deities, vehicles for articulating beliefs, and guides for spiritual experiences. A comprehensive examination of these musical instruments enables a more nuanced understanding of the concept of Taoist music and its role and significance within traditional Chinese culture.



Discussion

The present study examined the musical practices of Taoist drumming at Xishan Guan, Guangfeng, with particular focus on performance forms, musical types, instrumental functions, and ritual applications. The findings demonstrate that the Taoist drumming tradition of Xishan Guan not only retains its religious significance but also reflects broader patterns observed in Chinese ritual music culture, particularly within Southern Daoist communities.

Performance Forms of Taoist Drumming

The classification of performance forms at Xishan Guan reveals a system that closely aligns with the structural framework identified in studies of Daoist ritual ensembles, where drumming functions as both a musical and liturgical device (Jones, 2020; Liu, 2018). The observed forms such as processional drumming, ceremonial court drumming, and functional cueing patterns during rituals illustrate the multi-layered role of percussion in guiding ritual flow, marking transitions, and reinforcing the sacred atmosphere. These forms correspond to the “ritual percussion codes” described by Yung (1989), wherein drumming acts as an audible script for ritual participants and officiants.

Types of Music Performed

The analysis of the various musical types performed within the Taoist Drum Circle of Xishan Guan indicates a coexistence of vocal liturgical chanting, Gong Che–notated instrumental pieces, and improvised percussion sequences. This reflects a musical ecology consistent with other Jiangnan and southeastern Daoist temples, where “jing” (classic hymns), “zan” (praises), and “fanbai” (ritualized chanting) accompany instrumental suites (Stock, 1996). The documentation and preliminary arrangement of Gong Che scores since 2010 have contributed to stabilizing the repertoire, echoing broader efforts in China to codify and preserve traditional notated repertoires as part of ICH protection strategies.

Range and Functions of Musical Instruments

The range of instruments—such as drums, gongs, cymbals, suona, and wooden clappers—is representative of the typical Taoist shengguan ensemble found in southern China. Each instrument carries specific ritual-functional purposes: drums regulate temporal structure; gongs and cymbals emphasize ritual punctuation; and wind instruments provide melodic contour that supports the chanting (Yeh, 2013). The functional interdependence of these instruments at Xishan Guan aligns with empirical research indicating that Daoist ritual music operates as a coordinated symbolic system, where each sound-producing device contributes to spiritual efficacy (Schipper, 1993). The findings confirm that instrumental functions at Xishan Guan are consistent with this cosmological and performative logic.

Applications of Musical Practice within Ritual Contexts

The musical practices observed ranging from routine pujas to major festival rituals demonstrate that music is inseparable from ritual performance and theological intent. As



previous research has noted, Taoist ritual music is not merely aesthetic but is a medium for prayer, communication with deities, and maintenance of cosmic order (Lagerwey & Marsone, 2016). At Xishan Guan, rehearsals and repeated enactments during dojos enhance musical precision and ritual impact, reinforcing the idea that mastery of musical practice enhances ritual legitimacy and authority.

Protection Transmission and Cultural Preservation

The results also highlight the extensive measures being taken to protect the Taoist drumming tradition as an intangible cultural heritage. These efforts such as the establishment of the Guangfeng County Taoist Association, the designation of the Taoist Drum Troupe as a municipal ICH project, and collaborations with academic institutions reflect national strategies described in China's ICH framework (Blumenfield & Silverman, 2013). The use of digital preservation, archival video documentation, and academic partnerships aligns with contemporary global practices for sustaining ritual music traditions.

Moreover, the emphasis on professional training, public education, and international exchange demonstrates an understanding that ICH protection must integrate community participation, institutional support, and modern technology. This approach echoes UNESCO guidelines, which stress both safeguarding and dynamic transmission rather than static preservation (UNESCO, 2011). By expanding research, improving documentation, and enhancing public engagement, the Xishan Guan community actively strengthens the viability of Taoist drumming for future generations.

Overall, the findings align with broader scholarship on Chinese ritual music and intangible heritage, indicating that the Taoist drumming tradition of Xishan Guan is a living, adaptive, and culturally embedded practice. The classification of performance forms, musical types, instrumental functions, and ritual applications provides a comprehensive understanding of its cultural significance. Meanwhile, the multifaceted preservation efforts spanning education, documentation, institutional collaboration, and international exchange underscore the community's commitment to ensuring the robust transmission of this unique musical heritage.

Conclusion

Guangfeng Xishan Guan Taoist drumming is performed in a variety of forms, including Hua Nao Tai, Le Ping Tai, Feng Zheng Hui and Xi Tang Hui, four major categories. The Hua Nao Tai is mainly a folkloric small wind instrument, which includes a variety of percussion instruments and orchestral instruments playing alternately. The Le Ping Tai features traditional Taoist gongs and drums, consisting of a Tai Ping Tai drum, a large gong, a large cymbal, and a small cymbal, which are usually used during the opening of the ceremony. Feng Zheng Hui contains variants of northern and southern tunes, with a large number of tunes, demonstrating the mingling of Taoist music and local music. Xi Hui Tang Hui mainly sings opera stories, and its singing style incorporates a variety of local tunes, such as Si Gong Tunes and Lao Er Ban, reflecting the remnants of the flower section of the chaotic bombing style of Northeast Gan in the middle of the Qing Dynasty. The cultural characteristics of this region are reflected in its religious practices, artistic traditions, folklore, and historical record. The religiousness of this music is reflected in its role as the core of Taoist ceremonial music, whereby the teachings and



ceremonial functions of Taoism are conveyed through musical means. In contrast, the artistry of the music is evident in its diversity and the excellence of the performances, which showcase a high level of artistic accomplishment. Folklore is inextricably linked to local culture, manifesting in various contexts such as funerals, birthday celebrations, temple fairs, and other red and white festivals and celebrations. It has become an integral aspect of people's psychological well-being and daily living. The longevity of this tradition is reflected in its history, which can be traced back to the North and South Dynasties. It has retained the transcripts of Gongshi sheet music and folk music scores from the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which are still in use today. As the process of modernisation accelerates, there is a risk that traditional music and culture will be lost as a result of a lack of research and conservation efforts. It is therefore important to strengthen these efforts in order to preserve this unique form of music and to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese Taoist culture and local traditions.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Public

1. Promote Community Awareness of Cultural Heritage Local communities should be encouraged to engage with Taoist drum music through public lectures, festival demonstrations, and open workshops to foster appreciation and support for its preservation.
2. Encourage Inclusive Participation in Ritual Activities While respecting ritual protocols, community members especially younger generations should be invited to observe and participate in non-sacred segments of ceremonies. This can build cultural continuity and strengthen communal identity.
3. Develop Cultural Tourism Responsibly Municipal cultural departments may incorporate Taoist drum music into heritage tourism initiatives, ensuring that performances remain respectful of their sacred origins and avoid excessive commercialization.

Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

1. Clarification of Category-Specific Musical Structures By identifying and analyzing the four main categories of Taoist drum music, this research deepens understanding of their rhythmic patterns, instrumentation, formal organization, and ritual functions within the jiao-festival context.
2. Documented Evidence of Hybrid Aesthetics The study highlights the integration of opera-style melodic contours, folk blowing-and-percussion timbres, and liturgical rhythmic cycles, emphasizing Taoist drum music's hybridized nature as both a sacred and community-rooted practice.
3. Enhanced Interpretation of Ritual-Musical Symbolism Through interviews and field observations, the study uncovers the symbolic roles of drum patterns such as summoning deities, protecting ritual space, or signaling transitions contributing to broader research on music and ritual semiotics.



Recommendations for Future Research

1. Comparative Studies Across Taoist Temples and Regions Future research could compare Xishan Guan's drum music system with Taoist musical traditions in other parts of Jiangxi or neighboring provinces to trace historical connections and regional variations.
2. In-depth Musical Analysis Using Technology Utilizing acoustic analysis software, tempo-tracking tools, and digital transcription programs could further reveal micro-level rhythmic characteristics and ensemble interactions.
3. Study of Performer Identity and Social Roles Research could explore how Taoist priests and ritual musicians negotiate social status, religious authority, and cultural identity in contemporary society.

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