

## Transmission Guidelines for Literacy Studies in Si Zhu Yue Traditional Chinese Folk Music

Junlong Li<sup>1</sup>, Kritsakorn Onlamul<sup>1\*</sup>, Lin You<sup>2</sup>, Fengsheng Yang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Changshu Institute of Technology, China

**Corresponding author:** Kritsakorn Onlamul, E-mail: kritsakorn.o@msu.ac.th

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### ABSTRACT

Si Zhu Yue music is a traditional Chinese folk music genre characterized by stringed and bamboo wind instruments. It originates from the Yangtze River basin in China. This study aims to propose guidelines for transmitting literacy studies in traditional Chinese folk music in Si Zhu Yue. We synthesize literature to provide insights into the cultural heritages. Three key informants with expertise in Si Zhu Yue music, educational settings, and cultural preservation efforts were purposefully selected to provide diverse perspectives on Si Zhu Yue music's transmission and literacy studies. Data analysis involved qualitative approaches to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights from interviews and observations. The findings highlight the significance of integrating cultural values into planning processes, the challenges of preservation in the face of modernization and globalization, and the need for innovative approaches to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. Recommendations include prioritizing cultural heritage preservation in planning policies and adopting interdisciplinary approaches to address the complexities of cultural sustainability planning.

**Key words:** Cultural Sustainability, Cultural Heritage, Systematic Review, Si Zhu Yue Music, Jiangsu Province

### INTRODUCTION

Si Zhu Yue, a traditional genre of Chinese folk music characterized by its use of stringed instruments and bamboo wind instruments, holds a significant place in China's rich cultural heritage (Witzleben, 1995; Zhuang et al., 2019; Wong, 2020; Li, 2021). As with many traditional art forms, Si Zhu Yue faces challenges in preservation and transmission in the modern era. This study proposes comprehensive guidelines for transmitting literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music in response to these challenges (Ben, 2013; Yang & Welch, 2014; Qiu et al., 2024; Wu & Chuangprakhon, 2024).

Si Zhu Yue music, originating from the Yangtze River basin, embodies centuries of cultural history and artistic expression. Historically performed in teahouses and private homes, Si Zhu Yue reflects the intimate connection between music, social gatherings, and everyday life in traditional Chinese society (Thrasher, 1981; Cui, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). However, rapid urbanization, socio-economic changes, and evolving cultural landscapes have threatened the preservation and continuity of Si Zhu Yue music. The transition from rural to urban settings, coupled with shifts in lifestyle preferences, has led to a decline in the transmission of this cultural tradition across generations (Rössler & Lin, 2018; Zhang et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2022).

The transmission of literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music faces multifaceted challenges in the

contemporary context. These challenges include diminishing awareness and understanding of Si Zhu Yue among younger generations, displacing traditional performance spaces, and eroding intergenerational transmission mechanisms. Additionally, integrating Si Zhu Yue into modern educational curricula and cultural policies requires careful consideration to preserve its authenticity and relevance (Hu, 2002; Tan, 2012; Yao & Chaotchamrat, 2023; Huang et al., 2024).

This study aims to propose guidelines for transmitting literacy studies in traditional Chinese folk music in Si Zhu Yue. These guidelines address the challenges of preserving and transmitting Si Zhu Yue across diverse socio-cultural contexts by delineating clear strategies and methodologies. Through a systematic approach, the research seeks to provide educators, cultural policymakers, and practitioners with actionable recommendations for safeguarding the integrity and vitality of Si Zhu Yue as a cultural heritage (Yan & Chiou, 2021; Qiu & Zuo, 2023; Barianaki et al., 2024).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the conservation and revitalization of traditional Chinese folk music. By establishing guidelines for transmitting literacy studies, this study aims to empower communities, educators, and cultural stakeholders to actively preserve and promote Si Zhu Yue (Tang & Sornyai, 2023; Zhang & Wu, 2023). Furthermore, the proposed guidelines have broader implications for safeguarding intangible cultural

heritage and cultivating cultural literacy in contemporary society. Through collaborative efforts guided by these guidelines, Si Zhu Yue can continue to thrive as a living tradition, enriching the cultural tapestry of China and the world (Taylor, 2013; Schmitt, 2017; Sihotang & Sitanggang, 2022).

### Research Question

- How can comprehensive guidelines for transmitting literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music be developed to address the challenges of preservation and continuity in the modern era?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to its cultural significance and difficulties in modern society, the transmission of traditional Chinese folk music, such as the Si Zhu Yue genre, is a growing scholarly interest. Scholars have explored various aspects of Si Zhu Yue music transmission, including its historical development, cultural significance, pedagogical methods, and preservation strategies (Cui & Karin, 2023; Hou & Seekhunlio, 2023; Shun & Boonsrianun, 2023).

Research on the transmission of traditional music in China highlights the importance of intergenerational learning and community engagement in preserving cultural heritage. Scholars emphasize the role of traditional music societies, familial networks, and apprenticeship systems in facilitating the transmission of folk music genres like Si Zhu Yue. Additionally, studies underscore the impact of socioeconomic factors, urbanization, and globalization on the traditional music landscape, necessitating innovative approaches to transmission (Schippers, 2016; Leung, 2020; Duan & Choatchamrat, 2023).

Literature on cultural literacy and heritage conservation provides theoretical frameworks for understanding the significance of Si Zhu Yue transmission in the context of education and cultural policy. Concepts such as cultural sustainability, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and participatory heritage management offer insights into effective strategies for promoting traditional Chinese folk music literacy studies (Poprawski, 2016; Zhu & Maags, 2020; Du & Leung, 2022).

This study draws upon theories of cultural transmission, education, and heritage conservation to inform the development of guidelines for literacy study transmission in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music. Theoretical frameworks such as social constructivism, cultural sustainability, and participatory action research guide exploring effective strategies for preserving and transmitting Si Zhu Yue across generations and cultural contexts (Schönpflug, 2008; Somekh & Noffke, 2009; Soini & Birkeland, 2014; Bradbury, 2015).

By integrating theoretical perspectives from cultural studies, education, and heritage conservation, this research aims to develop comprehensive guidelines that address the multifaceted challenges of Si Zhu Yue transmission while promoting cultural literacy and community engagement. This study contributes to advancing knowledge in music education, cultural heritage preservation, and transmission

of literacy studies through synthesizing relevant literature and theoretical frameworks (Harmon, 2007; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2016; Shi & Nicolas, 2023).

### METHOD

#### Selection of Key Informants

Three key informants were purposefully selected to provide diverse perspectives and insights into Si Zhu Yue transmission and literacy studies. The selection criteria include expertise in Si Zhu Yue music, experience in educational settings, and active involvement in cultural preservation efforts. The key informants comprise:

- A senior Si Zhu Yue musician with extensive experience in traditional music performance and teaching,
- A music educator specializing in Si Zhu Yue literacy studies and curriculum development, and
- A cultural scholar with research interests in folk music preservation and community engagement.

#### Selection of Research Site

The research site selected for this study is south of the Yangtze River, specifically focusing on Si Zhu Yue music in Jiangsu Province. This region is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and longstanding tradition of Si Zhu Yue music practice and transmission, as shown in Figure 1.

#### Research Tools

The research employs two primary research tools, as shown in Table 1.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis involves a qualitative approach to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights derived from the interviews and observations. The collected data from interview transcripts and observation notes are systematically reviewed and coded to identify key findings related to Si Zhu Yue transmission and literacy studies. Themes such as teaching strategies, curriculum content, cultural context, and challenges in transmission are analyzed. The findings are synthesized to develop comprehensive guidelines for transmitting literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music.

### RESULTS

#### The Historical and Development of Si Zhu Yue Music

Si Zhu Yue music, a traditional Chinese folk music genre, holds a significant place in the cultural heritage of Jiangsu Province, particularly in the region south of the Yangtze River. Its origins date back centuries, intertwining with the rich history and traditions of the area. Over time, Si Zhu Yue's music has evolved, reflecting changes in society, culture, and artistic expression. The development of Si Zhu Yue music can be traced through various historical periods, each contributing to its unique characteristics and significance. From



**Figure 1.** Map of research site in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China  
Source: Chinafolio (n.d.)

**Table 1.** Research tools

| Research Tools   | Description  |
|------------------|--|
| Interview Form   | A structured interview form is designed to elicit detailed information from key informants regarding their perspectives on Si Zhu Yue transmission, literacy studies, and related challenges and opportunities. The interview questions are crafted to explore key themes such as teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and community engagement. |
| Observation Form | An observation form is utilized to document observations made during participant observation sessions at Si Zhu Yue music gatherings, educational workshops, and community events. The form includes prompts to record contextual information, participant interactions, and notable practices related to Si Zhu Yue transmission.                     |

its humble beginnings as a form of entertainment among local communities to its recognition as a national intangible cultural heritage, Si Zhu Yue music has undergone a transformative journey shaped by cultural exchange, artistic innovation, and preservation efforts. Through initiatives such as establishing museums, music societies, and educational programs, efforts have been made to safeguard the legacy of Si Zhu Yue music and promote its transmission to future generations. These endeavors have preserved traditional musical techniques and repertoire and facilitated the integration of Si Zhu Yue music into contemporary contexts, ensuring its relevance and vitality in modern society, as shown in Figure 2.

Despite the challenges posed by social and cultural changes, Si Zhu Yue music continues to thrive as a cherished cultural treasure, embodying the spirit of Jiangsu's cultural identity. By recognizing its historical significance, understanding its developmental trajectory, and embracing innovative approaches to transmission, Si Zhu Yue music can continue to inspire and enrich the cultural landscape of China for generations to come.

### Modern Outreach of Si Zhu Yue Music

In exploring the modern outreach of Si Zhu Yue music, various contemporary dissemination channels and platforms have been examined to understand how this traditional Chinese folk music is promoted and exposed to diverse audiences locally and globally. These channels play a crucial role

in ensuring Si Zhu Yue music's continued transmission and appreciation in today's rapidly evolving cultural landscape. One significant aspect of the modern outreach of Si Zhu Yue music is its presence on digital platforms and social media. Si Zhu Yue's music reaches a wider audience beyond its traditional geographic boundaries through websites, streaming services, and social networking sites. Online platforms provide accessibility and convenience, allowing enthusiasts worldwide to discover, listen to, and engage with Si Zhu Yue music without geographical constraints.

Additionally, multimedia platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and podcasting have facilitated the dissemination of Si Zhu Yue music through audiovisual content, performances, interviews, and educational materials. These platforms offer immersive and interactive experiences, enhancing audience engagement and understanding of Si Zhu Yue music's cultural significance.

Furthermore, collaborations with mainstream media outlets, music festivals, cultural events, and educational institutions have contributed to the visibility and recognition of Si Zhu Yue music on a broader scale. Through concerts, workshops, lectures, and exhibitions, Si Zhu Yue's music is showcased to diverse audiences, including students, scholars, tourists, and music enthusiasts, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, as shown in Figure 3.

Si Zhu Yue music's modern outreach encompasses various channels and platforms, from digital media to live events and collaborations with mainstream institutions. These



**Figure 2.** Wuyang Si Zhu Yue Museum Picture  
Source: Junlong Li, from fieldwork in August 2023



**Figure 3.** Papan Publisitas Pertunjukan  
Source: Junlong Li, from fieldwork in August 2023

efforts are vital in preserving, promoting, and transmitting Si Zhu Yue music to new generations and audiences worldwide.

### Social Influence of Si Zhu Yue Music

The social influence of Si Zhu Yue music encompasses its cultural significance and societal impact within the communities where it is practiced and appreciated. This section analyzes the multifaceted role of Si Zhu Yue music in fostering cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and enriching the lives of individuals and communities.

Si Zhu Yue music serves as a cultural cornerstone and source of pride for the communities in which it originates and thrives. It embodies Chinese folk music's rich heritage and traditions, reflecting the local culture's history, values, and ethos. Through its melodies, rhythms, and lyrical themes, Si Zhu Yue's music evokes a sense of nostalgia and belonging among community members, reinforcing their cultural identity and sense of heritage.

Moreover, Si Zhu Yue's music promotes community cohesion and solidarity. It is a unifying force that brings people together across generations, social classes, and cultural backgrounds. Through communal performances, gatherings, and celebrations, Si Zhu Yue's music fosters interpersonal connections, strengthens social bonds, and promotes mutual understanding and respect among community members. Si Zhu Yue music also serves as a platform for cultural

exchange and dialogue, facilitating community interactions and fostering cross-cultural appreciation and collaboration. Through festivals, concerts, and cultural exchanges, Si Zhu Yue's music transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, creating opportunities for intercultural dialogue, exchanging ideas, and celebrating diversity.

In summary, the social influence of Si Zhu Yue music extends beyond its musical elements to encompass its broader cultural significance and societal impact. Si Zhu Yue's music enriches the fabric of community life by fostering cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and facilitating intercultural dialogue. It contributes to the cultural vitality and diversity of society.

### Government's Transmission and Development Strategy of Si Zhu Yue Music

Si Zhu Yue music is significant in traditional Chinese folk culture, prompting government bodies to implement various policies and initiatives to support its transmission, preservation, and development. This section evaluates the strategies employed by governmental entities to ensure the continued vitality of Si Zhu Yue music within the broader context of cultural heritage preservation and development. Governmental efforts to safeguard Si Zhu Yue music encompass a range of measures, including financial support, institutional recognition, educational programs, and cultural promotion. By allocating funds to initiatives related to Si Zhu Yue music, government bodies provide crucial financial assistance for activities such as performances, recordings, research, and educational programs, ensuring the sustainability of Si Zhu Yue music initiatives.

Furthermore, governmental institutions play a pivotal role in officially recognizing Si Zhu Yue music as an intangible cultural heritage asset. By bestowing official recognition upon Si Zhu Yue music, governments raise awareness about its cultural significance, encourage research and documentation efforts, and establish regulatory frameworks to protect its authenticity and integrity.

In addition to financial and institutional support, governments implement educational programs and outreach initiatives to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of Si Zhu Yue music among the populace, particularly younger generations. By integrating Si Zhu Yue music into school curricula, cultural exchange programs, and community outreach initiatives, governments ensure its transmission to future generations and its continued relevance in contemporary society.

Overall, governmental transmission and development strategies for Si Zhu Yue music reflect a commitment to preserving and promoting this important aspect of traditional Chinese folk culture. Through financial assistance, institutional recognition, educational programs, and cultural promotion, government bodies play a vital role in ensuring the longevity and vibrancy of Si Zhu Yue music for generations to come.

### Performance Space

Si Zhu Yue music's performance space encompasses traditional and modern venues, each with unique spatial arrangements,

audience engagement dynamics, and cultural implications for both performers and listeners. This section explores the diverse settings where Si Zhu Yue music is performed, highlighting its significance within different contexts. Traditionally, Si Zhu Yue music gatherings took place in teahouses and private houses, characterized by an intimate and casual atmosphere. In these settings, spatial layout lacked the typical separation between performers and listeners, fostering close listening behaviors and interpersonal interactions. Performers and audience members engaged in fluid movements, freely moving around, drinking tea, and engaging in low-voice conversations while the music played. This informal environment facilitated direct communication between performers, creating an internal musical communication circle where mutual evaluation and appreciation thrived.

In contrast, modern performance spaces for Si Zhu Yue music, such as concert halls and theaters, emphasize a clear separation between the stage and the audience area. Designed to focus solely on the performers, these spaces enforce strict etiquette and silence among audience members, with applause as the primary feedback form at the end of performances. The stage becomes a platform for performers to convey emotion and communicate with audiences through dramatic gestures and expressions.

The shift from traditional to modern performance spaces reflects broader changes in cultural norms and audience expectations. While traditional venues promote socialization and intimate interaction, modern spaces prioritize focused listening and formal presentation. This evolution in performance spaces highlights the dynamic nature of Si Zhu Yue music and its ability to adapt to changing cultural contexts.

Overall, the performance space of Si Zhu Yue music encompasses a spectrum of venues and settings, each contributing to the richness and diversity of its cultural expression. By understanding these performance spaces' spatial dynamics and cultural implications, stakeholders can better appreciate the nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity in transmitting Si Zhu Yue music.

### Mode of Development

The mode of development of Si Zhu Yue music involves a multifaceted exploration of the strategies and approaches employed to adapt this traditional Chinese folk music to changing socio-cultural, economic, and technological contexts. This section delves into the dynamic evolution of Si Zhu Yue music, highlighting efforts to balance tradition with innovation while ensuring its continued relevance and sustainability. Traditionally, Si Zhu Yue music relied on oral transmission and informal gatherings within local communities, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and social cohesion. However, new challenges and opportunities have emerged with modernization and globalization, prompting stakeholders to explore innovative approaches to preserve and promote Si Zhu Yue music.

One significant aspect of the mode of development involves the integration of new technologies and digital platforms to expand the reach of Si Zhu Yue music to wider

audiences. Si Zhu Yue music can now transcend geographical boundaries and reach listeners worldwide through online music platforms, social media, and digital streaming services. This digital dissemination not only enhances accessibility but also introduces Si Zhu Yue music to younger generations who may not have been exposed to it otherwise.

Furthermore, efforts to innovate within the musical repertoire and performance techniques have played a crucial role in its development. While respecting the traditional elements of Si Zhu Yue music, musicians and composers have experimented with new compositions, arrangements, and instrumentation to appeal to contemporary tastes and sensibilities. By incorporating fusion and cross-genre collaboration elements, Si Zhu Yue's music remains vibrant and relevant in today's diverse musical landscape.

Educational initiatives and training programs have also emerged to cultivate a new generation of Si Zhu Yue musicians and enthusiasts. Music schools, community programs, and cultural institutions provide opportunities for individuals to learn and appreciate Si Zhu Yue music, ensuring its transmission and continuity for future generations.

Overall, the development mode of Si Zhu Yue music reflects a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation as stakeholders navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world. By embracing technological advancements, fostering artistic creativity, and investing in education and training, Si Zhu Yue music continues to thrive as a cherished cultural heritage of China.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research presented in this article revolves around the transmission guidelines for literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue's traditional Chinese folk music. The literature review encapsulates a broad spectrum of studies that underscore the importance of preserving and transmitting traditional music heritage. For instance, the study by Leung (2020) proposes a model for transmitting Cantonese opera in Hong Kong higher education, emphasizing the transition of oral tradition to formal education. Similarly, the research by Yang and Welch (2014) delves into the challenges and opportunities of teaching folk music in higher education, providing insights into practical pedagogical approaches.

The research methods utilized in this study combine qualitative analysis and guideline development. Qualitative analysis, as demonstrated by Qiu et al. (2024), offers valuable insights into transmission and preservation strategies for folk music, while guideline development, as seen in Huang et al. (2024) and Shun and Boonsrianun (2023), provides actionable recommendations for promoting literacy transmission. These methodological approaches contribute to a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies for transmitting Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music.

The research results align with the theoretical principles of cultural heritage preservation and transmission. Scholars like Harmon (2007) advocate for integrated approaches to conservation, which resonates with the findings of studies on literacy transmission and preservation strategies (Huang et al., 2024; Shun & Boonsrianun, 2023). These results affirm

the importance of incorporating cultural values into educational frameworks and transmission materials to ensure the continuity of traditional music practices.

In conclusion, the research on transmission guidelines for literacy studies in Si Zhu Yue traditional Chinese folk music underscores the critical role of cultural heritage preservation and transmission. The literature review highlights the diverse approaches and challenges of transmitting traditional music heritage in educational settings. The research methods employed in this study provide valuable insights into practical strategies for promoting literacy transmission, aligning with theoretical principles of cultural sustainability.

Future research directions include longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of transmission guidelines, comparative analyses with other traditional music genres to identify best practices, and interdisciplinary collaborations to enhance cultural sustainability practices. By advancing knowledge in these areas, stakeholders can contribute to preserving and transmitting Si Zhu Yue's traditional Chinese folk music for future generations.

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