

Chinese Folk Songs Literacy in the Context of Meihua Dagù in Tianjin, China

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: July 03, 2024

Accepted: October 04, 2024

Published: October 31, 2024

Volume: 12 Issue: 4

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the historical development and literacy of Meihua Dagù, a traditional Chinese folk music form rooted in the cultural heritage of Tianjin, China. Meihua Dagù's evolution from an aristocratic pastime to a popular folk art reflects a dynamic cultural adaptation and resilience process. The research examines how historical events, cultural shifts, and socio-political changes have influenced Meihua Dagù's literacy, encompassing performance skills, historical knowledge, and cultural appreciation. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study involved fieldwork, interviews with six informants, and a literature review. Key findings highlight the significant impact of historical disruptions like the Cultural Revolution, alongside the art form's revival through modern pedagogical strategies and technological integration. The analysis of musical characteristics, including melody, rhythm, and mode, underscores the rich and nuanced literacy of Meihua Dagù, further enriched by the transition from Old to New Meihua Dagù. The role of educators and community support in sustaining Meihua Dagù's literacy across generations is emphasized. The study's recommendations for future research include comparative studies with other Chinese folk music forms, the impact of digital media, interdisciplinary approaches, and longitudinal studies. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of Meihua Dagù and its role in preserving Chinese cultural heritage.

Key words: Meihua Dagù, Chinese Folk Songs, Cultural Heritage, Folk Songs Literacy, Tianjin Municipality

INTRODUCTION

Meihua Dagù, a traditional form of Chinese folk music, originated in the late Qing Dynasty and has a rich history spanning over two centuries. This musical art form, also known as Meihuadiao, holds a significant place in the cultural heritage of Tianjin, China. Rooted in the aristocratic circles of the Eight Banners of the Qing Dynasty, Meihua Dagù evolved from an elite pastime to a popular folk art deeply embedded in the local culture of Tianjin (Lufkin, 2016; Jingfang, 2023; Yao et al., 2023). The term "Meihua" refers to the plum blossom, symbolizing resilience and purity, which is reflected in the lyrical and melodic qualities of the music. The evolution of Meihua Dagù through different historical periods—from its origin to its prosperity, cessation, and continuous development—illustrates a dynamic cultural adaptation that has ensured its survival and relevance in contemporary society (Meyer, 2016; Cao & Boonsrianun, 2023; Chao & Nicolas, 2024; Li & Bhengsri, 2024).

Despite its long-standing presence and cultural significance, the literacy of Meihua Dagù within the broader context of Chinese folk music has yet to be extensively studied. In this sense, literacy encompasses the ability to perform and understand music and an awareness and appreciation of its historical, cultural, and social contexts (Kelly, 2018;

Yung, 2022). The historical development of Meihua Dagù, marked by various adaptations and innovations, has played a crucial role in shaping its literacy. However, there needs to be more scholarly literature that comprehensively addresses how these historical changes have contributed to the literacy of Meihua Dagù among its practitioners and audiences. This gap represents a critical area of inquiry, especially in the face of rapid cultural and technological changes that influence the transmission and preservation of traditional art forms (Howard, 2016; AM, 2019; He & Sensai, 2024).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of Meihua Dagù's literacy and its role within the framework of Chinese folk music. By investigating the historical development of Meihua Dagù, this study aims to provide insights into how historical events, cultural shifts, and social transformations have influenced its practice and perception. Understanding these factors is crucial for preserving and promoting Meihua Dagù, especially as younger generations and broader audiences engage with this art form. Additionally, this research can contribute to the broader discourse on cultural heritage preservation, offering a model for studying and sustaining other traditional art forms facing similar challenges (D'Amico, 2023; Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Liu & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Zhang & Karin, 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the historical development literacy of Meihua Dagu within the context of Chinese folk music. Specifically, it explores how the various phases of Meihua Dagu's evolution have shaped its literacy among performers and audiences in Tianjin, China. By examining the historical trajectory of Meihua Dagu, from its aristocratic origins to its current status, this study seeks to uncover the underlying factors that have influenced its literacy. This investigation will involve a comprehensive literature review, fieldwork, interviews with key informants, and analysis of performance practices (Tang & Sornyai, 2023; Tian & Woramitmaitree, 2023; Qiu et al., 2024).

In conclusion, Meihua Dagu represents a unique and valuable component of China's musical heritage. Its historical development offers a fascinating lens through which to examine the concept of literacy within traditional folk music. Through this study, it is hoped that Meihua Dagu will not only be preserved as a historical artifact but also continue to thrive as a living tradition, enriching the cultural landscape of Tianjin and beyond.

Research Question

- How has the historical development of Meihua Dagu contributed to its literacy within the context of Chinese folk music in Tianjin, China?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical development of Meihua Dagu and its contribution to the literacy of Chinese folk music in Tianjin, China, has been the subject of limited scholarly attention. This literature review explores the theoretical frameworks and historical contexts that underpin the study of Meihua

Dagu. It examines the evolution of Meihua Dagu through different historical periods, its cultural significance, and the impact of sociopolitical changes on its literacy and practice.

Historical Evolution of Meihua Dagu

The origins of Meihua Dagu trace back to the late Qing Dynasty, a period characterized by significant cultural and artistic developments. The formation of Meihua Dagu during this era can be attributed to the unique sociopolitical environment, which fostered the growth of various art forms, including opera and Quyi. The initial stage of Meihua Dagu's development saw its association with the aristocracy, particularly the Eight Banners of the Qing Dynasty (Smith, 2015; Shi, 2019). This connection to the elite class imbued Meihua Dagu with cultural sophistication and exclusivity. As it transitioned from aristocratic entertainment to popular folk art, Meihua Dagu underwent significant transformations in its musical structure, performance style, and audience engagement. These changes were influenced by prominent figures such as Jin Wanchang and Lu Chengke, who played pivotal roles in adapting and popularizing Meihua Dagu (Guthrie, 2021; Price, 2024). The historical evolution of Meihua Dagu thus highlights the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and social change.

Cultural Significance and Adaptation

The cultural significance of Meihua Dagu lies in its ability to reflect and adapt to the changing social landscapes of Tianjin. The period of prosperity from 1949 to 1966, following the founding of New China, marked a golden era for Meihua Dagu. During this time, the art form received state support, leading to the establishment of professional troupes and the creation of a new repertoire that resonated with

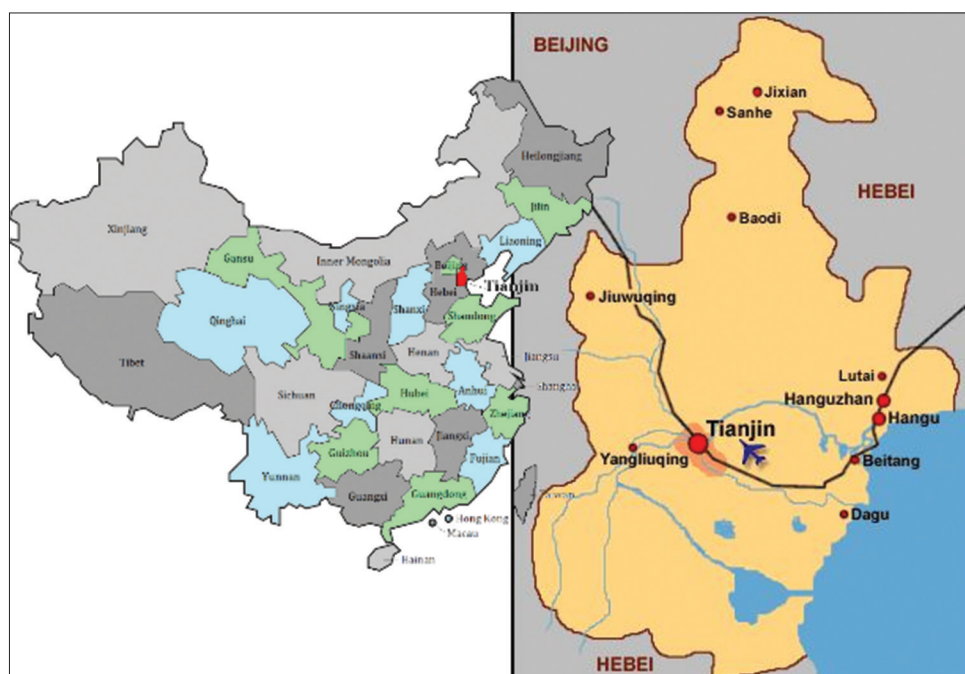


Figure 1. Map of the research site in Tianjin, China
Source: Chinafolio (n.d.), pinterest (n.d.)

contemporary societal themes. The adaptation of Meihua Dagū to include political and social narratives expanded its audience base and reinforced its relevance in a rapidly modernizing society (Flew, 2016; Inglehart, 2020). However, the cessation period (1966-1976) presented challenges as cultural policies suppressed many traditional art forms during the Cultural Revolution. Despite these obstacles, Meihua Dagū's resilience and ability to adapt to new contexts ensured its survival and eventual revival. The continuous development phase post-1976 has seen further innovations in performance techniques, repertoire, and audience engagement, highlighting the ongoing cultural significance of Meihua Dagū in Tianjin.

Impact of Sociopolitical Changes on Literacy

The literacy of Meihua Dagū, defined as the knowledge and appreciation of its musical and cultural elements, has been profoundly influenced by sociopolitical changes throughout its history. The initial aristocratic phase emphasized a refined aesthetic accessible primarily to the elite. As Meihua Dagū transitioned to more popular folk art, its literacy expanded to include a broader segment of society. The state support during the mid-20th century facilitated the formalization of Meihua Dagū education, leading to a structured transmission of knowledge through professional institutions and troupes. The Cultural Revolution, however, disrupted this transmission, highlighting the vulnerability of cultural literacy to political forces (Cai & Dunn, 2020; Huo, 2023; Lei & Pattananon, 2024). The post-reform era has seen a renewed focus on preserving and enhancing the literacy of Meihua Dagū through academic and cultural initiatives. These efforts have included incorporating modern pedagogical methods, creating new compositions that blend traditional and contemporary elements, and using media and technology to reach wider audiences. The sociopolitical context has thus played a crucial role in shaping the literacy of Meihua Dagū, influencing how it is taught, performed, and appreciated.

In conclusion, the literature on Meihua Dagū underscores the intricate relationship between historical development, cultural significance, and sociopolitical influences in shaping literacy. This exploration highlights the resilience and adaptability of Meihua Dagū and offers insights into the broader processes of cultural preservation and innovation in traditional art forms.

METHOD

The study used fieldwork, interviews, observations, and a literature review to gather comprehensive data.

Selection of the Research Site

Tianjin, China, was chosen as the research site due to its rich history and active community of Meihua Dagū performers. The site selection was influenced by the presence of professional performance troupes, Quyi performing artists, and enthusiasts, making it a fertile ground for studying the art form's development and literacy (Figure 1).

Selection of Informants

The informants were selected based on their involvement and expertise in Meihua Dagū, as shown in Table 1.

Research Tools

Various tools were used to gather and analyze data. These included interview forms, observation forms, and questionnaires. The questionnaires were tailored to each group of informants and refined through expert review and informant feedback.

Data Collection

Data were collected through document review, fieldwork, and interviews. The researcher used a video recorder, audio recorder, tone meter, computer, sound measuring equipment, ruler, pen, and notebook to document findings.

Data Management

Data management involves organizing and categorizing collected documents, audio recordings, videos, and other materials. Field recordings were transcribed into text, and musical notations were created for the selected songs.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted using both Western music analysis methods and traditional Chinese music analysis techniques. The researcher created music scores from the collected data and analyzed them to achieve the research objectives. Descriptive analysis was employed to understand the history and development of Meihua Dagū, while musical analysis focused on melody, rhythm, mode, and accompaniment.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all informants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose and their role in it. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal information, and the data collected were used solely for research purposes. The study adhered to ethical guidelines to respect the participants' cultural heritage and personal experiences, ensuring the research findings' integrity and validity.

RESULTS

Evolution of Meihua Dagū: Historical Literacy and Development

It examines how historical events, cultural shifts, and socio-political changes have influenced the development and preservation of Meihua Dagū, contributing to its literacy within the context of Chinese folk music.

Origin and early development (1840-1949)

The origin of Meihua Dagū during the late Qing Dynasty marks the beginning of its historical literacy. Initially a form

Table 1. Selection of informants

Type of Informants	Criteria for Selection	Details
Key Informants	Tianjin-based artists, natives of the Meihua Dagù performance community, have extensive teaching experience, participated in government-organized performances, and possess profound insights into historical and contemporary practices	Two key informants, natives of Tianjin, are renowned artists and significant members of the Meihua Dagù performance community, providing valuable insights into the historical and contemporary practices of the art form
Casual Informants	Participation in Meihua Dagù performances and teaching activities and providing oral histories and practical insights into performance and transmission are key responsibilities	Two casual informants, who have participated in numerous Meihua Dagù performances and teaching activities, provided valuable oral histories and practical insights into the performance and transmission of the music
General Informants	Tianjin folk art workers participate in Meihua Dagù performances, engage in teaching, and provide perspectives on cultural and community engagement with Meihua Dagù	Two Tianjin folk art workers, who have participated in numerous Meihua Dagù performances and teaching efforts, provided insights into the broader cultural and community engagement with Meihua Dagù

of entertainment among the nobles of the Eight Banners, Meihua Dagù, also known as Meihuadiao, was characterized by its unique accompaniment of five instruments symbolizing the five petals of a plum blossom. The early literacy of Meihua Dagù was rooted in its aristocratic and literati origins, with its melodies and lyrics reflecting the cultural elegance of the Qing Dynasty. The contributions of artists like Wen Yusen and Jin Wanchang were pivotal in transforming Meihuadiao into Meihua Dagù, adding interludes and adapting the accompaniment to enhance its musical style. This period laid a strong foundation for Meihua Dagù's literacy, embedding it with rich cultural and musical nuances.

The prosperity period (1949-1966)

The founding of the People's Republic of China heralded a new era of prosperity for Meihua Dagù. During this period, Meihua Dagù experienced significant institutional support, leading to the establishment of the Tianjin Folk Art Troupe. The state management and organization of folk art troupes facilitated artistic discussions and innovations, furthering the literacy of Meihua Dagù. This era saw the creation of new repertoires and the integration of folk tunes and modern elements into Meihua Dagù. The introduction of new accompaniment instruments and the reform of musical structures under artists like Bai Fengyan contributed to the literacy of Meihua Dagù, making it more accessible and relatable to contemporary audiences. The prosperity period cemented Meihua Dagù's status as a prominent form of Chinese folk music, enriched with historical and musical literacy.

The cessation period (1966-1976)

The Cultural Revolution brought a decade of cessation to the development of Meihua Dagù. This period witnessed the disbandment of folk art troupes and the suppression of traditional art forms, severely impacting the literacy of Meihua Dagù. Many artists were forced into labor, and performances were banned, leading to a significant hiatus in its development. Despite this, the foundational literacy of Meihua Dagù

remained intact, preserved in the memories and skills of its artists. This challenging phase underscored the resilience of Meihua Dagù's literacy, which would resurface and flourish in subsequent years.

Revival and modern development (1976-2023)

The post-Cultural Revolution era and China's reform and opening-up policies marked the revival of Meihua Dagù. The re-establishment of art troupes and the founding of institutions like the Northern China Folk Art School played a crucial role in the resurgence of Meihua Dagù's literacy. This period blended traditional and modern elements, with professional composers introducing new musical structures and thematic content. Incorporating modern pedagogical methods in teaching Meihua Dagù facilitated the transmission of its literacy to new generations. Including diverse accompaniment instruments and innovative performance practices further enriched Meihua Dagù's literacy. The sustained efforts of artists and educators in preserving and promoting Meihua Dagù have ensured its continued relevance and vitality in contemporary Chinese folk music, as shown in Figure 2.

The historical literacy of Meihua Dagù is a dynamic narrative of cultural preservation and innovation. Each phase of its evolution, from aristocratic origins to modern adaptations, has contributed to its rich literacy tapestry. The historical development of Meihua Dagù reflects China's socio-cultural transformations and highlights this unique art form's enduring appeal and adaptability within the realm of Chinese folk music.

Musical Characteristics and Literacy of Meihua Dagù

It delves into the structural elements, such as melody, rhythm, mode, and accompaniment, highlighting how these components have evolved. The section also examines the differences between Old Meihua Dagù and New Meihua Dagù, emphasizing the innovations and adaptations that have enriched its musical literacy.



Figure 2. Meihua dagou add accompaniment instruments
Source: Xinyu zhang, from fieldwork in August 2023

Structural elements: melody, rhythm, and mode

The musical literacy of Meihua Dagou is deeply rooted in its structural elements, which have been meticulously crafted and evolved. The melody of Meihua Dagou is characterized by its use of traditional Chinese scales and modes. Analyzing the piece “Dai Yu Zang Hua,” a famous performance by Meihua Dagou artist Jin Wanchang, provides insights into these elements. The mode used in this piece is Eb mode, chosen to suit the performer’s vocal range and expressive needs. This flexibility in choosing modes is a hallmark of Meihua Dagou’s literacy, allowing performers to adapt their singing to their vocal conditions and the audience’s preferences.

Regarding rhythm, Meihua Dagou employs a variety of note values, including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, and dotted eighth notes. This diversity in rhythmic patterns contributes to the dynamic and expressive quality of the music. The piece “Dai Yu Zang Hua” uses a slow pace of 66 beats per minute, with a 4/4-time signature, typical of the Manban section in traditional Chinese music. This section allows for a lyrical and expressive delivery, which is essential for conveying the emotional depth of the story being told, as shown in Figure 3.

Old meihua dagou vs. new meihua dagou

The transition from Old Meihua Dagou to New Meihua Dagou marks a significant evolution in the musical literacy of this art form. Old Meihua Dagou is characterized by its use of modal function words such as “Ai na,” “Ai zhe,” and “Nin na” at the beginning of phrases, followed by the lyrics. This method of singing from the last weak beat to the strong beat, with all ending notes on Do, is a distinctive feature of Old Meihua Dagou. The accompaniment in Old Meihua Dagou includes traditional Chinese instruments like Sanxian, Sihou, Pipa, and Yangqin, providing a rich and varied texture to the music.

New Meihua Dagou, developed post-1976, incorporates modern musical elements and techniques, reflecting a more contemporary literacy. Innovations by artists like Bai Fengyan introduced new structures, eliminating the need

for modal function words and allowing for more direct and engaging performances. The accompaniment has also been expanded to include instruments like the cello, double bass, and even electroacoustic elements, enriching the musical texture and appealing to modern audiences. These adaptations have made Meihua Dagou more accessible and relevant, demonstrating its musical literacy’s dynamic and evolving nature.

Accompaniment and performance techniques

The role of accompaniment in Meihua Dagou is crucial in enhancing the musical literacy of the performance. The accompaniment is not just a background element but an integral part of the musical narrative. The analysis of “Dai Yu Zang Hua,” the accompaniment includes a short introduction, interludes between lines, and a longer ending section. These elements help control the rhythm and intonation, allowing the singer to focus on emotional expression.

The accompaniment’s complexity and variability also showcase the musicians’ skills, with passages featuring sixteenth and thirty-second notes and the highest note reaching E in three groups of small letters. This provides a platform for the accompanists to demonstrate their virtuosity, contributing to the overall musical literacy of the performance.

Introducing modern accompaniment techniques in New Meihua Dagou has enriched its musical literacy. The use of orchestral instruments and electroacoustic elements has expanded the sonic palette of Meihua Dagou, allowing for more varied and nuanced performances. This evolution reflects the adaptability and resilience of Meihua Dagou, ensuring its continued relevance and appeal in contemporary Chinese folk music.

In conclusion, the musical characteristics and literacy of Meihua Dagou are defined by its structural elements, the evolution from Old to New Meihua Dagou, and the role of accompaniment in performances. The piece “Dai Yu Zang Hua” exemplifies these aspects, showcasing the rich musical heritage and the innovative spirit that has shaped Meihua Dagou over time. The continuous adaptation and enrichment of its musical literacy ensure that Meihua Dagou remains a vibrant and integral part of Chinese folk music.

Transmission and Pedagogical Literacy of Meihua Dagou

It explores the role of critical informants and educators in preserving and propagating the art form. The section discusses the methodologies, challenges, and strategies in teaching Meihua Dagou, emphasizing how pedagogical literacy has been developed and sustained across generations.

Role of key informants and educators

The transmission of Meihua Dagou relies heavily on the expertise and dedication of key informants and educators. The researcher interviewed two key informants who are vital performance members of Meihua Dagou. They have extensive experience participating in government-organized performances and teaching the art form. Their deep understanding

Figure 3. Dai yu zang hua folk song score
 Source: Xinyu zhang, transcription from fieldwork in August 2023

and commitment to Meihua Dagu are instrumental in preserving its literacy. These key informants, along with casual and general informants who also participate in teaching and performances, provide a rich source of knowledge and practice that helps maintain the integrity and continuity of Meihua Dagu, as shown in Figure 4.

Methodologies in teaching meihua dagu

Teaching Meihua Dagu involves a blend of traditional methods and modern pedagogical strategies. The literacy of Meihua Dagu is imparted through meticulous instruction in its musical elements, performance techniques, and historical context. Educators emphasize the importance of understanding the mode, rhythm, and accompaniment styles unique to Old and New Meihua Dagu. For instance, students are taught to appreciate the significance of modal function words in Old Meihua Dagu and the innovative elements introduced in New Meihua Dagu.

In addition to musical literacy, educators also focus on the cultural and historical literacy of Meihua Dagu. Students learn about the historical events, cultural shifts, and socio-political changes that have shaped the evolution of Meihua Dagu. This comprehensive approach ensures that students not only master the technical aspects of Meihua



Figure 4. Yang yun sings new meihua dagu folk song
 Source: Xinyu zhang, from fieldwork in August 2023

Dagu but also develop a deep appreciation for its cultural and historical significance.

Challenges and strategies in pedagogical literacy

The transmission of Meihua Dagu faces several challenges, including the dwindling number of practitioners and the increasing influence of modern entertainment forms. To

address these challenges, educators and practitioners employ various strategies to enhance the pedagogical literacy of Meihua Dagū. One effective strategy is incorporating Meihua Dagū into formal education systems. Establishing the Northern China Folk Art School in Tianjin has provided systematic and scientific training in Meihua Dagū.

Another strategy involves leveraging modern technology to preserve and disseminate Meihua Dagū. Audio and video recordings of performances and digital archives of musical scores and historical documents have become valuable resources for educators and students. These resources not only aid in teaching but also help preserve the rich heritage of Meihua Dagū for future generations.

Furthermore, educators encourage students to participate in performances and competitions to gain practical experience and build confidence. This hands-on approach helps students apply their theoretical knowledge and improve performance. The support and recognition from the community also motivate students to continue their practice and contribute to the transmission of Meihua Dagū.

Sustaining pedagogical literacy across generations

Sustaining the pedagogical literacy of Meihua Dagū requires a concerted effort from educators, practitioners, and the community. Educators play a pivotal role in this process by continuously updating their teaching methods and incorporating feedback from students and peers. Collaboration among educators, practitioners, and cultural institutions ensures that the teaching of Meihua Dagū remains relevant and practical.

One notable example of sustaining pedagogical literacy is the performance of “Wu Yin Lian Tan,” a complex piece that requires a high level of coordination and skill from the performers of Wu Yin Lian Tan. Teaching such intricate pieces involves breaking down the performance into manageable parts and gradually building the students’ proficiency. This methodical approach enhances the students’ technical skills and instills a deep understanding of the art form’s nuances, as shown in Figure 5.

In conclusion, the transmission and pedagogical literacy of Meihua Dagū is crucial for preserving and propagating this traditional Chinese folk art. The dedicated efforts of key informants, educators, and the community have ensured



Figure 5. Wu yin lian tan

Source: Xinyu zhang, from fieldwork in August 2023

that the rich heritage of Meihua Dagū continues to thrive. By employing innovative teaching methodologies, addressing challenges, and fostering a deep appreciation for the art form’s cultural and historical significance, the literacy of Meihua Dagū is sustained across generations.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings reveal a complex interplay of historical events, cultural shifts, and socio-political changes that have shaped the literacy of Meihua Dagū among its practitioners and audiences. This discussion section aims to interpret these findings in light of existing research and theoretical principles, addressing both consistencies and inconsistencies with previous studies.

The evolution of Meihua Dagū from an aristocratic pastime to a popular folk art form illustrates a dynamic process of cultural adaptation and resilience. This trajectory aligns with the theoretical framework of cultural evolution, which posits that traditional art forms must adapt to changing socio-political and cultural contexts to survive (Howard, 2016). The study’s findings support this theory, showing how Meihua Dagū’s literacy was preserved and enhanced through various historical periods, including the aristocratic phase, the period of state support, and the revival after the Cultural Revolution (Lufkin, 2016; Cao & Boonsrianun, 2023).

However, the study also highlights periods of significant disruption, such as the Cultural Revolution, which profoundly impacted the transmission and practice of Meihua Dagū. This finding is consistent with existing literature on the vulnerability of traditional art forms to political forces (Cai & Dunn, 2020; Huo, 2023). Despite these challenges, the resilience and adaptability of Meihua Dagū ensured its revival and continued development in the post-reform era.

The analysis of musical characteristics, including melody, rhythm, and mode, reveals a rich and nuanced literacy of Meihua Dagū. The transition from Old Meihua Dagū to New Meihua Dagū demonstrates significant innovations in musical structure and performance techniques, reflecting a blend of traditional and modern elements (Guthrie, 2021; Price, 2024). This evolution is consistent with the theoretical principles of musical adaptation and innovation, emphasizing incorporating contemporary elements to maintain relevance and appeal (Flew, 2016; Inglehart, 2020).

The detailed examination of “Dai Yu Zang Hua” and the role of accompaniment in Meihua Dagū performances underscores the intricate relationship between musical literacy and performance practice. The study’s findings align with previous research highlighting the importance of accompaniment in enhancing traditional music’s expressive quality and emotional depth (Meyer, 2016; Yung, 2022).

The role of key informants and educators in preserving and propagating Meihua Dagū is critical for sustaining its literacy across generations. The study’s findings emphasize the effectiveness of combining traditional methods with modern pedagogical strategies to enhance the transmission of Meihua Dagū (Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Zhang & Karin, 2024). Incorporating formal education systems, modern technology, and community support are key strategies

for addressing challenges and ensuring the continued vitality of Meihua Dagū.

However, the study also identifies challenges related to the dwindling number of practitioners and the influence of modern entertainment forms. These challenges underscore the need for ongoing efforts to engage younger generations and broaden the audience base for Meihua Dagū. The findings suggest that leveraging digital media and creating new compositions that blend traditional and contemporary elements can help sustain the pedagogical literacy of Meihua Dagū (D'Amico, 2023; Liu & Chuangprakhon, 2024).

While this study provides valuable insights into the historical development of the literacy of Meihua Dagū within the context of Chinese folk music, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of informants, though carefully selected, was relatively small. This limited the diversity of perspectives and may not fully represent the broader community of Meihua Dagū practitioners and enthusiasts. Second, the study was geographically confined to Tianjin, China, potentially overlooking regional variations and influences on Meihua Dagū in other parts of China. Third, the reliance on qualitative data, while rich in detail, may introduce subjective biases.

In conclusion, the historical development and literacy of Meihua Dagū in Tianjin, China, reflect a dynamic process of cultural adaptation and resilience. The study highlights the significant influence of historical events, cultural shifts, and socio-political changes on the literacy of Meihua Dagū, demonstrating its enduring appeal and adaptability. The findings underscore the importance of combining traditional methods with modern pedagogical strategies to enhance the transmission and preservation of Meihua Dagū. The impact of digital media on Meihua Dagū's preservation and promotion could provide new strategies for younger audiences. Interdisciplinary approaches combining musicology, sociology, and education studies could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and educational significance of Meihua Dagū. Longitudinal studies could track changes in Meihua Dagū's literacy and practice over time, providing valuable data on its evolution and adaptation.

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