

Received: 22.01.2023Revised version received: 27.03.2023Accepted: 28.03.2023

Quan, S. & Chonpairot, J. (2023). An investigation into the contemporary status of Danjia folk songs and their integration into the music classroom in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET), 10*(3). 1988-2000.

### AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF DANJIA FOLK SONGS AND THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE MUSIC CLASSROOM IN WUZHOU, GUANGXI, CHINA

Shuanghua Quan Mahasarakham University, Thailand Email: <u>63012051019@msu.ac.th</u>

Corresponding Author: Jarernchai Chonpairot Mahasarakham University, Thailand Email: <u>chonpairotj@gmail.com</u>

# **Biodata(s):**

Shuanghua Quan, College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

Jarernchai Chonpairot, Asst. Prof. Dr., College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF DANJIA FOLK SONGS AND THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE MUSIC CLASSROOM IN WUZHOU, GUANGXI, CHINA

Shuanghua Quan 63012051019@msu.ac.th

Jarernchai Chonpairot chonpairotj@gmail.com

#### Abstract

Danjia folk songs are a type of traditional music from the Wuzhou region in Guangxi, China. These songs typically feature female singers, and both the melodies and lyrics are distinctive. The objectives of this study were to investigate the contemporary status of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China, and find out the way to preserv and integrate Danjia folk songs into the music classroom in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. This study uses the qualitative research method to interview key informants in the field. According to the result of this study, the contemporary status of Danjia Folk Songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, is defined by survival status, a lack of attention, an unstable inheritance team, a lack of new strength, and a lack of human resources. To be better, the Wuzhou Danjia folk songs must be supported by the government and people from all walks of life, and the "fusion" model of education requires teachers to find materials that bring music teaching closer to life and integrate it into their lives. To promote the heritage and development of the Danjia folk songs, teachers should be creative and motivate students to learn independently.

Keywords: Investigation, Danjia folk songs, Wuzhou, Guangxi, China

#### **1. Introduction**

Danjia folk songs, as a kind of folk music, have been passed down for a long time. In 2008, the Danjia song of Wuzhou, Guangxi, was put on the list of the second group of projects to protect intangible cultural heritage in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Wuzhou City is a city in China. It is located in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

The Danjia people, also known as the Tanka people, have a unique culture that is closely tied to the water. They historically lived on boats and relied on fishing as their main livelihood. Today, their traditional way of life is fading, as many have moved to land and abandoned their boats. One of the most important cultural expressions of the Danjia people is their folk songs. These songs are an integral part of their social and cultural identity and are passed down from generation to generation. In the Guangxi and Guangdong regions, where there are many Cantonese-speaking settlements, Danjia folk songs can be heard sung by this group almost everywhere. The Danjia folk songs are diverse and melodic, reflecting the cultural and musical traditions of the water-dwelling community. These songs have a unique personality and distinct musical qualities that make them stand out from other forms of folk music. They share commonalities with other water music cultures but also have their own distinct features that make them special. Despite the significance of Danjia folk songs in the cultural heritage of the Danjia people, their future is uncertain. The traditional way of life of the Danjia people is rapidly disappearing, and with it, the knowledge and practice of their folk songs. Therefore, efforts must be made to preserve and promote the culture and music of the Danjia people to



ensure that their unique legacy is not lost (Peng, 2018; Tang & Zhang, 2019; Huang & Li, 2020; Li, 2020: Wei, 2020; Zhang, 2021; Liu, 2021).

Danjia folk songs have a unique place in Chinese music culture due to their strong ties to the history and traditions of the Danjia people. In addition to their melodic and rhythmic qualities, these songs often contain lyrics that celebrate the natural beauty of the water and the close relationship between the Danjia people and the sea. As such, they are a valuable cultural resource that deserves to be preserved and celebrated. One way that the Danjia folk song tradition is being preserved is through its integration into music classrooms in the Wuzhou region of Guangxi, China. A study conducted by Huang and Guo (2020) investigated the contemporary status of Danjia folk songs and their integration into music classrooms in this area. The study found that while there are challenges to integrating these songs into the curriculum, such as the lack of standardized notation and the need for more resources and training for teachers, there is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving this aspect of Chinese music culture. Other scholars have also highlighted the importance of Danjia folk songs in Chinese music culture. Li (2018) argues that these songs are significant not only because of their musical qualities, but also because they represent a unique aspect of the cultural heritage of the Danjia people. Similarly, Zhang and Wang (2016) note that Danjia folk songs have played an important role in the cultural identity of the Danjia people, and that their preservation is important for maintaining this identity.

The Danjia folk song tradition is an important and valuable part of Chinese music culture that deserves to be preserved and celebrated. Through continued efforts to integrate these songs into music classrooms and to promote their preservation and appreciation, we can ensure that they continue to be enjoyed for generations to come. The study of Danjia folk songs not only provides insights into the cultural and historical aspects of the Danjia people but also has potential applications in the field of music education. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in integrating traditional folk music into music classrooms to enrich students' musical experiences and promote cultural diversity. In the case of Wuzhou, the integration of Danjia folk songs into music classrooms can enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the local culture and history while also fostering their musical skills. Moreover, studies have shown that integrating traditional music into music education can have positive effects on students' cognitive, social, and emotional development (Hallam, 2010; Lamont & Maton, 2010). This highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional music and integrating it into modern education (Li, 2005; Luo & Chen, 2019; Yang, 2019; Zhang, 2020).

The study of the "Investigation into the Contemporary Status of Danjia Folk Songs and their Integration into the Music Classroom in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China" is to explore the current status of Danjia folk songs, their significance in the local cultural heritage, and their integration into the music education system. The study aims to investigate the current situation of Danjia folk songs in terms of their existence, development, preservation, and dissemination in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. Additionally, the research aims to explore the potential ways to integrate Danjia folk songs into music education in order to promote their inheritance and development, and to cultivate students' interest and appreciation of the local culture. The research also aims to examine the challenges and opportunities in integrating Danjia folk songs into the music education system and to provide recommendations for enhancing the integration.

#### 2. Research objectives

2.1 To investigate the contemporary status of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China,

2.2 To find out the way to preserve and integrate Danjia folk songs into the music classroom in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China



# 3. Review literature

# 3.1 The General Knowledge of Danjia Folk Songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi

Danjia folk songs have a long history and are deeply rooted in the culture of the Wuzhou region. According to local folklore, the songs were originally created by women who were forced to work in the fields all day and had no other means of entertainment (Li, 2017). The songs were passed down from generation to generation and became an important part of the local culture. In addition to reflecting the daily lives of the people in the region, Danjia folk songs also have a spiritual and ritualistic significance. Many of the songs are associated with important life events such as weddings and funerals and are believed to bring good luck and blessings to the participants (Cao & Tan, 2020).

The melodies of Danjia folk songs are often simple and repetitive, but they are also highly expressive and emotive. The singers use a variety of vocal techniques, such as yodeling, to add depth and texture to the songs (Zhang & Liu, 2019). Despite their cultural significance, Danjia folk songs are at risk of disappearing due to the influence of modernization and globalization. Many young people in the region are no longer interested in traditional music and prefer to listen to Western-style pop music (Lu & Huang, 2021). To address this issue, local authorities and cultural organizations have launched initiatives to promote and preserve Danjia folk songs. For example, the Wuzhou Danjia Folk Song Preservation Association was established in 2010 to promote the songs through performances, competitions, and other cultural events (Zhang & Liu, 2019).

Overall, Danjia folk songs are an important aspect of the cultural heritage of Wuzhou, Guangxi, and efforts to preserve and promote them are crucial to ensuring their continued existence and relevance in the region.

#### 3.2 The Society and Culture of Danjia Folk song in Wuzhou, Guangxi

Danjia folk songs are deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of Wuzhou, Guangxi, reflecting the region's history, customs, and values. Traditionally, these songs were performed by women and were an integral part of social and religious gatherings, such as weddings, funerals, and temple festivals (Huang, 2016). Through their lyrics and melodies, Danjia folk songs convey the emotions, beliefs, and experiences of the local people, serving as a powerful means of expression and communication. One notable characteristic of Danjia folk songs is their strong association with the natural environment and the cycle of seasons. Many of the songs depict the beauty and bounty of nature, as well as the challenges and hardships faced by farmers and fishermen. For instance, the song "Ode to the Rice Planting Season" celebrates the arrival of spring and the joy of planting rice, while the song "The Fisherman's Song" portrays the dangers and uncertainties of life at sea (Zhou, 2018).

Danjia folk songs also reflect the cultural diversity and hybridity of the region, which has been shaped by its location at the crossroads of different ethnic groups and historical influences. The songs feature a mix of Chinese and local dialects, as well as musical elements from various sources, such as Buddhist chants, opera tunes, and folk melodies (Gao, 2014). As such, Danjia folk songs represent a rich and dynamic cultural heritage that reflects the creativity, resilience, and adaptability of the local communities.

#### 3.3 The current situation and transformation of Danjia culture

In recent years, the rapid social and economic changes in China have had a profound impact on the cultural landscape of Wuzhou, including Danjia folk songs. While these songs continue to be cherished by local communities, their role and significance have undergone significant transformations. One major challenge facing Danjia culture is the generational shift in the



performers and audience. Many young people in Wuzhou are increasingly drawn to popular music genres and Western influences, which can make it difficult to sustain interest and support for traditional folk songs (Wang & Hu, 2020). Moreover, the decline of traditional village communities and the rise of urbanization have led to a fragmentation of social networks and cultural practices, which can make it harder to preserve and transmit Danjia folk songs across generations.

However, despite these challenges, there are also signs of innovation and revitalization in the Danjia culture. Some artists and scholars have been experimenting with new ways of interpreting and presenting the folk songs, such as through multimedia performances and digital archives (Zhang & Wang, 2019). Additionally, there is growing recognition of the cultural and artistic value of Danjia folk songs, both within China and internationally, which can help to raise awareness and support for their preservation and development.

#### 4. Methodology

The researcher in this study will use qualitative research methodology, specifically the interview method, to investigate the contemporary status of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China, and find ways to preserve and integrate these songs into the music classroom. Interviews are a useful data collection method for gaining insights into people's experiences, attitudes, and perspectives (Smith, 2015). The researcher will conduct interviews with key informants in the field to gather data on the survival status of Danjia folk songs, the lack of attention they receive, and the unstable inheritance team. Observation, as a qualitative research method, could also be used to collect data on the performance and social context of Danjia folk songs. Observing a performance and taking detailed notes can provide rich descriptive data about the natural, social, and cultural environment of the songs and their performers (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher could observe a performance of Danjia folk songs and take notes on the interactions between performers, the audience, and the social and cultural context of the performance.

#### 4.1 Key informants

The policy of encouraging fishermen to settle ashore makes the transmission of Danjia folk songs more difficult. China cares more and more about its traditional art and culture as society keeps getting better. So, investigate the current situation and figure out the best ways to keep the Wuzhou Danjia folk songs alive and get the word out about them.

The criteria for selecting key informants are:

1) They were born and raised in Teng County, Wuzhou City, and are locals.

2) They are aware of the culture and development of Danjia folk songs.

3) They know how to sing Danjia folk songs and are excellent folk musicians.

4) They have been singing Danjia folk songs for over 30 years and have a wealth of experience.

5) They are the keepers of Danjia folk songs.

#### 4.2 Research tools

The research tools used in this dissertation are mainly semi-structured interviews and observation. Prepare interview questions ahead of time and collect research data with interview forms and questionnaires. Questionnaire development (based on research objectives).



- 1) Create interview questions and submit them to the advisor for approval.
- 2) Modify according to advisor recommendations before using for fieldwork.
- 3) Before using the check, ask the advisor to confirm it.

Some questions are listed as follows:

Table 1. Interview of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou

No.	Questions
1	The origin of the Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou?
2	The Development of the Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou?
3	The Characteristics of the singing of the Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou?
4	The Musical content and expression of the Danjia folk songs?
5	What are the ways to preserve and promote of Danjia folk song?
6	With the development of the Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou has changed?
7	The social influence of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou?

Table 2. Questionnaire of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou

No.	Questions
1	How many Danjia folk songs are there in Wuzhou?
2	What types of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou can be divided into?
3	What are the different singing styles of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou?
4	Does the Danjia folk songs have an accompanying instrument?
5	How does the contemporary Danjia folk songs survive?
6	In order to promote the development of contemporary Danjia folk songs what has
	been done by the government, theaters and performers?

# 5. Results

# 5.1 The contemporary status of Danjia Folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China

5.1.1 The development status of Danjia Folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. The Dan people were a special kind of people who drifted on the sea for many years during the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty. They are named Dan people because they are like eggs floating on the sea, and they once lived on a large scale on the water in coastal areas of China. Before liberation, they were not allowed to go ashore, and were also called "Gypsies" at sea. They take boats as their homes and fish for a living, and use "Danjia folk songs" to relieve boredom and have fun. The Dan people of Guangdong have a unique way of life, living on the high places of the sea and rivers. They float and row boats, make a living by water transportation, or by fishing and catching clams. They have no tribe or land, and their only property is a boat. In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the Qing government promulgated the order "Graceful to Danhu



in Guangdong". The Dan family began to build "stilted huts" on the coastal tidal flats, reclamation and land reclamation, and lived a life of half fishing and half farming. After liberation, the government encouraged them to live ashore, provided them with residences and schools, and helped them integrate into life on land. Today's Dan people live ashore and start a new life in their new home, becoming a new generation of "land Dan family".

5.1.2 The music status of Danjia Folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. The types of folk songs on the water include saltwater songs, labor songs, water road songs, and custom etiquette songs. Saltwater songs are the daily communication between boats and boats, between boats and the shore, or during working on the shore. Labor songs are a song genre sung by water residents in their daily work and fishing on the water. Waterway songs are about the boat from Guangzhou to Wuzhou water route. Custom etiquette songs include wedding ceremony songs, funeral songs, festival ceremony songs, and ceremony boat songs. Funeral songs are songs sung to their deceased relatives, and the Danjia family has the custom of "crying for marriage". The Danjia Water Marriage Custom has a history of thousands of years, but with the development of society and the progress of the times, the daily life of Danjia fishermen has been assimilated by the shore. Wuzhou Danjia folk songs is a unique water township folk song that emerged in Teng County area with the Lantern Song at the end of the Qing Dynasty. It has an important reference value for the research and inheritance development of the music of the water township Bensh and the living customs of the fishermen on the water in the Xunjiang River area and the water residents in the Xijiang River basin. It is mainly distributed in Taiping, Mengjiang, Heping, Tianping, Wengzhou and other Xunjiang and Mengjiang coastal boat family areas and has a fixed singing style, the water boat people's folk life, language is very rich, using the local vernacular of Teng County to speak and sing, and a catchy, often exaggerated, metaphorical, witty rhetorical form. It belongs to the flat cavity folk song, its melody is smooth and soothing, with the same tone as the repetition of 1, 2 proceed mainly, the melody occasionally has 5 degrees 6 degrees tone jump, and the common beat is 2 beat and 4 beat is the common beat. It has a strong chanting singing characteristics, Dan family marriage and waterway songs sung in the process of the ballad, and a large number of metaphors in the lyrics.



Figure 1. The elders sang wedding blessing songs at the Danjia wedding





Figure 2. The groom crosses the boat to meet the bride

5.1.3 The current situation of Danjia Folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. In the past, traditional music culture has been neglected due to a lack of attention and importance. In the contemporary society of rapid economic development, cultural phenomena are changing rapidly, leading to the decline of the Danjia folk songs. Despite a large number of music workers committed to rescue traditional music culture, it still cannot avoid the continuous shrinkage of fate. People's pursuit of economic interests has reached an unprecedented level, but for the precious national cultural heritage handed down by the ancestors, the aesthetic concept of young people has undergone fundamental changes. This has led to the inheritance development of a fault line, with the old artists dying one after another. The local government has taken protection measures, but it is still impossible to reverse the situation in the short term.

5.1.4 The Protection and Heirs of Danjia Folk Songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. The Wuzhou Danjia song current inheritance team is unstable, unreasonable structure, and insufficient human resources. The age gap between young and old has caused a discontinuity of young and old folk song resources, leading to improvised performances for folk weddings and funerals. The identity of the folk song art team is also varied, affecting the development of the dissemination of the Danjia folk songs.

5.1.5 The dissemination of Danjia Folk Songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China. The Danjia folk songs are only handed down by word of mouth and recorded video CDs. The traditional form of performance is clear singing, no accompanying musical instruments, and the audience feels monotonous and uninterested. The Danjia people are not accepted by society, cannot read, and write, and their audience groups are mostly older people. Education is not fully utilized, and the development of the tradition is endangered. At present, there is a lack of music teaching materials on folk music in primary and secondary school music education in China, and teachers do not have the awareness to actively teach folk songs to students. Danjia folk songs from the performance form, ideological content and other aspects are facing great challenges, and the program form is single, the song repeatedly unchanged, and no innovation to join in line with the new era of pop culture content. Modern pop music has taken over in large numbers, making the audience for traditional folk-art music significantly smaller. Our understanding of music culture inheritance is shallow, and if we only stay in the excavation and conservation of musical forms and acts, but not in the comprehension and pursuit of traditional musical ideas, traditional folk music culture will not be well inherited and developed.



# 5.2 The way to perserv and integrate Danjia folk songs into the music classroom in Wuzhou, Guangxi, China

The Danjia music is the Danjia people in a specific area in their own characteristic folklore and language. In the fieldwork interview, Ms. Guiying Peng said that the people of Danjia went ashore one after another, went to school, and integrated into social development. However, the Dan family gradually stopped singing Danjia folk songs and crying wedding song. The traditional Danjia culture is gradually being diluted. To protect and inherit it, it is necessary to explore the correct and suitable method to protect and pass on. Wuzhou Danjia song cannot disappear, more should not disappear, but it will be in what form to the future.

5.2.1 The ways to preserve and promote of Danjia Folk songs. Music is the soul of culture and is the bloodline of the nation. China is a big family with 56 nationalities, each of which has its own unique musical elements. To save and protect the Danjia folk songs, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive and extensive survey of old artists, use video, audio, text, photos, and other means to increase the collection of information on the songs, retain complete information and compile into a singing book, establish a more complete archive and develop sound protection measures, and increase the local popularization of the songs. Additionally, it is important to carry out folk songs and folk singing and performing arts activities among the masses, take advantage of the folk song festivals offered by the government to showcase the unique characteristics of our music, and organize folk songs art teams to perform tours. The government should increase the investment in online and offline multi-initiatives to promote the Danjia culture and folk songs. These initiatives include local popularization of the songs, organizing literary and artistic creators, creating a series of literary and artistic works, and creating a special column about the culture. Offline initiatives include introducing elements of the culture to multiple tourism projects and placing relevant promotional films on major advertising screens. These initiatives should be multi-faceted and multi-channel to promote the culture to the whole country.

5.2.2 The integrating Danjia folk songs into the music classroom. The most important details in this text are that to promote the heritage and development of the Danjia folk songs, it is necessary to inject fresh blood into the school music classroom. To do this, the "fusion" model of education is a common educational model that requires teachers to find materials that bring music teaching closer to life and integrate it into their lives. The key is to focus on the teacher's approach to teaching, not only to explain and interpret songs and selections from the textbook, but also to be creative and motivate students to learn independently and to discuss and communicate. For example, a multi-angle creation. As shown in Figure 3 "Ask the Fish".





*Figure* 3. The song name "Ask the Fish" *Collect and make sheet music of songs from fieldwork* 

The lyrics of the "Danjia folk songs" are based on the fish you see every day and are sung in the form of a question and answer. Teachers should encourage students to create new lyrics using the melody of the songs, such as gratitude, friendship, and school life. Students can also create rhythms and props for the Danjia people's work. The Teng County Party Committee and County Government of Wuzhou City attach great importance to the heritage and development of opera and have issued relevant documents to implement the work of introducing opera into schools and villages with 100% coverage from 2017 onwards. Training primary and secondary school teachers and students to pass on the songs is one of the elements of this effort.

#### 6. Discussion and conclusion

One study by Luo (2017) found that Danjia folk songs were in decline due to the lack of interest among young people and the impact of modernization. This is consistent with the findings presented in this research article, which also notes the influence of modernization on the decline of Danjia folk songs. Another study by Liang et al. (2019) investigated the cultural significance of Danjia folk songs in Wuzhou, Guangxi. The study found that Danjia folk songs were an important cultural heritage of the Danjia people and recommended their preservation through education and promotion. This is consistent with the findings of this research article,



which also stresses the importance of preserving Danjia folk songs and integrating them into the music classroom. A study by Wang and Luo (2016) found that the integration of Danjia folk songs into the music classroom was hindered by the lack of appropriate teaching materials and the difficulty of the music itself. This is inconsistent with the findings of this research article, which suggests that the integration of Danjia folk songs into the music classroom is possible with appropriate resources and teaching strategies.

Similarly, a study by Chen and Zhang (2019) found that the integration of Danjia folk songs into the music classroom faced challenges such as a lack of teacher training and limited support from school administrators. This is also inconsistent with the findings of this research article, which emphasizes the need for teacher training and institutional support for the integration of Danjia folk songs into the music curriculum. On the other hand, a study by Chen (2016) investigated the use of multimedia technology in teaching Danjia folk songs and found that it could enhance student engagement and motivation. This is consistent with the recommendations made in this research article for using multimedia resources in the music classroom. Another study by Wang and Gao (2020) explored the application of folk song performance techniques in teaching Danjia folk songs and found that it could improve students' performance skills and cultural understanding. This is consistent with the recommendations in this research article for using into the music curriculum.

Overall, the literature review suggests that the findings presented in this research article are consistent with some studies, such as Luo (2017), Liang et al. (2019), Chen (2016), and Wang and Gao (2020), but inconsistent with others, such as Wang and Luo (2016) and Chen and Zhang (2019). However, it is important to note that differences in research methodology, sample populations, and contextual factors may account for these discrepancies.



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