

# Historical Value and Contemporary Significance of Hakka Folk Songs: Balancing Protection and Dissemination

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**Abstract:** *Hakka folk songs, as a shining pearl in China's traditional music culture, embody profound historical and cultural connotations as well as unique social functions. This paper aims to comprehensively analyze the historical value and contemporary significance of Hakka folk songs, and explore the challenges faced in their protection and dissemination practices, as well as corresponding strategies. From a historical perspective, Hakka folk songs not only demonstrate the unique charm of Hakka culture, but also vividly interpret the essence of Hakka culture through clever rhyme schemes, harmonious tone patterns, and the unique flavor of the Hakka dialect. At the same time, Hakka folk songs have played important roles at different historical stages, whether as a channel for expressing people's emotions, a tool for public opinion in political struggles, or a vivid record of historical events, all of which highlight their irreplaceable social value. In contemporary times, the cultural significance of Hakka folk songs remains significant. They not only provide a rich source of inspiration for modern musical compositions, promoting innovative development in music art, but also enhance community cohesion, promote individual mental health, and provide valuable spiritual comfort to people by conveying deep humanistic care. In the wave of globalization, Hakka folk songs have become a window showcasing the charm of Chinese traditional culture, enhancing national cultural confidence and promoting cultural exchanges and understanding among nations. However, on the road of protecting and inheriting Hakka folk songs, we also face many challenges. How to maintain their traditional charm while achieving innovation and development; how to broaden their audience base without losing Hakka characteristics; how to resist the impact of modern pop culture and preserve their unique charm are all issues that need to be addressed urgently. Therefore, we need to adopt diversified protection measures, such as establishing a non-material cultural heritage protection system, strengthening the cultivation of inheritors, and utilizing new media for widespread dissemination, in order to find the best balance between protection and dissemination.*

**Keywords:** Hakka Folk Songs, Historical Value, Contemporary Significance, Cultural Connotation, Social Function, Protection Practices

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview of Hakka Folk Songs

Hakka folk songs represent a vibrant and distinctive form of musical expression within the rich tapestry of Chinese traditional music. Rooted deeply in the history and culture of the Hakka people, these songs encapsulate a unique blend of traditional Chinese elements and the distinctive characteristics of the Hakka diaspora. Hakka folk songs are characterized by their

catchy melodies, rhythmic patterns, and poignant lyrics, which often reflect the daily lives, emotions, and struggles of the Hakka people. They serve as a bridge connecting the past and the present, offering insights into the cultural heritage, social customs, and historical experiences of the Hakka community (Bai, 2007).

The lyrics of Hakka folk songs are often crafted with precision, utilizing rhyme schemes, metaphorical language, and cultural references that resonate deeply with the Hakka people. These songs often feature simple yet profound themes, such as love, longing, hardship, and resilience, which resonate universally and transcend cultural boundaries. The melodies of Hakka folk songs are equally captivating, combining traditional Chinese musical scales with the unique rhythmic patterns and instrumental accompaniment that are hallmarks of Hakka musical tradition (Yan, 2016).

## **1.2 The Status of Hakka Folk Songs in the Course of History**

Hakka folk songs have occupied a prominent position in the historical narrative of the Hakka people, serving as a crucial vehicle for the transmission of cultural identity and social cohesion. Throughout their long history, Hakka folk songs have played a pivotal role in various social, cultural, and political contexts.

In ancient times, Hakka folk songs were a primary means of communication among the scattered Hakka communities, helping to maintain cultural continuity and foster a sense of belonging among the diaspora (Zhang, 2021). These songs often served as a repository of historical knowledge, preserving tales of migration, battles, and significant events that shaped the destiny of the Hakka people. Through their melodies and lyrics, Hakka folk songs offered a sense of solace and hope to the scattered Hakka communities, reminding them of their shared roots and cultural heritage. As time progressed, Hakka folk songs continued to evolve, incorporating new elements and influences from the surrounding cultures. However, their core essence remained intact, with the songs continuing to serve as a vital link between the past and the present. In modern times, Hakka folk songs have become a cherished part of Chinese cultural heritage, celebrated not only by the Hakka community but also by people from diverse backgrounds who appreciate the unique charm and emotional depth of these songs. Furthermore, Hakka folk songs have garnered international recognition, with their unique musical style and cultural significance attracting the attention of musicologists, anthropologists, and music lovers from around the world. As a result, Hakka folk songs have become an important bridge for cultural exchange and understanding between China and the international community (Gao, 2021).

## **2. Historical Value of Hakka Folk Songs**

### **2.1 Cultural Underpinnings of Hakka Folk Songs**

Hakka folk songs are imbued with a profound cultural heritage that reflects the distinct characteristics of the Hakka people. This cultural richness is evident in various aspects of the songs, including their lyrics, melody, and performance style (Wang, & Li, 2019).

#### **2.1.1 Rhythmic and Metered Lyrics**

The lyrics of Hakka folk songs often exhibit a meticulous attention to rhythmic and metered structure. The use of parallel phrases, known as "duizhang," and the careful arrangement of tones (pingze) create a musical and poetic quality that is unique to Hakka folk songs. This literary device not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the songs but also conveys a sense of harmony and balance that resonates deeply with the Hakka people (Liu, 2013).

### **2.1.2 Singing Characteristics of Hakka Dialect**

The distinctive dialect of the Hakka people plays a crucial role in the unique sound and flavor of Hakka folk songs. The use of Hakka dialect in singing adds a layer of authenticity and cultural identity to the songs, making them instantly recognizable to the Hakka community. The pronunciation, tone, and rhythm of the Hakka dialect all contribute to the unique charm and emotional depth of these songs.

### **2.1.3 Inheritance and Manifestation of Hakka Culture**

Hakka folk songs serve as a living testament to the cultural heritage of the Hakka people. Through their lyrics and melodies, these songs preserve tales of migration, tradition, and social customs that are crucial for understanding the history and identity of the Hakka community. They also reflect the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the Hakka people, providing a window into their cultural landscape (Li, 1995).

## **2.2 Social Functions of Hakka Folk Songs**

Hakka folk songs have played a vital role in various social contexts, serving as a means of communication, expression, and social cohesion.

### **2.2.1 Simple Expression of People's Emotions**

The lyrics of Hakka folk songs often capture the raw and unfiltered emotions of the people, reflecting their joys, sorrows, and daily struggles. These songs serve as a means of emotional catharsis, allowing individuals to express their feelings in a collective and communal setting.

### **2.2.2 Weapon of Political Struggle**

In times of political conflict and struggle, Hakka folk songs have been used as a weapon of resistance and protest. By incorporating political themes and messages into their lyrics, Hakka people have been able to communicate their grievances and aspirations to a wider audience, fostering a sense of solidarity and unity among the oppressed (Li, 1995).

### **2.2.3 Record and Reflection of Historical Events**

Hakka folk songs have also served as a historical record, preserving tales of significant events and historical figures that have shaped the destiny of the Hakka people. Through their melodies and lyrics, these songs offer a vivid and emotional portrayal of historical events, providing a unique perspective on the past (Bai, n.d.).

## **2.3 Development of Hakka Folk Songs in Different Historical Periods**

The evolution of Hakka folk songs can be traced through various historical periods, each with its own unique musical and cultural characteristics (Yang, 2016).

### **2.3.1 Before the Qin and Han Dynasties: Logging Songs as Representatives**

During the pre-Qin and Han dynasties, logging songs were a prominent form of Hakka folk music. These songs, which celebrated the hard work and communal spirit of the loggers, reflect the importance of natural resources and labor in early Hakka society.

### **2.3.2 Tang and Song Dynasties: Field Songs Dominate**

During the Tang and Song dynasties, field songs, or "tiange," became the dominant form of Hakka folk music. These songs captured the daily lives and struggles of the farmers, reflecting the agricultural nature of Hakka society during this period.

### 2.3.3 Ming and Qing Dynasties: Tea Songs Prevail

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, tea songs emerged as a popular form of Hakka folk music. These songs celebrated the tea culture and the hard work of the tea farmers, reflecting the economic and social changes that were occurring in Hakka society at this time.

### 2.3.4 Modern Times: Emergence of Miner Songs

During the modern period, miner songs became a significant form of Hakka folk music. These songs captured the harsh realities and struggles of the miners, reflecting the industrialization and modernization of Hakka society.

### 2.3.5 Contemporary Era: Rise of Red Folk Songs

In the contemporary era, red folk songs, or "hongshan ge," have emerged as a prominent form of Hakka folk music. These songs, which incorporate revolutionary themes and messages, reflect the political and social changes that have occurred in China since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Through their melodies and lyrics, red folk songs continue to serve as a means of cultural expression and social cohesion among the Hakka people.

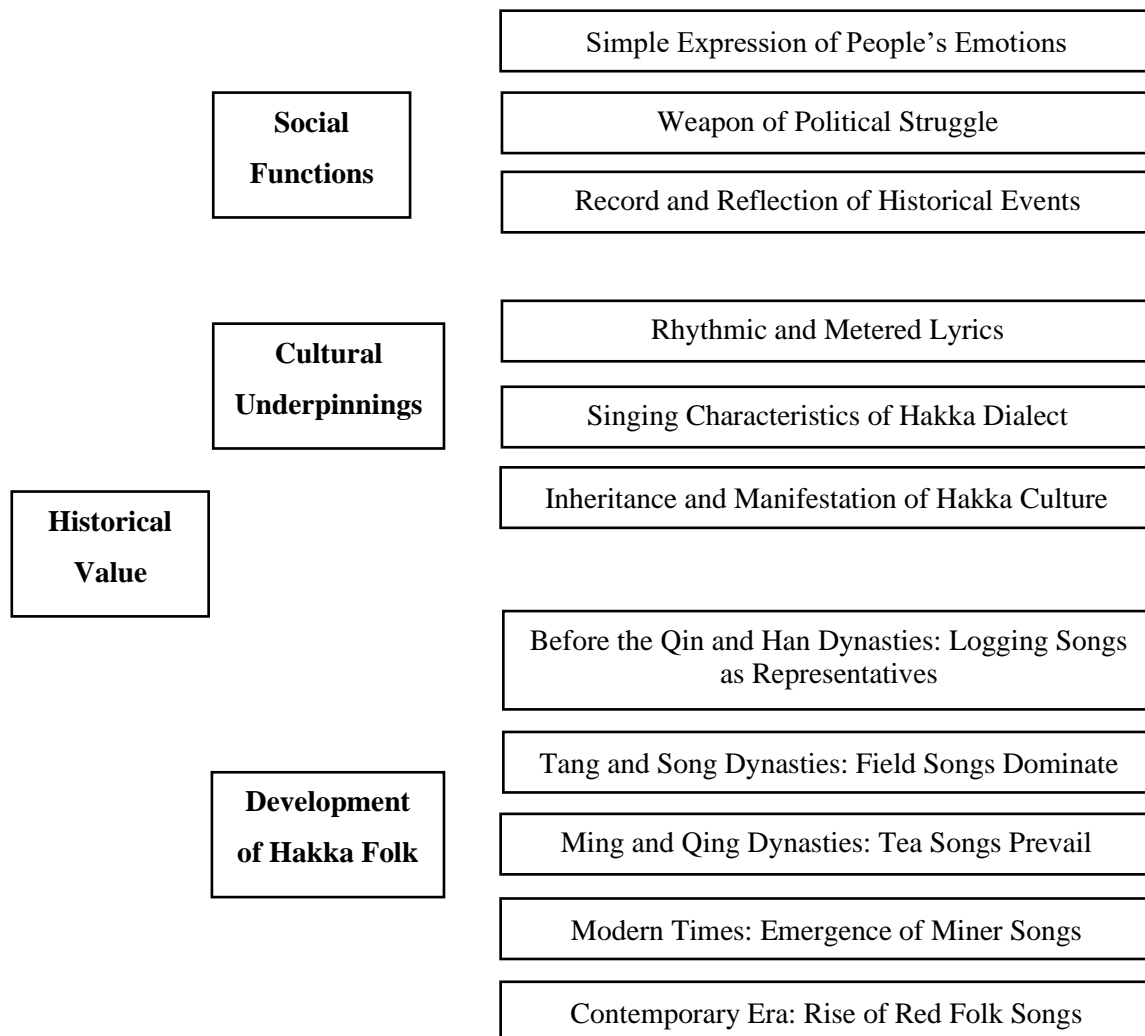


Figure 1: Historical Value of Hakka Folk Songs

### **3. The Contemporary Significance of Hakka Folk Songs**

#### **3.1 The Influence of Hakka Folk Songs in Modern Music Creation**

Hakka folk songs have significantly contributed to modern music creation by serving as a rich source of inspiration and material. They introduce unique musical elements and melodies that are distinct from mainstream music, thus enriching the diversity of modern musical compositions. Furthermore, the incorporation of Hakka folk songs into modern music pushes the boundaries of musical innovation. Musicians and composers often draw inspiration from these traditional tunes to create new and refreshing pieces that resonate with both traditional and contemporary audiences (Wen, 1992). Additionally, Hakka folk songs convey deep humanistic concerns and emotions, allowing modern music to touch the hearts of listeners and evoke a sense of nostalgia and connection to one's roots.

#### **3.2 The Contribution of Hakka Folk Songs to Cultural Heritage Preservation**

Hakka folk songs play a pivotal role in maintaining community cohesion. They serve as a bridge that connects individuals within the Hakka community, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. These songs often narrate stories of the community's history, traditions, and values, reinforcing shared memories and cultural identity. Moreover, Hakka folk songs promote individual mental health by providing an outlet for emotional expression and stress relief. Singing these songs allows individuals to channel their emotions in a constructive way, promoting emotional well-being and resilience. Furthermore, Hakka folk songs offer spiritual comfort and support during times of adversity. They serve as a source of strength and encouragement, reminding people of their ancestors' resilience and perseverance (Feng, 2007).

#### **3.3 The Value of Hakka Folk Songs in the Context of Globalization**

In the era of globalization, Hakka folk songs showcase the charm and diversity of Chinese traditional culture. They represent a unique cultural heritage that is deeply rooted in China's history and traditions, offering a glimpse into the country's rich cultural tapestry. By presenting these songs to the world, we enhance national identity and pride, fostering a sense of cultural confidence among Chinese people. Additionally, Hakka folk songs facilitate international cultural exchanges and understanding. They serve as a bridge for cultural dialogue, allowing people from different backgrounds to appreciate and learn about each other's cultures. Through these songs, we can foster mutual respect and understanding, promoting a more harmonious and inclusive global community.

Significance	Description
Music Creation	Hakka folk songs inspire modern music, enrich diversity, and touch hearts.
Cultural Preservation	They foster community cohesion, reinforce cultural identity, and promote mental health.
Globalization	Hakka songs showcase Chinese culture, enhance national pride, and facilitate cultural exchanges.

**Figure 2: The Contemporary Significance of Hakka Folk Songs**

## 4. Preservation and Dissemination of Hakka Folk Songs

### 4.1 Preservation Measures for Hakka Folk Songs

The preservation of Hakka folk songs is crucial for maintaining the rich cultural heritage of the Hakka people. Various measures have been implemented to ensure that these traditional songs are not lost to future generations (Liang, 2018).

#### 4.1.1 Establishment of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Experimental Zones

One effective measure is the establishment of intangible cultural heritage protection experimental zones. These zones are specifically designed to protect and preserve traditional cultures, including folk songs. Within these zones, Hakka folk songs are recorded, documented, and studied by experts. The zones also provide a platform for community members to perform and teach these songs, ensuring their continued transmission.

#### 4.1.2 In-depth Research and Exploration by Experts and Scholars

Experts and scholars play a vital role in the preservation of Hakka folk songs. They conduct extensive research on the history, lyrics, melodies, and cultural significance of these songs. This research helps to understand the origins and evolution of Hakka folk songs, as well as their role in the community. Through their studies, experts and scholars can identify key elements of the songs that need to be preserved and promoted.

#### 4.1.3 Cultivation and Support for Inheritors

The cultivation and support of inheritors is another crucial aspect of preserving Hakka folk songs. Inheritors are individuals who have mastered the art of singing and performing these songs. They are essential for transmitting the songs to younger generations. To ensure the continuation of Hakka folk songs, it is important to identify and support these inheritors. This can be done through financial assistance, mentorship programs, and opportunities for public performance.

## **4.2 Dissemination Pathways for Hakka Folk Songs**

The dissemination of Hakka folk songs is equally important for their preservation. By making these songs accessible to a wider audience, their cultural significance and beauty can be appreciated by more people (Liao, 2015).

### **4.2.1 Utilization of the Internet and New Media**

The internet and new media have revolutionized the dissemination of Hakka folk songs. Online platforms such as music streaming services, social media, and video-sharing websites provide easy access to these songs. This allows people from different parts of the world to discover and enjoy Hakka folk songs. Additionally, these platforms can be used to educate people about the cultural significance and history of the songs.

### **4.2.2 Popularization of Education in Schools and Communities**

Schools and communities are also important platforms for disseminating Hakka folk songs. By integrating these songs into school curricula and community events, younger generations can be exposed to and learn about their cultural heritage. This can be done through music classes, cultural festivals, and workshops. By engaging students and community members in the learning process, the transmission of Hakka folk songs can be ensured.

### **4.2.3 Promotion through Literary and Artistic Performances and Activities**

Literary and artistic performances and activities are another effective way to disseminate Hakka folk songs. These events can showcase the beauty and diversity of Hakka folk songs, attracting more people to learn and appreciate them. Performances can include concerts, dance performances, and theater productions that incorporate Hakka folk songs. Additionally, workshops and masterclasses can be held to teach people how to sing and perform these songs.

## **4.3 Challenges and Strategies for Balancing Preservation and Dissemination**

Balancing the preservation and dissemination of Hakka folk songs is a complex task. There are various challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that these songs are preserved in their original form while also being accessible to a wider audience (Li, 2007).

### **4.3.1 Maintaining the Authenticity and Innovative Development of Hakka Folk Songs**

Maintaining the authenticity of Hakka folk songs is crucial for their preservation. However, it is also important to encourage innovative development to keep the songs relevant and engaging for modern audiences. This can be achieved by incorporating modern elements into the songs, such as new melodies, arrangements, and performance styles. By doing so, Hakka folk songs can remain true to their original form while also appealing to a wider audience.

### **4.3.2 Expanding the Audience Base While Maintaining Hakka Characteristics**

Expanding the audience base for Hakka folk songs is important for their dissemination. However, it is also important to maintain the unique characteristics of these songs that make them distinct from other types of music. This can be achieved by targeting specific audiences who are interested in traditional music and culture. Additionally, by promoting the cultural significance and history of Hakka folk songs, more people can be encouraged to learn and appreciate them (Zhi, 2007).

### **4.3.3 Addressing the Impact of Modern Popular Culture**

The impact of modern popular culture on Hakka folk songs is a significant challenge. With the rise of digital media and streaming services, younger generations are increasingly exposed to popular music. To compete with this, Hakka folk songs need to be promoted and marketed

effectively. This can be done through targeted campaigns, partnerships with music labels, and collaborations with popular artists. By doing so, Hakka folk songs can reach a wider audience and remain relevant in the modern music landscape. In conclusion, the preservation and dissemination of Hakka folk songs are essential for maintaining the rich cultural heritage of the Hakka people. By implementing various measures and addressing the challenges associated with balancing preservation and dissemination, these traditional songs can continue to be enjoyed and appreciated by future generations (Feng, 2006).

## 5. Conclusion

### **The Important and Irreplaceable Status of Hakka Folk Songs**

Hakka folk songs, as an important component of Chinese traditional music culture, carry profound historical depth and rich cultural connotations. They are not only invaluable treasures created by the Hakka people in their production and daily lives but also excellent traditional cultures handed down from generation to generation, possessing an irreplaceable status.

Hakka folk songs demonstrate the wisdom and emotions of the Hakka people through their unique musical styles and expressions. These songs are rich in dialect expressions and are the product of the fusion of Central Plains culture and local culture, possessing distinctive regional characteristics and ethnic flavors. Whether they are work songs, mountain songs, ditties, or ceremonial songs, Hakka folk songs captivate people's attention and affection with their unique artistic charm. Over the long historical years, Hakka folk songs have not only become an important part of the spiritual life of the Hakka people but also significant carriers for expressing emotions, conveying information, and recording history. These songs contain the Hakka people's aspirations and pursuits for a better life, their attachment and love for their hometown, as well as their profound insights and critiques of social phenomena. These emotions and thoughts have been transmitted across time and space through the singing of Hakka folk songs and have been handed down to this day.

### **The Necessity and Urgency of Preserving and Spreading Hakka Folk Songs**

However, with the rapid development of society and the acceleration of globalization, Hakka folk songs face unprecedented challenges and difficulties. On the one hand, modern lifestyles and entertainment options have led to an increasing number of people distancing themselves from traditional music culture, resulting in a shrinking audience for Hakka folk songs. On the other hand, due to the lack of effective preservation and inheritance mechanisms, the singing and creation of Hakka folk songs face the dilemma of a lack of successors. Therefore, preserving and spreading Hakka folk songs is necessary and urgent. Firstly, preserving Hakka folk songs is an important measure to maintain cultural diversity. In the context of globalization, maintaining and promoting the uniqueness of national culture is particularly important. As an important component of Chinese traditional music culture, the preservation and inheritance of Hakka folk songs are significant for maintaining cultural diversity and promoting cultural exchanges and mutual learning. Secondly, spreading Hakka folk songs helps enhance national cohesion and cultural identity. Hakka folk songs not only carry the historical memories and cultural traditions of the Hakka people but also become their common spiritual home and emotional bond. By spreading Hakka folk songs, people's national pride and cultural self-confidence can be stimulated, enhancing national cohesion and cultural identity.

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