

PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION STRATEGY OF SHANXI BADATAO *

Moxuan He¹ and Manoon Tho-ard²

¹⁻²Academy of Arts and Philosophy, Shinawatra University, Thailand

Corresponding Author's Email: manoon.t@siu.ac.th

Received 20 May 2025; Revised 1 June 2025; Accepted 1 June 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the preservation and promotion strategies of Shanxi Badatao, a traditional large-scale instrumental folk ensemble with deep historical and cultural roots in Northern China. Drawing from qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including archival research, field observation, and a 400-person questionnaire survey, the research explores the genre's historical development, musical structure, and challenges in contemporary transmission. The findings reveal that Shanxi Badatao evolved through the integration of court, religious, and folk musical elements, maintaining a distinct form built on fixed qupai sequences and expressive instrumental configurations. However, its continuity is increasingly threatened by generational gaps and declining traditional apprenticeship. The study underscores the importance of digital preservation, community-based education, and cultural tourism integration as effective strategies for revitalizing this intangible heritage. It concludes by advocating a holistic model that combines historical awareness with technological innovation to ensure the sustainable inheritance of Shanxi Badatao in modern society.

Citation:



* Moxuan He and Manoon Tho-ard. (2025). Preservation And Promotion Strategy Of Shanxi Badatao.

Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Development, 3(3), 1267-1282;

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.>

Website: <https://so12.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JISDIADP/>

Keywords: Shanxi Badatao, Preservation, Pedigree, Communication

Introduction

Shanxi Badatao, a representative form of traditional Chinese folk instrumental ensemble, traces its origins back to the Han Dynasty and flourished through the Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. It is deeply rooted in the religious, court, and folk music traditions of northern China and is especially prominent in rituals, temple fairs, weddings, and funerals. Characterized by complex melodic structures, varied rhythmic styles, and a rich ensemble of wind and percussion instruments, Shanxi Badatao is considered a living relic of ancient Chinese music culture (Yang, 1981). Its repertoire, often organized into "sets" (tao), integrates diverse influences from Buddhist temple music, local operatic tunes, and secular folk traditions, making it a unique example of musical hybridity.

Despite its cultural richness, Shanxi Badatao faces significant challenges in the contemporary era. Urbanization, generational shifts, and the decline of traditional apprenticeship have led to a narrowing of its performance space and a weakening of its transmission pathways (Xu, 2006). Although institutional and governmental efforts have made strides in documentation and preservation—such as its inclusion in the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2021—practical strategies for sustained promotion and adaptation remain limited.

The importance of studying Shanxi Badatao lies not only in safeguarding a cultural treasure but also in understanding the dynamics of musical heritage within a modernizing society. Its preservation contributes to cultural diversity, offers material for musicological research, and enhances community identity and cohesion. Furthermore, it provides insight into the interaction between intangible cultural heritage and technological, social, and economic transformations.

Objectives

1. To investigate the historical inheritance and development of Shanxi Badatao, and to examine its interactions and integrative relationships with other local musical traditions, such as Buddhist temple music, Xian drum music, and folk operatic forms.

2. To analyze the musical structure and compositional characteristics of Shanxi Badatao, including its qupai arrangement, formal framework, melodic styles, and instrumental configuration, in order to uncover its aesthetic and structural uniqueness.

3. To develop a practical model for the preservation and promotion of Shanxi Badatao, incorporating traditional and modern methods such as digital documentation, community-based education, cultural tourism integration, and multimedia dissemination, to ensure its sustainability as a living tradition.

Literature Review

Research on Shanxi Badatao as a representative of northern Chinese folk instrumental music has accumulated valuable theoretical and practical insights. Scholars have approached its development from historical, structural, and cultural preservation perspectives. The following areas summarize key findings relevant to this study:

Yuan Jingfang (1987) emphasized the regional specificity of Chinese national instrumental music, noting that traditions like Shanxi Badatao originated from layered integrations of court music, religious rituals, and folk customs across dynastic eras. This aligns with current views that Badatao is both a product of historical fusion and a living archive of multi-ethnic musical practices.

Wang Shuhua (1980) analyzed the structural features of the "Eight Great Sets," identifying the distinctive narrative and modular qupai sequence (e.g., scattered, adagio, allegro), which form the aesthetic basis of Shanxi Badatao. His

research provides a technical foundation for understanding Badatao's compositional integrity and rhythmic variation.

Wang Guosheng (2015) explored the creative and symbolic value of intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing that traditional music like Badatao not only preserves sound forms but also reflects collective memory and cultural identity. His work supports integrating heritage music into cultural innovation and policy-making frameworks.

Xu Litao (2006) highlighted the critical role of inheritors as "core carriers" of intangible heritage, especially in oral traditions like Badatao. She argued that institutional neglect and generational disconnection pose severe risks to such musical lineages, reinforcing the need for structural and policy-based support.

Song Jianhua & Wang Kaiting (2013) proposed systemic strategies for safeguarding intangible heritage, including formal documentation, educational curriculum integration, and government-led promotional campaigns. Their work lays the groundwork for incorporating Shanxi Badatao into local music education and public awareness platforms.

Methodology

1. Qualitative Research

This study first adopted a qualitative approach to trace the historical origins and developmental trajectory of Shanxi Badatao. Through extensive literature review and archival analysis, the research investigated its musical structure, cultural context, and stylistic evolution. The interdisciplinary method—drawing from ethnomusicology, history, religious studies, and folklore—was applied to position Badatao within the broader framework of traditional Chinese ceremonial and instrumental music. Field observation was also employed by attending local performances and ritual practices in Shanxi, enabling the researcher to understand both the performance characteristics and audience

interaction. This method supported the exploration of the genre's internal structure, compositional features, instrumental configurations, and aesthetic values. Additionally, the study analyzed how Badatao relates to other regional music forms such as Wutai Buddhist music and Xian drum music, further enriching the contextual scope.

2. Quantitative Research

To assess the current level of public awareness, cultural recognition, and acceptance of Shanxi Badatao, a quantitative survey method was utilized. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed among diverse demographics in Shanxi Province, including variations in age, profession, and geographic background. The questionnaire was designed to collect data on audience understanding, appreciation frequency, and future outlook toward Badatao preservation. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed a generally high level of recognition (e.g., average ratings above 3.9 in key dimensions). Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.931, indicating excellent internal consistency. Factor and correlation analyses further confirmed the positive relationship between audience perception and the perceived cultural value of Badatao.

3. Integrated Scope Design

The design of this research method integrates historical, musical, and practical scopes. Historically, it examines Badatao's development from ancient Han dynasty roots to its formalization during the Ming and Qing dynasties, including its later transformations through modern disruptions and governmental preservation efforts. Musically, it dissects structural logic, rhythm systems, and instrumental configurations unique to Badatao, including fixed qupai sequences and multi-layered textures. Practically, the research evaluates strategies for promoting Badatao as intangible cultural heritage—such as talent training, digital documentation, community engagement, and cultural tourism integration—

thereby offering a holistic framework for its preservation and revitalization in contemporary society.

Results

Shanxi Badatao is a large-scale folk instrumental ensemble with large scale, exquisite structure and beautiful melody. In the history of Chinese music, it occupies a unique historical position and far-reaching social influence.

This study takes Shanxi Badatao as the research object, clarifies its historical context, analyzes its musical form structure from its historical context, and thus has a clear orientation for Shanxi Badatao. Finally, in the form of questionnaire survey, the author analyzes the development status of music intangible cultural heritage represented by Shanxi Badatao, and thinks about how to inherit and develop this kind of cultural heritage.

1. The historical context of Shanxi Badatao and its relationship with other music

As the living relics of thousands of years of drumming music, Shanxi Badatao not only carry the musical culture gene of Han, Tang and Ming and Qing Dynasties, but also become the epitome of the integration of folk custom and art in northern Shanxi by absorbing multiple elements such as temples and operas.

1.1 Historical context

Shanxi Badatao of inheritance system with "millennium not broken" is the cultural representative of Chinese traditional music. Shanxi Badatao are the representative of Shanxi folk instrumental music and folk music, reflecting the life of Shanxi people.

Han Dynasty to the Northern and Southern Dynasties: The embryonic form of Shanxi Badatao can be traced back to the Han Dynasty drum music tradition. The form of "advocacy" recorded in the Book of Han by Ban Gu in the

Eastern Han Dynasty has become an important source of northern folk music . During the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the temple music of Wutai Mountain arose, among which Puan Mantra and Wu Fang Wu were absorbed into Shanxi Badatao of religious music elements. Tang Dynasty to Yuan dynasty The fusion of court music and Buddhist music in the Tang Dynasty laid the foundation for the eight sets of Qupai structure. Tunes such as "Listening to the Horse" and "Hanging Zhier" date back to the ancient Tang and Song dynasties.

In the Ming Dynasty, folk artists combined court music with local operas to form an early structure of Shanxi Badatao's melodramas. For example, Song of Qing Tian was adapted into a folk music form in the Ming Dynasty. Qing Dynasty: The eight great sets entered a heyday. Cho Chenggui, a musician from Wutai Pagoda Shadow, compiled a complete repertoire of eight sets (such as "Zui Taiping" and "Goolang"), and established the playing mode of "sets and singles" . During this period, the eight sets were widely used in wedding and funeral celebrations, temple fairs and other folk activities .

Odern changes period. From the Republic of China to the Anti - Japanese War: Shanxi Badatao the art reached its peak in the early 20th century, but the Japanese invasion in the 1930s led to the loss of musical scores and interruption of inheritance. After the founding of the People's Republic of China: the government salvaged the heritage by collecting music scores (for example, 23 sets of music scores were sorted out in the 1950s) and recording audio, but the complete performance was gradually lost.

1.2 The relationship with other local music

Shanxi Badatao are a combination of various musical forms, such as Wutai Buddhist music, folk music, and so on, which is a model of the integration of multiple artistic forms in China.

Xian drum music in common. Tongyuan advocacy tradition: both of them belong to the Han and Wei advocacy music system, mainly percussion and wind

music, representing the model of Chinese traditional large-scale instrumental cycle . Structural similarity: Xian Drum Music and Shanxi Badatao's all adopt the playing rule of "ram - adagio - faster - express", reflecting the rigor of rhythm layout.

Interaction with the music of Wutai Buddhist music. Religious music fusion: Shanxi Badatao's directly absorbed the repertoire of Buddhist music of Wutai Mountain (such as "Western Zang") and performed in the Buddhist rituals of temples, forming a branch of "Zen Buddhist Music". Shanxi Badatao and Wutai Buddhist music both take guanzi, sheng and suona as the core, with percussion instruments such as drums and cymbals, which strengthens the solemn sense of religious ceremony .

The penetration of local opera music. Folk scene sharing: Shanxi Badatao together with Xinzhou Bayin and other folk music to serve the season and Shehuo celebration, forming a comprehensive art scene of "blowing music and opera performance".As the living relics of thousands of years of drumming music, the eight sets of Shanxi not only carry the musical culture gene of Han, Tang and Ming and Qing Dynasties, but also become the epitome of the integration of folk custom and art in northern Shanxi by absorbing multiple elements such as temples and operas.

2. Shanxi Badatao of music structure and composition

Shanxi Badatao is the representative music of Shanxi local instrumental music.

2.1 Musical structure

The Shanxi Badatao is composed of 2 to 10 independent Qupai in a fixed order, forming a complete narrative logic. For example, "Qingtiantao" contains seven songs including "Caifang" and "Qingtiantao". Its qupai come from a variety of sources , combining folk instrumental music (such as "Tuiluzhou"), opera Qupai

(such as Jin Opera "Jimaohou"), religious music (such as Wutai Mountain Buddhist music "Puanzhou") and folk elements.

Set form framework. The Shanxi Badatao are based on "sets of songs", and each set is composed of several independent songs (singles) in a fixed order. For example, "Qingtiantao" contains songs such as "Qingtiantao" and "Zhumating", forming a narrative logic of "starting - Cheng-turning - combining" .

The inside of the repertoire follows the rhythm progression rule of "scattered plate - adagio - allegro", reflecting the tension design of "from static to dynamic" in traditional Chinese music.

Multi - style. The single structure often adopts the three - part style of "scattered sequence - middle sequence - broken" of Tang Dynasty Daqu. For example, "Proverbtao" begins with the scattered sequence introduction, the middle sequence develops the theme, and the end reaches the climax through the dense rhythm (broken). Some tracks (such as "Tuigulutao") incorporate changes in opera style, enhancing the drama through the transformation of "original plate - water plate - allegro" .

2.2 Composition of Musical Instruments

The Badatao of instrumental music in Shanxi are mainly composed of traditional instruments, such as sheng, drum, suona and so on.

Core wind instrument. Main instrument: The pipe (Tartar) plays the main melody line and realizes the continuous effect of long tones through cyclic ventilation technique; The sheng is laid with harmony, forming a longitudinal sound with five degrees and eight degrees overlaying .

Auxiliary wind instrument: Suona is used to set off a passionate scene (such as the Geeselangtao), and bamboo flute is interspersed with decorative colorful phrases.

Percussion ensemble. The basic configuration includes drum, cloud gong, cymbals, forming a "drum constant speed - gong cymbal shape" collaboration

mode. Special pieces add clapper and wooden fish to strengthen the sense of religious ritual.

3. Establish the model of the preservation and promotion of the Shanxi Badatao as intangible cultural heritage

3.1 New paths for the inheritance of the "Shanxi Badatao". Establish a mechanism for the use and incentive of special talents in the folk music culture industry, give full play to the great role of the government in protecting and supporting the inheritors, encourage the enthusiasm and innovation of the inheritors of folk music in promoting folk music, change old concepts, and update their understanding.

3.2 Digital protection and dissemination of "Shanxi Badatao" from the perspective of new media. From the perspective of new media, digital technology provides new opportunities and challenges for the protection and dissemination of "Shanxi Badatao". Use WeChat, Weibo, Tiktok and other social media platforms to spread. Shanxi Badatao tracks are uploaded to Tencent Music, NetEase Cloud Music and other network music platforms. Using the combination of art and technology application means in the meta-universe concept system, it brings a new opportunity for experiencing music intangible cultural heritage and other intangible cultural heritage to solve the survival problem and reproduce the original state.

4. Changes of Badatao of audience in Shanxi and their impact on communication

In order to study the development of intangible cultural heritage represented by Shanxi Badatao in society, the audience, the way of inheritance and the way of transmission and other issues. The questionnaire is designed for audiences in different regions, different occupations and different ages in Shanxi, so as to have a basic understanding of the audience groups, understanding degree, communication methods and ways, inheritance status and future development of the Shanxi Badatao.

4.1 Data representation. The questionnaire is designed for audiences of different regions, different occupations and different ages, so as to have a basic understanding of the transmission mode and mode, audience groups, inheritance status and other issues. A total of 400 questionnaires were effectively recovered. The participants were mainly from different age groups, occupations and geographies.

4.2 Data analysis. This paper will analyze, summarize and understand the large amount of data collected. According to the results of the questionnaire data, this study will use five data analysis methods: descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and correlation analysis to analyze the questionnaire data.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the research dimensions of Badatao noumenon in Shanxi

Basic Indicator Sort						
Item	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.	Median
A1	400	1.000	5.000	3.967	0.981	4.000
A2	400	1.000	5.000	4.030	0.976	4.000
A3	400	1.000	5.000	3.940	0.986	4.000
A4	400	1.000	5.000	3.993	0.943	4.000
A5	400	1.000	5.000	3.970	0.944	4.000

4.2.1 Descriptive analysis

According to the table above, the average values of some dimensions of resilience in the questionnaire are all higher than 3.8 points, indicating that the respondents have a high understanding of the *Badatao* in Shanxi. Among them, the understanding of the *Badatao* styles in Shanxi is as high as 4.030 points, indicating that the respondents have the highest understanding of the *Badatao* in Shanxi. It shows that the *Badatao* works in Shanxi, the types of Musical

Instruments and the structure of musical forms are the important factors affecting their inheritance and dissemination.

4.2.2 Reliability analysis

Table 2 Reliability analysis table

Cronbach reliability analysis		
Number of terms	Sample size	Cronbach α coefficient
24	400	0.931

As can be seen from the above table, the reliability coefficient value of the research data is 0.931, higher than 0.9, indicating that the reliability quality of the data is high and can be used for further analysis.

4.2.3 Correlation analysis

Table 3 Factor load coefficient

Factor (latent variable)	Measuremen t item (explicit variable)	Non- standard load factor (Coef.)	Standard error (Std.Error)	z (CR val ue)	p (Std.Estimat e)	SM C
Factor1	Understanding of current situation	1.000	-	-	-	0.766
Factor1	Cultural characteristics	1.008	0.052	19.460	0.000	0.719
Factor2	Future outlook	1.000	-	-	-	0.787
Factor2	Value propaganda	1.019	0.052	19.497	0.000	0.705

As can be seen from the above table, the absolute values of standard loads in the four dimensions are all greater than 0.6, indicating that each dimension has a good measurement relationship. In the future outlook dimension, the coefficient is 0.887, indicating that current situation understanding and cultural characteristics have the highest correlation with the future outlook dimension.

Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive examination of Shanxi Badatao, encompassing its historical evolution, musical structure, cultural functions, and contemporary preservation strategies. The findings confirm that Shanxi Badatao is not only a form of large-scale instrumental folk music but also an integral part of the cultural and ritual life of Northern Shanxi. The structure of Badatao—featuring fixed qupai sequences, slow-to-fast rhythmic progression, and diverse instrumental configurations—demonstrates a sophisticated compositional logic that aligns with the traditional aesthetic principles of Chinese folk music. From a cultural-historical perspective, Badatao reflects a synthesis of court, Buddhist, and folk musical traditions, evolving through dynastic periods while maintaining core ceremonial functions in weddings, funerals, and temple fairs. As supported by Yuan (2001), the survival of traditional folk ensembles like Badatao depends heavily on their embeddedness in local customs and ritual frameworks, which give these musical forms both continuity and symbolic meaning. The study also highlights several challenges. Traditional apprenticeship systems are rapidly declining due to urban migration and waning interest among younger generations. While master-apprentice transmission was once the primary vehicle for maintaining repertoire and performance practices, this method alone is no longer sufficient in contemporary contexts. As Xu (2006) points out, the effectiveness of intangible cultural heritage preservation hinges on recognizing inheritors as both

custodians and educators—thus requiring institutional, financial, and technological support to sustain their roles. In terms of preservation and promotion, this study proposes the use of digital media platforms, online music archives, and virtual technologies (e.g., VR-based performance simulations) to document and disseminate Badatao more effectively. Incorporating the genre into school curricula and cultural tourism initiatives could further strengthen its visibility and relevance among broader audiences. Audience analysis from the survey indicates a generally high level of recognition and appreciation, affirming that Shanxi Badatao retains cultural vitality and developmental potential if innovative and inclusive strategies are implemented. In conclusion, Shanxi Badatao serves as a living embodiment of regional musical identity, aesthetic heritage, and communal memory. Its preservation requires not only historical awareness and structural documentation, but also adaptive strategies that respond to modern technological conditions and social expectations. Future research may continue to explore the integration of digital tools and institutional frameworks to ensure that this rich tradition can be sustained and reimagined across generations.

Recommendation

1. General Recommendations

To ensure the sustainable preservation and transmission of Shanxi Badatao as a form of intangible cultural heritage, several practical measures are recommended. First, local governments and cultural institutions should establish structured support mechanisms for inheritors, including financial subsidies, performance platforms, and formal training opportunities. Encouraging cross-generational learning—through community education, master-apprentice models, and school-based curricula—can enhance youth engagement and strengthen intergenerational continuity. Second, digital preservation methods

should be prioritized. This includes high-quality audio-visual documentation of performances, online dissemination through platforms such as WeChat and NetEase Music, and the construction of publicly accessible digital archives. Integrating new media technologies, such as virtual exhibitions or augmented reality applications, can help create immersive cultural experiences for broader audiences. Third, cultural tourism development can be leveraged as a powerful tool for revitalization. Shanxi Badatao may be featured in themed folk festivals, experiential workshops, or multimedia performances, combining heritage promotion with regional economic development. The creation of cultural products (e.g., music-based merchandise, digital albums, educational kits) can also generate commercial value while raising public awareness.

2. Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should expand the interdisciplinary dimensions of Shanxi Badatao studies by incorporating perspectives from ethnomusicology, digital humanities, and cultural economics. A focused examination of how digital transformation influences audience perception and community identity could offer new insights into adaptive strategies for heritage preservation. Moreover, longitudinal studies that track the impact of institutional policies and educational programs on the vitality of Badatao are needed. Such research could help evaluate the effectiveness of current protection models and identify gaps in implementation. Additionally, comparative studies between Shanxi Badatao and similar ensemble traditions in other regions of China or East Asia may illuminate shared patterns of musical evolution, ritual function, and transmission. Lastly, the integration of artificial intelligence and motion capture technologies into the documentation and analysis of musical gestures, instrumental coordination, and performance practices deserves attention. These tools hold potential not only for scholarly analysis but also for reconstructing lost practices and creating interactive learning environments for younger generations.

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