

## THE INHERITANCE AND DISSEMINATION OF HENAN FOLK SONGS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ONLINE MEDIA

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### Abstract

Under the dual impact of globalization and the digital wave, the survival context of traditional music has undergone profound transformation. Henan folk songs, as an important carrier of Central Plains culture, bear the historical memory, folk customs, and public emotions of the Henan region. In the traditional communication context, Henan folk songs face difficulties such as the discontinuity of inheritors and limited dissemination scope. With the popularization of online media, short-video platforms, social media, and digital audio platforms have constructed a completely new communication ecology, providing new paths for the inheritance and dissemination of Henan folk songs. The fragmented dissemination of short-video platforms breaks temporal and spatial restrictions, live interactive broadcasting activates living inheritance, virtual technology empowers artistic innovation, and cross-platform linkage builds cultural identity. Based on the inheritance value and traditional dissemination dilemma of Henan folk songs, this paper analyzes their artistic characteristics and cultural value, combines them with the communication characteristics of online media, explores the reconstruction path of inheritance models, dissemination mechanisms, and cultural ecology under online media, and proposes optimization strategies for the risks of alienation in dissemination, aiming to provide theoretical and practical references for the modern transformation of traditional music.

### INTRODUCTION

Henan, as one of the core birthplaces of Chinese civilization, has its folk song culture rooted in the agricultural civilization of the Yellow River basin, and after thousands of years of accumulation has formed a unique artistic system. From the banks of the Qi River where “the mandarin ducks coo” in the Book of Songs to the Yellow River shores where “the cicadas chirp” in the Ballad of Mulan, Henan folk songs have consistently served as vital vehicles for the people of the Central Plains to express emotions and document daily life. Over millennia of evolution, Henan folk songs have crystallized into distinct genres—mountain ballads, work chants, and folk tunes—characterized by their

simplicity, regional distinctiveness, and popular appeal. From the lively cheerfulness of “Weaving Flower Baskets” to the humorous wit of “Aunt Wang Nailing the Jar,” from the stirring passion of “Osmanthus Blooms Everywhere in August” to the heartfelt tenderness of “Weeping at the Seventh Pass, Henan folk songs are not only the embodiment of musical art, but also contain the wisdom of production and life as well as the spiritual and cultural aspirations of the people of Henan.

However, in the process of industrialization and urbanization, the living soil of Henan folk songs has gradually shrunk: the migration of rural populations to cities has led to the loss of singing

communities, the impact of popular music and short videos has sharply reduced the audience for traditional repertoire, and the oral transmission mode has difficulty adapting to the communication logic of modern society. According to a 2023 survey by the Henan Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, among the existing folk-song-type intangible cultural heritage projects in the province, only 12% have achieved normalized transmission, while 78% face the crisis of “songs disappearing as people leave.” Entering the information age, the traditional oral transmission model and single dissemination channels cannot meet the cultural consumption needs of modern society, and Henan folk songs have gradually been marginalized. The rise of online media has broken the limitations of time and space, reshaped the logic of cultural communication, and provided new possibilities for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. In this context, how to make use of the advantages of online media to achieve effective inheritance and wide dissemination of Henan folk songs has become an urgent issue to be solved. This paper focuses on the intersection between online media and the inheritance and dissemination of Henan folk songs, and through field investigation and case analysis explores paths for their integrated development, helping Henan folk songs regain vitality in the new era.

### Literature Review

Research on the inheritance and dissemination of folk songs is commonly framed through the concept of intangible cultural heritage, where value lies not only in preserving texts or melodies but also in sustaining living practices, community memory, and intergenerational transmission (UNESCO, 2003). The 2003 UNESCO Convention defines safeguarding broadly to include identification, documentation, transmission, and revitalization, making this framework especially relevant to regional musical traditions such as Henan folk songs (UNESCO, 2003). Heritage scholars likewise argue that intangible heritage should not be treated as a fixed museum object. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) explains intangible heritage as a form of metacultural production, Kurin (2004) emphasizes that

safeguarding must remain connected to communities and lived practice, and Bortolotto (2007) shows that UNESCO-oriented heritage work shifts attention from preserving objects to recognizing dynamic cultural processes. For Henan folk songs, this suggests that effective inheritance cannot be reduced to archiving repertoire alone, but must also sustain performance contexts, social meanings, and local participation.

Existing studies further show that the inheritance and dissemination of Henan folk songs can be understood through cultural ecology, intangible cultural heritage theory, local protection practice, and online media communication. Shang (2019) highlights the importance of cultural ecology and regional identity in sustaining traditional music, while Wang (2013) emphasizes preservation, transmission, and revitalization as central to intangible cultural heritage protection. The *Report on the Protection and Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Henan Province* (2023) further stresses the need for stronger safeguarding mechanisms and sustainable inheritance pathways (Henan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, 2023). In addition, Yu (2019) and Peng (2023) explain how media ecology and network communication reshape the production, circulation, and reception of cultural content, making digital platforms increasingly important for expanding and transforming the transmission of Henan folk songs.

Within China, this heritage framework has increasingly shaped music policy, curriculum reform, and public discourse. Zhang et al. (2015) show that intangible heritage protection for music in China expanded rapidly after the early 2000s, but also generated tensions between state-led preservation, staged display, and living transmission. Law and Ho (2011) demonstrate that music education in China is closely tied to cultural memory, nation-building, and the negotiation between tradition and modernization. Similarly, Ho (2013) argues that localization matters in Chinese music education, since curricular reform reflects not only technical training goals but also wider cultural and political priorities. Studies by Yang and Welch (2014, 2016) are especially important

because they move from policy rhetoric to pedagogical reality. Their work on Hua'er music shows that traditional folk music learning, which is often oral, contextual, improvisatory, and community-based, does not fit neatly within conservatoire-style classroom instruction. This insight is directly relevant to Henan folk songs, because any inheritance model that over-formalizes repertoire risks weakening the social conditions that originally gave the songs meaning.

A second major stream of scholarship examines how digital media changes cultural transmission. Liang et al. (2021) show that social media can widen participation in heritage communication and strengthen visibility, engagement, and sustainability when used strategically. In the Chinese music context, Wang (2021) finds that online platforms have become important channels for preserving and popularizing musical heritage, although platform logics often favor visually attractive and easily consumable content. Li (2022) further suggests that digital delivery can strengthen access, learning outcomes, and the wider dissemination of Chinese folk music in higher education. Lim and Zhang (2023) describe this broader shift as the platformization of Chinese national music, in which dissemination increasingly depends on digital platforms, algorithmic circulation, and online creator cultures. Dang et al. (2021) similarly confirm that digitization, dissemination, and utilization have become central themes in recent research on intangible cultural heritage in China. Taken together, these studies suggest that online media is not merely an additional publicity tool; rather, it

restructures who produces heritage, how audiences encounter it, and which forms of tradition become visible, simplified, or transformed in the process of circulation.

Henan-specific scholarship remains comparatively limited, which also reveals a clear research opportunity. Existing studies on Xinyang folk songs, Henan Zhuizi, and related regional forms confirm that Henan's musical traditions remain culturally rich but vulnerable under modernization, migration, and changing educational structures. Zhang et al. (2023) document the development and transmission challenges facing Xinyang folk songs, while Miao et al. (2024) show that oral pedagogy continues to play an important role in the teaching of Henan Zhuizi. Li (2023) situates regional folk songs within broader patterns of cultural communication and spatial distribution along the Grand Canal, offering a wider framework for understanding circulation, geography, and diversity in Chinese folk-song heritage. Shang's recent studies are especially relevant because they directly address Henan folk songs in relation to cultural tourism integration and higher normal music pedagogy (Shang, 2026a, 2026b). Taken together, the literature shows that heritage policy, pedagogy, digital dissemination, and local music traditions have all received attention, but there is still limited integrated analysis of how online media can support the inheritance of Henan folk songs without flattening their regional identity, pedagogical depth, and cultural context. That gap provides the justification for the present study.

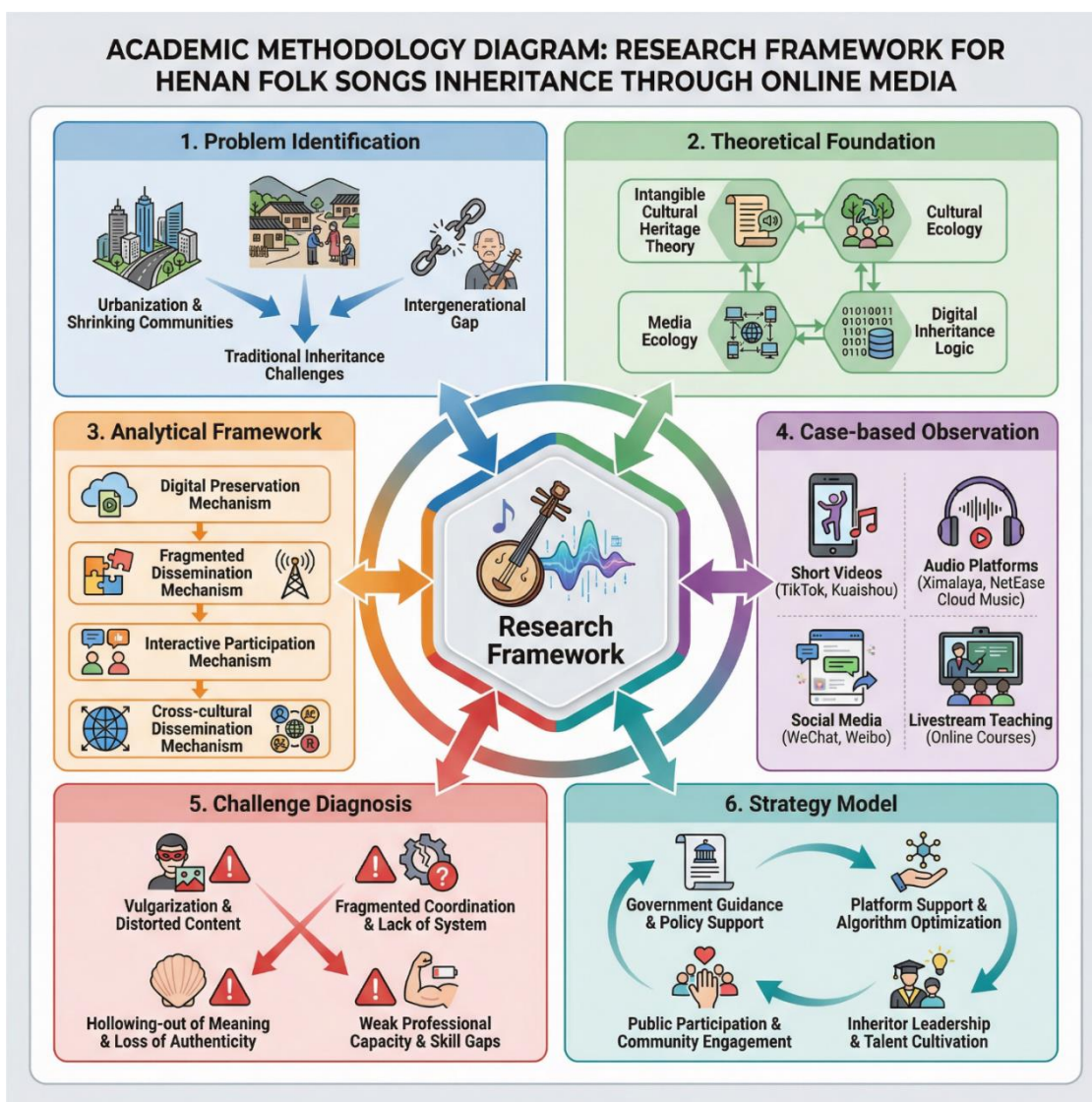


Figure 1: Methodology

I. The Cultural Inheritance Value and Traditional Dissemination Dilemma of Henan Folk Songs

(1) The Cultural Inheritance Value of Henan Folk Songs

(2)

Henan folk songs are an important medium for the transmission of Central Plains culture, and their content covers historical events, folk customs, ethical concepts, and more in the Henan region.

1. Henan Folk Songs: Diverse Genres and Distinctive Artistic Characteristics

According to genre, Henan folk songs can be divided into work chants (such as Yellow River boatmen’s chants), field songs (such as Xinyang

wheat-threshing songs), minor tunes (such as *Bian Hualan* and the Henan version of *Jasmine Flower*), and lantern songs (such as the accompanying singing of Queshan iron-flower performance). Their artistic characteristics are distinct:

First, the “Yellow River gene” of language and melody. The four tones of the Henan dialect (high level, rising, dipping, falling) directly influence melodic contour; for example, in *Picking Pomegranates*, the dialect pronunciation of “pomegranate” forms a distinctive drawn-out vocal phrase. Second, the “presence of everyday life” in subject matter. From romance (*Missing My Beloved*), labor (*Weeding Song*), to festivals (the Henan

variant of *Dragon Boat Tune*), the content of folk songs covers all scenes of daily life and functions as a “sound museum” of Central Plains culture. Third, the “collective memory” of cultural identity. Henan folk songs frequently use regional symbols such as the Yellow River and Mount Song; for example, the “ai-hai-yo” chant in the Kaifeng Yellow River boatmen’s chant is not only a labor rhythm but also a spiritual bond uniting generations of residents along the Yellow River banks.

## 2. The Cultural Transmission and Identity Value of Henan Folk Songs

Henan folk songs possess distinctive regional characteristics in musical form. Their melodies are mostly based on the tonal fluctuations of the Central Plains dialect, and their rhythms are closely connected with local production labor and living habits. Mountain songs often adopt free rhythms with high and resonant melodies suitable for singing across open mountainous areas; work chants have regular and powerful rhythms that coordinate collective labor movements; minor tunes feature smooth and graceful melodies with vivid lyrics and strong entertainment value. The lyrics of Henan folk songs are largely created orally among the people. Their language is plain, direct, and easy to understand, full of the atmosphere of everyday life, embodying the aesthetic feature of folk art as “originating from life yet elevating life,” and providing rich material for modern musical composition.

Henan folk songs are a shared cultural symbol of the people of Henan, carrying collective memory and emotional resonance. For example, *Wheat-Threshing Song* and *Rice-Planting Song*, which reflect agricultural activities, record the processes and rhythms of traditional farming; *Marrying a Bride* and *Lantern Festival Revelry*, which embody folk customs, display Henan’s distinctive wedding traditions and festive culture; *Song Urging Filial Piety* and *Classic of Teaching Children*, which contain ethical ideas, convey traditional virtues of respecting the elderly and loving the young, and diligence and thrift in managing a household. Through the inheritance of Henan folk songs, the core connotations of Central Plains culture are passed down from generation to generation. In

specific cultural settings, such as festive gatherings and folk activities, singing Henan folk songs strengthens people’s sense of belonging and identity. Meanwhile, as representatives of local culture, Henan folk songs can demonstrate Henan’s regional charm in external cultural exchange, enhance its cultural influence, and promote the construction of a local cultural brand.

## (2) Traditional Challenges in Transmitting Henan Folk Songs

### 1. Disruption in the Lineage of Transmitters and Lack of Successors

The inheritance of traditional Henan folk songs mainly relies on the “oral transmission and personal teaching” model, in which elder folk artists pass skills to descendants or apprentices. However, with accelerating urbanization, large numbers of rural residents have moved to cities. The lifestyle and values of the younger generation have changed significantly, their interest in traditional folk songs has gradually declined, and they tend to pursue modern cultural forms such as pop music. Simultaneously, the number of elderly folk artists is dwindling annually, placing many skills at risk of extinction. This has created a generational gap in the transmission of Henan folk songs, making it difficult to sustain the chain of inheritance. Traditional dissemination relied on offline settings such as “fields and farmland” and “temple fairs and festivals,” with audiences limited to local middle-aged and elderly groups. With rural hollowing-out and urbanization, once younger generations leave their hometowns they lose natural exposure to folk songs, and the coverage of traditional channels shrinks drastically.

### 2. Limited and Single-Channel Dissemination

In the traditional communication context, Henan folk songs were mainly spread through offline scenes such as folk activities, farm labor, and street performances, restricting their reach to specific regions and populations. Although some songs were broadcast via radio and television, broadcast schedules and content selection limited their effectiveness. Traditional transmission primarily followed a linear “master-

apprentice” model, with dissemination primarily carried out by a small number of intangible cultural heritage inheritors, local arts groups, and academic institutions. Low participation among younger generations has resulted in insufficient innovation momentum for folk songs, hindering interactive engagement with audiences. This makes it difficult for folk songs to adapt to modern aesthetic demands or fully stimulate audience enthusiasm.

### 3. Insufficient Content Innovation and Weak Adaptability

Traditional Henan folk songs mostly reflect past production and living scenes, creating a gap with modern lifestyles and values and making it difficult to meet contemporary cultural consumption needs. In form, they are mainly performed as solo singing and lack integration with modern art forms such as dance, drama, film, and television, resulting in weak competitiveness in the modern cultural market and difficulty attracting young audiences. To protect “authenticity,” some songs are fixed within stage performance or academic research frameworks and detached from their original life context. For example, although *Bian Hualan* has been adapted into a symphonic version performed in concert halls, ordinary audiences find it difficult to understand the life scenes of “picking flowers, drying flowers, and wearing flowers,” turning cultural communication into mere “cultural display.”

## II. The Reconstruction Logic of Henan Folk Songs Through Online Media

The essence of online media lies in “connection”—linking people to information, content, and culture. For Henan folk songs, the value of online media lies not only in expanding reach but also in reconstructing the ecological chain of “production–dissemination–reception,” promoting transformation from “static preservation” to “dynamic inheritance.”

### (1) Digital Preservation: Building a “Digital Gene Bank” for Folk Songs

The technological characteristics of online media provide the foundation for digitally preserving folk songs. Through high-definition audio recording, 4K video capture, 3D

modeling, and other techniques, elements of Henan folk songs—including audio, video, lyrics, and performance contexts—are converted into digital resources, forming a storable, searchable, and reusable “digital gene bank.” For instance, relevant departments could develop a “Digital Museum of Central Plains Folk Songs” to preserve high-definition recordings and field investigation videos (including interviews with inheritors and performance scenes) while annotating lyrics. Users could also experience the immersive atmosphere of “Yellow River Boatmen’s Work Songs” through VR devices. This digital preservation not only prevents the loss of songs with the passing of inheritors but also provides original materials for future dissemination and innovation.

### (2) Fragmented Dissemination: “Lightweight” Expression Breaking Spatial-Temporal Constraints

The “short, flat, and fast” characteristics of short-video platforms (e.g., Video Account, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili) align perfectly with the “everyday life” essence of Henan folk songs. Through 15-second to 3-minute videos, users can quickly grasp core elements like melodies, dances, and dialects—aligning with modern “attention economy” dissemination patterns. For instance, creators like Jia Yunlong from Henan Yu Opera Troupe No. 3, Tian Ai Yun of Kaifeng Erjiaxian, Yue Diao inheritor Shen Xiaomei, and Zhou Bin—a bearer of Henan Jiulian Deng intangible cultural heritage—have released series of short videos showcasing local opera and Henan folk songs on Douyin and WeChat Video. By telling compelling stories of the Yellow River and disseminating Central Plains culture, they have amassed substantial followings and inspired many young users to imitate and sing along. This fragmented dissemination isn’t mere “content compression.” Instead, it recreates the folk songs’ living contexts through “scenario-based slices”—such as humming during farm work or communal singing at festivals—allowing users to forge emotional connections with the songs during their “fragmented moments.”

### (3) Interactive Participation: An Ecological Shift from “One-Way Reception” to “Co-Creation and Sharing”

The “interactivity” of online media has shattered the traditional boundary between “transmitter” and “receiver,” transforming users from passive recipients into active creators. In the online dissemination of Henan folk songs, users participate in content production through secondary creation such as song adaptations, dialect dubbing, and narrative performances, forming a virtuous cycle of “professional creation → public participation → secondary dissemination.” For example, the “Guochao-style” adaptation video of *Bian Hualan* (incorporating electronic music and Hanfu fashion elements) demonstrates how such interaction not only expands dissemination reach but also injects new vitality into folk songs through users’ creative participation, transforming them from “cultural heritage” into “living culture.”

### (4) Cross-Cultural Dissemination: Identity Evolution from “Regional Symbol” to “Global Resonance”

The internet’s “boundary-less nature” provides channels for folk songs’ cross-cultural dissemination. Some content creators leverage international platforms like YouTube and TikTok, using “cultural spectacle” or “emotional resonance” as entry points to attract overseas audiences. For instance, the fusion of Henan folk songs with modern genres like electronic music and rap (e.g., the electronic remix of “Shaolin Shaolin”) breaks through regional cultural barriers, integrating them into global youth culture. This cross-cultural transmission transcends mere “cultural export”; it rediscovers the universal values of folk songs (such as praise for one’s homeland and love for life) through an “outsider’s perspective,” thereby strengthening cultural identity.

## III. Characteristics of Online Media Transmission and Its Role in the Inheritance of Henan Folk Songs

The integration of online media has opened new avenues for preserving Henan folk songs. According to 2024 data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), China’s

online video user base reached 1.073 billion, accounting for 98.3% of all internet users, with short video usage rates hitting 94.8%. With its “decentralized,” “interactive,” and “fragmented” communication characteristics, online media is reshaping the power structure of cultural dissemination. The one-way transmission model of traditional media has been disrupted, transforming users from mere ‘audiences’ into “communicators,” fundamentally altering the logic of cultural content production and dissemination.

### (I) Core Characteristics of Online Media Communication

#### 1. Immediacy and Extensive Reach

Leveraging internet technology, online media enables instant information release and dissemination. Audiences can access content anytime, anywhere via mobile phones, computers, and other devices. Simultaneously, the internet transcends geographical boundaries, allowing information to cross borders and regions to reach global audiences, maximizing dissemination scope.

#### 2. Interactive and Participatory Nature

Online media has transformed the one-way transmission model of traditional media, establishing a two-way interactive communication mechanism. Audiences are not merely recipients of information; they actively participate in the dissemination process through commenting, liking, sharing, and content creation, becoming both producers and disseminators of information. This interactivity and participation enhance audience engagement and sense of belonging, thereby improving communication effectiveness.

#### 3. Personalization and Precision in Communication

Leveraging big data technology, online media delivers personalized content recommendations based on audience interests and browsing histories, precisely targeting content to interested groups. This precision enhances communication efficiency, reduces costs, and meets diverse audience preferences.

#### 4. Diversified Forms of Communication

Online media employs diverse formats including text, images, audio, video, and live streaming to transform abstract concepts into vivid, intuitive presentations. Short videos and live streams, with their strong visual impact and entertainment value, are particularly popular among younger audiences, opening new avenues for cultural dissemination.

### (II) The Role of Online Media in the Inheritance of Henan Folk Songs

#### 1. Expanding Inheritance Channels and Broadening Reach

Online media provide diversified channels for the inheritance and dissemination of Henan folk songs. Through short-video platforms (such as Douyin and Kuaishou), digital audio platforms (such as NetEase Cloud Music and QQ Music), and social media (such as WeChat and Weibo), Henan folk songs can break through geographical and temporal limitations and reach audiences nationwide and even globally. For example, folk artists can upload videos of themselves singing Henan folk songs to short-video platforms and quickly gain substantial views and attention, greatly expanding the influence of Henan folk songs.

#### 2. Enriching Inheritance Methods and Enhancing Audience Participation

The interactivity and diversity of online media can enrich the forms of inheritance of Henan folk songs. On the one hand, audiences can watch performance videos of Henan folk songs through online platforms, learn singing techniques, and participate in online discussions, thereby achieving active learning and inheritance; on the other hand, folk artists and cultural institutions can use online platforms to carry out live-stream teaching, folk-song composition competitions, and other activities, attracting audiences to participate in the inheritance and creation of Henan folk songs and strengthening their sense of participation and belonging.

#### 3. Promoting Content Innovation to Meet Contemporary Demands

The development of online media has promoted content innovation in Henan folk songs. To

adapt to the characteristics of online dissemination and the needs of contemporary audiences, creators of Henan folk songs have begun to adapt and innovate on the basis of traditional folk songs, combining traditional melodies with popular music elements (such as rap and electronic music) and integrating modern social life and values. For example, the adapted version of *Bian Hualan* incorporates popular rhythms and lyrics and is well received by young audiences, achieving the modernization transformation of traditional folk songs.

#### 4. Exploring Inheritance Resources and Protecting Cultural

Online media assets provide new approaches for the exploration and protection of Henan folk song resources. Through online platforms, a large number of Henan folk song materials scattered among the people (such as recordings of elderly artists, musical scores, and lyrics) can be collected, organized, and digitally preserved, preventing the loss of cultural resources. At the same time, online platforms can discover and promote a group of promising folk artists, providing them with opportunities to display their talents and promoting the cultivation and growth of traditional subjects.

### IV. Practical Cases of Henan Folk Song Inheritance and Dissemination in the Context of Online Media

#### (1) Online and Digital Dissemination of Henan Folk Songs

WeChat public accounts and short-video platforms, with their fast dissemination speed, wide audience coverage, and strong interactivity, have become important positions for the dissemination of Henan folk songs. Some inheritors of Henan folk songs publish singing videos on short-video platforms and adapt Henan folk songs to give them new contemporary connotations. The videos incorporate Henan's landmark architecture and folk customs and are uploaded to platforms such as Douyin, Channels, and Xiaohongshu, triggering widespread dissemination and discussion and enabling more young people to understand and appreciate Henan folk songs.

Digital audio platforms like NetEase Cloud Music and QQ Music provide crucial support for the digital preservation and dissemination of Henan folk songs. These platforms not only host extensive audio archives of traditional Henan folk songs but also offer channels for folk artists and independent musicians to release original works. For instance, NetEase Cloud Music launched a “Henan Folk Songs” special section featuring classics like “Osmanthus Blooms Everywhere in August” and “Aunt Wang Nails the Jar,” alongside adapted Henan folk song works. Users can stream and download these tracks anytime via the platform, enabling convenient dissemination of Henan folk music. Simultaneously, the “comment section” feature on digital audio platforms creates interactive spaces for audiences. After listening to Henan folk songs, users share their feelings, memories, and stories in these sections, fostering a positive cultural dissemination environment. For instance, in the comments for “Osmanthus Blooms Everywhere in August,” many users recount childhood experiences of hearing the song and express nostalgia for their hometowns, further deepening the emotional resonance of Henan folk songs.

### **(2) Collaborative Dissemination Between Official and Folk Forces**

Social media such as WeChat and Weibo have become important platforms for collaborative dissemination of Henan folk songs between Henan cultural institutions and grassroots communities. On the one hand, official institutions such as cultural and tourism authorities across Henan Province and Henan Vocational College of Art publish historical and cultural knowledge of Henan folk songs, interviews with folk artists, and information on online performances through public accounts and official pages, guiding the public to pay attention to the inheritance and development of Henan folk songs. For example, relevant departments can launch an “Online Exhibition of Henan Folk Songs,” pushing one Henan folk song and related interpretation weekly through public accounts. On the other hand, enthusiasts can spontaneously form “Henan Folk Song exchange groups,” carrying out online singing and lyric-creation activities and forming a

grassroots atmosphere of inheritance and dissemination.

### **(3) Innovation of Inheritance Models of Henan Folk Songs**

With the popularization of live streaming, some professional art institutions and folk artists in Henan have begun to offer online teaching courses of Henan folk songs through live-stream platforms, innovating inheritance models. For example, teacher Zheng Huiling from the School of Music of Henan University conducts a “Henan Folk Song Singing and Performance Live Classroom” on Douyin, explaining historical backgrounds and singing techniques, demonstrating performances on site, and interacting with viewers in real time, with nearly a thousand viewers per session. She has also recorded a series of “Henan Folk Song Singing and Performance” courses covering everything from basic singing to advanced creation and published related teaching materials, meeting the learning needs of different audiences. This online inheritance model not only breaks the geographical and temporal limitations of traditional offline teaching and lowers the learning threshold but also integrates high-quality teaching resources, achieving professionalization and scale in the inheritance of Henan folk songs.

## **V. Challenges in the Inheritance and Dissemination of Henan Folk Songs in the Context of Online Media**

While online media presents opportunities for folk song inheritance, its double-edged sword effect cannot be overlooked. During dissemination, Henan folk songs face risks of “alienation,” “fast-foodization” and “hollowing out,” necessitating a balance between preserving authenticity and embracing innovation.

### **(1) Inconsistent Content Quality with Pronounced Vulgarization Tendencies**

In the online media environment, due to the lack of effective supervision and guidance, some Henan folk song dissemination content varies greatly in quality. Some folk artists and bloggers pursue traffic and attention by publishing vulgarized or homogenized works, such as crude lyrics or improper performance forms, which

not only damage the artistic image of Henan folk songs but also mislead audience cognition. For example, some short videos adapt the solemn melody of *Yellow River Boatmen's Chant* into a comedic parody with exaggerated expressions and joking lyrics; some live-stream performances add vulgar interactive phrases to cater to audiences, turning folk songs from "cultural expression" into "traffic tools." Such alienated dissemination seemingly expands influence but weakens cultural essence, eventually leading to the paradox of "the wider the dissemination, the thinner the culture." In addition, some adapted works excessively pursue popular elements and ignore traditional cultural connotations, causing the loss of the essential characteristics of Henan folk songs.

#### (2) Fragmented dissemination actors lacking collaborative coordination

The online dissemination subjects of Henan folk songs mainly include folk artists, cultural institutions, and self-media bloggers, but there is a lack of effective cooperation among them, presenting a fragmented communication state. Folk artists' dissemination is mostly individual behavior without professional planning and promotion; cultural institutions' content is serious and single in form, making it difficult to attract young audiences; self-media dissemination is random and lacks systematization and professionalism. Without synergy, dissemination effects cannot be maximized.

In online dissemination, participation by ordinary users lowers professional barriers but may also lead to "bad money driving out good." Non-professional secondary creations (such as off-key covers or incorrect annotations) may mislead audiences, while high-quality content from professional troupes and heritage inheritors struggles in traffic competition due to high production costs and slow dissemination speed. For example, a provincial song-and-dance theater's live broadcast of *Central Plains Folk Songs Special* attracted only 5,000 viewers, while a parody video by an internet celebrity gained hundreds of thousands of views. This imbalance may result in superficial dissemination and hinder deep cultural inheritance.

#### (3) Hollowed-out dissemination with severe Copyright issues

Technologies such as VR, AR, and AI provide immersive experiences for folk song dissemination, but when technology is detached from emotional connection, it may lead to "form over content." For example, a digital museum uses VR to recreate the flower-picking scene of *Bian Hualan*, but users focus only on visual effects rather than the life interest expressed in the lyrics. This "technological worship" neglects the core value of folk songs—emotional expression and cultural identity—leading to hollow dissemination effects.

Additionally, the openness and convenience of online media pose severe copyright protection challenges. Many traditional Henan folk songs have unclear ownership, leading to unauthorized use and adaptation by platforms and individuals. Meanwhile, original works by folk artists and creators are easily plagiarized, and complicated and costly rights-protection processes discourage creativity, hindering innovation and inheritance.

#### (4) Shortage of Professional Talent and Insufficient Operational Ability

Online dissemination of Henan folk songs requires professionals who understand both cultural connotations and online communication technology and operations. However, most current disseminators are enthusiasts or non-professionals lacking planning, content creation, and platform operation abilities. Many folk artists have strong singing skills but do not understand platform algorithms and promotion methods, making it difficult for their works to spread widely; staff in cultural institutions lack innovative thinking for online communication, and their content and formats struggle to adapt to online dissemination characteristics.

Although online media have the advantage of precise targeting, the current online dissemination of Henan folk songs generally suffers from unclear audience positioning. Many dissemination entities fail to identify specific target groups when releasing content, resulting in an inability to effectively reach potential audiences. For example, some traditional Henan folk songs are directly posted on short-video

platforms dominated by young users; because the content does not align with the interests and needs of this audience, it struggles to gain attention. Conversely, some adapted and commercialized versions perform poorly among middle-aged and elderly audiences. This vague audience positioning leads to wasted communication resources and low dissemination efficiency.

## VI. Optimization Strategies for the Inheritance and Dissemination of Henan Folk Songs in the Context of Online Media

To address these challenges, a collaborative mechanism should be established featuring “government guidance, platform support, inheritor leadership, and public participation.” This approach aims to achieve “preserving authenticity” through innovation and strengthen “identity recognition” through dissemination.

### (1) Cultivating Collaborative Dissemination Entities and Improving Content Quality

Content is the core of dissemination, making the quality of Henan folk songs' online content paramount. On one hand, we must uphold the cultural essence of traditional Henan folk songs, deeply explore their historical, artistic, and emotional value, and produce a collection of representative traditional folk song masterpieces. On the other hand, content innovation should be encouraged, guiding creators to respect tradition while integrating Henan folk songs with modern art forms and contemporary themes to produce adapted and original works that meet the needs of today's audience. Concurrently, oversight of disseminated content must be strengthened through establishing content review mechanisms to counteract vulgar and homogenized content, thereby safeguarding the artistic image of Henan folk songs.

Efforts should also be made to strengthen online communication training for intangible cultural heritage inheritors and local art troupes, encouraging them to participate in short-video and live-stream platforms (e.g., launching “Inheritor Live Rooms” to narrate the stories behind folk songs). In addition, a cooperation mechanism among platforms, universities, and

inheritors should be established, guiding professional teams (such as music production companies and animation studios) to collaborate with inheritors and incorporate folk song elements into modern cultural products, (e.g., national-chic animations and game background music).

### (2) Strengthening the Emotional and Meaningful Core of Communication to Resist Technological Alienation

The core of online communication is emotional connection rather than technological display. When using technologies such as VR and AI, the focus should remain on the emotional essence of folk songs—such as love for one's hometown and praise for labor—enhancing user resonance through narrative storytelling. For example, a Douyin account run by a “Henan mom” shares a parent-child version of the folk song *Hong Wawa* (Lullaby), telling the story of teaching her child to sing the song. Through warm scenes of intergenerational singing, the emotional value of the folk song is conveyed. Such emotional storytelling is far more effective in fostering cultural identity than mere technological presentation.

Digital preservation should not merely pursue “high-definition technology” but should also emphasize cultural authenticity. On the one hand, through a combination of field research and digital recording, it is important to fully document performance settings (such as fields and festival celebrations), oral histories of inheritors (including creative background and performance techniques), and the broader cultural ecology (related folk customs), forming integrated digital archives of sound, video, and text. On the other hand, a “tiered dissemination” mechanism should be established: core or endangered folk songs may adopt an academic version with detailed annotations, while widely known pieces such as *Bian Hualan* may adopt a popularized version, avoiding communication barriers caused by excessive academicization.

### (3) Improving Policy, Market, and Society Support Mechanism to Build a Sustainable Ecosystem

The government should introduce supportive policies—such as tax incentives and financial subsidies—to encourage cooperation among platforms, enterprises, and inheritors. The market should guide companies to develop cultural products related to folk songs (e.g., digital collectibles, creative merchandise), fostering a virtuous cycle of “dissemination-revenue-further dissemination.” Societally, public education must be strengthened (e.g., integrating folk song instruction into K-12 music curricula) to cultivate cultural identity among younger generations. For instance, relevant departments could collaborate with short-video platforms to launch the “Central Plains Folk Song Season” campaign. By providing traffic support and creation subsidies, this initiative would encourage user participation in folk song dissemination, effectively boosting the online influence of Henan folk songs.

Targeted dissemination should be achieved by defining audience segments based on characteristics like age, gender, and interests. For younger audiences, emphasize modernized and entertaining content through adaptations, short videos, and livestreams to capture their attention. For middle-aged and elderly audiences, emphasize the preservation of traditional folk songs and evoke nostalgic sentiments through classic song showcases and online retro-themed activities. For specialized audiences like music researchers and learners, provide professional content such as folk song sheet music, vocal technique analyses, and academic research findings. Simultaneously, leverage big data analytics to understand audience needs, optimize content recommendation mechanisms, and enhance dissemination precision.

Government cultural departments should play a leading role by strengthening overall planning and establishing communication and coordination mechanisms among dissemination entities like folk artists, cultural institutions, and self-media bloggers. Cultural institutions should collaborate with folk artists and bloggers, leveraging the dissemination strengths of grassroots forces alongside the professional

resources of cultural institutions to jointly plan promotional activities, such as co-hosting Henan folk song composition competitions and online concerts. Encourage dissemination entities to share resources like content materials and promotional channels to form a synergistic dissemination force.

### (4) Enhancing Professional Operational Capacity and Strengthening Intellectual Property Protection

Developing professional talent is crucial for enhancing the online dissemination of Henan folk songs. On one hand, universities and specialized arts institutions should introduce relevant curricula to cultivate versatile talents with both cultural literacies in Henan folk songs and online dissemination skills—such as adding courses on online communication and new media operations within music programs. On the other hand, government cultural departments and online platforms should jointly organize training activities for folk artists, cultural institution staff, and self-media bloggers, equipping them with knowledge and skills in online dissemination to enhance their capabilities in communication planning, content creation, and platform operation. Additionally, recruiting top-tier online communication professionals will further empower the digital dissemination of Henan folk songs.

Robust copyright protection mechanisms are essential for the innovation and preservation of Henan folk songs. First, governments must strengthen the promotion and enforcement of copyright laws, clarify ownership rights for traditional Henan folk songs, and standardize copyright management on online platforms. Second, platforms should establish comprehensive copyright protection systems, enhance content copyright reviews, and combat infringement through measures like dedicated reporting channels and copyright monitoring technologies. Finally, creators should be encouraged to register their copyrights and enhance their awareness of rights protection. Concurrently, a mediation mechanism for copyright disputes should be established to reduce the cost of rights enforcement and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of

creators. To maximize the online dissemination of Henan folk songs, it is necessary to integrate resources from various communication entities and build a collaborative dissemination system.

### Conclusion

Online media serves not only as a dissemination tool for Henan folk songs but also as a pivotal variable in reshaping their cultural ecosystem. Through online platforms, these songs transcend temporal and spatial constraints, evolving from “regional culture” to “global dialogue”; shifting from “static preservation” to “living transmission”; and upgrading from “unidirectional dissemination” to “co-creation and sharing.”

However, the value of online media ultimately must return to its cultural essence—the transmission of Henan folk songs is not merely about “preserving sounds,” but also about “continuing emotions” and “conveying meaning.” Only by upholding cultural authenticity through innovation, reinforcing emotional connections in dissemination, and building a sustainable ecosystem in development can Henan folk songs flourish with new vitality in the digital age, becoming an important spiritual emblem of Central Plains culture and even Chinese culture as a whole.

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