

## The Preservation and Transmission of the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County, China

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### ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the preservation and transmission of the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County, China. The study’s qualitative research method involved conducting interviews and observations. The results of the study are as follows: The Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County is a culturally rich tradition dating back to the Qing Dynasty, with a peak during the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. This cultural heritage, deeply rooted in the local community’s veneration for the divine and temple culture, plays a vital role in Ningcheng’s historical and cultural significance. In 1983, various stakeholders reignited efforts to preserve and transmit this tradition, following disruptions during the Cultural Revolution. The Guandi Temple, central to this heritage, has undergone transformations over the years but remains a symbol of Ningcheng’s cultural identity. While the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” thrives, challenges like financial support, suitable venues, and professional inheritance systems pose threats to its long-term preservation and transmission. Collaborative efforts involving the government, local associations, and educational institutions are necessary to address these challenges and ensure the tradition’s preservation and continuation. This cultural treasure bridges the gap between tradition and modernity, fostering a profound appreciation for Ningcheng’s rich heritage.

**Key words:** Preservation, Transmission, Lantern Festival, Miaohui, Ningcheng County

### INTRODUCTION

China is renowned for its diverse array of traditional festivals, with the Spring Festival and the Lantern Festival emerging as particularly significant cultural observances. The Lantern Festival logically evolves and intensifies the manifestation of the Spring Festival. The current iteration not only preserves the fundamental nature of its precursor but also enhances it with more vibrant and intricate celebrations. In the realm of Chinese cultural practices, the Lantern Festival assumes the role of a symbolic culmination of the Spring Festival, denoting the conclusion of this festive and culturally momentous period (Huang, 1991).

The Lantern Festival is commonly associated with “Miaohui,” alternatively known as “temple city” or “festival field,” which has strong historical and cultural ties to Chinese folk religion and customs. Traditionally, the event is observed around the Lunar New Year and plays a significant role in Chinese commercial exchange. Miaohui originated from the process of local evolution and the observance of religious customs. People frequently arrange these gatherings during temple festivals or on designated days, predominantly in close proximity to temples. The “Miaohui” festivities have gained significant popularity throughout the

country and are considered a time-honored Chinese folk cultural practice. Folk customs are an essential aspect of a nation’s or country’s living culture, which is created, valued, and transmitted by the general population. “Miaohui” is a significant element within this cultural framework. This phenomenon inextricably intertwines with the lives of individuals, shaping its emergence, continuity, and evolution (Zhang, 1993; Zhou & Chuangprakhon, 2023).

The Miaohui event, closely linked to the Lantern Festival in Ningcheng County, has a historical background spanning more than two centuries. The central hub of this celebration is the esteemed Guandi Temple, located in the area. This rich and dynamic history comprises a wide range of cultural expressions, including music, singing, dancing, and many forms of creative presentations. In several regions of China, “Miaohui” meetings are prevalent outside the confines of Ningcheng County. These gatherings are frequently associated with temples and serve as a central hub for local religious practices and folk traditions. The economic success of the region significantly drives the advancement of temple culture. The Guandi Temple, located in Ningcheng County, significantly contributes to the ongoing development of the Miaohui. During these festive occasions, individuals from many regions of the country embark on extensive journeys

to pay homage to the temple, engage in the act of burning incense, and express their desires, thereby fostering a sense of collective happiness characterized by the resonating tones of gongs, drums, and suona music. The square adjacent to the temple transforms into a vibrant hub of commotion, where individuals engage in diverse celebrations, encompassing customary dances, exhibitions of dragon lanterns, land boat races, stilt-walking, and other forms of merriment. The aforementioned activities, namely Tartar wrestling, Lady Dengguan's inverted donkey riding, lamp dispersing, and face puppetry, have the ability to draw participants from nearby villages and cities, exemplifying the continuing appeal of this time-honored custom (Wang & Bao, 2020; Yue & Seekhunlio, 2023).

The Ningcheng Lantern Festival "Miaohui" has a rich history and has seen significant modifications and advancements over a period of more than two centuries. Preserving, transmitting, and expanding the subject matter pose persistent challenges. However, in contemporary times, the range and strength of performance material have expanded significantly, garnering increased interest from governmental and non-governmental entities. The music associated with the Ningcheng Lantern Festival, known as "Misaohui," possesses unique regional attributes, which contribute to its abundant and impressive cultural significance. The festival encompasses a diverse range of performances that fulfill distinct societal roles, exerting a distinctive impact on the local community (Xing & Yan, 2021; Gao & Karin, 2023).

This study delves into the culture of the Lantern Festival "Miaohui" in Ningcheng County, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. The "Miaohui" Lantern Festival is a lively showcase of the local populace's religious beliefs, musical artistry, traditional culture, and daily life. This festival in Ningcheng County features temple worship, performances in the "Miaohui," market trade, and cultural exchanges. This study focuses on the presentation and transmission qualities demonstrated during the Lantern Festival "Miaohui" performances, as well as the history of the Ningcheng Lantern Festival and the social purposes it performs. Currently, concerns related to its protection, transmission, and development persist, but the substance of performances thrives, gaining more attention from both government and non-governmental organizations. The music associated with the Ningcheng Lantern Festival, called "Miaohui," stands out for its rich and distinct local traits, while other types of performances serve diverse social functions, guiding and influencing the local community in various ways.

### Research Question

- How are the preservation and transmission of the Lantern Festival "Miaohui" in Ningcheng County, China?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The History of "Miaohui" in Ningcheng County

According to fragmented historical documents, the "Miaohui" tradition in Ningcheng County dates back to the Daoguang

dynasty of the Qing Dynasty, approximately 1743. This cultural phenomenon peaked between the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, and it has a history of more than 150 years. It arose as a result of the ancient people's tremendous veneration for the divine, which fueled the development of temple culture and, as a result, influenced local folk practices. The establishment of temple fairs was a natural result of this synergy, and the thriving local economy fueled the expansion of temple culture even further. Because of their unique geographical location, these temple fairs grew in size and prominence over time. The formation of the Folk Art Association was a watershed moment, with June 24<sup>th</sup> formally proclaimed as the Farmers' Cultural Festival. By 2021, Ningcheng County had successfully held the Farmers' Cultural Festival for 13 consecutive years, showcasing its enduring cultural history (Zhao & Bell, 2007).

People observe "Miaohui" as a traditional Chinese folk religious and cultural custom during celebrations like the Lunar New Year and the Lantern Festival. It is also one of the oldest types of Chinese market commerce. Miaohui's origins are inextricably linked to the growth of temple-centered religious activities, which frequently occur during temple festivals or on mandated days, particularly in close proximity to temple precincts. Due to their historical significance in China's market culture, these temple fairs have gained national acclaim and are referred to as "temple city" interchangeably. These fairs have been a feature during temple festivals or designated times since the Tang Dynasty, generally located within or near temples. The term "temple fair" derives from ancient Zongmiao (ancestral temple) communities, when people sought blessings from ancestors and deities. People performed rituals and offerings in palaces or residences, often accompanied by captivating performances like social opera or temple fair opera, laying the foundation for the temple fair tradition. These temple festivals embody the essence of ancient Chinese folk culture, a culture that is created, cherished, and handed down through generations within the country. As such, they are an intrinsic part of this living culture, with their emergence, persistence, and evolution inextricably linked to people's daily lives (Tieliang, 2000).

#### The Development of "Miaohui" in Ningcheng County

The yearly Lantern Festival, "Miaohui," in Ningcheng County bears testimony to a wonderful cultural phenomenon that has evolved throughout time. As Xinshi adherents travel from far and wide to attend this magnificent temple fair, the event has developed into a huge celebration, attracting thousands of participants and spectators alike. The colorful sounds of gongs and drums fill the air in the square outside the temple. Traditional entertainment, such as the vibrant yangko dances, brilliant dragon lantern parades, daring land boat races, and the graceful art of stilt walking, take center stage in this sea of people. The "carry pavilions" give a unique touch to the celebrations, exhibiting the variety of abilities and traditions on display. Wrestling contests, the Lantern Master's sedan chair procession, the humorous Lantern Lady riding a donkey, and other captivating entertainment add to the excitement. Participants from

surrounding towns and cities congregate, creating a palpable communal atmosphere and making the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month a genuinely large and energetic celebration cherished by the locals (Zhao, 2021).

The flexibility of “Miaohui” to adapt and grow with changing periods and societal requirements has contributed to its continuing popularity. Originally steeped in religious traditions, “temple fairs” acted as serious sacrificial events. However, throughout time, these fairs evolved to include market trading activities, allowing families to promote and exchange their local items. The addition of local delicacies, crafts, and other commodities gave new elements to the fairs, progressively broadening their appeal. “Temple fairs” became synonymous with commerce, attracting vendors from all over the world, facilitating the exchange of goods, and enriching the cultural tapestry. Despite changes in their existence, these cultural phenomena have lasted and revived, eventually flourishing in the post-liberation era, driven by tourism development and a desire to promote national culture and the economy. In modern times, “temple fairs” are evolving, with religious themes declining and a varied range of event types emerging. The dynamic nature of these cultural festivities emphasizes their endurance and importance in the face of shifting social dynamics and preferences (Cooper, 2013; Hou & Seekhunlio, 2023).

### **Other Traditional Arts and “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County**

In addition to the Lantern Festival “Miaohui,” Ningcheng County hosts a variety of cultural events, including the Daming “Miaohui,” held yearly on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. This tradition, which has origins dating back nearly a thousand years, has become a well-known and enduring cultural celebration, attracting visitors from near and far. The Daming Temple Fair, classified as a municipal intangible cultural relic in 2015, is rigorously protected and promoted by the Ningcheng County Cultural Relics Protection Center, ensuring that its legacy and cultural significance are passed down to future generations. It acts as a cultural bridge between the past and the present, encouraging regional togetherness and cultural variety (Kanaryova, 2014).

The Falun Temple, located in Dachengzi Town, Ningcheng County, possesses a significant historical background and exhibits impressive architectural magnificence. Falun Temple was built in the year 1745 AD, during the tenth year of the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty. Its construction took place on the site where the Linglong Temple of the Liao Dynasty once stood. The temple complex spans an extensive area of 22,000 square meters and consists of four temples: Falun Temple, Dafa Temple, Puzhao Temple, and Baita Temple. These temples align strategically along a north-to-south axis, showcasing a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing layout. The complex has remarkable structures made of green brick and tile, featuring intricate cornices, painted beams, and red apricot motifs. A scenic backdrop of mountains in the north and verdant walls in the south enhances the setting for these architectural elements. The architectural composition of the structure is characterized by

the presence of drum towers, bell towers, and a great hall embellished with vibrant murals, serving as a tangible representation of its profound historical and cultural importance (Xing & Yan, 2021).

The Mongolian populace observes the esteemed annual Nadam Fair, traditionally held in the months of July and August to commemorate the culmination of the harvest season. The term “Nadam” in the Mongolian language refers to the concept of “entertainment” or “games.” This cultural event encompasses a variety of traditional activities, including horse racing, wrestling, archery, and other related pursuits. The aforementioned quinquennial festivity serves as a platform for the exhibition and commemoration of the diverse cultural legacy of the Mongolian populace and was officially designated as a constituent of the national intangible cultural heritage in 2006. The celebration is a dynamic fusion of historical traditions and contemporary celebrations, serving as a representation of Mongolia’s cultural essence across many areas of China (Li, 2010).

The Yangko is a vibrant kind of traditional music and dance that has its roots in the northern regions of China. The genre underwent a transformation from its origins as songs sung by agricultural workers to encompass operatic characteristics and the inclusion of expansive production ensembles. In contemporary times, the art form of Yangko has evolved to encompass a harmonious integration of musical elements, choreographed movements, and theatrical expressions while also exhibiting distinctive regional characteristics. The performances are characterized by the presence of vibrant costumes, props, and spirited dancing, frequently accompanied by the resonating sounds of gongs and drums. During festivals in Ningcheng County, the traditional dance known as Yangko is performed to invoke favorable agricultural outcomes and safeguard against calamities, holding significant cultural value. This practice serves as a testament to the county’s profound cultural past (Yang et al., 2010).

The cymbal drum music of Ningcheng County possesses a profound historical background, with origins that may be traced back several millennia. This percussion art style is distinctive and is employed at regional festivities and cultural occasions. The primary musical instruments employed in this context are cymbals, cymbals, and drums, which collectively generate a rhythmic and fascinating auditory experience. This tradition originated from the ancient Mongolian shamanistic drum music that emerged during the Yuan Dynasty. It had significant growth and development throughout the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. The establishment of a dedicated research association in 2009 has solidified the status of the emblem as a representation of Ningcheng County’s cultural heritage. Currently, cymbal performance ensembles persist in exhibiting this distinct and dynamic art form throughout a multitude of cultural events (Pegg, 2001).

### **Research Theory**

This research used the theoretical framework of ethnomusicology to investigate the cultural processes that underlie the preservation and transmission of the Lantern Festival

“Miaohui” in Ningcheng County, China. This study examines the complex interrelationships between the aforementioned musical heritage and a range of contextual elements, such as geographical considerations, historical influences, and cross-cultural exchanges. Field investigations play a crucial role in the collection of research data, providing valuable insights into the ways in which ethnomusicology helps safeguard traditional knowledge and cultural practices. This methodology facilitates comprehension of the diverse and intricate fabric of cultural legacy, as well as its ongoing presence within present-day society (Bruno, 2013; Wang, 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

The research methodologies used in this study include a multifaceted approach to investigating the preservation and transmission of the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County, China. The research procedures are presented below:

1. The study’s literature review began with a thorough analysis of relevant literature, including historical documents and cultural sources about the Lantern Festival and “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County. This is a foundational understanding of the cultural environment.
2. Field investigations were vital to data acquisition. Researchers interviewed local inheritors, government institutions, and performers. These interviews provided vital insight into the festival’s history, music, and cultural relevance.
3. The researchers intensively watched and documented the music and acts during the Ningcheng Lantern Festival, “Miaohui.” This direct observation contributed to capturing the essence of the celebration and its different components.
4. The data gathering methods used included expert interviews, literature reviews, and on-site research. Researchers gathered information on the festival’s musical qualities, cultural elements, and social function.
5. Key informants, including local artists, government officials, and people, were interviewed to acquire a thorough perspective on the festival. These interviews provided insights on the event’s organization, historical context, and present relevance.
6. Research tools, including interviews and observation. These assisted in quickly documenting and organizing data.
7. Data management of for clarity and neutrality, data obtained from fieldwork, interviews, and literature studies were carefully categorized and handled.
8. The data analysis was rigorously examined. The festival, music, and cultural relevance were examined using qualitative research methodologies.

Overall, this comprehensive research approach, which included a literature review, field investigations, data collection and analysis, expert interviews, and discussions with key informants, enabled a thorough examination of the cultural phenomenon surrounding the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County.

## RESULTS

### Preservation and Transmission of “Miaohui”

The Ningcheng Lantern Festival “Miaohui” dates back to the Qing Dynasty’s Daoguang dynasty, about 1743. It evolved further and peaked between the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, spanning over 150 years. The ancient people’s veneration for the divine and their involvement with temple culture deeply ingrained this cultural legacy in the surrounding area. The region’s economic prosperity also led to the development of temple culture, resulting in the expansion of the Lantern Festival’s scale.

Ningcheng County has a rich historical and cultural history due to its location at the crossroads of the central plains and grassland civilizations. The existence of the central capital of the Liao Dynasty in this region adds to its historical significance. The tradition of peasants carrying pavilions on their backs during the Lantern Festival has its origins in this cultural background. During the Lantern Festival, these ceremonies, which included back-carried pavilions and other art forms, were a method for locals to pray for good weather, excellent crops, peace, and prosperity. The habit of peasants carrying pavilions on their backs in the Three Stores region began during the Qing Daoguang dynasty and peaked during the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. However, the Cultural Revolution in 1965 disrupted and ended this cultural festival. In 1983, the organizers revived the Ningcheng County Lantern Festival temple fair performances, marking a watershed moment in preserving and transmitting this cultural tradition. Following the formation of Ningcheng County as an autonomous city in 1983 and the consequent enrichment of its economic and cultural life, the local government began to place a greater emphasis on this cultural activity. Support from a variety of sources has helped it grow and evolve, ensuring its continued preservation and transmission.

Coordination between village-based folk organizations and township management departments was required for the restoration and revival of the folk Guandi Temple. The narrative of Guan Gong’s arrival began to circulate among the people in 1988, prompting the reconstruction of the Guandi Temple in its original position through public donations. Villagers, both Han and Mongolian, donated to the financing as a group effort. This resulted in the construction of tiny temples and the expansion of the temple square. The local administration was initially unwilling to refer to it as “Guandi Temple” and renamed it “Cultural Palace,” barring incense burning. After negotiations, they decided to add a statue of Shakyamuni to allow incense burning. The civil organizations of the Three Dian Villages eventually agreed to govern the original Guandi Temple, with seven individuals being accountable for various positions within the temple fair organization.

New components were included in the temple fair and events as the country evolved and residents became more informed. People came to see the celebration as more than just a religious ritual but also as a cultural and recreational gathering that promoted physical fitness and entertainment.

The number of actors, the diversity of performances, and the audience of the three temple festivals have all peaked, ensuring the continuous preservation and transmission of this cultural treasure (Table 1).

Table 1 presents a comprehensive depiction of the chronological progression and transformative phases observed in the formation and evolution of the Ningcheng “Miaohui” music. This traditional cultural phenomenon is intricately linked to the Lantern Festival, which takes place in Ningcheng County, China. The provided table delineates pivotal epochs in the historical progression of this music, denoting noteworthy landmarks and alterations throughout its evolution.

### Preservation and Transmission of Ningcheng’s Guandi Temple Culture and Miaohui Tradition

The Guandi Temple in Ningcheng County has had a prominent position throughout history in shaping the local culture and fostering the “Miaohui” heritage. The following provides a comprehensive account of the historical background and the endeavors undertaken for the preservation and transmission of this subject matter.

Local block shops and families from both Han and Mongolian groups cooperatively constructed the Guandi Temple in the eighth year of Qing Emperor Qianlong’s reign (1711). At the beginning, the complex included a palace for the Emperor and a separate palace for the Empress. Nevertheless, the statue underwent destruction in the year 1964, while the temple, in its entirety, was subjected to demolition during the mid- to late 1960s.

In the ensuing years, both community members and Mongols residing in the hamlet actively engaged in fund-raising efforts aimed at the restoration of the temple. Private donors generously contributed to the renovation of the Guandi Temple in 1988 and 1997. It is noteworthy to acknowledge the significant contribution of the Mongols residing in the hamlet towards the restoration of the temple and their active involvement in the associated cultural events.

Any temple can be designated as a “Miaohui” due to its etymological link to the concept of a temple. Within this particular context, the term “Miaohui” predominantly pertains to the Ningcheng Guandi Temple. The temple, situated in Ningcheng County, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia, possesses substantial historical and cultural importance. The construction of the structure commenced during the Qing Dynasty in the ninth year of Qianlong, namely in the year AD 1743. Over the course of its existence, the site gained a reputation

for its impressive scale and drew individuals on religious journeys and adherents from far-flung areas.

The temple’s architectural design dedicates a grandiose central hall specifically to Guan Di (Guan Yu), a highly significant character within the annals of Chinese history. The primary focal point of the hall is a partially seated figure of Guan Yu, characterized by a reddened complexion, with Zhou Cang and Guan Ping positioned on either side. In addition, the temple accommodates statues of several deities, including “Huo De Zhen Jun” (the deity associated with fire) and Sun Simiao, a prominent figure in the field of medicine.

Several plaques and inscriptions further emphasize the historical importance of the temple. The transverse board located in the front hall of the temple formerly exhibited a plaque denoting the establishment of the temple during the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty. In addition, the temple showcases wooden plaques dating back to the Qing Dynasty adorned with golden characters, such as “Everlasting One,” “Qiankun Zhengqi,” and “Yi Bing Qianqiu.”

Murals on the inside walls of the temple depict notable episodes from the life of Guan Gong, including the “Taoyuan Three Ties” and “Beheading the Yellow Scarf.” The temple complex encompasses additional structures, such as auxiliary buildings, meeting facilities, and nine minor temples, which collectively enhance the cultural significance of the site.

The Guandi Temple has undergone a series of transformations throughout the course of its existence, acting as a location for the town’s Police Department branches and subsequently as a primary school teaching facility. Nevertheless, the shrine underwent demolition by the Red Guards amidst the Cultural Revolution in 1968. Certain ancillary structures within the temple premises have undergone partial conservation efforts.

In recent years, there has been a collaborative endeavor between the local government and the community to safeguard and conserve the Guandi Temple. The preservation efforts undertaken aim to preserve the enduring appreciation and reverence of the temple and its accompanying cultural heritage by forthcoming generations. The temple serves as a monument to the profound cultural traditions and historical significance of Ningcheng County (Figure 1).

### Preservation and Evolution of “Miaohui” Culture in Ningcheng County

Every year, during the Lantern Festival “Miaohui,” on the fifteenth day of the first month, Xinshi devotees from all over the world traveled hundreds of kilometers to the temple fair

**Table 1.** The ningcheng “Miaohui” Music’s historical stage

Period	Shape	Function	Performance form
1743-1965	The form is simple: only big drums and cymbals.	Sacrifice	Stilts, lanterns, and face puppets.
1965-1983	Add a single suona and gong.	Sacrifices and blessings	Stilts, lanterns, land boat, dragon dance, lion dance and flower basket.
1983-2023	Rich form: two or more suonas, drums, small drums, gongs, and cymbals.	The five elements that define our society are sacrifice, blessing, entertainment, culture, and commerce.	Stilts, lanterns, face puppets, land boat, dragon dance, lion dance, flower basket, and taigebeige.

to burn incense and make vows. Suona, Gongs, drums, and people packed the square outside the temple. People danced yangko, carried and carried pavilions, ran on land boats, walked on stilts, conducted flower basket meetings, and carried and carried pavilions. Tartar wrestling, the Lantern Master's sedan chair, the Lantern Lady riding on a donkey, three shifts of Ychs ringing gongs to open the way, dispersing street lamps, and face puppets drew spectators from all around the surrounding towns. Every Lantern Festival, on the fifteenth day of the first month, people will gather in front of the temple, accompanied by sonorous drums and cheerful horns, to enjoy the twist and the singing, and the troupe has resumed its performance, which is the most grand and lively festival gathering of the local people (Figure 2).

Traditional buildings from 30 years ago have vanished, replaced by new brick and tile houses, while modern automobiles have replaced rickshaws and animal-drawn carts at Sanjidian Village. Oat noodles and millet have given way to rice noodles, meat, and eggs, as have dietary preferences. Farmers dominated the town 40 years ago, but industrialization has brought about changes, such as the establishment of business organizations and migrant laborers. Currently, around one-tenth of the local population has left the area in search of work. The task in this modernizing context is to preserve tradition, shape the reconstruction process, and develop mutual acknowledgment of Mongolian and Han cultures in daily life (Figure 3).



**Figure 1.** Guandi Temple  
Source: Weiping Yuan



**Figure 2.** Yangko Dance  
Source: Weiping Yuan

Two cultural elements are crucial in preserving and transferring the heritage of Guandi Temple in Sanjidian Village. For starters, old ideas are resurfacing among villages that have relied on agriculture for nearly four decades. Second, a local legend of a Guan master appearing by the river inspired the reconstruction of Guandi Temple. This story spread quickly among the villagers when the power of numerous masters weakened during the Cultural Revolution. Guangong Temple's enduring historical memory represents Wang Mingke's classification of memory into "social memory," "collective memory," and "historical memory," standing as a beacon in a village where Mongolian and Han cultures have coexisted for almost three centuries.

### Preserving and Celebrating Ningcheng's Vibrant Lantern Festival Tradition

The annual Lantern Festival "Miaohui" in Ningcheng, Inner Mongolia, is a bright event that brings Xinshi believers from all over the world to participate in cultural festivities. This festival features a diverse range of traditional performances such as dragon lanterns, land boats, stilt walking, and more. It has become a symbol of Ningcheng's cultural legacy over the years, attracting global tourists and strengthening the local economy. It holds the designation of an intangible cultural heritage and has received numerous awards, including regional and municipal protection designations. However, in order to ensure its long-term preservation and transmission, difficulties like financial assistance, proper locations, and professional inheritance processes must be solved.

The preservation and transmission of this unique cultural tradition is crucial for the preservation of Sandian Village's cultural identity. In 2009, the "Three Shops Among Villagers Art Association" founded the initiative to excavate, invent, and develop these folk arts. Financial support, educational initiatives, and media promotion are critical to preserving its viability for future generations. By addressing these issues, Ningcheng will be able to maintain the Lantern Festival "Miaohui" as a treasured cultural resource that spans the gap between tradition and contemporary while sparking renewed appreciation for its rich legacy (Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** Suona performance in "Miaohui"  
Source: Weiping Yuan



**Figure 4.** Production of Old Artist's Lanterns  
Source: Weiping Yuan

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discussion and conclusion section of this story emphasizes the importance of the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” in Ningcheng County as a vibrant cultural event that has changed over time. This yearly festival serves as a platform for folk acts and has become a symbol of Ningcheng’s cultural heritage. It attracts enthusiasts from all over the world, increasing tourism and the local economy. Furthermore, it has obtained recognition and protection at several levels, emphasizing its significance as an intangible cultural treasure. This corresponds to Xing Li and Yan Mengchun’s study on the reconstruction of the Guandi temple fair in Sanzuodian village, Ningcheng, Inner Mongolia, and its impact on the village’s identity. Sanzuodian Village, Sanzuodian Town, and Ningcheng County have evolved the old Guandi Temple Fair from the Qing Dynasty into the modern “Guandi Temple Festival on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month.” Residents of the entire hamlet as well as nearby communities attended this celebration. The ritualized process of sacrifice to carnival is a process of «cultural reproduction» from tradition to the present. The rebuilding of collective cultural memory has become a symbol of village culture in Sanzuodian Village, where Mongolian and Han people currently coexist. It depicts the two ethnic groups’ development of village cultural ecology and their re-identification with their own traditions in the early twenty-first century (Xing & Yan, 2021). Nonetheless, despite its effectiveness and popularity, a number of obstacles endanger the long-term preservation and transmission of this cultural practice. Financial assistance is critical in order to continue the work of local performers and artists. Furthermore, locating adequate venues and establishing a professional inheritance system are critical to ensuring the tradition’s continuity. The research of Wang Shun and Pitsanu Boonsrianun emphasizes the importance of emphasizing the distinctive characteristics and utilizing the inherent advantages of the heritage. It is critical to nurture future generations and invest in training efforts. Online media channels have the potential to further disseminate this intangible cultural legacy. Raise awareness and comprehension of local ethnic culture while engaging youth in cultural preservation and tradition transmission (Shun & Boonsrianun, 2023).

The preservation and transmission of this cultural gem demand multifaceted strategies. First and foremost, we must extend adequate financial assistance to sustain the dedicated efforts of local performers and artists. These individuals, who pour their hearts and souls into upholding this cherished tradition, rely on continuous support to ensure its vitality. Secondly, addressing venue constraints is paramount. The Lantern Festival “Miaohui” is a multifaceted celebration with diverse components that require suitable spaces for their full expression. Finding and securing these venues is crucial for the seamless continuation of this cultural extravaganza. Furthermore, these findings collectively contribute to a richer understanding and preservation of cultural heritage, a vital component of cultural heritage (Yue & Seekhunlio, 2023).

In conclusion, the Ningcheng Lantern Festival “Miaohui” is a custom that combines history and contemporary culture, promoting a profound admiration for the cultural legacy of the region. In order to maintain its ongoing vitality, it is imperative for the government, local organizations, and educational institutions to confront significant obstacles. These encompass offering monetary assistance to local artists, tackling constraints related to performance spaces, and building a strong and comprehensive system for passing down professional knowledge and resources. Ningcheng’s ability to surmount these challenges will ensure the continuation and safeguarding of the Lantern Festival “Miaohui” for future cohorts, thereby upholding its esteemed position as a cultural gem that connects the past with the present.

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