

Education and Literacy Transmission of Chinese Pansori in Chaoxian Ethnic Group

Wang Lulu^{1*}, Peerapong Sensai², Watchara Homhuan¹

¹College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

²Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Corresponding author: Wang Lulu, E-mail: 64012061008@msu.ac.th

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ABSTRACT

Pansori, a traditional Korean musical storytelling art form, has been a vital cultural expression of the Chaoxian ethnic group in China, particularly in Yanji City. This study explores the educational and literacy practices involved in transmitting Pansori within this community, focusing on how these practices influence the younger generation's engagement with their cultural heritage. The research aims to understand the role of musical and linguistic literacy in preserving Pansori and ensuring its continued relevance in a rapidly modernizing society. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with three groups of eight informants: Two key informants, three casual informants, and three general informants, including provincial-level intangible cultural heritage transmitters, community members, and young learners, supplemented by participant observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that while traditional literacy practices effectively sustain Pansori, challenges remain in engaging youth who are increasingly influenced by global cultural trends. The study suggests the integration of digital media and innovative educational strategies to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, ensuring Pansori's vibrant future. This research contributes to the broader discourse on cultural transmission and the preservation of intangible heritage within minority communities.

Key words: Pansori, Chaoxian Ethnic Group, Cultural Transmission, Musical Literacy, Intangible Cultural Heritage

INTRODUCTION

The Chaoxian ethnic group, also known as the Korean minority in China, has preserved a rich cultural heritage that includes traditional music forms such as Pansori. Pansori, a genre of musical storytelling, has been a significant cultural expression for the Chaoxian people, reflecting their history, values, and traditions (Lee, 2016; Um, 2016). Originating from the Korean Peninsula, Pansori was introduced to China during migration and has since evolved within the Chaoxian communities in places like Yanji City. The unique blend of traditional Korean elements and local influences has given rise to a distinctive form of Pansori deeply rooted in the daily lives and cultural practices of the Chaoxian people in China (Chang, 2023; Zhuo et al., 2024).

The transmission of Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group faces several challenges in the contemporary context. As China undergoes rapid modernization and urbanization, traditional forms of cultural expression, including Pansori, are at risk of being overshadowed by more mainstream and commercialized cultural products (Kim, 2016; Yates-Lu, 2019). Furthermore, the younger generation, increasingly exposed to global influences through digital media, may

struggle to connect with traditional art forms like Pansori. This disconnect raises concerns about the sustainability of Pansori as a living tradition within the Chaoxian community. The problem is exacerbated by the limited opportunities for formal education in Pansori, as most teaching occurs informally or within small community settings, often without a standardized curriculum or resources. Thus, there is an urgent need to investigate the current educational and literacy practices related to Pansori to ensure that this cultural treasure is not lost (Gao & Karin, 2023; Howard, 2016; Wu & Chuangprakhon, 2024).

For several reasons, understanding the educational and literacy practices involved in transmitting Pansori is significant. Firstly, it provides insights into how cultural traditions can be preserved and adapted to changing social and cultural landscapes. The Chaoxian people, like many other ethnic minorities in China, are striving to maintain their cultural identity while integrating into the broader Chinese society. As a key element of this identity, Pansori serves as an artistic expression and a medium through which cultural values, history, and social norms are passed down to younger generations. Secondly, studying these practices can inform broader discussions on the role of education

and literacy in preserving intangible cultural heritage (Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Yao et al., 2023; Zhang & Wu, 2023).

This research investigates the educational and literacy practices of transmitting Chinese Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group. This involves exploring the methods used to teach and learn Pansori, the role of formal and informal education in this process, and the impact of these practices on the younger generation's engagement with their cultural heritage (Creutzenberg, 2019; Howard, 2016; Thomaidis, 2019). The research will also examine how literacy, both in terms of musical literacy and linguistic proficiency in the Chaoxian language, affects the transmission of Pansori. The study addresses these aspects to comprehensively understand how educational practices shape Pansori's future within the Chaoxian community.

Research Questions

- How are education and literacy involved in Chinese Pansori's musical transmission to the Chaoxian ethnic group?
- How do these practices impact the younger generation's cultural heritage and musical education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage provides a framework for understanding these practices, particularly in the context of minority groups facing the pressures of modernization and globalization. This review specifically explores the theoretical perspectives surrounding cultural transmission, the pivotal role of literacy in preserving oral traditions, and the effects of educational practices on sustaining cultural heritage within the Chaoxian community.

Theoretical Perspectives on Cultural Transmission

The transmission of Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group can be understood through the lens of cultural transmission theory, which emphasizes the processes by which cultural knowledge, values, and practices are passed from one generation to the next. This theory posits that cultural transmission is not merely replicating existing knowledge but involves a dynamic process of adaptation and reinterpretation to suit the evolving social and cultural environment. In the context of the Chaoxian ethnic group, Pansori serves as a medium for conveying musical skills and the historical and social narratives that define the community's identity. The theory suggests that the effectiveness of cultural transmission depends on the engagement of both transmitters and learners, the availability of resources, and the broader social support for maintaining cultural practice. Consequently, the roles of educators, community leaders, and cultural institutions become paramount in facilitating this transmission process (Howard, 2016; Tamariz, 2019).

The Role of Literacy in Preserving Oral Traditions

Literacy plays a significant role in preserving oral traditions like Pansori in traditional and modern forms. In this context, literacy goes beyond basic reading and writing skills to include musical literacy, which encompasses the ability to understand, interpret, and perform music. Within the Chaoxian community, musical literacy involves a deep understanding of Pansori's structures, modes, and rhythms and the linguistic proficiency in the Chaoxian language necessary to convey the stories and emotions embedded in the performances. The literature highlights the importance of maintaining both linguistic and musical literacy to ensure the continuity of Pansori. This dual literacy is vital for younger generations to connect with their cultural heritage and for educators to effectively transmit the unique knowledge and skills associated with Pansori (Kelly, 2015; Purcell-Gates, 2020).

Educational Practices and Their Impact on Cultural Heritage

Educational practices within the Chaoxian community are central to the transmission of Pansori. These practices range from formal instruction in schools and cultural institutions to informal learning within families and communities. The literature underscores the importance of a supportive educational environment that recognizes the value of Pansori as a cultural heritage. This support includes the creation of curricula that integrate Pansori into broader educational systems, developing and training educators proficient in both the musical art form and the cultural context, and providing adequate resources to facilitate effective learning. The impact of these practices on the younger generation is profound, as they not only acquire the technical skills required to perform Pansori but also develop a sense of cultural identity and continuity. However, the literature also identifies challenges, including declining interest among younger generations and the need for more innovative approaches to ensure the relevance of Pansori in contemporary society (Howard, 2016; Shi & Nicolas, 2023; Qiu et al., 2024).

METHOD

The research methodology focuses on gathering in-depth information from key informants actively transmitting Pansori and casual and general informants with varying degrees of interaction with Pansori in Yanji City. Combining interviews, field observations, and document analysis ensures a comprehensive understanding of the research question.

Research Design

This qualitative research employs a case study design, focusing on the Chaoxian ethnic group's Pansori transmission practices in Yanji City. The case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of the cultural and educational context in which Pansori is transmitted. The research is exploratory, aiming to uncover the nuances of Pansori transmission

and its impact on cultural heritage and music education within the community.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process involves multiple methods to ensure a thorough exploration of the research question. These methods include semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and the analysis of relevant documents and materials related to Pansori transmission.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are the primary data collection method used in this study. The interviews are designed to gather detailed information about the educational and literacy practices involved in Pansori transmission and the challenges and successes experienced by those involved. The interviews are conducted with three groups of informants: key informants, casual informants, and general informants, as shown in Table 1.

Participant observations

Participant observations are conducted during Pansori performances and educational sessions to gather contextual data on the transmission practices. These observations allow the researcher to witness firsthand how different audiences teach, perform, and receive Pansori. Observations focus on the interaction between teachers and students, the use of language and literacy in Pansori instruction, and the role of cultural context in shaping the transmission process.

Document analysis

Document analysis involves reviewing existing materials related to Pansori transmission, including historical records, cultural documentation, educational curricula, and previous research studies. This analysis helps contextualize the

current practices within the broader history of Pansori and provides a foundation for understanding how educational and literacy practices have evolved.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis analyzes data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. It helps researchers understand Pansori transmission's cultural and educational dimensions by identifying patterns within the data. The process involves familiarizing with the data and systematically coding it to identify key themes related to educational and literacy practices, Pansori transmission, cultural heritage, and music education. Themes are then reviewed and grouped into broader categories, capturing the main findings of the research. The final step is to interpret these themes in the context of the Chaoxian ethnic group's cultural and educational practices, concluding the role of education and literacy in Pansori transmission.

RESULTS

This study investigates how literacy practices encompassing musical notation and cultural knowledge are integrated into the educational processes that sustain Pansori. By examining these practices, the research seeks to understand their impact on the younger generation's engagement with their cultural heritage and music education. The study also explores the challenges and opportunities in enhancing these literacy practices to ensure the continued vitality of Pansori within the Chaoxian community.

Musical Literacy and Education of Pansori

This section explores the integration of musical literacy into the teaching and learning of Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group, focusing on the use of musical notation, rhythm, and melody in instructing students. The analysis highlights how these literacy practices contribute to preserving cultural heritage and enhancing the music education of the younger generation.

Musical literacy is foundational in the education of Pansori, especially in transmitting its complex rhythmic and melodic structures. The Pansori drum, as shown in Figure 1, is a critical tool in developing rhythmic literacy. The drum patterns are not only the backbone of Pansori performances but also serve as a guide for singers in maintaining the tempo and emotional intensity of the narrative. Educators emphasize the importance of students understanding and mastering these drum rhythms, as they are integral to the authenticity of the Pansori performance.

Rhythmic literacy is equally essential in Pansori education. Figure 2 showcases the "Shen Qing Song" rhythm, characterized by the Jinyang ZHANGdan, a slow and deliberate rhythmic pattern requiring precise timing and control. Educators use various exercises to help students internalize these rhythms, emphasizing the relationship between rhythm and the narrative being conveyed in the song. Mastery of these rhythmic patterns is critical for students to perform

Table 1. Selection criteria for informants

Group	Method
Key Informants	Two key informants, the Chaoxian ethnic group in Yanji City, are provincial-level intangible cultural heritage transmitters of Pansori, contributing to its preservation and promotion and providing insights into formal educational practices
Casual Informants	Three adults and three community children provide perspectives on Pansori's public perception and value, while the children's views assess its impact on younger generations
General Informants	Three general informants were also interviewed, all Chaoxian singers actively involved in Pansori. These interviews offer insights into the practical aspects of Pansori performance and its ongoing preservation within the community

Pansori authentically, as the rhythm drives the emotional expression in the performance.

The ability to read and interpret musical notation is another key aspect of musical literacy in Pansori education. Figure 3 presents the musical notation for “Shen Qing Song,” students are taught to recognize and reproduce the specific notes and rhythms that define the Pansori style. Notational literacy allows students to internalize the melody and rhythm, ensuring they can accurately perform the traditional songs. This practice is crucial in maintaining the integrity of Pansori as it is passed down to future generations.

In an interview with a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage transmitter, the significance of musical notation in Pansori education was underscored. The informant emphasized that without a strong grasp of notation, students would struggle to capture the emotional depth and subtlety of Pansori performances. The notation provides a visual framework that helps students understand the structure of the music, making it easier for them to learn and perform complex pieces like “Shen Qing Song.”

Furthermore, the education of Pansori also involves teaching students about the modal scales and tonal systems unique to this genre. In “Shen Qing Song,” a four-note scale

(A-C-D-E) with passing tones creates a distinct sound emblematic of Pansori’s musical identity. Educators stress the importance of modal literacy, where students learn to identify and reproduce these scales, allowing them to perform with the appropriate tonal quality essential to Pansori.

Through these literacy practices of musical notation, rhythm, and mode, educators teach students how to perform Pansori and instill a deep understanding of its cultural and musical significance. The integration of these practices into the education of Pansori ensures that students are well-equipped to carry on the tradition, preserving it for future generations while also making it relevant to contemporary audiences. This approach to musical literacy is vital to sustaining the cultural heritage of the Chaoxian ethnic group and enriching the musical education of the younger generation.

Musical Literacy in the Transmission on the Younger Generation

Musical literacy is crucial in transmitting Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group, bridging the art form’s historical roots and its contemporary practice. This section examines how a deep understanding of the musical elements and the linguistic and cultural contexts is vital to preserving Pansori traditions for future generations.

One of the key aspects of musical literacy in Pansori transmission is integrating the Chaoxian language into the teaching process. As observed in interviews with educators and cultural transmitters, the ability to convey Pansori songs’ narrative and emotional depth relies heavily on a nuanced understanding of the Chaoxian language. In the transmission process, teachers emphasize pronunciation, intonation, and the emotional weight of words, which are essential for conveying the stories and cultural heritage embedded in the Pansori repertoire. This language literacy is about fluency and understanding the cultural references and historical connotations that the lyrics carry, which enrich the performance and preserve its authenticity, as shown in Figure 4.

The cultural context of Pansori is equally significant in its transmission, as Figure 4 vividly captures this aspect, where



Figure 1. Pansori
Source. Wang lulu, from fieldwork in July 2023

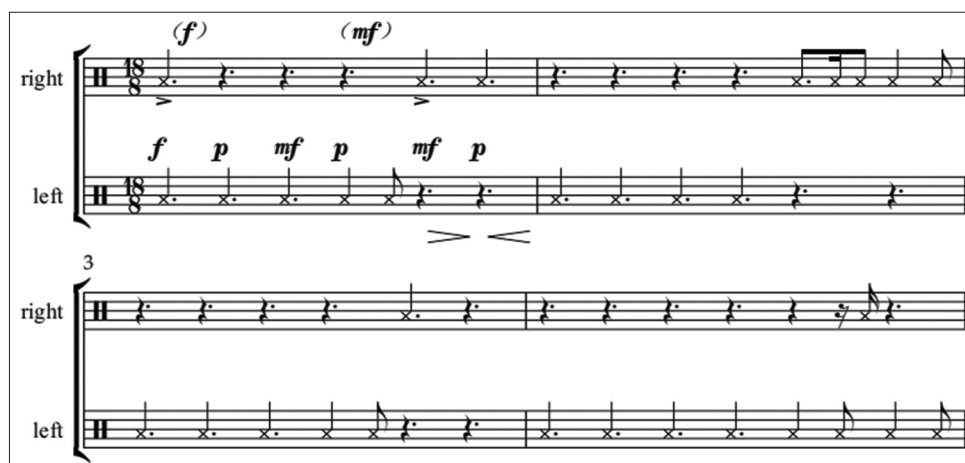


Figure 2. The rhythm of the “Shen Qing” song
Source. Wang lulu, transcription from fieldwork in July 2023

Shen Bong was ve- ry bored,
 sim boŋ sa ga ki ga mak h'jə

You hǎ fuck ing left, Pende,
 hǎ p'eŋ_ di gi ne ga kan ne gi fjə_

Blind pe - o ple are the most
 se saŋ i mut s'aŋ han sa fa ma

pi - ti - ful in the world,
 i waŋ i to maŋ i ka fja gə dən

And you left me in cold blood,
 it t'in de sə ta fa na dʒi

Ex - ces - sive cru - el - ty, Too un just,
 su beŋ fi mu in dʒi gjəŋ e wa sʌ

Leav - ing me hun dreds of miles in the mid - dle
 dʒi gjəŋ i wen i fi fan 3 ma fi nja

of no where, I can't see, Lone ly and lone - -
 ky si ni fe du mot do fi fa

ly, This is no place to die, God damn it,
 mf sa fam p'eŋ dik ə ma

De - peng, I did - n't know you were so immoral.
 nə gi fəl t'f'u fil ne mol lat t'a

Figure 3. The music score of the “Shen Qing” song

Source. Wang lulu, transcription from fieldwork in July 2023

a young student is engaged in learning Pansori under the guidance of an experienced instructor. The setting, replete with traditional instruments and cultural artifacts, reinforces the importance of cultural literacy in the learning process. The instructor in the image is seen teaching the musical notes and rhythms and immersing the student in the cultural environment inseparable from the art form. This method ensures that the students develop a holistic understanding of Pansori, seeing it not just as a musical genre but as a living tradition that encapsulates the values, history, and identity of the Chaoxian people.

Furthermore, the transmission of Pansori involves a deep literacy in the musical structure itself, including rhythm, melody, and the specific modes that define the genre. The use of visual aids like musical notation, as mentioned in the analysis of Figures 2 and 3, aids in teaching these complex musical components. Educators use these notations to help

students visualize the structure of Pansori songs, breaking down the melodies and rhythms into understandable segments. This method enhances the students' musical literacy, allowing them to grasp the intricate patterns that characterize Pansori and enabling them to perform with the required technical proficiency and emotional depth.

The interviews with key informants also highlight the importance of literacy in understanding the historical evolution of Pansori. Instructors often incorporate lessons on the origins of Pansori, its development over centuries, and its role in Chaoxian society. This historical literacy helps students appreciate the art form's significance and motivates them to contribute to its preservation. By connecting musical practice with historical knowledge, educators ensure that the transmission of Pansori is not merely about replication but about informed and meaningful perpetuation of the tradition.

Impact of Literacy Practices on Cultural Engagement

The impact of literacy practices on cultural engagement within the Chaoxian ethnic group, particularly in the context of Pansori transmission, is profound. Literacy extends beyond mere reading and writing, encompassing an understanding of the cultural, historical, and musical nuances integral to Pansori. Educational practices surrounding Pansori transmission aim to cultivate musical skills and deep cultural awareness among students through rigorous training in the Chaoxian language, historical context, and traditional performance techniques. This approach ensures that students are not only Pansori performers but also Chaoxian cultural heritage custodians.

The influence of these literacy practices on students' cultural identity is significant as they begin to see themselves as part of a larger cultural continuum. Formal education and informal community practices reinforce this connection to their cultural roots, creating immersive environments filled with traditional instruments and symbols. As students progress in their studies, they become more adept at interpreting and expressing the complex emotions and narratives inherent in Pansori performances.

Literacy practices have a broader social impact, as students who engage deeply with Pansori through these educational practices often become advocates for cultural preservation within their communities. They participate in cultural events, teach younger students, and contribute to the documentation and conservation of Pansori. This cycle of education and engagement ensures that the tradition of Pansori is preserved and revitalized by each new generation. The literacy practices instilled in these students empower them to participate actively in their cultural community, ensuring that Pansori remains a vibrant part of Chaoxian cultural life.

Challenges and Opportunities in Enhancing Pansori Literacy

In the ongoing transmission of Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group, enhancing musical and cultural literacy presents significant challenges and opportunities. As Pansori continues to adapt to modern contexts, educators and performers face the dual task of preserving its traditional essence while ensuring its relevance for younger generations. This section explores these challenges and opportunities, highlighting how they impact the transmission of Pansori literacy and the broader cultural engagement of Chaoxian youth.

One of the primary challenges to enhancing Pansori literacy is the tension between tradition and modernization. As noted in interviews with Pansori educators, there is a delicate balance between maintaining the traditional aspects of Pansori and incorporating modern elements that appeal to younger audiences. Traditional Pansori, with its intricate melodies, rhythms, and narrative structures, requires a deep understanding of the Chaoxian language and cultural context. However, many young people today are more familiar with contemporary musical forms and may find traditional Pansori less accessible. This creates a barrier to literacy, as

the younger generation may need more foundational knowledge to fully appreciate and perform Pansori in its traditional form, as shown in Figure 5.

Pansori, a traditional Chinese art form, is a cultural expression that combines traditional and modern elements. This approach makes Pansori more accessible to a wider audience and raises questions about preserving traditional literacy. Educators must find innovative ways to teach traditional and adaptable skills for various contexts. New media and technology can be integrated into education to enhance Pansori literacy. Digital tools and platforms can make Pansori more accessible to young learners, making learning more engaging and allowing for wider dissemination of Pansori literacy beyond traditional settings. Incorporating contemporary themes and narratives in Pansori performances can also enhance literacy among Chaoxian youth. By incorporating stories and issues that resonate with the younger generation, Pansori can become a more dynamic and relevant cultural expression.

Community-based initiatives that promote Pansori literacy through participatory activities, such as local festivals, workshops, and performance opportunities, can reinforce



Figure 4. Transmission of the pansori practice to the young generation

Source. Wang lulu, transcription from fieldwork in July 2023



Figure 5. The special performance of pansori in the community

Source. Wang lulu, transcription from fieldwork in November 2023

Pansori's technical aspects and strengthen the cultural literacy that underpins the art form. Community performances are vital to Pansori's cultural life, offering a space where traditional and modern elements can coexist, and literacy is continually reinforced through practice and performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study on the education and literacy practices involved in the transmission of Chinese Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group both support and challenge existing theoretical frameworks on cultural transmission and literacy. The integration of musical literacy in Pansori education is consistent with cultural transmission theory, which posits that the successful perpetuation of cultural practices depends on the engagement of both transmitters and learners, the availability of resources, and broader societal support (Tamariz, 2019). The study's results highlight that musical literacy encompassing rhythmic, melodic, and notational skills is critical in sustaining Pansori. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of literacy in preserving oral traditions (Kelly, 2015; Purcell-Gates, 2020).

However, the study also reveals divergences from the traditional understanding of cultural transmission. The reliance on informal, community-based methods for Pansori transmission, without standardized curricula or formal educational structures, challenges the assumption that formal education is always necessary to preserve cultural heritage (Howard, 2016). These informal methods' success underscores cultural practices' adaptability and resilience, even without structured educational frameworks.

Furthermore, the study confirms that the intersection of language and musical literacy is vital for effectively transmitting Pansori. The dual literacy required in the Chaoxian language and Pansori's musical structures ensures that students accurately perform the art form and understand its cultural and historical significance. This finding aligns with prior research that underscores the importance of maintaining linguistic proficiency alongside musical skills to preserve the integrity of oral traditions (Kelly, 2015; Howard, 2016).

Despite the effectiveness of current literacy practices in transmitting Pansori, the study identifies significant challenges in engaging the younger generation. The tension between tradition and modernization is evident, as younger individuals, exposed to global influences and contemporary music forms, may find traditional Pansori less accessible or relevant (Yates-Lu, 2019). This gap suggests a need for innovative educational approaches integrating modern elements into Pansori instruction while preserving its traditional essence (Shi & Nicolas, 2023). Exploring digital tools and new media as potential solutions to bridge this gap represents an important opportunity that deserves further investigation.

The study also highlights the broader social impact of Pansori literacy. Students who engage deeply with Pansori through these educational practices often become advocates for cultural preservation within their communities. This aligns with theories suggesting cultural transmission is about preserving the past and adapting and ensuring the relevance

of cultural practices in contemporary society (Tamariz, 2019; Zhang & Wu, 2023).

In conclusion, this study affirms the critical role of education and literacy in transmitting Chinese Pansori within the Chaoxian ethnic group. Integrating musical and linguistic literacy into Pansori education is essential for preserving this cultural heritage and ensuring its transmission to future generations. However, the challenges posed by modernization and the shifting cultural preferences of the younger generation highlight the need for innovative approaches that balance tradition with contemporary relevance.

The study's findings are consistent with cultural transmission theory, particularly regarding the importance of engagement, resources, and societal support in sustaining cultural practices. Nonetheless, the success of informal, community-based methods of Pansori transmission challenges the notion that formal education is indispensable for cultural preservation. This suggests that flexibility and adaptability are key to successfully transmitting intangible cultural heritage.

Further research is needed to explore the use of digital media and technology in enhancing Pansori literacy among younger generations. Integrating online platforms and mobile apps into education could make the traditional art form more accessible. Comparative studies with other cultural practices could offer broader perspectives on preserving intangible cultural heritage. Understanding the impact of contemporary themes and narratives on Pansori performances could inform strategies for revitalizing traditional art forms. Longitudinal studies could provide empirical evidence for best practices in cultural transmission.

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