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Singing With A Sanxian: A Study of The Principal Instrument in Bai Musical Tradition

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SINGING WITH A SANXIAN:
A STUDY OF THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENT IN BAI MUSICAL TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

The Bai people, a minority group in the People’s Republic of China numbering at least 1.8 million, are heavily concentrated in Yunnan Province’s Dali Autonomous Prefecture. Music has historically been a significant part of Bai culture, as Bai musicians across the region enjoy performing Baizu diao, or popular Bai folk tunes, in the form of singing or on various instruments. These diao, or melodies, often describe the lifestyle of Bai people and the region in which they live in and are commonly performed on a three-stringed member of the lute family called a sanxian.

This study uncovers both the history and culture of Bai people and their musical traditions, but also represents the attempt of westerner to learn sanxian and better understand Baizu musical form. Qualitative research identifies the cultural importance of Baizu diao to the Bai culture as a whole. In turn, quantitative research transposes the melodies of Bai music into a familiar western notation system, which allows for further analysis of the musical form.
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LIST OF MUSICAL TERMINOLOGY

Allegro: cheerful or brisk tempo

Beat: one single stroke of a rhythmic accent

BPM: beats per minute

Bridge: holds the strings in place and transmits their vibrations to the resonant body

Coda: a closing section appended to a movement

Da Ben Qu: operatic style found in Bai music

Diao: translates to “melody”

Duige: a communicative form of singing in Bai music, often a duet between a male and female

Flat: a symbol (♭) that lowers the pitch of a note by a semitone

Interval: the space between two notes on a musical score

Key Signature: the relative tonality of a piece of music

Lute: a member of the chordophone classification of instruments, uses plucked strings

Measure: the period of a musical piece that encompasses a complete cycle of the time signature

Minor: a darker sounding tonality of a key signature, as opposed to major

Octave: an interval of an eighth, thus the same note

Resonance: the ability of a closed space to hold sound

Solfège: the “do-re-mi” system of singing a musical scale

Tempo: the relative beats per minute of a particular piece of music

Theme: a distinctly identifiable progression of sound in music

Time Signature: determines what note value is to be given to a particular beat

Tuning: the base notes of an instrument without when playing open strings

1 All definitions from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*
INTRODUCTION

I first adopted the idea to study Bai musical practice after witnessing a video during the first week of SIT Yunnan depicting the various xiaoshu minzu (小数民族), or ethnic minorities, in Yunnan. Along with brief background into each of the various ethnic groups that call Yunnan Province their home, the video depicted the cultural traditions of each, with the most intriguing to me being that of musical practice. I looked into the musical culture of a number of ethnic minorities, ranging from the Yi, the Dai, and the Lhasu; however, the joyous melodies found in Bai music stood out to me most in my search.

This study will analyze the history of the Bai and the Dali region, where I center my fieldwork, from the establishment of the Kingdom of Nanzhao through to the classification of the Bai as an ethnic minority in 1956. I base some of my research on the previous findings of another westerner that studied and performs Bai music, Lisa Andrews, as well as other Bai scholars. Andrews’ master thesis, titled *Just Sing What You Want To Say: The Importance of Linguistic Tone in Bai Songs*, identifies “the close relationship between Bai linguistic tone heights and melodic pitches”, as well as a number of cultural aspects of Bai people and Bai music (Andrews 2012). Moreover, Andrews’ studies Baizuhua, or Bai language, and learned to sing *Baizu diao*, making her probably one of the only foreigners who has done so. After reading her own thesis and realizing that she was able to learn and perform Bai music, I decided that learning arguably the principal instrument in Bai music, the *sanxian*, would provide a fantastic opportunity for fieldwork. My background in music composition as a one-year music major at college, as well as years of playing guitar, led me to my fieldwork in Dali and the research found in this paper. My paper begins with a historical background of Dali and Bai people. My paper
will then identify the important festivals of the Bai musical calendar. Then, I will analyze my own study of *Baizu diao* with accompanying transpositions of Bai music into western notation.

**METHODS**

All of the fieldwork research found in this paper took place in and around the Dali Guzhen (Ancient City) in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China from November 6 to December 6, 2014. My fieldwork consists of observational research, formal and informal interviews, and a personal study of the *sanxian* with a Bai musician. I chose to study Bai music in Dali for a number of reasons. For one, I had the opportunity to travel to Dali during the Yunnan exploration project with SIT Yunnan. During my time there, I fell in love with the beautiful topography of the region, which includes the vast Erhai Lake and the beautiful Cangshan Mountain range. I knew I wanted to research the musical practices of an ethnic minority group when I first learned of our ISP opportunity; as a result of my previous experiences and my knowledge that Baizu culture contained a historical musical tradition, Dali presented itself as the perfect choice to conduct this research.

While most of my data was collected through interviews, I was also able to utilize a recording device in order to further analyze the *diao* that I learned to play on *sanxian*. These recordings have proven to be incredibly valuable, as I am able to constantly listen to each, which greatly enhances my ability to learn the instrument.

Thankfully, finding both a *sanxian* and a *sanxian* teacher were not difficult tasks in Dali. For one, David Patrick, my ISP advisor who also helped with translation, studies Baizuhua with my *sanxian* teacher, Yang Yue. Moreover, Mr. Yang’s father makes a number of instruments, principally the *sanxian*, and I ended up buying the *sanxian* I learned on from him.
The History of the Bai: Kingdom of Nanzhao to Ethnic Minority Classification

To first understand the vast subject that is Baizu traditional musical practice, it is important to gain a sufficient understanding of the cultural background of the Bai people and their history in and around the Dali area. The Bai people first gained ethnic minority (xiaoshu minzu) status in 1956 as part of the PRC’s official recognition of 38 distinct ethnic groups living within China. The term “minzu” was first popularized by Chinese politician and founder of Republican China, Sun Yat-sen, in the early 20th century. In China, the state-sponsored project of “minzu identification”, or minzu shibie, from 1953 to 1979 identified 55 minority minzu out of over 400 applicant groups seeking official status. China’s understandings of ethnic minorities had been heavily influenced by Russian politician Josef Stalin, and thus, based Chinese classification of ethnic minorities on Stalin’s “four commons”: common language, common territory, common economic life, and common psychological make-up. Before the classification project, the Bai people were known as “minjia”, which literally means “civilians” (Zhihong 2008).

Although it can be said that Bai people worked to assimilate themselves within the Han nationality in the early 20th century, in later years they worked to distinguish themselves from the Han majority. As a result, the Bai nationality is distinctly ethnic through these four commons; although Bai culture is commonly an oral culture, an “ancient” Bai script was established in the 8th century using Chinese characters. However, this writing system never becoming truly standardized, and few members of the Baizu community continue to use it as a means of recording history or music. In terms of Baizu song, most musicians use Chinese characters (Mackerras 1988).
Another ethnic common for the Baizu nationality is the territory of Dali, where Bai culture can trace its roots back over 1000 years. Original settlers of the land around Erhai Lake included members of several tribes, including the Mengshe, Mengsui, Langqiong, and Dengtan, who flourished in the fertile lands that surrounded the lake. The Mengshe zhao, or Mengshe Kingdom, was located in the southern part of the Erhai region, and thus known as the Nanzhao, or “southern zhao”. This southern Nanzhao Kingdom ultimately unified the remaining six zhaos in the area, and the Nanzhao Kingdom was founded in 737 AD with help from the Tang Dynasty. The Nanzhao capital was established a year later in 738 AD at Taihe, a location just south of modern day Dali, and advantageous due to its ability to be easily defended from attack. Surrounding fertile land promoted agricultural growth that stimulated a developing population (Zhihong 2008).

The history of the Nanzhao Kingdom is covered extensively in Tang scholar Fan Chuo’s account, Book of the Southern Barbarians, who states that the Nanzhao “was a well-organized state which ruled over many ethnic groups with the principal constituent group of Nanzhao being the Bai Man” (Zhihong 2008). 12 years later after the establishment of Taihe, in 750 AD, the Nanzhao Kingdom rebelled against the controlling Tang Dynasty, who in response to the rebellion, sent over 80,000 soldiers who were easily defeated by the Nanzhao General Duan Jianwei. More successes against Tang forces were to follow, and by 829 AD, the Nanzhao had expanded into Burma, Northern Laos, Thailand, Sichuan, and Chengdu. However, 873 AD marks the expelling of the Nanzhao from Sichuan, and by 902 AD, the kingdom was in a steep decline, marked by the murder of the key members of the royal family by the Nanzhao chief minister. After a period of strife between multiple dynasties, Duan Siping claimed power in 937
AD and established the Kingdom of Dali, exactly 200 years after the establishment of the Kingdom of Nanzhao.

The Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture was established in 1956 as part of the PRC’s classification of the Bai as an ethnic minority. The Municipality of Dali, or the Dali Guzhen and Xiaguan area, is the Seat of Dali. A census taken in the year 2000 notes that there are around 1.8 million people in the region surrounding Erhai Lake, 1.2 million of that population being of the Bai nationality. Prior to 1956, Francis Hsu’s 1948 monograph *Under the Ancestor’s Shadow*, found that most people living in the western town of Dali were not distinctly non-Chinese, as most spoke minjia but adopted a seemingly Chinese lifestyle. “It was the social mobility and the inner structure of the local family that seemed to make the town an ideal representation of a Chinese village with age-old customs and rituals” (Hsu 1948). Moreover, David Wu’s work almost half a century later found that the lifestyles of the inhabitants of Dali differed little from traditionally Han-Chinese life, and that the process of ethnic identification by the PRC led to the Bai viewing themselves as a non-Chinese nationality. Wu identifies that the only major difference between the Bai people and their Han counterparts fell into the language category; regardless, Bai language borrows much of its vocabulary from Mandarin Chinese. From my interviews with American Bai scholar Lisa Andrews, I learned that 60-70% of the Bai language vocabulary is borrowed from Mandarin Chinese (Andrews 2012).

Wu’s analysis of Baizu nationality is especially critical, as he notes that Bai transition from Han cultural assimilation to viewing themselves as a distinct nationality in the past 50 years directly correlates with the policies of minority identification established in 1956 by the PRC. For one, the assumption of being a culturally distinct ethnic minority allows the Bai to receive
government funding and avoid the now changing One-Child policy, which previously allowed only one child per family. In his own words, “the sense of ethnic pride, which motivates minority identities, has been promoted by the policymakers of the dominating Han Chinese, not initiated by the minorities themselves” (Wu 1990). While I do not agree with Wu on his analysis of the opportunistic self-identification of the Baizu as an ethnic minority, I do agree with his observations that the Bai nationality is not an entirely unified one. Through my time in Dali, I found that Dali Bai and the Bai in Jinchuan County speak slightly different dialects, and even have different local songs. However, through my fieldwork in Dali regarding the musical culture of the Dali Bai, I found that musical tradition, regardless of Bai regional differences, provides a great sense of pride for the Bai xiaoshu minzu, giving themselves a unique ethnic identity.

**Bai Traditional Musical Practices: Festivals**

To members of the Dali Baizu community, music, song, and dance is an integral part of their day-to-day life and cultural identity. Bai music is preserved through a number of practices, including numerous festivals of great cultural importance, showcasing a number of Bai musical categories that continue to be practiced. One of these major Bai festivals is that of *Gua sa na*, also known as *Raosanling* in Mandarin, or “Three Temples Pilgrimage”, which is a three-day long event that takes place from the 23rd to the 25th of the fourth month on the lunar calendar (Yang). Celebrated in three main sites, the Cave, Creek, and Horse villages, members of over 70 Bai villages from all over the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture participate in this festival that is perceived by local government officials as a significant feature of Bai cultural heritage (Co 2011). According to Bai Zhong’s study on Bai cultural practices in *Making a Difference: Bai Identity Construction in Dali*, the festival of *Gua sa na* “is one of the highlights in the local
annual calendar when Bai identity is articulated, performed, and reproduced” (Zhihong 2008). *Gua sa na* is particularly noted as a site of *duige*, or communicative singing performance. This dialogical singing occurs between men and women “regardless of age and marital status” and marks the establishment of long-term or temporary courtships based upon mutual attraction between the two individuals (Jones 1999). Moreover, *Gua sa na* is also noted as as site of *da ben qu*, a form of local Bai opera that often incorporates a large backing ensemble of musicians along with either a male or female singer.

Although I was not able to witness firsthand the events of *Gua sa na*, I was able to witness a *da ben qu* performance in the village of Xizhou, about 30 minutes north of Dali Guzhen. While the female singer, Deng Shao Qing, who would later become a fantastic source for my study of the *sanxian* (三弦), performed many Bai songs in Baizuhua, she also sang a number of Han Chinese songs in Mandarin. This was on par with Bai Zhihong’s observations at *Gua sa na*, as Bai people and non-Bai locals both take part in the festival (Zhihong 2008).

Another famous Bai cultural music festival is that of Shibaoshan, also a three-day long event that takes place at the base of beautiful Shibaoshan Mountain between the end of July and beginning of August, according to the lunar calendar. During the festival, a couple thousand Bai people congregate at the base of the mountain to perform Bai traditional song and dance; young Bai girls, dressed in beautiful and colorful traditional Baizu clothing, sing *Baizu diao*, or Baizu melody, while young men utilize the *sanxian* in their performances. As with the other famous Baizu music festivals, I was not able to attend; however, Lisa Andrews, probably the only westerner who can perform vocal *Baizu diao*, was able to show me a DVD of the festival.
Through watching and studying this DVD, titled *Shibaoshan Lianqing*, I am able to uncover the true importance of the sanxian in Baizu traditional music practice.

**A Study of the Sanxian and Baizu Diao**

My first direct encounter with the *sanxian* occurred during a SIT visit to Shaxi Valley, where we spent a night listening to Baizu musical performances in the Shaxi Guzhen. Along with an ensemble of elderly Baizu musicians, we also listened to a series of beautiful duets between a talented young female singer and a versatile young, male *sanxian* player. After their performance, which included both *da ben qu* and *duige*, I was able to approach the young sanxian player and get a firsthand view of the beautiful instrument. The *sanxian* (三弦), “san” (三) meaning “three” and “xian” (弦) meaning “strings”, is a three-stringed fretless member of the lute family, which includes guitars, banjos, and any other plucked instrument with a neck and resonance chamber. *Sanxians* may come in all shapes and sizes, with some assuming a hexagonal resonance body shape, while others, such as the one I would later use to study *Baizu diao*, utilize a opal shaped resonance chamber. Coverings of the resonance chamber vary; the *sanxian* I used during my study was covered with *she pi* (蛇皮), or snakeskin. However, I observed *sanxians* that are covered with a thin paper membrane, while one sanxian I saw utilized a metal covering on the resonance chamber, much like the steel covering of a resonator guitar found in Western bluegrass and blues music.

The resonance chamber of the *sanxian* I use also contains bone inlay that not only provides an extra sense of design and craftsmanship, but also contributes to the structural integrity of the lower end of the instrument. Much like a violin, the surface of the resonance chamber supports a bridge, which in turn supports the strings and rises them off the surface of
the instrument. The neck of the *sanxian* is fretless, which allows for a sliding method during playing, and a glazed wood finish provides a playing experience is incredibly smooth to the touch. The strings are plucked, thus creating sound, using the hollowed out tip of a cow horn; this horn pick is placed on the tip of the index finger. The tuning system is controlled by three tuning pegs; the tuning peg nearest to the resonance chamber corresponds to the highest in tone of the three strings, while the peg farthest away corresponds to the lowest in tone. The tuning of the *sanxian* is the musical interval of a 4th between the lowest and middle strings, while the tuning between the middle and highest of strings is that of a 5th. My teacher often tunes his instrument to that of C-F-C, representing an interval jump of an octave between the lowest and highest strings. To that regard, almost all *Baizu diao* is in this tuning, which corresponds to the key of C minor in western musical notation.

I first met my *sanxian* teacher, Yang Yue, through my ISP advisor, David Patrick, who learned *Baizuhua* from Mr. Yang. Mr. Yang, a contractor and freelance Bai musician, lives with his family in the village of Shang Sheng Jiecut (上生久村), a small town on the east side of Dali Guzhen that is home to numerous Bai families. Many of the families are related, as I learned through my many meetings with Mr. Yang’s close friends and associates. Mr. Yang is not only a fantastic *sanxian* teacher, but he is also a great source of knowledge on the history and culture of Baizu people and Baizu music. Mr. Yang explained to me the status of many Baizu musicians in and around the Dali area. While many Bai individuals, especially in his village, play music as a hobby that has been passed down in their family from generation to generation, other Bai musicians are associated with the local Dali Cultural Bureau. Musicians like Mr. Yang who are associated with the Cultural Bureau and can be considered more amateur, casual musicians,
receive of monthly stipend of around 700 kuai. Other, more professional musicians, are able to receive a monthly stipend of around two to three thousand kuai if given an official UNESCO certification by Cultural Bureau.

According to Mr. Yang, the UNESCO certification process can be rigorous, with musicians having to pass both a written test and a performance in front of members of the Cultural Bureau. Moreover, musicians wishing to receive UNESCO certification must also write their own Baizu songs. Regardless of being an amateur or professional, all musicians associated with the Dali Cultural Bureau are essentially on-call musicians, who may be booked on the spot or told of a performance months in advance. These performances may include festivals such as Raosanling or Shibaoshan, or even more intimate occasions such as local god festivals, marriages, or funerals. Through my lessons with Mr. Yang, I began to learn many of the songs that are performed at these particular events.

Raosanling (绕三灵)

The first song I learned on sanxian is that of Raosanling, named after the festival that takes place in the Cave, Creek, and Horse villages on the 23rd to the 25th of the 4th month on the lunar calendar. This diao, or melody, evolved over the years as a result of performances at the festival, during which Baizu people from all across Dali would descend upon Shibaoshan to listen to Baizu music and watch dancing competitions between various villages. Most of the musical performances consist of middle to old-aged Bai people who have at least some sort of musical training. They perform a number of traditional songs, and sometimes, even compose their own tunes in commemoration of the festival (Co 2011).
After learning Raosanling, which, like all Baizu music, is notated with numbers, I got the idea to transpose the music into western notation. Raosanling is in the key of C minor and is played at a tempo of 120 BPM, or beats per minute, which can be considered allegro. Like many of the diao I encountered during my fieldwork, the time signature of Raosanling can be played in 4/4. Raosanling is notable due to its intro, which utilizes a jump down of a 5th, with a quarter note on G jumping down to a quarter note on C. The diao itself is quite simple as it repeats itself and can be considered a loop, as notated by my music (see Appendix A).

I believe that Raosanling is a fantastic diao for me to start with, and Mr. Yang was able to teach it to me by using the system of solfège, or what westerns commonly refer to as the “do-re-mi” system. While Mr. Yang never personally sang the lyrics of Raosanling to me, I was able to observe firsthand a performance of singing and dancing to the diao by a group of local ladies in Yang’s village; as Mr. Yang played the diao on sanxian, the group of ladies, known in Dali as laomamahui, sang and danced along with him. Laomamahui can be found in most Baizu villages; they are groups that comprise of determined ladies who practice most nights for the annual dance competitions at Raosanling. Once I mastered the song, I even had the chance to perform Raosanling with the dance troupe on a number of occasions.

Gesangla

The second diao I learned is called Gesangla. Although Gesangla is not a traditionally Baizu diao, instead being a popular folk song hailing from the Lhasa, Tibet, it is “welcomed and loved by many different ethnic minorities in Yunnan” (Yang). Gesangla took me slightly longer to learn, especially as its musical form, that of A-B-A, is more complicated than that of Raosanling. Regardless, like Raosanling, Gesangla is in the key of C minor and is played at a
tempo of 120 BPM, or beats per minute, which can be also considered allegro. The *diao* begins with a two repeating 8th note lines, the first containing a 8th note melody of C to B flat. The second 8th note melody consists of E flat to D. After a single repetition of these 8th note melodies, the songs dives into an eight bar melody that ends with a whole note on C at the eighth measure. The end of this eight bar melody marks the point at which a singer must begin singing. The singer will perform in unison with the *sanxian* player for another 8 bars, after which the music uses a “to coda” marker to go back to that eight bar melody that occurs after the initial 8th repetition at the beginning of Gesangla (Appendix B).

As with my experiences with Raosanling, I was able to perform Gesangla with a number of other musicians and various members of Mr. Yang’s village. I have a fond recollection of the moment I first mastered the piece; Mr. Yang took me around his village to play both Raosanling and Gesangla for his friends. Although Raosanling is a traditionally Baizu *diao*, I found that people were more impressed with my playing of Gesangla and often wanted to sing along with me. Mr. Yang was so confident with my ability to play Gesangla that he took me to a spot at Dali Guzhen where he often meets with his friends and performs music, drinks tea, and smokes a lot of cigarettes. One of his friends had an erhu with him, a two-stringed Chinese instrument similar to a violin, and we spent almost an hour practicing a duet of Gesangla.

*Chaoshandiao* (朝山调)

The third *diao* Mr. Yang taught me is that of Chaoshandiao, a delightful sounding tune that roughly translates to “mountain pilgrimage tune”. Following its quite literal translation, the lyrics of Chaoshandiao signify the worshipping of the “gods of the mountain” and the pilgrimage of Bai people to the base of of Cangshan (苍山), a mountain range that runs directly west of
Dali. According to my sanxian teacher, Mr. Yang, Chaosandiao has been passed down for about 1000 years as a result of the “Three Temple Pilgrimage”, and the song pays tribute to the gods of each temple that worshippers visit during the festival of Raosanling (Yang). Like the previous two songs, I noted Chaosandiao in the key of C minor in a time signature of 4/4. The song begins with a four bar 8th note line that sounds similar to the eight bar repeated line at the beginning of Gesangla. The four bar line at the beginning of Chaosandiao sees repetition starting in the third beat of the tenth measure, and proceeds to the end of the song. This timing of this diao is different from the previous two as the entire song is not in a 4/4 time signature; the last measure of the song is played in a 2/4 time, which cuts the amount of beats in a 4/4 measure by half (Appendix C). Chaosandiao is a great tune to play, and in my own personal experience, is easier to learn than many of the other diao due to the similarities between it and Gesangla. Moreover, by this point in my lessons, I found that I was beginning to gain a better musical understanding of sanxian music through the commonalities of theme and similar fingerings. A comparison of the music in Chaosandiao and Gesangla represents the commonalities of musical themes.

_Bai Yue Liang, Bai Jie Jie (白月亮, 白姐姐)_

The fourth song I learned, and probably both my favorite and Mr. Yang’s favorite diao, is that of Bai Yue Liang, Bai Jie Jie, which translates literally to “White Moon, White Sister”. In the words of Mr. Yang, “Bai Yue Liang, Bai Jie Jie is the best Baizu diao”, and was composed in Jianchuan County, a region about two hours north of Dali Guzhen. Due to the origins of Bai Yue Liang, Bai Jie Jie in the Jianchuan region, Mr. Yang states that many of the Baizu individuals know and will commonly sing this particular tune, regardless of the occasion (Yang). In
Jianchuan County, Baizu people make up over 92 percent of the total population, which represents the highest percent population of the numerous counties found in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (Andrews 2012).

As with the previous three songs, Bai Yue Liang, Bai Jie Jie is in the key of C minor with a BPM of 120. After finishing my musical practice of this particular tune, I noticed that the timing of the line that appears at both the beginning of the song and at the 12th measure is different. While the line at the beginning is best played in a 4/4 time signature, the line appears again at the 12th measure and is best played in a 2/4 time signature. This has to do with the timing of the interval of a 5th that occurs between a C and G in the bass clef in the 16th measure; when the song is performed live, there is a slight pause that occurs at this junction. At the end of the song, I notated a “to coda”, as the tune experiences a repetition of the melody at the 11th measure (Appendix D).

I really savoured learning this song, especially as it was one of Mr. Yang’s wife’s favorites and she often enjoyed singing in unison with my sanxian performance. With her voice as a guide, I was able to pick up this diao very quickly!

Panghai Diao (螃海调)

Panghai Diao, the fifth song taught to me by Mr. Yang, translates quite literally to “crab song”, with “pang” (调) meaning “crab” and “hai” (海) meaning “lake”. True to the title of this tune, Panghai Diao describes the crabs that live in Erhai Lake next to Dali. Passed down for a few hundred years in the Dali Bai musical culture, this diao is usually sung in a local Yunan dialect of Mandarin Chinese. Like the previous songs, I notated Panghai Diao in C minor with time signature of 4/4 at 120 BPM. This song is unique due to the fact that it was the first diao I
heard that utilized the note D, as one can find in the first measure of my Panghai Diao notation. The note D is again utilized in the seventh measure of the song. I also utilize coda notation in this song, as the first line from measures 1-4 is repeated once the song is finished (Appendix E). Although I did not have enough time to perform Panghai Diao during my ISP final presentation in Kunming, I really enjoyed learning this tune and the interesting backstory behind it.

*Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang (大理是个好地方)*

The sixth and final *Baizu diao* that I learned is probably the most famous in and around the Dali Guzhen area, that of Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang. The title *Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang* (大理是个好地方) literally translates to “Dali is a good place”; as the title alludes, this *diao* sings the praises of the Dali region and the endless possibilities that the area has to offer. The lyrics single out the beauty of Erhai Lake and the grandeur of the Canshan Mountain range as particularly notable reasons for Dali being such a fantastic area to grow up (Deng). This *diao* is also notated in a key signature of C minor, a time signature of 4/4, and a tempo of 120 BPM, or allegro. Like Panghai Diao, Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang is also unique from the other *diao* I notated as it contains the usage of the note D. However, Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang differs as it contains many more uses of the note D; it is used four more times than the previous song. Once the song has been finished, the melody can be repeated at the beginning, as I noted with the bars at the start of the song and at the end. The numbers 1 and 2, which can be found at the end of the second and third measures, respectively, refer to the order in which measures are played when repeating the piece (Appendix F). Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang is entertaining to play, and I enjoyed playing a sanxian trio of the song with Mr. Yang and one of his good friends.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my study of the sanxian has not only taught me a lot about the history and culture of the Bai, but also gives me vast knowledge of the form of Bai musical tradition. One thing I notice through my study of the instrument is that much of the Baizu diao is similar in theme, key signature, and tempo. As found in the musical notation in the appendix of this paper, one can find that almost all Baizu diao is performed in the same key signature, that of C minor. Moreover, the diao that I learned and performed for my creative ISP are mostly in the same time signature, that of 4/4, and is usually played at the same tempo, that of 120 BPM. These commonalities are not a mistake; through my interviews with Mr. Yang, I learned that the philosophy of Baizu music is as follows: all Baizu diao connect to form a greater diao, linking each and every melody and song to create an overarching musical tradition (Yang).

I am thankful for this amazing opportunity; the potential for further research is endless. Although I will not have the luxury of a personal sanxian teacher upon my return to my homeland, there is still much to be learned about Bai culture and history. To that regard, I have spent the past few months compiling a lengthy bibliography of both Chinese and English sources on Bai cultural study, which will assist me greatly in the writing of my thesis on the preservation of Baizu music in the face of tourism and modernization. I look forward to my future studies of this amazing culture and music.
WORKS CITED


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APPENDIX A
APPENDIX C
APPENDIX E
大理是个好地方

ALLEGRO

Dali Shi Ge Hao Difang

记谱：C. Stanbrook

排列：Saxian