

# Research on the Composition and Social Value of Gongs and Drums in Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province

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**Abstract:** The traditional Chinese folk instrumental music, gongs and drums, once flourished in southern China. The gongs and drums of Huaihe River basin in Anhui province were mainly distributed in Chizhou generation. The art of folk music originates from the life of the people. Relying on the unique historical, geographical and cultural environment, it presents a unique musical style to the audience. As an expression of ancient Chinese classical melody, it has continuously enriched and absorbed many excellent local culture and civilization achievements with the passage of time, and has exerted a profound influence on promoting the progress of Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of its roots can enable us to more comprehensively understand and grasp the essence of this Great China culture with a long history of inheritance.

**Keywords:** Anhui; Huaihe River; Gong and Drum; Folk Art.

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## 1. Historical Background of Gongs and Drums

### 1.1. History and Culture

Gongs and drums were mainly produced in the Huaihe generation in Anhui Province, especially Chizhou, the birthplace of gongs and drums, which has a profound accumulation of cultural and human heritage, attracting many talented and beautiful people to settle down or travel. Many outstanding writers and poets emerged in the historical corridor from ancient times to modern times, such as Li Bai, a great poet in the Tang Dynasty, Du Mu, a famous prime minister and writer in the late Tang Dynasty; Wang Anshi, a famous political reformer in the Song Dynasty, Du Fu, a great master of realistic poetry, and so on. These famous people created works that have been passed down for centuries in this ancient and culturally rich soil, enriching the traditional culture here and enjoying the reputation [1] of "the land of poets for thousands of years". This unique geographical environment and cultural conditions created a good opportunity for the birth of traditional Chinese percussion music - gongs and drums here.

### 1.2. Religious Belief

As an ancient city with rich history and culture, Chizhou has a profound and lasting influence on music and art. Its long historical background and diverse culture make it a fertile ground for various folk performance forms. The Taoist culture is also quite rich, and Gexian Cave in Jiuhua Mountain is still a Taoist site[2]. In addition, under the influence of multi-cultural ideas, residents here generally accept and respect different spiritual pursuits and ways of life. As a result, both traditional Confucianism and Western Catholicism and Christianity have found their adherents and developed here.

### 1.3. Folklore

With the inheritance and development of traditional culture, folk customs have gradually evolved into many symbolic folk arts, such as gong and drum music being a typical example. This phenomenon has also been mentioned many times in

relevant documents and records in Chizhou, especially in weddings and other ceremony occasions, where gongs and drums are often used as important musical elements to enhance the atmosphere. According to the Annals of the Chizhou Area: "... Three kneels and nine taps, gongs, cannons, mourning, music, and the reading of sacrificial texts are family offerings.[2]" It can be seen that gongs and drums played a key role in local customs and activities. In a variety of folk activities in Chizhou, almost every link needs the participation of gongs and drums, especially in some festivals or special ceremonies, it is always necessary to create a warm atmosphere through loud gongs and drums. At the same time, these colorful gongs and drums are also bred in the background of profound local folk customs.

## 2. The Development of Folk Culture in the Huaihe River Basin

In addition to gongs and drums, the Huaihe River Basin also has other important musical elements such as Qingyang Opera, Huangmei Opera and other local operas and music. [3] They have been enriched with the progress of culture, and have become quite perfect, attracting a certain scale of audiences and gaining the consensus of the public. However, due to their particularity and limited transmission channels, their influence is limited, and the target population of their services is mainly local residents. Some rap songs also encounter difficulties in the process of spreading, and there are some obstacles to their survival and development. The specific manifestations are as follows: some forms of dance, folk performance and bands are on the verge of disappearing. In order to deal with this problem, the government provides policy support to this kind of folk culture, so as to ensure their continuation in the long history. Qingyang Opera, Huangmei Opera and gongs and drums in the Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province are all based on daily life, and take the local social environment as the creative material, showing strong regional characteristics and humanistic customs, rich cultural research significance and artistic appreciation value, covering a wide range. Meanwhile, with the strong support of the government, Many folk activities have been turning to a

higher level of artistic process, from the original grassroots culture gradually transformed into a cultural form that integrates artistry, professionalism and professionalism. These artists have gone beyond the limits of the local stage and stepped onto the national stage through various forms of activities, and continue to gain popularity in the professional art circles in China. Percussion instruments such as gongs and drums, for example, combine elements of folk dance and rely on the beliefs and customs of the people to sustain their existence and continue to evolve. [3]With the acceleration of urbanization, folk artists are gradually integrating into big cities, presenting themselves through various performances to obtain resources for survival, and at the same time playing an active role in promoting traditional culture.

### **3. Composition of Gong and Drum Music in the Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province**

#### **3.1. Musicians of the Music Class**

The gongs and drums around the Huaihe River in Anhui province are mainly famous in Qingyang County, where the composition of the members of the gongs and drums band has shown its own characteristics in different historical stages. [4]Usually, the members of the early band formed by people close to each other knew each other well, and they would learn skills from older family members or masters and pass them on to the next generation. In addition, some of them acquired their gong and drum skills through visiting teachers, but these activities mostly took place in the same area and rarely involved other ethnic groups. However, with the progress of society, young people may no longer love gongs and drums as much as their predecessors, because learning the art requires a lot of time and effort, and only after a long period of study and practice can they master high skills. As a result, many young people hesitate when choosing whether to continue learning gongs and drums. Still, since gongs and drums are listed as intangible cultural heritage, today's band members, most of whom are from the elderly group, take the initiative to take responsibility for maintaining traditional culture and attach great importance to the inheritance of gongs and drums.

#### **3.2. Nature of Music Class**

Due to the characteristics of folk gongs and drums, their musicians adopt a basic way of life, and at the same time show their performance mode and style. This reveals not only their role and importance in these groups, but also their position and their values. Nowadays, professional artists or bands are rarely seen in the city, because their goal is to make money, both as professional actors and through this way to earn a living income. Many bands and professional artists are mainly located in rural areas, distributed all over the country, especially in areas with strong traditional atmosphere, such as China's ethnic minority areas. These people often participate part-time and make a living from music as a hobby, while farming is their main job. [6]When weddings and funerals happen, they are invited to play and are rewarded accordingly. Most of them have been passed down from family to family, following a traditional customary system, just like some professional bands. The basic identity of all band members is farmers and laborers. By participating in some local ceremonies and activities, they exchange music performances for income, which not only obtains economic benefits, but

also allows the folk culture of gong and drum to continue to spread, making its existence to a certain extent legitimate and universal, and is reflected in every corner of the society.

#### **3.3. Status of Musicians**

As the core part of the ten fan gongs and drums, the importance of the Si drummer cannot be ignored. He needs to be able to lead the rest of the musicians and possess superb performance skills. In addition, he needs to be proficient in the position of the ten gongs and the reading of the music sheet to ensure that he can fully control the whole performance.[5] In practice, the drummer is often responsible for giving the "signal" to start a performance or using body language to convey information to other musicians. His role is not only as performer, but also as commander. The master and leader are also influential in the Ten Fan Luogu, often serving as the founder of the group and being highly skilled. They may become full-time technical instructors, but they may also be the ones who undertake external activities. They have a high status in the band and are respected by the musicians. Their job is to teach the musicians how to play the drums and gongs, determine the musical level of the band and its future direction, set appropriate goals, and play a key role[5] in maintaining the development of the band.

#### **3.4. Sheet Music for the Orchestra**

Generally speaking, music scores for gongs and drums are created manually, which is very different from traditional music scores that are understood by the masses. They mainly come from the works of past gong and drum masters, so to master gong and drum, one must first know how to read music sheet music. When students have mastered all the music scores, they will receive individual guidance from the teacher. However, due to the various changes and connection methods of various instruments in the music, such as the high complexity of suona melodies, it may take more than a year for beginners to get familiar with the music score, and then they need to invest a lot of extra time to further study the blowing, playing and playing skills of gongs and drums. Only in this way can the rhythm of gongs and drums be harmonized to produce beautiful timbre[6]. In addition, students should also participate in various activities, learn from the teacher's practical experience, and understand how to use multiple ways to express the same song according to different times and places. Therefore, in addition to mastering the basic knowledge, it is more important for these students to be proficient in music theory and to achieve perfect coordination among other instruments. Music scores change with The Times. Early music scores are handed down mainly by understanding them. Musicians learn the scores by heart and deepen their impressions through repeated practice. But to ensure that the scores would last, they transcribed them for performance or display. With the progress of society, in order to let more young generations have access to the music, they have optimized, modified and simplified it for easy learning. We can deeply understand the historical development and transformation process of percussion instruments by studying the composition of bands and the creation of music scores. The diverse roles of the performers and the constant updating of the repertoire all show the self-improving ability of the traditional Chinese percussion instrument, which has a strong folk flavor and is full of creativity. This way of inheritance has gradually changed from the initial family education to the modern master teaching mode. Among many percussion

instruments in various parts of China, Chizhou City in the Huaihe River basin of Anhui Province is an example. Its unique style shows the unique charm of local culture, geographical advantages and its own evolutionary characteristics, and at the same time, it actively integrates into other folk art forms. Together, a new aspect of percussion culture has been built.

## **4. The Sound, Identity and Social Value of Gongs and Drums Music**

### **4.1. The Continuous Sound Field of Gongs and Drums**

Gong and drum music is influenced by time and space factors. In folk activities and rituals, its unique features are emphasized. [7] Through creation, humans have given music its personality and transformed it into independent and diverse forms of artistic expression. As The Times have changed, so have the forms of music. In a particular historical stage, the form of folk culture is closely related to the mentality of the residents in the region. For example, before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the folk customs were simple, people respected the local religious culture, and had a certain degree of folk religious belief. Therefore, the gong and drum culture at this time showed a close relationship with the local folk belief. Based on the changes of different ages, the environment of gong and drum music adapted to the corresponding social environment

### **4.2. Gongs and Drums and People's Cultural and Social Values**

With the continuous development and spread, gong and drum music has demonstrated its artistic charm through various folk customs and ceremonies. Its main purpose is to arouse resonance in the hearts of the public and integrate their own spiritual beliefs into the performance. This way of expression is not limited to specific scenes or forms, it can touch people's inner depths in a way that transcends the boundaries of traditional music theory. This is the reason why gong and drum music have a strong sense of national and cultural belonging, and has continued to spread to this day. It also reflects the value of the people's culture and highlights the significance of their uniqueness.

### **4.3. Inheritance and Change of Gongs and Drums**

As one of the main expressions of traditional culture, gong and drum culture has evolved through several generations, and its social characteristics and cultural significance continue to adjust with the changes of The Times. With the integration of modern musical elements, the traditional musical form is undergoing constant recombination and conflict. Under specific historical background, it is incorporated into the development process of the new era, realizing the transformation [7] of culture and identity. Influenced by the social environment, the form of folk music progressed relatively slowly, but encountered some

challenges in the process of development. However, the continuation of gong and drum music shows its strong cultural appeal and influence. At the same time, gong and drum culture is still absorbing the essence of other musical cultures to adapt to today's changing life and development environment. In addition, the government is paying more and more attention to the promotion of excellent national culture of folk music, including gong and drum music, and has implemented a series of related policies and support measures to promote its continued prosperity and spread.

## **5. Conclusion**

Among the traditional Chinese musical expressions, gong and drum music originated in the Huaihe River basin in Anhui province. Its birth was influenced by many factors such as the historical background, natural environment and folk beliefs of the area, so it has a very high inheritance significance. The combination of local folk culture and gong and drum music can more effectively demonstrate the unique tone of local ethnic culture, and show the appeal of gong and drum music to the public through various folk activities and rituals. Although gong and drum music have a long history of development, the performers, pieces and forms of their bands in each era have their own characteristics, which generally reflect their professional and part-time characteristics. However, with the progress of society, gong and drum music has encountered many challenges in the process of inheritance and development. Fortunately, due to the successful application for the heritage, its cultural heritage has gradually been recognized, and to some extent, it helps to improve the inheritance and persistence of the Gong and drum music culture. After a long period of artistic accumulation, the musical style and expression techniques contained in Gong and drum music have become more stable, and will continue to reflect its far-reaching influence and outstanding artistic value in the long river of Chinese civilization.

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