

Rhythmic Sound: Presence and Significance: A Study of the Yue Drum Used in the Han Chinese Shigong Ritual in Guangxi, China

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Abstract : The use of drums as an accompanying instrument is a common phenomenon in traditional Chinese folk rituals and musical culture. Especially, some folk rituals construct ritual-related sounds and give them ritual-specific symbolic and meaningful systems through the combination and use of multiple percussion instruments. The Yue drum(腰鼓), an asymmetrically shaped thin waist drum, is currently used in Han Chinese Shigong(师公)rituals in Guangxi, China, and is an important ritual instrument in Shigong rituals. This paper examines the use of the Yue drum and other percussion instruments in Han Chinese Shigong rituals in Guangxi, China, and shows the current status of combining instrumental accompaniment forms with human voices in Shigong rituals. Through further analysis of the musical and dance forms of Han Chinese Shigong rituals, this paper shows how Han Chinese Shigong ritual performers construct the ritual field through "sound-human-dance" and further explains the relationship between the existing and fictitious performance fields in the rituals. In addition, this paper demonstrates the relationship between Han Chinese Shigong rituals and the religious beliefs they involve, such as Taoism and Buddhism. And it further explores how performers in Han Chinese Shigong rituals use Yue drums for the dual purpose of "entertaining the gods" and "entertaining the people".

Keywords : sound research, the Han Chinese Shigong ritual, the thin waist drum, folk beliefs, ritual music

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