



# The Examination and Analysis of the HuiGu of Zhuang Ethnicity in Mashan County, Guangxi Province, China

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## Abstract

This study used a qualitative research and interview methodology with the objective of examining the development and analyzing the playing pattern of HuiGu of Zhuang nationality in Mashan County, Guangxi. The fieldwork method is mainly used for collecting data, together with the information from the document. The study's result showed that the process of making HuiGu requires the preparation of tools and instruments used to make musical instruments. and the process of preparing wood, cow hide, and Zhumie to be assembled to make HuiGu. On the playing mode of HuiGu, we found that there were the following types of play styles: 1) Single drumming mode; 2) group drumming patterns; 3) group playing mode; 4) parade performance mode. Playstyle HuiGu can be found at Drums of Dragon Dances, Wedding Drums, and Harvest Drums.

**Keywords:** HuiGu Drum, Development, Drum pattern, China.

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## 1. Introduction

"HuiGu" is a proper noun. Its full name is "Mashan County Zhuang which belongs to the second batch of intangible cultural heritage at the level of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China. Mashan County is a place name in China: Mashan County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. "Drum" is a musical instrument made of animal skins and wood.

Zhuang Hui Gu, which is called "nuo zhuan" in Zhuang. Folk percussion music includes three musical instruments, including drums, cymbals, and gongs. Zhuang Hui Gu is the protagonist. Zhuang Hui Gu bodies are made by hollowing out large logs with a thickness of 3 cm. The height of the drum is 1.2 meters, the inner diameter of the drum is 56 cm, and the diameter of the drum surface and the cowhide is 62 cm. The head and bottom of the

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drum are covered with cowhide, and the cowhide is used as the drum head. The sound is loud, round, and thick. The cowhide on both sides is fixed with small, hard wooden sticks. The length of the small wooden stick is determined according to the ratio of the drum. Then the small wooden stick is clamped with a bamboo strip ring to fix the cowhide surface at both ends. In the middle of the drum body, use small wooden sticks to tighten the bamboo strips one by one, and at the same time, tighten the drumhead again. Use hard wood to make drumsticks, and use cotton cloth to make a ball with one end wrapped around the wood, totaling 41 cm. The cowhide drum surface becomes loose after being beaten for a long time. You can put some thick wooden wedges on it after tightening the wooden sticks (Qiangwei, 2010). Zhuang Hui Gu is a kind of folk entertainment unique to the people of the Zhuang nationality in Mashan County, Guangxi. Its initial function is to exorcise ghosts, warn of outside attacks, and pray for auspiciousness. Later, because of its magnificent beat, it is exciting and inspiring. Boosting the spirit has gradually become a popular entertainment activity among the people, and it has been passed down to this day. In ancient times, there was a bronze drum in the area, which later evolved into a cowhide drum with a hardwood shell and two Mongolian cowhides. In ancient times, villages and villages often gathered to fight drums, which were later called "Huigu" (Linyin et al., 2017). In the Song Dynasty, Nong Zhigao was sentenced to chaos, and Di Qing led the army to quell the chaos. At that time, the local people in Jingangzhai, Guling Town, and Mashan built a city and stationed troops to resist the Song army. "Receiving soldiers, the native people beat the drum (Zhuang Hui Gu) and marched in." (Lingnan posthumous letter, Wu Chongyao, Qing Dynasty) The Mashan Zhuang Hui Gu first appeared in the Song Dynasty, passed through the Yuan and Ming dynasties, prevailed in the Qing Dynasty, and is popular in the Republic of China. It has a history of more than a thousand years. According to textual research, when the Mashan Zhuang people's Zhuang Hui Gu was first formed, it was a horn and weapon to drive away evil spirits. Before the Song Dynasty, the ancestors of the Zhuang nationality used cowhide to make drums for thunder and to suppress evil spirits. At that time, the villages in Mashan would beat their Zhuang Hui Gu to drive away ghosts and pray for blessings during festivals, New Years, ancestor worship, and childbirth. After thousands of years of historical development, it has formed its own unique national cultural characteristics. Its initial functions were to drive ghosts and demons out, warn of outside attacks, pray for good weather, harvest good crops, and provide safety for six animals. Finally, it gradually evolved into a folk entertainment of the Zhuang nationality and has been passed down to this day (Dawei et al., 2020). The Hui Gu of the Mashan Zhuang nationality in Guangxi have a long history and culture, and they are the most representative cultural heritage of Mashan County's ethnic minorities. The Mashan Zhuang nationality's dancing drum in Guangxi not only inherits history and culture, but it also represents the local people's spiritual wealth. The Mashan Zhuang people in Guangxi will express their pursuit and yearning for a better life (Mengqi, 2020). The Zhuang Hui Gu is also the Zhuang people's natural worship of the universe gods and the

praise of the industrious and courageous working people, as well as the praise of honesty, kindness, and love. It is original and used to exchange emotions, convey information, provide entertainment, and use other important methods. It has distinctive artistic characteristics (Huang, 2019).

The "huigu" of the Zhuang nationality is a kind of drum music. Its main equipment includes drums, gongs, hairpins, etc. The drums play a central role. The types of "huigu" songs are diverse and colorful, and the performance of "huigu" is very rich in national characteristics and national complexity. The sound is loud and penetrating, the performance is neat and uniform, the scene is shocking, the rhythm is neat, and it contains high art. Ornamental value. The craftsmanship of "drum" and the cultural connotation of "huigu" have high research value and practical application significance for studying the history and culture of the Zhuang nationality.

## 2. Literature Review

Mashan County is in the north-central part of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, north of Nanning City, on the south bank of the middle section of the Hongshui River, and at the northern foot of Damming Mountain. It has a longitude of 107°42'38"–108°30'00 "E and a latitude of 23°24'06"–24°02'06 "N.

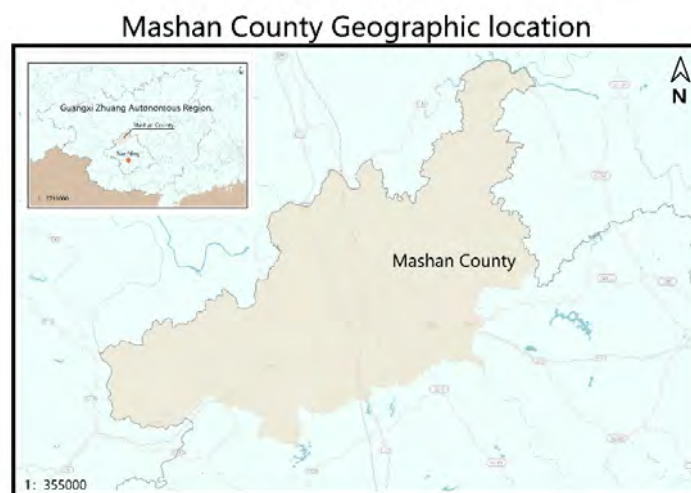


Figure 1. Research scope Mashan County

*Mashan County map, from Ministry of Natural Resources of the PRC, September 13, 2022.*

The Zhuang "HuiGu" is a characteristic national cultural resource in Guangxi, which can be appreciated in major folk festivals, traditional national sports, and national cultural and artistic performances. Use this as a starting point for developing culture based on a

strong national heritage. Add value, inherit, and develop cultural industries with ethnic characteristics; promote the identification of ethnic cultural communities; promote the prosperity and development of multiculturalism; and achieve the matching and coordination of culture and economic, social, and ecological development (Huang, 2019).

In order to adapt to the market-oriented development of folk sports in the village, each of the "HuiGu" teams of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has added new elements, such as women, dance, gongs, and cymbals. mixed drums (mixed male and female playing the same drum), carnival drums (mixed male and female drums and gongs and cymbals), lantern drums, pole drums, dragon dance drums, and a variety of side drums and interlude drums. The crisp sound of gongs and cymbals, the magnificent scene, the thunderous drums, and the gongs and cymbals ringing in unison are deafening. In the interview, the successor Wei Jianting said: "Zhuang "HuiGu" seems simple, but it is not easy to fight well" (Biao, 2020).

As the inheritors of ethnic culture, the young and middle-aged people of ethnic minorities are the backbone of the national cultural inheritance system and play an important role in the inheritance of the national culture. However, with the acceleration of reform and opening up and the acceleration of urbanization, many young people in Guangxi's ethnic minority areas The middle-aged are no longer living on the land where their ancestors were born and raised their entire lives. Instead, they continue to receive modern education knowledge through work, reading, military service, marriage, and other means, and thus leave their homeland. Going to the city will result in the absence of the young and middle-aged generation from the local cultural system, which will lead to the breakage of the entire ethnic cultural inheritance chain and weaken the foundation of ethnic minority culture. On the other hand, go out to work. The young ethnic minorities who studied quickly accepted the mainstream culture in developed areas or cities, gradually deviated from the traditions and ethnic cultural habits of their hometowns, lost interest in ethnic traditions and cultural customs, and were unwilling to learn and inherit old ethnic skills, which seriously impacted the original national cultural system. In the research activities such as throwing hydrangeas, "HuiGu," and hitting a pole, the inheritors put more time and energy into the local school classrooms for training and transmission because only schools gather many Of course, after these students leave school, very few people can further improve and study these traditional national sports. When they reach the level of young and middle-aged people, there will be a break in inheritance (Zhang, 2013).

### *2.1 The background of "HuiGu"*

Mashan County is a place where the Zhuang people live and has abundant national cultural resources. In 2008, the three-voice folk song of the Mashan Zhuang nationality was selected as a national intangible cultural heritage masterpiece. On October 30, 2012, the Chinese Folk Artists Association officially awarded Mashan County, Guangxi, the "Hometown of China's Huigu" title. So far, after the previous "Hometown of Black Goats

in China" and "Hometown of Chinese Civilian Culture and Art," Mashan County has had its third national cultural card. The "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has a long history. It first appeared in the Song Dynasty, passed through the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and prevailed in the Qing Dynasty. It has a history of more than a thousand years. The main musical instruments of "HuiGu" are drums, gongs, cymbals, etc., with drums playing the main role. The drum is hollowed out of camphor, banyan, maple, and other logs to make the shell. The cowhide is used as the drum surface, and the two sides are tightened with tough raw bamboo strips. The sound is round and thick. At present, the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang ethnic group is mainly distributed in more than 150 villages in Baishan, Yongzhou, Zhouxu, Zhoulu, Linxu, Qiaoli, Hequn, Bailongtan, Guling, Guzhai, and other townships. The "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has unique national characteristics. The first is primitive simplicity. The "HuiGu" style of the Mashan Zhuang nationality is ancient and simple, rich in original ecological characteristics; the second is the loud drum. Most of the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang people are hollowed out of camphor, banyan, maple, and other logs. The largest of the remaining "Huigu" is 150 cm in diameter, and the smallest is more than 50 cm in diameter. The sound is loud, round, and heavy; the scene was intense. During the drum match, the mixing drums, carnival drums, dragon dance drums, pole drums, lantern drums, etc. are interspersed with the crisp and loud gongs and cymbals. The whole scene of drums is deafening, shaking in all directions, and exciting (Huang, 2013).

The "HuiGu" of the Zhuang nationality is a kind of folk entertainment unique to the Zhuang people in Mashan County. On November 10, 2008, the "HuiGu" of the Zhuang nationality in Mashan County was included in the second batch of the intangible cultural heritage list of the Guangxi autonomous region. On October 30, 2012, Mashan County was formally awarded the title "Hometown of "Huigu" in China" after evaluation by the Chinese Folk Artists Association. In April 2010, Mashan County established a "HuiGu" team with Wei Jianting as the commander-in-chief and a total of 35 drummers. The "HuiGu" team participated in the Guangxi week of the Shanghai World Expo (Xiuming, 2017).

### **3. Methodology**

The main research method in this article is qualitative research. The researcher has chosen the research area with the theme of "HuiGu" of Zhuang nationality in Mashan County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. I take representative folk artists as my insiders, and I take some representative folk songs as my main research objects.

#### *3.1 Key informants*

##### *3.1.1 Mr. Wei Jianting*

He was approved by Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, as the second-generation heir of Mashan Huigu, and was known as the "Mashan Drum King".



Figure 2. Mr. Wei Jianting

### 3.1.2 Mr. Chen Mengru

He is a member of the Guangxi Folk Artists Association, his has own drum production studio in Mashan County and is also the main drum maker designated by the government.



Figure 3. Mr. Chen Mengru

### 3.2 Research Tools

The research tools used in this paper are mainly interviews and observations, as well as practice. To obtain research data, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with informants and obtained information on the production process of HuiGu through audio and video recordings, by observing the differences between the various modes of production, and by participating in some of the HuiGu production processes and learning how to use HuiGu.

### *3.3 Data Collection*

The researcher collected data through documentary analysis and fieldwork. To conduct an in-depth study, the researcher consulted literature from libraries and cultural centers and completed a literature search analysis using online databases such as CNKI (China Knowledge Infrastructure), open knowledge maps, and ACM.

### *3.4 Data Collection*

The researcher uses conceptual and theoretical analysis of the data to track the objectives and definitions of terms. In the first objective, we used quantitative research methods, fieldwork data analysis, and production techniques. The researcher traveled to the Zhuang HuiGu manufacturing workshop to conduct field research, taking samples through observation, and interviewing my key informants, Mr. Wei Jianting and Mr. Chen Mengru, to gain experience and relevant data from them. In the second objective, we used a documentary analysis and a practical approach to compare the playing patterns of the HuiGu. The researcher learned to play the HuiGu with key informants and at the same time wanted to briefly investigate the playing of the HuiGu.

## **4. Result**

### *4.1 The Development of "HuiGu"*

The origin of the development of the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has gone through thousands of years of history. There are many opinions about the original reason for the formation of " no matter which version was created by our ancestors for the needs of production and life. Yes, every kind of origin legend is related to daily production and life. After more than a thousand years of development, the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has also been continuously evolving in the development of society, from the original exorcism of evil spirits to the present competition performance project, from simple percussion to the addition of performance actions and other musical instruments. So that the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has regained a new life, continuously blooming and becoming the most dazzling role in the traditional festivals and major celebrations and competitions of Mashan County (Bin, 2017).

The "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang nationality has a long history and rich connotations. It was conceived in the Song Dynasty, passed through the Yuan and Ming dynasties, prevailed in the Qing Dynasty, and is popular in the Republic of China. It has a history of more than one thousand years and has formed its own unique national cultural characteristics during the historical development of thousands of years. In the 1990s, the spring breeze of the reform of the national cultural system blew across the country. The governments of various regions have tried every means to develop local cultural

undertakings and encourage folk artists to shoulder the burden of developing national traditional culture. In this context, some are scattered in Mashan County. "HuiGu" performers from various villages began to form teams spontaneously. So far, there have been more than 20 "HuiGu" teams in Mashan County. The publicity of "HuiGu" in Mashan County will never be famous, but the author believes that the current publicity of "HuiGu" in Mashan County will never be famous. The propaganda will never seriously weaken the market-oriented development level of the "HuiGu" of the Mashan Zhuang ethnic group (Dawei, 2020).

The traditional performance of "HuiGu" has a crowded carnival, passionate, and unrestrained character, which is related to its early use in social functions such as offering sacrifices to ghosts and gods, warning of foreign attacks, and calling for war. Therefore, "HuiGu" emphasizes the vibe of the sound field in the form of performance, that is, the higher participation of the masses. This result will inevitably bring about the relative limitations of technical performance. In view of the current situation of social music emphasizing the development of individuality, the traditional "HuiGu" rhythm pattern is somewhat monotonous and dull in the performance of modern popular music (Kun, 2019).

"HuiGu" after the founding of New China in 1949–1985. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Zhuang "HuiGu" were mainly distributed in Baishan, Hequn, Guling, Bailongtan, Qiaoli, and other townships in Mashan County and the surrounding areas near Shanglin County, Xincheng County, Du'an County, and Dahua County. in some areas. The main musical instruments are drums, gongs, cymbals, etc. The protagonist is the drum, which is made of hollow logs such as camphor wood and banyan maple to make a drum shell. The voice was round and thick. The gongs and cymbals are supporting instruments, and the sound is crisp and loud, embellishing the drums. After 1961, the previous large number of "HuiGu" were basically not properly protected. Therefore, during the period from 1961 to 1985, very few people would make "HuiGu" from the beginning. Through the teacher's teaching and the people's love, it was passed down from hand to mouth. Later, more and more people fell in love with the Zhuang "HuiGu," so the Zhuang "HuiGu" formed a popular trend, and every village had at least one "HuiGu," so that this period was the "HuiGu" in Mashan County. The peak period of "HuiGu" produced by "traditional craftsmanship"

After the promulgation of the Forest Law of the People's Republic of China (September 20, 1984–2019), Since the implementation of the "Forest Law of the People's Republic of China" in 1984, felling trees has become illegal, but due to the impact of economic interests, some people illegally fell trees to sell raw materials, so it is still possible to buy raw materials suitable for Zhuang people in the wood raw material market. HuiGu "processed log material." But after all, the raw materials for this part are still scarce and cannot satisfy people's demand for the Zhuang "HuiGu." Therefore, people began to think about



how to make the Zhuang "HuiGu" without a strong trunk. Later, they borrowed the splicing form of other musical instruments and evolved a kind of wooden board. The birth of the spliced Zhuang "HuiGu" craftsmanship Through the author's research, it is found that it was also during this period that the Zhuang "Huigu" had a change in the persistent craftsmanship that was different from the traditional craftsmanship.

Therefore, in this period, the production of Zhuang "HuiGu" is divided into two types: one is Zhuang "HuiGu" made by traditional craftsmanship, and the other is Zhuang "HuiGu" made by splicing. People also changed their approach to percussion and music during this time period, shifting from the traditional fixed percussion rhythm to a flexible percussion rhythm.

The newly revised Forest Law of the People's Republic of China (2019–present) With the efforts of "Huigu" inheritors and government departments, it finally passed the national review in May 2021 and was listed in the fifth batch of representative national intangible cultural heritage projects. national recognition and protection from disappearing into history. Therefore, in 2018, the newly revised "Forest Law of the People's Republic of China," which came into effect in 2019, was revised and reviewed. After the new law came into effect, the cutting of trees became more stringent, and the trees that met the production requirements of "HuiGu" were basically protected. And from ordinary illegal acts to criminal law violations, there is a huge difference in the starting point of the two, so no one is willing to cut down protected trees after 2019. Therefore, after 2019, there will be very few cheap log materials that were felled many years ago and can still be used in rural areas or lumber mills, which are used to make "HuiGu" by traditional craftsmanship. They are all made of wood splices. At the same time, with the help of market demand, people have gradually developed Zhuang "Huigu" in various formats, various models, and derivatives suitable for various age groups and more in line with market needs.

#### *4.2 The Analysis of HuiGu playing patterns*

There is a difference between the different playing patterns in the various performance scenarios. The following is an analysis of a few drum patterns. The researcher selected the pattern of drums for the Dragon Dance to analyze.

##### *4.2.1 Dragon Dance HuiGu Score Translation (Translation of the based-on Appendix B-1)*

The translations of handwritten HuiGu scores into rhythmic scores are based on data collected by the researcher from field work.

## Dragon Dance HuiGu Score

Score Production: SHI LIN

The musical score is presented in six systems, each with three staves for HuiGu, Cymbal, and Gong. The notation uses 'x' for drum hits and various rhythmic symbols. The score includes time signatures such as 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, and 8/8, and bar numbers 4, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31. The HuiGu part features melodic lines with notes and rests, while the Cymbal and Gong parts provide rhythmic accompaniment with specific patterns of hits and rests.

Figure 4. Dragon Dance HuiGu Score Translation

*translated and produced by ShiLin, 19 August 2022.*

### 4.2.2 Analysis of the mode of playing dragon dance drums

Structure. The whole piece is divided into three sections. Opening of the first section: 1–9 bars; second section: 10–32 bars. End of the third section: 33–36 bars Basic drumbeat and simple analysis



of "HuiGu," no matter which statement was created by our ancestors for the needs of production and life. Yes, every origin legend is related to daily production and life. After more than 1,000 years of development, the Mashan Zhuang "HuiGu" has also continued to evolve in the development of society, from exorcism and exorcism to the current competition performance project, from simple hitting to performing movements and the addition of other musical instruments, so that the Mashan Zhuang "HuiGu" seems to be reborn, and its brilliance has become the most dazzling role in the traditional festivals and major celebrations and competitions in Mashan County. After thousands of years of development, the Zhuang nationality "HuiGu" has a great influence both inside and outside the region. In terms of action choreography, it has developed towards a diversified development of sports, art, bodybuilding, and innovation. Under the attention of the state and the efforts of Mashan County government departments, the development of Mashan Zhuang ("Huigu") has achieved certain achievements, which have injected fresh blood into the development of the economic and cultural fields of Mashan County.

Chinese culture has a long history, is extensive and profound, and has produced brilliant achievements. It is an important component of human civilization, as well as the primary resource and foundation of the country's cultural soft power. The rich and colorful cultural heritage continues the civilizational blood of the Chinese nation and is the spiritual home of the Chinese nation and all mankind. However, since we have not paid enough attention to cultural design for a long time, have an inadequate understanding of cultural soft power, have provided insufficient publicity and promotion of cultural transmission, and have neglected the innovation and transformation of traditional cultural resources, the advantages of excellent cultural traditional resources have not been fully utilized. transform into powerful, real productivity. Over the past 30 years of reform and opening, China's economic development has attracted worldwide attention, but the cultural construction that matches it needs to be strengthened.

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