

## Literacy and Knowledge Transmission of Huaci Yaogu: Educational Strategies and Practices in Henan, China

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the literacy and knowledge transmission of Huaci Yaogu, focusing on educational strategies and practices in Henan, China. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, which entailed conducting interviews and making observations. The study highlights multiple methods teachers' colleges in Henan Province implemented to support this traditional musical art form's research, preservation, and promotion. By integrating Huaci Yaogu into music elective courses and organizing specialized seminars, the curriculum aims to broaden students' understanding and appreciation of regional musical traditions. Additionally, constructing a scientifically sound training curriculum system ensures comprehensive coverage of performance techniques, production technology, traditional technical training, and theoretical courses. The study also emphasizes the importance of extracurricular folk art practice activities, which enhance students' professional quality and foster a proactive learning environment. By participating in these activities, students gain hands-on experience and develop a deeper understanding of Huaci Yaogu, leading to more effective transmission of literacy and knowledge. The research concludes that integrating well-rounded curricula, practical training, and innovative methodologies significantly contributes to the preservation and dissemination of Huaci Yaogu, ensuring future generations appreciate its cultural and historical value.

**Key words:** Huaci Yaogu, Literacy, Knowledge Transmission, Education, Henan

### INTRODUCTION

The Huaci Yaogu, an ancient Chinese narrow-waist drum, exemplifies the harmonious combination of music and ceramics, showcasing the Tang Dynasty's vast cultural tapestry. Despite a lack of detailed information about the Huaci Yaogu, comprehensive studies of related ancient narrow-waist drums provide important insights into its production, melodic characteristics, and cultural significance (Maceda, 1995; Xiaodun & Xiaohui, 2004).

Archaeological findings from the Duandian Kiln in Lushan, China, show that the Huaci Yaogu comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors, with three major types: large, medium, and small. These drums have various glaze thicknesses and ornamental styles. Three major glaze colors and five distinct varieties, such as black porcelain, black porcelain with floral glaze, and tea flower glaze, distinguish the Huaci Yaogu, all adorned with massive porphyritic designs. The material composition and porcelain-making skills of the Tang Dynasty's Lushan Huaci Yaogu are consistent with historical accounts recorded in the Jiegu Lu, confirming its reputation as a Tang Dynasty porcelain masterpiece. Notably, the Lushan Kiln, Xiabaiyu Kiln, and Changsha Kiln are considered Huaci Yaogu's key production facilities during this period (Swope, 2009; Chang et al., 2024).

The Huaci Yaogu's legacy extends beyond its physical shape and musical function to include broader cultural tales of transmission and evolution. The drum's voyage from India to China, its modification and absorption into Chinese musical traditions, and its influence on neighboring cultures highlight the significance of researching its transmission paths. By investigating these paths, this study sheds light on cultural exchange mechanisms and the importance of literacy in sustaining and propagating musical traditions (Li, 2019; Shun & Boonsrianun, 2023).

Henan Province, with its deep historical roots and vibrant cultural traditions, serves as an ideal location for this study. The region's rich musical heritage and active community engagement in folk arts provides fertile ground for exploring how Huaci Yaogu is taught, learned, and appreciated. This research will delve into various educational settings, from formal institutions like schools and universities to informal community practices, to paint a comprehensive picture of Huaci Yaogu's current state and future prospects (Gong et al., 2024; Yang & Welch, 2023).

This study's significance lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of cultural preservation and transmission in the modern world. By documenting and analyzing the educational practices surrounding Huaci Yaogu, this research

aims to contribute to the broader discourse on intangible cultural heritage and its role in contemporary society (Qiu et al., 2024). Furthermore, it seeks to offer practical insights and recommendations for educators, policymakers, and cultural practitioners dedicated to preserving and revitalizing traditional arts (Huo, 2015).

In summary, this research explores the literacy and knowledge transmission of Huaci Yaogu in Henan, China, through an ethnomusicological perspective. By examining the educational strategies and practices used in the region, we aim to shed light on the mechanisms that sustain and propagate this ancient art form, ensuring its ongoing relevance and vibrancy in the cultural landscape and highlighting the enduring influence of historical musical traditions in contemporary cultural contexts.

### Research Question

1. How do the educational strategies and practices implemented in Henan, China, facilitate Huaci Yaogu's literacy and knowledge transmission?
2. What impact do these methods have on preserving and promoting this traditional musical art form?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Knowledge of Drums in China

Drums have been an intrinsic part of Chinese culture since ancient times. Clay was the primary material for the first "Tu drums." Chinese ancestors used drums, renowned for their loud resonance and far-reaching sound, to motivate soldiers in combat. Historical accounts, like the legend of the Yellow Emperor using Kui's skin to create a drum that reverberated for 500 miles, underscore the significance of the drum in ancient warfare (Rom, 2020; Kierman & Fairbank, 1974).

In ancient China, people believed that drums made of crocodile skin had a more powerful sound. The Zhou Dynasty introduced the role of "drum men," who oversaw the production and performance of drums for various purposes, including military and ceremonial ones (Wang & Chonpairot, 2024). The drum for sacrifices, the Ling drum, and the Jin drum for ensembles were popular. The military utilized specific drums, such as the "Fen (Yin) drum," an eight-foot-long drum with a big face, and various road drums and Jin drums, which evolved into various war drums commonly used in the military (McGuire, 2019).

Initially used in sacrificial ceremonies and hunting expeditions, drums were highly esteemed as heavenly objects in the past. During the Zhou Dynasty, these instruments played a crucial role in leading the sounds in the "eight tones" system. Ancient writings indicate that drums preceded other instruments in musical performances. Drums gradually transformed from pottery and earth drums to leather and bronze drums, finally branching into a diverse array of contemporary drums (Liu & Nicolas, 2024).

The history of drums dates back more than 5,000 years. In antiquity, these instruments served not only for musical and rhythmic purposes but also for combating adversaries,

intimidating wild creatures, and functioning as devices for measuring time and signaling alerts (Lam, 1994). As civilization advanced, the utilization of drums extended to encompass national ensembles, theatrical performances, traditional art forms, festivals, labor contests, and other domains. It is quite probable that the earliest drums originated from pottery and household objects, as indicated by the discovery of pottery drums dating back to the Neolithic Age (Xu, 2022). People fashioned pottery drums, also called earth drums, by enveloping clay drum frames with animal hide. Over many centuries, the production of drums continued, and the Tang Dynasty introduced ceramic drums to complement the existing wooden ones (Gong et al., 2021).

### The Knowledge about Waist Shaped Drums in China

The Yao Changgu is a culturally significant musical instrument closely associated with the Yao people's traditions. It is named for the dancers who play and perform with this elongated drum. The beginnings of it are the topic of several theories, each providing a distinct viewpoint on its historical evolution. One account claims that the offspring of Panwang, a legendary progenitor of the Yao ethnic group, constructed the Changgu as a tribute to him. Another hypothesis suggests that the elongated percussion instrument dates back to the Neolithic Era, underscoring its antiquity (Chen & Sensai, 2024). Nevertheless, the prevailing viewpoint posits that the Changgu is a direct descendent of the fine-waist drum, undergoing gradual adaptations and refinements throughout its evolution. This perspective sees the Changgu as an integral component of the broader evolution of slender waist drums, showcasing the ever-changing characteristics of musical traditions (Junyi, 2023). Different locations and ethnic groups recognize the Changgu, a musical instrument, by its numerous names and shapes, highlighting its extensive importance and integration into Yao culture. The diverse range of names, shapes, constructions, and playing techniques highlights the instrument's versatility and cultural significance. Yao Changgu's development of the fine-waist drum exemplifies the instrument's continuing significance and the Yao people's abundant musical heritage, encompassing their history, traditions, and creative essence (Zhang & Li, 2020).

The Zhuang tribe bee drum, used by the Zhuang, Yao, and Maonan ethnicities, got its name from its bee-like shape. It is widely popular in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and plays an important role in cultural events. During harvests and celebrations, communities gather in traditional clothes to sing and dance to the rhythmic beats of the bee drum. With a thousand-year history, the bee drum is an iteration of the narrow waist drum that has seen minor changes in shape and design over time (Wu & Boonsrianun, 2023). These changes represent cultural contacts that occurred between the Central Plains and Lingnan regions during the Tang and Song dynasties. The drum's name and shape, reminiscent of a bee's body,

are similar to the Huaci Yaogu, a narrow waist drum. This likeness emphasizes the bee drum's location within the more prominent family of narrow-waist drums and its importance as a cultural item that connects historical and regional musical traditions (Jian & Nicolas, 2021; Shi & Bhengsri, 2022).

The Huaci Yaogu of Lushan, which originated in the Han Dynasty and thrived in the Tang Dynasty, spans more than 1,400 years. This extraordinary drum in the Palace Museum in Beijing embodies notable artistic accomplishments and occupies a prominent position in Chinese history. The distinguishing characteristic of the Lushan Huaci Yaogu is its distinctive decorative features, which consist of blue, yellow-brown, gray-purple, or milky dots on glazes of black, tea leaf, brown, or gray-white (Xuelai, 2023).

The Lushan Huaci Yaogu is a notable milestone in the chronicles of Chinese ceramics. It represents the earliest instance of high-temperature kiln porcelain with a glaze that changes color in China. The historical significance of this technological and artistic progress emphasizes the remarkable accomplishments of the Tang Dynasty's porcelain industry (Henderson et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020).

The kiln site, situated in Lushan County, Henan Province, covers an area of almost 50,000 square meters. In the 1970s, many Huaci Yaogus were discovered at this old porcelain kiln site, proving that it was where the Lushan Huaci Yaogu was made. This particular drum is distinguished by its black or milky blue dots. The visually fascinating and artistically significant Lushan Huaci Yaogu is adorned with a beautiful glaze that showcases gem-like blue hues and cloud-like patterns. The exceptional aesthetic characteristics of this object have led to its prestigious designation as Lushan Huaci Yaogu, renowned for its exquisite beauty and artistry (Li & Thotham, 2023).

### Research Theory

This study employs ethnomusicology theory to investigate the literacy and knowledge transmission of Huaci Yaogu, a culturally significant musical instrument from Henan, China. Ethnomusicology provides a comprehensive framework for exploring the intertwining of music and cultural practices, emphasizing the social, cultural, and historical contexts of music creation, performance, and transmission. Ethnomusicology allows a detailed analysis of how Huaci Yaogu is taught, learned, and integrated into the community's cultural fabric. This approach highlights the role of music as both an art form and an artistic expression, focusing on the ways in which Huaci Yaogu embodies the heritage and identity of the people in Henan. Through fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation, the study aims to capture the lived experiences of those involved in the transmission of Huaci Yaogu, from master musicians and educators to students and community members. It enriches the academic discourse on ethnomusicology and also offers practical implications for cultural preservation and education policies, ensuring that the legacy of Huaci Yaogu continues to thrive for future generations (Rice, 2010; Fan, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the educational strategies and practices surrounding the transmission of literacy and knowledge related to Huaci Yaogu in Henan, China. Qualitative methods are chosen to provide rich, detailed insights into the cultural and educational contexts influencing the transmission of this traditional folk art form.

### Data Collection

- 1) **Literature Review:** This study's foundation is a comprehensive review of scholarly articles, books, and historical documents related to Huaci Yaogu and broader theories of ethnomusicology. This review helps to understand Huaci Yaogu's historical development, cultural significance, and current educational frameworks.
- 2) **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with key stakeholders involved in preserving and disseminating Huaci Yaogu's knowledge. Participants will include music educators, cultural practitioners, students, and community members from Henan Province. These qualitative interviews will explore their perspectives on educational strategies, challenges faced, and their roles in transmitting Huaci Yaogu literacy.
- 3) **Participant Observation:** Direct observation of educational practices and extracurricular activities related to Huaci Yaogu will be conducted in schools, colleges, and community settings in Henan. This method allows for the observation of how Huaci Yaogu is taught, learned, and practiced in real-world contexts, providing insights into the dynamics of knowledge transmission.

### Data Analysis

- 1) **Thematic Analysis:** Qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and observations will be analyzed thematically. Themes related to educational strategies, cultural preservation, community involvement, and challenges in knowledge transmission will be identified and coded. This analysis will uncover patterns and variations in how Huaci Yaogu literacy is perceived, taught, and learned.
- 2) **Comparative Analysis:** Comparative analysis will be used to contextualize findings within the broader framework of music education and cultural heritage preservation in China. Contrasting practices and known for their folk music education may provide additional insights into effective educational strategies.

## RESULTS

### College Education and Training Support for Huaci Yaogu

Teachers' colleges in Henan Province have implemented multiple methods to encourage the research, preservation,

and promotion of Huaci Yaogu. The objective of these endeavors is to guarantee the preservation and admiration of this conventional musical art form by forthcoming generations.

### *Music elective courses and local music education*

One strategy involves offering music elective courses at universities that integrate regional music education into the public music curriculum. College students specifically benefit from these public music courses, which enhance their auditory and musical aesthetic skills while broadening their knowledge and appreciation of music. By including exceptional local folk music in these courses, instructors help students understand and value regional musical traditions. More specifically, the curriculum incorporates Huaci Yaogu art performances to familiarize students with this distinctive component of cultural heritage (Figure 1).

### *Seminars and multidirectional participation*

Another critical initiative involves organizing workshops specifically dedicated to the local folk music tradition. These seminars attract diverse attendees, including management colleagues, specialists, artists, musicians, government officials in art education, media professionals, and students. The seminars create a participation structure that engages students, especially music specialists, from multiple directions and perspectives. This collaborative environment fosters the sharing of ideas and knowledge, enhancing participants' understanding and appreciation of Huaci Yaogu.

Incorporating national and folk music terminology into these discussions helps students connect this traditional art form to other academic disciplines, enriching their educational experience and deepening their understanding and appreciation of their country's musical culture. These educational initiatives aim to enhance and expand the comprehension and application of Huaci Yaogu, ensuring its ongoing relevance and vitality in contemporary society.



**Figure 1.** College classrooms Huaci Yaogu training  
Source: Zongheng Xiao

### **Constructing a Scientific and Reasonable Training Curriculum System**

Huaci Yaogu's training requires the creation of a scientifically sound and reasonable curriculum structure. This research has resulted in developing a comprehensive curriculum covering all aspects of Huaci Yaogu, including performance techniques, production technology, functional practice, traditional technical training, porcelain skills, and intellectual property protection. The program also includes theoretical courses on professional protection of non-heritage experiences, Huaci Yaogu connotation analysis, and its evolution's historical and artistic significance (Figure 2).

The training plan also contains a curriculum for teaching management and a quality monitoring system based on a cycle of "teaching preparation, teaching information collection, teaching evaluation, teaching summary and reflection." This approach entails examining academic conditions, finalizing lecture content, developing teaching plans, discussing teaching methods, and creating teaching resources like lesson plans and courseware. The ultimate goal is to help students transition smoothly from instruction to product production, commodity development, artistic expression, and social practice.

Universities have used their resources to fund the study and creation of local primary and secondary school music textbooks and teacher training in ethnic music. Throughout the textbook writing process, attempts were made to collect and include superb local folk music with lovely melodies, strong ethnic styles, and brilliant local colors. These projects aim to inspire and influence young people through aesthetic education, preserving and valuing Huaci Yaogu's rich cultural history for future generations.

Integrating a well-rounded curriculum, supported by practical training and innovative methodologies, can substantially contribute to the preservation and spread of Huaci Yaogu. This complete teaching framework improves students' technical skills and creative knowledge and instills a deep awareness of Huaci Yaogu's cultural and historical value. The curriculum prioritizes literacy and knowledge transmission, ensuring the effective transmission and rejuvenation of Huaci Yaogu's rich traditions and craftsmanship for future generations.



**Figure 2.** The invention of the Huaci Yaogu drum  
Source: Zongheng Xiao



**Figure 3.** The students are studying with the teacher to play the Huaci Yaogu drum  
Source: Zongheng Xiao

### Organizing Extracurricular Folk Art Practice Activities to Learn from Advanced Experience

Huaci Yaogu's development is significant in organizing extracurricular national folk art practice activities essential to high school music education. These activities complement classroom teaching, providing a holistic approach to improving students' professional quality. Teaching folk music at the high school level should extend beyond the classroom to effectively spread the nation's folk music culture. Relying solely on the efforts of schools and teachers is insufficient; the key is to harness the subjective initiative of students. Active student participation in folk music's collection, organization, creation, and performance is crucial. Students' enthusiasm for studying and exploring the dissemination of folk music increases when they fully utilize artistic practice opportunities, thereby enhancing the spread of national folk music (Figure 3).

Folk music education has expanded teaching content, adjusted curriculum systems, and updated teaching methods to create music-specific courses. In 2010, Pingdingshan College's Department of Music introduced specialized courses alongside its regular offerings. Including Huaci Yaogu's performance practice as a key chapter encouraged more teachers and students to engage with its development from a professional perspective. This initiative effectively protected and inherited the region's rich folk music and cultural heritage.

By 2016, universities such as the Chinese Academy of Music had introduced elective courses focused on the inheritance and development of national music culture, contributing positively to the promotion of exceptional national culture. This approach is a valuable model for other universities' music departments, demonstrating how integrating local folk traditions into academic programs can preserve and promote cultural heritage.

Students gain hands-on experience and develop a deeper understanding of Huaci Yaogu and other national folk music traditions by organizing and participating in extracurricular folk art practice activities. These activities foster a proactive learning environment where students take ownership of their

cultural education, leading to a more effective transmission of literacy and knowledge. The success of such initiatives indicates the potential for widespread adoption of similar programs, which would enrich the educational landscape and ensure the preservation and promotion of national folk music heritage.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discussion literacy and knowledge transmission of Huaci Yaogu in Henan, China, emphasizes the integration of traditional folk music into modern educational frameworks. The findings reveal the critical role that college education, practical training, and innovative methodologies play in preserving and promoting this cultural heritage.

The methods implemented by teachers' colleges in Henan Province demonstrate a proactive approach to fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of Huaci Yaogu among students. By integrating Huaci Yaogu into music elective courses, these colleges enable students to enhance their auditory and musical aesthetic skills while broadening their knowledge of regional musical traditions. This approach preserves cultural heritage and enriches students' educational experiences, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of their cultural roots. (Hou & Seekhunlio, 2023; Schroeder et al., 2015). Additionally, incorporating Huaci Yaogu art performances into the curriculum allows students to engage practically with this traditional art form. This hands-on experience is crucial for developing a genuine appreciation and understanding of Huaci Yaogu's cultural significance. These courses help ensure that future generations continue to value and preserve Huaci Yaogu by familiarizing students with this unique component of cultural heritage (Ho, 2014).

Organizing specialized seminars dedicated to local folk music traditions is another effective strategy for promoting Huaci Yaogu. These seminars attract diverse participants, including experts, performers, educators, and students, fostering a collaborative environment for sharing ideas and knowledge (Tang, 2021; Xu & Karin, 2024). This multi-perspective approach to learning encourages deeper engagement and understanding among participants. This interdisciplinary approach enhances students' educational experiences and fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage (Gong & Wang, 2023). The seminars provide a platform for students to engage with Huaci Yaogu from various perspectives, promoting a holistic understanding of its cultural and historical significance.

Organizing extracurricular activities focused on national folk art practices is vital for developing students' professional skills comprehensively. These activities complement classroom teaching and provide a holistic approach to enhancing students' abilities and knowledge. Teaching folk music at the high school level should extend beyond the classroom to effectively promote the nation's folk music culture (Tang & Sornyai, 2023). The key to successful extracurricular activities is harnessing students' subjective initiative. Active student participation in folk music's collection, organization, creation, and performance is crucial.

When students fully utilize artistic practice opportunities, their enthusiasm for studying and exploring the dissemination of folk music increases, thereby enhancing the spread of national folk music (Guocheng et al., 2022).

In conclusion, integrating Huaci Yaogu into educational policies and practices in Henan, China, highlights the importance of literacy and knowledge transmission in maintaining cultural heritage. These endeavors ensure that Huaci Yaogu's rich traditions are effectively passed down to future generations by developing a complete curriculum incorporating practical training and creative approaches and promoting a proactive learning environment. The success of these educational practices in Henan serves as a model for other places, highlighting the value of ongoing collaboration between educators, students, and community members. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need to incorporate traditional folk music into modern schooling, providing practical insights toward preserving and renewing traditional arts for future generations.

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