

# Study on the Structuring of Music for Buddhist Folk Funeral Rituals in Bijie

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## ABSTRACT

I think I have made an in-depth study of folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music in Bijie area, which aims to explore the origin, development, evolution of folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music in Bijie area, as well as its position and role in society and culture, and education. This study adopts a variety of research methods such as field survey, literature study, and music analysis. A large amount of musical materials were collected through field surveys and recordings of different folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music in the Bijie area. Relevant historical documents, folklore and oral history materials were also sorted out and analyzed to understand the historical origin and cultural background of funeral ceremony music. The results of the study show that the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music in the Bijie area has a long history and a unique style. These musical compositions usually consist of elements such as Buddhist scriptures, mantras, Buddhist music and folk music, forming a unique musical form. In funeral ceremonies, these musical compositions are used to pay homage to the deceased, transcend the spirits of the dead, and protect the living, etc., and they have both religious ceremonial and social functions (ethics and morals, Buddhist education, and rituals). In addition, the study also found that folk Buddhist funeral ritual music in the Bijie area was influenced by a variety of factors during its evolution, such as regional culture, religious sects, and social change. With the development and change of society, the funeral ceremony music also evolved and innovated, gradually forming unique local characteristics. In general, the music of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals is characterized by its solemnity, solemnity, sadness, and mourning, and adds a unique atmosphere to the funeral rituals through various forms of Buddhist scripture recitation, gatha and music performance, so that people are more able to feel the presentation of cultural phenomena such as memorialization and prayers for the deceased, and expectations and teachings for the living, and so on. It reveals the historical origin, cultural background and evolution process of the music of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral ceremony, and provides theoretical and practical guidance for the protection and inheritance of this unique music culture.

## KEYWORDS

Buddhism; Folk Buddhism; Funeral Music.

## 1. BUDDHISM IN BIJIE COUNTIES AND DISTRICTS

Bijie is located in the southwestern part of Guizhou Province, China, a prefecture-level city in Guizhou Province, is an area with a long history and deep cultural heritage. In Bijie, Buddhist culture has a profound influence, and many Buddhist temples this land, is an important part of the local cultural heritage.

According to historical records, Buddhism was introduced into the Bijie area as early as in the Tang Dynasty, and was then further developed in the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. The Buddhist culture in Bijie has a long history and has left many precious historical relics and cultural heritage. For example, Dafang Temple, Guanyin Temple, Wenshu Temple, etc. These temples are not only

places to visit, but also carriers of culture, demonstrating the long history of Buddhism and rich cultural connotations of BiJie. Buddhist teachings in BiJie promote the virtues of compassion, wisdom, and forbearance, which have positively influenced the ideology and moral character of the local people. Buddhist culture also promotes cultural prosperity and social harmony in the Bijie area. Every year, on important festivals such as Buddha's Birthday and Buddha's Success, Buddhist temples in BiJie hold grand pujas and celebrations, attracting a large number of tourists to participate in the solemn scenes and peaceful and sacred atmosphere.

In recent years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of people studying Buddhism in Bijie, and researchers have gradually revealed the history, culture and influence of Buddhism in Bijie through archaeological excavations, documentary research and field surveys. Many well-preserved ancient Buddhist sites, such as temples, pagodas and stone carvings, can be found in and around the city of BiJie, which bear witness to the flourishing and prosperity of Buddhism in BiJie. The Buddhist culture in the Bijie area has blended local and foreign cultures to form a unique style. In the Buddhist temples in BiJie, you can see many buildings and artworks with local characteristics, which reflect the unique charm of BiJie Buddhist culture.

In general, the results of the study of Buddhism in Bijie show that the Buddhist culture in the Bijie area has rich historical connotations and unique cultural characteristics, and plays a positive role in the development of the local society and cultural inheritance. With the depth of the study, it is believed that the value and significance of Buddhism in Bijie will receive more recognition and attention. It is hoped that the Buddhist culture in Bijie will be better inherited and developed, and make greater contributions to the prosperity of local society and culture.

## **2. BIJIE FOLK BUDDHIST FUNERAL CEREMONY ACTIVITIES AND MUSIC**

Bijie is a prefecture-level city in Guizhou Province, located in southwestern China. In the Bijie area, the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony is an important memorial ceremony with unique cultural characteristics. Through the study of folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie area, we gain an in-depth understanding of the local people's mourning rituals, cultural traditions and social customs.

First, folk Buddhist funeral ceremonies in the Bijie area are usually organized and hosted by families, clans and villages. Before the start of the funeral ceremony, family members would invite a local folk Buddhist gentleman to come and officiate the ceremony to pray for the deceased's supremacy and blessings. In the funeral ceremony, the recitation of Buddhist scriptures and chanting is an essential part to help the deceased get a better afterlife. Secondly, the folk Buddhist funeral rites in the Bijie area also include a series of ceremonies and activities, such as burning incense, offering flowers, and worshipping ancestors. Family members will wear white mourning clothes with a rope woven from straw tied around the waist, a mourning crown made from bamboo strips and paper flowers, and draped in sisal ropes, and carry wine, fruits, and foodstuffs to the deceased's home to pray for and worship the deceased. During the ceremony, there are usually specific musical instruments and songs to express condolences. Among the most common instruments include percussion instruments such as wooden fish, cymbals, gongs and drums, as well as wind instruments such as the erhu, bamboo flute, suona, eqin, stringed instruments and keyboard instruments. The sound of these instruments is clear and melodious, creating a solemn atmosphere and allowing participants to feel a sense of transcendental tranquility. This music plays an important role in funeral ceremonies, both to mourn the deceased and to guide the soul to rest in peace. In addition, the folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie region reflect the local people's reverence and understanding of life, death and reincarnation. They believe that the souls of the deceased will be transcended and redeemed in the afterlife, so they will do their best to pray and transcend for the deceased during the funeral ceremony. The performance of music during the transcendence is usually divided into several parts. One is the opening music, which is used to guide the participants into the atmosphere of the religious ceremony.

Then comes the memorial music, which is usually some sad tunes that are used to express the mourning and remembrance of the deceased. Finally, there is requiem music, which is usually solemn and is used to pray for the soul of the deceased to rest in peace. In addition to the above three, there are also specific songs that are performed during the funeral ceremony. These songs are usually sung by folk Buddhist gentlemen, and the lyrics are mostly blessings and prayers for the deceased. These songs have beautiful and moving melodies that can make the participants feel a sense of peace and tranquility that transcends the earthly world. This mourning and ceremonial tradition has continued in the Bijie region for hundreds of years and has become an important part of the local culture.

Overall, the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony in the Bijie area is a traditional ceremony with deep cultural heritage and ritual significance. Through the study of this ceremony, we can better understand the mourning intention rituals, cultural traditions and social customs in the Bijie area, and provide reference value for the protection and inheritance of the local cultural heritage. In recent years, with the emphasis on folk culture and research, the folk Buddhist funeral ritual music in the Bijie area has also gradually received academic attention. Some scholars have begun to conduct in-depth research on this music, trying to explore its origin, evolution and inheritance. They have gradually revealed the uniqueness and cultural connotation of this kind of music through field research, music analysis and other methods.

### **3. INSTRUMENTS AND PERFORMANCE FORMS IN BIJIE FOLK BUDDHIST FUNERAL RITUAL MUSIC**

In the Bijie region, the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony is an important mourning ceremony in which the musical performance is an integral part. In the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony in the Bijie area, musical instruments play a vital role, they not only add a solemn atmosphere to the ceremony, but also play a role in guiding the hearts of the deceased's family members and praying for blessings and transcendence.

In the folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie area, common musical instruments include: 1. Dharma instruments: Dharma instruments are common musical instruments in Buddhist rituals, including the wooden fish, decrees, Ruyi, Buddha's staff, Dharma bells, Dharma clothes, etc. The wooden fish is a percussion instrument, and the shape of the instrument is similar to that of the wooden fish. Wooden fish is a percussion instrument shaped like a small fish, which is used to beat the beat and guide the folk Buddhist dharma masters to recite scriptures. In addition, Bijie Folk Buddhism also has a saying about why the wooden fish should be struck when reciting the scriptures, they believe that Buddhism has a lot of losses from the process of molding, transmitting and so on, crossing the ocean, resulting in the incomplete scriptures they recite, which fall into the sea and are eaten by the fishes and shrimps.

So in reciting the sutras it was necessary to strike the head of the wooden fish, so that he would spit out what he had eaten and make up the recited sutras. This is why there is the saying: One blow on 100,000 words, several blows on the whole recitation. Decrees, Ruyi, Buddhist staffs, Dharma bells, Dharma clothes, etc. are used to increase the level and atmosphere of the music and make the whole ceremony more solemn. 2. Drums and gongs: In the folk Buddhist funeral ceremonies in the Bijie area, there are often drums and gongs performances. Drums and gongs are heavy percussion instruments that produce a loud sound, which is used to guide the family members of the deceased, friends and relatives to follow the rhythm of the salute and chanting. The three strokes of the gong and the nine revolutions of the drum emphasize the role of gongs and drums in the Dharma activities, and the use of gongs and drums as understood by the Dharma masters. Usually, people just think that the loud sound of gongs and drums can break the dull atmosphere and make the ceremony more vivid and interesting. This is a one-sided interpretation, not the concept of the masters. 3. Wind instruments: Usually, in Dafang County and Qixingguan District, there are wind instruments, such as sheng, flute, suona, etc., performed during the funeral ceremony.

These wind instruments can play a melodious melody, adding a mysterious atmosphere to the ceremony, making it easier for the families of the deceased to enter into the atmosphere of mourning and commemorating the ceremony. In addition, these instruments also have the role of accompanying the singing, in the process of the ceremony, the priests use these instruments to help accompany the singing, not only can increase the mourning atmosphere, but also help the priests to reduce the damage to the voice.<sup>4</sup> Stringed Instruments: In Dafang County, the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music, the use of the erhu, this stringed instrument performances. The erhu is a stringed instrument that can play a mournful, low and deep melody, making it easier for the family members of the deceased and their friends and relatives to feel the solemnity and sanctity of the memorial ceremony.

The instrumental repertoire in the folk Buddhist funeral ceremonies in the Bijie area in general presents the following conclusions: 1. Different instruments play different roles in the funeral ceremonies and have different playing techniques. Drums are the key players among these instruments, and the sounding of the drums signifies what tunes the priests are playing.<sup>2</sup> Instrumental tunes are an important form of music in funeral rituals, and they usually consist of several movements, each with a specific melody or rhythm.<sup>3</sup> In the folk Buddhist funeral rituals of the Bijie area, instrumental tunes are not only a form of music, but also carry a wealth of commemorative meanings and cultural symbols. Studying the meanings and symbols of musical instruments can help us understand more deeply the different regional cultural connotations of funeral rituals. The study of the structure and performance of the music can reveal the inner musical logic and expression of the music of the Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals. At the same time, the playing techniques of the instruments in the music of BiJie folk Buddhist funeral rites can help us better understand the significance of the instruments in the funeral rites of gongs and drums, and the roles of the instruments in the music of BiJie folk Buddhist funeral rites in terms of accompanying the music, singing, and playing.

In general, there are many kinds of musical instruments in the folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie area, and each instrument has its unique role and expression. These instruments together constitute a magnificent musical picture, adding a sacred and solemn atmosphere to the funeral ceremony, making it easier for the family, friends and relatives of the deceased to devote themselves to the condolence ceremony. Through the study of musical instruments in the music of the folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie area, we can better understand the inheritance and development of the local sacrificial culture, and provide useful references for the protection and inheritance of this valuable cultural heritage. Meanwhile, it is hoped that more scholars and musicians will devote themselves to this field of research in the future, so as to jointly explore and pass on the rich connotations and unique charms of the music of the folk Buddhist funeral rituals in the Bijie area.

#### **4. LIMITATIONS, WEAKNESSES, AND FUTURE DIRECTION**

BiJie folk Buddhist funeral ceremony is an important condolence ceremony, in which music plays an important role in the whole ceremony. However, there are some limitations in the study of the music of BiJie folk Buddhist funeral rituals, which include the following aspects: First, the lack of systematic research: most of the current studies on the music of BiJie folk Buddhist funeral rituals are fragmented and piecemeal, and lack of systematization and comprehensiveness. Due to the lack of systematic research, we are unable to fully understand the characteristics, evolutionary process, and influencing factors of folk Buddhist funeral ritual music in Bijie. Secondly, it is difficult to collect information: the inheritance of folk Buddhist funeral ritual music in Bijie is mainly an oral tradition, and a lot of musical information has not been recorded. Due to the difficulty of data collection, it is difficult for researchers to obtain sufficient musical information, which also limits the in-depth study of folk Buddhist funeral ritual music in Bijie. Lack of literature: At present, there is relatively little literature on the music of folk Buddhist funeral rituals in Bijie, and many related research results have not been fully organized and published. Due to the lack of literature, researchers often face the

dilemma of insufficient information when conducting research. Fourthly, the research method is insufficient: the research method for the music of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals is relatively single, mainly focusing on field survey and fieldwork. The lack of diversified research methods makes the researchers suffer from certain limitations when exploring the connotations and characteristics of the music in depth. Fifth, social background changes: with the development and changes in society, the folk Buddhist funeral ceremony music in the Bijie area is also evolving and developing. However, researchers have often neglected the impact of social background changes on the inheritance and evolution of music, leading to limitations in the research results.

The BiJie folk Buddhist funeral ceremony is an important condolence ceremony in which music plays an important role in the whole ceremony. However, there are some weaknesses in the study of music in the BiJie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony, which may affect the in-depth understanding of this cultural tradition. First, there are certain difficulties in collecting and organizing data for the study of music in the Bijie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony. Since this tradition is mostly passed down orally, many musical works have not been recorded or organized into written materials. This has led to difficulties in obtaining and organizing relevant music data, making it difficult for researchers to fully understand and analyze the characteristics and evolution of this traditional music. Secondly, the study of the music of the Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals is currently at an early stage; however, this traditional music involves a number of disciplinary fields, such as religion, musicology, and folklore, which requires the researcher to have interdisciplinary knowledge and abilities. The requirement of knowledge of these disciplines may limit the study of this traditional music to a certain aspect, resulting in a less comprehensive and in-depth study.

To summarize, there are many limitations in the study of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral ritual music, which we overcome and solve in our future work. We will overcome and solve these limitations in our future work. By strengthening data collection, expanding research methods, and analyzing the social background in depth, we will better reveal the characteristics and evolutionary laws of the folk Buddhist funeral music in the Bijie area, and provide more powerful support for the study of this precious musical cultural heritage.

The Bijie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony is an important condolence ceremony, which carries people's mourning for the deceased and their prayers for the afterlife. In this ceremony, music plays an important role, not only as a tool to express emotions, but also as a bridge connecting people, gods and ghosts. The study of music in Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals can not only help us better understand the local condolence culture, but also provide an important reference for the protection and inheritance of this tradition. In the future, I believe that the research in this field should be carried out in the following aspects: firstly, the musical form and playing skills: the music of BiJie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony has unique musical form and playing skills, and the study of these characteristics can help us to better understand the connotation and characteristics of this kind of music.

Through the analysis of musical forms and the study of playing skills, the origin, development and evolution of this music can be revealed. Secondly, the condolence meaning and cultural connotation: the music of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral ceremony is not only a form of artistic expression, but also an important part of the national ritual culture. Studying the cultural connotation of this music can help us better understand the local folklore and cultural traditions. The third is protection and inheritance: with the development of society and cultural changes, the music of BiJie folk Buddhist funeral rituals is facing the challenge of disorganization. Therefore, the unity of this music has to be especially important. Future research can explore how to perpetuate and carry forward this music by recording, organizing and passing it on. The fourth is interdisciplinary research: the music of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral rituals involves many disciplines, such as musicology, religion, folklore, etc. Future research can draw on interdisciplinary research methods to explore the significance and value of this kind of music from different perspectives. The fifth is the study of musical forms and performance skills: to explore the musical forms, performance skills and expression styles of the folk

Buddhist funeral ritual music of BiJie, and to analyze its characteristics and evolutionary laws. The inner structure and expression of the music can be deeply excavated through field investigation, music analysis and other methods.

In general, the future of the research of Bijie folk Buddhist funeral ritual music is full of hope. Through in-depth research and discussion, we can better utilize the multiple research perspectives of BiJie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony Music, dig deeper into its historical origins, cultural connotations and social functions, and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the inheritance and development of traditional music. At the same time, we can also promote cultural protection and inheritance through academic research, promote the combination of tradition and modernity of the music of BiJie Folk Buddhist Funeral Ceremony, and make contributions to the local cultural construction and social development.

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