

# The Role of Qin Zheng in the Development of Guzheng During the Tang Dynasty

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## Abstract

This article aimed to study (1) Is the Qin Zheng the origin of the guzheng?; (2) The history of the Qin Zheng; (3) The role of the Qin Zheng in the development of the guzheng in the Tang Dynasty; and (4) The development of the Qin Zheng. The samples were the history of the guzheng. Ancient documents, preserved to this day, and excavated historical sites serve as the primary sources of research. The tools used to collect the data were the literature books, the Internet information, and the author's ten years of experience in teaching the Guzheng. The research results after analyzing the historical content of Guzheng were as follows:

1. Research results showed that there is no doubt that the Guzheng originated from the Qin nation and was passed down during the Qin Dynasty. It gradually absorbed the unique musical styles of the region, specializing in playing mournful, desolate, and full of longing music.

2. The Qin Zheng played an important role in the court music of the Tang Dynasty and spread to neighboring countries with cultural exchanges. Particularly in Japan, the Qin Zheng has assimilated into the country's national music and now stands as one of the country's national musical instruments.

3. The Guzheng, which originated in the Qin region of Shaanxi, also declined in the same area. However, in the early 20th century, through the efforts of Shaanxi Guzheng performers and experts, the Qin Zheng was re-established, allowing the Guzheng to return to its birthplace and begin to develop and be passed down once again. By learning from past experiences and preserving the traditions of folk music, and by rooting itself in folk music, the Guzheng has been able to flourish and bloom anew.

**Keywords:** Qin Zheng; Development of Gu Zheng; Tang Dynasty

## Introduction

The Guzheng was first recorded in writing in the Qin Dynasty Prime Minister Li Si's "Jian Zhu Ke Shu", It's recorded here is people are banging on a jar made of copper, playing the Guzheng, banging the thighs to beat the rhythm, and then singing together, which is enjoyable and which best represents the music of the Qin people. (Li, 1975). This shows the importance of the Guzheng in the music culture of that time, and it was widely used as a vocal accompaniment in folk music, and then formed a fixed pattern to play a role in the music of the court. The simple musical mode of the Guzheng as harmonic accompaniment can be seen in the admonition that it had been left out in the cold by the court. However, the Guzheng thrived in the nourishment of folk music and eventually became one of the representatives of China's intangible cultural heritage. During the period of the Han Wei and Six Dynasties, the Qin Zheng was vigorously developed and a number of Guzheng playing artists emerged. The appearance and production process of the Guzheng was improved, and the number of strings increased with the aestheticization of music, and the Guzheng returned to the court once again from the folklore. (Jiao, 2002). The Tang Dynasty was the most prosperous period for the development of the Guzheng, and its inclusive and open foreign policy resulted in a rich and diverse musical culture. The number of strings and the material of Guzheng made great progress, and the Guzheng was thus called by various names, such as the Guzheng with silver decoration called silver Zheng, or the mourning Zheng named after the style of music. In the Tang Dynasty, the Guzheng was frequently used in court music and dance, and it was also respected by the literati in the folk world, and there are a large number of poems in the Tang Dynasty that sing the praises of the Guzheng. This also proves that the Guzheng was much loved by the upper class at that time. It was also during this period that the Guzheng gradually went out of the country, integrating into neighboring countries along the Silk Road, and forming a unique local folk music. Japanese Koto music was even directly influenced by the Tang dynasty Guzheng, and the Guzheng brought back from China during the Tang dynasty is still preserved in the Shosoin Treasure House in Japan. (Cheng, 1996).

The development of the Qin Zheng in Shaanxi region has experienced twists and turns, from prosperity to decline after being subjected to factors such as the relocation of the national capital and the change of historical dynasties, and even no one, and then from the revival of the

Shaanxi Guzheng school toward the development and inheritance, all the way to the local music elements, which condenses the essence of the music of the Qin land. Shaanxi Guzheng music is also becoming more and more popular and can be seen in any event. In today's cultural fusion, studying the development of the Qin Zheng helps us to protect traditional Chinese music culture and to learn from and absorb valuable experience.

The main objective of this article is to investigate whether the Qin Zheng can represent the origin of the Guzheng, which is still controversial in today's academic world, and why the Qin Zheng occupies a pivotal proportion in the academic world of the Guzheng, and how the Qin Zheng played a role in the dissemination of Guzheng music along the Maritime Silk Road during the Tang Dynasty, starting from the origin of the Guzheng, and then introducing the meaning of the Qin Zheng, the development of the Guzheng in the Qin land, and how the dissemination of the Qin Zheng has influenced the Guzheng.

The article begins with a discussion of the origins of the Guzheng, moves on to the meaning of Qin, the development of the Guzheng in Qin, how the spread of the Guzheng has influenced the development of the Guzheng, and then to the significance of the spread of music and culture that should be reflected on by contemporary people.

## Research Objectives

1. To Prove That the Guzheng Originated During the Qin Dynasty, flourished in the Tang Dynasty, and Spread to Neighboring Countries Along the Maritime Silk Road.
2. To Study the History of the Guzheng and Tracing Its Origins Is Essential for Better Development in the Future.

## Literature Review

The majority of the experts and scholars in the Qin Zheng-based literature believe that the Qin Zheng is generally referred to as the Guzheng, tracing back two thousand years of cultural history, the Qin Zheng has always been the collective name of this type of musical instruments, which originated from the Qin land and flourished in the Tang Dynasty. (Lu, 1992). From the earliest record of the Qin Zheng, Li Si admonished Qin Shi Huang on the instrument said “the true sound of the Qin” in the true, can be understood as the Qin dynasty in the early days of the Qin nation's music, at the moment of playing the Guzheng, playing the rhythm of singing is the people's favorite as well as the most representative of the Qin culture of the symbol of the music,

and from this can be inferred that the Guzheng is the most representative of the Qin nation of the musical instrument. It was as famous as the singing of Zhao and the dancing of Yan. However, looking through the ancient books, it can be found that at that time there was no other name for the Guzheng in other regions, such as Chao Zheng (for Chaozhou) or Yu Zheng (for Henan), besides the name of Qin Zheng. Therefore, the author believes that the Qin Zheng is a kind of musical instrument gradually improved and formed under the music culture of Qin people, which was handed down to the Qin people and emerged in the Qin Dynasty, and has been continuously improved and become one of the intangible cultural heritages of China in the later times. (Cui, 2010).

However, there are individual experts in the academic world who believe that the Qin Zheng is only a Guzheng that was passed down in the Qin Dynasty, and it does not prove that the origin of the Guzheng is the Qin Dynasty.(Qi, 2020).The geographical area of Guzheng in Qin Dynasty belongs to the local folk music which is now played well in Gansu and Shaanxi, so it was highly respected in Qin Dynasty, and it cannot be generalized that the documentary records are only solitary evidence, and it is inferred by comparing with the Guzheng found in the unearthed artifacts that the Guzheng should have appeared as early as in Qin Dynasty probably In the period of Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Period, the Guzheng appeared in the country of Ancient Yue, and the Guzheng should have been a bamboo instrument in the beginning, and the later stage of the time, with reference to the musical instrument “Se” to make a five-string Guzheng, which is considered to be of the same origin as “Zhu”. (Xiang, 1993).

Guzheng originated in the Qin Dynasty, this statement is still highly recognized in the academic world, in the Qin Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, the capital of the country was established in the Qin ling area, which is the present Shaanxi area, the development of Guzheng in the Tang Dynasty was relatively prosperous, whether it is the Tang Dynasty's political, economic and cultural are the most prosperous dynasties in China since the dynasties, music and culture and the fusion of the integration of various ethnic groups absorbed each other and fused, in all levels have developed to a very high level. In particular, the Guzheng had an important position in the court music in the sitting part of kabuki and the ten-part of music. (Jiao, 2002)

Mutual exchanges between China and Japan began to be frequent in the Sui and Tang dynasties, and during the Tang Dynasty, Japan sent officials to the Tang Dynasty many times to exchange and study, especially the ritual and music system and the art of song and dance, and Chinese music culture was gradually introduced to Japan, and the thirteen-stringed Guzheng

opened up a new world along the Maritime Silk Road of cultural exchange, and it became Japan's unique national musical instrument, the Koto, after fusing with the music culture of Japan. (Zhao, 2018).

The Guzheng has a variety of musical interpretations, which also creates its inclusiveness and high adaptability. under the influence of foreign musical cultures, unique ethnic instruments have been formed, such as the Korean Zheng, the Japanese Zheng, the Vietnamese Zheng and so on, and various local schools have been gradually formed in China, interpreting the musical characteristics of each place, such as the Shandong Zheng school, the Henan Zheng school and so on. The establishment of the Shaanxi Zheng school in the 20th century was inevitable. The historical and cultural background of the Zheng is inseparable from the Qin land, and objectively speaking, the Qin Zheng frequently appeared in the folk or court literature of various dynasties. (Cai, 2019). This also provides a rich cultural soil for the establishment of the Guzheng school in Shaanxi, the formation of a region's music culture needs to be in a stable political life environment, centering on Xi'an in Shaanxi Qin land from the end of Spring and Autumn to the Tang Dynasty there are more than 1140 years in which thirteen dynasties have been experienced, which means that the folk music of the Shaanxi region occupies an important position in China's music history, so the development of the Guzheng has to be based on this as a point of departure, and to keep the fundamentals.

## Research Methodology

This article is guided by the theory of historical anthropology to collect relevant literature for organization and generalization. By analyzing ancient documents to study the development of Qin Zheng music culture in human historical changes, this helps to form a comprehensive and accurate research paper. The thesis is mainly based on the analysis of literature and supported by archaeological materials to explore the connotation of the Qin Zheng. It studies the musical style of the Qin Zheng, mainly discusses the role of the Qin Zheng in the music of the Tang Dynasty, the influence of the Qin Zheng on the guzheng, and explores the importance of the Qin Zheng in the development of the guzheng by comparatively analyzing the influence of modern Qin Zheng music in the guzheng music.

## Research Results

### The Guzheng Originated During the Qin Dynasty, flourished in the Tang Dynasty, and Spread to Neighboring Countries Along the Maritime Silk Road

In the long history of China, the Guzheng has been developing but the Qin Zheng has gradually declined in the change of dynasties. after the founding of New China, the Guzheng music was divided into several genres with the division of the region, but there was no Qin Zheng. in 1957, Mr. Cao Zheng put forward the theory that the Guzheng belonged to the Qin, and then many players and scholars set up the Shaanxi Zheng School with the efforts to play and research the Qin Zheng. Nowadays, the most debated issue in the academic world is still whether the Guzheng originated in Qin, I will argue whether the Qin Zheng began in Qin through the comparative analysis method by arguing the unearthed artifacts and the literature analysis.

In 1979, two 13-stringed musical instruments were excavated in Xianshuiyan, Guixi, Jiangxi Province, which were called “xylophone” in the excavation brief. After the academic professional judgment of this tomb for the Spring and Autumn period. The xylophone is shaped like a boat, with the tail uplifted, and the instrument is detected to be of catalpa wood, with a narrower body, and no code was found; another 13-stringed instrument was excavated with a black lacquer at the bottom, and according to historical records, the lacquered instrument has a sacrificial function.



**Figure 1** Guixi Xianshuiyan Tomb No. 2 Xylophone

Sources: <https://www.zsbeike.com/wap/kepu/10070659.html>

12-stringed instruments were excavated from a tomb of the Warring States period in Wu county town in Jiangsu, and the whole of the instrument was brushed with black lacquer, which was also used for rituals. (Qi, 2020).



**Figure 2** Xylophone in a Warring States Tomb, Wu County, Jiangsu Province

Sources: <https://m.zhangyue.com/readbook/12915825/11.html?p2=104073>

From the excavation of these three instruments for the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC–476 BC) to the Warring States Period (476 BC–221 BC) from the Qin Dynasty (221 BC–207 BC) there is a gap of more than 500 years, geographically there are nearly thousands of kilometers away. Some experts in the academic world believe that these instruments should be the earliest Zheng, thinking that the Zheng was produced in the late Spring and Autumn period or the early Warring States period, which disproves the claim that the Qin Zheng is the source of the Guzheng. The academic community has such a basis is that these three pieces of Guzheng and Tang Dynasty Guzheng similar to the modern Guzheng, so it is Guzheng.



**Figure 3** Modern 21-string Guzheng

Sources: <https://ishare.ifeng.com/c/s/7vsCxpv6uuuy>

But I think that if these three instruments are all Zheng during the Spring and Autumn period, then why is there no trace of Zheng in “*The book of songs*”, the earliest collection of more than 300 poems in China, which was compiled by Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, and his disciples at the end of the Spring and Autumn period, and only records Guqin, Se, and these Zheng-like musical instruments. Confucius was a great thinker and educator in ancient China, and his involvement in the compilation of poems must have been comprehensive and wide-ranging. The contents of “*the Book of Songs*” cover love, marriage, labor, rituals, religion, folk songs from various places, and court music songs, involving politics, music, and social culture. “*The book of songs*” reads, “*Fu Qi Hao He, Ru Qin Gu Se*” The symbol of marital harmony is like playing the

Guqin and the Se in perfect harmony. “*Yao Tiao Shu Nv, Qin Se You Zhi*” Beautiful young girl specializes in playing the Guqin and Se among other things (Zhang, 2012). As we all know, the development of a musical instrument can't be separated from the use and love of human beings, there are Guqin, Se records why no Guzheng? Since it appeared in the tomb as a sacrificial instrument, why is there no written record of it? The second doubt is that these three instruments and the Tang Zheng similar, according to historical records Guzheng in the Qin Dynasty folk circulation to form a certain scale in the palace as a ceremonial music, and later because of just a simple acoustic accompaniment is too boring to be eliminated in the palace music to continue to circulate in the folk music in the constant nourishment of change, The number of strings also changed with the change of dynasties from five strings, seven strings, to twelve strings during the North and South Dynasties and then to thirteen strings, which was popular in the Tang Dynasty, and the melodies were more beautiful (Wei, 2007). There is a thousand years gap between the time, if the thirteen-stringed Guzheng has appeared in the Spring and Autumn period, then why it has not been passed on?

Therefore, I believe that these three instruments can only be said to be similar to the Guzheng. To summarize the above consider the following points: 1. the Guzheng bridge was stolen: three musical instruments unearthed when there is no Guzheng bridge, although the body of the Guzheng has been destroyed by the tomb robbers, but the three ancient tombs of the Guzheng bridge can't all be stolen, the early Tang Dynasty Guzheng production process to reach the use of shells and so on to decorate the surface of the Guzheng, so also basically exclude the Guzheng bridge decorated with more expensive and was stolen; 2. No bridges: if the three instruments themselves don't have a bridge, then they can't be called Guzheng, Guzheng needs a bridge to set up the strings, so that the strings are taut and then played through the vibration of the sound, no matter how many strings of the Guzheng, the bridge must be sequentially arranged to support the strings through the bridge to send out a different pitch, whether it is because the bridge is already decayed or is still buried in the soil, these ideas need to be further studied! These assumptions need further study, and therefore don't constitute sufficient substantial evidence to prove that the three instruments are Guzheng; 3 All three instruments are made of wood, and in the canonical texts it is written: “*Zheng, from bamboo also*”, “*five strings to build the body*”, all of which confirms that in the early period the Guzheng was made of bamboo, and in the later period, with the prosperity of culture, the people's demand for music increased, so the Guzheng was changed to the use of wood which was easier to preserve to make, and the number

of strings was changed, and the body also began to widen and lengthen. The number of strings was changed and the body of the Guzheng was widened and lengthened. At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the literary scholar Ruan Yu wrote in his “Zheng Fu”: “Now, when I look at the instrument, the upper part of the instrument is as high as the sky, the lower part is as flat as the earth, and the middle part of the instrument is as hollow as the hexagrams. String column December, proposed December. When the Guzheng was established, the four elephants were there” Here it is pointed out that the Guzheng already had twelve strings in the Han Dynasty, and the overall body was wider and longer than that of the five-stringed period, and there were twelve yardsticks, comparing with the twelve months of the year and the Guzheng has a pentatonic scale. The Guzheng is referred to as an instrument of benevolence and wisdom in the “Zheng Fu” which is also one of the Japanese names for the Guzheng. The five sounds played: Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zhi and Yu correspond to the five elements: earth, gold, wood, fire and water, and also to the five directions: center, west, east, south and north. From this, we can see that the Guzheng developed rapidly in the Han Dynasty and was very popular. It was not only a musical instrument, but also a representative of cultural and social significance. Then, all this is also with the passage of time in the step-by-step improvement so far, if really in the Spring and Autumn period 13-stringed Zheng has appeared, then the later history of those literati, Zheng music player did in the poem why did not mention the Guzheng of the ancient Yue country, and there is no text can be argued. In this way, I think that the three instruments can be overthrown as Guzheng, and can only say that they are similar to Guzheng and also similar to Guqin.



Figure 4 Guqin

Sources: <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/%E5%8F%A4%E7%90%B4>

The word “Guzheng” first appeared in Qin dynasty literature in the book Li Si (?) –208 B.C.), who wrote “Jian Zhu Ke Shu”, a book in which he recorded people striking pottery, playing Guzheng, and striking bones to sing loudly. “Ji Weng Kou Fou, Tan Zheng Bo Bi, Er Ge Hu Wu Wu, Kuai Er Mu Zhe, Zheng Qin Zhi Sheng Ye” Li Si recorded four sound effects here: “Ji Weng”:

striking a wine vessel made of tiles ;“*Kou Fou*”: striking a pottery vessel ;“*Tan Zheng*”: playing a Guzheng; “*Bo Bi*”: striking an animal's thigh bone (probably a leg bone). The Guzheng was the only plucked instrument in this simple and heroic musical mode. The views that can be obtained in the literature are that the Qin Zheng was already a valued instrument in the state of Qin and could represent the music of the state of Qin; the Qin Zheng had already moved from the folk to the court; and the Qin Zheng performance had already had a fixed pattern. Huan Kuan, the prime minister of the Han Dynasty, wrote in a document recording the political, economic and cultural thoughts of the Western Han Dynasty that in the past, people often used to play Guzheng and strike pottery to cheer up in folk drinking parties. This also proves that the Guzheng was a very popular instrument in folk music during the Qin and Han Dynasties, often accompanying vocal music with percussion. And this form of music performance has gone through two historical stages, Qin Dynasty and Han Dynasty, and has a wide audience. Here the Qin Zheng takes on two meanings, the first being the Guzheng in the broader sense, and the second being the music style in the narrower sense, specifically referring to the Guzheng music that renders the folk music style of the Shaanxi region.

One side of the water and soil nurtures one side of the people, different geographical environment, climate, history and culture, nurturing a different style of music. Geographically, Qin refers to the area of Shaanxi. At the height of the Qin Dynasty, the territory reached the present-day Shaanxi, Gansu, southeastern Ningxia, southwestern Shanxi, west of Henan's Hanguan Valley, Hubei, and northern Sichuan. The territory is huge, and the terrain is even more complex and varied. The Qinling Mountains in the domain is respected as one of the dragon veins of Chinese civilization, belonging to the continuation of the Kunlun Mountain Range, with an altitude of 3771.2 meters, the Qinling Mountain Range links the Guanzhong Basin, the Loess Plateau, the Qilian Mountain Range, and the Hexi Corridor. The territory is also home to two of the largest tributaries of the Yellow River, the Han River and the Wei River. The terrain within the territory is mostly mountainous and plateau, and it is the demarcation line between the north and south of China. South of the Qinling Mountains, the climate is warm and rainy; north of the Qinling Mountains, it is dry and cold, and there is a big difference in temperature between day and night. Therefore, in such a geographical environment and climate, the Qin people's straightforward and bold character was created. The music style is also a mixture of rigidity and flexibility. Bold and straightforward, there are also euphemistic and mournful, seductive.

Secondly, it is recorded in the document “Old Tang Book Music Zhi” that: “Zheng, the sound of Qin is also”, Guzheng is originally the sound of Qin music. In the Three Kingdoms period, Cao Zhi also wrote in his poem “Zeng Ding Yi”: “Qin Zheng sends out the western sound, and Qi Se raises the eastern eulogy”, which means that Qin Zheng plays the music of the northwestern part of the Qin land, and Qi Se accompanies the songs of the eastern part of the country. The Wei Wenhui of the Seven Kingdoms of the Warring States period also wrote in his book “Shan Zai Xing”: “The Qi chants dance in the east, the Qin Zheng plays in the west”, the Qi sings along with the dance in the east, and the Guzheng of the Qin plays the sound of the north-west. In the Tang Dynasty, the poet Cen Sen wrote in his Song of the Qin Zheng: “You don't hear the bitterest sound of the Qin Zheng”, which describes how the music of the Qin Zheng makes people feel the sad and bitter musical emotion, which is heart-warming, and the bleakness and bitterness of the Guzheng causes the listener's resonance. The highest peak of the Tang Dynasty, Li Qiao, wrote in his poem “Yong Zheng”: “Don't listen to the western Zheng, there are traces of sadness in the Zheng”, don't listen to the music of the Qin land, and every note of the Guzheng music has traces of sadness in it. From this, it can be determined that the style of Qin Zheng must be unique, it is suitable to play the sad, mournful music in the style also reflects the sometimes high and sometimes sad music spark.

The Han Dynasty was the second great unified dynasty after the Qin Dynasty. The Han Dynasty, with its capital in Chang'an City (Xi'an), Shaanxi Province, strengthened the centralized rule by absorbing the cultural heritage of the Qin Dynasty, and further developed the economy, culture, and art, which is known as the first golden period in the history of China's development. The Qin Zheng was also well developed, from simple tones to rich melodies; from five strings to twelve or thirteen strings; from bamboo to wood; and in various forms, such as orchestra accompaniment, instrumental ensemble, solo, and singing accompaniment, etc. The Qin Zheng also appeared from the folk to the court. A large number of artists with high artistic and cultural qualities appeared from the folk to the court successively, who loved Zheng and knew how to play Zheng, and the Qin Zheng began to have a more perfect performance function in this period, and returned to the court from the folk, occupying an important performance position in the Han Music House, and the style of Qin Zheng became more distinctive.

During the Qin Dynasty, the capital was located in Xianyang, Shaanxi. By the time of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the capital was moved to Luoyang, Henan. During the Three Kingdoms period, the capital was also established in Chengdu, Sichuan and Nanjing, Jiangsu. In the Sui and

Tang Dynasties, the capital returned once again to Xi'an, Shaanxi. As the capital of a nation serves as the core of politics and culture, musical culture is naturally influenced by these shifts. During the process of migration, cultural exchanges led to the blending of musical traditions, with different musical styles influencing one another. The simple accompaniment style of the guzheng during the Qin Dynasty continuously evolved and upgraded over time.

Although there is an 800-year span between the Qin and Tang Dynasties, no matter how the capital migrated, the musical essence ingrained in the blood and genes of the people of the Qin region never faded. The guzheng once again returned to the Qin region during the Tang Dynasty, where it flourished and developed. It even spread beyond China's borders, reaching countries such as Japan and Korea through the development of the Maritime Silk Road.

The prosperity of the Qin Zheng was not easy, but was formed after a hundred years of baptism of traditional Chinese culture and the precipitation of continuous exchange and mingling with foreign music. During this period, the musical expression and artistic effect of the Qin Zheng were developed unprecedentedly, and a large number of Zheng artists emerged, the Qin Zheng went out of China as a representative of the country, and became a symbol of the culture of China, which is unprecedented. In the Tang Dynasty, the elegant music followed the ritual music of the Sui Dynasty, which was the music used by the court for rituals or congratulations, in which it was recorded that the elegant music mostly used wind instruments, of which there were four kinds of plucked instruments, the five-stringed or seven-stringed Guqin, the twenty-seven-stringed Se, the twelve-stringed Zhu, and the thirteen-stringed Guzheng. In the “*Sui book – music Zhi*” wrote: “*four said Zheng, thirteen strings, the so-called Qin sound, the author of the Meng Tian also*”, (Xu, 2016). Where there is a double meaning, first of all, the Sui dynasty elegant music with the Guzheng to play out the musical style of the Qin nation, or with the most representative of the Qin dynasty, the Guzheng to play elegant music. the Tang court music and dance developed into ten parts of music after following the elegant music of the Sui Dynasty, in which the Guzheng occupies an important position.

During the Tang Dynasty, a specialized institution for court music and ritual training was established, dedicated to the study of music. Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, who had a deep passion for music, was well-versed in musical theory, enjoyed composing, and even personally participated in music teaching and training.

Within the administrative structure of the Tang Dynasty, an important institution called the Taichang Temple was established. It was responsible for managing state rituals, music,

sacrifices, astronomy, and education. One of its subordinate organizations was the Taiyue office, which inherited the traditions of previous dynasties' court music management systems. Its predecessor was the Music Bureau of the Han Dynasty. The Taiyue Office was primarily responsible for: 1) Managing and performing court ceremonial music. 2) Preserving and organizing ancient musical documents. 3) Training musicians and establishing musical rules and ritual standards.

During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, in 712, the Liyuan Troupe was established. The emperor personally selected hundreds of palace women to train in music, dance, and drama. Among them, outstanding instrumental performers were given the title "Choutan Artists". Since they were trained under the emperor's direct supervision, these musicians held extremely high status. The Liyuan Troupe, though the last music institution established during the Tang Dynasty, represented the pinnacle of Tang court music. In its later years, the Liyuan became the center of court entertainment culture. If the imperial court placed such emphasis on music, local regions naturally followed suit. In many prefectures, provinces, and counties, music institutions were established to manage performances and training, specifically providing services for local rituals and entertainment activities.

Zheng performers were professional musicians. Among them, palace performers performed in the imperial court, while household performers entertained in private residences. In teahouses and other public entertainment venues, there were also folk performers. These individuals typically underwent professional training and were highly skilled, capable of playing pieces of varying difficulty. This reflects the strong market demand at the time, which led to the emergence of a large number of professional artists. However, the social status of Zheng performers was generally low. They were often composed of dismissed officials' family members, convicted slaves, or commoners. A few exceptional Zheng performers, renowned for their extraordinary skills, gained the appreciation of nobles and literati. Zheng performers were not only disseminators of music but also of culture. Through their performances of Zheng pieces, they conveyed emotions and ideas, enriching the cultural lives of ancient people. This is reflected in the poems of the famous Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi, who wrote: "Qin Xiao Zheng Di Di Xiang Chan, Ji Jue Tan Chui Sheng Li Yi" The Qing is an ancient percussion instrument with a crisp and clear sound; the Xiao is a wind instrument with a melodious tone; the Zheng is a plucked string instrument with a bright and resonant sound; and the Di is a flute with a clear and pleasant timbre. These instruments alternate and harmonize with each other, creating a continuous and

elegant flow of music through various playing techniques. This line of poetry showcases the richness and splendor of the instruments used in Tang Dynasty ceremonial music. In Wu Rong's poem "Li Zhou Plays the Zheng", the scene depicts how the Zheng performer Li Zhou, with her exceptional playing skills, left an unforgettable impression on the emperor. The line "Ji Du Cheng En Meng Ji Zhao" illustrates that Li Zhou was summoned multiple times by the emperor due to her outstanding musical talent. "Yi Zi Yan Hang Xie Yu Wang" As Li Zhou played the Zheng, her fingers resembled the elegant and synchronized flight of geese, drawing the emperor's gaze. "Man Zuo Hao Feng Sheng Fu Fu" Her performance was as soothing and delightful as a gentle wind, pleasing everyone present. "Tian Yan Kai, Sheng Xin Yue" The emperor was deeply impressed and satisfied with Li Zhou, further highlighting her extraordinary skill.

This poem also reflects the high regard for musical art among the imperial nobility during the Tang Dynasty. Performers with exceptional talent could earn the emperor's admiration. It underscores that only in a prosperous and peaceful era could music and cultural arts reach their zenith, showcasing the flourishing state of the nation.



**Figure 5** Tang Dynasty Zhou Wenju Musical Instrument Ensemble

Sources: <https://yihua.art/zhouwenju-he-le-tu-juan.html>

A large number of Guzheng artists have also emerged in the folk, the prosperity of the instrument can't be separated from the spread of human beings, the skilled Guzheng player is to promote the spread of Guzheng music, which also attracted the literati to sing the praises of the Guzheng, in the famous Chinese poets Bai Juyi, Li Bai and other poems there are a large number of Guzheng related works have been handed down to this day, there are poems describing the

music of the Guzheng, and there are also poems describing the shape of the Guzheng. This unprecedented event was just like the famous poet Bai Juyi's poem in Tang Dynasty: "*Running in a car to see peonies, walking on a horse to listen to the Qin Zheng*". People would drive far away from home to see peonies, and also ride on horseback to listen to the music of Qin Zither.(Chen, 2012).The Guzheng also went abroad as a representative of the nation and became a cultural symbol of China. After the Tang Zheng was integrated into Japanese national music, it gradually became Japan's "Koto", first used in Japanese Ya music, then in the Heian period for horse-racing music, and then moving from the court to the temples and folklore, gradually evolving into the present Ikuta-ryu and Yamada-ryu. (Cheng, 1996). There were officials in charge of musical exchanges in the successive exchange and study missions sent by Japan, in which there were four accounts of the transmission of the Guzheng to Japan. The first is that Fujiwara Sadatoshi (807–867), after learning the pipa in the Tang Dynasty, married Liu Niang, who played the pipa and the Guzheng, and brought the Guzheng and the musical scores with him back to Japan; The second theory is that Emperor Tang Xizong of the Tang Dynasty sent an orchestra led by a Guzheng master to Japan for an exchange, and that Emperor Akihito (833–850) had the Japanese female musician of the time, Ishikawa Seko, study the exchange, and that Emperor Akihito studied the Guzheng afterward; The third theory is that Emperor Saga (809–823), who loved Tang culture, was proficient in the Guzheng and flute, and taught his son the Guzheng, and there are records in Japanese literature that the origin of the Tang dynasty Guzheng in Japan must have come from Emperor Saga, but there is no record of how he learned the Tang zither in the literature. The fourth theory is that Sun Bin, a Guzheng artist in the Tang Dynasty, took the sheet music and Guzheng to Japan, and this theory is also documented in Japanese literature. All four of these claims are yet to be confirmed, and this is a point of research that I will develop in my later doctoral dissertation. However, through these four accounts, we can get that the spread of Guzheng music in the Tang Dynasty was not facilitated by a certain person or event, but that the spread of music must have been a long-term process, with a long history of successive generations. The restored 13-string Guzheng of the Tang dynasty, preserved in the Shokurain Temple, is used in the present-day Ya music in Japan.



**Figure 6** Japanese Ya music Koto

Sources: <https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404439996286238845>

From the Song Dynasty onwards, with the relocation of the national capital, the development of the Qin Zheng gradually went into decline, and with the rise of local opera and rap music, and the comprehensive development of songs, dances, singing, and performances, the accompaniment of the Qin Zheng was gradually replaced by stringed instruments, and the Qin Zheng in Shaanxi gradually went into decline (Zhai, 2015).

### **The History of The Guzheng and Tracing Its Origins Is Essential for Better Development in The Future**

In recent times, the Qin Zheng has not appeared in the canonical records of musical instruments, only about the records of Zheng schools in Henan, Shandong, etc. In addition to the late discovery of Zheng music in the Yulin area, no one in Chang'an knows or plays the Qin Zheng, and the audience is few and far between, almost extinct. The formation of a school has innate components and late artificial creation, but are inseparable from people, the formation of art schools is in a certain historical stage, some artists in the thought, artistic ideas, creative methods, music style are gradually similar to an art group, their aesthetic ideas are similar, thus gradually forming a class of styles represent a historical stage or a regional style characteristics (Cui, 2010).

In 1956, after the establishment of the Zheng program in Xi'an Conservatory of Music, the only higher education institution of music in Northwest China, experts and scholars proposed the revival of the Qin Zheng and the establishment of the Shaanxi School. By studying the history of the Zheng, learning from the canonical books and summarizing them, the experts proposed that the Qin Zheng originated from the land of Qin, and that the Qin Zheng should be returned to the land of Qin. Since then, the Chinese Zheng music world has been divided into nine major artistic schools and all of them represent different styles and types according to the regional division, which are: Shaanxi Zheng, Henan Zheng, Shandong Zheng, Zhejiang Zheng, Chaozhou Zheng,

Fujian Zheng, Kejia Zheng, Neimenggu Zheng, and Jiaye Zheng. Other Zheng schools are social music schools formed by Zheng players or enthusiasts, but Shaanxi Zheng school is the first and only Zheng school established by the academic experts of professional music colleges, which has embarked on the road of scientific development in terms of music composition, theoretical knowledge, and inheritance and teaching. At the beginning of the establishment of the school, it belonged to the stage of groping, mainly taking the imitation of singing as the main inspiration for composing music, taking the folk ballads and opera music as the base, and borrowing the characteristics of folk music to show the musical style of the Zheng music of Qin Di. The Shaanxi National Orchestral Music Association has recorded more than 130 traditional Zheng tunes and modern Zheng tunes at the beginning of the 21st century.

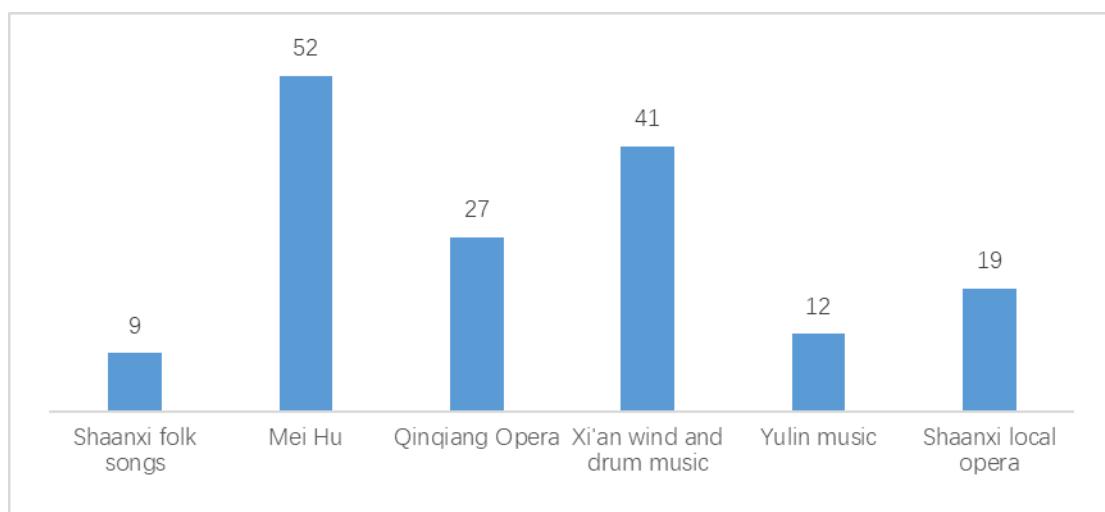
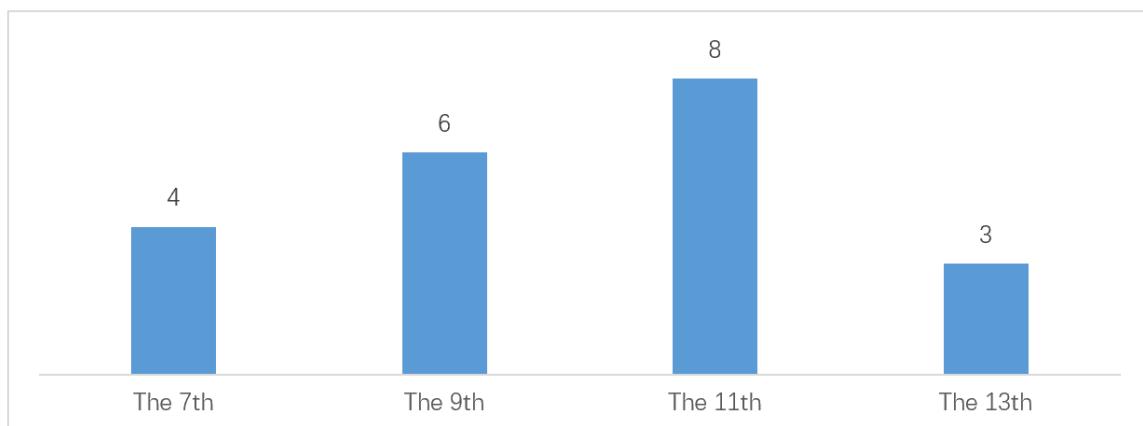


Chart 1. Percentage of traditional Zheng music taken from Shaanxi regional music.

The chart shows that there are enough repertoires for both the traditional Zheng music adapted from traditional folk music and the modern Zheng music composed with the western compositional techniques and choosing the Shaanxi folk music style as the main melodic material. This makes the Zheng music of Shaanxi have more forms of expression, such as solo, ensemble, Zheng and piano, Zheng and symphony, etc., which greatly enhances the musical expressiveness of the Zheng music of Shaanxi (Li, 2004). In 2024 “Dunhuang Star” Youth Zheng Art Exhibition, there were 2 Shaanxi modern Zheng pieces; in 2024 “National Rhythm Cup” Ethnic Instrument Art Exhibition, there were 3 Shaanxi pieces designated; in 2024 China Music (Ethnic Instrument) Exhibition, there were 7 Shaanxi Zheng pieces designated; Shaanxi traditional music, as one of the nine major Zheng genres, has played steadily on the selections of professional events, which is

unanimously affirmed by the experts. At the Golden Bell Award, a professional competition recognized by the Chinese government held every two years, the modern compositional repertoire of Shaanxi is more popular among Zheng players, and the participants choose to interpret Shaanxi Zheng music with a high frequency, which reflects the vigorous vitality and infectious musical style of Shaanxi Zheng as a latecomer, and is valued by the music world. In the 13th China Music Golden Bell Award Zheng Competition, 3 pieces of Shaanxi repertoire were selected; in the 11th Music Golden Bell Award finalists, 10 people were selected, among which 8 people chose modern Shaanxi repertoire. In the 9th Music Golden Bell Award finalists, 6 out of 11 finalists chose Shaanxi modern repertoire. In the closing ceremony concert of the 7th Chinese Music Golden Bell Award, there were 4 pieces of Shaanxi Zheng. This is the result of the unremitting efforts of Shaanxi Zheng people.



**Chart 2.** Percentage of Qinzheng-style pieces in the four Guzheng Professional Competitions held.

Shaanxi modern creative music can be recognized by everyone, can't be separated from the local music elements of the Qin land, hot ears and sour heart is synonymous with listening to Shaanxi Zheng music, there are still echoes in the ears, but the heart has begun to sour, hooking people's tears, wanting to pour out their emotions with others. The composer brings the influence of Qin music on the Qin Zheng to the composition and performance style of the piece. Take the concerto for Zheng and piano "Yun Shang Su." as an example, the author wants to express the emotion of the love story between Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Concubine Yang Guifei. The cultural background of the piece is the "Song of Long Hatred" by Bai Juyi, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, and he chooses the poem to name the piece. In the musical style of the piece, he chooses the Qinqiang material which is unique to Shaanxi Province, which is impassioned and bold, and he uses the unique sound effect of the Qin Zheng to alternate between joyful and bitter

sounds, which is contrasted with the piano, so that there is sweetness and harmony in the past under the collision of the Chinese and Western music, and there are also partings of life and death that have to be faced. The music is a sweet blend of memories of the past and the parting of life and death that has to be faced. Happy sounds: Happiness sounds in the Qinqiang, with scales of 5,6,1,2,3, This type of scale has stability in the music, with notes progressing up and down in a smooth melody. (Chao, 2016). Bitter tone: a bitter, or saddening sound. Bitter tone is the biggest feature in Shaanxi local opera music, the bitter tone scale is 4 with slightly ascending 4,7 with slightly descending 7, common scale 5, descending 7,1,2, ascending 4,5. the most unique in Shaanxi Zheng music is the sound effect between 4 and ascending 4 on the basis of 3 through the left hand technique by constantly expanding around 4 and 7 on the bitter tone, and the sound effect of 7 and descending 7 through the left hand technique on the basis of 6 as well. The same is true for the left hand technique on 6, which produces the 7 and the descending 7 sound effects. This in imitation of the sound of sobbing when crying, in the tragic aesthetic effect, the music dramatic conflict and tragic artistic expression, with profound artistic infectivity to make the performer and the listener to produce emotional resonance and spiritual shock, in order to feel the charm of music. In Google Scholar, you can find 6,720 papers related to Yunshang Su. In China Knowledge Network Academic Forum, there are 25 dissertations and 55 journal reports on the research of Yunshang Su. All these data confirm that the Shaanxi music is the most popular music in China. All these data confirm that Shaanxi Zheng music is highly recognized by experts, scholars, Zheng players and enthusiasts. The success of Zheng music in Shaanxi has made many composers pay attention to other local folk music and broaden their compositional materials, and a number of successful Zheng music works have emerged, such as the Xinjiang music genre, the Miao and Dong music genres, etc. This kind of works has preserved the tunes of the Chinese folk music, utilized the characteristic styles of the local music, and pushed forward the development of the Zheng music with the western composing means in a continuous and high-quality development.

## Conclusion

This dissertation starts from the study of ancient literature, combined with unearthed artifacts, with empirical evidence and previous summary of the study, concluded that the birth of musical instruments will leave traces in the historical records, music culture is the spiritual product of the local people's labor and life, people express their emotions and create civilization through

music, and the spiritual needs are also improving while meeting the material life, and the production and change of musical instruments satisfy the music lyricism of different eras. The Qin Zheng is a musical instrument that can express the music and culture of the Qin people, and it is the source of the Guzheng. In the early stage of development, the music style was rough, and in the later stage, it was constantly improved and fused, and the Guzheng entered into the most prosperous stage of development in the Tang Dynasty, and it was played in a wide range of places, and there were many different modes of performances, such as solo, ensemble, and accompaniment of songs and dances, etc. After the introduction of the Tang Guzheng to Japan along the Maritime Silk Road, it has been continuously developed and integrated, and the shadow of the Tang Guzheng can be found in the traditional music of Japan nowadays. This dissertation starts from the study of ancient literature, combined with unearthed artifacts, with empirical evidence and previous summary of the study, concluded that the birth of musical instruments will leave traces in the historical records, music culture is the spiritual product of the local people's labor and life, people express their emotions and create civilization through music, and the spiritual needs are also improving while meeting the material life, and the production and change of musical instruments satisfy the music lyricism of different eras. The Qin Zheng is a musical instrument that can express the music and culture of the Qin people, and it is the source of the Guzheng. In the early stage of development, the music style was rough, and in the later stage, it was constantly improved and fused, and the Guzheng entered into the most prosperous stage of development in the Tang Dynasty, and it was played in a wide range of places, and there were many different modes of performances, such as solo, ensemble, and accompaniment of songs and dances, etc. After the introduction of the Tang Guzheng to Japan along the Maritime Silk Road, it has been continuously developed and integrated, and the shadow of the Tang Guzheng can be found in the traditional music of Japan nowadays.

## Suggestions

This dissertation starts from the study of ancient literature, combined with unearthed artifacts, with empirical evidence and previous summary of the study, concluded that the birth of musical instruments will leave traces in the historical records, music culture is the spiritual product of the local people's labor and life, people express their emotions and create civilization through music, and the spiritual needs are also improving while meeting the material life, and the production and change of musical instruments satisfy the music lyricism of different eras. The Qin

Zheng is a musical instrument that can express the music and culture of the Qin people, and it is the source of the Guzheng. In the early stage of development, the music style was rough, and in the later stage, it was constantly improved and fused, and the Guzheng entered into the most prosperous stage of development in the Tang Dynasty, and it was played in a wide range of places, and there were many different modes of performances, such as solo, ensemble, and accompaniment of songs and dances, etc. After the introduction of the Tang Guzheng to Japan along the Maritime Silk Road, it has been continuously developed and integrated, and the shadow of the Tang Guzheng can be found in the traditional music of Japan nowadays.

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