

Historical Study of the Development of the Chinese Guqin

Jiejing Zhao¹, Yan Li²

¹ CITI University, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia

² Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia

Abstract: As one of the oldest plucked instruments in the world, the Chinese guqin carries rich historical and cultural connotations. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the development history of the guqin, analyze its position in Chinese traditional culture, as well as the artistic characteristics and aesthetic ideas of guqin music. Firstly, this paper combs through the development history of guqin from its origin to modern times in detail, including the early development, the characteristics and achievements of each period such as Spring and Autumn and Warring States, Qin and Han, Wei, Jin and North and South Dynasties, Sui, Tang and Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing. Secondly, it analyzes the style of guqin music, playing techniques and musical scores, and expounds the close connection between guqin music and the arts of poetry, painting, calligraphy and so on. It further elaborates on the profound aesthetic ideas embedded in guqin music, including mood, flavor and connotation. In addition, the paper also discusses the spread and influence of guqin culture, its influence at home and abroad, and the status and role of guqin in modern society. Through the study of the development history of the guqin, we can better understand the profound heritage of guqin culture and its important position in Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, for the modern society, the aesthetic thought and artistic value contained in guqin music still have important revelation significance.

Keywords: Guqin; Development History; Traditional Culture; Music Art; Aesthetic Thought.

1. Introduction

The guqin, as a treasure of Chinese traditional music culture, has a long history and rich connotation. It is not only a musical instrument, but also a symbol of traditional Chinese culture, carrying the spiritual pursuit and aesthetic taste of the Chinese nation. With its unique artistic charm and profound cultural heritage, guqin music has attracted the attention of countless musicians and scholars. However, with the rapid development of modern society, guqin music has been gradually marginalized and is facing a crisis of inheritance. In this context, it is of great practical significance to study the history of the development of guqin and excavate its cultural value for the inheritance and promotion of Chinese excellent traditional culture.

2. Development History of the Guqin

2.1. Origin and Early Development

The history of the guqin, as one of the traditional Chinese musical instruments, can be traced back to the ancient times. According to archaeological discoveries, the earliest zither-type instruments appeared in the Neolithic Age, while the origin of the guqin in literature is usually considered to be related to ancient myths and legends. Traditionally, the guqin is believed to have been created by the Fu Xi Clan, and later improved and perfected by ancient holy kings such as Shen Nong and Huang Di. During the Xia and Shang Dynasties, the guqin began to gradually become an important court instrument. During the Western Zhou period, the musical art of the guqin was further developed, and specialized educational institutions appeared to teach the art of the qin. There are many records about the qin in the Book of Songs, reflecting the living and poetic character of guqin music at that time. By the time of the Eastern Zhou period, especially the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the

musical art of the guqin enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. During this period, the rise of Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism and other schools of thought made the guqin not only a musical instrument, but also a symbol of philosophy and morality. The qin, chess, calligraphy and painting became essential skills for the literati to cultivate themselves [1]. During the Warring States period, the performance techniques and music theory of the guqin were also greatly enriched. Famous qin masters, such as the story of Boya and Ziqi, have been passed down through the ages, embodying the profound meaning of guqin music and the virtuosity of the playing art. At this time, the sheet music of the guqin also began to appear, although the early sheet music was not completely preserved.

2.2. The Guqin in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods

The Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period is an important stage in the development of the guqin in China. The guqin of this period has rich connotations not only in music, but also in culture, philosophy and art [2].

First of all, the guqin in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods had obvious development in music. According to historical records, there were many kinds of zither music in this period with different styles. For example, famous guqin tunes such as "High Mountains and Flowing Water" and "Fisherman and Woodcutter's Questions and Answers" were produced in this period. These qin tunes not only have high artistic value in music, but also have strong expressive power in expressing thoughts and emotions. Secondly, the guqin of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods was also of great significance in terms of culture and philosophy. During this period, Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism and other schools of thought flourished, and the guqin, as a musical instrument, was closely related to these ideas. For example, Confucianism's "The Way of the Mean" emphasizes harmony and balance, which coincides

with the inner harmony pursued by guqin music; Taoism's "Do Nothing, Rule by Doing Nothing" coincides with the naturalness and randomness pursued by guqin music. Therefore, the guqin in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods was not only a manifestation of music, but also a reflection of philosophical thinking. In addition, the art of guqin in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods also prospered greatly. During this period, many famous qin masters and qin scores appeared. For example, Boya, Ziqi and Shikuang were all famous qin masters in this period. Their playing skills and musical creations had a profound influence on the development of the guqin in later generations. At the same time, the zither scores of this period also provided rich materials for the guqin music of later generations [3].

2.3. The Guqin of the Qin-Han Period

The guqin of Qin-Han period is an important stage in the development history of Chinese guqin. In this period, the guqin not only served as a musical instrument, but also became a symbol of culture, thought and art.

First of all, during the Qin and Han Dynasties, the production technology of the guqin was greatly developed. According to historical records, after Qin Shi Huang unified the six kingdoms, he ordered a large number of guqins to be made for use in the court. These guqins were made with very fine craftsmanship, and the body of the qin was more beautifully shaped. At the same time, the production technology of guqin in the Han Dynasty also improved greatly, and the famous guqin in the Han Dynasty include "Zhang Zhi" and "Wang Xizhi", etc. These guqins are still celebrated by people today [4]. Secondly, during the Qin and Han Dynasties, the music theory of the guqin was also enriched and developed. During the Han Dynasty, there appeared such music literature as "Han Shu - Yi Wen Zhi", which systematically organized and elaborated the music theory of guqin. Meanwhile, some famous qin masters appeared in the Han Dynasty, such as Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong, who were highly skilled in qin and made great contributions to the development of guqin music. In addition, the guqin of the Qin and Han dynasties was also closely related to the political and cultural background of the time. After the burning of books and burying of scholars by Emperor Qin Shi Huang, many intellectuals were displaced, and they used the guqin to express their worries about the country and the people. During the Han Dynasty, Confucianism became orthodox, and guqin music was also closely connected with Confucian culture, becoming an important way for literati to cultivate their bodies and minds [5].

2.4. The Guqin in the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties Periods

The development of guqin during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties is an important stage in the history of Chinese guqin art. During this period, the guqin was not only used as a cultivation tool for the literati, but also rose to a philosophical and artistic height.

During the period of Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, with frequent wars and social turmoil, many literati and scholars sought spiritual solace, and the guqin became their first choice. The guqin music of this period mostly reflects the grief and sorrow of the literati and their yearning for a peaceful life. Famous zither music, such as "Guangling San" and "Pingsha Falling Geese", were created during this period. At the same time, the guqin playing skills of the Wei, Jin, and

North and South Dynasties period were also greatly developed. The zither players in this period, through practice and exploration, innovated many performance techniques, such as left-hand vibrato and right-hand dialing, which made the expression of guqin music richer [6]. During this period, the guqin also became closely associated with Buddhism, Taoism and other religious cultures. Many zither tunes incorporated religious elements, such as "High Mountains and Flowing Water" and "Fisherman and Woodcutter's Questions and Answers", etc. These zither tunes contained deep religious philosophical thoughts while expressing the beauty of nature. In addition, the art of the guqin during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties was also spread to Korea, Japan, and other countries through cultural exchanges, and had a profound impact on later generations. The art of guqin in this period reached a new height, both in terms of musical composition, performance skills, and cultural connotation and international influence [7].

2.5. The Guqin of the Sui, Tang and Song Dynasties

First of all, the guqin music compositions of the Sui-Tang-Song period were rich and varied. The number of zither compositions increased dramatically, and a large number of masterpieces appeared, such as "High Mountains and Flowing Water", "Question and Answer of Fishermen and Woodcutters", "Ping Sha Fu Yan" and so on. These zither compositions are more perfect in musical form, with beautiful melody, far-reaching meaning, and richer expression methods, which have high artistic value [8]. Secondly, playing skills were greatly improved during this period. The zither players of the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties not only made new breakthroughs in fingering and stringing, but also explored the timbre, volume and range of the zither, making the guqin playing skills more exquisite. In addition, the education and dissemination of the guqin in the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties also saw unprecedented development. Many famous qin masters, such as Yan Zhenqing, Han Yu, and Liu Zongyuan, made important contributions to guqin education. At the same time, court music of this period also adopted the guqin in large numbers, making the guqin's status in the field of music performance increasingly high. Finally, the guqin culture of the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties had a profound influence. The ideas of qin science in this period had an important influence on later generations, such as Han Yu's Preface to the Qin Exercises and Liu Zongyuan's Sermons on the Qin, all of which are important documents of qin science. Meanwhile, the art of guqin in this period also influenced other art forms, such as poetry and painting, making guqin an important part of Chinese culture [9].

2.6. The Guqin in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties

During the Yuan Dynasty, many famous zither artists emerged, such as Yan Zhenqing and Zhao Mengfu, whose zither skills were superb and had a profound influence on later generations. The Yuan Dynasty also saw the emergence of a number of important zither scores, such as the Zhengzhuan of Qin Scores and the Complete Book of Qin Scores, etc. The compilation and circulation of these zither scores laid the foundation for the inheritance and development of the art of the guqin. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the art of guqin was more widely spread and developed. Many members of the royal family and literati loved the guqin, and

they made important achievements in the creation, performance and research of qin music. During this period, the styles of qin music became more diversified and rich, and the composition of qin music reached a new height. Many famous zither pieces such as "Guangling San" and "Pingsha Lying Geese" were created in this period [10]. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, guqin education also began to rise. Many qin societies and qin halls were established, providing a platform for the transmission and promotion of qin music. At the same time, there was a large number of works on qin studies, such as "The Heart of Qin Studies" and "Qin Studies in the Right Order", which played an important role in promoting the development of the art of the guqin.

2.7. The Revival of the Guqin in Modern Times

Since the Ming Dynasty, the guqin has gradually fallen into a trough. However, in modern times, the guqin experienced an important revival. The rise of the New Culture Movement caused many intellectuals to pay attention to traditional culture, and the guqin was also emphasized at this time. Many famous guqin performers emerged, such as Qi Baishi and Chen Changlin, who devoted themselves to the inheritance and development of guqin music [11].

During this period, guqin music began to absorb some new elements, such as the harmonies and compositions of western music, which made guqin music richer and more diverse. At the same time, the guqin also began to go to the world stage, attracting the attention of many international music lovers. Famous guqin performers, such as Wu Yili and Li Xiangting, have demonstrated the charm of guqin in international concerts, making guqin music an important bridge between Chinese and foreign cultures. In addition, many music colleges and universities have begun to offer guqin majors to train a new generation of guqin performers. For example, the Central Conservatory of Music and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music have majored in guqin, providing talent support for the inheritance and development of guqin music. At the same time, the guqin has gradually entered the public's life, and many citizens have learned the guqin as a way to cultivate sentiment, cultivate body and mind [12]. In modern society, guqin music not only has artistic value, but also has cultural value. It has become a way for people to inherit and promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Through learning guqin, people can better understand and experience the charm of Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, guqin music also has a certain influence on modern music creation, and many composers have integrated guqin elements into their works, creating many musical works with period characteristics.

3. Guqin Music and Artistic Characteristics

3.1. The Style and Classification of Qin Music

As a traditional Chinese musical instrument, the guqin has a rich variety of music styles and classifications. From the perspective of historical development, guqin music can be divided into four stages: early qin music, Wei and Jin qin music, Tang and Song qin music and modern qin music [13].

Early zither music is represented by "High Mountains and Flowing Water", "Fishermen and Woodcutters Q&A", "Guangling San", etc. These zither songs have a deep cultural heritage and unique artistic charm. The music style is solemn,

simple and ancient, with slow rhythm and beautiful melody, showing a spiritual realm of transcending the world and pursuing nature. The qin music of Wei and Jin dynasties was formed under the influence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism culture, and the typical representatives are "Eighteen Beats of Hu Jia", "Flat Sand and Falling Geese" and so on. The style of zither music in this period was influenced by the cultural phenomena such as metaphysics and landscape idylls, presenting a kind of refreshing, light and elegant, and off-beat characteristics. Tang and Song zither music was developed on the basis of Wei and Jin zither music, with high artistic achievements. The zither compositions of this period pay more attention to the richness of melody and the strengthening of expressive power, such as "Yangguan Sanjie" and "Fisherman and Woodcutter Q&A". At the same time, title music began to appear in the Tang and Song dynasties, represented by "High Mountains and Flowing Water" and "Flat Sand and Falling Geese", etc. The titles of qin tunes complemented the musical contents, forming a unique artistic style.

Modern zither music is based on the tradition of guqin, absorbing western music elements and developing innovatively. The zither music of this period pays more attention to the expression of the spirit of the times, such as "Yellow River Cantata" and "Liang Zhu". The music style is novel, the melody is rich, and the playing skill is high, which pushes the art of guqin to a new peak [14].

3.2. Performance Techniques and Music Scores

The playing techniques of guqin are rich and varied, mainly including right hand plucking, left hand string pressing, sliding, overtones, vibrato and so on. Right hand plucking is to strike the strings with the fingernails, producing different tones and rhythms through different fingerings and strengths. Left-handed strumming involves pressing the strings with the fingers to change the effective length of the strings, thus producing different pitches. Sliding is to slide the fingertips on the strings to produce continuous changes in pitch; overtones are to touch the strings lightly to produce crisp high notes; and vibrato is to gently knead the strings with the fingers to produce expressive tones. The sheet music of the guqin is an important carrier for recording guqin repertoire, and the earliest sheet music can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. Guqin sheet music is mainly in the form of written music and simple music. The written score uses words to indicate the strings, fingers and playing techniques, while the simple score uses numbers to indicate pitch and rhythm. The score contains a wealth of instructions for playing, such as fingering, rhythm, strength and weakness, which provide accurate guidance for the player. The repertoire of the guqin is rich and varied, ranging from classical masterpieces, such as "High Mountains and Flowing Water" and "Questions and Answers of Fishermen and Woodcutters," to new compositions created in modern times. The guqin repertoire usually has a profound moral meaning and unique artistic charm, and the performers interpret the connotation and emotion of the qin pieces through skillful mastery of the playing techniques, so that the audience can feel the charm of guqin music [15].

3.3. The Relationship between the Guqin and Poetry, Painting and Calligraphy

The relationship between the guqin and poetry, painting and calligraphy has a long history and mutual influence,

which together constitute the unique flavor of traditional Chinese culture. The relationship between the guqin and poetry is mainly reflected in the combination of music and literature. Guqin music, with its unique rhythms and rhythms, provides an accompaniment to the chanting of poems, making them more vivid and touching. Many guqin compositions are composed to express the poet's emotional experience of nature, life and society. For example, the song "Li Sao" is based on Qu Yuan's poem of the same name, and through the lyricism of guqin music, it makes the meaning of the poem more profound. At the same time, poems also influence the creation of guqin music, and the titles and themes of many guqin tunes are derived from poems, such as "Pingsha Falling Geese" and "Fishermen and Woodcutters Question and Answer" [16]. The relationship between the guqin and painting is mainly reflected in the similarity of artistic expression and spiritual connotation. The curved body and strings of the guqin, as well as the fingering when playing, are just like the lines and colors in painting, which can express the artist's inner emotions and mood. At the same time, guqin music and painting also pursue the creation of "mood", through simple and implicit expression, making music and painting have an abstract beauty. Many painters are also fans of the guqin, and they play the guqin to express their emotions after painting, such as Xu Wei in the Ming Dynasty and Qi Baishi in the Qing Dynasty. The relationship between guqin and calligraphy is mainly reflected in the commonality of artistic spirit and aesthetic concepts. Guqin music focuses on the expression of inner emotions and emphasizes the creation of "mood", which is in line with the "mood" and "rhythm" pursued by calligraphy. At the same time, the fingerings and strings in guqin playing are just like the strokes and structures in calligraphy, which emphasize the beauty of lines and changes in rhythm. Many calligraphy masters also played guqin to cultivate their emotions after creating their works, such as Wang Xizhi, a calligrapher of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and Yan Zhenqing, a calligrapher of the Tang Dynasty [17].

3.4. The Aesthetic Ideology of Guqin Music

The aesthetic thought of guqin music is an important part of traditional Chinese culture, with unique philosophical connotation and artistic value. In guqin music, music and nature, people and instruments, music and spirit are intertwined, forming a unique aesthetic concept. First of all, guqin music emphasizes the harmonious symbiosis with nature. The tone of the guqin is tranquil and distant, and is in tune with the sounds of nature. Guqin music pursues a tranquil and indifferent attitude towards life, reflecting the harmony between man and nature. In this harmony, people can find inner peace and tranquility. Secondly, guqin music focuses on the spiritual world of people. Guqin music is not only the enjoyment of hearing, but also the pursuit of a spiritual realm. The sound rhythm of guqin echoes with people's inner emotion, and through music, people can express their emotion and cultivate their sentiment. In guqin music, people can find a spiritual support beyond the material [18]. Finally, guqin music pursues the creation of "mood". Guqin music is not only a combination of melodies, but also a way of artistic expression. Through the music to express a mood, so that people in the process of appreciation to produce resonance, triggering thinking. The meaning of guqin music is far-reaching, poetic and intoxicating.

4. Dissemination and Influence of Guqin Culture

4.1. Domestic Dissemination and Influence

As a musical instrument with a long history, the spread and influence of Chinese guqin in China can be described as far-reaching. Since the pre-Qin period, the guqin has become an important way for literati to cultivate themselves and express their emotions. With the passage of time, guqin music was gradually integrated into poetry, calligraphy, painting and other art forms, forming a unique qin culture [19].

In ancient times, guqin music was mainly used in occasions such as palace elegant music, literati elegant gathering and religious ceremonies. Since the Tang and Song dynasties, the guqin art gradually went to the folk and became a widely circulated musical instrument. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, guqin music entered a period of prosperity, with a variety of schools of qin in different parts of the world and a wealth of writings on qin, which led to the widespread spread of guqin music in China. The spread and influence of the guqin is not only reflected in the field of music, but also deeply penetrated into philosophy, aesthetics, literature and other levels. The guqin is intertwined with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and has become an important symbol of Chinese culture. Many ancient literati, such as Wang Xizhi, Bai Juyi, Su Shi, etc., who played the guqin to compose poems and meet friends with the guqin, have been praised for thousands of years. In addition, the art of the guqin has had a profound influence on the music of later generations. Many traditional instruments and musical forms were inspired by the guqin, such as the pipa and guzheng. In modern times, despite the influence of Western music, guqin music still maintains a place in the country. The government and cultural institutions have actively carried out guqin education and protection, enabling the art of the guqin to be passed on and carried forward [20].

4.2. International Dissemination and Influence

In terms of international dissemination and influence, guqin music, with its unique charm and profound cultural heritage, has gradually been noticed and loved by people all over the world. First of all, the international dissemination of guqin music began at the beginning of the last century, with the foreign exchange of Chinese culture, guqin music began to go out of the country, spread to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia and other places, and gradually became prominent in the international music industry. Entering the 21st century, with the acceleration of globalization, the international spread of guqin music further expanded, and groups of people studying and researching guqin music began to appear in Europe, America and other western countries. Secondly, the international influence of guqin music is mainly reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, as a unique form of music, guqin music, with its characteristics of timbre, melody and playing techniques, has brought new aesthetic experiences to the international music community, enabling them to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of traditional Chinese music. Secondly, the profound philosophical thinking and humanistic spirit contained in guqin music also deeply impressed international audiences, making them deeply interested in Chinese traditional culture. Thirdly, the spread of guqin music in the international arena also promotes the foreign exchange of Chinese traditional culture, and makes a positive contribution to the spread and influence of Chinese

culture in the world.

4.3. The Relationship between the Guqin and Modern Society

The guqin, as a representative of Chinese traditional music, has become an important part of Chinese traditional culture after thousands of years of evolution and development. In modern society, the guqin is not only a kind of musical art, but also a kind of cultural heritage and symbol.

The spread of guqin in modern society mainly depends on some players and scholars who love guqin. They not only devote themselves to the performance and research of guqin music, but also make the transmission and development of guqin music through various ways, such as concerts, lectures and training courses. At the same time, with the development of science and technology, guqin music has also been able to spread to a wider audience through various media, such as the Internet, television and movies. The influence of the guqin in modern society is also gradually expanding. After listening to guqin music, many people are attracted by its unique charm and begin to study and research the guqin. In some universities and research institutions, there are also guqin majors or research institutes to train professional guqin players and researchers. In addition, the guqin has become an important part of some cultural activities and festivals, such as traditional cultural festivals and exhibitions of qin, chess, calligraphy and painting. The status and role of the guqin in modern society has also changed. In the past, the guqin was mainly a recreational tool for aristocrats and literati, but now it has become a spiritual support and cultural enjoyment for ordinary people. Guqin music not only has aesthetic value, but also has the function of cultivating body and mind and cultivating sentiment. Many people improve their cultural literacy and aesthetic level by learning and playing guqin.

5. Conclusion

The guqin, as one of the traditional Chinese musical instruments, carries the rich historical and cultural traditions of the Chinese nation. From its origin to the present, the guqin has evolved over thousands of years, showing the charm of art and conveying the spirit of the nation.

The origin of the guqin can be traced back to the ancient times, but its exact time of birth cannot be verified. The shape of the guqin in the early days was different from that of today, and after a long period of evolution, the shape and playing skills of the guqin were gradually perfected during the Tang and Song dynasties. The music of the guqin is characterized by its elegant, serene and far-reaching artistic style, with representative works such as "High Mountains and Flowing Water", "Guangling San" and "Flat Sand and Falling Geese". The guqin is not only a musical instrument, but also a cultural symbol. It is closely connected with traditional Chinese culture, containing the essence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The playing techniques, musical scores and theories of the guqin all reflect the aesthetic interests and philosophical concepts of the ancient literati. The guqin is intertwined with poetry, painting, calligraphy and other art forms, which together constitute a unique cultural tradition of the Chinese nation. The guqin culture has spread widely and has not only had a far-reaching influence in China, but has also attracted the attention of many international friends. In recent years, with the revival of traditional culture, the guqin has once again received widespread attention. Many scholars

and artists at home and abroad have devoted themselves to the research and performance of the guqin, which has given the art of guqin a new vitality.

In conclusion, the guqin, as a treasure of Chinese traditional music culture, has witnessed the historical changes of the Chinese nation. Studying the development history of the guqin helps us to better understand traditional culture, pass on the national spirit and stimulate cultural innovation. It is hoped that in the future, the art of guqin will continue to develop in inheritance and innovation, contributing Chinese wisdom to the world's music culture.

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