



The Transmutation of Contemporary Zhejiang Gu Zheng Music

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Abstract. This study aims to clarify the development and changes in the many schools of Gu Zheng (Zhejiang Zheng). The focus is on the lesser-known techniques and repertoire that have evolved from the 1920s to the 21st century. The Zhejiang Zheng's techniques, including the “strumming” (kuaishidian) and “saolian”, are unique and not found in other Zheng genres. Over the course of a century, Zhejiang Zheng has shifted its focus from technical expertise to national themes and, more recently, to self-discovery.

Keywords: Zhejiang Zheng, Transmutation, Techniques, repertoires

1 Introduction

From the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, the Gu Zheng gradually formed different genres. This is because the Qin Zheng was moving eastward and southward with the country's political centre, leading to a gradual fusion of the country's different Gu Zheng genres with local folk and opera music. For example, the Gu Zheng genre in Henan was derived and developed based on the traditional folk ensemble of stringed music; the Zheng in Shandong is a combination of the Qin Zheng, which was spread to Heze, and the zither and local special ditties; the Zhejiang Zheng was spread to Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, from the Central Plains as far back as the Tang and Song Dynasties, and has been used in the form of an ensemble or accompaniment in “ensemble of traditional stringed and woodwind instruments music”. Because Zhejiang Zheng has the most diversified

forms and the widest scope during the period of change, I will take Zhejiang Zheng as the representative for elaboration.

2 The Development of Zhejiang Zheng in 1920'S

In the 1920s, the Zhejiang Zheng was known as the martial arts instrument, and there were a number of Hangzhou Zheng artists who were good at playing the martial arts of Zheng, such as Jiang Yinchun, Qiu Shiru, Wu Ruquan and others who were good at playing the martial arts of Zheng, and the performance had already appeared in the “Thumb Shaking”(dazhiyao), “strumming”(kuaisidian), , The techniques of “Thumb Shaking”, “strumming” , “Pizzicato”(jiatan) and “lifting the strings” (tixian) had already appeared in their work. Jiang Yinchun was a Gu Zheng artist during the Republic of China period, and Wang Xunzhi was a member of the Hangzhou Jinyuzhuang traditional music Research Society. Wang Xunzhi used to play the three-stringed Zheng(sanxian), but later he studied the fifteen-stringed Zheng (i.e., Hangzhou Zheng) under the tutelage of Jiang Yinchun. The main repertoire of this period includes Ensemble of Traditional Stringed and Woodwind Instruments Music, the Thirteen Suites of Strings, and repertoires from Hangtan, such as *sanshisaban*, *cixiuxie* — also known as *the Inter Weaving of Lamps and Moonlight*(dengyuejiaohui), *High Mountains and Running Water*(gaoshanliushui), and *Rainbow Song*(xiaonishang).

In 1924, Wang Xunzhi and Wu Yicheng established the Hangzhou National Music Research Society in Hangzhou, specialising in the performance of “Thirteen Sets of Strings” and the repertoire of the popular Ensemble of Traditional Stringed and Woodwind Instruments Music, which had a far-reaching impact on the promotion of the Zheng’s gradual shift from an accompanying instrument to an ensemble and a solo instrument. The society played a far-reaching role in promoting the Zheng from an accompanying instrument to an ensemble and solo instrument. Wang Xunzhi compiled some of the Ensemble of Traditional Stringed and Woodwind Instruments Music, Thirteen Sets of Strings(xiansuoshisanta) into Zheng solo repertoires, such as *Sanshisaban*, *Yunqing*. From Wang Xunzhi, the Wulin Zheng was again inherited and laid the foundation for the rise of the Zhe style of Zheng.

3 The Situation of Zhejiang Zheng Before And After The Cultural Revolution

After the founding of the country in 1949, the Gu Zheng became more widely learnt, music colleges were established in different parts of the world, and the Gu Zheng became a solo instrument, so that more people could play the Gu Zheng as a lifelong job. 1956, Wang Xunzhi was appointed as a teacher at the Central Conservatory of Music in East China (later renamed the Shanghai Conservatory of Music). During this period, he began a systematic collation of the Zheng compositions of the Zhejiang Style, translating the gongchi scores(gongchipu)of songs like *High Mountains and Running Water*, *Siheruyi*, *Yunqing*, *Jiangjunling*, into five-line scores, and then, from 1958 to 1961, collated *Yueergao*, *Haiqingnahe*, *Bawangxiejie*, and *Xiaonishang*. The “strumming”(kuaisidian), “Pizzicato”(jiatan), “finger-wagging”(yaozhi) and “string lifting”(tixian) are the main techniques used in the Yueergao.

Before the early 1960s, Zheng compositions were mainly composed by older artists such as Cao Dongfu, Zhao Yuzai, and Wang Xunzhi, and *Lin Chong Flees by Night* which was written by Wang Xunzhi and Lu Xutang is one of the representative works. *Lin Chong Flees by Night* uses the characteristic saoyao and gliss(guazou) techniques of Zhejiang Zheng music to simulate the situation of fierce winds and heavy snowfalls. After the sixties, with the training of the first generation of Gu Zheng students, they became the main force in composition and performance, and in 1962, Xiang Sihua, a student of Wang Xunzhi, premiered *Haiqingnahe*, which was the first piece to be performed with two Zhengs, and in 1964, the medoly *Zhantaifeng* composed a student of Wang Xunzhi, who was reach another peak of the development of the art of the Gu Zheng, following the medoly *Qingfengnian* (Zhao Yuzai, 1954). In composing “*Battle of the Typhoon*”, Wang Changyuan creatively used two techniques, namely the clasp swing(kouyao) and the scraping outside the column(xianwaiguazhou), to embody the majestic theme of the typhoon.

During the Cultural Revolution, due to the influence of ideology, Zheng compositions were in the doldrums, but in 1971, Zhang Yan and Liu Qichao composed *Liuyang River*(liuyanghe), *Caoyuanyingxiongxiaojiemei*, and *Fishing Songs of the East China Sea*(donghaiyuge), which have been widely performed nowadays. Among them, *Liuyang River* uses the innovative technique of five-tone arpeggio with two big fingers, which expresses the waves of *Liuyang River*, which is

full of glitter and vivid images. On the basis of the “strumming”(kuaisidian), the left hand low octave harmony accompaniment is added, and this form of accompaniment is also an innovative use of Zhejiang Zheng artists.

4 The Development of Zhejiang Zheng after Reform and Opening Up

After the 1980s, the appearance of the Gu Zheng concerto further enhanced the expression of the Zhejiang Zheng. This is a genre of music in which the Gu Zheng and other instruments perform together, and there are often cadenza of the Gu Zheng performing alone. During this period, more than 10 guzheng concertos were composed in China, among which the composer Li Huanzhi's Gu Zheng concerto *Miluo River Fantasy*(miluojianghuanxiangqu) has the most artistic standard and representativeness, and Fan Shang'e's *Yinhebing* has been circulated as a golden song of the Zhejiang Zheng. Since *Miluo River Fantasy*(miluojianghuanxiangqu) does not belong to the scope of Zhejiang Style of Gu Zheng, I will not elaborate on it here. In *Yinhebing*, the Zhejiang Style of Gu Zheng makes extensive use of the duanyao and Vibrato(chanyin) techniques, reflecting the ripples of the water in the canal and the scene of the blue waves.

At the 1990s, Zhejiang Zheng reached a brand-new stage, where composers re-examined the compositional structure, harmonic composition and other aspects, and injected new vitality into the Gu Zheng arts in the form of modulation and cadenza. Composer He Zhanhao's works *Jasmine Flower*(molihua), *Regret and Hate of Linan*(linanyihen), *Luyou* and *Tangwan*(luyouyutangwan) are some of the representatives. In *Regret and Hate of Linan*, traditional instrumental techniques such as “dianzhi” and “glissando”(huayin) are used, and at the same time, variations such as inversion variation, tonal variation and chorus variation are used, and b-Yu minor piano flamboyance is introduced. Therefore, it can be said that the Gu Zheng piece *Regret and Hate of Linan* inherits and develops the Zhejiang Zheng. *Jasmine Flower* is adapted from the Jiangsu folk song *Jasmine Flower*, incorporating modern western compositional techniques and the music of harmonic polyphony. *Luyou and Tangwan* is in compound triad form with Introduzione, coda, bridge and cadenza, with D-Yu Major, G-Yu Major and D-Yu Major, telling the fruitless and poignant love story of the young couple in the Song Dynasty.

5 After The Millennium, The Convergence of The National Zheng with the West and the Development of the Zhejiang Zheng

With the development, modern western music with its basic characteristics of tolerance, openness, science and democracy has systematically deconstructed all the inherent cultural forms, including Gu Zheng music. The traditional pentatonic tuning, playing techniques and notation are all affected. For example, in the modern piece *Canggeyin*, the bass scale of minor third plus major second forms the unfolding development, whereas the traditional pentatonic scale consists of the arrangement of major second plus minor third, which is a breakthrough from the traditional pentatonic tuning. At the same time, the beat is also innovative, with a series of unconventional playing techniques such as tapping the body of the Gu Zheng, “saoxian”, and “staccato”(shaxian); the modern piece *Dawn Mist*(xiaowu) combines Western compositional techniques and traditional Peking Opera through five variations; Ye Shujian’s solo Zheng piece *Ran* and *Ding* use the arch to play the Zheng to do the vibrato. The modern repertoire does not have a clear distinction between regional styles, and is generally characterised by a fusion of East and West, and pioneering. Then, I will conduct a detailed literature review of the Zheng piece *Canggeyin*.

Wang Shu and Liu Jinhui analysed the Zheng piece *Canggeyin*. Wang Shu analysed the background of the composition, the compositional techniques, and the use of traditional Chinese musical elements. The analysis covered three aspects of the statement. Liu Jinhui analyses the music and performance techniques of the Gu Zheng, focusing on the composition background, musical ontology, and meaning of the piece. Xie Fengrui’s skills differs from that of previous scholars as he focuses primarily on the piano part of the piece. He discusses the performance of synchrony and asynchrony in the piano accompaniment, specifically the relationship between the Zheng part and the collaborative part, as well as the relationship between the Zheng music and the piano. Zhou Linchen and Bai Rong both focus on the compositional concept of *Canggeyin*. They analyze the composition process, characteristics of the concept, and performance aspects of the piece. They also explore the compositional history and concepts of the three different versions of *Canggeyin*, as well as the fusion and gradual progression of the three versions in terms of their musical aesthetics.

6 Literature Review

Gu Zheng is one of the national musical instruments in China, which has long been extended to overseas and has been developed and inherited in the process of spreading. In Gu Zheng culture, its playing techniques, stylistic features, representative tasks and main genres are very different. A large number of scholars have studied the Gu Zheng genres.

Song Yaochen and Chen Ke, analyzed the causes of Gu Zheng genres in China, taking regional culture as an influencing factor. Many these scholars have also studied each branch of the school in detail. Li Zhihan summarized the formation and development of the Kejia Zheng, as well as its playing style and unique techniques; Wang Luxin outlines the origins of the Shandong Zheng school and weak development; Wang Xiaohong and Gu Haijun elaborate on the origins of the Henan Zheng, and analyze the bold and bright artistic style of the tunes and the skills of the left and right hands.

In Zhejiang genre, Gu Zheng music has been a classic by virtue of its varied musical techniques and unique Jiangnan style performance characteristics, so many scholars conducted in-depth discussions. In particular, the two article have mentioned the music characteristics of the Zheng and the technique characteristics of “strumming”(kuaisidian), “ennuciation”(dianzhi)and “finger-wagging” (yaozhi). Zhang Man explains the ancient development history, modern development history, and future innovation and development revelation of the Zhe Style Zheng from the perspective of the Zhe Style Zheng’s process of change. Zhang Ran and Han Jianyong’s articles highlight the innovation and evolution of Zhe style of Gu Zheng, especially summarize the formation and development of Zhe style of Gu Zheng, and summarise them. Although their studies are not similarly orientated, they add to the completeness of the Zhe style of Gu Zheng.

Foreign scholars’ studies on ethno poetics and folklore also shed light on the transmutation of the Zhejiang Zheng. There is a growing body of literature that investigates five scholars’ views on ethno poetics including Robert Moore, Alexander D. King, M. Eleanor Nevins, Anthony K. Webster, Paul V. Kroskrity. Richard Bauman emphasis on discovery and dialogue but with attention as well to matters of genre, language shift, and ethno poetics as a critical vantage point on anthropological theory and practice. He also concludes with a discussion of voice, one of the principal organizing concepts of the collection. Richard Bauman makes a new point in another

article, He proposes three major shifts in the concept of performance in this literature, he also interprets performances and decentered recentered both within and across speech events—referred to, cited, evaluated, reported, looked back upon, replayed, and otherwise transformed in the production and reproduction of social life.

This literature expounds the nature of folk customs and the connection between folk customs and human. Richard Bauman investigates that the difference of identity is the basis of ethnology, and the participants of ethnic groups must have the relevant identity characteristics of folklore interaction, that is, the most important factor in folklore is interaction. At the same time, he also discusses the nature of folklore as a language art.

7 Conclusion

Since the 1920s, the number of compositions for the Zhejiang Zheng has increased, and the skill with which they have been performed shows that attention has been paid to bringing into play the expressive power of the Gu Zheng in groups. The duets of Gu Zheng have basically withstood the test of history in each time period. The repertoire of compositions since the founding of the PRC is roughly divided into three periods, the 1950s as the first period, the 1960s and 1970s as the second period, and the 1980s onwards as the third period. The performers are roughly divided into three types, one is the Gu Zheng artists of the old generation, the second is the Gu Zheng artists cultivated later, the works of these two types of performers are more traditional and the degree of innovation is limited, and the third is the professional composers, who concentrated their works after the year 2000, with a strong epochal character and the most innovative strength, but there is a suspicion of the insufficiency of the traditional flavour. The art of the Zhejiang Zheng has made many achievements over the past century, but it is necessary to think calmly about some of the problems that need to be solved in order to move forward.

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