

A Comparison of Pipa Performance Between Modern Chinese and the Sui and Tang Dynasties

– Taking China and Japan as Examples

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Abstract: The Tang Dynasty was the heyday of Ancient China, especially Chinese music. Because of enhanced international communications, Chinese music has been diffused to adjacent East Asia countries, including Japan. To be specific, this paper mainly takes pipa as an example to explore comparisons and contrasts between Chinese ancient and modern music; Chinese and Japanese musical development; also, in the dynasties of Sui and Tang. In this research paper, Pipa music is the main research object; its history, appearance, and usage are all discussed and compared. The central question is how the differences between Chinese pipa and Japanese pipa happened in history and culture. This paper uses qualitative research and comparing papers on the same topic. Based on this research, Pipa music between the Sui Tang period and the Modern period are different in appearance, sound effects, and grasping manipulations.

Keywords: Chinese music, Japanese music, East Asia music, Pipa, development of music

1. Introduction

Among kinds of music, Pipa was one of the most popular court musical instruments, which was loved by court concubines headed by Yang Yuhuan. Both Chinese and Japanese were deeply affected by Pipa music. Differences in national beliefs and traditional cultures took Pipa music into change over thousands of years, and that's why people could feel the beauty and color of music in areas [1]. This paper comprises changes in Pipa music, the spreading experience of the Pipa, and differences between ancient and modern Pipa music in research. Through historical data and expansion of territory, the playing position, string naming and tone of Pipa contain imperceptible distinctions. Compared with Chinese music, Japanese music is sombre in general, and their musical range sounds more unobjectionable than most East Asian countries. With the help of qualitative research methods help, this paper compares papers in professional areas. Also, in a great deal of reading, Pipa music's diversity, ingenuity, and historical significance are incarnated. This traditional non-object inheritance inspires society in both national and international cultures in Asia. When hearing the melodious sound of Pipa, Asian people are proud of that mentally [2].

2. Pipa in Ancient China Tang Dynasty

During the Tang Dynasty, the three hundred years governed, the emperor derived from the experience of the Sui Dynasty, that they paid attention in social producing, mitigating class contradictions. It was one of the most prosperous music development times. In those times, the government earned a peaceful and stable environment for citizens to chase interests and entertainment.

Pipa music is one of the most typical Chinese instruments in both history and culture. It has been a tedious experience since its invention. In the Tang Dynasty, because of affection from emperors in their courts, the Pipa was exhausted to one of the most significant instruments. According to A brief discussion on the use and development of pipa in Yan music in the Tang Dynasty, pipa was used in high frequency in Tang Dynasty's courts, and it even became the main role of court Yan music. Yan music is a special kind of music for people to entertain and appreciate when they attend court banquets. Yan music provides the pipa a stage to develop and diffuse totally; it also prompts the pipa's self-value and lays the foundation of the pipa's long-run evaluation [3].

The appearance of the pipa was renewed in the Tang Dynasty into the shape of a half-pear, which consisted of the traditional straight-neck pipa and Xiyu's crooked-neck pipa. A brief discussion on the use and development of pipa in Yan music in the Tang Dynasty mentions that the half-pear widened pipa's sound regions by adding pipa columns. As the columns were added, a pipa could be performed with more sounds than before, which enhanced its musical influences and use-ratio [4].

In the technique of pipa performance, it is mainly divided into two types – left hand and right hand. Both of them are challenges to the player's power and harmony. In the right-hand technique, the player needs to collect all power on top of the fingers' back, accordingly, the sounds can be full and accurate. When the right-hand tries to slide its wrist, the player must ensure the thumb and index finger are in the same direction and standard. Admittedly, the thumb and index finger take the main role when playing, the left fingers need to switch between frizzy and straight according to the music score. Also, according to the inheritance and innovative development of pipa performance techniques, the difference with the right hand, the left hand treats power as the central route, which means it needs to press four strings with finger pulp to keep the balance of each string and total sound effect. In this way, the right hand and left hand perform their functions [5]. Only if they can tie in with each other, the whole performance can be successful.

The Tang Dynasty is undoubtedly the peak of Pipa music in Ancient China. It not only continued Pipa's traditions derived from the Qin Dynasty but also improved its usage to better practical use. It also provides enough research space for lateral studies.

3. Pipa in Modern China

As history develops and society changes, after thousands of years, Pipa music culture changes into anfractuosity – with China regions changing and people migrating, performances of pipa are not limited to only one.

The acoustic and music Features effects are valuable to be discussed. According to PipaSet and TEAS: A Multimodal Dataset and Annotation Platform for Automatic Music Transcription and Expressive Analysis Dedicated to Chinese Traditional Plucked String Instrument Pipa, there are unique characteristics of the Pipa instrument from an acoustic and Chinese music perspective. The section highlights the fake nail noise produced by the Pipa, the time-domain envelope, and the body response, which affects the amplitude distribution of harmonic series. The section also discusses the intrinsic pitch deviation of the Pipa and the impact of tempo and rubato on Pipa performance. Understanding these features is essential for accurate transcription and expressive analysis of Pipa music [5].

This paper will discuss two of the different styles. Granted, pipa's basic performance ways are invariable, but the time differences still lead to some music theories' separations.

3.1. Dong Pipa

In China Guizhou, Dong Pipa is widely known. It is developed by Dong people in China Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi. People who composed Dong music with Dong Pipa were inspired by their social life including their marriage, traditions and their lifestyles. "Both Dong Pipa and Gayageum categorize the Dong Pipa into three sizes: large, medium, and small. They provide a detailed description of its shape, setup, vocal range, string material, paddle material, pipa material, playing posture, timbre characteristics, suitable occasions for playing, and other related aspects" [5].

3.2. Nanyin Pipa

Another pipa category in modern China is Fujian Nanyin Pipa. Nanyin Pipa takes the main role of musical instrument in Nanyin's music play. According to the article Two Questions for Comparison between Fujian Nanyin Pipa and Japanese Pipa, its shape is like a pear, which includes a thin pipa neck and wide abdomen. Mostly, its surface is made of paulownia, and its back is made of rosewood with shells engraved on it as decorations. Accordingly, some popular calligraphers would like to write idioms on Nanyin Pipa to sculpt it as an art ware [6].

Nanyin Pipa is filled with Fujian culture, especially in southern Fujian. "As an ancient type of music, Fujian Nanyin is also unique in its notation. It adopts the method of distinguishing sound notation, which is composed of three parts: fingers, scores, and songs, which are basically in the form of hand-copied scores. At the same time, Fujian Nanyin is also a cultural link between the southern Fujian region and the people of Southeast Asia, with the function of self-entertainment and social activities [6].

4. Pipa in Japan

In the Sui and Tang Dynasties of China, there was an unprecedented upsurge of cultural exchange between China and Japan, and it was the first time in Japanese history that the country organized and promoted the absorption of foreign advanced cultures. Japan sent envoys to China many times during the Barrier Mill period, which is a historical story of the friendship between China and Japan, and a golden age of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges in ancient times. With the new admiration and desire for culture, Japan urgently requested to absorb the achievements of civilization from China [7].

The Shakura Courtyard in Nara, Japan, has a large collection of artifacts from around the 8th century, including Musical Instruments that were transferred from China to Japan. In Zhengcangyuan's collection of Musical Instruments of the Tang Dynasty, pipa instruments are undoubtedly prominent in quantity, completeness and elegance. That is to say, the pipa that appeared in the historical documents of the Tang Dynasty and before has a physical collection in Zhongcangyuan. This is of great significance to the study of pipa instruments in the Tang Dynasty [8].

The plectrum used in the Japanese pipa is historically called "hanpa", and in the Satsuma pipa, it is made of boxwood, and these 12 hanpa are the same, all of which are triangular. The Japanese pipa is naturally derived from China. On the panels of the five pipas and the curved pipa that appear on the murals of Cave 379 of the Sui Dynasty in the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang, there are devices for "defending and dialling". The so-called "plucking" means that a decorative plate is attached to the plucked pipa panel to protect and defend the panel from damage [9].

To further know the Japanese Pipa, there are several categories to analyze. The first one is Yue pipa. It was first created in the Tang Dynasty, and then delivered to Japan. It is one typical kind of Nanyin pipa: It has the same shape as a pear with four strings and four pillars. Its neck is called 'deer

neck', which is made of Pometia and Bloodwood. The second category is the Blind Monk pipa, which is specially used by blind monks. Pinga pipa is the third type, but it is just for appreciation. The shape is the same as Yue Pipa, but smaller than Yue Pipa, with a total length of less than 67 cm. There are five pillars, slightly higher than the pillars of the Yue pipa. The plectrum is slightly larger than that of a musical pipa, and somewhat open in front. The fourth is Satsuma Pipa. This Pipa is used for appreciation or family entertainment. The production material is made of all mulberry wood of the highest quality, but the cheap Satsuma pipa is only made of mulberry on the web, and cherry, beech, park and other wood on the back. Another one is Zhu Qian Pipa. This pipe is used for appreciation or family entertainment. Its original shape is a four-stringed pipa. The body is small, about 83 cm in length, with a long string of the five-stringed pipa similar to that of the Satsuma pipa, tapering from the first string to the fifth string [10].

After the pipa was introduced to Japan from China, it adapted to the needs of Japanese social development in the new cultural living environment and played an unparalleled role in the process of social development for more than 1,000 years. The Japanese musicologist Hideshi Yoshikawa once said, "It is very difficult to describe the history of Japanese music, and the types and genres of music, such as cell division, multiply rapidly. " The author thinks that this can also be used to describe the development of Japanese pipa. When the pipa entered Japanese society, it was quickly implanted into Japanese culture and continued to derive and evolve many new forms, from which various cultural phenomena were born.

5. Conclusion

The pipa traditions of China and Japan have their unique beauty, demonstrating the profound heritage of East Asian music culture. In this paper, we deeply discuss the historical origin, playing skills and cultural connotations of Chinese and Japanese pipa. As an ancient musical instrument, the Chinese pipa has been inherited for thousands of years, reflecting the rich and profound connotation of Chinese music. Its wide application in the fields of classical, folk and modern music makes it an indispensable part of traditional Chinese music.

In contrast, the Japanese pipa has absorbed the essence of the Chinese pipa in its historical development and has formed a unique musical tradition. Under the influence of Japanese culture, the pipa has been reflected in the mystical, religious and artistic fields. Its exquisite playing skills and expressive musical style make it unique on the international music stage.

Generally speaking, the pipa of China and Japan is not only a musical performance tool but also a carrier of cultural inheritance. Through the comparative study of the pipa of these two countries, this paper builds a deeper understanding of the diversity and richness of East Asian music culture. It also calls on us to strengthen cultural exchanges in the era of globalization and jointly promote the spread and development of this ancient instrument in the world.

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