

The Anthropology of Music in China
LUO Qin, Shanghai Conservatory of Music

Part One
Historical Trajectory of Study on Chinese Traditional Music

The twentieth century witnessed transformation of traditional Chinese music in terms of the overall situation. Before the 20th century, Traditional Chinese Music was an all-encompassing category that included, for example, *Xiqu* (folk music drama), story-telling, music and dance, folk songs, traditional instrumental ensemble, folk music club, and ritual music activities and etc. In contrast to that, the situation of Chinese music in the 20th century turned to a new page, both form and content of which have been undergoing critical transformation in response to the ever-changing socio-cultural environment. It is embodied as the following series of dichotomy: traditional and modern, Chinese and western, folk and urban, pop and classical. Five stages in the process of transformation are showed below:

1) Western perspective in reviewing traditional Chinese music: A number of patriotic scholars, represented by *Xiao You-mei* and *Wang Guang-qi*, brought back from western world with a brand-new western perspective on the value and sense of Chinese traditional music culture, which started a new age of academic research on traditional Chinese music.

2) Sorting the history of Chinese music tradition: A number of domestic distinguished scholars, represented by *Liu Tian-hua* and *Yang Yin-liu*, examined many thousands years of inherited traditional music forms and cultivated a consciousness of disciplinary construction.

3) Classifying traditional music, researching on and creating out of folk music resources: Meanwhile, a number of “*Zuolian*(Chinese Left Wing Writers Association)” musicians, represented by *Lu Ji*, *An Bo*, *Xian Xing-hai*, and *Shen Zhi-bai*, did considerable jobs in classifying traditional music, researching on and creating out of folk music resources, thus expands the function of traditional music.

4) Analyzing musical morphology: together, a number of scholars, led by *Yang Yin-liu* and *Shen Zhi-bai*, represented by *Yu Hui-yong* and etc, put an effort in analyzing music form with the use of western comparative musicology. Another group of scholars, for example *Gao Hou-yong*, *Shen qia*, and *Liao Nai-xiong* also did great contributions in disciplinary scientific and technical development.

5) Cognizing music culture: with the leadership of the above unique figures, and under an impact from the increasingly emphasized humanities concerns, a number of young scholars shifted their academic interest into cognition of traditional music, keeping playing a positive role in contributing to the disciplinary expansion through a broader view and an in-depth thinking.

From 1980s to the beginning of 1990s, a considerable number of scholars devoted into this field and contributed a lot in introducing and disseminating the idea of Ethnomusicology, many of whom have put forth unique visions in their publications, for example, “*Development of Ethnomusicology in China*”, “*Issues in*

Ethnomusicology”, “*An introduction to the study of Ethnomusicology*”, “*Bi-perspectives in the Study of Music Culture*” etc. Together, there also emerged many other publications in various fields, for example, in the fields of Ethnography, Cultural Geography, Cultural Anthropology, a sub-discipline--Folk Musicology, and related issues, such like “How to use ‘Anthropology of Music’ to replace ‘Ethnomusicology’” and etc, all of which opened a new age of multi-perspectives on music cultures.

Let us interpret the relations in-between music and culture from a different angle. The same as a common rule of the development of Ethnomusicology as a discipline, since 1980s, the development of Ethnomusicology in China can also be divided into three stages that was already described and summarized by in Alan Merriam in his Merriam’s early argument.

1) *The study of music in culture: music≠culture*

2) *The study of music as culture: music≈culture*

3) *Music is culture: music=culture*

So far, to summarize without any doubts, the consciousness in disciplinary construction is reinforced to a great extent under the impact from the increasing humanistic concerns aroused in Ethnomusicology as well as in the holistic socio-cultural context. Scholars shift academic emphasis, become involved into realizing what music culture is, and contribute a great deal in the disciplinary expansion through a broader view and an in-depth thinking.

1) These three stages are not replaceable, but interrelated or even juxtaposed.

2) These three stages are complimentary. Music creation, analysis and cognition of music culture are three necessary constitutional aspects in the course of development of Chinese traditional music.

3) Transformation process is a natural stage of maturation in disciplinary development.

Part Two

Anthropology of Music in 21st Century China

As noted above, there exists five phases/stages in the whole process of transformation of Chinese tradition music academic research: reviewing traditional Chinese music; sorting the history of Chinese music tradition; classifying traditional music, researching on and creating out of folk music resources; analyzing music morphology; cognition of music culture. These five stages reflect a transition from individual to collective academic interest. With the gradual disciplinary expansion, people are increasingly realizing the importance of disciplinary construction. In order to accelerate the expansion of Ethnomusicology and to implement the strategy of “reasonable, efficient, and visionary” in 21st century China, we should develop a clear core idea; should integrate a group of talent scholars as a driving force; and also should establish a guideline that guarantees a smooth academic research.

In 2005, the “Anthropology of Music¹ Division, E²-Institutes of Shanghai Universities”, under supports from Shanghai municipal government and Shanghai

¹ With the same idea of ethnomusicology, its angle and methodology are more focused cultural-anthropological

Education Council, was established in Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Grounding on the prestigious academic tradition of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, our general objectives are set to establish a modern information platform; to integrate and optimize relevant academic resources through jointing effort with distinguished scholars from domestic and abroad universities and academic institutes; to operate academically autonomous, financially and administratively independent under the orientation of Shanghai Education Council, who emphasizes specifically on the foundational, cross-disciplinary, visionary and realistic academic idea. We are going to base our research center in Shanghai, root in China, and look toward the outside world, with an idea of “construction of anthropology of music in Chinese vision” as our goal in mind, with an academic guideline of “in-depth fieldwork, innovative idea, international exchange”, and maintain a characteristic of “hard-working and industrious”; with “Anthropology in China” as the main subject of theme, through which we are going to gain academic predominance, integrate a name research team, and play a positive part in the development of anthropology of music on the international stage.

1) Operation Mode

E-Institute, grounding on the prestigious academic tradition of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, integrates and optimizes relevant academic resources operationally independent and academically autonomous. On the core bases of a group of researcher, we also assemble a group of experts from the United States, Britain, Hong Kong, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai and Yangtze River Delta region. With a scholarship emphasis specifically put on the foundational, cross-disciplinary, visionary and realistic academic idea, we are going to base our research center in Shanghai, root in China, and look toward the outside world.

Its innovative mode of operation by means of digital, informational, and electronic methods and its usage of website as a platform for research activities broke the stereotypical research framework/style. So far, we’ve designed a webpage specifically for E-institute, and we are looking forward to be a channel for multi-lateral academic exchange, together, we are going to cooperate with academic individuals or groups from domestic or abroad research forces in the field of Ethnomusicology. Meanwhile, the under-constructed electronic database will also serve as a provider of good service, and a most accomplished academic resources database.

Meanwhile, E-institute has a series of related systems, including echelon employment and training system, academic research and seminar system, academic attainments’ publication system, fieldwork and teaching or training system, information interaction and exchanging system, day-to-day supervision and assessment system, the protection of intellectual property rights and cooperation system, as well as the fund management and financial aid gathering system.

Sharing a common or similar sense in academic idea, experience, and research method; following a series of established regulations and norms; under the

perspectives.

² “E” stands for several meanings: 1) electron or email, 2) efficiency, 3) excellence, and 4) elite

supervision of E-institute Academic Committee, we are confident to say that the research team of E-institute will definitely guarantee a smooth operation in the course of disciplinary construction.

2) Structure of the Research Team

A chief researcher as the central leader, 10 researchers as the core, a group of middle-aged scholars as the backbone, the Anthropology of Music Division, E-Institutes of Shanghai Universities thus forms a good research echelon. Among the 10 senior researchers, there are four from Shanghai Conservatory of Music and one in the field of Anthropology of Art from Shanghai *Fudan* University; The other distinguished scholars are from outside Shanghai. For example we have professors from a mainland prestigious college and research institute (Central Conservatory of Music, China Music Research Institute), expert in the field of anthropological music from Taiwan University, one from UCLA in the United States and one from Oxford University in England, thus constitutes an international cooperative team. We are looking forward the research team with a common sense of mutual recognition in academic capability, idea, and spirit to becoming the central driving force in academic world and to becoming an internationally influential academic team after 10 years of disciplinary construction.

3) Academic concept

We share a common sense in academic concept: the study of music is not only to analyze music itself, but also to explore and interpret related musicians' activities in a given socio-cultural context. Moreover, the study of music has shifted its academic emphasis from music product to a group of people who are involved into the music-making activities, such like composer, performer and consumer. This new trend reflects an impact received from the field of Social Science, especially from Anthropology, Ethnology, Linguistics, Sociology and Cultural Study. "Musicology" in a renowned publication "New Grove Music and Musicians Dictionary" is describes like this: in fact, the entire function of musicology will be Ethnomusicology. Therefore, under the influence of Ethnomusicology, the role of Musicology is undergoing an unprecedented change. The study of music will not anymore be confined as music form analyzing, especially not limited as a focus on western classical music. All musics and related people, their societies and cultures will be the future central academic focus. Thus, Ethnomusicology serves as a leading force in the disciplinary development, remolding traditional understanding of music.

2 A plan of disciplinary construction

Holding "The disciplinary development of Anthropology of Music in China" as thematic slogan, putting an emphasis on the foundational, cross-disciplinary, visionary and realistic academic idea, keeping in mind with the central goal of "Anthropology of Music in Chinese Vision", we base the research center in Shanghai, root in China, looking toward the outside world, and the disciplinary construction of Anthropology of Music Division, E-Institutes of Shanghai Universities will be followed by the following three guidelines:

1) Ideas and method in research of Anthropology of music in international context — to build up a platform of international academic communication, which

can push forward Chinese scholars to the frontier of international scholarship, build up the foundation of academic exchange and dialogue mechanism, and play an active and leading part in the development of Chinese music circle.

2) Chinese traditional music's audio and video behavior in domestic context — theoretical construction and intellectual property rights protection, such as:

- (1) Establish a “Chinese Ritual Music Research Center”
- (2) Digitalize Chinese traditional ritual music's audio and video materials.
- (3) Build up a traditional Chinese instrumental music electronic database.

3) Urban music culture in Shanghai region — an area case study model. Shanghai is the birthplace of Chinese modern music culture; it is not only the port for western music culture, but also the cradle of music culture of modern China. In the last decade of 20th century, its development, new trend and vitality had made Shanghai become the focus in the field of Anthropology of music in China. The study of Shanghai Urban music culture includes the following two aspects:

(1) Research on Shanghai urban music culture: to start with the examination of the historical trajectory of music culture in Shanghai; to summarize the cultural characteristics of “Shanghai Style of Music” through case study; to interpret the sense of music in the course of urbanization of Shanghai; to establish a research pattern or mode on music cultures in the region of Yangze River Delta--music cultural industry, Yangze River Delta traditional music cultural study.

(2) Strategic role in Shanghai musical culture development: to establish a research group composed by musical experts, scholars in cultural studies, and government leaders; and to propose our constructive suggestion for government decision-making in Shanghai music cultural development.

Under the above three guidelines, with a smooth and extensive academic exchange mechanism, and a series of related fundamental theoretical research, we are going to try our best to make the E-institute the most important research base in the field of Anthropology of music in China within the coming future 10 years of efforts, meanwhile we are doing our best to make it an example in the International tendency of Musical Anthropological Studies for studying musical localization

2008-10