



THE KONGHOU, CHINESE ANCIENT INSTRUMENT'S LEGACY AND MODERN PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

The Konghou, an ancient Chinese plucked string instrument, holds a significant place in Chinese musical heritage and tradition. Once a prominent instrument in imperial courts and folk music, the Konghou gradually declined in use before experiencing a modern revival. This study explores the legacy of the Konghou and its transformation in contemporary music education, emphasizing its role in preserving and promoting Chinese culture. By examining historical records, playing techniques, and its reintroduction into modern pedagogy, this research highlights the Konghou's adaptability in both traditional and contemporary musical contexts. The study also investigates current teaching methodologies, performance practices, and instructional challenges, providing insights into how the Konghou can be effectively integrated into modern music curricula. Through this exploration, the research aims to bridge the gap between the rich traditions of ancient Chinese music and the evolving demands of music education today, ensuring that the Konghou's cultural and artistic value continues to inspire future generations.

Keywords: Konghou; Chinese Ancient Instrument; Legacy and Modern Pedagogy

Introduction

The konghou is an ancient plucked musical instrument in China with a long and profound history. According to research, it has been passed down for over two thousand years. In the passage of thousands of years, they have encountered a fate of prosperity and decline. During the prosperous Tang Dynasty (618-907) in China, with the rapid development of economy and culture, the art of playing konghou reached a considerable level. It was during this period that ancient Chinese konghou were successively introduced to neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. In the temple of Dongliang Daiji in Japan, there are still two remnants of Tang Dynasty konghou preserved to this day. However, this ancient musical instrument ceased to be popular in China in the late 14th century and gradually disappeared. People could only reminisce about the beautiful music that had disappeared from historical time and space through poetry, paintings, sculptures, pottery, and other means. In order to bring back the long-lost musical instruments to the stage, Chinese musicians and instrument makers have conducted extensive research since the 1950s. Based on the records of ancient books and the preserved graphics of ancient murals, they designed and trial produced several types of konghou. However, due to the many shortcomings of these konghou, they were not promoted and circulated. In the early 1980s, a new type of konghou flute - Yanzhu konghou flute - was developed. Its structure is relatively complete and scientific, and its sound system has ethnic characteristics, so it is promoted for music practice (Liu, 2000). But this has also led to many problems in the promotion of konghou.

Popularity: Due to historical reasons, konghou were once a court instrument and were less commonly used among the general public, which limited their popularity among the general population. In addition, after the Yuan Dynasty, due to social and cultural changes, konghou were regarded as a decadent sound and gradually lost. This also makes it difficult for many people to distinguish between konghou and harps.

Difficulty and Cost of Learning: The learning difficulty of konghou is relatively high, requiring long periods of practice and professional guidance. Meanwhile, the cost of konghou is not low, which also increases the learning cost and makes it difficult for ordinary learners to afford. There are few targeted books and no specialized books on basic skills.

Inheritance issue: Although some people have tried to revive konghou konghou, few have the determination to make it a lifelong career, which also leads to a shortage of professional teachers. In addition, there are regional differences in the inheritance and production of konghou, and the independence between the northern and southern factions also hinders their integrated development.

The konghou flute, an ancient musical instrument that left a glorious figure in the history of ancient Chinese music, reached its peak in the Tang Dynasty but ceased to be popular after the 14th century, gradually disappearing.

History of Konghou

The Konghou, also known as Kanhou or Konghou, is a traditional Chinese plucked string instrument. In ancient times, in addition to being used in court music, it was also spread among the people. In ancient times, there were three types of Konghou: the horizontal Konghou, the vertical Konghou, and the phoenix-head Konghou. The strings were usually tied to an open frame and plucked with fingers.

In ancient times, there were three types of Konghou: the horizontal Konghou, the vertical Konghou, and the phoenix-headed Konghou. So, we moved to Nanyue, prayed for Taiyi in the temple, and started to use music and dance, and called singers, and made twenty-five strings and Konghou Qin and Se. From then on. Sima (Western Han Dynasty) Therefore, Sai Nanyue prayed for peace in the temple. Later, he started to use music and dance, called songs, and composed twenty-five strings (Ma, 1986).

The "Tongdian" by Du You of the Tang Dynasty: "Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty asked the musician Hou Diao to make it... According to its shape, it

looks like a Konghou but is small, with seven strings, and it is played with a plectrum like a pipa" This is a lying konghou of the Konghou and Konghou type. From the brick book of the Wei and Jin Dynasties tombs in Jiayuguan, Gansu Province, there are no frets on the panels. The vertical Konghou was introduced from Persia in the Han Dynasty and was later called "Hu Konghou" (He, 2006).

The modern music of Xiang Pipa and the upright konghou comes from the Western Regions and is not a Chinese instrument. According to research, the konghou has a history of more than 2,000 years. In ancient times, in addition to being used by palace bands, the Konghou was also widely circulated among the people. During China's prosperous Tang Dynasty (618-907), with the rapid economic and cultural development, the art of Konghou playing also reached a very high level. It was during this period that the ancient Chinese Konghou was introduced to neighboring countries such as Japan and North Korea. In the Todaiji temple in Nara, Japan, there are still two remnants of the Tang Dynasty Konghou. However, this ancient musical instrument fell out of popularity in the late 14th century and gradually disappeared. People can only see part of the Konghou pattern on the remaining murals and reliefs.

In the Peacock Flies Southeast, it is said that "Thirteen can weave textiles, fourteen learn to tailor clothes, fifteen play the konghou, sixteen recite poetry and calligraphy. Seventeen is a gentleman's wife, and her heart is always miserable. Since you are a government official, , keep the integrity and stick to it. The humble concubine leaves the room empty, and rarely sees each other. The cock crows into the weaving machine, and there is no rest every night. Five pieces are cut off in three days, so the Lord thinks it is too late. If it is not because the weaving is late, it is difficult for the wife of the king! The concubine cannot be driven around and is left with nothing to do. Then I can send my concubine back to me in time." The konghou is mentioned in the poem.

The ancient Konghou can be roughly divided into vertical Konghou and horizontal Konghou. Among them, the early sleeping Konghou appeared in the Chu State in the Spring and Autumn Period. It has the same origin as the guqin, but its long resonance box panel has the same taste as a pipa. This is the main

difference between it and the qin and Konghou in shape; it uses Konghou plucked pieces. Or percussion. The vertical Konghou evolved from the bow of ancient hunters. It is the oldest stringed instrument born with the birth of the earliest human civilization and has a history of more than 5,000 years. You can count the instruments that are older than this on your fingers: stone whistle, bone whistle, bone flute, xun, and ocarina. By 1200 BC, the vertical seal had been basically finalized (there were no major changes for the next two thousand and hundreds of years). Later, it was introduced to Central Asia and India via Persia. It was already popular in Xinjiang, China before the Qin Dynasty. After Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty opened the Western Regions, the vertical seal was slowly introduced to the Central Plains. Phoenix culture is also a worldwide culture. Phoenix, Garuda, and Phoenix are all represented in the vast area from China to Europe.

The konghou was made by the master Yan, and it was a kind of music. Later it came out of the mulberry trees, and was placed on the Puyang River. It was kept by the marquis of the Gaikong Kingdom. The master Juan was the Duke of Jin Pinggu Yan, and Zheng and Wei divided the land. which is called lustful pleasure.

Yingshao Customs. Konghou and Youkanhou According to the Ban Gu (2000) (The Eastern Han Dynasty) : Emperor Xiaowu raced to Nanyue, prayed to Taiyi and Houtu in the temple, and then began to use music. Renhou tunes the music to the music of the Konghou, saying that the music is in harmony with the rhythm. The surname of Hou is Guanzhang'er, or Konghou. If you take it from the sky, the Konghou and Konghou are all empty, so how can it be the only Houye? This theory is true, and the poem goes: Kankangu I am, and the article is also true.

In the Zhenyuan Dynasty, there was a music player in the state of Su. His craftsmanship included two phoenix-headed konghou: one was two feet long, and the belly was seven inches wide. The phoenix head and neck were two feet and five inches long. The surface was decorated with a single leather, and the strings were ten and four, one item has Zhen, the phoenix head is outward-facing; one item has Tiao Zhen.

The Konghou and Konghou are also made according to the Qin system. According to its shape, it looks like a Konghou but is small, with seven strings, and is played with a plectrum, like a pipa. Emperor Ling of the Han Dynasty liked it if he raised the seal. The body is curved and long, with twenty strings and two strings. It is held vertically in the arms and played in unison with both hands. It is commonly known as the Konghou. The phoenix head has a konghou, and there is a neck and a Konghou. Qixian, composed by Zheng Xizi, Kaiyuan Zhongjin. The shape is like that of Ruan Xian, with a lack at the bottom and a large body, and a lack at the sides, so you can take advantage of the body. There are thirteen strings separated by one solitary column, seven combined scattered sounds, ninety-one separated sounds, one column sound, a total of ninety-nine sounds, which correspond to the tune (Du, 1984).

The konghou is the sound of Zheng and Wei, the voice of Quan Yu, and it is the sound of the subjugation of the country. Therefore, it is called the Marquis of Kongguo, and it is also said: There is a song about Gong Wu crossing the river in the ancient Yuefu of Kanhou. In the past, a white-headed man drowned in the river, and he sang in mourning. The girl Liyu was good at playing the konghou, so she wrote this song to express her sorrow. In the first part of Xiantongzhong, there is a Zhang Xiaozhi who has forgotten his name and played the most popular song in ancient and modern times. Now in Western Shu, there is Li Qigao in Taihe, who is also the best. It is planned to introduce the Jiaofang to prevent aging. Although there are thirty people in the Jiaofang, there are only one or two who are capable.

The old sayings are all made like a qin, but the is like a Konghou but smaller. It has seven strings and is played with a wooden plectrum to combine the two changes. Therefore, Yan music has large and small Konghou sounds, and the music is played by each hand, following the strings. It is as clear as the roar of cranes and the clearer sound of jade. However, if it is not a foreign system, the sound of Zheng and Wei is not suitable for Yan music. It may be said that it is taken from the air and called its conjecture (Chen, 1986).

In Korea and other countries, there was the music of erecting and lying down the Konghou, which was introduced to North Korea by Horizigao, the emperor of Jin. Emperor Ling of the Han Dynasty liked this music, and later generations also used it in their teachings.

Originating from Tianzhu, it is made in the shape of a phoenix with a curved neck. In Fulou, Gaochang and other countries, it has a phoenix-headed konghou, and its craftsmanship is quite ingenious.

The Konghou is made of wood, with a broad belly, and a crossbar is placed under the belly, with twenty-four zhen added, and a phoenix beak added to the stigma and head.

The eight-handled Konghou is made of catalpa wood. The body is five inches wide, six inches thick, and four feet eight inches long. The handle is carved with a dragon head, inlaid with a flower board in the middle, carved with a dragon and agarwood, all painted with gold and agarwood, and attached with ebony. The lead is tied with twenty strings, and the leader is placed horizontally underneath. The dragon head is painted with gold and agarwood. It is two feet and two inches long. Five minutes, with twenty ebony shafts on it, and a column hand in the middle, made of ebony, with two ends of Konghou joints, carved dragon heads painted with gold, one foot and two inches long, and five minutes of sui thread hanging from the two dragon heads.

Konghou Teaching Methods

Basic Skills Training Method: Posture training: Teachers will demonstrate and explain to students the correct piano holding posture, sitting posture, or standing posture, ensuring that all parts of the body are in a comfortable and conducive state for playing, such as naturally relaxing arms and not shrugging shoulders.

Finger practice: Various finger techniques are practiced individually, and teachers will demonstrate slow movements, decompose movements, and other

methods to allow students to clearly see the trajectory and force application of their fingers, and then have them repeat the practice.

Score recognition teaching: Select appropriate score examples based on students' foundation, starting from simple monophonic melodies and gradually transitioning to complex chords and rhythmic patterns. Teachers will combine actual performance with students, allowing them to play while reading the score, cultivating their sight-reading ability (Cui, 2010).

Music Teaching Method: Gradual selection of songs: Select songs based on students' skill levels and learning progress, starting with simple exercises such as "Little Star" and gradually transitioning to more difficult classic songs such as "Xiangfei Bamboo".

Segmented and refined teaching: Divide the song into several paragraphs and teach them one by one. Analyze the performance techniques, emotional expression, rhythm characteristics, etc. of each section, so that students can first master each section proficiently, and then perform the overall coherent performance.

Practical teaching method: Classroom performance practice: Arrange students to perform in the classroom, allowing them to play in front of classmates and teachers, exercise their psychological qualities and stage performance, and receive timely feedback and guidance from teachers.

Stage performance practice: Organize students to participate in various performance activities, such as concerts, cultural evenings, etc., allowing students to accumulate performance experience in actual stage environments, improve their performance skills and coping abilities.

The Problems During Performance

Finger pain or calluses: Beginners' fingers may not adapt to the intensity and frequency of playing, which can easily lead to this problem. The playing posture and force application method should be adjusted to ensure that the fingers

naturally bend and touch the strings with the fingertips, avoiding excessive force. It is also possible to reduce exercise time appropriately, give your fingers enough rest, and relieve symptoms through finger massage, hot compress, and other methods.

String pitch deviation: Check whether the string position and hand shape are accurate by practicing targeted basic skills and music. If the uneven tension of the new piano strings leads to pitch problems, multiple presses and tuning are required to achieve stable tension. Before the performance, stretch the strings to achieve rapid and stable adjustment of string tension.

Unstable rhythm: Practice with a metronome, starting at a slow pace such as 60 beats per minute, steadily playing simple rhythmic patterns, gradually becoming familiar with them, and then increasing the speed. Cultivate a sense of stable rhythm. Complex rhythmic patterns can also be broken down and practiced separately before being played in a coherent manner. It is also necessary to strengthen the training of inner beat sense, silently counting the beats while playing. You can also practice imitating the rhythm by listening to some clear paced Jingqu and imitating its rhythm.

Thin tone: Check if it is due to improper angle and depth of finger touch on the string. If the tone is muffled, blurred, or has noise, it may be due to improper string position, angle, or intensity. It should be adjusted to a suitable angle between the fingers and the strings, generally 30 to 45 degrees, and the depth of touch should be just enough to sound the strings without producing any noise. At the same time, check if there are any foreign objects blocking the resonance box on the piano body. Cleaning it can improve the sound quality. You can also try adjusting the string touch point to make the sound brighter near the piano code and softer away from it; Adjust the angle of the string touch to make the sound full at the appropriate angle; Control the intensity and apply precise force according to the requirements of the song. At the same time, strengthen the strength and speed training of finger plucking, try different ways of exerting force during practice, and find the method that can make the strings vibrate fully. You can also consider replacing the strings with better quality ones (Cui, 2010).

New Knowledges

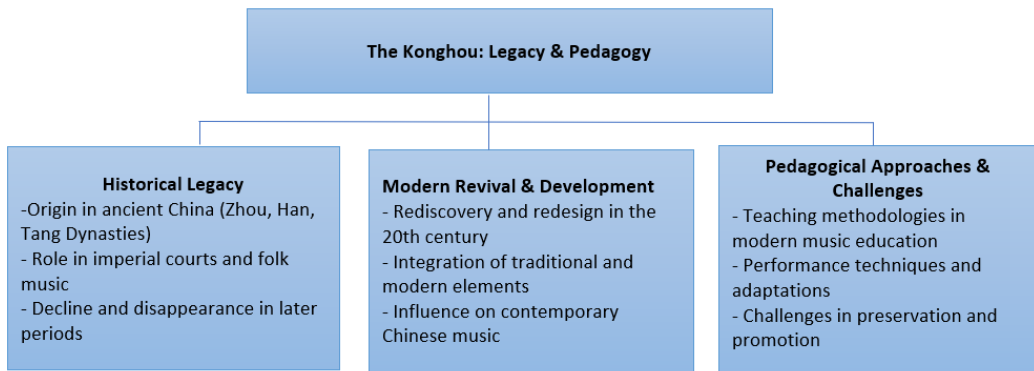


Figure 2.8: New Knowledges Diagram of Konghou, Chinese Ancient Instrument's Legacy and Modern Pedagogy.

Conclusions

The konghou, an ancient Chinese plucked string instrument with over two thousand years of history, flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) but gradually disappeared in the late 14th century. Initially used in both court and folk music, it evolved into three types: horizontal, vertical, and phoenix-headed. Historical records and artifacts indicate its influence in neighboring countries like Japan and Korea. Despite efforts to revive it since the 1950s, challenges such as its complexity, high learning costs, and lack of instructors hinder widespread adoption. Modern teaching methods focus on posture training, score reading, and stage performance practice, but issues like finger strain, pitch instability, and rhythm inconsistencies persist.

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