

INTRODUCTION TO THE QIN :

1. Instrument: Classification and contemporary morphological description

a. Classification

Qin belongs to the zither family, is also called Gu qin, Yao qin, Yu qin, seven-string qin. Its origin is hidden in remote ancient times in China, there are different records about qin's origin in different books. It's As written in the Preface of the book *History of Qin* (《琴史》Zhu Changwen1039-1098, Song Dynasty.), "qin as an instrument, starts from Ancient times, After the invention of qin, emperors from different dynasties inherited and improved this instrument(琴之为器，起于上皇之世，后圣承承，益加润饰)", and "Music starts from Fu Xi makes qin. (自伏羲作琴，而乐由此兴)" From the writings in ancient Chinese treatises, we can see that the origin of qin starts from an early time. In Li Ji, "Shun made a qin with five strings, to sing *Nan Feng* (昔者舜作五弦之琴，以歌南风)". [Nan Feng is the chapter in *the Book of Songs*, concluding the poems from the folk in Ancient Times.] The poems in *the Book of Songs* also write, "Gentle and graceful is the girl, he'd like to wed her, the qin and se (an instrument) playing." And "(椅桐梓漆，爰伐琴瑟)" [feel I need to [write a little more here](#)]

b. Morphology

Qin is an instrument about 8 feet and 1 inch. It's made by two wood boards joined together. The top one is rounded, and the bottom is heavier and flat. The tradition of qin making uses the wood of wu tong (梧桐) and shan mu (杉木). As the qin player sits facing the instrument, on the right hand, there is the qin bridge. Qin also has seven strings fixed on the tuning pegs and thirteen Huis on the cover wood. Qin's tuning is based on pentatonic scales. At the back of the qin, there is a dragon pond and two pillars. Qin use silk strings at the beginning. The sound quality of silk string is soft and clear. Later on, the strings change to metal in 1999. On a concert held in Hong Kong by De Yin Qin Society, this is the first-time used metal strings. (Wong Shu-Chee: Through Qin Strings, inquiring about the Guqin's Past and Future Path of Development) The top of qin is always covered by five different layers of lacquer. Deer horn powder is considered as one of the best lacquer materials. Over time, the lacquer on the top of qin would appears different crack patterns, called duan wen (断纹). The duan wen can be snake belly cracks, toroise back cracks, plum blossom cracks, cow hair cracks, flowing water cracks, and ice cracks.

c. Cultural meaning of the morphology

Qin is an instrument that is closely associated with culture and aesthetics. The more one learns about this instrument, the more qin reveals its stories through history through its music.

The making and tuning of qin represent the "the Unity of the Heaven and the human being (天人合一)." The shape of qin that the upper wood board is round and the bottom board is more angular is related to ancient Chinese cosmology -- -- "the circular heaven and square earth (天圆地方)".

2. The notation of guqin

The notation of guqin is called the "notation of the simplified Chinese characters (减字谱)," which means "the notation of abbreviated Chinese characters." For the reason that it uses the symbols which are constituted by wholesome or parts of different Chinese characters.

a. explanation of the notation

There are two parts of each character of the guqin notation. The upper part indicates the articulations of the left hand; while the lower part indicates the playing techniques of the right hand. The fret positions are important elements for the indication of right hand's playing techniques of guqin notation. The upper right part of the simplified character from guqin notation indicates which fret to posit the right hand. There are thirteen frets on a guqin. Frets are also called "Hui (徽)." The upper left part of the character on the notation indicates which finger of left hand to play. The articulations of left hand are always related to which specific string needs to be plucked. Guqin has seven strings, which count from the farthest to the nearest, from the thickest to the tinnest strings. These seven strings are called by the numbers from one to seven. Their Chinese characters are written as "一、二、三、四、五、六、七." Except the fundamental hand gesture information provided by the simplified characters, there are lots of articulations of right hand and left hand (the articulations of left hand appear on the upper part; while the right hand shows up on the lower part of the character.)



Illustration of simplified character from guqin notation

b. the history of guqin notation

2. ???

(1) hand gesture related to sound body

For guqin playing, the right hand pluck different strings, while the left hand use different fingers to press down the string (which right hand plucked) on different hui position to add extended sound effect.

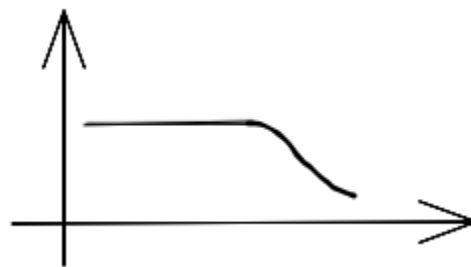
In guqin music, each note demonstrate the whole process of the generation and decay of the sound.

I want to cateforize guqin sound into three types: open-string notes, pressed-strong notes, and harmonic notes.

a. open-string notes

Open-stiring notes are played by the right hand. There are 8 basic right hand articulations: pie (using the thumb to pluck towards the player on the string), tuo (using the thumb to pluck outwards the player on the string), mo (using the index finger to pluck towards the player on the string), tiao (using the index finger to pluck outwards the player on the string), gou (using the middle finger to pluck towards the player on the string), ti (using the middle finger to pluck outwards the player on the string), da (using the ring finger to pluck towards the player on the string), zhai (using the ing finger to pluck outwards the player on the string).

In this case, the sound of open-string note [need to write more here]



ADSR of open-string sound

b. pressed-string notes

The left hand's gesture corresponding to the decorated stretched sound. Two most common articulations of the left hand gesture which are called Yin (吟) and Nao (猱). The definitions of Yin and Nao from Chen Yujian in Song dynasty are:

"Yin: use the left thumb where the nail and the muscle meet (on the right side of thumb nail) and press down a string and swing it. The sound is like a leftover sound reverberation from a bell. The rest of the fingers are the same. Another saying is that maybe only use nail and that is called Yin. For example, left thumb presses down on the 9th dot and the right hand plucks the 3rd string then Yin, which means once the 3rd string is plucked, use the area where the nail meets the muscle and move back and forth without stopping, and the distance is half an inch up then down, very tiny swinging (vibrato). When the vibrato is not stopping, it is called walking Yin

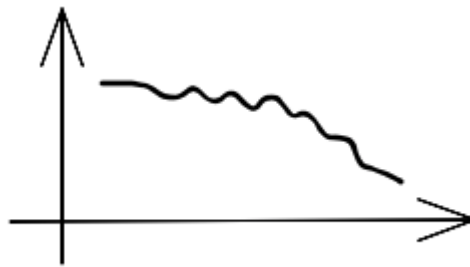
(走吟 walking vibrato). If it is called “slight vibrato” (微吟), one must do it in a very relaxed manner. If it is called “muscle vibrato” (肉吟), only use the side muscle of the thumb joint, and softly make the vibrato on a hui position.

Rò Yín (muscle vibrato): same as above, produced from the side of thumb joint. Valuing its finals and reverberation distance.

Náo: Stretch the sound by going up and down called “Náo”. The momentum is like spring thunder and flying lightning, valuing its smooth movement without any hesitation. “Walking Náo” (走揉) is that the up and down movement produced and the sound is created, then wait for about a second and do the up and down movement again. Another saying is that the Náo (the Chinese character here changes to 揉 需 which is pronounced Ró) is using muscle instead of nail. For example, Dà Jiǔ Dǎ Èr Ró (thumb pressed down at 9th dot and right hand plucked 2nd string and Ró) means when the string is plucked, move the thumb by using its right side of the joint muscle, up a little bit and then rapidly move down to the hui position, slightly make one sound. If rapidly move up and down without heading and ending, it is called “Chuò Ró” (綽 揉). If doing Yín first then doing Náo later, it is called Yín Náo (or Yín Ró 吟 揉), also called “Huàn” (喚). Which to use is all depending on its appropriate situation.”

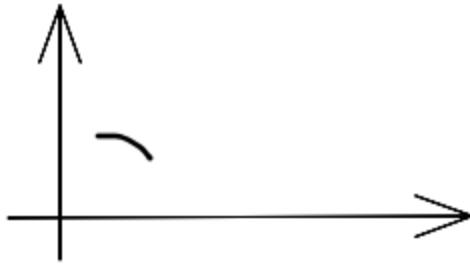
From Chen Yujian's definition, one can tell that there are different types of Yin and Nao according to slight difference.

In this case, the sustain of the pressed-string sound is extended by the left hand articulations -- Yin and Nao.



ADSR of pressed-string sound

c. harmonic notes



ADSR of armonic sound

(2) the cultural meaning behind the gesture

As guqin is the symbol of Chinese literati class, different hand gestures are related to different cultural meanings and metaphors. From the illustrations from Taiyin Daquanji and Xinkan Taiyin Daquanji. The hand gestures we discuss above, also corresponding to the sceneries in the natural world.

The metaphor behind pi and tuo is:

From myriad cavities there is furious howling.

There is a crane on the ridge. It stands by itself, with its awesome physique.

It is about to fly off, about to soar.

Suddenly it cries out, startling people.

The sound is mournful.



Illustration of pi and tuo

The metaphor behind the articulation Nian (means using two fingers to pick and lift a string) is:
 The cool autumn breezes suddenly arrive.
 The wild brown goose arrives as a guest.
 It grasps a ruyi plant to the south.
 It seems to be going there relying on ren (which is a southern place)
 It can avoid going through the passes and abandon.
 He transmits his sad sound, which moves people.



Illustration of nian

The metaphor of mo, li, fu and du says:
 Cranes crying in nine bends of the marsh.
 The sound can be heard throughout the wilds.
 The light sound luo luo (means "elegant music"),



Illustration of mo, li, fu and du

(3) the learning tradition

The learning process of guqin evolving imitating the hand gestures from the guqin master, and resiting the hand gestures. The teaching and learning process of guqin is called "kou chuan xin shou", which means "oral transmission and teaching from the heart." This chinese idiom refers to the most common method of qin learning that one always copy his or her teacher.

(4) related to performance

The Chinese word "dapu" refers to the interpreting process of the guqin score.

Guqin notation is very different from western notation system. Western notation systems are generally viewed as prescriptive. nowadays the difference of each performances are timbre, velocity

[i think you can also talk about the difference of the role of composer and player here]



illustration of dapu process

3. composition with hand gestures?

Notes of March 1:

difference of what making music means

double reality of symbols and gestures

yourself embody the whole creative activity

the definition of music --the ideology of guqin

two lists: european compenonts of music: score, composer

chinese lists

find out corresponding points there

what is important in the sound, is it sound only--

How chinese person embody the western music

why chinese qin master is recognized by their phylosophy not hteir music

the harmony of Chinese music is different, and western harmony
different notions of ideology of creativity
time, in your language, you don't have tenses
how do you deal with time-- time has function

Notes:

hand gestures

how the symbols translate to gestures

find representative several examples of relationship between hand gestures and notations

In Europe, they hide gestures behind the notation; in Chinese, each gesture has a name and they notated it

notation for gesture is only an aural

In China, it is part of language

What is the difference of composing with or without gestures

Learning Objectives:

I want to study the gestural meaning behind guqin notation.

The notation of guqin is called the "notation of the simplified Chinese characters (减字谱)." For the reason that it uses the symbols which are constituted by wholesome or parts of different Chinese characters. This notation system is so different for the reason that the notation itself indicates the hand gestures, not pitch or rhythms. In fact, there are no indications of pitches and rhythms on the score, but

only hand gestures. For years and years, it is a mystery why the notation system of guqin has no information of pitches and rhythms. It is also a mystery that fascinates so many guqin players how to interpret the rhythms based on the guqin notation system. I want to discuss the possible reasons based on the gestural theory behind the guqin notation system. Also, I want to discover what guqin notations that based on gestures can inspire music researches and compositions nowadays.

Methods and Research Used

I will study the reading materials about gesture theory on music, and discuss the reading materials with Prof. Guerrino. I also want to apply gestural study on guqin playing technique.

Results to be Evaluated

I will write a research paper as the outcome of this direct study.