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COMMENT ON “THE CIVILIZATIONAL RETURN OF EASTERN “RITES AND MUSIC” AND WESTERN “ETHICS” IN MODERN MUSIC EDUCATION”

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Archaeological evidence, over the years, has proven that the most primitive music, in ancient China, is closely connected to witchcraft and religion. In the primitive era, music was an original witchcraft and ritual form of religious sacrifice in the world’s many parts. As witchcraft evolved into religion, “rites” gradually became divorced from “music”. By the Western Zhou Dynasty, “music” became a part of “rites”, and this is where the oriental ritual and music civilization began. In the essay, Li (2024) makes a detailed and precise discussion of the rites and music civilization in the Zhou Dynasty, but rarely mentions the content of early music education. In fact, during the Zhou Dynasty, China’s music culture and music education had made significant progress.

Music education, in the Zhou Dynasty, was the earliest systematic music education in China. Music education, in this period, did not exist as an independent system, but it was integrated into the education of “rites” and was conducted under the constraints of “rites”. It can also be said that the music education of the Zhou Dynasty was set up for the education of rites. The education of “rites” and the education of “music” are an interconnected and inseparable whole. Education, in the Zhou Dynasty, can be divided into several aspects, such as “rites, music, archery, imperial examinations, calligraphy, and mathematics”. Among them, “rites” and “music” were regarded, by the rulers, as crucial links in education, and they were

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regarded as system for governing the country. To implement the rites and music system, the Zhou Dynasty established Chunguan, the first rites and music institution in Chinese history. There are more than 1,400 music officials, in the Chunguan, who are responsible for music education, teaching music skills and engaging in other music affairs, such as chief musicians and musicians. They were all professionally trained musicians at the time and had a clear division of labor. The chief musicians' function is recorded in the *Rites of Zhou* as follows: "Chief musicians are in charge of the teaching methods of the university, establishes and manages the decrees of the kingdom's schools, and gathers the princes to study in the school." (Liu, 2014, p. 69). The general meaning is: chief musicians should use "Chengjun" (one of the "universities" in the Zhou Dynasty) as the norm (standard) to govern the country's music education so that it meets the royal family's children's needs. It can be said that music education, in the Zhou Dynasty, was not only about teaching vocalization and performance skills, but its real purpose was to use music as a means to ultimately achieve the goals of inner education and changing customs. Therefore, the rites and music education, in the Zhou Dynasty, also had a highly ethical and political nature.

During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, the rites and music system gradually collapsed, and music education thought was mainly divided into two schools: Confucianism and Taoism. Confucian music education thought emphasized humanism, while Taoism advocated naturalism. Humanism, represented by Confucius, emphasizes caring for people's individuality. It can be seen, from Confucius's advocacy of "education without discrimination", that humanism advocates freedom and equality, and it is a philosophical trend and world view that advocates the embodiment of self-worth. Taoism, represented by Laozi, advocates the natural expression of emotions. From a philosophical perspective, naturalism, in a broad sense, advocates the philosophical trend of using natural causes or natural principles to explain all phenomena. Confucian humanism and Taoist naturalism seem to be in conflict, but internally, they both focus on improving one's own cultivation through music education, and their goal is to achieve one's own inner transformation through music education.

Music education thought, in ancient times, was based on the philosophical view of Chinese civilization. This philosophical view exists from a related and holistic point of view. Therefore, this organic whole concept exists in music education thought. He believes that music and people, music and politics, music and social life are all interconnected and interdependent. Since the Zhou Dynasty, the establishment of rites has led to strong hierarchies in people's minds and even in all aspects of life. Rites in all aspects, from food, clothing to music, cannot be overstepped. In this kind of ritual culture, what it brings to people is not only a strong hierarchical thinking habit, but also a strong political color. The rites and music culture are to establish a balanced relationship between music and rites, and their essence is strict division of classes. Ye Lang pointed out in *A General History of Chinese Aesthetics*:

Behind all sensual pleasures, there is more or less a consciousness of hierarchical status. This worldly utilitarian orientation and strict and detailed regulations are certainly the opposite of the free aesthetic spirit, but inevitably become a necessary condition for understanding Chinese aesthetic activities. (Ye, 2014, p. 117).

Zhou Gong’s “making rites and music” established a music education culture with hierarchy as its core, which was to realize the society’s hierarchical order through people’s rich and true emotional expression.

Confucian culture has become the mainstream of Chinese culture in later generations. The return of “Oriental rites and music”, advocated by Li (2024), also refers to the return of Eastern rites and music under Confucian culture. In order to understand what kind of rites and music culture created the music ethics, advocated by Li (2024), it is necessary to trace the ideological roots of Confucian culture.

As a historical and cultural phenomenon, Confucian culture also has its own processes of emergence, development and transition. The historical mainstream of Confucian culture is represented by the original period, the Classical period, the Neo-Confucian period and the returning period. Different periods show different aspects. Confucianism, in the pre-Qin period, had original characteristics and focused on social moral practice. Its value orientation focused on the cultivation of human nature and ethical and moral behavior, and ideologically respected benevolence and justice, loyalty and forgiveness, etiquette and music, and moderation. The Han Dynasty was the era of Confucian classics. Dong Zhongshu elevated Confucianism to a “supreme” status, and a large number of ethical practices took place. Neo-Confucianism, in the Song and Ming dynasties, made a new elucidation of the Confucian and Mencius traditions to reconstruct Confucius’ and Mencius’ “tradition”. Its value orientation was “the cultivation of human ethics and mind”. Although different periods had their own emphases, the basic nature was the same. In terms of its nature, Confucian culture is the study of “mind” and its spiritual side, which is manifested in the comprehension of thoughts and self-awareness. It is different from experiential knowledge, which originates from practice and reasoning.

In addition, Confucianism, as a science of education, aims to educate people and achieve the ideal personality advocated by Confucianism. In different eras, the content and focus of Confucian education are different: Pre-Qin Confucianism focused on cultivating personality. Han and Song Confucianism emphasized rites, justice and principles. Modern Confucianism requires enlightening people’s wisdom, etc. In short, the connotation of Confucianism is extremely rich, including politics, morality, life and other aspects. But no matter what aspect of education, it is inseparable from the education of rites and music. Confucian music thought can even be referred to as “music education”. Confucian music education is actually Chinese cultural education. From the content point of view, it includes

language education, history education, behavioral education, emotional education, aesthetic education and other aspects. It can be seen from the works of the past dynasties, such as *The Rites of Zhou*, *The Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Hanshu*, *The Great Learning* and other works that Confucianism “teaches human relations, father and son have relatives, monarch and minister have righteousness, and husband and wife have distinctions”. The responsibility of education is to have a relationship between elders and children, and to have faith among friends.” Most of the remarks, in *The Analects of Confucius*, are to teach people to become gentlemen, aiming to improve their inner qualities and improve their overall self-cultivation. Of course, there must be a support to improve the inner quality, that is, the influence and infection of poetry, books, rites, music and other aspects, which prove that the essence of Confucian rites and music culture is a kind of ethical education to advocate benevolence and teach people to be good.

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