

The Philosophy in the Ancient Chinese Musical Instrument- Guqin

Geng Yanxia

Ph.D of Center for Chinese and South-East Asian Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Abstract

Guqin is one of China's oldest and most revered musical instruments, which was listed as one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of the world by UNESCO in 2003. It is deeply embedded in the Chinese culture that to embrace an all-encompassing moral philosophy known as the *Dao* (道) of *qin* or "the Way of the *qin*." This ideology which contains a large sense of living philosophy is to be explored in this article, mainly from the traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism, Buddhism and native Chinese Taoism.

Keywords: Chinese Philosophy, Ancient, instrument, *guqin*

Introduction

As early as in the primitive times, Chinese people began to use musical instruments, which has evolved today into three main types--- wind, string, percussion, categorized by the way they are played. The string instruments could also be divided into two types: the one is two-stringed represented by *er-hu* (二胡), *jinhu*, (京胡) etc.; the other is represented by *guqin* (古琴) and *guzheng* (古筝), played unconventionally by plucking the strings with fingers.

Guqin is one of China's oldest and most revered musical instruments, which was listed as one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of the world by UNESCO in 2003, also named as seven-stringed *qin* or *sitong* (丝桐), etc., with a history of over 3000 years. In Chinese history there are significant body of literary works, ancient stories and theories related to it.



A famous Tang Dynasty (618–907) qin, the "九霄环佩"¹
(Source: Google Images)

¹ The most famous but still playable old *guqin*, made by the famous late Tang dynasty *qin* maker Lei Wei (雷威). It is kept in the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing.

Records indicate that it has been a favorite of the literati for more than 2500 years; Confucius himself was a great lover of the instrument. Over centuries, it became a representative of the life, taste and pastime of the Chinese literati. In addition to its contribution to solo and orchestral musical arrangements, a wealth of symbolic meaning also accrued to it over time. Not only was the knowledge of the instrument reserved for the literati, but its learning was also believed to be conducive to meditation and have an ability to facilitate intellectual enlightenment.

The *guqin* is so deeply embedded in the Chinese culture that to study it is to embrace an all-encompassing moral philosophy known as the *Dao* (道) of *qin* or “the Way of the *qin*,” essentially a lifestyle of moderation (中庸), self-cultivation and decorum. A sincere follower of “the Way of the *qin*” does not seek fame but, like Boya², prefers a select audience of fragrant pines, craggy peaks, swirling mists and the occasional discerning human if he can not find a bosom friend who can truly understand his sound like Ziqi. Indeed, a true *guqin* devotee does not have to play the instrument at all. He can simply possess it and appreciate its “soundless music.” He loves *guqin* not just for the music, but also for the ideology—the *Dao* (道) of *qin* which contains a large sense of living philosophy.

I. The Sound of Heaven

As we know, music has been an important part of Chinese people’s life since the ancient times. There are several

legends about the origin of the character “*Yue*” (Music)



. One is that the upper part of the character resembles silk and the lower part is the wood. Another legend goes that the upper part looks like drums, and the wood is the wooden support base. But whatever maybe the origin of the character, we can see the relationship between Music and *guqin*.

The music of *guqin* well represents the traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts about the relationship between the heaven, earth and man. In Chinese, “*gu*” means old and “*qin*” means “musical instrument”. Its long narrow body is made of two pieces of boards at the top with the bottom glued together. There is a great deal of symbolic connotation surrounding the instrument. For example, it measures “三尺六寸五分” (Three Chinese feet and six and half inches), to symbolize the 365 days of the year. The 13 holes or mother-of-pearls (灰位) inlaid along the outer edge represents the 13 months of the lunar year; the upper surface is rounded, representing the sky, and the bottom is flat, representing the earth. This is because ancient Chinese believed that the sky was round and the earth was flat (天圆地方). The three different tones of *guqin*: *fanyin* (泛音), *anyin* (按音), *sanyin* (散音), represents the heaven, earth and man (天,地,人) separately. Therefore, the performance of *guqin* signifies the union of the three.

Meanwhile, the five strings of the earliest *qin* symbolize the five elements: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. (金、木、水、火、土). Around the 11th century BC when Bo Yikao (伯邑考), the eldest son of King Wen (周文王), first ruler of the Zhou Dynasty died, the Emperor added a sixth string to mourn his son’s death; thus the sound of the sixth string is sorrowful. The seventh string was added by the second Zhou ruler, King Wu (周武王), to inspire his soldiers when his country went to war; so the tone of this string is very strong and inspiring.

² Boya: was a *qin* player from the Spring and Autumn period or the Warring States period. He is associated with the *guqin* pieces *Gao Shan* 《高山》 (“high mountains”) and *Liu Shui* 《流水》 (“flowing water”). Ziqi was his friend who could truly understand and resonate with his music.

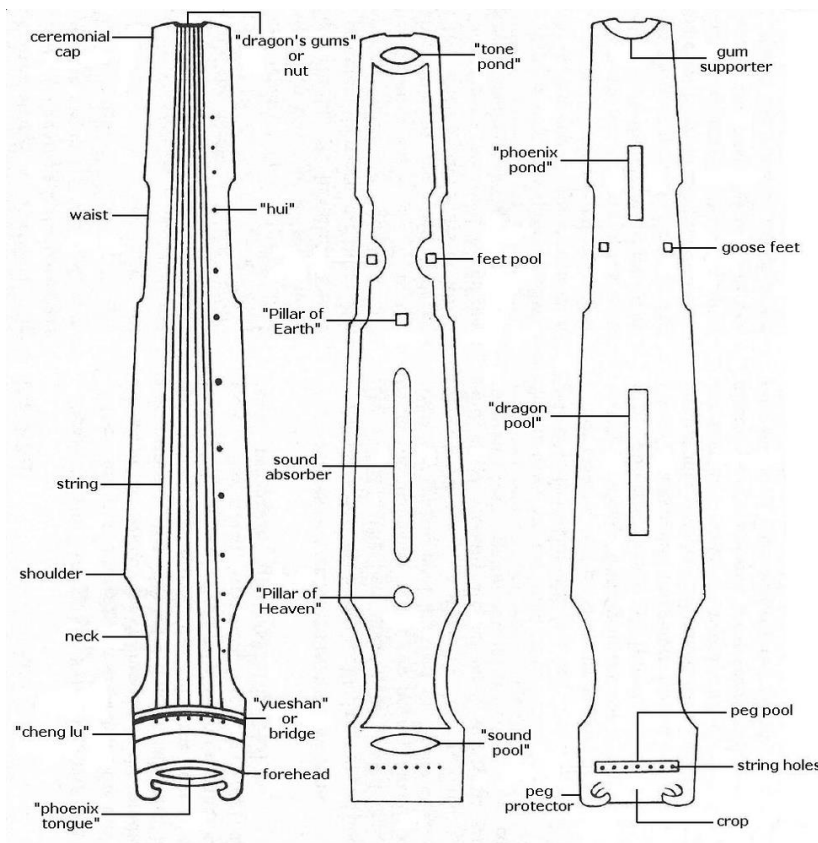


Fig. 2.1: Names of different points at the front, inner and rear sides of *guqin*
(Source: Google Images)

Therefore, *guqin* was believed to be the instrument best able to link man and the cosmos, to harmonize heaven and earth; some even claim it could summon ghosts, cure diseases, make birds dance and fish fly. In many ancient documents, the idea that *guqin* comes from the heaven and earth has been recorded. It actually comes from the simple traditional Chinese philosophy, that is “man is an integral part of Nature” (天人合一). The sound of *guqin* is the sound of heaven, which reflects the relationship between man and heaven. There are many ancient works discussing this aspect.

In the book of *The Sound from Ancient Times* (《太古遗音》), it is said that the origin of *guqin* is from the heaven and earth.³

Cai Yong (蔡邕 133–192) in the Eastern Han dynasty (东汉), once said : *qin* is the most proper sound between the earth and heaven.⁴

Ji Kang (嵇康 224–263), the poet of the Wei and Jin period puts it in his works of “*Qin Fu*”(《琴赋》): *Qin* can bring the heaven and earth to harmony (感天地以致和) .

Fan Zhongyan (范仲淹 989–1052) of the Song dynasty once said: It is said that the sages play the *qin* in harmony with heaven and earth thus harmonizing the world.⁵

³ 昔者，伏汤氏之亡天下也，仰以观法于天地，远取诸物，近取诸身，始画八卦，扣桐有音，削之为琴。

⁴ 琴者天地之正音，得其材可以合天地之正器，得其人可以合天地之正道，得其律可以合天地之正音。故伏羲制琴以象天地阴阳之数，而合神明之德，是谓正音。

⁵ 《与唐处士书》，盖闻圣人之作琴也，鼓天地之和而和天下。琴之道大乎哉。

Su Jing (苏璟 1810—?) of the Qing dynasty, also put it : *qin*, an instrument, having the original sounds of earth and heaven, nurtures the virtue of moderation and harmony, and possesses the delicacy of “*Dao*”, therefore the player’s heart goes beyond the material world and the music conforms to the Nature. Then the subtlety of music is hard to be described and understood. And only the one who plays it can experience it.⁶

Furthermore, the thoughts of *qin* emphasizes the combination between the Nature and emotion (情景合一), which is also one of the traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, and subordinates the idea of the man and Nature . For example, whether you are playing and listening to the tune of *Gaoshan and Liushui* (《高山》《流水》), you should experience the vivid natural scenes of the high mountains and flowing waters. That is just the starting of the friendship between Boya and Ziqi.

Thus, from these observations we can see that the ideas of heaven, earth, man, and *guqin* are all just one embodiment of the traditional Chinese philosophical ideas as well as the simple aesthetics. “Man is an integral part of Nature ”. They also represent the traditional Chinese philosophical concept of dualism : *Yin* and *Yang*, which will be discussed later under *Guqin* and the Traditional Chinese Medicine.

II. *Guqin* and Confucianism

As we have discussed in the last chapter, the core of Confucianism is its thoughts of rites and virtue. The culture of Rites and Music is the ideal form of the Chinese culture, the nature of it is the pursuit for moderation and harmony, whether in the governance of the countries by emperors or in the cultivation of individuals.

Guqin as the major form of music in ancient China was used as a method by the governor or sages to regulate the whole society. One of the three legendary emperors *Shun* (舜) once played *qin* and sung the *Song of Southern Wind* (《南风歌》) to consolidate his power.⁷ After all, *guqin* was just a musical instrument, how can it play such an important role and has so huge impact on the society? This question has been raised numerous times since the ancient times, and it is best answered by Zhu Changwen (朱长文) in the book *The History of Qin* (《琴史》): “In the time of stability, when people are happy, music could harmonize everything. While in the time of turbulence, people are worried, and music can increase the calamity.”⁸ *Guqin* was said to be not only containing all the sounds between earth and Nature, and examining the stability or turbulence in the country; but it was the prosperity and reflection of the eight sounds⁹ and the king of all the music.¹⁰ This is the reason why Confucianism puts *guqin* at the first place among the eight types of sounds, and regards it as something that embraces all the music. Certainly, here the music means the elegant one and that of the orthodox.

According to the Confucian ideas, *guqin* is the instrument of the Holy Sages; and is the foremost musical instrument that carries the orthodox culture of China. Since the music and rites are the core of Confucianism, it is

⁶ 《春草堂琴谱之鼓琴八则》，琴，器也，具天地之元音，养中和之德性，道之精微寓焉，故鼓琴者，心超物外，则音合自然，而微妙有难言者，此际正别有会心耳。

⁷ 舜为天子，弹五弦琴，歌南风之诗而天下治。

⁸ 治平之世，民心熙悦，作乐足以格和气；暴乱之世，民心愁蹙，作乐可以速灾祸。 Zhu Changwen, *The History of Qin*, Nangjing: Jiangsu Phoenix Publisher , 2017, p.52.

⁹ The eight sounds refer to an ancient Chinese system of classifying musical instruments into eight materials as metal, stone, earth, leather, silk, wood, cucurbit and bamboo, (金、石、土、革、丝、木、匏、竹). Sometimes these were also used other than with a figurative or idiomatic meaning of music.

¹⁰ 琴，可以包天地万物之声，可以考民物治乱之兆，是为八音之兴，众乐之统也。 Zhu Changwen, *The History of Qin*, Nangjing: Jiangsu Phoenix Publisher , 2017, p.1.

not a common art form or skill, it has two social functions: one is that it carries the mission of ethical education and plays the function of political governance. And the other one is gentlemen playing it to nurture the essence of harmony and cultivation in themselves. Those who play the *qin* would first have to know the requirements of rites, aiming to fulfill the rites not just for the individual happiness.¹¹ That is to say, the macro function is to help regulate the society and in micro way to help the individual to nurture his nature. Playing the *guqin* means the player should restrict themselves not allowing oneself to do any evil thing and keep the calmness and nobility all the time, and reach the final aim of cultivation, which also fits the claim that Confucianism asserts over all the scholars or the literati. “穷则独善其身而不失其操，达则兼济天下无不通畅”¹² That is why we can see many names of the *guqin* tunes as *cao* (操) or *chang* (畅).

On the other hand, the thoughts of being “moderate, just, mild, and harmonious” (中正平和) is the aesthetic standards of *guqin* music which greatly reflects the Confucian thoughts, especially the idea of the Golden Mean (中庸之道) and Rites (礼乐思想). In the *Book of Music* (《乐记》), it is said that the music comes from the inner life of a man, so it is serene (乐由中出，故静). Confucianism demands that a man of noble quality should restrain himself to reach benevolence and rites (克己复礼). This feature and demand are compatible with the characteristics of the tone of *guqin*, whose sound is extremely deep and restrained, lower than other musical instruments, and could be heard only in a very serene environment. Meanwhile *guqin* music is something that belongs to heaven. It helps people get the serenity and heavenly nature, which the *qin* can easily help the players to gain.

The Confucianism has been advocating the idea of *rushi* (入世), that means noblemen should adapt to the society and coordinate every aspect in a harmonious way. “Harmony” is the first of the twenty-four features of the music of *guqin* that is summarized by Xu Shangying (徐上瀛) in the book of “*Qin Kuang*” (《琴况》): “The supreme sage of the distant past had his spirit connected with Nature and his virtue in accord with the gods. He nurtured the character of the common people through nurturing his own. Thus, he created the *qin*, with harmony as its foremost characteristic.”¹³ Then he continuously explained the methods to reach the state of harmony. “Playing *guqin* aims for harmony at three levels, namely concordance between strings and fingers, fingers and sounds, and finally, sounds and the spirit. Only in this way can ideal harmony be attained.”¹⁴

Besides, the feature of pentatonicism of *guqin* also reflects such Confucian aesthetic ideas. The five tones of *guqin* “*gong, shang, jue, zhi, yu*” (宫, 商, 角, 徵, 羽)¹⁵, are the five pentatonic scale which fit harmoniously with the

¹¹ “君子之近琴瑟以礼节也，非以恣心也”，(《左传 昭公元年》)。Zuo Qiuming, *Zuo's Annals*, Beijing: Tide Publishing House, 2012, p. 570.

¹² 桓谭,《新论》，Huan Tang, *New Comments*, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014, p.178.

¹³ 明·徐上瀛《琴况·和况》，稽古至圣，心通造化，德协神人，理一身之性情，以理天下人之性情，于是制之为琴。其所首重者，和也。Translated by Xie Junren, *Examine the Rhyme and Search for the Seclusion* (《审律寻幽》), Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing Group, 2016, pp.67- 69.

¹⁴ 明·徐上瀛《琴况·和况》，吾复求其以和者三，曰：弦与指合，指与音合，音与意合。而和至矣。Translated by Xie Junren, *Examine the Rhyme and Search for the Seclusion* (《审律寻幽》), Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing Group, 2016, pp.68- 69.

¹⁵ The scale of Chinese music is mainly pentatonic scale. “*Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu*”, equals do, re, mi, sol, and la separately, the first five strings are of the five sound, the last two repeat the sound of the first two. Cited in Mukherji, Priyadarśī, “India-China Relations: A Journey to the Unexplored Domains of History and Culture”, *Contemporary India*, Vol.2, No.4 (Oct.-Dec. 2003), p.22.

aesthetic standards of being “moderate, just, mild, and harmonious” (中,正,平,和). Meanwhile it also corresponds to hierarchical elements of the metaphysical system and embodies the idea of three cardinal guides (三纲). The five sounds represent five elements in politics that are “emperor, minister, man, affairs and material” (君, 臣, 民, 事, 物). The theme of many tunes also reflect the Confucian thoughts, especially those connected with the famous or legendary persons or historical events. For example, *Song of the Southern Wind* (《南风歌》) and *the Song of the Immortal* (《神人物》), both are expressions or odes to the glory or the harmony of a peaceful society. *Song of King Wen* (《文王操》) is the first song that Confucius learned from his tutor, mainly reflecting the lofty character of King of Wen in the Zhou dynasty, and showing great respect and admiration to those noble persons.

III. Guqin and Taoism

Before the period of Wei and Jin (220-420), Confucianism exercised predominant influence over the *qin* and it used *qin* as an important method in the moral education. Since the period of Wei and Jin, many *guqin* tunes started to directly represent the philosophy of Taoism, such as the idea of “Man and Nature are just one” (天人合一). That is because of the social instability in the period of Wei and Jin, the literati and officials were exasperated with the turmoils of the society and urged the imperial governor to earnestly to find other spiritual moorings. The metaphysical idea of inaction and naturalism (自然无为) of Taoism represented by *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, replenished their spiritual void. So playing *qin* became one of their consolations in their pursuit for escaping politics.

Taoism advocates an attitude of inaction, *chushi* (出世), meaning keeping away from the human society. This differs from Confucianism by not emphasizing rigid rituals and social order, but is similar in the sense that it holds the disciplines for achieving “perfection” by becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the universe called “the way” or “dao”. This kind of consensus reflected on the *guqin* is just the thoughts of 琴道 (*Qin Dao*).

On this aspect Taoism criticized the constrained rites of Confucianism, opposing the function of music just for the dominance of the ruling class. And *Zhuangzi* suggested that playing the *qin* should mainly be for the amusement of the players themselves (鼓琴足以自娱), advocating the simplicity and purity of being natural. So being a recluse or living an idyllic life became the dream of most people. Furthermore it is being inherited today and has already become a great tradition in the Chinese literature and culture.

The pursuit of tranquility and indifference while playing *qin* soon gained popularity. And being light and tranquil has become one of the features of ancient music of elegance. When people are playing the *qin*, what they are pursuing is beyond the sound and words. Tao Yuanming (陶渊明 365—427), the famous idyllic poet in the Eastern Jin dynasty once wrote: “Once knowing the pleasure beyond *qin*, why should we still bother to strive for the sound of strings?”¹⁶ Or the poet Li Bai (李白 701—762) in the Tang dynasty: “The great music forms its tone itself, so just play the five strings of *qin*”.¹⁷

¹⁶ 但识琴中趣, 何老弦上声。It tells the story of the poet Tao Yuanming in Jin dynasty, (陶渊明 365—427), who lived a poor and simple life. At his home there was a *qin* on the wall, every time after he drank with friends, he would pick up the *qin* and played it happily. People doubted the whether the tone was correct. He smiled and answered: “once knowing the pleasure beyond *qin*, why should we still bother to strive for the sound of strings?”

¹⁷ “大音自成曲, 但奏五弦琴。”, from the poem of *Gifting to Brother Ling Hao* (《赠临洛县令皓弟》).

In some sense, all the above have embodied the dialectic thoughts of *Laozi*. The *yin* and *yang*, the existence or non-existence, inaction or action are the typical Taoist philosophic thoughts. “Great music should sound sparse.”(大音希声) is the main musical or aesthetic theory that has been put forth by *Laozi*. The sound of *qin* may sound low or even inaudible, but it endows us with endless imagination and connection to the heart. Whether playing it or listening to it, people could reach a realm of oblivion, forgetting the material world and the body, just as the tune “*Ou Lu Wang Ji*” (《鸥鹭忘机》), literally meaning the gulls forgetting the time and flying freely, but expresses the dreams of the literati of living a free and reclusive life. Another tiny tune called *Xian Weng Cao* (《仙翁操》) similarly describes an old man who achieved “the way” and lived a free and leisurely life.

The modern Chinese philosopher, Feng Youlan (冯友兰 1895–1990) categorized four realms of the traditional Chinese philosophy. The first is the realm of Nature, the second is the realm of utilitarianism, the third is of morality, and the last is the realm of earth and heaven.¹⁸ The thoughts of Taoism mostly belongs to the last one, which is of the relation between earth, heaven and men. *Zhuangzi*, in the chapter *On the Uniformity of All Things* (《庄子·齐物论》), said, “Heaven, Earth and I come into being together, and all things and I are one” (天地与我并生, 而万物与我为一). This kind of metaphysics, is just what the *Qin Dao* and the art of *guqin* wants to present. There is another *guqin* tune called “*Qiu Shui*” (《秋水》), or “*Autumn Flood*”, directly named after the famous article “*Qiu Shui*” of *Zhuangzi*. It tells the story of the *Butterfly Dream*¹⁹ of the Master, expressing a common sentiment and artistic conception with the essay after the Taoist philosophy that is “things and myself or the Nature and people are just one.”

IV. *Guqin* and *Chan*

It could be said that *Qin Dao* is mainly influenced by Confucianism and Taoism. Since Buddhism spread to China in the Han dynasty, it has played such an important role in the Chinese culture, its impact on *guqin* cannot be overlooked, especially the thoughts of *Chan*. Today, while practising *guqin*, the term “*chan qin*” (禅琴), or “*qin chan*” (琴禅) can often be heard.

It is undeniable that Buddhism migrated to China from India. And the well-known *Chan* (Zen) Buddhism is deeply rooted in the Tantric Hindu-Buddhist practices of India. Taoism in China incorporated such practices in its doctrine and eventually Sinicized the components inherited from India.

Chinese Taoist philosophy traces its roots of *Chan* to the Indian practice of *dhyāna* (“meditation”). It could be said that after the Song dynasty, Buddhism in China was known as *Chan*²⁰. The thoughts of *Chan* is the core of Chinese Buddhism. *Chan* Buddhism emphasizes rigorous self-control, meditation-practice, insight into the nature

¹⁸ Feng Youlan (冯友兰), *The History of of Chinese Philosophy*, Shanghai: East China Normal University Publisher, 2011, pp.360-365.

¹⁹ 《庄周梦蝶》 Cf., the translation of Lin Yutang: Once upon a time, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Zhou. Soon I awoke, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming that I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming that I am a man. Between a man and a butterfly there is necessarily a distinction. The transition is called the transformation of material things.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20060423162418/http://www.religiousworlds.com/taoism/cz-text2.html>

²⁰ Cf., Gao Lingyin (高令印), *The General History of Chinese Chan*, Beijing : The Publisher of Religious Culture, 2004, p. 404.

of things. Therefore, the essence of *Chan* is to nurture the mind, which has the same purpose as of practising the *guqin*. Just as Chen Yujian (成玉礪 1111—?) of Northern Song dynasty in his works *On the Qin* (《琴论》) put “playing the *qin* is just like meditation; after years of practice, people feel the sudden enlightenment of knowing all the ways and could accomplish it easily. If the enlightenment could not be achieved, however hard you try, excellence can never be attained”.²¹

Chan points directly to the human mind, to enable people to see their true nature and become Buddhas.²² The sutra of *Chan* holds that without text, waking instantly, the nature is empty, as free as the destiny. In some sense there is some connection with the thoughts of Taoism. A special transmission outside the teachings; not established upon words and letters; directly pointing to the human heart and mind; seeing nature and becoming a Buddha.

By far we have discussed a lot about the function of *guqin* like helping the governance of the ruling class, and to nurture the nature and bring calmness to the player. Then after achieving the calmness and tranquility of hearts, the enlightenment is the final aim, which is the ultimate purpose for both the way of *qin* and the teachings of *Chan*.

The practice of *dhyana* or meditation, especially sitting meditation is an important part of *Chan* Buddhism. By mediation people not only relieve themselves of the thoughts and feelings that arise in the midstream, but they also develop insight into the nature of body and mind, experiencing the awakening. That idea is similarly expressed by Xu Shangying (徐上瀛): “...However those playing with true elegance are different. They nurture tranquility and purity, and express their personality through the *qin*. While it depends on the listener if he can appreciate the elegance in the *qin* sound, for the player, the music itself suffices to mirror his own character. Such is the truly profound elegance.”²³

There is a tune called “*Pu An Zhou*” (《普安咒》) which comes from the original chanting of a Buddhist sutra, composed by repetitive monosyllables, symbolizing the harmony of man and Nature. Same as in the modern *guqin* artist Cheng Gongliang (成公亮) who wrote a set of *guqin* tunes related to the Buddhist religion called “*Pao Xiu Luo Lan*” (《袍修罗兰》), among which the last stanza was created on a Buddhist music, called *Chant of Zhun Ti* (《准提咒》).

Even if there are not so many tunes that directly express the sounds of Buddhism but most of the *guqin* tunes could be related to the thoughts of *Chan* and could be used directly when people are meditating. Since there are so many connections between the Nature and *Chan*, there has been a lot of monks in Chinese history playing *guqin*, for whom another school was combined of *qin* called “*sengqin*” (僧琴), standing together with the *qin* of literati, or “*wenrenqin*” (文人琴).

²¹ 攻琴如参禅，岁月磨练，瞥然醒悟，则无所不通，纵横妙用而常若余。至于未悟，虽用力寻求，终无妙处。Lao Tong, *The Way of Qin* (《琴道》), Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2018, p.358.

²² 明心见性，Nan Huai-Chin, *Basic Buddhism: Exploring Buddhism and Zen*, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1998, p. 92.

²³ 明·徐上瀛《琴况·雅况》，“惟真雅者不然，修其清静贞正，而藉琴以明心见性，遇不遇，听之也，而在我足以自况。斯真大雅之归也”。Translated by Xie Junren, *Examine the Rhyme and Search for the Seclusion* (《审律寻幽》), Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing Group, 2016, p.80.

Conclusion

Guqin as an ancient instrument of sages reflects many aspects and thoughts of the classical Chinese Culture. The features of *qin* and the philosophical thoughts it represents is concordant to the ones expressed in the Chinese people's daily life. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are the three major Chinese religions and philosophical thoughts, with which *guqin* has a great connection, such as the thought of "man is an integral part of Nature (天人合一)" in Taoism, the thought of "*Chan*" (*Dhyana*) in Buddhism. The Confucian values of harmony, moderation of action and education mixed with the Taoist notions of creativity, intuition, inaction and love for Nature, form the essential bedrock of Chinese art. Therefore, it could be said that *guqin* itself is just the mixture of these philosophical thoughts. Sometimes it is hard to separate the impact of each philosophical school or religion, but we can still differentiate some distinct features that belong to different theories.

Reference

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