

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2023-3-16>

## DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE PIANO ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY IN THE CONTEXT OF ADAPTATION OF WESTERN INFLUENCES

*Li Huaxin,*

*Postgraduate Student, Sumy State Pedagogical University  
named after A. S. Makarenko (Sumy, Ukraine)*

*ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2378-8019*

*nauka17-18@ukr.net*

**Abstract.** The article examines the national and cultural factors influencing the development of Chinese musical culture, with a focus on the integration of genres and forms within the international context. The study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the main trajectories of Chinese musical culture, particularly piano culture, as a conceptually integral national phenomenon. The research methodology employs historical, structural-typological, and comparative-analytical methods. Through the research process, it was discovered that the creation of a unique system of musical thinking in China relies on adapting external influences to the national artistic representation and aesthetics, shaped by a global perception. Among composer's approaches, arrangement and cyclicality emerge as the most specific types of thinking, facilitating the harmonious integration of traditions with modernization and the incorporation of Chinese music into the global context. This research opens up prospects for analyzing the piano heritage from the perspective of musical anthropology.

**Key words:** Chinese musical culture, Integration, Piano culture, National phenomenon, Modernization, Musical anthropology.

**Introduction.** Modern musical culture appears as a multifaceted mosaic structure, where vectors characterizing small forms in the systemic discourse of their functioning acquire special importance. National and cultural factors, which today are in close international relations, also remain an important aspect here. The latter is due to the fact that genres and forms that are integrated into the international musical space acquire the characteristics of one or another country and form a content-wise new layer of genre diversity. Any musical organization assumes a certain form, formation, style, as well as species specificity or genre. It is this specificity that often allows the musically organized system of sounds to be attributed to a particular national segment or figurative system. Chinese musical culture forms a distinctive segment of China's overall artistic development, which justifies the possibility of considering genre specificity from the standpoint of a coded cultural-national mentality. China is one of the most captivating countries currently drawing the interest of musicologists.

**Main part.** More and more musicologists, art historians, and cultural scientists are exploring various aspects of Chinese music, including O. Roschenko and O. Markova who delve into Chinese opera, instrumental and ensemble music; G. Karas who focuses on the professional music of Chinese national origins; O. Samoilenko who explores the psychology of Chinese music; L. Kiyanovska and I. Lyashenko who study arrangements and transcriptions of Chinese composers; and V. Moskalenko who examines the performance and interpretation of piano works.

Theoretical investigations into the forms of Chinese music have been conducted by S. Ship, and additional research can be found in the works of S. Eisenstad and others. Moreover, there has been a recent increase in activity among Chinese researchers in the study of their own culture. Among them, notable figures include Wang Anyu and Wang Lishan, who focus on the formation and development of the history of Chinese musical culture; Liu Xiaolong, Liu Fuan, Liu Chi, and Zhao Xiaosheng, who specialize in piano art; and Bai Ye, Wang Ying, Wang Chendo, Wang Yuhe, and Wei Tinghe, who conduct personified studies of Chinese musical heritage.

The analysis of these sources, it becomes obvious that although the universalizing-generalizing approach contributes to the holistic understanding of Chinese musical art, there is also a need to highlight the peculiarities of Chinese music through certain specifics of the concept, which consists of genres and forms. This study aims to address this need by outlining the specifics of form formation in Chinese piano music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Therefore, the **purpose of the study** is a comprehensive review of the main vectors of the development of Chinese musical culture, in particular piano culture, as a conceptually integrated national phenomenon.

**Research methodology.** The study involved a thorough analysis of a significant number of sources, which brought to light the key issues requiring investigation. These include analyzing Chinese musical art from the perspective of conceptual formation and identifying the variation cycle as the predominant form of musical expression. The research methodology employs historical, structural-typological, and comparative-analytical methods. This approach enables the identification and analysis of specific concepts regarding Chinese piano music, focusing on its formation and composition with respect to form and genre.

**Results.** The 20th century intensified the process of dialogue and fruitful interaction between Chinese culture and the European academic musical tradition. As in European musical culture, in Chinese, there is a stratification of the epochal style system into a number of subsystems – stylistic directions, which is connected with the general trend of strengthening individual and national art of the 20th century. Piano music by Chinese composers offers a fertile ground for studying the encoding of national culture in musical genres for several reasons. Firstly, a significant amount of such music has been accumulated over the past century, dating back to 1915 when the first works by Chinese composers for this instrument appeared. This rich historical heritage allows for the identification of certain genre-specific features.

Secondly, through the lens of music composed for the European piano, one can vividly trace the creative approach of Chinese composers in working with both national and non-national materials. The influence of Chinese musical traditions has distinctly shaped the piano style of composers from the People's Republic of China, presenting intriguing challenges for study.

Thirdly, exploring different stylistic directions in Chinese piano music serves as a means of promoting and popularizing the piano heritage of national composers. As a result, there arises a need to examine musical genres as specific components of national culture, analyzing the content encoded within them.

In the piano work of Chinese composers, the difference in stylistic directions is determined mainly by reliance on certain traditions or musical-aesthetic concepts. That is why the piano music of Chinese composers is the most fertile material for study. Until now, a fairly significant amount of it has been accumulated, which is due to the century-long history of piano music in China, starting from 1915 – the time of the appearance of the first work of a Chinese composer for this instrument. This allows you to identify certain commonalities and features at the level of style and certain genres. Chinese musical culture was certainly created in the East-West symbiosis, which led to certain differences in the structure of musical thinking. As O. Markova points out, «Eastern art is quite closed, in which for several centuries no new genre formations similar to traditional cyclical forms emerged, while European professional art created an open system that showed the ability for further evolution and genre modification» (Markova, 1992: 113).

At the same time, the piano compositions by Chinese composers emerge as a complex synthesis of national traditions intertwined with elements from non-national artistic cultures, leading to the emergence of new traditions based on this fusion. The national style, representing a conceptual system of common features inherent in the folk and professional creativity of a nation and nationality (Markova, 1992: 26), manifests itself in individual works and the creative expressions of specific composers across various directions.

It is evident that the foundation for this artistic creation lies in national traditions, which significantly influence the organization of musical material, i.e., the musical form. In Chinese piano art, composers heavily draw upon the rich reservoir of folk song creativity. Genuine examples of folk creations have survived to the present day and are actively incorporated into the works of composers from the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly in the realm of piano music

According to Ma Wei, Chinese piano music experienced significant development in the first third of the 20th century (Ma Wei, 1994: 24). This growth was influenced by European interest in the culture of the East. A notable example is C. Debussy's work «Pagodas» from the series «Estampes», which was inspired by an exhibition showcasing traditional Chinese musical instruments. Chinese composers started composing for Western Europe, incorporating their own intonations while integrating European musical and figurative elements into their art.

It is essential to emphasize that the fundamental characteristic of Chinese music, which has always been preserved and still endures, is its connection with national intonations and, most importantly for its form structure, its association with poetic art. This specificity has naturally influenced all existing musical forms today.

Dong Guangjun points out that in Chinese musical form, analogous to Chinese poetry, specific developmental components such as «qi, chen, zhuang, he» (起承转合) can be distinguished. The researcher explains that these terms denote particular stages of poetic form development. «Qi» represents the beginning of the presentation, «chen» signifies an increase in conflict, «Zhuang» denotes a decisive moment in the conflict, and «he» signifies its completion. These elements have been transformed into the musical form as follows: exposition, a traditional presentation of the theme, character, and images (qi 起); the approval of the theme with possible changes (cheng 承); development and elaboration of the theme (zhuan 转); and ultimately, the conclusion (he 合) (Dun Guantszyun', 2013: 22).

It is derived from this that there exists a connection with the traditional European form structure and composition, which was influenced by Aristotle. However, it is crucial to emphasize that improvisation, which was transferred to professional music from folk music and directly from Chinese poetry, is considered a distinct feature that has influenced the development and style of Chinese music

Improvisation, as a characteristic feature of China's national tradition, has had a significant impact on all traditional form-forming components. As a result, the boundaries of the form are not as clear-cut as in European music, and the form no longer solely dictates the composer's intention but instead creates the conditions for a multifaceted and multidimensional interpretive approach. In comparison to European music, Chinese music does not express hierarchical subordination between themes in a clear manner. Distinguishing between primary and secondary themes can be quite challenging. The gradual unfolding of the artistic image through thematic contrast is practically absent. Instead, the renewal of material and its development are often achieved through changes in metrotempo or by incorporating features of another genre within the same intonation material. In contrast to European forms, the principle of «comparing intonationally close material» is more prevalent here rather than the idea of «revealing something new» (Li Tsziti, 2004, 265).

Musical intonation bears the imprint of its time, making musical practice a repository of numerous archetypes that importantly reflect the social and national existence of individuals. Anthropological understanding of culture posits that it encompasses all aspects of human existence, distinguishing human society's life from that of nature, and includes both rational and irrational elements. The evolution of the anthropological approach to interpreting culture has led to a fragmentation of the concept into various ideas, each reflecting individual aspects and manifestations of culture. Among these aspects, we find the existence of intonation dictionaries of a particular era or of specific composers. However, there is also an attraction to certain genre spheres that organize a set of into-

nations into particular forms. This attraction to genre spheres characterizes the norms of musical thinking that contribute to the richness of musical perception, complementing the intonation dictionary of a given era.

Indeed, music is deeply connected to the culture of humanity. In philosophy, music exists as a metaphorical concept, and human music, performed at its highest level, seeks to imitate the music of the cosmos, as stated by T. Kablova. Music embodies both illogicality and spontaneity, and beyond this seemingly opposite connection, it becomes a metaphorical model not only of the cosmos but also of consciousness (Kablova, 2015: 24-26).

The development and formation of Chinese piano culture have followed a complex path, primarily due to a specific relationship with the piano itself, which was introduced by missionaries in the 17th century and did not immediately assimilate into Chinese musical culture. The first Chinese piano works emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Interestingly, romanticism became the preferred style among Chinese composers. This choice is justified by the fact that romanticism allowed the preservation of national identity while gradually incorporating European instruments into their compositions. Chinese composers' attraction to European romantic aesthetics and elements of romantic language, evident since the early stages of national piano art in the 1910s and continuing until the late 1970s, can be attributed to the shared aesthetic aspects between Western European musical romanticism and Chinese national thinking and cultural traditions (Barnard, 2000: 67). This shared connection is exemplified in tendencies towards programming, cyclicity, and reliance on folk song and folk dance origins.

The works of the first composers of the 1910s-1930s – Zhao Yuanzhen (piano program miniatures «Peaceful March» – 1915, «About Chen»– 1917, «Children's March» – 1919, «Wedding March» – 1928, «Two-part invention» – 1930), Xiao Yumei (piano pieces: Nocturne op. 19 – 1916, «Mourning Prelude» – 1916, «New Fairy Dance» – 1923, Li Shuhua «Art revolution» – 1929, «Spring Dream on the Lake» – 1928, «Memory» – 1932 – in fact, imitation of works of romantic (partly classical) style.

According to their genre, they gravitated towards program music that was not burdened by a complex form. The reflection of the romantic-impressionist genre, which is manifested primarily in the titles of the works, their ideological inspiration, is also essential. That is, at this stage, there is an appeal to the visual association, which is an imprint of the information encoded in the name regarding traditional images, including those of a national character (Byan' Men, 1996: 42-48). That is, there is an appeal to a special sphere of society's life, a manifestation of its spiritual and material culture, which is traditional folk culture and collective creativity of groups or individuals, determined by the hopes and expectations of society.

In accordance with improvisation in music, as a national tradition of China, which is rightly pointed out by Yan Chzhykhao, in his logical development, Chinese composers, creating examples of piano culture, begin to turn to attempts to reflect elements of national imagery in piano works, which is actually the origin of national oriented line of romanticism (Yan' Chzhykhao, 2018: 16-18). Its essence consists primarily in turning to the European genres of piano music of the Romantic era and singling out the most relevant to the possibilities of improvisational ideas. Thus, among the most popular in the 1930s and 1940s were the following suites: «Chinese Suite» – 1934 Liu Xueyang; «Spring Journey» – 1945 Ding Shande; sonata and sonatina – Sonata b-mol, Ma Xitsuna; Sonatina – 1940, Jiang Wenye; Variations – Variations on a Chinese Folk Theme –1948 by Ding Shande. The genre of the piano concerto also aroused some interest in the composition community: in the 1930s and 1940s, concertos by Jiang Wenye – 1936 and Zhang Xiaohu – 1945 were created. But these were far from perfect in terms of artistic and compositional works, which at present have only preserved their historical significance. It can be argued that the appeal to cyclicity is becoming the most popular in creativity. Yes, the tendency to cyclicity, so characteristic of the European miniature of the 19th

century, becomes a characteristic feature of the work of composers of the PRC in the 1950s and 1970s (Chu Wanghua, Huang Anlun, Li Yinghai, Huang Huwei, Wang Jianzhong), when due to the political attitudes of the Chinese authorities, the influence of Western art was almost completely eliminated. If the formation of cycles in European music of the 19th century is explained by the «relative fragmentation, incompleteness of the romantic miniature» (Markova, O. 1990: 29), then in the work of Chinese composers, the merging of miniatures into a cycle contributes to the desire to imagine the world of musical images in all its diversity. Especially the influence of European classical-romantic art is expressed in form-creating means: this is evidenced by the use of simple and complex two- and three-part forms, variations, rondo.

The fact that avant-garde, as a European genre, entered Chinese piano culture in the 1980s is significant. Composers such as Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Tang Dong, Chen Qigang, Cao Guangping, Yao Henlu, Liang Lei, Chen Xiaoyun, Gao Ping, and others explored cyclicity in music. These composers represented various trends and approaches that engaged in a dialogue with both European and Chinese musical traditions.

Some composers, like Chen Yi and Zhou Long, embraced neo-folkloric trends in their works. Others, like Chen Qigang, delved into post-avant-garde phenomena. Additionally, different avant-garde currents actively utilized serial and serial techniques, sonorics, and aleatorics.

However, despite these diverse influences, many Chinese composers, including Tang Dong, turned to specific forms like the cycle «Eight Memories in Watercolor» and the Piano Concerto with Orchestra «Huanghe», created collaboratively by Yin Chengzong, Chu Wanhua, Liu Zhuang, Shi Shuchen, Shen Lihong, as well as a transcription for piano and orchestra of the cantata «Huanghe» by Xian Xinghai. Moreover, a significant number of cycles with diverse nature and genre content exist, indicating that Chinese musical culture encodes its content not merely within separate genres but rather through the cyclical nature of various musical forms.

It can be said that the musical form, which forms genre specificity as a compositional integrity, is a static concept that is unconscious relative to historical existence, and on the other hand, due to the ubiquity of use, which is determined by national traditional factors, as well as programmed images, acquires the character of a code of cultural identity. This allows us to say that cultural codes are symbolic in nature. This is also justified by the fact that the vast majority of Chinese music is programmatic, that is, it appeals to human thinking and consciousness.

Accordingly, in Chinese piano music, we find that Chinese composers preferred genres that best corresponded to their artistic and figurative ideas, aesthetics, and way of thinking. As a result, several types of genre imagery have dominated Chinese piano music at all stages of its development:

- cheerful, optimistic marching songs;
- energetic collective dances;
- contemplative landscapes, often tinged with elegiac shades (programmatic pieces, bucolic compositions);
- heartfelt lyrical songs, including love songs and lullabies;
- bravura gesticulations, showcasing strength and dexterity (études, toccatas);
- demonstrations of the composer's ingenuity and skill, as seen in inventions, fugues, and variations.

However, it is rare to find expressions of dramatic conflict, tragic images, or extreme mental states (such as fury, ecstasy, apathy, etc.) in Chinese piano music. Even in sonata compositions, thematic contrast rarely reaches the level of psychological conflict.

The modern piano work of Chinese composers represents, in the terminology of S.Tishka, the «stage of expansion» of the European tradition into the space of traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, the path of synthesis of expressive means of Chinese and European music, sketchily outlined at the early stage of the development of the genre branch of piano music by such authors as He Luting, Huang Qi, Ding Shande, has become more and more fruitful in recent decades.

According to Li Tsziti, a characteristic feature of Chinese music is the appeal to «ancient Chinese chants with poetic text», which allows more concretely determining the directions of development of musical thought (Li Tsziti, 2004: 228). It would be logical to assume that this significant development of arrangements among Chinese composers stems from their projection on folk song art. As Bian Meng points out in his work dedicated to the study of the formation and development of Chinese piano culture, «most often the authors themselves cannot accurately determine the type of intra-genre modification, because, firstly, they are closely related to each other and, in many respects, echo each other, and secondly, they represent a real creative process at their essential core, comparable in character to the work of composition itself» (Byan' Men, 1996: 64).

Arrangements created by composers could differ from the original works, for example, in terms of structural or genre parameters. However, a prerequisite for piano arrangements was the renewal of the artistic form, such as its metrorhythmic aspect, based on the original characteristic features of the work. The genre of arranging in China has risen to an unprecedentedly high artistic level, involving not only the processing of well-known melodies but, first and foremost, the creative mastery of the traditions of national musical folklore. This enriches the expressive potential of the piano, its texture, and sound palette.

**Conclusion.** One of the main trends in the development of Chinese piano music is the expansion and elaboration of the European romantic genre system, which acquires a new interpretation within Chinese musical culture. Initially, Chinese composers mastered a limited number of piano genres from European professional music, including preludes, variations (often based on folk themes), programmatic pieces, and suites of miniatures.

Over time, the range of genres incorporating "foreign" material has significantly broadened, leading to greater diversity. This approach has contributed to the creation of a unique and distinctive component of Chinese piano culture, characterized by the prominence of cyclical genres with romantic elements. These cyclical genres have enabled the representation of the national mentality at a new level. Each of these techniques reflects the peculiarities of China's national musical tradition and signifies a distinct philosophical understanding of reality, different from that of Europe. The prospects of this research may be the derivation of the specified characteristic features as a code of the mentality of the nation, which from the standpoint of musical anthropology creates conditions for studying the creation of works as an imprint not only of the imagery laid down by the author, but as a carrier of immanent features of a historical and social nature, which in the case of Chinese music is decisive for mastery and analytical scientific explorations.

#### References:

1. Barnard, Alan. (2000) *History and Theory in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [ in English].
2. Bian Meng. (1996). *The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Culture*, Beijing: "Chinese Music" Publishing House, 1996. [in Chinese].
3. Dun Guantszyun'. (2013) The form of qi, chen, zhuang, he in music and how it is used. *Huanghe's voice (21)*. Chanji: Faculty of Music of Chanji College. No. 21. P. 1–4. [in Chinese].
4. Kablova, T. B. (2015) Zoloty peretyn yak kompozytsiynny pryntsyv transmironosti v muzychniy kul'turi [Golden Section as a compositional principle of transcendence in music culture]: monohrafiya. Kyiv : NAKKKiM. [in Ukrainian].
5. Li Tsziti. (2004) *An introduction to the analysis of structure in Chinese music*. Beijing: Publishing House of the Central Conservatory, 588 p. [in Chinese].
6. Ma, Vey. (2004). Kontseptsiya formy v muzyki Kytayu ta Yevropy: aspekty kompozytsiyi ta vykonavstva [The concept of form in the music of China and Europe: aspects of composition and performance]: dys. ... kand. mystetstvoznavstva: 17.00.03. Odesa [in Ukrainian].

7. Markova, O. (1990) Intonatsiynist' muzychnoho mystetstva: naukove obgruntuvannya ta problemy pedahohiky [Intonation of musical art: scientific substantiation and problems of pedagogy]. Kyiv: Muzychna Ukrayina [in Ukrainian].
8. Wāng, Yùhé. (2005) History of modern Chinese music. Beijing. 377 p. [in Chinese]
9. Yan', Chzhykhao. (2018). Typolohichni osoblyvosti obrobok, aranzhuvan' i transkryptsiy u fortepianniy tvorchosti kytays'kykh kompozytoriv [Typological features of arrangements, arrangements and transcriptions in the piano works of Chinese composers of the XX – early XXI centuries]. Lviv. [in Ukrainian].