

Underlying socio-cultural aspects and aesthetic principles that determine musical theory and practice in the musical traditions of China and Japan

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Introduction

Chinese music has ancient roots. Music began to flourish in the 14th century BC during the Shang dynasty (approx 1766-1027 BC), the time of the Bronze Age. Its origins are probably earlier some 8,000 years ago. Towards the end of the Shang dynasty, some 3,000 years ago, a complete musical theory and sophisticated musical instruments began appearing in China. Instruments used include stone chimes, bronze bells, panpipes, and the sheng (mouth-organ).

Since then Chinese music style has been remarkably stable. However, it has not been stagnant. Its evolution and richness reflects a vast and ancient land.

The importance of Chinese music extends beyond its borders. The presence of Chinese musical instruments, style and repertoire is noticeable throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in Korea and Japan. Chinese music certainly influenced aspects of Japanese music.

By way of comparison, the history of Japanese music begins in the 8th century AD - more than 2000 years after the origins of Chinese music. Since the 8th century and for more than 1000 years musical styles in Japan have changed frequently.

Confucius in ancient China

During the 6th and 5th century BC, Confucius (K'ung Fu-Tzu circa 551-479 BC), developed the school of thought that the social and political disorders of the time arising from the degeneration of feudalism could be remedied by the restoration of traditional values and norms. For this to happen he came to believe that people had to follow the principles and precepts of the sages of the past. He belonged to a group called Ju who were ritualists and who in all areas of life and society believed in the sanctity of certain rites, ceremonies, manners, tastes and the like. The orthodox ritual music (yayue) advocated by Confucius was largely responsible for China's musical development for the next 1000 years and even right until 1900 AD. The basic principle being that sound influences the harmony of the universe.

In this regard, Confucius conceived of music as a means of calming the passions, dispelling unrest, and transcending lust and similar propensities. The Yueh Chi (the 27th chapter of the Li Chi or Record of Rites) describes how "when music goes forth: Orderly relations are clear ... hsueh [learning] is in harmony, and chi [energy] is balanced. Transforming ways and refining customs, Music brings peace to all in the world." Music was not encouraged as a form of amusement and those adopting entertainment music (suyue) for social frivolity were relegated to a very low social status. Instead music elicits awareness of the world in a cosmic sense and offers a basis for reflection on how human beings are related to each other and to all things in nature.

In this socio-cultural background Chinese music and its immense social importance developed. The ancient Chinese belief that music is meant to purify one's self found particular expression in the qin or guqin (old qin). This is a long seven-stringed zither possessing a repertory calling for great subtlety and refinement in performance. It is said that "Though the qin player's body be in a gallery or in a hall, his mind should dwell with the forests and streams." It was the instrument of the Confucian superior man and most of the scholars and literati of the day were required to study and regularly practice the

instrument. In accordance with the Confucian Way (later the Tao), the qin was used as a vehicle for worship, formation of character, and regulation of one's civil life. As such it was profoundly utilised from Confucian times until 1900 AD (the whole period sometimes being referred to as the Confucian era).

The dynasty of Confucius' time, the Zhou dynasty (1027-256 BC), made music a compulsory subject for sons of noblemen and princes to study. The Zhou dynasty and Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), which revived musical culture after its importance was lessened by the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC), established Music Bureaus as part of their governmental machinery. This practice was later followed in Japan.

Modification of Chinese music through the dynasties

Originating from early animist ritual, folksongs and dance evolved during the Han dynasty giving rise to narrative arts and puppetry. This was the precursor to Chinese opera. The early years of the first millennium were marked by a steady spread of foreign musical influence. Contacts with Central Asia brought in a variety of instruments, such as the pipa (lute), huqin (2 stringed bowed fiddle) and suona (double-reed oboe or Chinese trumpet) originating from India or perhaps Persia and Arabia. Later, these all became the main instruments of Chinese opera music.

Because of interaction with foreign music, much of the Han Chinese folksong and dance performed today is a subtle blend of many regional influences. This era had 6 categories of music: court music; qin music; harmonious songs of gentry; narrative music; drum and wind music from tribal areas; show music.

The place of orchestras in dynasties was also very important. Each dynasty emphasised different aspects of music. Instruments were even created for special occasions. The ruan (originally called the dong jin), a plucking instrument, was made in 115 BC for the marriage of Emperor Han Wu and Princess Wu Shun. The Music Bureaus of the Han and later the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD) actively collected folksongs from both within and outside China. The Tang period fancied the use of double reeds and the jiegu drum, which resulted in an exciting period for Chinese music. During the period of Sui-Tang the age of true fiddling began. Later during the Song dynasty (960-1280 AD) a cross-fertilization of fiddles took place across China.

The Tang dynasty did much towards strengthening Chinese secular music (also called suyue). This was more than national. It reached its peak with orchestras being made up from various foreign tribes, as a result of centuries of commercial contacts which had developed. Indeed as early as the Han dynasty foreign music had entered China to modify and improve Chinese music. Tang music was highly developed and influenced Korea and Japan. In combination with poetry, songs and dramatic plots it was the origin of the Chinese opera. Portions of Tang music found their way into the Japanese court music of gagaku. The court music tradition of China was lost there but survived in strength in Korea and Japan. Gagaku is said to preserve Tang dynasty court music, but as played today gagaku sounds nothing like any known Chinese music. However, as reconstructed by experts involved in the Tang Dynasty Music Research Project there are believed to be some noteworthy similarities between Chinese court music and gagaku, and also early qin music.

Subsequent dynasties (Yuan, Ming, Qing) modified many early forms of music. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD) foreign instruments continued to be introduced, such as the yangqin or dulcimer which today remains one of the favourite musical instruments of the Chinese people. The Ming dynasty made some 1,000 modifications of earlier qin pieces and that instrument played an influential role at the time as a solo instrument for ritual and ceremonial

music. As can be seen a process of modification has occurred throughout the evolution of Chinese music.

In Chinese musical practice and tradition, though a student can copy the teacher exactly, once having achieved a certain level the student is free to make changes and become part of the living tradition. Consequently, pieces will be modified resulting in new and numerous versions. Even though this constant modification has occurred in Chinese music, the cultural preference of harmony, intervals, tones and rhythms used in Chinese music still distinguishes it from any other. Variations of rhythm, tone and quality, beat and embellishments in traditional Chinese music are highly distinctive due to the sounds and playing styles of traditional Chinese instruments.

Importance of instruments and Nature

The history of Chinese musical instruments is one of discovery of new resonators, new use of physiology in acoustical excitation and innovation in musical acoustics. Indeed, the name reserved for musical instruments is qin or resonator. Ancient China possessed a level of acoustical science that was essential in supporting its elaborate musical art. Physics and engineering was evident in the perfection of musical instruments and to arrive at desirable orchestration.

Chinese musical instruments can be divided into 4 basic categories based on how they are played: woodwind (blown); bowed string; plucked string; percussion (struck). The aesthetic arrangement of an orchestra into these groupings and the acoustic spaces involved create a harmonious auditory atmosphere. However, there is no one single species of Chinese orchestra, but rather several dozens of acoustically unified and musically interesting orchestras, as well as ensembles.

Regions and provinces of China can be culturally different and acoustically unique, but they are still all Chinese. Over thousands of years, the Chinese people have been unified socially by a single language and a single harmony system. As a result there is an interesting situation of coexistence of many Chinese orchestras, each having its cultural acoustic specialties, and yet all unified through a system of harmony (musical intervals and chords).

Orchestras and ensembles are primarily based on reeded wind and plucked string instruments serving as their tone quality base. Due to the broad development of plucked string instruments in China, it has perhaps more kinds of plucked instruments than any country in the world.

Aesthetically Instruments can be representative of events in nature such as water flowing through a stream. The famous qin piece called Flowing Water (played since the Tang dynasty along with the piece High Mountains) is very reflective of this. It is said that through the qin, the player and music and human beings and nature blend in perfect union. This is seen in another well-known piece from 1549 AD called Celestial Beings which depicts the harmonious scene of gods and humans dancing together, such that the music is believed to create an effect of faintly visible gods. Tunes with titles relating to, and expressing admiration for, plum blossoms are representative not only of nature, but also nobility and purity.

Materials used in the construction of Chinese instruments are also classified based on nature. This stems from the Confucian definition of ideal music which includes 8 elements of the universe or 8 voices speaking through materials of the world. This bayin classification has 8 categories with many instruments in each: stone (qing and other tuned sonorous stone chimes); metal (luo or gongs, bo or cymbals, chimes, bells and the suona or double-reed oboe with its predominant metal bell); silk strings (huqin, erhu and other bowed instruments,

pipa or lute, zheng and other zithers); bamboo (pan-pipes, di, dizi, tungxiao and other flutes); wood (ban or clappers such as the mu-yu for Buddhist chanting); skin (gu or drums); gourd (sheng or mouth-organ); earthenware (xun and other vessel-flutes and struck vessels). Each category was attributed a particular compass point as well as a particular season. The philosophy being that music is an aesthetic link between humankind and nature. By playing a particular musical instrument the human self could communicate with nature. This practice was also socially important to farmers and labourers who depended on the land for their livelihood.

Chinese music practice

On another social front the qin was a symbol of lofty thoughts played by scholars throughout the various dynasties. The music of the qin absorbed the philosophy and aesthetics of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, making it an expression of harmonious sounds, feeling and spirit. For 3,000 years practically every major scholar, particularly from the time of Confucius, has contributed music and stories for special performance on the qin (or guqin its older version), helping to integrate it deeply into Chinese culture and society.

Qin music, as with a lot of Chinese music, is thematic. The images often evoked are those of beauty, idyllic natural phenomenon, enjoyment of friendship, sadness at separation (e.g. due to service in far posts of government), happiness of a society with upright rules, misery when correct principles were not followed. Many qin players work on dapu, the process of recovering or reinterpreting music, as modification is part of Chinese musical history.

The guzheng is another ancient very expressive stringed instrument which is some 2,750 years old. Its timbre is resplendent, mild, soft and elegant and when the strings are struck consecutively it produces a sound like flowing water (denoting angels). When the strings on the other side of the bridge are struck the music is said to be like that of the devil.

Another instrument capable of great expression is the pipa or lute. It is one of the oldest musical instruments in the world and appeared in China over 2000 years ago. The Tang Dynasty poet, Pai Chui (Bai Juyi), described the timbre and variations of the pipa as "large pearls, small pearls tumbling onto a plate of jade". It has a resonant, delicate, clear and enchanting timbre and because of this holds a unique position among China's plucked instruments. There are more than 12 ways of tuning the pipa, more than 30 techniques associated with the right hand's plucking and more than 10 techniques associated with the left hand's fingering. All this reflects on the complexity of Chinese music. As a result the pipa is capable of producing realistic sound effects from connotations of moonlit nights to millions of horses galloping. The tune Spring on a Moonlit River is considered a classic treasure and the scene set by the music is the beginning of a Spring night on a river lit by the full moon.

Chinese instruments can practically reproduce sounds in nature. The traditional piece called Birds Worshipping the Phoenix played on the suona (double reed metal bell trumpet) literally squawks with the sounds of birds.

Instruments can also emulate the human voice. The erhu is over 1000 years old. It has a snake skin resonator. Its structure consists of two strings tuned to a perfect fifth interval (D, A) and a bow hair in between. When the string is vibrated, the snake skin of the wooden drum that is placed on the lap is vibrated also. The very soft sound produced can be like a human voice humming. It can also make a pronounced whining tone colour. Its usual distinctive tone colour is mellow and bright. The absence of a fingering board allows the erhu to be freely manipulated through tension of the strings to produce a wide variety of musical effects, including the sound of horses galloping and neighing. Other

plucked instruments such as the liuqin can produce exciting and agitating tunes when played loudly, and a sweet and touching tune when played softly.

Due to the richness and timbre and variety of Chinese percussion instruments, many different effects can also be created by these. The large gong can create a stately and imposing atmosphere, while dramatic and mysterious effects can be achieved with all sorts of drums. Of real fascination is the sheng (mouth organ) one of the earliest recorded instruments. Its structure is the most complicated in the wind section of instruments, being originally made up of a group of bamboo tubes of different lengths tied together with a string and later improved by adding reeds. The sheng is used to play sonorities with fifths and fourths. It provides a unique chordal sound texture.

Chinese music theory

Chinese music is based on the pentatonic scale, but heptatonic scale is also used, often as an expansion of a basic pentatonic core. A pentatonic scale has five notes per octave, typically arranged in major seconds and minor thirds, e.g. C3 D3 F3 G3 A4 C4. This scale can be generated as a series of fifths (or fourths), e.g. F-C-G-D-A.

The Chinese did, however, have the notion of an octave divided into 12 pitches of equal temperament dating from the legend of Ling Lun and the 12 Lu some 2,500 years ago. However, this could also have derived from Pythagorean tuning from the western provinces and contact with Babylonian tuning practices carried east by Alexander the Great's invasion of central Asia and western India. Nevertheless, this was never implemented or accurately produced on a physical instrument. The culmination of equal temperament theory probably came in the late 16th century during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)

The texture of the music is usually monophonic and, if involving more than one player, heterophonic by way of simultaneous variations of a melody on a single line. This is the same for Japanese music. Vertical fourths or fifths are employed in this process. However, expressiveness in Chinese music is often less a function of melodic patterns than of the individual note which carries cosmological connotations. Aesthetically, this emphasis on a single tone raises timbre (tone colour) to a position of great importance. It means that Chinese musicians use immense skill in the range of colouristic possibilities they extract from their instruments (and voices). For example, the use of portamento and vibrato which give a feeling of weeping or complaint.

Timbre and melody are prominent expressive features of Chinese music and a variety are used. Great emphasis is given to the proper articulation and inflection of each musical tone especially for stringed instruments. Vocal tone colour is of a pinched nasal quality. Chinese melodies tend to be rather long before the repeat. A very Chinese texture would be play a melody simply, in the style of a stringed instrument, while another plays an embellished version.

Ostinato or repeated patterns based on a pentatonic scale are used to connect events. Dynamics shift from soft and loud, but are more often soft as music is generally composed for small groups of ensembles. Typically this consists of the si-zhu (silk and bamboo) ensembles comprised of, for example the zheng (16 stringed zither) and flutes accompanied by a few small percussion instruments. The larger orchestra is the jin-shi-si-zhu (metal, stone, silk and bamboo) configuration. Large court orchestras are dynamic in volume and symphonic in acoustical impact. The rhythm is usually in duple meter (2/2 or 2/4).

Japanese music background

Japanese music is a combination of cultural elements from a variety of lands which exist side by side in harmony. The music is diverse. Music styles have

changed frequently over the last 1,000 years in line with social and historical changes. In addition to traditional folk music, the various art music styles (e.g. gagaku, noh, kabuki) have been established separately in different periods of Japanese history.

Historically, vocal music played a more important role than instrumental music. Very few pieces of Japanese music belong to 'absolute music' (composed only for instruments). Music has been developed in close connection with literature, drama, and theatre including pantomime and puppetry. Music was not a separable element from such art forms and would make no proper sense without them. Early Japanese music was also thought of as regional styles. What would be heard is distinct cultures of music.

What existed before about the 7th century AD is somewhat unknown. Stone and clay flutes from 300 BC have been found all over Japan. A 2-stringed zither is also believed to have existed at this time. Bronze bells existed in some areas. Until that time Japan was not centralized in terms of government or cultural homogeneity.

Japan did, however, have a musical tradition before the advent of Chinese and Korean influences. The tradition existed in popular songs, indigenous Shinto religion (based on ancestor and nature worship), ritual and chant and possibly in court music and dances. The earliest Shinto music or kagura ('god music') were drums and flute music accompanying the shrine dances. How much is actually Japanese in origin is difficult to determine. This is because the people of the Nara period (553-793 AD) had been highly receptive to foreign culture. Therefore, when Buddhist music arrived in Japan from Chinese teachers at around 719 and 735 AD, Shinto chant became, in part, a counter-reaction to Buddhism, and so an incorporation of Buddhist practice into Shinto occurred.

Buddhist chants were categorised as shomyo music. These were originally in Sanskrit or Chinese, but the Japanese added to them. It had canon associated with it, which Shinto chant did not have. The music is basically highly ornamental singing in free rhythm or 'one beat' melodies, which could be elongated or shortened at any time, with intermittent sounds of bells and chimes. It was slowly changed to sound more like Japanese music as we know it.

The folk music of the early period was anonymous and either in free rhythm or metric rhythm. It was originally associated with religious events or labour, farming, fishing, working in the mountains and packhorse driving. This relationship was lost (other than in Okinawa) and changed to recreational purposes. The dominant secular style of music which evolved was gigaku (or Kure-gaku). From the Kamakura period (1192-1333) to Muromachi period (1333-1603), there was a steady growth of folk theatrical arts from shrine ritual plays and peasant rice-planting dances. These became essentially pantomimes and popular dances (derived from southern China and northern Indochina) and later came to be considered as music of low form. Today, most of the surviving folk songs are from the Edo period of Tokugawa Shogun rule (1603-1868 AD) and accompanied with shakuhachi (bamboo flute), or drums and shamisen (3 stringed plucked square banjo).

Gagaku - ancient court music

With the introduction of Buddhism, music also came from Korean and Chinese courts and was performed in the Japanese courts under the generic name gagaku (refined court music). Since the 8th century AD common characteristics have been evident in Japanese music. It was at this time that Music Bureaus, and later in the 10th century the Native Music Department, were established to be in charge of musical duties for both ritual and entertainment and to lay down and enforce rules of native music performance and composition. Significant developments took place in the Heian period (794-1192 AD) as folk music became

more sophisticated and there was an assimilation of all kinds of music from various Asian countries. This also resulted in an influx of new instruments and new sounds. However, because of the fall of the Tang dynasty in China in 906 AD, diplomatic ties were virtually severed with Japan and China became less important in court music. As a result saibara (essentially folk music) and roei (chanting of poems in the Tang style) became more dominant. This also meant that indigenous music was elevated to the status of high culture.

Gagaku is not a distinct musical classification but subsumes several musical and performance genres (including saibara and roei). The origins of gagaku are: original foreign music (i.e. togaku or music of the left of Chinese origin and komagaku or music of the right from Korea); pure Japanese music; and music composed in Japan using influences from other countries. It also includes orchestral music without vocal parts called kangen comprising wind and string instruments, its dance accompaniment called bugaku and vocal music and dance from Shinto rituals. Being performed at courts for the powerful nobility and upper classes it reflected the Heian cultural value of miyabi or courtly refinement.

With the decline of Chinese influence, an essentially homogenous native musical sensibility had spread throughout most of Japan by the 10th and 11th centuries. Gagaku began to represent a significant departure from the entrenched Chinese aesthetic. Chinese music was altered as the Japanese added to and subtracted from it according to their own tastes. This process inevitably involved discarding or modifying some elements that were uncongenial in terms of instruments and Japanese music itself. Musical theory became more systematic. Court music became Japanized.

The theoretical concepts of jo-ha-kyu infiltrated the various types of music and the music that followed, particularly the noh drama. This is an aesthetic concept in Japanese music which gives a shifting tempo. Such compositions follow a 3 part pattern that consists of an introduction, a scattering effect in the central section, and a rushing effect near the end of the piece. The rushing effect is similar to the Chinese chui concept which results in a gradual acceleration in the last section of a piece. The jo-ha-kyu pattern permeates much of Japanese music. It applies to individual musical segments or phrases and to entire compositions. The mark offs come from the drums.

The principal instruments associated with gagaku orchestras usually of up to 17 musicians are stringed and wind instruments. Percussion being of lesser importance. In the strings the biwa (4 stringed lute), imported as the Chinese pipa, is the premier instrument. To achieve certain aesthetic effects associated with Japanese music the biwa's strings are looser and frets higher than that of the pipa. This gives it a unique sound described as sawari (touch) as part of its aesthetics (like the noise of a cricket). Among the wind instruments are the shakuhachi (bamboo flute), ryuteki (short double-reed pipe), hichiriki (flute) which play the melody and sho (free reed mouth organ) derived from the earlier Chinese sheng which provides a cluster of background tones. The Japanese also employed 3 percussion instruments of significance for marking off phrases of music: the two headed side drum (kakko); bronze gong (shoko); and hanging drum struck by 2 large and heavy drumsticks (taiko). Short melodies and arpeggios played on the biwa and 13 (or 17)-stringed koto (zither) can also mark changes.

Gagaku has been played by musicians from the same hereditary family or guilds for more than 1,000 years. Melodies develop very slowly so that the listener's attention becomes focused on the sound mass rather than the melody. There is actually one melody interpreted simultaneously and little change in harmony. Due to formal use of jo-ha-kyu the tempo does increase but the listener's overall impression is of a very slow tempo, with clusters of sound hanging in the air. This gives the feeling of the oriental aesthetic of staticity and a

sparse effect. The changes noted by the listener take place almost hypnotically. A shifting pitch is also employed which gives a sense of indeterminability. Some gagaku has a bimodal sound where the same mode is played but different starting pitches are assigned to different instruments.

The history after the early period is that Japanese music reversed its course from the determinable concepts derived from Chinese theory, to an emphasis on multi-sonority employed in gagaku, to the indeterminate elements of noh drama and from there to the simplicity of the traditional chamber of koto, shamisen and shakuhachi with an emphasis on heterophonic texture (Watanabe). Accordingly, Japanese music acquired its distinct characteristics.

Noh drama

As Japan changed from a court to military dominated society in the 12th century, theatrical genres of music started to develop. The noh drama became the official entertainment of the new warrior class. Noh is highly stylized and symbolic usually performed by a few male actors and musicians. The main character often wears a mask to fit the role. Its music is provided by the hayashi (ensemble of drums, flutes and chanters). Noh developed into its present form during the 14th and 15th centuries and later during the Edo period it became the official performance art of the military government. With the social reforms of the Meiji period (1868-1912), noh lost its governmental patronage

Nohgaku music contains voice (utai) and instrumental parts. Actors or a 'choir' sing and instrumentalists accompany them with the shoulder drum (ko tsuzumi) and hip drum (o tsuzumi). The noh ensemble includes a bamboo flute (nokan), which signals formal divisions within the drama, adds colour to lyrical pieces, and accompanies dances. The taiko drum is also used for dance parts. Nohgaku music uses set melodic and rhythmic patterns within prescribed forms, but is played in flexible tempos. Variation in tempo is signalled by the drummers. Short sharp shouts (kakegoe) by drummers also enhance the tension in the music. The vocals of the actors and choir of 8 male singers is derived from the shomyo of Buddhist chanting and tells the story. This singing and speech has a stylized pattern of intonation to give it a sparse effect.

Indeed, by 1500 AD Japanese music obtained maximum effect from minimum material. In accord with Japanese aesthetics, silence is important in and around musical sounds. This silence is called ma and is the effective silence for the next sounds and the emphasis for each phrase. Because of ma the rhythm of Japanese music feels free to the ears. It is not just a rest, but is silence as an equivalent value to sound. Japanese music is composed as an intense balance between the two. In noh drama sounds exist to define ma.

Overall Japanese music is very simple. Many people in a group will tend to sing the same notes as each other and there is no real chorus, as the Japanese do not sing the same thing twice. The Japanese aesthetic is to return to the quality of the single tone.

Chamber/ensemble music - shakuhachi, koto and shamisen

After 1500 AD simplicity is also well reflected in music for solo instruments, such as the shamisen and koto. The Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1603), is important in the historical development of several instruments. At this time, the primitive recorder was modified into the artistic shakuhachi, the old court zither became the sonorous koto and the shamisen acquired its present shape and used the sawari sound. These instruments combined to form an ensemble in which the tone of the shakuhachi is bright (akarusa) and has depth (fukami) and when played vibrates the whole body (a quality called chikui). The nature of

chamber music is such that the instruments can usually be heard separately rather than being merged.

Originally shakuhachi was played as a part of the practice of Zen Buddhist priests and considered a religious instrument. Even though the shakuhachi became an instrument for musicians and ensembles, solo pieces with strong religious significance are still the most important musical form. Zen music represents the true essence or soul of the shakuhachi. The music's temporal and spatial qualities depend heavily upon tone, duration, intensity of breath and use of non-tonal breath sounds and finger trills. Blowing the shakuhachi is considered as being Sui-Zen (blowing meditation). The purpose of this practice is to obtain the perfect sound to cause internal and world peace and is an aid to attain enlightenment

From the ensemble, shamisen music made its way into kabuki drama and bunraku puppet plays during the 17th century as well as home entertainment (utaimono). In the kabuki and bunraku it provides the lively rhythm which dominates these theatres. That accompanying music is called nagauta. The shamisen was the favourite instrument of the next major historical period, the Edo period. The instrument being accompaniment for both melodious singing and narrative singing.

The koto (13 stringed zither) soon became a popular instrument for home use. It was formerly part of the gagaku ensemble but developed as a solo instrument from the 17th century. Music for the koto is called sokyoku which was originally composed, played, and transmitted solely by the blind. Later women and girls in the higher military and wealthy merchant classes learned it as part of their cultural education.

Kabuki theatre music

The most popular form of traditional Japanese theatre is kabuki, which began in the latter part of the 16th century. This was a period of renaissance in Japanese culture. Kabuki was well established by the mid-17th century. Although founded by a shrine maiden (Okuni), since early on, during the Genroku period (1688-1704), all roles have been taken by men. Over the next 300 years it developed into a sophisticated, highly stylised form of theatre. Kabuki music makes use of instrumentalists and singers, mostly backstage or offstage providing sound effects and special incidental music. Kabuki plays and dances are about both grand historical events and everyday life of people in the Edo or Tokugawa period (1600-1868). They employ bombastic characters with an exaggerated style of acting.

Geza is the offstage music and serves many functions in the overall dramatic impact of kabuki. It is music as accompaniment, music as meaningful and image-evoking sound, and music as one of the threads that holds kabuki together as total theatre. Geza can be equated to the "leit-motif" of Wagnerian operas and thus indicative of a specific visual image. Geza melodic patterns are played by the shamisen and can assist in transitions between dialogues. Kabuki can be characterised as the "balance of yin and yang" (Kartomi). In it one finds both stability and change in a simple reciprocal setting. Kabuki plays evoke a unique ambience which is achieved, on stage, by the use of the 'long song' or nagauta.

Musical composition and scales

As Japanese music tends towards simplicity, gagaku music utilised only 6 modes or scales of Chinese origin from the 7th century. The Chinese system of music had some 84 modes based on the pentatonic scale (e.g. CDEGA) and 2 auxiliary notes (i.e. B F). The Japanese reduced these to 6 modes. These 6 modes were then divided into 2 categories: 3 ryo modes based on Chinese music and 3 ritsu modes of the Japanese variety. The male scale is ryo and the female scale is

ritsu. This mirrors the notion of yin and yang or the female (completion) and male (creation) principles of change in the universe from Chinese thought.

The Chinese ryo pentatonic scale of CDEGAC regards C as the tonic. When one takes the same scale notes starting on G (GACDEG) with G as the tonic then transposes it to C, the Japanese ritsu pentatonic scale of CDFGAC results. The scale now contains a perfect fourth from the tonic (C-F) and so the Japanese preferred the perfect fourth over the perfect fifth of Chinese music (C-G). Although fifths were also used in Japan. Building complex sonorities in fifths and fourths is common to gagaku music. Another ryo scale can be DEF#ABD, plus G (or G#) and C# (or C) as auxiliary notes. Another ritsu scale is EF#ABC#E, plus G and D as auxiliary notes.

Derived from the ritsu scale is the scale system called in-yo. Set on C for comparison the yo scale is C Eb F G Bb with D and Ab as auxiliary notes. This traditional scale is derived from gagaku. The in scale is C Db F G Ab with Eb and Bb as auxiliary notes and is the more modern scale. The in scale has two semitones and is a hemitonic pentatonic scale, as contrasted with the more common anhemitonic pentatonic yo scale which does not have semitones.

The most important note in the Japanese pentatonic scale is the 3rd note, called the 'cornerstone'. This corresponds to the wood agent (and to Spring, the East, beginning, jen or benevolence which is the most important of the virtues). Wood is one of the 5 materials. The concept of five was a sophisticated theory of change derived from Chinese thought. In this theory the five tones of the pentatonic scale were intimately related to a many other 'fives' in nature, e.g. organs, animals, etc. Change, including musical change, was governed by the relationship of the five material agents either as they engendered one another or conquered one another. These 2 possible relationships governed the sequence of notes in the Chinese scale which is mirrored in the Japanese scale, as follows:

Material:	wood	fire	earth	metal	water
Chinese:	chiao	cheng	kung	shang	yu
Note:	3rd note	4th note	5th note	1st note	2nd note
Japanese:	sho	u	kaku	kyu	chi

On this basis Instruments are divided into bass, woodwind (e.g. sho, hichiriki), string (e.g. biwa, koto), percussion and keyboard. Many instruments originated in China but were modified and tuned to the Japanese scale. The koto is usually tuned in the indigenous in scale of D Eb G A Bb D with auxiliary notes F and C or the yo scale of DFGACD with auxiliary E and Bb.

Japanese musical patterns and timing

The characteristics of Japanese music such as timbre and performance technique are integrally connected to the constraints inherent in Japanese instruments. The aesthetic goal is to achieve maximum effect from minimum amount of sound. The time lag or pause which comes out from time to time between the word or the music is highly thought of in Japan. A basic fundamental of Japanese music is that things are deliberately kept simplified, often understated, to create a very special kind of space. The same can apply to instruments. Thus, the shakuhachi has only 5 holes for 10 fingers.

Japanese music is slow usually in 2/4 or 1/4 time. The meters in gagaku music are basically duple being derived from the Chinese use of duple meter which represented balance between yin and yang. The music flows with no repetitions. Music consists of non-stop composed forms rather than forms that repeat or return previous themes or sections. There is an emphasis on melodic or rhythmic tension with little harmony. Rhythmic patterns, such as in noh drama, are used

with an ending designed to move the music or theme forward in progressions producing a sense of motion.

Improvisation is not common in Japanese music, whereas the ability to semi-improvise had a role to play in China as a show of ability. In Japan there is a greater interest in combination of standard materials rather than in originality. The emphasis is on repertoire rather than just the medium, whereas the medium was very important in Chinese music. Japanese music is closely allied to verbal expression, and aural learning with limited use of detailed notations is the preferred practice.

Conclusion

What can be seen from this analysis and the socio-cultural history of Chinese and Japanese music is that Chinese music is much older than Japanese music. Chinese music is surrounded with long-held traditions. Those traditions were influenced by various imported or regional styles and subject to change to some extent, the change being due to assimilation on a somewhat incremental basis resulting in homogeneity being retained in Chinese music.

However, China never imported anything from Japan. Chinese music was exported to Japan, and that is when it underwent the most change but within the Japanese context. It became metamorphosed through interaction with a developing indigenous style. As the local culture had a strong emphasis on theatre Japanese music grew through the theatrical arts. Accordingly, it is difficult to separate the two. Chinese music did not have to rely on theatrical arts for its development. It relied more on Confucian philosophical notions and complex theory. Japan used these but kept things simple. That cultural trait and historical and physical separation allowed for separate development.

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