

PRIZE LECTURE (FULL TEXT)

◆NOT FOR CITATION◆

Myself and Ethnomusicology:  
A Couple of “Betrayals” in My Academic Career

沈洽 SHEN Qia

Professor, China Conservatory of Music, Beijing

Tokyo, Japan 2011 June 23

More than a hundred years ago in 1902, my grandfather's elder brother, SHEN Xin-gong 沈心工<sup>1</sup>, was here in Tôkyô, at the Kôbun (Hongwen) Teachers' School<sup>2</sup> located in Ushigome District. He was seeking for a way to make his own motherland become stronger. He did not choose “revolution”, but rather “education”. He considered that, for the purpose of saving a country, it should surely be necessary to educate people starting from childhood. He quickly found out what was needed, namely, what was later referred to as “school songs 學堂樂歌”. He saw in its new style what could possibly awake people's spirit and suitably inculcate them with the thoughts of modern science and democracy. He initiated “Music Seminar” in 1902 for overseas Chinese students and invited SUZUKI Yonejirô<sup>3</sup> to the seminar for teaching “school songs”. Next year, he came back to Shanghai and started activating and popularizing the “school songs”. This is a real western music popularization of the movement in China. His contributions since then were being made to engendering huge and far-reaching influences over China during the first half of the twentieth century. Therefore, he has been regarded as the first man in modern Chinese music history.

As time went by, in 1958, I finished my high school and as a freshman entered the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, I chose my major “Theory of Traditional Chinese Music (TTCM) 民族音樂理論” which was a new subject just established less than two years before. My aim was, as a famous musicologist, WANG Guang-qi 王光祁<sup>4</sup>, said: “climbing up the top of Kunlun 崑崙, performing the flute of Huangzhong 黃鐘” for challenging the strong forces of western music-centrism and earning the equal status in the world for Chinese music itself. In the light of this behavior of mine, some people later criticized: “Mr. Shen Xin-gong had started importing and popularizing western music, but Mr. SHEN Qia as his grandson ‘betrayed’ him”. Facing such criticism, I thought that there was some truth in the criticism at the outset, and on this account, I felt some kind of apology to my forefather. Around 1984, however, my uncle once told me that SHEN Xin-gong once wrote a memorandum *Guihexuan Ji* 《歸鶴軒記》 around his fifty years of age. In this manuscript, he recalled his own touching story, on reflection, that he was too high on western music and accordingly too slight on own traditions.

Unfortunately, this one was lost when my uncle's dwelling place ransacked by "red guards" during the "cultural revolution". However, I have found many other records afterwards that could prove as my uncle told me: he really wanted and had tried to revive own traditional music, such as taking part in Jinyu Qin-club 今虞琴社<sup>5</sup>, improving technology of setting *qin*-strings onto instrument, recovering *qin* songs 琴歌 etc. Just for his age and health reasons, he failed to do more in these respects. Since then, I've been confident that my choice of academic way is the best inherited from his uncompleted ideal!

The story about the second one I was blamed for "betrayal" began in winter, 1977. At that time, the nightmarish turbulence had just finished<sup>6</sup>, the academic field called "TTCM" which I devoted myself to almost became in ruins. Most scholars of this field were thinking about the same problem: how to rebuild an own academic homestead. Just in that moment I pleurably met my old friend Prof. LUO Chuan-kai 羅傳開 whom I had not met for 10 years. He gave me a bundle of no binding up mimeograph material which he had just translated with his colleagues. It was about the status of development of ethnomusicology in the West and Japan during the time China was in unrest. Especially Prof. Yamaguti Osamu's some articles gave me a big inspiration. I compared ethnomusicology with "TTCM" and deeply felt that they have many worthy of our learning in this discipline, such as relationships between music and culture, how to deal with "orthodox" musicology and the values of European cultural centralism and so on. Thinking of that, I really felt a bright light in front my eyes. I thought, instead of rebuilding "TTCM" as such according to its original manner, I should rather make efforts in grafting it as grafted to stock the "TTCM" up and to construct a new ethnomusicology belonging to Chinese ourselves! And so, I have been tying with it together inseparably starting from that time. That is the reason why I have been complained by some colleagues later as a kind of "betrayal" to "TTCM" and even to my great respected and favorite teacher Prof. Yu Hui-yong 于會泳<sup>7</sup>.

However, I do not feel any guilt for this blame this time, since I deeply know that my transition to ethnomusicology is just for resetting the perspective angle and expanding the research methods. As for the academic object and aim there is no change. So, I firmly believe that it is not "betrayal", but the best inherited towards my benefactor, the late Prof. Yu Hui-yong's 于會泳 unfulfilled wishes.

From then until now, as over thirty years passed, I myself changed from a strong man to a grey old boy and my almost naive ideal and the persistence on ethnomusicology has always been with me and even become a part of my life. Throughout my life, I have devoted all my energy to push this discipline to development, even though I have felt the pressures from many aspects in practice. But I neither complain and nor regret. Nowadays, after two generations of efforts, ethnomusicology has, as someone said, already been almost a half of the territory

in China<sup>8</sup>. However, if we calmly observe it, how to get along with "TTCM" and "orthodox" musicology, how to get rid of influences of European centrism in ethnomusicology itself and how to combine the music and culture more closely from methodology angles, etc. there is still a formidable task in front of us. Chinese ethnomusicologists need a long way to go.

I noticed that there have been some similar situations once in your country, between traditional Japanese music study and ethnomusicology, between ethnomusicology and "general Western scholarship" and "Western music history" and "ethnomusicology in Western scholarship context"<sup>9</sup>. However, you deal with these problems better than we, I think. This time, the fact that, with the great honor, I can accept the Ethnomusicology Award on behalf of Mr. KOIZUMI Fumio is a good proof. I never thought of that my small contribution in a half century of this field can be seen by the KOIZUMI Fumio Foundation and by all of you here, I am really grateful since, as you know, "It is the biggest satisfaction when your work can be seen". Thank all of you.

=====

<sup>1</sup> SHEN Xin-gong (沈心工, 1870-1947) : given names--Qing-hong (慶鴻) and Shu-kui (叔達), the pen name --Xin-gong (心工) by himself for his works, was born in Shanghai, famous educationist and founder of "School Songs". He, as the earliest music teacher in the history of Chinese modern education, is affirmed the first man in the history of Chinese modern music also. He produced more than 180 pieces of "School Songs" in his life.

<sup>2</sup> Hongwen [Kôbun] Shoin. Its first name was Yile Shoin 亦樂書院, founded by KANÔ Jigorô (1860-1938), educationist, the founder of jûdô as well. Hongwen Shoin was a school especially founded for Chinese overseas students. Later, to be avoided as a taboo for Qianlong emperor 乾隆, changed the name to Hongwen 宏文. The students included CHEN Tian-hua 陳天華, HUANG Xing 黃興, YANG Du 楊度, HU Han-min 胡漢民, NIU Bao-cai 牛保才, YANG Chang-ji 楊昌濟, ZHU Jian-fan 朱劍凡, HU Yuan-tan 胡元倓, LI Qin-xiang 李琴湘, FANG Ding-ying 方鼎英, XU Shou-Tang 許壽裳, ZHOU Shu-ren 周樹人 (pen name: LU Xun 魯迅), CHEN You-yun 陳幼雲, CHEN Shi-zeng 陳師曾, CHEN Yin-ke 陳寅恪, LIU Xun-lin 劉勳麟, BAO Gui-zao 鮑貴藻, LI Si-guang 李四光, HOU Hong-jian 侯鴻鑒, ZHENG Ju-ru 鄭菊如, LI Shu-cheng 李書城, LIN Bo-qu 林伯渠, DENG Yi-zhe 鄧以蟄 *et alii.*

<sup>3</sup> SUZUKI Yonejirô (1868-1940): Japanese music educationist in the Meiji-Taishô-Shôwa eras. Graduated from Tokyo Music School and served in the Higher Normal School of Tokyo.

Founded Japan Music School (present name: Tokyo College of Music); its first president.  
Main Works: *The Compendious Music Dictionary, etc.*

<sup>4</sup> WANG Guang-qi 王光祁 (1891-1936): famous musicologist, social activist and the first man in comparative musicology in China also, alternative names Run-yu 潤嶼 and Ruo-yu 若愚. Was born in Wenjiang 溫江, Chengdu 成都, Sichuan 四川. Went to Germany in 1920, studied political economy first and then transferred to music in 1923. Entered Berlin University in 1927 to learn musicology and comparative musicology, taught by C. STUMPF and E. M. von HORNBOSTEL *et alii*. and awarded a doctorate in Bonn University in 1934. The main works include *The History of Chinese Music*, 1921, *Evolutionism on Western Music*, 1923, *A Study on Ton-system between Eastern and Western*, 1926, *Music of Eastern Nations*, 1929 and *On Classical Chinese Opera*, 1934 and so on.

<sup>5</sup> Jinyu Qin Club 今虞琴社: a club especially for *qin* 琴 musicians founded by the famous *qin* musicians CHAYi-ping 查夷平, PENG Qing-shou 彭慶壽, XU Yuan-bai 徐元白, ZHUANG Jian-cheng 莊劍丞, FAN Shao-yun 樊少云 *et alii* in 1936 in Suzhou 蘇州. It was aimed for 'developing and promoting the scholarship of *qin* music 琴樂'.

<sup>6</sup> It refers to the so-called "cultural revolution" (1966-1976).

<sup>7</sup> YU Hui-yong 于會泳 (1925-1977): a famous music theoretician and composer, was born in Rushan 乳山, Shandong 山東. Once served as the vice-director of department of TTCM. From 1985, led and completed as the main composer to create the operas including *Haigang* 海港 (The Harbour), *Zhiquweihushan* 智取威虎山 (Very Wise to Conquer the Mountain Weihu), *Longjiang Song* 龍江頌 (Laud the River Longjiang), *Dujuan Shan* 杜鵑山 (The Mountain Dujuan), *Panshi Wan* 磐石灣 (The Harbour Panshi) and *Shen Yi-zi* 審椅子 (Interrogating a Chair) etc., main works *Relationship between Tune and Lyric of Traditional Chinese Music* (1964) etc..

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Editor Note of *People's Music* 人民音樂, 2010 Vol. V.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from *Come out of Alluvial Water: A New Musicology* 出自積淤的水中——以貝勞音樂文化為實例的音樂學新論 (YAMAGUTI Osamu, 1999, *China Social Sciences Press*).

---

This page was updated on 22 July 2011.  
KOIZUMI Fumio Memorial Archives, All rights reserved.