

Study on the Writing Strategies for Literature Pertaining to the Academic and Disciplinary Historiography of Traditional Chinese Music Theory

Weiyi Sun

School of China Conservatory of Music, Beijing 100101, China

Abstract: Since the "Nanjing Conference" in 1980, ethnomusicology, under the concept of "Ethnomusicology" officially entered China as a discipline. Since then, the two disciplines of ethnomusicology and traditional Chinese music theory have continuously interacted and mutually influenced each other through exchanges. Following the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, China's various sectors faced an urgent need for recovery and development. As an integral component of Chinese traditional culture, traditional Chinese music increasingly drew attention from across society, with its value being rediscovered and emphasized. The establishment of influential journal media platforms and the gradual refinement of dissemination methods have since played a pivotal role in advancing the scholarly study and preservation of traditional Chinese music. To date, some domestic scholars have attempted to analyze relevant research achievements, delving deeply into ethnomusicology and traditional music theory from a theoretical perspective, and have published a series of valuable theoretical outcomes. This study is based on 135 research achievements on academic and disciplinary histories included in the "Cataloging of literary theory" section of the "Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Music". Based on the writing strategies of these articles, I categorize them into three major types: those arranged in chronological order, those based on research and classification methods, and those organized by issue. In the main body of the paper, I will conduct an in-depth examination of the writing methodologies employed in these research contributions, followed by a comprehensive assessment of their respective strengths and limitations.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Music Theory; Ethnomusicology; Academic History; Disciplinary History; Writing Strategies.

1. Introduction

This paper takes 135 research achievements on academic and disciplinary histories included in the "Cataloging of literary theory" section of the "Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Music" as the research object. These achievements are systematically sorted out and their writing strategies are categorized into three types for analysis, with the aim of providing useful references for the further development of academic and disciplinary history research.

2. Chronological Order

In the field of musicology, traditional academic and disciplinary history research often follows a chronological order, which is a relatively common writing strategy. Its advantage lies in its clear organization and comprehensive information. For instance, Wei Chen's article, "Exploring the Future Direction of Traditional Chinese Music in the 21st Century" (1996) cleverly uses conferences as a narrative thread, systematically summarizing the evolution of traditional Chinese music theory construction since the 1980s based on the chronological order of conference hosting. During the summarizing process, the author not only elaborates in detail on the topics and special issues of each conference but also delves into the development direction of traditional Chinese music in the 21st century, conducting a meticulous comparative analysis with the music of countries in the Asia-Pacific region that share profound cultural ties with China. On this basis, the article makes forward-looking predictions and in-depth discussions about the future development prospects of traditional Chinese music. Notably, while employing the diachronic research method, the article also follows the spatial and geographical dissemination paths

to analyze the exchanges and interactions between China and other countries in the field of music, thereby making scientific predictions about the future development direction of traditional Chinese music. In my view, Wei Chen's article, which uses conferences as a narrative thread, provides a novel framework for studying the development of traditional Chinese music theory construction. The article adopts a combination of diachronic research and spatial-geographical dissemination analysis, giving the research depth and breadth. Diachronic research can reveal the developmental changes of traditional Chinese music in different historical periods, uncovering its internal laws and trends, while spatial-geographical dissemination analysis showcases the international dissemination and exchanges of traditional Chinese music from geographical and cultural dimensions, broadening the research perspective. This multifaceted research strategy enables a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of the contemporary state and future trajectory of traditional Chinese music.

Jianzhong Qiao's "A Historical Review and Commentary on Textbooks of Traditional Chinese Music in the 20th Century" (2016) follows a chronological order to compile an excerpt of traditional Chinese music textbooks in the 20th century. During this process, he not only summarizes the overall trends of textbooks in each period but also, for textbooks with the same trend, deeply analyzes their main differences. Meanwhile, he elaborates in detail on the objectives (background), editing methods, specific content (chapter structure), and roles (status) of textbook compilation. Furthermore, Jianzhong Qiao explicitly expresses his views and evaluations of these textbooks, including their strengths and weaknesses. On this basis, he summarizes the current issues in textbook compilation and provides targeted

solutions, further proposing preliminary ideas for future textbook compilation. Regarding this article, arranging the excerpt of 20th-century traditional Chinese music textbooks in chronological order helps clearly present the historical thread of textbook development, allowing readers to see the characteristics and changes of textbooks in different periods. Through this linear summarizing, one can capture the evolutionary trends of textbooks influenced by social, cultural, and educational factors in different historical stages, providing a foundation for in-depth research on the development laws of textbooks. However, a purely chronological summarizing may overly focus on surface phenomena and easily overlook some cross-period important influencing factors or deep-level developmental logics.

3. Based on Research and Classification Methods

In academic and disciplinary history research, the classification-based research method has the advantage of clear priorities, appropriate detail, and strong logic. For instance, in the study of traditional music theory, Mei Xiao's "A Summary of Studies on Traditional Chinese Music" (2009) examines the development process of traditional Chinese music research in the long river of history, comprehensively analyzing its development. The book not only delves into the diverse academic thoughts within the connotation of this research field but also analyzes in detail the practical operational aspects, offering unique personal insights into its future development direction. In terms of research methods, Mei Xiao discusses traditional Chinese music research from multiple dimensions, specifically covering "research objects, scope, significance, main research directions, stages, achievements, representative figures, and brief reviews of important literature." She emphasizes that the article follows a rigorous methodology aimed at extensively covering diverse events, figures, and their research achievements in different historical periods, deeply excavating and presenting various complex factors, thereby perceiving the diverse ideological systems and practical operational modes within the academic research field. During the discussion, Mei Xiao conducts a detailed analysis and introduction of the writings of several influential authors in related fields and conducts comparative studies on similar topics, clearly pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of various viewpoints and achievements. In the second part, she conducts a diachronic in-depth discussion from the perspective of disciplinary naming and poses a series of thought-provoking questions at the end, triggering further reflection from readers on relevant issues in traditional Chinese music research. This article adopts a multi-dimensional research method, discussing from multiple aspects such as "research objects, scope, significance, main research directions, stages, achievements, representative figures, and brief reviews of important literature" reflecting the comprehensiveness and systematicity of the research method. This multi-dimensional analysis can comprehensively cover various aspects of traditional Chinese music research, avoiding one-sidedness in research. The author follows a methodology that emphasizes comprehensiveness and depth, aiming to widely cover diverse events, figures, and achievements in different historical periods, deeply excavating and presenting complex factors to perceive ideological systems and practical operational modes. This methodology has high academic value, avoiding

superficial and simplistic research.

In the field of ethnomusicology research, scholars such as Guangyu Feng and Fangbing Ren have conducted comprehensive reviews, retrospectives, and in-depth reflections on the disciplinary research achievements of ethnomusicology. Fangbing Ren's "A Comprehensive Review of Chinese Ethnomusicology Research in the Past Five Years" (2004) focuses on systematically and comprehensively compiling and summarizing the theoretical monographs on ethnomusicology published and the papers published in "journals" during the period from 1999 to 2003. The content of this article is strategically organized into two primary sections: "Academic Conferences" and "Monographs and Journals". Within the "Academic Conferences" section, the author offers a meticulous and well-contextualized overview of the core themes and pivotal viewpoints discussed at significant conferences. In the "monographs and journals" section, it is further subdivided into "disciplinary theoretical research" and "achievements in ethnomusicology practice", with the "achievements in ethnomusicology practice" section listing four representative classic investigation reports. Guangyu Feng's "The New Trends in China's Ethnomusicology Research over the Past Three Decades: Reflections Triggered by the 'National Ethnomusicology Academic Symposium' Held in Nanjing in 1980" (2011), written from the perspective of a participant in the 1980 Nanjing "National Ethnomusicology Academic Symposium", a landmark event in the development of ethnomusicology in China, summarizes the development trajectory and emerging trends of ethnomusicology in China from 1980 to 2010 from three important dimensions: "a new stage for ethnomusicology in China", "establishing Chinese characteristics in ethnomusicology" and "continuously improving research methods in ethnomusicology".

Fangbing Ren and Guangyu Feng's research provides relatively comprehensive reviews and retrospectives on the development process of ethnomusicology. Fangbing Ren presents the research achievements of the period from 1999 to 2003 through the compilation of monographs and papers, showcasing the research dynamics of this stage from the sections of academic conferences and monographs and journals, enabling readers to clearly understand the research trends of this period. Guangyu Feng, taking the 1980 Nanjing Conference as a starting point, summarizes the development trajectory over 30 years from 1980 to 2010, providing a macro perspective for researchers to grasp the developmental stages and important turning points of ethnomusicology in China, facilitating an understanding of the disciplinary development thread and key turning points.

4. Organized by Issue

From the relevant information I have consulted, it can be inferred that research achievements in the current musicology field that use issues as a thread for academic and disciplinary history studies are relatively scarce. However, the writing strategy that uses issues as an entry point exhibits significant advantages in accurately grasping academic dynamics and hotspots.

Taking Mu Yang's "Ethnomusicology Stepping into the 21st Century: International Trends and Chinese Practices" (2009) as an example, the article uses issues as a key entry point to deeply analyze the evolution process of the theoretical landscape of modern music anthropology and its global development trends and research dynamics from the

late 20th century to the early 21st century. The article initially provides a comprehensive synthesis of the core issues in this field during the specified period, followed by an analysis that integrates practical case studies from China, elaborates in detail on the close connections between these issues and music practices and research, as well as the application of contemporary theoretical frameworks in practical research. The writing strategy that uses issues as an entry point enables researchers to focus more on core issues within specific fields, thereby accurately grasping academic dynamics and hotspots. This article clearly showcases the development status of this field in international trends and Chinese practices by focusing on the core issues of modern music anthropology, providing a clear perspective for researchers to understand the discipline's frontiers. This writing strategy helps avoid overly broad and scattered research, making the research more targeted and effective.

However, the issue-centered research strategy may limit the researcher's perspective to specific issues and fields, thereby neglecting the development of other important aspects within the discipline. For instance, while focusing on the changes in the theoretical landscape of music anthropology, one may overlook the development dynamics in other related fields such as music education and music industry. This constraint may result in research findings that lack sufficient comprehensiveness and integration, thereby failing to fully capture the holistic developmental trajectory of the discipline

5. Conclusion

In summary, in articles related to the academic and disciplinary histories of ethnomusicology and traditional music theory research, there are three different writing strategies, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Firstly, using chronological order as a writing strategy. This approach has significant advantages, enabling the article to be well-organized, with information presented comprehensively and completely. Readers can relatively intuitively understand the development process of the discipline by following the chronological thread. However, its drawbacks are also apparent, as it risks descending into mere data aggregation, thereby complicating the precise identification of the discourse's focal points during the writing process. Consequently, the article may degenerate into a large-scale review, lacking in academic depth and theoretical discussions, and failing to showcase the unique value of academic research.

Secondly, using research and classification methods as a writing strategy. Its advantage lies in highlighting primary and secondary relationships, achieving appropriate detail and a clear and rigorous logical structure in the discourse. By reasonably classifying the research content, it helps readers better understand the framework of disciplinary research. However, when faced with a large number and complex types of research objects that are difficult to effectively categorize,

forcing classification may compress the space for diachronic academic history discussions, making it difficult to elaborate on the construction process of the knowledge system.

Thirdly, using issues as a writing strategy. This approach can flexibly analyze literature materials in detail and clearly reflect the dynamic changes in academic development, with incomparable advantages in accurately grasping academic dynamics and hotspots. However, it also has certain limitations. Although focusing on issues can make the research more targeted, it may also lead to insufficient research depth. Additionally, due to the different characteristics and backgrounds of different issues, research achievements based on issues may have certain limitations, and their universality may be affected. Therefore, the three writing strategies for articles on the academic and disciplinary histories of ethnomusicology and traditional music theory research each have their own characteristics. In actual writing, one should reasonably choose or comprehensively utilize these writing strategies according to the research purpose, object, and one's own needs to enhance the quality and academic value of the article.

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