

# DEVELOPMENT OF ANCIENT STYLE MUSIC COMMUNICATION IN THE NEW MEDIA ERA FROM MIMAN CULTURE MEDIA

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## ABSTRACT

Miman Culture Media is the first cultural company in China that focuses on the promotion of original ancient style music, and has developed a large number of young group fans of traditional Chinese music and culture. In every stage of the company's development, it reflects the market development trend of Chinese folk music in the era of new media, media dissemination channels, and changes in the connotation of traditional music. Combined with the development of Miman Culture Media, this paper adopts empirical methods such as interviews, online ethnography and participant observation to analyze the transmutation of ancient style music in Chinese pop music field in the era of new media from three aspects: cultural self-consciousness, market integration, and marketing of ancient style music, and to get the characteristics of the pluralism and cultural nature of Chinese ancient music in the era of new media.

**Keywords:** Miman Culture Media, ancient style music, new media, communication, youngster

## INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Chinese composer Liu Huan scored the music for the TV drama *Empresses in the Palace* by using the ancient style elements, and the ancient style music with new lyrics in the drama turned into a classic once it was released. People enjoyed the ancient style of the music in the drama. There is a surge of interest in ancient poetry and culture. The public has a strong

aesthetic demand for classical culture, especially the young generation's pursuit of popular music, popular ancient culture, and recognition of the value of Chinese classical culture, which has formed the ancient style music characterized by youth culture. In 2015, after the establishment of Miman Culture Media, the ancient style - popular relativity theory, the creation idea of attraction to the ancient style. The company creates ancient style works that spread on the Internet, integrating animation, online games, ancient costumes and music with ancient style elements, and they have made ancient music a genre that shall not be downplayed in popular music.

This paper examines how the ancient style music has changed from being a marginal culture to being accepted by the mainstream society, the uniqueness and value of which, and explores the development of Miman Culture Media and the laws of Chinese popular music. This change can also provide some reference for the dissemination and development of other new arts. In this paper, the research methods include interviews, participant observation, ethnographic research, etc., and the empirical research method, which concludes that the folk ancient style music is branching out from popular music, which is different from the folk style music of the older generation of artists. From the content and form of the ancient style music, it is more obvious that the young generation loves, admires and sings the ancient national sentiment. Ancient style music was brewed on the Internet, which has cultural, commercial and political attributes.

In recent years, China's costume drama market is booming, and the lyrics, music and singing of the music are highly characterized by ancient style music. Immortal theme breaks the traditional orchestration mode, not just using traditional folk instruments, but the combination of traditional folk music, Western instruments and new sound sources, creating a different sound and auditory effect, with a different musical style from the ancient costume drama, which contributes to the development of the plot. Folk ancient style music meets the modern people's auditory aesthetics, and it can play a vital role in ancient dramas for the audience to better understand and appreciate, and builds a solid bridge between the author and the audience.

## **RELATED WORKS**

The earliest article on ancient style music was published in 2011 and it was a score of a song. The definition of ancient style music proposed by Jin Shasha's paper in 2014. This article is regarded as the first academic study of ancient music. Zhou and Xiong (2016) studied the history of ancient style music, a phenomenon that originated from folk music, in a folk art perspective. Zhu, Meng, and Xu (2020) proposed in their study the relationship between the existence type attributes of music and culture. Tian (2019) also analyzed the influence of traditional culture on young people in his study, including the need for heritage and innovation. Zhao (2020) analyzed the aesthetic characteristics and ancient characteristics to conclude that young people have aesthetic characteristics of classical culture. Sun (2019) proposed that the ancient style music is a phenomenon of subculture, and studied the ancient style music characteristics from the subculture perspective in his study. Zhou (2019) also proposed the

concept of youth subculture in her study to explore the development of ancient style music and the concept of subculture. Chen (2019) proposed that the transformation of ancient style music to Chinese ancient style music, although fuelled by commercial capital, is also a manifestation of the awakening of national consciousness in the youth population.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Due to the special nature of the development of ancient style music, the Internet has been the main position for its development and dissemination in the early days and still to this day. In this case, it is very appropriate to use interviews, observation method, and online ethnography method in empirical research. From the study of the development of Miman Culture Media, the changes in the aesthetics of folk music among the new youth in the new era are found, and behind the change reflects cultural self-consciousness.

The term “cultural self-consciousness” was first proposed by Mr. Fei Xiaotong in 1997. Cultural self-consciousness means that people living in a certain culture have self-knowledge of their culture, understanding its origin, formation process, characteristics and its development tendency. Fei Xiaotong (2004) pointed out that it does not carry any meaning of cultural regression, it is not about “evolutionary reversion”, and it also does not advocate “total westernization” or “being assimilated”. Self-knowledge is to strengthen the ability to take ownership of cultural transformations and to gain an autonomous position in deciding cultural choices adapted to the new environment and the new era.

### **Cultural aspects of ancient style music**

#### **1. Cultural self-consciousness**

Under the tide of global economic integration, cultural self-consciousness is our unremitting pursuit of our own national traditional culture. The Chinese music circle at the turn of the century set off the Chinoiserie represented by “Dongfengpo”. Subsequently, an activity of filling in lyrics for ancient songs by Xianyou Game attracted a large number of ACG community who love ancient style and ancient culture. Since then, driven by interest, many young fans of traditional culture, online ancient music communities and national cultural identifiers have combined their efforts to use the Internet as a vehicle to continually blend traditional music with elements of popular and even Western music. The song “Our MoMingQiMiao” mentions: “Inviting you to breathe the winds of the Tang and Song dynasties” and “being drunk and listening to Jue, Zhi, Gong, Shang”, which show the youth group's perspective on traditional music and culture.

#### **2. Network ancient style music community**

In 2003, the network ancient style music first appeared in Fenbei.com, which is a relatively active base of original music, and then closed due to operational problems. There is a Chinese Paladin's music section on Fenbei.com, which is the earliest base for ancient style originals, and

many ancient style music singer-songwriters were users on Fenbei.com, including Ediq and Diuzi, the initiators of MoMingQiMiao. With the Internet as a platform, members form music communities by virtue of their common music style and common interests. With the Internet as a platform, members form music communities by virtue of their common music style and common interests. Including publicity, artwork and post-processing personnel, many people work for the community as a sideline, and the creation of ancient style works is all based on personal hobbies and the support of fans. According to the count of Tianya Club website, as of 2011, there are more than 60 ancient style music communities registered on the Internet. In addition to MoMingQiMiao, the influential ones are PingShaLuoYan, LuanFengMing, QianGeWeiYang, LiuShangQueshui, HuaKuiLou, and MiaoYuQingGe. In 2015, after Gui Zhenyu led MoMingQiMiao to establish Miman Culture Media, integrating the popular resources of the ancients circle and signing more than 100 ancient singer-songwriters. The company has ten million ACG (Animation, Comic, Game) fans online, to promote China's ACG culture industry, and holds cultural iconic ancient style concerts offline to expand its influence and has emerged as a powerful force in the ancient style music market. Table 1 shows the situation of ancient style creators and the number of fans.

**Table 1: Status of Some Producers of Ancient Style Music**  
(Fans' data in the table is as of March 2023)

Name of circles	Identity	Relevant information	Remark
Xinran	Singer	Weibo followers 118,000 Representative works: Qiannianyuan	The originator of the ancient style singers
ediq	Lyricist, Music Producer	Founder of “MoMingQiMiao” Representative works: Shengtang Yechang, Qinshi. Majors: Transportation Management in junior college, Bachelor of Laws	
Hetu Music Producer	Music producer	Weibo followers: 3.681 million Representative works: Qingjin Tianxia Graduate School: Jishou University	
YinPinGuaiWu	Music producer	Weibo followers: 2,382,000 Representative works: Dianyusi, Qinshi	
Yinlin	Music producer	Weibo followers: 2,382,000 Representative works: Jinlichao Graduate School: College of Foreign Languages, Nanjing University	
Qiran	Music producer	Weibo followers: 2,449,000 Representative works: Pipaxing, Piruzhaolu Graduate School: Shanghai Theater Academy Major: Puppetry	

Wang Jingxuan (Yaoyang)	Singer, model, actress	Weibo followers: 1,692,000 Representative works: Chuimeng Daoxizhou, Chunbudu Graduate School: Liaoning Normal University Major: Broadcasting & Hosting	
Qiyuqin	Original music producer, composer	Weibo followers: 176,000 Representative works: Pipaxing, Zonghengpian Graduate School: Central Conservatory of Music	

Under the operation of Miman Culture Media, ancient style music become widely known, from online to offline, from “entertaining oneself in a small circle” to the mainstream culture. The company integrates multi-party capital and enters into market-oriented operation. Relying on the new media platform to create ancient style music, so that has a very high cultural integration, but also political and commercial. With the ancient style music as the axis, multiple circles of culture have been fused.

## **Marketability of ancient style music**

### **1. Direction of music market**

The ancient style circle, compared to the huge entertainment market, is a minority group. Circle culture originates from game soundtracks, IP anime music, cosplay and other subcultures, and they are known as youth subculture communities or ACG communities. The youth community in the ancient style circle wants to expand the influence of their circle and gain social attention, and the capital market expects ancient style music to go to the mainstream consumer group. Driven by the two parties, Miman Culture Media co-organized offline concerts with many Internet media platforms, combining traditional culture with modern popularity, launching the concept of Chinese ancientry style, and replacing ancient style with Chinese ancientry style. In 2015, the Chinese Ancientry Concert - Tage Xingqianshan was held at the Great Hall of the People, and in 2016, An Original & New Chapter - Large-scale Chinese Ancientry Concert was held at Beijing National Stadium. In 2017, “Praying for the Age - Theme Concert of Chinese Ancientry Style for Public Welfare” was held at the Juyongguan Great Wall. From the locations of the Great Hall of the People, Beijing National Stadium and the Great Wall, which are traditional Chinese cultural landmarks, we can see that the commercial ambition of Miman Culture Media is to promote ancient style music to the Chinese cultural level.

### **2. Ancient style culture become widely known, “ancient style” and “Chinese ancientry style”**

Under the operation of Miman Culture Media, ancient style music become widely known, from online to offline, from “entertaining oneself in a small circle” to the mainstream culture. Chen Bijun et al. (2018) were the first to propose “breaking the wall” and “entertaining oneself in a small circle”, both of which are Internet buzzwords. Breaking the wall means breaking the

barrier of communication between ACG and the real world. “Entertaining oneself in a small circle” is to amuse oneself in a small circle and obsess about one's own hobbies. Strictly speaking, ancient style and Chinese ancientry style are two completely different existences, which have been quite controversial. Ancient style is the IP culture chased in ACG youth culture community, and imitating and singing in ancient style is just the external form of IP culture. Originating from The Book of Poetry, Chinese ancientry style represents the traditional Chinese classics, the cultural symbols of a long history of 5,000 years. Singer-songwriters in ancient style and enthusiasts of Chinese ancientry style want to break through the circle culture and rise to the mainstream culture, and the external form of imitating and singing in ancient style is naturally taken as a breakthrough for the Chinese ancientry style. The transformation from ancient style to Chinese ancientry style is a trend of development of minority culture to mass culture, the fusion of popular music and classical, and the collision of youth culture and mainstream culture.

### **3.Relying on cultural and recreational activities to create cultural, commercial and political ancient culture**

The concert held by Miman Culture Media in the early stage is to create the wind vane of ancient music inheritance of Chinese civilization, then after the cooperation with the Internet entertainment platform, the development of both cultural and commercial, politically oriented cultural activities, is the ancient music completely “break through the wall”, to occupy the mainstream market. On April 20, 2019, the “Young of China” Chinese Ancientry Music Festival and the award ceremony for “Young People's Favorite Chinese Ancientry Music” was successfully held at the Jiangsu Grand Theatre in Nanjing. Organized by the China Youth New Media Association and undertaken by Miman Culture Media, the event aims to encourage original Chinese ancientry style music, recognize outstanding Chinese ancientry style musicians and Chinese ancientry style music projects, with a view to continuously promoting the vigorous development of Chinese ancientry style music. During the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, Miman Culture Media joined hands with Changba Live House to create the first online Chinese ancientry style music festival. Chen Hua, founder and CEO of Changba Music Group, stated the following about the online festival in an interview, “The biggest public service is to provide job opportunities; offline singers are experiencing difficulties in earning income from the epidemic, and we can provide 100,000 offline singers with online performance opportunities through Changba Live House.”

### **Inclusiveness of Chinese ancientry music**

The ancient style singer-songwriters, represented by Miman Culture Media, are admirers of folk music, creators of ancient style music, and curators of Chinese ancientry style music. The transformation from ancient style to Chinese ancientry style cannot be separated from the marketing strategy. Chinese ancientry style creates Chinese ancientry style music with a vague concept with unique Chinese cultural symbols, showing the strong inclusiveness, culture, inheritance and innovation of national music in the new media era.

### **1. The market and ancient style musicians expect Chinese ancient style to become mainstream culture**

In an interview, the program team of The Chinese Youth said: “We call it Chinese ancient style in the hope that by (encouraging) young people to take part in the competition, we can find a unique way of expression of traditional culture that young people can accept. .... Our definition (of Chinese ancient style) is that young people can like, accept and enjoy spreading traditional culture and focusing on stage performances. In the research of Ji Fangfang (2020), a musician in the ancient style circle has talked about the efforts of the ancient style circle to become Chinese ancient style in the interview: the ancient style is a small circle, and the Chinese ancient style is a big circle. .... At present, I know many ancient style musicians, in fact, hope very much to enter the Chinese ancient style market, and wish that their works can become more formal and decent. It can be said that they are also cultivating professional listening consciousness of their fans. Chinese ancient style has turned into a traditional culture grip between the new media platform and the market, wandering in the middle of tradition and modernity, trying hard to get closer to the mainstream traditional culture.

### **2. The concept of Chinese ancient style music is blurred by the promotion of the market capital**

Since 2011, Gui Zhenyu entered MoMingQiMiao Ancient Style Music Club and began to lead the club to start commercialization. After the establishment of Miman Culture Media, it vigorously advocated the Chinese ancient style instead of ancient style, organizing large-scale concerts, concerts, and developing high-quality music IP, which pushed the Chinese ancient style music to the market climax. In the development of Chinese ancient style from culture to capital, the escalation from minority to mainstream, the market had to find a balance between mainstream and non-mainstream, and at the same time also find commercial value in culture and entertainment, making it impossible to accurately define Chinese ancient style. Chinese ancient style music has multiplicity and uncertainty at the same time. Too much mixing of elements has been the subject of blurred boundaries in Chinese ancient style music. Some people say that Chinese ancient style music is a kind of specious traditional music. In September 2018, an online poll was launched on NetEase Cloud Music, the original purpose of the campaign was to reshape the public's impression of Chinese ancient style music. According to the results of the poll, NetEase Cloud Music stated that “any Chinese pop song that incorporates elements of traditional Chinese culture is called Chinese ancient style.”

### **3. The strong inclusiveness of Chinese ancient style music in the new media era**

Chinese ancient music is quietly influencing Chinese folk music with young people's multiple definitions and aesthetics of music and culture. Young people who love new media are searching for their roots in national culture and supplementing it with other cultural elements. The music retains the highbrow characteristics of traditional Chinese music, but also combines it with popular music, and even tries to combine it with western hip-hop, rap, jazz and ballad. In the era of new media, Chinese ancient style music not only demonstrates cultural confidence,

but also shows strong inclusiveness. When the ancient style subculture approaches the national music culture, the Chinese ancient style music comes into being, and its lyrics can be “both literary and vernacular”, and its songs can be “both ancient and new”. On new media platforms, folk music takes various forms and blossoms. An ancient style song, Pipaxing, with 1.67 billion plays and searches on Tik Tok, reached a popular height by combining Bai Juyi's poem Pipaxing, the production style of popular music, rap elements, folk music, and elements of opera. Table 2 compares and summarizes the ancient music functions of different new media platforms.

**Table 2:** Comparison of functions of different media platforms

<b>Comparison of functions of different media platforms</b>			
<b>Platform name</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Functions for the dissemination of ancient style music</b>	<b>Audience</b>
5sing	Audio playback platform featuring ancient style music	The main carriers of early ancient style music broadcasting	①Important carriers of audio broadcasting platforms in ancient style circles ②Audience of ancient style music
Netease Cloud, KuGou, QQ Music	Popular audio playback platform	Vehicles for playing ancient style music	All kinds of music audience
YY.com	①Voice socialization platform ②Instant social interaction ③Performance space for ancient style song clubs	①Maintaining Audience ② Expanding Audience	Singer and ancient style music team fans
Weibo	①Open communication ②Online text, chat social platform ③Content mainly consists of short-form graphics and shorter videos.	①Expanding audience ②Publicize information about ancient style music ③Sina Weibo super topic and fan groups provide social platforms for the audience to meet their social needs.	①Audience of ancient style music ②Weibo users
Bilibili	①Video platform ②Videos with content related to ancient style music	① Expanding audience ② Releasing channels for ancient style music videos	① Audience of ancient style music ② ACG and movie fans



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to increase user viscosity, the Internet and other entertainment platforms have launched IP TV ancient dramas, popular topics, and national style youth of China, etc. Multiple elements such as business + culture, classical + popular, national + world, etc., are fused together to create Chinese ancient style music in the new media era, which forms the transmutation of traditional music.

### **The rendering of Chinese ancient style music by entertainment program platforms and IP film and television music**

On new media platforms, online media platforms such as Bilibili, Tik Tok, Douyu, Kwai, Toutiao, and iQIYI have pooled their resources to target the youth user base, launching Chinese ancient style boards and Chinese ancient style topics, respectively. For example, Chinese Choir with 10 million clicks on Bilibili, the topic of “I want to make a laugh out of the quintessence of Chinese culture” on Tik Tok, and The Youth of China by iQIYI topped Weibo topic search for 16 times during the year of broadcasting.

In recent years, the emergence of network literature IP film and television adaptations such as the hit drama To the Sky Kingdom, Nirvana in Fire, The Joy of Life, The Untamed and other network literature IP film and television adaptations has made the Chinese ancient style IP culture deeper into the market. Miman Culture Media takes the opportunity to create original Chinese ancient style works, the incubator of Chinese ancient style projects and IP. The two original literary works Kongque Daming and Jinlichao use the marketing method of “music + IP” to create a full-scene experience of entertainment-style fan value and satisfy the fans' sentiments. Miman Culture Media's IP marketing strategy expands the audience circle, expands the fan base, and influences the whole national style music market.

### **Chinese ancient style involves multi-party consultations**

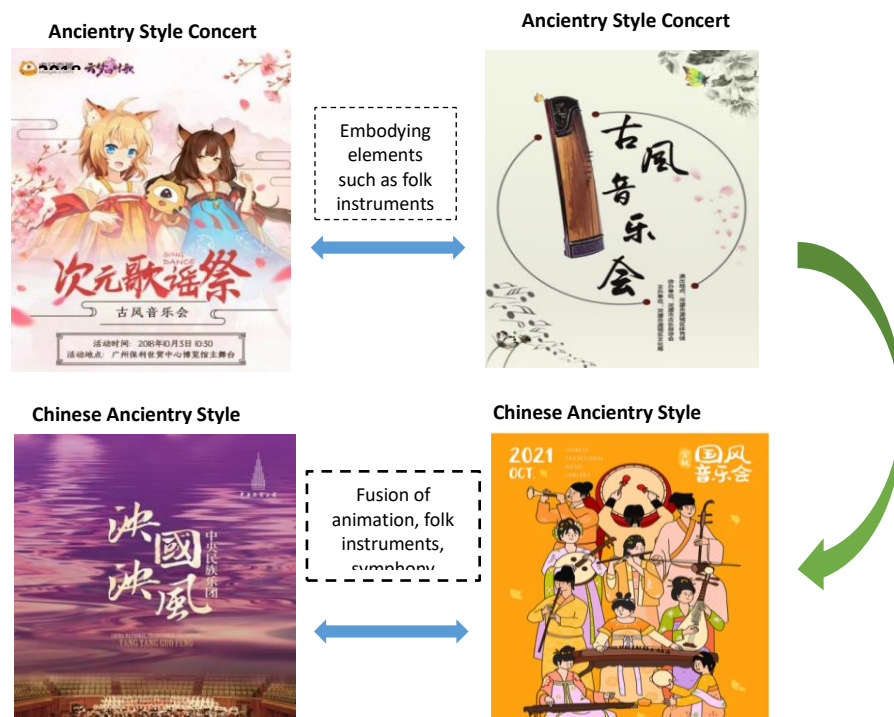
Internet media and market capital have given birth to the Chinese ancient style culture, and the current style presented by Chinese ancient style music is the result of a compromise negotiated by many parties (2016 Shi Yong).

Culturally, on the one hand, it is reflected in the subcultural community's circle struggle when approaching the mainstream culture, the collision between the subculture and the mainstream culture, and the group has the demand to retain its self-perception. On the other hand, in the classic cultural inheritance of classical culture and modern cultural friction, the focus is the original traditional inheritance or join the popular innovation? Douban, Zhihu, Baidu Tieba and other online platforms set off several debates. The author believes that it is the mix and match of Chinese ancient style elements to adapt to the market multi-cultural young groups.

Commercially, on the one hand, it is reflected in the conflict and inconsistency of the creative styles of ancient style musicians and mainstream professional musicians, and the

cultural and professional nature of national style music is quite controversial, seeking common ground while reserving differences for common development under the harmonization of the market group's needs. On the other hand, it is reflected in the cultural and entertainment media platforms and industry regulations, how to screen and combine the elements of Chinese ancients style in different contexts to meet the auditing requirements. New media companies in the entertainment industry focus on the youth subculture community economy market, while industry regulations emphasize the strict implementation of the relevant provisions of National Radio and Television Administration, strictly control the connotation of the traditional cultural level, and the final presentation of Chinese ancients style must be the result of multi-party communication.

Dimensionally, on the one hand, it reflects the game of business and politics. Miman Culture Media operates commercially, organizes several animation and ancient style concerts to promote traditional culture, elevates subgenre culture to the level of national traditional culture, and frequently interacts with the official account of Chinese Communist Youth League on Weibo. At the national political level, it is necessary to cultivate young people's cultural self-consciousness, cultural confidence, sense of social responsibility and sense of national identity. Business and politics have found a balanced footing in Chinese ancients style works. On the other hand, Chinese ancients style music embodies the collision between the nation and the world, as Mr. Lu Xun said in Collection of Essays of Qiejieting: "Only national is international". In the era of world economic integration, Chinese ancients style music has infiltrated with various music elements in the world with symbols unique to our nation, forming a new style of popular music and influencing a new generation of young people. Figure 1 shows the development from ancient style music to Chinese ancients music style.



**Figure 1:** Comparison of Concert publicity pictures from ancient style to Chinese ancients style

## CONCLUSION

The development of Miman Culture Media can be said to be a microcosm of the development of ancient style music. In the ten years from 2012 to the present, ancient style music has gone through several periods of online games, Internet music communities, and commercialized operations. Ma Mei et al. (2016) argued that the core culture of ancient style music has also developed from ACG fan culture to the promotion of traditional Chinese culture. In the era of new media, the ancient style turns into Chinese ancientry style, and it is hard to visualize Chinese ancientry style, it is a kind of Chinese imagery, it is the consequence of all people's imagination of "Chinese ancientry style", and it can be all things with Chinese cultural symbols. Under the role of new media, Chinese ancientry style music demonstrates a strong diversity and cultural nature, which parallels the basic principles of Western music and Chinese music, traditional music and non-traditional music, cultural heritage and artistic innovation, in order to reach the cultural harmony and self-awareness of "pluralism and unity, coexistence".

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