

A Discussion of Music Education Activities at the White Deer Cave Academy in the Song Dynasty Based on the “Order of Learning”

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ABSTRACT

As the core of Neo-Confucianism dissemination and a model of academy education in the Song Dynasty, the music education activities at White Deer Cave Academy were not merely the impartation of art, but deeply aligned with the "order of learning" outlined in Zhu Xi's "Revelation of White Deer Cave Academy", which advocates for "extensive learning, careful inquiry, prudent reflection, clear discernment, and diligent practice". This led to the formation of a unique educational system that "guides music with Neo-Confucianism and educates people through music". This paper systematically sorts out the Confucian ideological origins of music education at White Deer Cave Academy, and attempts to analyze the educational connotation of the "order of learning". Then this paper focuses on demonstrating the inherent coupling relationship between music education activities and "The Preface to Learning", summarizes the theoretical value and practical significance of the music education model at White Deer Cave Academy, and ultimately refines a four-in-one music education model of "knowledge-speculation-value-practice", thus providing data reference and practical inspiration for the integration of moral and aesthetic education, as well as the combination of theory and practice in contemporary quality education.

Keywords: Song Dynasty, White Deer Cave Academy, Order of learning, Music education activities, Coupling relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since Zhu Xi's reconstruction and establishment of the "Revelation of White Deer Cave Academy",¹ the educational mission of "illuminating human relations" has been firmly established. Its educational practices encompass comprehensive

cultivation in self-cultivation, conduct, and social interaction. Music education, as a crucial medium for "fostering virtue", has been incorporated into the core system of academy education. The "order of learning", as the core content of the "method of teaching people" in the "Revelation," represents Zhu Xi's methodology for "pursuing truth to foster virtue"² based on Confucian classics. Its five-step progressive logic permeates the entire process of academy education. The music education model of White Deer Cave Academy, along with the progressive logic it embodies — “knowledge accumulation, critical thinking and discussion, value judgment, and practical transformation”³ — provides a historical reference for the deep

1. "The Revelation of the White Deer Cave Academy", also known as "The Academic Rules of the White Deer Cave Academy" or "Zhu Xi's Dogmas", was formulated by Zhu Xi, the master of Neo-Confucianism in the Southern Song Dynasty, in the seventh year of the Chunxi era (1180) for the reconstruction of the White Deer Cave Academy in Jiangxi. The academic rules are divided into five sections: "The Objectives of the Five Teachings", "Order of Learning", "The Essentials of Self-Cultivation", "The Essentials of Conducting Affairs", and "The Essentials of Dealing with People". The content is primarily compiled from Confucian classics such as "The Analects," "Mencius," and "The Doctrine of the Mean". (Hereinafter referred to as "The Revelation".) The following sections on Zhu Xi's and the White Deer Cave Academy's educational philosophy are all derived from this.

2. Pursuing the truth of things fosters virtue. The following text all convey this meaning.

3. The author has summarized this progressive logic.

integration of moral and aesthetic education in contemporary quality education.

2. THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN WHITE DEER CAVE ACADEMY

The ideological origins of music education at White Deer Cave Academy can be traced back to the pre-Qin Confucian school, with its core being the concept of "music education fostering virtue" established by Confucius. In "The Analects of Confucius: Taibo", Confucius proposed "arising from poetry, established by ritual, and perfected by

music", viewing music education as the final link in the cultivation of a gentleman's character. He emphasized that music not only has an aesthetic function but also nurtures temperament and rectifies the human heart. The aesthetic standard of "being joyful without excess, mourning without harm" in "The Analects of Confucius: Bayi" combined with the moral requirement of "thinking without evil" laid the foundation for the Confucian core idea of "unity of beauty and goodness" in music education — the aesthetic expression of music must conform to ethical norms in order to achieve the perfection of individual morality. ("Figure 1")

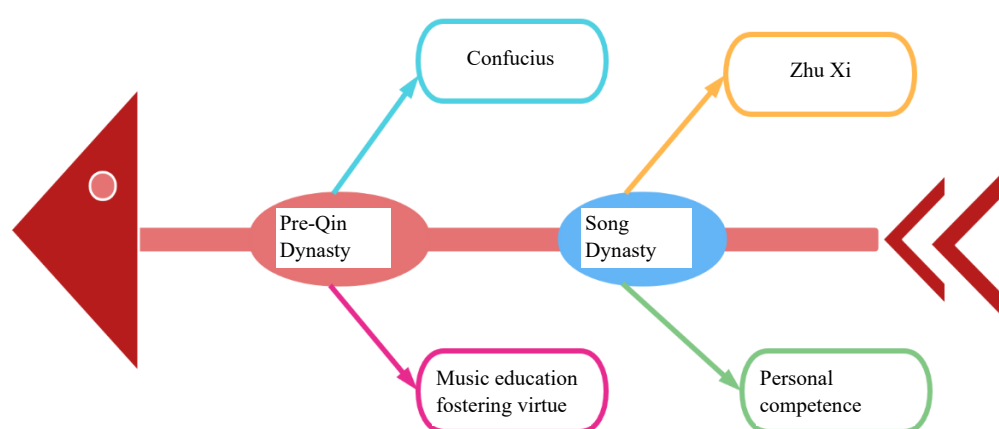


Figure 1 Origin of music education thought in White Deer Cave Academy.

The academy music education in the Song Dynasty focused more on the internal demands of individual self-cultivation and placed moral education at the core. In the 6th year of Chunxi in the Southern Song Dynasty (1179), Zhu Xi formally incorporated music education into the education system of Bailudong Academy: setting up a library of ritual and musical instruments, purchasing elegant musical instruments such as qinse and bells and drums, and hiring scholars who are proficient in rhythm as music instructors, forming an education model that emphasizes both music education and lectures, and combines etiquette and music.⁴ The academy daily set up the piano course, teaching the "Book of Songs" soundtrack singing and ancient music performance; sacrifices, lectures, festivals and other activities must be accompanied by elegant music, which permeates all aspects of college life. Therefore,

music education has been sublimated from pure art education to the core link of moral achievement, laying a solid foundation for the deep coupling between the "order of learning" and music education. ("Figure 2")

4. Referring to Wu Anyu, Yang Yingzi, Exploration into the Traditional Music Education of Yuelu Academy [J]. Chinese Music, 2018.(1).



Figure 2 Course schedule for qin music at White Deer Cave Academy.

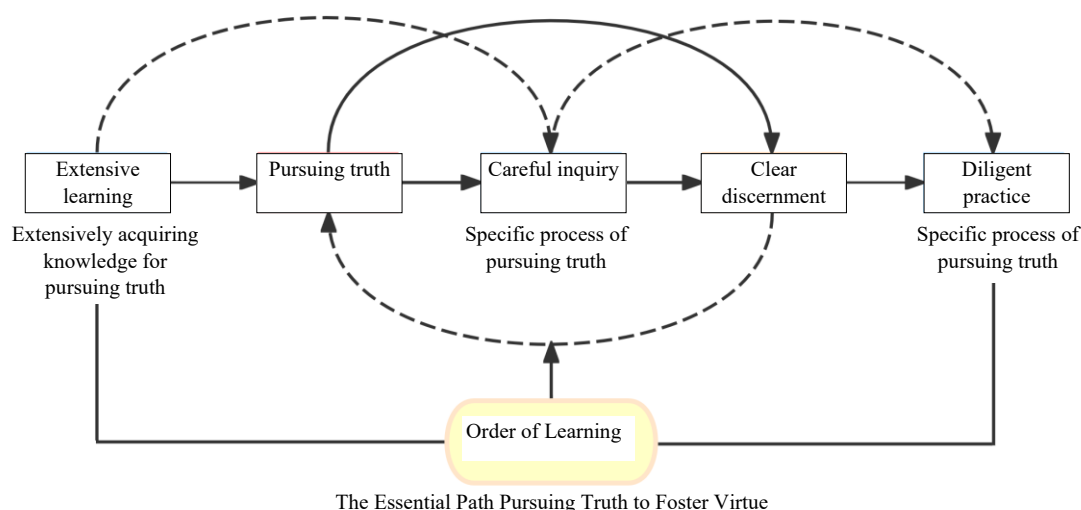


Figure 3 Five-step logical relationship diagram of the "order of learning".

3. EDUCATIONAL CONNOTATION OF THE "ORDER OF LEARNING"

Zhu Xi made a systematic Neo-Confucianism interpretation of the "order of learning" in his "Annotations of Chapters and Sentences of the Four Books",⁵ placed it in the primary position of "the method of teaching people", and clarified its core position in academy education. He believed that "extensive learning" is widely involved in knowledge for "pursuing truth". "Careful inquiry", "prudent reflection" and "clear discernment" are the specific processes of "pursuing truth", and "diligent practice" is the ultimate destination of

"exhaustive". The "order of learning" is the essential path to "pursuing truth to foster virtue". These five aspects are interconnected and progress in layers, with none being dispensable. (As shown in "Figure 3")

3.1 The Logic and Progressive Relationship of Music Education in the "Order of Learning"

The five-step logic of the "order of learning" constitutes a complete "knowledge-action" closed loop, reflecting the progressive process from knowledge accumulation to practical transformation, with a rigorous and clear internal logical relationship.

5. Referring to Zhu Xi, Collected Commentaries on the Four Books [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company. 2011.

"Extensive learning" represents the fundamental stage of learning, which is interpreted as extensively reading various books and embracing diverse knowledge. Zhu Xi emphasized: "Erudition refers to the principles of all things in the universe, as well as the methods for self-cultivation and governing others, all of which should be studied".⁶ "Extensive learning" means that people need to extensively learn Confucian classics, ritual and music systems, natural principles and other knowledge around "pursuing truth to foster virtue". At the same time, it includes practical knowledge such as etiquette norms and music skills, which embodies the educational concept of "advancing both knowledge and action".

"Careful inquiry" is the starting point of speculation for learning. The core is to question and ask questions, and to explore the source. Zhu Xi believed that "those who read undoubtedly must be taught with doubts",⁷ emphasizing that on the basis of erudite, they should actively ask questions such as the interpretation of music education thoughts, the differences between ancient music and modern music, and promote cognitive deepening through rational questioning.

"Prudent reflection" is the deepening stage of learning, focusing on careful consideration and mastery. Students continue to think about the questions raised by "careful inquiry", integrate scattered knowledge and questions, and explore internal laws. They internalize external knowledge into their own cognition, and think about the relationship between music and ethics and natural order.

"Clear discernment" is the key link of learning, and the core is to distinguish between right and wrong and establish standards. After "prudent reflection", he clearly judged right and wrong, right and evil, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and adhered to Confucian principles. In music education, he distinguished between elegant music and vulgar music, positive sound and obscene sound, and established the standard of worshipping elegance and depreciating vulgarity.

"Diligent practice" is the ultimate destination of learning, which is reflected in the application of learning and the practice of morality. Zhu Xi believed that "the breadth of learning is not as

important as the essence of knowledge; the essence of knowledge is not as important as the practical application of it".⁸ He advocated "pursuing truth" from words and deeds, and realizing moral internalization through practical activities such as Confucius music and dance, daily string songs in music education.

The five-step logic of the "order of learning" is interrelated and progressive. "Extensive learning" is the foundation, "careful inquiry, prudent reflection, and clear discernment" are the core, and "diligent practice" is the destination. They together constitute the complete path of "knowledge-action" and fully reflect the educational concept of "unity of knowledge and action" in the Song Dynasty.

3.2 The Core Content Embodiment of the "Order of Learning" in the White Deer Cave Academy

3.2.1 Embodiment in Teaching Practice

Under the guidance of "order of learning", White Deer Cave Academy has constructed a teaching mode of scholars' self-study and teachers' answering questions. The academy required scholars to study independently according to the five-step path, and stimulate questioning and speculation through lectures and debates. Zhu Xi often guided scholars to think with classic doubts, and implemented "careful inquiry" and "prudent reflection".

3.2.2 Embodiment in Academic Philosophy

The White Deer Cave Academy took the "order of learning" as the criterion, and the scholars of the Academy standardized the autonomous learning with the "order of learning", emphasizing the combination of learning and thinking and the application of learning. When Lu Jiuyuan gave a lecture in White Deer Cave Academy, he focused on the "Analects of Confucius", "gentleman is a metaphor for righteousness, and little man is a metaphor for benefit", and guided scholars to accumulate knowledge with "extensive learning", "careful inquiry", and "prudent reflection" to discriminate righteousness and benefit, and "diligent practice" to practice morality and righteousness, which fully reflected the five-step academic logic of the "order of learning".

6. Referring to Zhu Xi, Collected Sayings of Master Zhu [M]. Edited by Li Jingde. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company. 1986.

7. Ibid.

8. Same as note 6.

3.2.3 Embodiment in Personality Cultivation

The "order of learning" served the educational purpose of "clearing the human relations", and becomes an important path to cultivate the personality of "sages". "Extensive learning" consolidates the knowledge of human relations, "careful inquiry, prudent reflection, and clear discernment" deepens moral cognition, and "diligent practice" transforms human ethics into personality traits, which is highly consistent with the process of cultivating gentleman personality.

The "order of learning" governed the educational activities of the academy: classic teaching, etiquette practice, music education activities, etc. Music education, as the core part, forms a deep coupling with it.

4. COUPLING ANALYSIS OF THE "ORDER OF LEARNING" AND THE MUSIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES AT WHITE DEER CAVE ACADEMY

4.1 "Extensive Learning" — Music Education Knowledge Accumulation

"Extensive learning" requires scholars to accumulate knowledge extensively, and the music education at White Deer Cave Academy provides a rich carrier for this: knowledge of music, etiquette norms, classics, and historical records, forming a knowledge system where "music education is extensive learning".

In terms of musical knowledge accumulation, the courses in the academy centered around elegant music, systematically imparting knowledge of musical theory, instrumental playing skills, and musical composition. The academy offered courses in qin music, teaching playing methods for instruments such as the qin and se, studying the five tones and the "Twelve Lv Lv" (twelve tones), delving into textbooks such as "Qin Cao" (Qin Music) and "Qin Pu" (Qin Music Score), and familiarizing students with traditional pieces such as "Three Variations of Plum Blossoms" and "High Mountains and Flowing Water", thus laying a solid foundation in music studies. ("Figure 4")

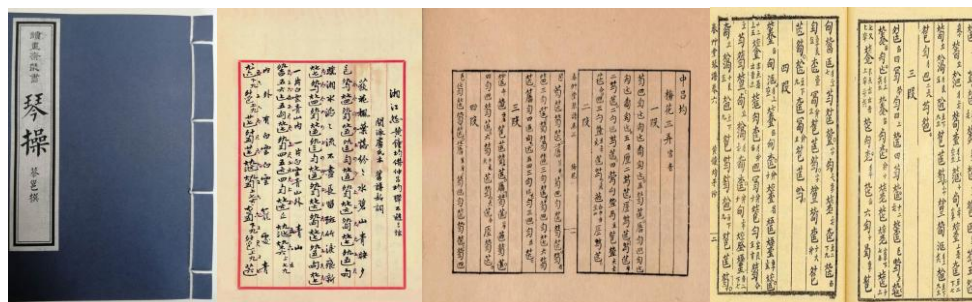


Figure 4 Diagram of the qin learning textbook. From left to right: "Qin Cao" (Qin Music), "Qin Pu" (Qin Music Score), Guqin notation of "Three Variations of Plum Blossoms", Guqin notation of "High Mountains and Flowing Water".

Accumulating knowledge of etiquette norms adhered to the principle that "music is the bridge to ethics",⁹ integrating ritual and music. Through learning the etiquette norms of welcoming the deity, laying the coins, the initial offering, the secondary offering, the final offering, and seeing the deity off

in the ritual dance for Confucius, learners can master the norms of positioning, movements, and attire, deepening the understanding of the "unity of ritual and music".

The accumulation of knowledge in classics and historical records is based on the Confucian classics, with a deep reading of the Four Books and Five Classics, and a broad understanding of works on Neo-Confucianism and musical theory from the

9. Referring to Chen Shuguo, *The Book of Rites: An Annotated Edition* [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House. 2004.

Song Dynasty, such as the “Book of Songs”, “Rites and Music”, “Zhu Xi's Collection of Sayings”, “Collection and Annotation of the Analects”, and “On the Temperament of the Qin”. The academy sang the classic chapters of the “Book of Songs” in the sacrifice, combining the study of classics with the practice of music education.

The knowledge accumulation in the music education of White Deer Cave Academy has three characteristics of being systematic, practical and purposeful: rhythm, etiquette and classical knowledge are interrelated; it is completed by performing musical instruments, etiquette norms, classical singing and other practices; all of them serve the core goal of “cultivating morality through reason”, and lay a solid knowledge foundation for the following four links.

4.2 “Careful Inquiry” — Musical Education and Critical Discussion

The “careful inquiry” requires scholars to actively question on the basis of erudition. The music education activities in the academy can stimulate speculative discussions through lectures, debates, and classic interpretations, making music education an important way to practice the “careful inquiry”.

The academy lecture was the core platform for the speculative discussion of music education, which encourages academic contention and cultivates questioning ability. After the meeting of Ehu,¹⁰ Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan discussed the relationship between music and the heart in the academy: Zhu Xi advocated that “music comes from reason”, and the beauty of harmony in elegant music comes from heavenly principles; Lu Jiuyuan advocated that “music is born from the heart”, and music is the natural outpouring of inner moral emotions. This debate has prompted scholars to re-examine the idea of music education and take the initiative to ask questions, “Is the origin of music is reason or mind?”, “What is the relationship between reason and the original mind”, etc., fully embodies the speculative spirit of “careful inquiry”.

Classical interpretation also contains “careful inquiry”. When scholars studied “The Book of

Rites and Music: Musicians, Ethicists”, they took the initiative to question “How does music communicate ethics?” and “Why can vulgar music make people happy?”. Studying classics with questions not only deepens understanding, but also cultivates critical thinking ability.

The speculative spirit in the music education of White Deer Cave Academy has three characteristics of pertinence, relevance and constructiveness: it revolves around the essence, goal and path of music education; it is closely combined with Neo-Confucianism and classics to carry out speculative discussion; and the purpose is to deepen cognition and promote the sustainable development of academy music education thought.

4.3 “Prudent Reflection and Clear Discernment” — Value Judgment in Music Education

“Prudent reflection” and “clear discernment” emphasize in-depth thinking of doubts, discrimination of right and wrong, and establishment of correct value standards. Academy music education is used to construct a value judgment system with neutral music as the core.

“Prudent reflection” is reflected in the deep thinking and mastery of the core issues of music education. In view of “the origin of music”, scholars have realized through repeated thinking that “reason” is the external order and norm of music, and “heart” is the internal emotional basis of music. The two complement each other; in view of the “goal of music education”, it is clear that music education is not only the teaching of skills, but also the “teaching of morality”, which aims to cultivate the nature of harmony and improve the personality.

“Clear discernment” is embodied in the clear judgment of the value of music and the establishment of the value standard with “advocating elegance and depreciating vulgarity” as the core. In Zhu Xi's “On the Temperament of the Qin”, he pointed out: “The development of ancient music is moderate in rhythm and harmonious in emotion; the development of modern music exceeds the limits and indulges in sensuality.”¹¹ He believed that the rhythm of elegant music is moderate, the emotion is peaceful, and it can cultivate the mind; and vulgar indulgence, easy to lead to impetuous, moral decay. At the same time,

10. In the second year of the Chunxi era of the Southern Song Dynasty (1175), a renowned philosophical debate was held at Ehu Temple in Xinzhou, Jiangxi (now Shangrao). The core of the debate was the ideological confrontation between Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism and Lu Jiuyuan's School of Mind. The debate was convened by Lv Zuqian and is historically known as the “Debate of the Ages”.

11. Same as note 6.

"clear discernment" also distinguishes the different functions of music education — taking moral education as the core, aesthetic function serves education, and ensuring that music education activities always focus on the goal of "moral education".

"Prudent reflection" and "clear discernment" have formed a clear value judgment system for the music education in academies: with "the beauty of harmony" as the aesthetic standard, "moral education" as the core goal, and "elegant music" as the main carrier. This system not only conforms to the core idea of Neo-Confucianism in the Song Dynasty, which advocates "preserving natural principles and eliminating human desires", but also inherits the Confucian tradition of music education, which advocates the unity of beauty and goodness. It cultivates scholars' aesthetic judgment and moral discernment.

4.4 "Diligent Practice" — Transformation of Music Education Practice

The "diligent practice" emphasizes the transformation of knowledge and cognition into practical actions. The music education activities of the academy transform the knowledge accumulation, speculative discussion and value judgment in music education into the personality cultivation and behavior habits of scholars in various practical forms such as Confucius music and dance, daily string songs and social practice.

Confucius worship music and dance is the core practice of "the unity of ritual and music". The academy sacrifices Confucius to play "Dacheng Music" and perform eight-line dances. Scholars participate in instrument performance, dance performance or poetry singing, strictly abide by etiquette norms and music rhythm, and understand the connotation of neutral music through physical practice. The etiquette knowledge from "extensive learning", and value judgment from "prudent reflection" and "clear discernment" are transformed into their own behavioral consciousness.

Daily string songs and qin learning practice are normalized practice. Scholars integrated qinse playing and poetry singing into daily life. They woke up every morning and played a song to nourish their hearts. They sat quietly at dusk in the melodious qin rhythm, to gain insight into profound truths. By singing "Guan Ju" and other articles, practicing "music without lewdness, sadness without hurting" and Confucian ethics, music

education has been transformed from a special teaching activity into a way of life.

Social practice is an extension of "practical application". Scholars spread the concept of music education to the society, playing elegant music in festivals, teaching local students, and passing on the benevolence thought of people and things with music. This kind of social practice expands the scope of the influence of music education, enables scholars to test the cognition of music education in practice, and realizes the higher realm of "unity of knowledge and action".

The practical spirit in the music education of White Deer Cave Academy has three characteristics: the unity of practicality and morality, the combination of daily and ritual, and the integration of individuality and sociality. Taking moral practice as the core, taking into account individual cultivation and social education, it helps scholars to realize the leap from knowledge to practice, and finally achieve the ideal personality of the unity of morality and behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

This study systematically explores the internal coupling between the "order of learning" and the music education activities of White Deer Cave Academy. The music education of White Deer Cave Academy is rooted in the pre-Qin Confucian tradition of music education. The "order of learning" has a strict five-step progressive logic. The two are deeply integrated to form a four-in-one music education model of "knowledge – thinking – value – practice".

White Deer Cave Academy's concept of "guiding music with reason and educating people with music" and the four-in-one music education model have realized the deep integration of aesthetic education and moral education, knowledge and practice, speculation and value. It is the crystallization of educational wisdom in ancient China. The concepts of "integration of moral education and aesthetic education" and "unity of theory and practice" contained in it provide an important historical reference for contemporary quality education. Deeply exploring and inheriting this educational wisdom is of great significance for promoting the development of contemporary quality education and realizing the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture. Based on the above, the author has generated an AI-generated

image of music education activities at White Deer Cave Academy in the Song Dynasty (see “Figure 5”)



Figure 5 The AI-generated depiction of musical education activities at the White Deer Cave Academy during the Song Dynasty generated by the author.

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