

# **Study on the Nationalization in the Development of Chinese Popular Music**

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## **Abstracts**

In the course of decades of development of Chinese popular music, many times of national expansion have been formed, fully showing the unique cultural personality of Chinese pop music. This study focuses on three important upsurges of the nationalization of Chinese pop music. Looking at the existing academic theoretical achievements, it has not paid enough attention to the nationalization of Chinese pop music, and has not formed a clear theoretical description of the reasons, characteristics, performance, and social influence of nationalization. Therefore, this study strives to fill the research gaps in these aspects with practical actions. Through the analysis of historical documents and audio-visual videos, it can fully demonstrate the course of the nationalization of Chinese popular music, and promote it to form a more distinctive and better development in the future. Promoting Chinese contemporary pop music culture can demonstrate the cultural charm of the oriental power in an independent way that combines Chinese and Western styles.

**Keywords:** Chinese Popular Music; Nationalization; Development of History

## **Introduction**

Pop music, as a form of Western music, arose alongside the Industrial Revolution and took its fundamental form in the early twentieth century. After more than a century of development and transformation, it has produced numerous outstanding musical works and become one of the most significant musical genres in contemporary social and cultural life. The development of Chinese pop music is enhanced by the exposure to European and American pop music, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan pop music. In order to make contemporary popular music works meet the audio-visual needs and aesthetic orientation of the public, we will continue to explore new "nationalization models" in the process of music art creation, and infiltrate the traditional culture and national elements of the Chinese nation into the lyrics and composition of contemporary popular music. , arrangement, etc., to create a popular music style with traditional style and national characteristics.

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\* Received: June 8 2023; Revised: June 14 2023; Accepted: June 23 2023

Chinese contemporary pop music presents new changes and new features, whether it is pop music creation theme, creation content, expression form, etc., all reflect the trend of nationalization and diversification. (Wang Linjing; 2022) In the independent development, Chinese language and literature and Chinese music melody, tune, and cadence are integrated, which has become representative of the nationalization and localization of pop music and shows the extreme adaptability and compatibility of pop music.

## **Research Objective**

1. From the perspective of national culture, based on the premise of summarizing the elements of law and national development, this study's primary mission and objective is to propose ideas and suggestions for future development.
2. From the perspective of culturalism, fill the gap in this research field.
3. Only with a thorough understanding of the evolution of Chinese contemporary mainstream music will we be able to demonstrate to the world the splendor of China's distinctive national culture.
4. This study serves as a resource for the problems that exist in the evolution of popular music in Thailand and other nations.

## **Research Methodology**

The design of research methods can substantially enhance the effectiveness and outcomes of research. On the basis of existing research objects and objectives, scientific and practical research methods can be used to fully obtain research observations at a variety of levels and aspects, resulting in satisfactory research outcomes.

### **Literature review method**

The application of the literature review method allows for the avoidance of excessive repetition of existing research results, as well as the understanding of the perspectives of existing researchers based on their real emotions during the observation and thinking processes in order to locate the appropriate center of gravity for the further development of this research.

### **Music analysis**

In the process of analyzing and observing artistic works, music analysis is the most intuitive, practical, and ontological research method, as well as the premise and foundation for all other cultural disciplines.

### **Fieldwork method**

A field investigation is required for this study on the nationalization of popular music. Composers, performers, and promoters of popular music are all involved in the realm of popular music. Consequently, the interview with them will be more natural and the outcomes and benefits will be greater.

### **Interdisciplinary method**

This study explores a specific topic from the perspective of music analysis via case study analysis. It must also incorporate relevant knowledge and the crossover of sociology, communication, aesthetics, and popular music anthropology by integrating disciplines comprehensively.

## Research Scope

Pop music, as a form of western music. The development of Chinese pop music benefits from the enlightenment of European and American pop music and Hong Kong and Taiwan pop music. In the independent development, Chinese language and literature and Chinese music melody, tune and rhythm are integrated, which has become the representative of the nationalization and localization of pop music, and also shows the extremely strong adaptability and compatibility of pop music itself.

## Research Findings

On the basis of collection and classification, the study will conduct in-depth analysis and reflection on pertinent literature, clarify the research subjects of papers in various fields, select their key perspectives, refine the innovation of the research, and provide a sufficient foundation for the research. In the comparative analysis of the papers and works on the subject of "the nationalization of Chinese popular music," there are both accomplishments and shortcomings. According to a search of nearly ten academic databases, including the China Doctoral Dissertation Full-Text Database, the China Excellent Master Dissertation Full-Text Database, and the National Standard Full-Text Database, more than eighty academic accomplishments closely related to the research were found.

### Historical development of Chinese pop music nationalization from 1930 to present

#### 1. The Early rise of the nationalization of Chinese popular Music (Old Shanghai Tunes in 1930s)

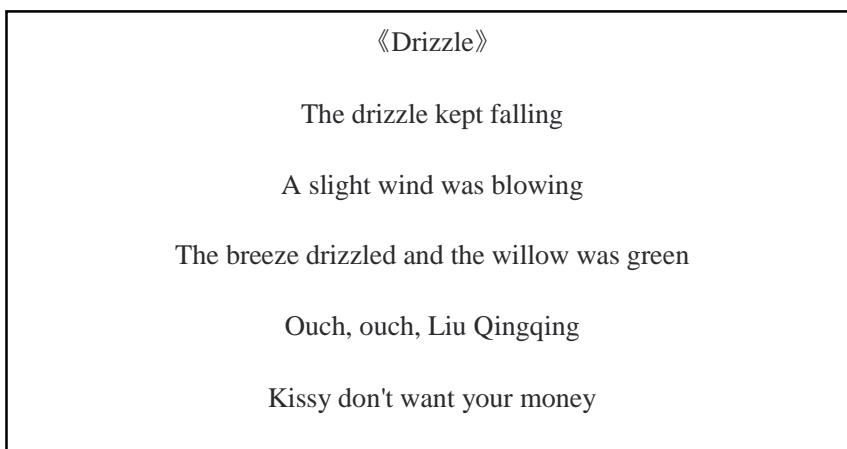
In the first half of the 20th century, pop music came to China across the sea. Western music represented by jazz gained a foothold and development in the city of Shanghai, thus launching the first stage of communication and expansion of pop music in China. Since the Opium War, China fell into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and Shanghai officially opened its trade port in 1843. With the continuous influx of Western powers, the city of Shanghai was objectively influenced by more Western culture. Combined with the formation of local culture itself, the city became one of the most open cultural gathering places in China at that time, which also laid a solid foundation for the penetration of western pop music.

##### 1. The popularity of jazz in Shanghai

In 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai was full of revelry and dancing. This form of musical expression of jazz is the most important style characteristic of Western popular music at this moment. The performance venue is arbitrary and does not require strict theatrical conditions like classical music. The music itself has typical cultural affinity, and the unique and novel music style is quite different from the previous Chinese folk music melody, which also makes Shanghai citizens quickly love this form of music.

##### 2. Li Jinhui's exploration

Li Jinhui, one of the founders of Chinese popular music, played an important role in laying the foundation for the development of Chinese popular music and the integration of western music and Chinese national culture. His creative practice also provided a favorable path for the nationalization of Chinese popular music. For example, Li Minghui's "Drizzle" had a great social impact at that time. Li Jinhui's contribution is not only to composing, but also to promoting the development of Chinese popular music as a whole, making it a part of Chinese culture and gaining recognition on the international stage. (Figure 1)



**Figure 1** Brief score snippet of Li Minghui's Drizzle (EMI Recording)

Influenced by the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Shanghai's music culture gradually changed into revolutionary songs with the spirit of anti-Japanese propaganda.

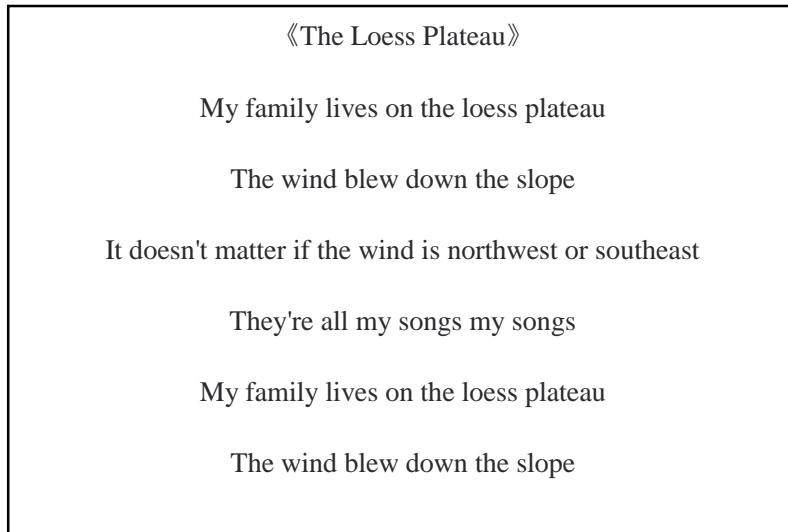
## 2. The Maturity of the nationalization of Chinese Pop Music (" Northwest Style "in 1980s)

In the late 1970s, China's reform and opening-up brought unprecedented cultural openness and freedom, which gave birth to the development of popular music. With the passage of time, the music industry in mainland China has set off a wave of "northwest wind", and a large number of works with the same theme, style and content have appeared one after another, becoming the most popular theme style of music works. This is the first nationalized wave formed after pop music returned to mainland China after decades, and it is also an important nationalized wave of pop music development.

### (1) What is the "Mistral"

In the 80's, there was an unprecedented "northwest wind" in the Chinese pop music world, which was an extremely important cultural phenomenon in the history of pop music development. It represents the pop music creation and performance style to the national culture of an important absorption and feeding. In this process, a large number of pop music works with typical regional cultural styles have been constructed, and many singers and their representative works have been born. The discussion of the cause, significance, gains and losses of the "Northwest Wind" song tide and its relationship with national music in the field of music theory also provided a reference for the social value orientation and basic paradigm for the subsequent development of the nationalization of Chinese popular music. (Shi Yong; 2023)

The term "Northwest wind" comes from a classic pop music piece at that time, "Loess High Slope". "Whether it's the southeast wind or the northwest wind, it's my song, it's my song." (Figure 2)



**Figure 2** Brief score snippet of Loess Plateau

### **(1) Overview of the development of the "Northwest Wind"**

In 1986, Xie Chengqiang composed the song "Xintian You", integrated the northwest tone and singing style, deeply rooted in traditional culture, and overturned people's perception of pop music. In 1989, the "northwest wind" style of pop music began to decline, and the whole Chinese mainland pop music scene entered a period of adjustment of classic oldies. After the explosion of this "Northwest wind" in the 1990s, some creators combined the pop music of the black earth culture in the northeast or the Water city culture in the south of the Yangtze River, which is clearly a continuation of the "Northwest Style" in the Chinese pop music circle. The "Northwest Style" pop music trend is a relatively thorough and pure attempt at nationalization.

### **3. The Innovation of the Nationalization of Chinese Pop Music (The "Chinese Style" in the early 21st Century)**

After the last stage of "Northwest style" nationalization trend, the development of Chinese pop music has entered a new high-speed stage. In the 1990s, Chinese pop music made a qualitative leap. Music works and singers gained market recognition, promoting the development of popular music styles in a diversified direction. At the same time, the gradual deepening of China's market economy also makes Chinese pop music present the trend of industrialization, promoting a more compatible relationship between Chinese pop music and foreign countries. Under this cultural trend, a new wave of nationalization of Chinese pop music was born, which is the emergence of the "Chinese style" trend.

#### **(1) What is "Chinese Style"?**

From the perspective of pop music creators, singers and other insiders, "Chinese style" mainly refers to the new generation of pop singers represented by Jay Chou, who are good at integrating Chinese ethnic elements and national culture into their music works at the beginning of the new century. In addition, musical instrument arrangement is also an important part of "Chinese style" pop music, such as the appearance of Erhu, pipa, guzheng and other musical instrument timbre has typical recognition and Chinese nationalized

artistic color. From the perspective of the public on the Internet, in the public cognition, "Chinese style" is mainly reflected as the product formed by the combination of popular music and Chinese culture, with the characteristics of "three ancient and three new", namely, ancient Ci Fu, classical culture, classical melody style, new singing methods, new arrangements and new concepts.

## **(2) The lasting social influence of "Chinese style"**

Different from the two previous nationalization processes of Chinese pop music, In the new century, a large number of "Chinese style" pop music works have not disappeared, but has always maintained strong vitality, and gradually "Chinese style" pop music as the mainstream way of contemporary Chinese pop music creation. Under the guidance of the new creativity, "Chinese style" pop music is more conducive to the formation of a mutual relationship with the diversified new pop music, and at the same time to promote the traditional Chinese culture from the Angle of diversification. Thus forming a kaleidoscope of work creation concept, which makes music works always maintain a sense of novelty.

### **The nationalization tendency in the development of Chinese popular music**

#### **1. The typical idea of the nationalization of popular music in old Shanghai period**

As illustrated in the above study, composers are more inclined to choose the way close to Chinese cultural life and social reality to show the color of nationalization, and this trend was formed naturally when the first combination was made. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was easier to form a common denominator with the creation of traditional music culture, thus stimulating the emergence of creative vitality and facilitating the work of a large amount of stylized popular music in a short period of time. Through induction and summary, it can be seen from the aspects of music ontology that nationalized pop music creation in this period has the following outstanding characteristics:

#### **(1) Melodic features based on Chinese traditional music**

First of all, from the tonality of the work. As we all know, Chinese traditional music has a specific tonality structure based on pentatonic and heptonal modes, while western popular music works basically continue the Western traditional major and minor tone structure and are created on this basis. Secondly, in terms of the use of thematic tones of musical materials, composers also draw on a large number of national and folk music materials to make their musical forms more Chinese. In addition, in the creation of Shanghai pop music, the orchestration has shown the characteristics of the combination of Chinese and Western.

#### **(2) The content of lyrics with the style of The Times**

On the one hand, the content presentation of the lyrics of old Shanghai pop music in the 1920s and 1930s has typical characteristics of ancient poetry culture. For example, Li Jinhui adapted the song "New Red Bean Poems" from Wang Wei's poems, and also created many works with traditional Chinese poetry culture, such as "Poem on Banana Leaf" and "Moonlight Night Ci". On the other hand, the creative process of some songs shows the unique cultural customs of old Shanghai at that time, which on the one hand gives consideration to the characteristics of The Times in the creative content of the lyrics of popular music, and at the same time reflects the unique color of regional culture.

#### **(3) The study and imitation of Western cultural style**

First, foreign forms of entertainment imported from abroad opened the way for the expansion of Western pop music in China. In terms of music performances, various forms of Western music art have been staged in various theaters and entertainment venues in

Shanghai, including sacred songs and dances and instrumental solo ensembles that have appeared for the first time on the Chinese mainland. On the other hand, in the 1920s, the open and inclusive social and cultural environment of Old Shanghai was also well prepared for the fusion of popular music and the development of nationalism. In addition, the popularity of pop music in Shanghai also reflects the influence of Western cultural trends. Under the comprehensive effect, the transformation of social aesthetic psychology has been formed.

## **2. The typical idea of the nationalization of popular music in the period of "Northwest Wind"**

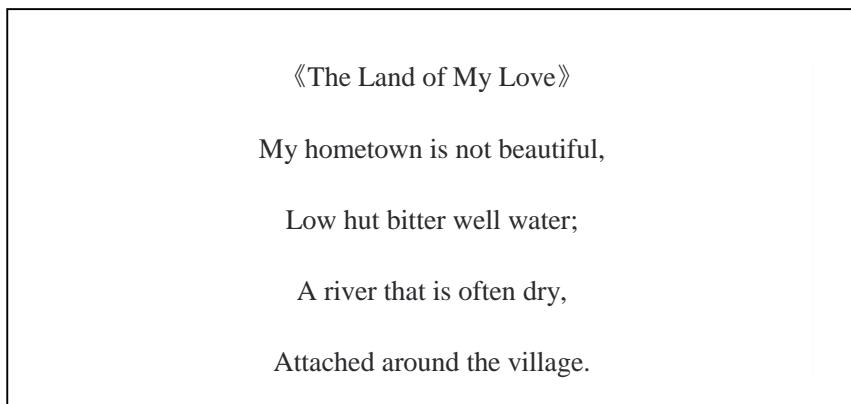
### **(1) Northwest music culture highlights**

In the 1980s, the development of "Northwest style" Chinese pop music nationalization was in full swing, showing a good combination with the northwest traditional music culture and folk music materials at the art noumenon level, presenting a strong cultural customs of northern Shaanxi. In the process of collecting and sorting out specific musical elements, it mainly reflects the inheritance and development of northwest music culture in the aspects of tonality, rhythm, singing methods and expression forms.

### **(2) The convergence of national spirit in lyric creation**

In the era of "Northwest Wind", the lyrics of popular music are no longer confined to the theme of urban life or love, but instead observe and feel the national culture and history of China from a broader perspective, understand the beautiful mountains and rivers of the motherland, and show the love and attachment to the hometown.

(Figure 3)



**Figure 3** Brief score snippet of I Am So in Love with My Hometown

### **(3) Chanting and "searching for roots" of thought**

In the popular music period of "Northwest Wind", people adopted the way of singing, which broke the traditional singing idea and presented a brand new form of performance. At the same time, the formation of the concept of popular music creation in this period also stems from the emergence of the trend of "searching for roots". This craze inspired a response from the music industry, which together led to the emergence and growth of "Northwest style" pop music.

### 3. The typical idea of the nationalization of popular music in the period of "Chinese style"

#### (1) A musical melody based on R&B and Rap

At the beginning of the new century, "Chinese" pop music was mainly in the form of R&B and rap. As far as "Chinese" works are concerned, in the early stage, Chinese singers like R&B and rap because of their overseas study experience, so they are used to taking them as the main style of singing creation and performance. The combination of these styles and Chinese national culture has been virtually formed.

#### (2) The use of classical image words and distinctive national symbol words

On the one hand, a large number of classical imagery words are used in the lyrics. For example, many "Chinese style" works created by Jay Chou are derived from Fang Wenshan's lyrics, showing high quality in terms of both literary attainments and technical aspects. On the other hand, symbolic traditional cultural words are also widely used in these "Chinese style" works. For example, The Art of War by Sun Zi by Zhe Tao, Cao Cao by Junjie Lin and so on. By borrowing some folk proverbs, the viewer can immediately feel the presentation of traditional Chinese culture, and bring an innate sense of aesthetic intimacy.

#### (3) Multiple performance ways and multiple social factors intervention

From the perspective of cultural participation, the emergence of "Chinese-style" pop music is not only an accident, but also the inevitable result of the development of Chinese society and pop music in China. Its extensive social and cultural participation is mainly reflected in the following three aspects: Before the rise of "Chinese style", In the middle and late 1990s and the beginning of the 20th century. Chinese popular music compositions were prepared for the emergence of "Chinese style" by adding folk music, religious music and regional cultural materials. The government's cultural protection and support also contributed to this trend. The policy issued in 2004 protected folk culture and established the intangible cultural Heritage protection list. Xinmin music and new folk songs combine traditional folk music and popular culture. Crossover groups such as Twelve Girls Band integrate pop music elements and modern technology, making folk music more fashionable. These trends and practices make the "Chinese style" pop music market has unlimited potential, rich creative motivation, and has emerged one after another.

## Discussion

According to the current summary and analysis of the existing academic literature, we believe that the special discussion on the nationalization of Chinese popular music that this research focuses on can effectively make up for the lack of depth and lack of research content in the previous theoretical circles, It really forms a more objective, meticulous and in-depth analysis of the nationalization of Chinese pop music. In the specific process of this study, the nationalization of Chinese popular music is divided into "old Shanghai period", "northwest wind period" and "Chinese style period" for separate research. Based on the collation of literature and materials, a comprehensive and in-depth observation and understanding has been formed, focusing on the form of music works in each period, the identities and attributes of creators and performers, their ability to act, and the reception and feedback of the public. It also pays attention to the different social backgrounds behind the upsurge of popular music nationalization. These research results are obviously innovative, and have not formed a good design and expression in previous academic

theories. However, this study looks at the historical clues of the development of nearly a hundred years, and finally summarizes it as the overall attribute characteristics and social communication ability of Chinese pop music nationalization. These inductions and conclusions can not only understand the theoretical issues of the nationalization of Chinese pop music more clearly, but also promote the further theoretical research on Chinese pop music, so that it can achieve better development results in the current social and cultural environment. Integrate more cultural materials with Chinese characteristics into the expression and presentation of pop music. Promote Chinese pop music to have distinctive characteristics and achieve good social communication effects.

## Conclusion

The nationalization process of Chinese pop music has always existed in the past hundred years and has shown periodic explosions, which shows that pop music itself has broad cultural compatibility. Being able to form a close interactive relationship with traditional Chinese culture is also the main academic achievement demonstrated and presented in this study. Through the analysis process of this study, we can understand the typical characteristics of the nationalization of Chinese pop music in various periods. Through comparison and vertical correlation, I also understand the cultural characteristics carried by myself. Obviously, the issue of nationalization of Chinese popular music will continue to emerge. In the follow-up theoretical research process, because popular music is constantly developing and progressing, it will also keep pace with the times in terms of creation and singing expressions. At the same time, China's social development is also making continuous progress, and the presentation of cultural confidence and integration with the international community are also constantly expanding. Therefore, it can be considered that the theoretical proposition about the nationalization of Chinese popular music will be extended, and there will be more new theoretical issues waiting for researchers to pay attention and answer.

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