
RESEARCH ARTICLE

On the Category Structure and Metaphorical Extension of "声(Sheng)", "音 (Yin)" and "乐(Yue)" in Chinese Musical Discourse

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ABSTRACT

In Chinese musical discourse, "声(Sheng, raw sounds)", "音(Yin, modulated sounds)" and "乐(Yue, music)" constitute a hierarchical and progressive category sequence. Based on the prototype category theory of cognitive linguistics and combining Rosch's category hierarchy theory with Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory, this paper systematically investigates the category definition, progressive mechanism and metaphorical expansion of this tripartite hierarchical structure. The hierarchy of "声(Sheng)-音(Yin)-乐(Yue)" established in *Yueji* corresponds to physical category (Sheng, the subordinate level), artistic category (Yin, the basic level) and value category (Yue, the upper level) respectively, and the leap among them is embodied in the three cognitive mechanisms of category promotion, metonymy operation and cognitive subject differentiation. "Yue", as the upper category, integrates the triple meanings of playing music, ritual music and spirit, and realizes the cognitive leap from sensory experience to political insight through the metaphorical chain of "To discriminate raw sounds is to know the modulation of sounds; to know the modulated sounds is to know the music; and to know the music is to know (the character of) the government". Through the method of knowledge archaeology, this paper also reveals the flat compression of the modern concept of "music" to the traditional tripartite structure, and advocates the restoration of the original cognitive appearance of the hierarchical distinction between "声(Sheng, raw sounds)", "音(Yin, modulated sounds)" and "乐(Yue, music)". This category structure is not only a conceptual tool for Chinese music classification, but also a genetic code for understanding the music cognitive style of Chinese people.

KEYWORDS

Yueji; Sheng-Yin-Yue hierarchy; Prototype category; Conceptual metaphor.

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1. Introduction

In Chinese musical discourse, the three terms "声(Sheng)", "音 (Yin)" and "乐 (Yue)" constitute a hierarchical and progressive category sequence. This tripartite structure first appeared in *Yueji*, and became the conceptual cornerstone of Chinese musical discourse system in later generations. *Yueji* says: "All the modulations of the voice arise from the mind, and the various affections of the mind are produced by things (external to it). The affections thus produced are manifested in the sounds that are uttered. Changes are produced by the way in which those sounds respond to one another; and those changes constitute what we call the modulations of the voice. The combination of those modulated sounds, so as to give pleasure, and the (direction in harmony with them of the) shields and axes, and of the plumes and ox-tails, constitutes what we call music. Music is (thus) the production of the modulations of the voice(raw sounds), and its source is in the affections of the mind as it is influenced by (external) things."¹ This discussion not only reveals the generation mechanism of music, but also establishes the core category structure of

¹ James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki, in The Sacred Books of China*, vol. 3, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885, p. 96

Chinese musical discourse, the tripartite hierarchical structure of "声(Sheng, raw sounds)-音(Yin, modulated sounds)-乐(Yue, music)"².

The categorization theory adopted in this paper mainly comes from the prototype category view in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 1978). According to this theory, human category is not defined by a set of fixed "sufficient and necessary conditions", but a dynamic network around "prototype", which has family similarity, hierarchy and cultural dependence. In the vertical dimension of category, Rosch(1978) distinguished three cognitive levels: superordinate category, which is highly generalized and culturally specific; basic-level category has the strongest cognitive prominence and the richest embodied features; and subordinate category, which has the most concrete image attribute. The basic-level category is the most direct and economical cognitive tool for human interaction with the outside world, while the upper category relies on the deeper cultural knowledge construction (Lakoff, 1987). In addition, the dynamic expansion of categories is inseparable from two cognitive operations: metaphor and metonymy. Lakoff & Johnson(1980) pointed out that metaphor projects the schema structure of one cognitive domain to another, while metonymy refers to the whole or the whole referring part with a typical part within the category. Together, they form a cognitive bridge for the category to "leap" from embodied experience to abstract concept.

Based on this theoretical framework, this paper will demonstrate that the tripartite structure of "声(Sheng)-音(Yin)-乐(Yue)"(Raw sounds-Modulated sounds-Music) in Yueji is essentially a cognitive hierarchy chain from subordinate category to upper category through basic category; The proposition of "Shen Yue Zhi Zheng (to know the music is to know the (character of) government)" is a typical manifestation of this category structure extending to the political cognitive domain through metaphorical mapping. The following will systematically analyze the cognitive logic and cultural implications of this category structure from four aspects: category definition, progressive mechanism, metaphor expansion and modern knowledge archaeology.

2. The categories of "Sheng", "Yin" and "Yue "

2.1 Sheng (Raw sounds) as a subordinate level, the physical category of the natural level

"Sheng (Raw sounds)" is the bottom of this category sequence and belongs to the category of physical hierarchy. Yueji pointed out: "The affections thus produced are manifested in the sounds that are uttered. " "Sheng" is a natural externalized sound after the human heart senses foreign objects, and it has not been artificially processed and organized. Jiang Chujuan and Jiao Can (2022) pointed out that "Sheng" is a natural existence and also exists in all things; Just for the sound of nature, it has no emotional and aesthetic value and will not become "Yin(modulated sounds)" or "Yue(Music)". Yueji even uses "beast" as a metaphor for the cognitive state that stays at the level of "knowing sound": "Hence, even beasts know sound, but not its modulations" This judgment reveals the cognitive orientation of the category of "Sheng (Raw sounds)"—it is a perceptual level shared by humans and animals, and belongs to the level of pure physical stimulation.

From the perspective of philology, Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2015) pointed out that the shape of the Chinese character "声 (Sheng) " originated from percussion and auditory appearance, which refers to instrumental sound, which can refer to general instrumental sound or the special instrumental sound of human mouth. The origin of this glyph shows that the core feature of the category of 声(Sheng)", "音 (Yin)" and "乐 (Yue) " lies in its physicality— it is the original sensory material that the vibration of an object receives through the auditory organs. In Rosch's category hierarchy theory (1978), "sound" belongs to the subordinate category below the basic-level category, which is the natural classification closest to the perceptual experience, and can be recognized without cultural acquisition, and has the most distinctive figurative perceptual characteristics.

2.2 Yin (Modulated sounds) as a basic level, the organizational category of the artistic level

Yin (Modulated sounds) is in the middle of this category sequence and belongs to the category of organizational level. Yueji pointed out: "Changes are produced by the way in which those sounds respond to one another; and those changes constitute what we call the modulations of the voice(sound)." When sounds are organized according to certain rules and rules to form a structured tune, "Sheng(Raw sound)" is transformed into "Yin (modulated sound)".

² The three Chinese terms 声, 音, and 乐 are translated throughout this study as Raw Sounds, Modulated Sounds, and Music, respectively. 声(Sheng, Raw Sounds) refer to unprocessed acoustic material at the most elementary level of perception; 音(Yin, Modulated Sounds) refer to sounds that have been patterned and organized according to rules—distinct from the Western music-theoretical term tones, which typically denotes individual pitches; 乐(Yue, Music) denotes the comprehensive ritual-ethical and spiritual concept that integrates musical performance, institutional rites, and moral cultivation. The pairing of Raw and Modulated is intended to foreground the cognitive progression from natural material to cultural artifact, corresponding to the tripartite hierarchical structure (Sheng → Yin → Yue) that this study examines. This terminological choice departs from James Legge's rendering of "音" as "modulations of the voice", in favor of a formulation that more transparently preserves the cognitive progression across category levels. All subsequent citations of Legge's translation refer to this edition.

Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2015) further verified that the Chinese character "音 (Yin) " is derived from the character "言"(yan, referring to "speech"), which is derived from the character "舌 (she, referring to 'tongue'", which is derived from the character "口"(kou, referring to "mouth"); "音 (Yin) " refers to the speech and language of the mouth, and the character "音 (yin) " is resulted from adding a stroke in the "口(kou, mouth)" of "言(yan, speech)" , referring to the oral chanting of vocal sounds, which means singing or the human voice of singing. Therefore, "音 (yin) " naturally borrows from the semantic meaning of referring to singing, which is a written sound that conforms to people's auditory taste, and refers to the sound played by objects that are now called "musicality". This research reveals the core characteristics of the category of "音(yin) ": it emphasizes the written form of sound, that is, the formal organization. Shuming Li (1984) pointed out that "声(Sheng), 音(Yin) and 乐(Yue) are concepts with levels and steps. 音(Yin) is higher than声(Sheng), and 乐(Yue) is higher than音(Yin). 声(Sheng) is the main material means of 乐(Yue). " From the perspective of categorization theory, 音(Yin) belongs to the basic level category — it is the most natural, economical and prominent level in human cognitive processing, and it is an organized category formed by artistic processing on the basis of 声(Sheng), which has both perceptual concreteness and formal abstraction.

2.3 Yue (Music) as a upper level, the aesthetic-ethical category of the value hierarchy

Yue (Music) is the highest level of this sequence and belongs to the category of value level. Yueji pointed out:" The combination of those modulated sounds, so as to give pleasure, and the (direction in harmony with them of the) shields and axes, and of the plumes and ox-tails, constitutes what we call music." Yue (Music) was born when people expressed it according to a certain tone and combined with dance, ceremony and other comprehensive forms. Jiang Chujuan and Jiao Can (2022) pointed out that Yue (Music) is based on people's psychological needs and emotional expression. When people hold up hunting gear, hatchet, feathers and oxtail according to a certain tone and start singing and dancing, Yue (Music) is born.

It is worth noting that Yue (Music) has extremely rich meanings in Chinese musical discourse. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2019) made a systematic textual research on the meanings of the word "乐(yue)" in Yueji, pointing out that the word "乐(yue)" as the biggest category of Yueji appeared 158 times. From the examination of its meaning, it can be seen that the concept of "乐(yue)" in Yueji can be divided into two categories: behavioral music and spiritual music, and behavioral music has two meanings: playing music and ritual music. This means that the category of Yue (Music) refers not only to specific musical activities (playing music), but also to ritual music system (ritual music) and spiritual realm (spiritual music). Yueji clearly said: "music is the intercommunication of them in their relations and differences." "The knowledge of music leads to the subtle springs that underlie the rules of ceremony ." The core feature of the category of Yue (Music) lies in its value— it is not only aesthetic, but also ethical, political and spiritual. From the perspective of categorization theory, Yue (Music) belongs to the superior category, which controls the physical and artistic attributes of Sheng (raw sounds) and Yin (modulated sounds)" , and at the same time endows music with the functions of social education and spiritual transcendence. As Lakoff(1987) said, the superordinate category often carries a more abstract and culturally specific knowledge structure, which is completely consistent with the special position of Yue (Music) in Chinese culture.

Table 1 Cognitive Comparison of the Category Levels of Sheng,Yin,Yue

Category	Hierarchical level	Core characteristics	Cognitive operation	Texts in Yueji
Sheng (声, Raw sounds)	Physical category (subordinate level)	Natural, unorganized and valueless judgment	perception	Even beasts know sound, but not its modulations
Yin (音, Modulat ed sounds)	Art category (basic level)	Organization, discipline and aesthetic value.	understanding	And the masses of the common people know the modulations, but they do not know music.
Yue (乐, Music)	Value category (upper level)	Comprehensive, enlightened and ethical.	awareness	It is only the superior man who can (really) know music.

3. The Cognitive Leap of Category Level from Sheng (Raw sounds) to Yue (Music)

The progressive relationship between the three categories of Sheng(Raw sounds), Yin(Modulated sounds) and Yue(Music) is not only a simple hierarchical sequence, but also reflects a profound cognitive leap mechanism. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this progression involves three kinds of cognitive operation.

3.1 The Cognitive Progression of Categorization

From the perspective of categorization theory, Sheng(Raw sounds), Yin(Modulated sounds) and Yue(Music) constitute a category hierarchy from concrete to abstract and from physics to value. Sheng(Raw sounds) is the most concrete and closest category to perception, belonging to the subordinate category under the basic level category; Yin(Modulated sounds) is a basic level category with formal structural characteristics. Yue(Music) is an upper-level category with comprehensive value connotation. Lakoff(1987) pointed out that superordinate categories often contain more abstract and culturally specific knowledge structures. In Chinese musical discourse, Yue(Music), as a superordinate category, not only contains the physical attribute of Sheng(Raw sounds) and the artistic attribute of Yin(Modulated sounds), but also contains multiple cultural connotations such as ritual and music system, ethical education and spiritual cultivation. The cognitive significance of this category level lies in that it guides the cognitive subject to continuously upgrade the category along the path of "Sheng(Raw sounds)→ Yin(Modulated sounds) → Yue(Music) ", from the perception of physical stimuli to the understanding of formal structure, to the awareness of cultural values, and finally realizes the complete cognition of music.

3.2 The Cognitive Progression of Metonymy

The progression from Sheng(Raw sounds) to Yin(Modulated sounds) and finally to Yue(Music) also involves the operation of metonymy. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2015) pointed out that the pictographic configuration of the Chinese character "声(Sheng)" originates from the depiction of striking a qing (磬, an ancient Chinese stone chime) and listening with the ear. The character "音(Yin)" is derived from "言(yan, for speech)"; The character "乐" is written as "樂", which originated from the image of building a drum . The source of this glyph reveals the metonymic basis of the categories of Sheng(Raw sounds) to Yin(Modulated sounds) and Yue(Music): all three are constructed through the metonymy of "Part for Whole". Sheng(Raw sounds) refers to the general sound with the specific action of "striking and listening"; Yin(Modulated sounds) refers to a well-organized singing voice with the specific action of "adding pen in the mouth"; Yue(Music) refers to the whole musical activity with the specific instrument of "drum building". This metonymy mechanism shows that the terms of Chinese musical discourse are not abstract concepts, but are rooted in the cognitive operation of embodied experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

On this basis, the progression from Sheng(Raw sounds) to Yue(Music) is itself a metonymic expansion: a lower-level category (Sheng, Yin) is used to refer to a higher-level category Yue(Music), and the category is "compressed" and "expanded" in concrete language expression. As revealed by the progressive structure of "object - heart - raw sounds - modulated sounds - music - harmony" in the pre-Qin ritual and musical discourse system, foreign objects (object) trigger emotions (mind), externalize them into tones (raw sounds), process them into melodies (modulated sounds) through art, and finally sublimate them into ritual and music (Yue), with He(和, harmony) as the ultimate form. The cognitive essence of this chain is a series of metonymic operations: object → mind (Cause for Result), mind→ raw sound (Internal for External), raw sound →modulated sound (Material for Form), modulated sound → Yue (Means for Purpose). Each link is a category leap through metonymy.

3.3 The Hierarchical Differentiation of Cognitive Subjects

The progressive category of Sheng(Raw sounds), Yin(Modulated sounds) and Yue(Music)is accompanied by the hierarchical differentiation of cognitive subjects. Yueji pointed out: "...even beasts know sound, but not its modulations, and the masses of the common people know the modulations, but they do not know music. It is only the superior man who can (really) know music. " This statement divides the cognitive subject into three levels: the "beast" can only perceive the physical stimulus of "raw sounds"; "the masses" can understand the formal structure of "modulated sounds"; Only the superior can realize the value of Yue(Music). The cognitive significance of this hierarchical differentiation lies in that it reveals that music cognition is not only a difference in perceptual ability, but also a difference in cultural accomplishment and moral realm. Only through the education of rites and music can an individual rise from the animal sensation of "recognizing sounds" to the moral consciousness of "knowing the value of music" through the artistic understanding of "knowing modulated sounds".

4. The Multiple Meanings of the Category of Yue (Music)

As mentioned above, Yue (Music) is the highest level and the most complicated category in the tripartite hierarchical structure. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2019) classified the meaning of Yue in Yueji into three categories: playing music, ritual music and spiritual music. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, these three kinds of meanings embody the integration function of Yue(music) as a superordinate category to multiple cognitive domains.

4.1 Playing music: the Category Integration of Behavior Domain

The Yue in playing music is the most basic meaning of the category of Yue (music), which refers to specific music performance activities. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2019) pointed out that "musicians play music with musical instruments, and the sound played is also called music, which is used as verbs and nouns". The core of this meaning is "behavior"—a group song and dance activity with the command of drum building. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this meaning embodies the unity of Sheng (raw sounds) and Yin (modulated sounds) in the category of Yue (music). That is, playing music includes both the physical material of sounds in Sheng and the formal organization of sounds in Yin, but it emphasizes the comprehensive presentation of the two. The core cognitive operation of playing music is metonymy — Behavior (playing music) for Product (music works).

4.2 Ritual Music: the Category Integration of Institutional Domain

The Yue in ritual music of ceremony is the social and political meaning of the category of Yue (music), which refers to the music part of the ritual music system. In the ancient political culture of China, ritual music were important tools for governing the country. Yueji pointed out: "The end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the minds of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear." This meaning reflects the cross-domain mapping of the category of Yue (music) from aesthetic domain to political domain. Music is not only the object of aesthetics, but also a tool of governance. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor, the core metaphor of this mapping is MUSIC IS POLITICS — the harmony of music can symbolize the clarity of politics, and the disorder of music can warn the decline of politics. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2019) pointed out that Yue(music) in ritual music is no longer a purely acoustic existence, but a political and ethical concept related to Li(ceremony).

4.3 Spiritual Music/Happiness: the Category Integration of the Mind Domain

The Yue in spiritual music is the philosophical and spiritual meaning of the category of Yue (music), which refers to the spiritual pleasure and spiritual realm caused by music. Yueji puts forward the famous statement that "Where there is music, there is joy.", which literally unifies the two meanings of the homonym 乐 (yuè for music) and 乐 (lè for being happy), revealing the inner relationship between the essence of music and happiness. But spiritual happiness is not just simple happiness, it includes several levels, such as the joy of heart, the joy of liking, the joy of peace (Lin Guizhen, Wang Hongxia, 2019). From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this meaning reflects the cross-domain mapping of the category of Yue (music) from the aesthetic domain to the spiritual domain: music is not only a means to trigger happiness, but also a realm of spiritual peace. It is worth noting that Yueji has a profound dialectical understanding of spiritual happiness — "Superior men rejoice in attaining to the course (which they wish to pursue); and smaller men(villains) in obtaining the things which they desire." This means that the spiritual meaning of Yue (music) itself includes value judgment. i.e. the joy of a superior and a villain are much more different.

In a word, the category of Yue (music) is the integration of three cognitive domains, namely, behavior, system and spirit, which embodies the function of "category compression" of the upper category— integrating phenomena (behavior, system and spirit) scattered in different experience fields under the same conceptual label to form cognitive economy. This is the reason why Yue (music) has become the most important category of Chinese musical discourse: it not only refers to music itself, but also carries all the understanding of music in Chinese culture.

5. Metaphorical Expansion in the Progressive Category of 声(Sheng), 音(Yin) and 乐 (Yue)

The category progression of Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music) is not only a classification system about the interior of music, but also a "cognitive channel" leading to a broader cognitive field. Yueji clearly pointed out: "we must discriminate (raw) sounds in order to know the airs (modulated sounds); the airs(modulated sounds) in order to know the music; and the music in order to know (the character of) the government. Having attained to this, we are fully provided with the methods of good order." This statement reveals the metaphorical expansion function of the progressive structure of "raw sounds—modulated sound—music": from the perception of the sound of physics to the understanding of the sound of art, to the awareness of the music of value, and finally to the insight of politics. This is a cognitive channel from perceptual to rational, from art to politics, from individual to universal.

From the perspective of conceptual metaphor, the statement mentioned in Yueji embodies three levels of metaphorical mapping (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

First, Yin (modulated sounds) is the sublimation of Sheng (raw sounds) and also a metaphor mapping from nature to culture. The core metaphor of this layer of mapping is FORM IS ORDER. When disordered sounds are organized into orderly sounds according to rules, the process itself is a metaphorical mapping from "nature" to "culture". From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the cognitive basis of this mapping lies in the use of "container schema". Sheng (raw sounds) is the unprocessed

"content" and Yin (modulated sounds) is the "form" endowed with content; "Form" is like a "container", which integrates disordered content into an orderly structure.

Secondly, Yue (Music) is the sublimation of Yin (modulated sounds) and also a metaphor mapping from art to ethics. The core metaphor of this mapping is MUSIC IS ETHICS. Yueji pointed out "music is the intercommunication of modulations of sound in their relations and differences." When "modulated sound" is combined with the functions of dance, ceremony and enlightenment to form Yue (Music), music will be transformed from a pure aesthetic object to a cultural carrier bearing ethical values. The cognitive basis of this mapping lies in the extended application of "container schema": Yin (modulated sounds) is a container, which contains not only the modulated sounds, but also an ethical value; When Yin (modulated sounds) is filled with ethical content, it is sublimated into Yue (Music).

Thirdly, "politics" is a mirror image of Yue (Music), and also a metaphor mapping from music to politics. The core metaphor of this mapping is "MUSIC IS POLITICS". Yueji put forward the famous proposition that there is an interaction between the words and modulated sounds (of the people) and the character of their government.", which indicates that political gains and losses can be "judged" through music. Jiang Chujuan and Jiao Can (2022) pointed out that Yueji classified and deduced the difference and progression among Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music), and finally led music to the political field. The cognitive basis of this mapping lies in Part for Whole metonymy, i.e. the harmony of music is the "part" manifestation of political harmony, and the overall situation can be grasped by examining the part.

Therefore, the whole cognitive channel from "raw sounds" to "politics" can be summarized as a cognitive chain: Raw sounds (Sheng, physical perception) → Modulated sounds (Yin, formal understanding) → Music(Yue, value consciousness) → Politics (Zheng, political insight)

The cognitive significance of this progressive structure lies in that it establishes a continuous ladder from the most basic perceptual experience to the highest social cognition. As the basic insight of cognitive linguistics shows, abstract thinking (political judgment) is not produced out of thin air, but is based on embodied experience (auditory perception). The proposition that "We must discriminate the music in order to know (the character of) the government." reveals the concrete operation mode of this cognitive continuum from embodied to abstract in Chinese musical discourse.

6. Category Integration and Knowledge Archaeology in the Concept of Modern Music

The tripartite hierarchical structure of Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music) not only shapes the conceptual system of Chinese traditional musical discourse, but also has a far-reaching influence on the formation of the collective concept of "music" in modern Chinese. Zhang Zhentao (2015) pointed out that Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music) in pre-Qin literature had three levels of order, and the technical components of music were gradually replaced by non-musical social components. Finally, Yueji made a classic interpretation and became a powerful classification concept, which influenced future generations; At the same time, the collective concept "music" and the statement "The greatest Music (Yue) is beyond sound" (大音希声, dà yīn xī shēng) also appeared in the pre-Qin period. This analysis reveals the archaeological connection between the tripartite hierarchical structure of Sheng-Yin -Yue and the modern concept of music.

From the perspective of knowledge archaeology, the formation of the collective concept of "music" in modern Chinese is actually the re-integration of the tripartite hierarchical structure of Sheng-Yin -Yue in modern academic context. In Chinese traditional discourse, those are three different categories, each with its own specific connotation and extension. Music, as the highest level category, unifies Sheng(Raw sounds) and Yin(Modulated sounds), but there is a clear hierarchical boundary among them. In modern academic discourse, music, as a collective concept, compresses the three categories of Sheng, Yin and Yue under the same label, which leads to its rich hierarchical connotation being obscured. The cognitive mechanism of this compression lies in "category integration"—integrating three categories of different levels into an upper category to achieve the cognitive economy and the docking with the western concept of "music".

However, this integration of categories has also brought about semantic flattening:when Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music) are collectively called music, the progressive relationship and value distinction among them are dissolved. Jiang Chujuan and Jiao Can (2022) pointed out that "sound" is a natural existence and also exists in all things. Just for the voice of nature, it has no emotional and aesthetic value and will not become Yin or Yue. In the collective concept of "music", this hierarchical distinction is blurred, which also makes it difficult for modern people to understand Chinese traditional musical discourse to some extent. Lin Guizhen and Wang Hongxia (2015) pointed out that an accurate textual research on the origin of the Chinese character 音(Yin), the origin of and the change of the word meaning is helpful to accurately understand the ancient music theories such as Yueji and the true connotation of the word "music" today. The significance of this textual research lies in revealing the rich historical meaning behind the seemingly ordinary daily concept of "music" through the method of knowledge archaeology, and restoring the original cognitive appearance of the tripartite hierarchical structure of Sheng-Yin-Yue.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the tripartite hierarchical structure of Sheng (Raw sounds), Yin (Modulated sounds) and Yue (Music) is the conceptual cornerstone of Chinese musical discourse. It constructs a cognitive continuum from physical perception to political insight through hierarchical categorization, cognitive progression of metonymy operation and metaphorical expansion of cross-domain mapping. With the help of Rosch's category hierarchy theory (1978) and Lakoff's prototype category view (1987), this paper reveals the internal cognitive logic of this tripartite structure —Sheng (Raw sounds) as the subordinate level anchors the body perception, Yin (Modulated sounds) as the basic level provides the formal organization, and Yue (Music) as the upper level carries the cultural value. The statement of "discriminating the music in order to know (the character of) the government" is fully explained by Lakoff & Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (1980), which shows a continuous leap from embodied experience to abstract political judgment.

This category structure is not only a tool for music classification, but also a concentrated expression of cognitive genes in Chinese musical discourse. It reveals Chinese unique way of understanding music. Music is never an isolated acoustic phenomenon, but a cognitive channel that runs through nature, art, ethics and politics. The flattening and compression of the modern concept of "music" reminds us to be wary of the loss of meaning brought by concept transplantation in cross-cultural dialogue, and it is necessary to restore the cognitive original appearance of the traditional category structure through the method of knowledge archaeology. In the follow-up study, the cognitive mechanism of this category structure can be systematically compared with other categories of Chinese music aesthetics such as Yun(韵) and "Jing (境)", so as to further reveal the deep cognitive schema of Chinese musical discourse.

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