

Interweaving Melody and Beat

-Specialties of Japanese and Korean Pop Music Styles and Development from Yonezu Kenshi and Han JiSung

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Abstract: Currently, in Asia and around the world, Japanese and Korean popular music cultures have a large number of fans and imitators. These two pop music cultures have their own characteristics, both of which have extremely distinctive style characteristics, complete and standardized industrial systems and a large number of creative, young and energetic practitioners. Therefore, the author tries to explore the style and development characteristics of Japanese and Korean pop music. In order to be more precise and efficient, the author selected two representative musicians, Yonezu Kenshi (Japan) and Han JiSung (South Korea) for the study. The author's research method is as follows. The author makes full use of previous theoretical research on Japanese and Korean pop music, combined with professional knowledge of music, and collects statements and social interviews of relevant authors in order to have a comprehensive understanding of their representative music works. Then the author makes a coded analysis and statistical drawing of the melody, rhythm and emotional expression of his representative works. After the study, the author found that the development of Japanese and Korean popular music cultures are similar but also significantly different. Mainly, the former is relatively conservative and traditional, focusing on melody; the latter is more open and tolerant, focusing on rhythm; at the same time, there are quite a lot of similarities and differences between the two in terms of emotional expression and lyrical characteristics. Finally, based on the summarized “developmental characteristics”, the author draws some inspirations for the development of Chinese pop music.

Keywords: Pop Music, Japan and Korea, Pop Culture

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese and Korean pop music has entered a very prosperous stage of development, occupying an important position in the global music industry and even in pop culture. According to statistics, in 2021, the world market size of Japanese pop music reached 283.2 billion yen, and in the same year, the global sales of Korean pop music albums amounted to 57.089 million [1,2]. It is clear that Japanese and Korean pop music culture has a significant influence. In the study of the style and development characteristics of Japanese and Korean pop music, the author mainly explores the following questions:

1. What are the creative styles and characteristics of the works of the above two representative figures?

2. Does this reflect a certain developmental feature of Japanese and Korean popular music culture?

3. What is the significance or revelation of this developmental feature?

Regarding the author's research topic, it has been studied and analyzed by a number of scholars previously. According to the search of CNKI and Google Scholar, the author found that the existing research on Japanese and Korean popular music cultures in the academic world takes the following three aspects as the main research directions.

First, combing the historical development of the two. In this regard, the studies mainly include Deng Tianqi's research on the historical path of Japanese popular music dissemination, Wang Xuan's research on the historical trend of globalization of Korean popular music culture, and so on [3,4]. This kind of research results can help the author to quickly and effectively understand the historical origin and development trajectory of Japanese and Korean popular music initially. However, these studies are often insufficient in explaining the "development and spread of popular music" in the specific historical structure of the present time, and at the same time, they are not sufficiently detailed in describing the impact of this event. This makes it difficult to accurately analyze the historical and social structure of the present.

Secondly, to explain the mode of operation of the two as cultural industries. In this regard, studies include Hong Yeh's research on the phenomenon of Korean pop music culture driving the "Korean Wave" industry to the world, Yoshitaka Mori's research on the mode of mass distribution of Japanese pop music through digital media, and so on [5,6]. These research results are more professional and comprehensive, which helps the author to grasp the characteristics of the two industries as cultural industries. However, such results often do not focus on the importance of individual creators in the industry as a whole, and there is a general lack of analysis of individual styles as well as the situation of real practitioners. Therefore, these results lack specificity when it comes to studying the style and creative characteristics of Japanese and Korean popular music.

Third, a discussion and evaluation of the current and future development of the two is made. In this regard, there is mainly Dal Yong JIN's research on the development mode of Japanese and Korean popular music integration and mutual reference and related suggestions, Wu Yu Ting's research on the ideology and aesthetic taste of Japanese and Korean popular music, as well as the discussion of the feasibility of some of the suggestions, and so on [7,8]. These studies focus on analyzing the relevance of the stylistic characteristics of Japanese and Korean pop music and put forward some rationalization suggestions. They help the author to quickly summarize the respective strengths and weaknesses of the development of Japanese and Korean popular music, and further elucidate the stylistic characteristics of Japanese and Korean popular music. However, the factual arguments of such results are relatively insufficient, and some of the opinions lack sufficient information support. At the same time, although these research results focus on individual creative styles, none of the studies has yet to summarize the conclusions of the theme of "style" through quantitative analysis and statistical calculations. Therefore, in the author's opinion, such research still needs to be improved.

In conclusion, by summarizing and reviewing the existing studies in the academic field, it can be found that these studies have sorted out, summarized, and suggested Japanese and Korean popular music cultures from a macro framework, but they lacked attention to the details of creators' personalities and creative styles. This leads to a relative lack of elaboration with factual examples and a lack of suitable research methods to prove the correctness of the theory in the current historical structure and effective interpretation of historical events.

The significance of the author's research is to make up for the lack of attention to individual authors under the current research in this field through detailed research and quantitative analysis of typical practitioners, and to provide readers with a clearer and simpler understanding of Japanese and Korean

popular music through more concise and vivid statistical charts and knowledge based on music specialties. Based on the understanding and knowledge of them, the author also intends to draw some inspirations from them, put forward rationalized suggestions for the development of Chinese pop music culture, and provide some assistance to the development, growth and dissemination of Chinese culture from an academic point of view.

2. The Style of Yonezu Kenshi and Han Jisung

The two subjects selected for the author's study are both musicians who are quite representative of the popular music scene in their home countries.

2.1. Research Methodology

First of all, it is necessary to explain the author's quantitative research approach to the two men's musical works: based on the author's professional knowledge of popular music as well as the context in actual music creation, the selected music samples are analyzed in four dimensions: lyrics, tune, melody and rhythm. In each dimension, the authors first encode common musical features within the dimensions using the periodic table coding method. The periodic table coding method refers to extracting the first two letters of the English word encoding the object to represent the whole object. Then, according to the music's own rhythm, melody, style, emotion and other characteristics, the author makes a one-to-one correspondence between the sample music and the coding characteristics. Finally, the author forms a statistical table expressed in word form, which is then transformed into an intuitive bar chart, pie chart, and so on. The superiority of this method lies in: 1. Breaking the inherent impression that "music" is relatively abstract, emotional and difficult to quantitatively analyze in personal cognition, and helping to clearly and objectively summarize the characteristics of musical works. 2. Giving full play to the role of statistics, graphical tables and computer technology, the workload is greatly reduced under the circumstance of guaranteeing sufficient samples, correct data, and reasonable summarization. 3. reasonably greatly reduces the workload and enhances the research efficiency.

2.2. Yonezu Kenshi

2.2.1. Introduction

Yonezu Kenshi, born in 1991, is a famous Japanese male singer, painter, and songwriter. After recovering from high-functioning autism that made him a poor socializer, Yonezu Kenshi has been writing and submitting his music under the stage name Hachi since 2009 on the famous Japanese music software VOCALOID and its eponymous platform. In the early part of his creative career (2009~2011), he did not perform music on his own, but rather used Hatsune Miku, a virtual vocalist sound library developed by YAMAHA Japan, to generate singing voices. From 2012, Yonezu Kenshi began releasing works under his real name in the Japanese popular music scene, and began to record and perform music with his own voice. This period can be considered as the middle of his compositions (2012~2017). After 2018, Yonezu Kenshi's style of compositions changed, and he also started to compose music for movies, TV dramas, anime, etc. extensively. This period (2018 to present) can be considered the later part of his creation.

2.2.2. Characteristics of Music Composition

According to the author's quantitative statistics, Yonezu Kenshi's music compositions have a distinctive personal style, whether in terms of lyrics, compositions or melodies and beats.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, Yonezu Kenshi's lyrics are very diverse in style, and the emotions as well as the contents expressed in the lyrics are very rich. Among the 26 representative song samples selected by the author, "longing" (Lo), "blessed" (Bl), "lyrical" (Ly), "philosophical" (Ph) lyrics account for a large proportion of the lyrics, as well as a variety of other styles. By analyzing the data, it is clear that Yonezu Kenshi's lyrical style tends to be generally positive, but there are not many lyrics that directly express emotions. He expresses positive emotions and his desire and blessing for the future through relatively obscure, philosophical, and complex lyrics. For example, the proportion of direct lyrics such as "happy" (Ha) and "angry" (An) is significantly lower in the sample. Meanwhile, based on the comparison of the three periods in Figure 1, it can be found that as the amount of songwriting increases, the styles of lyrics are also expanding, and the range of lyrics is wider. For example, the styles of "happy" (Ha), "tough" (To), and "simple and easy to understand" (Ru) did not appear in the early period, but all of the above styles appeared in the middle and late periods. However, all of these styles appear in the middle and late stages of the song.

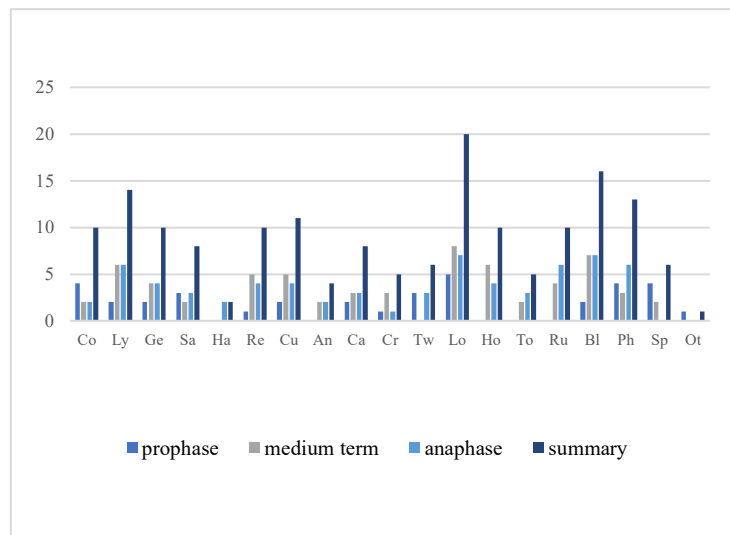


Figure 1: Analysis of Yonezu Kenshi's lyric style-histogram

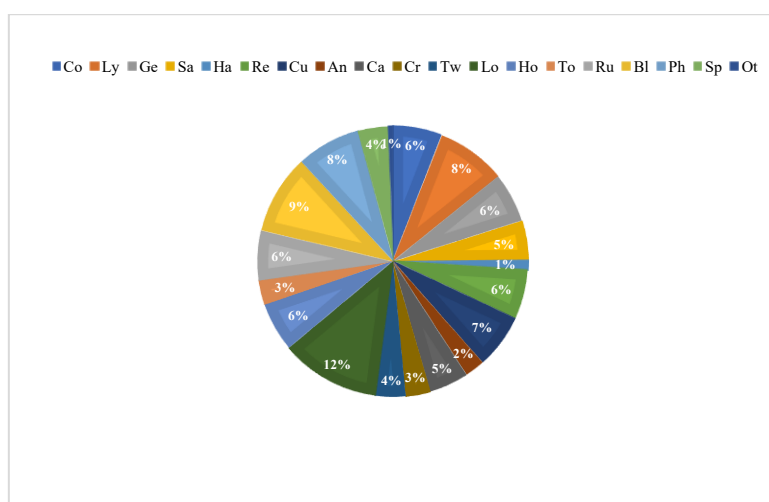


Figure 2: Analysis of Yonezu Kenshi's lyric style-Pie chart

Using the same quantitative method, the author also analyzed the characteristics of Yonezu Kenshi's tune style, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. In terms of tunes, Yonezu Kenshi still maintains his

own diverse style, but unlike the relatively indirect and euphemistic expression of emotion in the lyrics, his tunes are more inclined to straightforward and easy-to-understand stylistic expression. For example, as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, "happy" (Ha), "relaxed" (Re), "comforting" (Cu), and other relatively straightforward and shallow tune styles are more frequent. In addition, based on the comparison between Figures 1 and 3, it is found that the personal style tendencies displayed by Yonezu Kenshi are closer to those of the lyrics in terms of tunes.

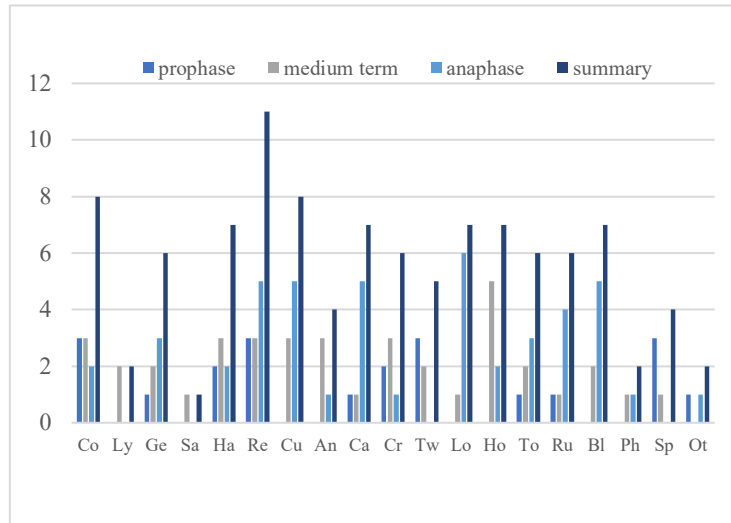


Figure 3: Analysis of Yonezu's Tune Style - Histogram

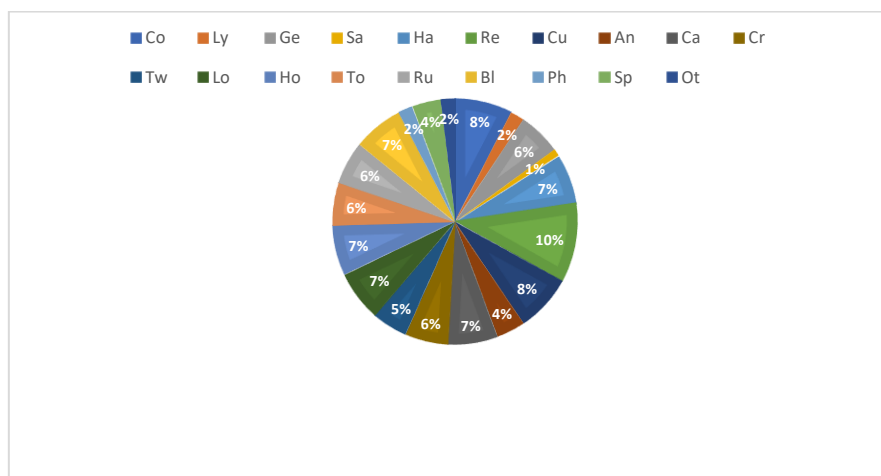


Figure 4: Analysis of Yonezu's Tune Style - Pie Chart

For Yonezu Kenshi, in terms of melody and rhythm, the author also conducted a statistical analysis. This is shown in Figures 5 and 6. The results of this section are roughly as follows: first, according to Figure 5, the proportion of "smooth" (Sm) and "staccato" (Dc) melodies in Yonezu Kenshi's songs is similar, but the proportion of "characteristic" (Ch) melodies is similar, and the proportion of "staccato" (Dc) melodies is similar. "(Ch) melodies are significantly more common than the "plain" (Ur) melodies. Secondly, as can be seen in Figure 6, Yonezu Kenshi's songs are mainly fast (Fa) and medium (Me), with very few slow (Sl), and his songs tend to be more in the "high" (Pa) and "cyclic" (Wh) rhythmic styles. Their songs tend to be more in the "high and exciting" (Pa) and "cyclic repetition" (Wh) rhythmic types.

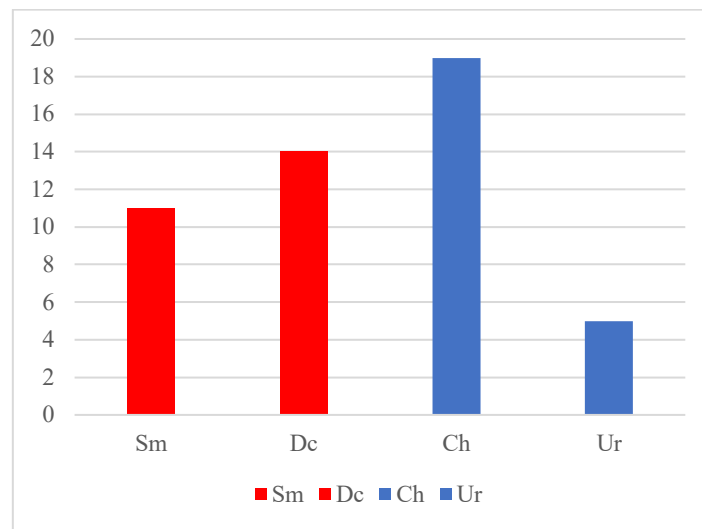


Figure 5: Analysis of Yonezu's Melody Style

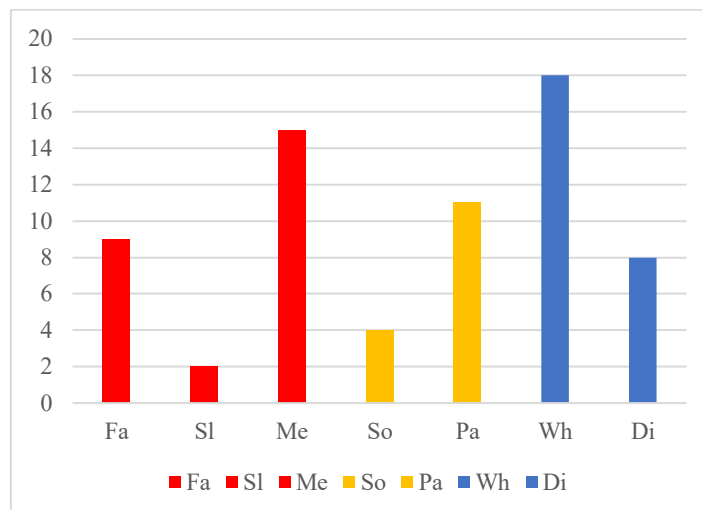


Figure 6: Analysis of Yonezu's Rhythm Style

Overall, based on the above statistics and quantitative analysis, combined with the creator's own description, comments from all walks of life, and reviews from music experts, the musical characteristics of Japanese musician Yonezu Kenshi can be summarized as follows: 1. Variety of musical styles, a wide range of musical styles, and a tendency to continue to learn and expand; 2. Overall style and emotion are positive and uplifting, and there is a sense of progression that motivates people; 3. The overall style and emotion are positive, uplifting and positive, with a sense of proceeding, which is inspiring; 4. The style of lyrics and music is relatively unified, but the expression of lyrics is relatively implicit, and the expression of tunes is relatively straightforward; 5. The works are novel and unconventional, which can give the audience a deep impression.

2.3. Han JiSung

2.3.1. Introduction

Han JiSung is a famous South Korean rapper, lyricist and dancer who was born in 2000. He is socially inept due to a phobia of crowds, but has a high level of concentration. He studied in Malaysia until

2015. He decided to participate in a variety talent show to become an idol singer in 2015, and later successfully passed the selection process to become a trainee with JYP Entertainment in South Korea. He co-founded the male singing group 3RACHA in late 2016 and began releasing original music. From 2017 to 2018, through more talent shows, his acting group expanded to nine members and was renamed Stray Kids, in which Han JiSung served as a lyricist and composer as well as a rapper. It is worth noting that due to the short period of time in the industry and the characteristics of his personal style, there is no suitable criterion for staging his creative career for the time being. Therefore, the study of Han JiSung will be conducted on the entire sample at the same time. Han JiSung's personal style is outstanding and well represents contemporary Korean popular music culture.

2.3.2. Music Composition Characteristics

First, the lyrics are analyzed: as shown in Figures 7 and 8, Han JiSung's lyrics also show a variety and breadth of styles. On the whole, his lyrics are mainly "longing" (Lo), "simple and easy to understand" (Ru), and "blessing" (Bl), which reflects that his emotional values are relatively high and positive. It is worth noting, however, that his lyrics contain a considerable number of negative emotions, such as "angry" (An), "Careless" (Ca), "crazy" (Cr), and "Twisted" (Tw). This shows that one of the important characteristics of the lyrics is that while the overall emotional value is positive, the negative emotions are used to reflect the positive and inspirational nature of the main theme of the song. It should also be added that Han JiSung himself is mainly a rapper, and since this form of singing pursues speed, hardness of pronunciation, and full emotional involvement, his lyrics tend to be more emotionally intense in the actual songs.

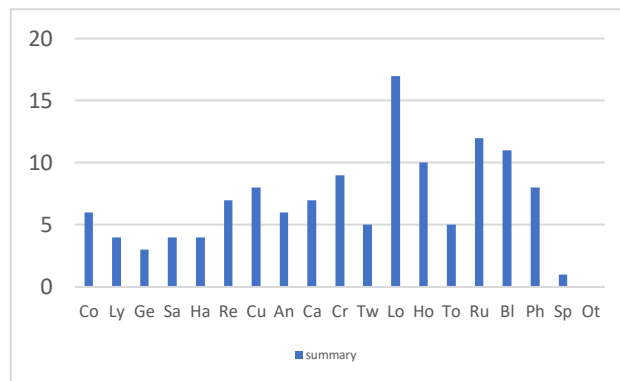


Figure 7: Analysis of Han JiSung's lyric style-histogram

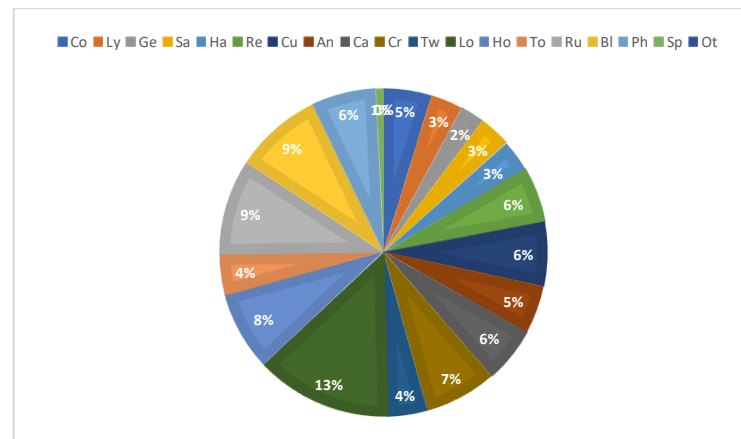


Figure 8: Analysis of Han JiSung's lyric style-Pie Chart

The analysis of Han JiSung's tunes continues below. As shown in Figures 9 and 10, the overall style of Han JiSung's tunes is characterized by complexity, diversity, and uneven distribution. First of all, it is worth noting that, unlike his lyrics, which are positive and uplifting, Han JiSung's tunes use a large number of music forms that express negative emotions directly. For example, in Figure 9, "Anger" (An), "Crazy" (Cr), "Twisted" (Tw), and "Oppression" (To) are the most common forms of music that express negative emotions. "(To) are significantly more prevalent in the sample. However, since the proportion of "hopeful" (Ho) and "longing" (Lo) tunes in the sample is also high, it can be assumed that he has not given up expressing positive emotions. In addition, it can be found that there are few relatively traditional or niche features in Han's style, such as "Sad" (Sa), "Spooky" (Sp), and "Simple and Easy to Understand" (Ru). and "Ru" (simple and easy to understand), which are relatively traditional or niche characteristics.

The melodies and rhythms of Han JiSung's 's music are analyzed as shown in Figures 11 and 12 below. As shown in Figure 11, in terms of melody, there is a certain proportion of both smooth and staccato melodies, and there are more "characteristic" (Ch) melodies than bland ones. As shown in Figure 12, in terms of rhythm, it is clear that the artist has almost completely abandoned slow (Sl) and soothing (So) songs, and the majority of the songs have a strong sense of rhythm, i.e., a strong sense of rhythm; at the same time, there is not a large difference between the proportion of looping (Wh) and varying (Di) rhythms in the artist's compositions, which suggests that he is good at both forms of rhythm. At the same time, there is not much difference between the cyclic (Wh) and varied (Di) rhythms in the piece, suggesting a combination of both.

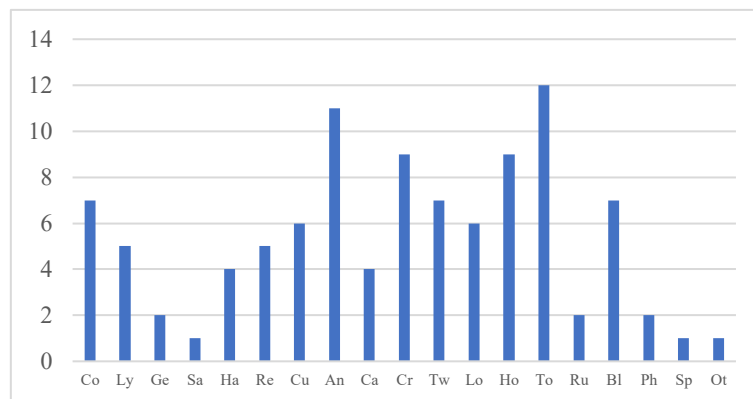


Figure 9: Analysis of Han JiSung's tune style-histogram

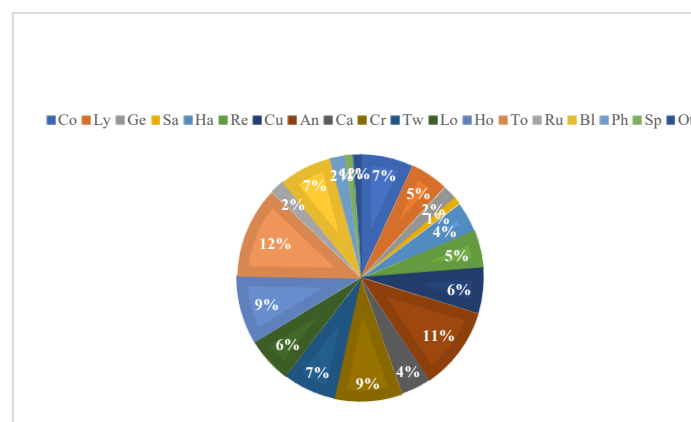


Figure 10: Analysis of Han JiSung's tune style-pie chart

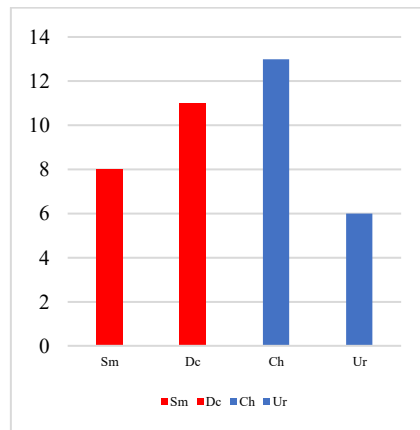


Figure 11: Analysis of Han JiSung's Melody style

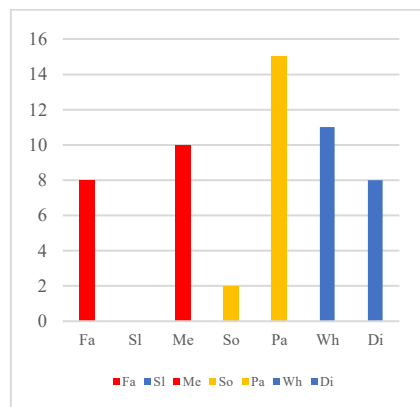


Figure 12: Analysis of Han JiSung's rhythm style

Based on the above analysis, Han JiSung's personal music style can be summarized as follows: 1. Various and complex lyric styles, good at using negative emotions to express positive song themes, forming a strong contrast between the song's surface interpretation and the actual connotation; 2. Relatively popular and innovative works, less involved in niche styles and old-time "set" emotional expression; 3. The music rhythm is fast, dynamic and exciting, with a variety of rhythmic patterns.

3. Comparison of Their Similarities and Differences and Discussion of Causes

Through the previous statistics and detailed analysis of the data, it can be found that there are many similarities in the personal experiences, creative styles, and characteristics of the works of both the Japanese representative musician, Yonezu Kenshi, and the Korean representative musician, Han JiSung, but there are also a large number of differences.

3.1. Similarities and Differences

In terms of emotional value, both of their music generally conveys positive and hopeful emotional value and positive values; however, Yonezu Kenshi extensively uses obscure lyrics and profound philosophy to convey emotions, while Han JiSung uses a lot of contrasts between positive and negative emotions to reveal the main emotional theme of his works. In terms of the coverage of their works, both of them cover a wide range of topics and have a good grasp of different forms of music; however, Yonezu Kenshi focuses on melodic songs, while Han JiSung focuses on rap songs. In terms of development, Yonezu is a free-spirited creator who develops on his own, while Han JiSung joins

an entertainment company and a performing group and develops together with the group. In terms of song style, Yonezu Kenshi's songs tend to be traditional pop, focusing on smooth melodies, audience enjoyment, and the ideological value of the work; Han JiSung's songs are more modern and trendy, focusing on fancy rhythms, cool stage effects, and strong emotional impact.

3.2. Genesis

3.2.1. Personal and Historical Backgrounds

Yonezu Kenshi and Han JiSung are both creators of the new generation after the "90s" and even after the "00s". Growing up in the historical structure of the "Z-era", this generation is more open-minded, and comes into contact with a variety of new things and new communication media. In the author's opinion, these new ideas, new things and new media have, to some extent, contributed to their openness and tolerance, diversity of styles and novel and unique creative thinking in popular music creation. Their "new style of music creation" has also contributed to the development of the music industry in this new era. Moreover, Generation Z youths are more innocent, kind, positive and confident in their attitudes towards life, and compared to their predecessors who emphasized a realist lifestyle and the concept of "cold treatment", Generation Z youths have a more positive attitude towards their surroundings, and a more positive attitude towards the world. Generation Z youth are more full of warmth, ideals, care and love for the things around them [9]. This may be one of the reasons why the overall style of their works is so positive. It is also worth noting that both creators have introverted mental illnesses, which, although it may hinder their normal socialization, may enable them to be more immersed and focused on their music creation, and to express their true inner purposes and emotions through the narrow outlet of music, which may result in more sincere, infectious, and impressive works.

3.2.2. The National Conditions of the Countries Where the Two Are from

For Yonezu Kenshi, the overall environment of pop music development in Japan is more tolerant to individual (single) creators, and due to the driving force and assistance of a number of famous music companies such as YAHAMA and SONY, the level of music technology in Japan is more developed compared to South Korea, and the modern music technology such as virtual sound is more mature. Moreover, the Japanese film and animation industry pays great attention to soundtracks, and needs a large number of high-quality pop music works to be used as theme songs, background music or end credits. For these reasons, Yonezu Kenshi's development started with the production of virtual music by a single person, gradually transitioned to real-voice solo singing, and then further expanded his business to film and television music. On the whole, although he is a single person who does all the creative work, his expression and scope of business are constantly broadening and progressing. His musical identity and personal style have been refined and perfected through a variety of development opportunities. Therefore, in the end, Yonezu Kenshi presents to the general public an image of an all-rounded, comprehensive, positive, ever-improving, warm and temperamental free artist.

For Han JiSung, considering the fact that Korean pop music since the 1990s has mostly been developed through the formation of performing groups by entertainment companies, the status and room for development of solo pop musicians are relatively limited, which may have prompted Han to choose a different path from Yonezu Kenshi's "solo" path, and to develop his music career through the formation of a singing group with other people. This may have prompted Han to choose a different path from Yonezu Kenshi's "solo career" and form a singing group with others. Moreover, Korean pop groups tend to present their work and expand their influence through live stage performances as opposed to online music, music videos, albums, and other forms of media distribution, and thus the artists' work needs to be more theatrical and interactive. This inherent industrial requirement may be

one of the reasons that led Han JiSung to mainly create rap works. At the same time, based on the "stage effect" mentioned above, it may also explain why Han's works contain a lot of emotional impact, contrast, and multiple rhythmic changes - the reason is that "using negative language to express positive emotions" and the impactful and violent style of rap are the most important elements of the artist's work. The reason for this is that "expressing positive emotions in negative language" and the impactful expression of emotions are relatively easy to arouse the empathy and recognition of the audience in the same situation, while the various rhythmic changes help to create a colorful sense of the stage scene. In the end, Han JiSung gradually developed his own image as a straightforward, sincere, impactful, inspiring and passionate rapper.

4. Conclusions

Based on the above detailed analysis, comparison and discussion of the two representative musicians, the author hereby summarizes the development characteristics of Japanese and Korean pop music as a whole as follows:

Represented by Yonezu Kenshi, the development of Japanese pop music is characterized by relatively traditional creative concepts and relatively orthodox song styles. It focuses on the pleasantness of the song itself and the audience's feelings, and the content and method of expression of emotional value are relatively single. However, it has a strong technological backing, and the market environment fully respects and recognizes individual independent creators, giving independent artists a broad space for development.

Represented by Han JiSung, the development of Korean pop music is characterized by new and fashionable creative concepts and varied song styles. It focuses on rhythmic patterns and specificity and strives to create more live performance effects. Emotional values are expressed in a wide range of contents and in new ways. However, its technology is less helpful to the industry, and there is the monopolization of the pop music market by entertainment companies and performing groups, which limits the expansion of individual style.

The comparison of the current situation and style of pop music between Japan and South Korea is a reflection of the different development characteristics of pop music in the two countries. Although Japanese pop music has its technological advantages and free market, the conservative and relatively inward-looking concept of creation has led to its declining end. Korean pop music is trendy, fashionable, open and tolerant, and its styles are more advanced and diverse, thus it can overcome the disadvantages of monopolizing the market and develop positively.

Based on the above comparison and summary, the message to Chinese pop music is clear. In the overall poor creative atmosphere, serious homogenization, and the loss of vitality of a large number of creators and listeners, Chinese pop music needs to break part of the Chinese people's traditional concepts of conservatism, backwardness, and unwillingness to change as well as the constraints of the social environment, and to actively absorb and generate excellent musical styles, song forms, and creative modes, and to cultivate a more open minded and open-minded music style, form, and creation mode, while adhering to the bottom line of culture. While adhering to the cultural bottom line, we should actively absorb and generate excellent music styles, song forms and creative modes, and cultivate a more open and tolerant pop music market, so that China's pop music culture can return to, or even surpass, the glory of Hong Kong and Taiwan's pop music in the 1990s. This is where the significance and value of this study lies.

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