

# INTRODUCTION

The 28th ICTM Colloquium titled **From Musical Bow to Zithers along the Silk Road** was held on 1-2 December 2022, co-hosted by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China.

The Silk Road was already an important topic in the history of ICTM colloquia. This is the fourth colloquium on "Musical Instruments along the Silk Road" held by Shanghai Conservatory of Music after "Plucked Lutes of the Silk Road: The Interaction of Theory and Practice, From Antiquity to Contemporary Performance" (October 2016), "Double Reeds of the Silk Road: The Interaction of Theory and Practice from Antiquity to Contemporary Performance" (November 2018), and "Drums and Drum Ensembles of the Silk Road" (November 2020).

The programme committee consisted of Xiao Mei (China), Pornprapit Phoasavadi (Thailand), Razia Sultanova (UK/Uzbekistan), Jasmina Talam (Bosnia & Herzegovina), Manfred Bartmann (Austria/Germany), Saule Utegalieva (Kazakhstan), and Gisa Jähnichen (China/Germany). The local arrangement committee for this colloquium consisted of some faculty members and students at Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

This colloquium comprised presentations by 18 scholars from Lithuania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Malta, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Germany, the United States, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Canada and China: Ahmad Faudzi Musib, Arthur Borman, Chinthaka P. Meddegoda, Gisa Jähnichen, Palmer Keen, Long Fei, Han Mei, Hans Brandeis, Henry Johnson, Lana Šehović, Jasmina Talam, Xiao Mei, Cui Xiaona, Chu Zhuo, and Xiong Manyu. Five sessions dominated the programme: 1) Musical Bows and Zithers in Europe; 2) Southeast Asian Cases; 3) Regional Studies; 4) The Long Way to the Zithers; 5) The Musics and Ecology of Bowed Zithers in China and East Asia.

All presentations were prerecorded items and replayed by the session chairs. At the same time, the colloquium also included a workshop on "From Localized Ensemble Genres to Solo Schools: The Constructed History of Chinese Zheng Schools and Interpretation Based on Performance" presented by two Chinese *zheng* performers.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Xiao Mei of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She began by pointing out the significance of organizing four consecutive colloquia on "Musical Instruments along the Silk Road", and presented the publication results of the three colloquia to the 200 participants from all over the world who attended the opening ceremony. After that, Svanibor Pettan, President of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and Liu Ying, Vice Dean of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, delivered speeches at the opening ceremony.

The five sessions of this colloquium reveal a number of aspects important to further research on the history and use of string instruments in regions and areas connected to the Silk Road. Scholars have focused on regions ranging from Europe to East Asia, South and Southeast Asia, broadly connecting Eurasia and Southeast Asian islands. Both regional and cross-regional studies have contributed to the re-conceptualization of the typology of zither instruments and their relationships in terms of shapes, sound, and performance in a rather wide space. These studies not only reveal details about the historical mobility of the musical bows and zithers, but also show how they moved from the distant past into our contemporary life.

Besides excellent presentations, the Local Arrangements Committee (LAC) prepared a special workshop "From Ensemble to Solo Genre: The History and Evolution of Chinese *Guzheng* Genre". Yan Xu from Shanghai Jiaotong University, and Wang Yi, a *zheng* player, performed and explained the workshop together. The event was distributed live on the internet and presented a rich explanation and wonderful performance for hundreds of listeners.

In general, this colloquium challenged some previous descriptions and tried to overcome one-sided explanations of historical developments. It was a step into re-researching progression lines, connecting the idea of instrumental developments with the natural resources of large regions. Sound production, especially with musical instruments, was but one important aspect of the colloquium. Another aspect was to incite ongoing discussions on global changes in this regard and the role of ethnomusicology as a discipline with high responsibility to guide local decision-making and interregional cooperation for joint research.

Thanks to the ICTM members organized in the Programme Committee, Local Arrangements Committee, and local staff, the 28th Colloquium came to a successful close. We were looking forward to the profound impact of this Colloquium, as well as to the next Colloquium. An illustrated report of the colloquium can be found in the ICTM January Bulletin of 2023.

For this volume were chosen those scholars who passed a second round of peer reviews and were recommended for print after they submitted and revised their papers. Not all participants are included as these are not proceedings but selected papers of the colloquium.

In course of the review and printing process, the sections had to be reconstructed as seen in the table of contents.

The first section is dedicated to the turning point China as this seems to be a priority in talking about anything regarding the Silk Road. All efforts have to do with the trade and the changes of societies along the route of this trade path. China is the place of departure and destination. The three studies of Xiao Mei and Xiong Manyu, Cui Xiaona, and Chu Zhuo in the section were all delivered in a well organised session and have shown the deep understanding of materials to be investigated in an overarching and comprehensive way.

The second section deals with the path along the Southern part of Asia. There are four studies that were of interest. They are about specific types of musical bows and derived zithers, their distribution and diversity delivered by Ahmad Faudzi Musib, Pornpratit Phoasavadi, Wei Ching Bing, and Gisa Jähnichen.

The third section conveys some historical connections to destinations of the Great Silk Road including developments of the last century. Southern Europe is one central topic, which was in detail investigated by Jasmina Talam and Lana Šehović, wider connections were the historical insights of Juan Sebastián Correa Cáceres and the South Asian perspective did also play an important role as Chinthaka P. Meddegoda could show.

The last section is dedicated to examples from East Asia with some wonderful contributions of Mei Han, Henry Johnson, and Long Fei, who summarized many insights.

Thousand thanks go to the nameless reviewers, supporters, researchers, translators, organizers, the publisher, and recruited staff members, who enabled the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to be the central host of this 28<sup>th</sup> ICTM Colloquium.

Xiao Mei / Gisa Jähnichen

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# **SECTION 1**

## **TURNING POINT CHINA**



# AN OVERVIEW OF CHINESE BOWED ZITHER INSTRUMENTS: TYPES, CONSTRUCTIONS, PERFORMANCES, AND CHANGES

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## ABSTRACT

The existing bowed and struck zithers in mainland China can be divided into two categories in terms of shape: tube zither and board zither. The earliest recorded bowed and struck zither in Chinese literature is the “zhu” [筑], which has been lost, so for a long time, people could only speculate on the appearance of the instrument based on the literature; the instrument is played by pressing the fret, vibrating it with the left hand, and striking it with the bamboo piece with the right hand. It was not until the 1970s and 1990s that people were able to get a glimpse of the actual objects and painted images in the excavated artifacts from the Han Dynasty tombs. The ancient bowed zither that appeared in historical documents and still has similar instruments spread today is a *Ya Zheng* [轧筝], which is recorded in the *Jiu Tang Shu* [旧唐书] (Old History of the Tang Dynasty) (945 AD) and Chen Yang 's *Yue Shu* [乐书] (Treatise on Music) (1101 AD). Although *Ya Zheng* faded away after the Qing Dynasty,

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Xiong Manyu is a doctoral student at Shanghai Conservatory of Music majoring in ethnomusicology. She is a member of the International Council for Traditional Music and Chinese Traditional Music Society. She has been learning *Guzheng* since childhood. In 2014, She majored in Chinese ancient music historiography and *Guzheng* performance at the Music School of Central China Normal University. In 2018, she came to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to study for a master's degree and a doctorate in ethnomusicology under the guidance of Professor Xiao Mei until now.

there are still similar instruments in folklore, such as the Shandong *Cuo Qin* [挫琴], the Hebei *Ya qin* [轧琴], the Putian *Wenzhenqin* [文枕琴], the Jinjiang *Ya Zheng*, the *Chen Yin* (in Zhuang people's language) of the Zhuang people, and many more. On the basis of historical literature, fieldwork, and previous studies, a comparison of the materials, forms, and performances of the extant bowed (and struck) zithers in China can be seen, which shows the great tension of the instrument in different cultural occasions and its rich and diverse cultural ecology, and it not only is a transitional instrument from striking to bowing but also creates new meanings in different contexts and collides with different cultural ecologies to create new expressions.

## KEYWORDS

China, Bowed and struck zithers, *Ya Zheng*, Historical sources, Diversity

## INTRODUCTION

The existing bowed and struck zithers in mainland China can be divided into two categories: tube zithers and board zithers. Regarding the production of sound, bowed zithers can also be divided into sub-categories such as 'bowed', 'struck mixed with bowing', while the main sub-category is possibly struck. Due to the differences in documentation, geographical distribution, and music genres, the designation, construction, and playing methods of these instruments also differ at the microscopic level. For example, in playing, it can be placed horizontally or vertically on the arm or on the floor supported by a stand. When *Ya Zheng* is placed on the left arm, the right hand holds a bow or a stick-shaped object of different materials to strike or bow the strings, but the left hand does not press the strings to get the tone, so it presents the characteristic of one string representing one tone; when it is placed on the floor, the player sits on the floor behind the instrument and plays the bow on the right side of the yard, and the left hand changes the pitch and vibrato by pressing the strings on the other side of the face cover. But in either form, the tone is generally rough and husky, with a strong tension and expressiveness. Recently, bowed zithers have been more often played with horsetail bows instead of wooden sticks or plant stems to make their sound smoother.

Throughout the research on this kind of musical instrument in some Chinese academic circles, certain achievements have been made since the 1980s, which can be roughly divided into three stages: from the 1980s to the 1990s, the research focus was on the historical origin of bowed instruments and the ancestors of bowed instruments, for example, by Zhou Wuyan [周武彦]<sup>2</sup>. Since the beginning of the 21st century, due to the attention paid to the study of folk

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<sup>2</sup> Zhou Wuyan [周武彦]. 1992. Zhongguo Xianyueqi Yuanliushutan [The Origin of String Instruments in China]. Journal of Nanjing Arts College (Music and Performance Edition), 3:19-23.

music, the conclusion that folk music is dying out based on the number of written documents has been gradually replaced by the discovery of similar musical instruments in various regions, fieldwork, and case studies of musical instruments. In the last five years, although comparative studies of musical instruments have emerged, they still focus on form comparisons and continue to place these instruments in the framework of the history of bowed instruments.

Unlike studies that focus on the historical approach to the origin of the bowed instruments, this paper is based on synchronic fieldwork, addressing the existing circumstances of the bowed instruments in mainland China as well as in East Asia as a whole and focusing on similar instruments named *Ya Zheng*, while reviewing the history of *Ya Zheng* in Chinese historical sources. And on the other hand, starting from the concrete application of this kind of musical instrument in different kinds of music, the authors identify the different materials, forms, tune-up, playing techniques, performance contexts, and musical styles of this instrument and further reveal the instrumental ecology behind such differences, considering the contemporary fate of bowed zithers in China and East Asia.

## THE YA ZHENG: A BOWED ZITHER INSTRUMENT IN HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

As mentioned above, *Ya Zheng* flourished in the time period of the Tang Dynasty (618–907). The first Chinese account of it appears in the *Jiu Tang Shu*: In Tang, there was a *Ya Zheng*, which was played by moistening its ends with bamboo pieces, hence its name. In the Tang Dynasty, *Ya Zheng* was played with lubricated bamboo pieces. In Chinese, the word *Ya* means the action of playing the instrument, which is why the instrument was named *Ya Zheng*.

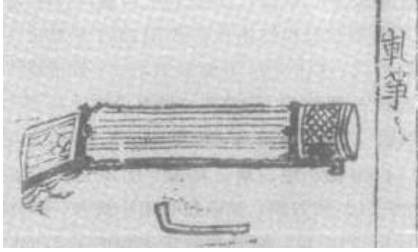
An early illustration of *Ya Zheng* appears in Chen Yang's *Yue Shu* during the Northern Song Dynasty time period, which shows a long zither with a slightly raised soundboard, about seven strings and yards, and an L-shaped musical bow (Figure 1).

During the Southern Song Dynasty, *Ya Zheng* had another exclusive name, *Zhen* [箏]. Zeng Sanyi [曾三异] (1146–1236) wrote in his book *Tonghualu* [同话录]: “There is a small instrument with seven strings called *Ya Zheng*, but now it is called *Zhen*. The *Zhen Zheng* is called two things by one.”<sup>3</sup> *Wulin*

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<sup>3</sup> Zeng Sanyi [曾三异] n.d. *Tonghualu*. [Synopsis]. Ms. without page numbers.

*Jiushi* [武林旧事] (*The old story of Wulin*)<sup>4</sup> and the *Ducheng Jishi* [都城纪事] (*Chronicle of the Metropolis*), both anonymous writings in many volumes, which were written in the same period, also documented the instrument, including the players and the explicit form of performance, such as the formation of a *Xiyue Hezou* [细乐合奏] (ensemble of traditional string, woodwind, and bamboo instrument music) with the *Jiqin* [稽琴], *Xiaoguan* [箫管], *Sheng* [笙], and *Fangxiang* [方响].



**Figure 1 (left): Illustration from the *Yueshu* of Chen Yang.<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 (right): The mural tomb of Xu Gui in the sixth year of Zhenglong in the Jin Dynasty.<sup>6</sup> Printed with permission.**

From the mural tomb of Xu Gui [徐龟] in the sixth year of Zhenglong in the Jin Dynasty (1161) excavated in the 1990s, it can be seen that the *Ya Zheng* was placed on a small table, and the female musician was playing with a long and thin stick in her right hand while pressing the strings with her left hand (Figure 2).

In the historical scenes of the Ming Dynasty time period, the uses, forms, and playing forms of the *Ya Zheng* were gradually enriched, covering the size, string system, and holding and playing style. The authors have slightly sorted out the documentary records and excavated artifacts of this period, which can be summarized as follows.

## COURT AND OFFICIAL MUSIC

*Zhen* used in court and official occasions is mainly small and with seven strings. For example, the small instrument in the fresco “Hougong Yanyuetu” [后宫燕乐图] (the court banquet music in the harem; north wall) reflects the

<sup>4</sup> Sun Ruqi [孙如琦]. 1992. *Wulin jiushi* 武林旧事. *Zhongguo da baike quanshu* 中国大百科全书, *Zhongguo lishi* 中国历史 Beijing/Shanghai: *Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe*, Vol. 3: 1257.

<sup>5</sup> Chen Yang [陈旸]. 1101. *乐书 - Yue Shu*. [Treatise on Music]. Ms. without page numbers.

<sup>6</sup> Xiang Yang [项阳] and Tao Zhenggang [陶正刚]. 2000. *A Collection of Chinese Musical Relics. Shanxi Volume*. Hongkong: Elephant Press, 247, Figure 2.4-2.7.



scene of the emperor's lubu Guchui [卤簿鼓吹] (the imperial guard of honor drumming and blowing music) and the court banquet music in the harem, and *Zhen* in the picture is played by hand with the head down.



**Figure 3: Hougong Yanyuetu, a picture of Shengmu Temple of the Houtu in Tian Village, Fenyang, Shanxi.<sup>7</sup> Printed with permission.**

In the literature, we can also see that *Zhen* was widely used in the court's lubu Yizhangdui. For example, the *Minghuidian* [明会典] (Code of Great Ming Dynasty), Vol. 115, which was updated in the third year of the Yongle era (1405), has “eight sets of *Zhen*” among the musical instruments in the entries, and “two sets of *Zhen*” are recorded in the entry of the Imperial Prince's guard of honor of *Minghuidian*, Vol. 116.<sup>8</sup>

## FOLK ZOUHUI [走会] PROCESSION

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, various kinds of folk Baixi art such as “zouhui” of acrobatics were widely popular. The Ming dynasty “Xianzong Yuanxiao Xingle Tujuan” [宪宗元宵行乐图卷] (Ming Emperor Xianzong's Celebration of Lantern Festival) describes the performance scene of the inner court of the capital in the 21st year of Chenghua (1485), which imitates the folk Lantern Festival cabaret and acrobatics. In front of Zhong Kui [钟馗]'s performing team is a small instrumental ensemble, and the way of playing *Zhen* can be clearly seen on the way, and it is at the forefront of the marching team, followed by Clappers, Pipa, Sheng, and Guan (Figure 4).

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<sup>7</sup> Xiang Yang [项阳] and Tao Zhenggang [陶正刚]. 2000. *A Collection of Chinese Musical Relics. Shanxi Volume*. Hongkong: Elephant Press, 264, Figure 2.4-18i.

<sup>8</sup> *Minghuidian* [明会典]. N.d. [Code of Great Ming Dynasty]. Many volumes. Here used 115-116.



Figure 4: Xianzong Yuanxiao Xingle Tujian (Ming Emperor Xianzong’s Celebration of Lantern Festival during the Ming Dynasty time period).<sup>9</sup> Printed with permission.

## YA ZHENG PLAYING IN A PRIVATE ENSEMBLE

The tradition of playing *Ya Zheng* or performing small ensembles with *Ya Zheng* at banquets has been prevalent since the Tang dynasty. Many poets have described the performance of *Ya Zheng*. For example, Liu Yuxi [刘禹锡], a poet of the Middle Tang dynasty, wrote a poem directly after the scene of listening to *Ya Zheng* playing, “Listen to *Ya Zheng* playing”; the audience listens to *Ya Zheng* playing without words, and the cicadas are clear on the autumn mountain and the green trees. It should only have been sent to a pure girl who plays the *Zhen* to write the sound of the phoenix among the clouds.

From the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) onward, *Ya Zheng* also appeared in the private ensemble in Jiangnan. When *Sanyue* [散乐] was played in the “banquets and small gatherings” of the duke and marquis, and the rich families, the *Zheng*, *Zhen*, *Pipa*, *Sanxian*, and *Clapboard* were used to play the music. In the upper left corner of the embroidered portrait of *Pipaji* [琵琶记] (Records of the *Pipa*) in *Wanhuxuan* engraved book in the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty, a maid of honor leans against her left shoulder while holding a *Ya Zheng* (Figure 5).

<sup>9</sup> Yuan Quanyou [袁荃猷], 1999. *A Collection of Chinese Musical Relics - Beijing Volume*. Hongkong: Elephant Press, 244, Fig. 2.6-14a.



**Figure 5: Embroidered portrait of “Pipaji”, quoted from Gao Ming’s “Pipaji”, Wanhuxuan engraved book by Wang Guanghua in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Ming Dynasty.**

**Figure 6: Yu Zhiding’s “The picture of female musician” in the Qing Dynasty.<sup>10</sup> Printed with permission.**

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), the Ming dynasty style was continued. Cultivating the most excellent musicians has become a fashion. “The picture of female musician” (1703) painted by Yu Zhiding, a famous painter of the Qing dynasty, also shows clearly the pattern of *Ya Zheng*.

Through the above sketch (Figure 6), we can see that the important ceremonial occasions in which *Ya Zheng* was once performed include: court ceremony procession, folk Zouhui (traditional folk music performances), and private ensemble; the overall ecology of *Ya Zheng* performance changed drastically as the historical process continued to develop. *Ya Zheng* left behind in the music genres and local Xiqu of various places gradually lost their survival ground, and the records of this instrument also disappeared until the Early Republic of China.

It was not until the 1950s that the cultural departments at all levels in China started to excavate and organize folk arts under the policy of rescuing traditional culture. Among them, *Ya Zheng* and its similar bowed instruments were discovered. In addition to the “*Ajaeng*” of the Korean people, which shows an obvious inheritance in form and pronunciation with *Ya Zheng* in the literature, the discovery also includes the bowed instrument *Zhentouqin* used in the accompanying instrument of Wen Shiyin in Hanjiang Town, Putian City, Fujian Province, in 1953, and in 1957, in the first music performance in Qingzhou City, Shandong Province, the accompanying instrument “*Cuo qin*” was found for the Bangzixi [梆子戏] and folk ditties; in 1988, the accompanying instrument *Ya qin* was found in Yuanmen Village, Yangzhuang

<sup>10</sup> Zhao Feng [赵夙]. 1991. *Chinese Musical Instruments*. Beijing: Modern Press, 76.

Township, Maigang City, Henan Province, and so on. Although these instruments were found in different regions and their forms differed, they all had one common feature: they could be bowed and belonged to the category of scraping-playing instruments, and their forms and playing methods had a high degree of similarity with those of *Ya Zheng* (or *Zhen*) recorded in the literature. Before we start our discussion on the existing bowed and struck zither instruments, it is necessary to review the research in this area in the framework of Chinese musicology.

## FORMER RESEARCH AND STUDIES

In mainland China, the bowed and struck zither instruments have a long history and are widely distributed, but little is known about them. In addition, the term “*Ya Zheng*” is often used as a general term for the study of these instruments. The most impressive thing about *Ya Zheng* is its unique playing style (striking or scraping a string with a bamboo piece) and its similar shape to Chinese *Zheng*. Therefore, the academic circles often start from these two aspects in the investigation and research of *Ya Zheng*.



**Figure 7: The monster striking “Zhu” on the coffin of Tomb No.1 of Mawangdui in Western Han dynasty.<sup>11</sup> Printed with permission.**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the research on *Ya Zheng* was mainly focused on the historical origin of the bowed instrument and the ancestor of the bowed instrument. A representative view is that the scholar Xiang Yang put forward the assertion that

“*Ya Zheng* belong to the early development stage of Chinese bowed instruments”. *Ya Zheng* and *Zhu*, which was a musical instrument that

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<sup>11</sup> Zao Zhixi [高至喜] and Xiong Chuanxin [熊传薪]. 2006. *A Collection of Chinese Musical Relics. Hunan Volume*. Hongkong: Elephant Press, 283, Fig. 2.2-2.4j.