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## SHORT INTRODUCTION TO NO. 8 OF AEMR

This volume comprises a number of highly innovative and diverse articles and reviews. Every reader may find an interesting piece to follow and might be inspired by novelties and confirmations from classical ethnography to organology and biographic studies. One outstanding new topic is the study on music practices among Chinese people living outside of mainland China. The inclusion of all activities along migration routes in history may play a further important role in viewing the cultural connections between and within Europe and Asia.

The review section includes all kinds of possible subjects: concert, conferences, book, and CD. It is remarkable how these reviews reflect on the changes in perception through media and recent publications that took place in the last decade. For further information you can consult the last pages of this issue with the call for submissions.

On behalf of the Editors and the Editorial Board,  
Gisa Jähnichen

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# HUDHUD: A LIVING ORAL TRADITION OF THE IFUGAO

Bienvenido B. Constantino, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses mainly on the oral tradition of Ifugao called Hudhud, its performances, cultural values, and means of pedagogical transmission. It is important to note that this oral tradition is sustaining through the school of living tradition in the place of its origin. Through this study, people will be aware of this unique oral tradition of Ifugao, which is situated in the northern Philippine highlands. This ethnographic study captures the holistic purpose of the study of Hudhud; and thus, immersion, interview, archiving, and observation of the subject were made. Performances of the Hudhud are still popular during the community gathering called *Gotad ad Ifugao*, death rituals, weddings, and other important gatherings—big or small—in the entire province of Ifugao.

## KEYWORDS

Hudhud, Munhaw-e, Oral traditions, Munhudhud, Ifugao

## INTRODUCTION

The reflection of people can be seen in their culture and arts. Their stories can be seen and heard through visual arts and music—some of them are in oral traditions. In the different parts of the Philippines, the singing and chanting of various oral traditions can still be heard, and actually thriving despite its riddance during the Spanish occupation. To give way to Catholicism, the church eradicates the sounds and sights of gongs and traditional oral traditions practiced by the indigenous people throughout the country. Navarro (2007) has immensely discussed how the Spaniards changed the religious belief of the Filipinos at expense of the face of the Philippine music in his book *Kolonyal na Patakaran at ang Nagbabagong Kamalayang Filipino*. He asserted:

“Bilang pormal na pagsasanay sa pag-awit, binuksan ang isang paaralang ng musika para sa mga batang lalaki. Ito ang Colegio de Niños Tiples. Itinayo ito noong 1742 sa Manila Cathedral sa pangunguna ni Reverendo (14) Rodriguez, and arsobispo ng Kapuluan ng panahong iyon. Nakatuon ang kurikulum ng paaralang ito sa pagsasanay sa boses (bokalisasyon), solfeggio, piano, organ, chanting, paglikha ng musika, at pagtugtog ng instrumentong may kwerdas. Kasama rin dito ang akademikong pag-aaral sa ilalim ng isang guro” (Navarro, 2007: 17). [As a formal singing practice, a music school was opened for young boys. It is called Colegio de Niños Tiples. It was built in 1742 in Manila Cathedral under the leadership of Reverend Rodriguez, the archbishop of the archipelago at that time. The curriculum of this school focuses on vocal training

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(vocalization), solfeggio, piano, organ, chanting, music creation, and playing string instruments. It also includes academic study under a teacher.]

...“pagdating ng Kastila ay pilit na pinalitan ito (daloy at praktika ng musikang katutubo) at nagpakilala ng bago ayon sa praktika at kamalayang kanluranin” (Navarro, 2007: 22). [arrival of the Spaniards forced to replace it (the flow and practice of indigenous music) and introduced something new according to Western practice and consciousness.]

This proof was also agreed by Arwin Tan (2019) in his article ‘Patronage and Capitalism in the Musical Associations of Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Manila’. Tan mentioned that the Spanish friars opened an informal school that offers thorough studies in music. He mentioned that:

“The only formal institution whose sole focus was music was the Colegio de Niños Tiples de la Santa Iglesia Catedral which centred its training on the musical needs of the church. In the absence of a formal institution, these associations catered informally to the demand for musical learning through the orchestras and bands they maintained” (Arwin Tan, 2019: 123).

These statements are the proofs of the musical suppression of the colonizers to assert their authority among the Filipinos. But as mentioned earlier, many of the oral traditions in the country, including music, have thrived due to the resilience of the people and the love for their own identity. Despite the Western music taught in both private and public schools, authentic Philippine music has remained progressive and has started to emerge among many studies and researches both by the locals and foreigners resulting in the support of the government (though is obviously not enough) for the preservation of this cultural diversity and wealth. Many of these were mentioned in the study by Ramon Santos, a national artist who championed research on decolonized approach in transmitting authentic Philippine traditions. He mentioned in his study entitled ‘Mga Katinigan sa mga Epiko sa Filipinas’ some of the oral traditions in the form of epics (both sung or cited as a poem):

“Ang Ullalim, halimbawa, ay isang uri ng himig na ginagamit ng mga makatà sa pagkanta ng mga berso at mga mahalagang panayam sa mga malalaking okasyon at mga pagpupulong ng mga nakatatandâ sa mga kasunduang pangkapayapaan at mga pagdiriwang” [The Ullalim, for example, is a kind of melody used by poets in singing the verses and important dialogues in large occasions and gatherings of elders at peace treaties and celebrations.]

... “Gayundin ang Ulahingan ng mga Manobo, na ang salitang **ulahing** ay isang uri ng estilo ng wika at musika. Ang unang ulahing ay tinatayang inawit ni Bayabayan, ang anak ng bayaning si Agyu. Ang ulahing ay ang tawag sa pagsalaysay sa prosa o tuluyan ng **kepuunpuun** o ang sinaunang pagsibol ng tao sa mundo”. [... and also, the ‘ulahingan’ of the Manobo, the word ‘ulahing’ is a kind of language and music style. The first ‘ulahing’ was said to be sang by Bayabayan, the son of the hero named Agyu. Ulahing is a term used in narrating prose of Kepuunpuun or the ancient human emergence in the world. Emphasis by the author.]

...“Ang Darangën ay epiko ng mga Mëranaw na higit na malawak ang gamit sa larangan ng tunog, gampanin, at likhaan. Unang-una, ito ay inaawit sa ibá’t ibáng okasyon, labás sa pagganap dito bilang pangunahing epiko ng bayan” (Santos, no date, unpublished manuscript.) [The Darangën is a Mëranaw epic that is widely used in the field of sound, performance, and creation. First of all, it is sung on different occasions, other than being the town’s main epic in the oral tradition.]

... “Ang Sugidanon naman ay ang tradisyong epiko ng Panay na nagmulâ sa katagang **sugid** na ang ibig sabihin ay magsiwalat o magsalaysay o narrate. Ang tawag sa mga kumakanta



ng epiko sa isla ng Panay ay **manugsugidanon**". (Santos, no date, unpublished manuscript.) [The Sugidanon, on the other hand, is a traditional epic of Panay that comes from the word 'sugid' which means to reveal or narrate. The epic singers on the island of Panay are called 'manugsugidanon'.]

"Sa mga Sama, ang epiko ay tinatawag na Kata-kata, mga mahabang kuwento tungkol sa moralidad na malimit isinasagawa sa mga lamay sa sementeryo o sa mga pagpapagaling ng maysakit (Santos, no date, unpublished manuscript)." [Among the Sama, the epic is called Kata-kata, long stories about morality that are often performed in wakes at cemeteries or at the healings of the sick.]

These studies prove the existence and continued preservation of the above-mentioned oral traditions, whether sung or cited as a poem. In this study, I particularly focus on the oral tradition of Ifugao called Hudhud, originally from the province of Ifugao in the Cordillera highlands.

Ifugao province is composed of 11 municipalities: Banaue, Hingyon, Hungduan, Kiangan, Tinoc, Asipulo, Lamut, Mayoyao, Aguinaldo, Alfonso Lista, and Lagawe, which is also the capital of the province. Ifugao is derived from the word 'Ipugo', literally means 'from the mountain', or 'mountain people', i.e., people dwelling in the highland of the Cordillera region, where in the past—even to this day—the main source of living is farming, similar to other indigenous people in the neighboring provinces. One of the most important oral traditions practiced to this date in this province and among its people is the singing (chanting) of Hudhud, which is also one of the oldest in the Philippines. Although there have been many studies about this, my experience and understanding in witnessing a Hudhud performance and being a resident of the Cordillera region are not the same from reading it in books.

It took me half a day to travel to the province of Ifugao and at certain times to schedule interviews with locals and key informants, one of them being the late Manuel Dulawan. I was also able to discuss matters with the Hudhud master in Lagawe Central School, teaching and preparing students for the performance of this popular chant. A handful of researchers have explored the province of Ifugao and its oral tradition and written many researches about it. I wish to contribute a unique paper through my own observations about Hudhud.

## **HUDHUD PERFORMANCES AND CULTURAL VALUES**

Hudhud is the longest existing oral tradition of Ifugao. Hudhud, indeed, is one of the best reflections of Ifugao culture. The oldest Hudhud pieces were said to be traced in Kiangan and, therefore, presumed to have originated in Kiangan, Ifugao (Lambrecht, 1967). Hudhud is a long composition performed either for entertainment or for wakes and vigils, weeding, and during good harvest. Hudhud are tales produced centuries ago, when Ifugaos established themselves in their present habitat. There was also a myth mentioned in the article of Dulawan (2000) regarding how exactly Hudhud started and a proof of its inception.

The UNESCO proclaimed Hudhud as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001. It was confirmed that Hudhud consists of narrative chants traditionally performed by the Ifugao community, which is well-known for its rice terraces extending over the highlands of the northern island of the Philippine archipelago. It is practised during the rice sowing season, at harvest time, and at funeral wakes and rituals. Thought to have originated before the seventh century, the Hudhud comprises more than 200 chants, each divided into 40 episodes. A complete recitation may last several days (Verora, 2001).

The number of stanzas differs in the composition. Some would have more than 400 stanzas, whereas others more than 300. In fact, Ifugaos trace them back to a long, long line of mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers (Lambrecht, 1957). A single Hudhud can contain different values that a child can learn. Young people grow in appreciation of values through music (Siruno, 1980). The Hudhud is said to be a nonritual chant and is also sung for entertainment. *Hudhud* is a kind of entertainment because when there is an occasion or gathering of people especially during wakes, people listen to the chanting to keep them awake and to stimulate them to reflect on Ifugao culture and history. The dominant theme of the Hudhud is about Ifugao epic heroes, love, marriage, and wealth of the *Kadangyans* (wealthy families).

According to Lambrecht (1957), these (Hudhud) tales, treasures of significant linguistic peculiarities, are outstanding pieces of primitive literature, memorials of an ancient culture that has maintained itself for ages. *Hudhud* contains different values but the best value that the child can learn from it is the love of his own culture and pride of his own race.

Dulawan (2000) in her article entitled ‘Singing Hudhud in Ifugao’ mentioned that several cultural values reflected in Hudhud pieces are such as wealth and beauty, family solidarity, respect for parents and elders, the prominence given to women, bravery, and social prestige. Dulawan attested in her writings about family solidarity that social organization is built on kinship. The ancestors’ norms of conduct became also the norms of the people’s conduct ... betrothal, marriage, prestige feasts, and many rituals linked to the ancient Ifugao cosmogony and religion. It is the knowledge of the ancestors of the Ifugao and what they did, which are the fundamentals of the custom laws—the unwritten laws of the Ifugao. Her observations are listed as follows: **People married into their own class**; monogamy is strictly observed. Kinsmen gathered together during tribal wars. Children are lovingly cared for. The children’s duty is to avenge any offense made against the family by an outsider. **Respect for parents and elders.** Parents were always addressed properly—*Amanhi Iken an hi* [My father, old man]; *Inan hi* [My mother]; *Aammod an bulalakki* [our elders, the handsome and braves elders of]. **Prominence given to women.** The hero’s mother, although a secondary character in the story, is always given prominence as she is the first to be consulted for all the prestigious feasts, especially in the arrangement of the marriage feast for her children. Hence, her home is the starting and ending place of all the stories. **Bravery.** The hero is praised for his skill as a warrior. He has to lead his people in tribal war and headhunting expeditions. Spear battles are intense moments that show his skill in handling the deadly spear. **Social prestige.** As one can observe, all the above values emphasize social prestige which is the ultimate cultural value.

The textual content has different meanings that indirectly describe their love of culture. Hudhud as an Ifugao oral folk literature defines clearly the authenticity of Ifugaos. It portrays the life of the early Ifugaos and their cultural values. Hudhud is a nonritual chant because it is not performed as a part of a specific ritual...of course, they can chant it during certain occasions, but they are not necessarily a must (Dulawan, 2000).

This is also attested by one of the officers of the Ifugao Cultural Heritage who said during an interview that Hudhud is an Ifugao epic. We have promoted Hudhud through the children of Ifugao in a form of competition especially during ‘Gotad’ [Gotad Ad Ifugao.]. Hudhud is sung under three circumstances: in the village house yard of a deceased person of honor and wealth, during funeral wakes; in the rice fields when a group of women clean the fields, during weeding time; and during the harvest season (Lambrecht, 1957).

*Alliguyun* and *Bugan* are the main characters in this song. The Hudhud is performed by women, but in some localities, men may occasionally join in the chant; according to Lambrecht (1957), men cannot sing Hudhud and most of them do not understand them well. Nevertheless, men have been mentioned to participate in this tradition.

Hudhud is used in certain important occasions. According to Dulawan (2000), the Ifugao epics, or Hudhud, are long sung narratives of the lives, exploits, and adventures of heroes who could defy

time and space. These narratives are performed in the fields during harvest time (*Hudhud di ani*) and at home during the wake for an elderly person's funeral (*Hudhud di nate*).

The many events narrated by their soloists and commented on by the whole group of choristers really happened in the distant past. None among them admits that because they cannot understand how their forbearers could ever have invented them. In the performance of Hudhud, the *munhaw-e* (lead singers) memorized the texts but it does not seem necessary for the choristers. The members of the group need not memorize them. They can reply in the form of singing, but it is important for them to know the theme and the cues so they would know what to sing. During the author's observation of the rehearsals, the children sat on a small stool and recited the lines of Hudhud in a very relaxed manner. The lead chanter is a girl and as she chanted the verses, other members would reply. In an interview, the master said that the Hudhud is composed of the soloist called *munhaw-e* and the choristers made of 10–12 people called *munhudhud*. For every other verse that the soloist would recite, the choristers would respond.

The *munhaw-e* tells them the title, and it is understood that the choristers knew exactly what to reply during the singing. When asked whether they need to memorize the entire Hudhud episode, the master answered that this is not necessary. Whatever you can memorize throughout your life, that's what we sang. There were also many other Hudhud singers in different parts of Ifugao who also recite different episodes from us and that make us a whole. We only do parts of the huge whole of Hudhud. We chose the right one for the occasion. Most are informal gatherings or events and usually are not written in the program. The people watch us and I think they are proud and entertained because it is part of our tradition. Now I teach this to our children because I believed it is time for them to take over. *Habang bata pa sila, alam na nila*. [While they were young, they already knew.] Dulawan (2000) also attested to the master when she stated that singers are ordinarily female, although some male singers are known. There is a leading soloist, *munhaw'e*, and a chorus of 10–12 women, *munhudhud*. An expert singer of tales usually volunteers to be the soloist. The choristers need not know the text of the Hudhud. The leading singer simply announces the title, and the choristers would know the cue word when they all join in the chanting until the end of the sentences, as these are all stereotyped phrases of the names of characters, names of villages, topography, and kinship relationships. Improvisations can also happen in the actual and informal singing of the Hudhud. According to Dulawan, the choristers, in fact, add many reduplications and alliterations at their pleasure, according to their wit and aptitude to improvise. These can be considered ornamentations, mere embellishments to amplify the unfolding of the story, and enhance its beauty in sound.

However, improvisation in singing Hudhud is not as broad or detailed as that of the secular Arab music and the Gamelan and Kreasi Belaganjur (Racy 1998 & Bakan 1998) where the beauty of the music relies on improvisations. Hudhud is somehow improvised through the use of grace notes but still observes the rhythmic pattern; otherwise, if too much improvisation will be done, the rest of the group will become offbeat. In some performances, it happens. Perhaps, this is the reason why Hudhud competitions are held in the province. Improvisation is even rehearsed and, therefore, is no longer considered as improvisation. There is also a common melody for all Hudhud—if not the same—all over the place. Subsequently, the singers are usually not pitch-perfect, the range therefore might differ, though most are moderately high and fits in the range of the singers.

It is, but amazing, to ponder how these chanters have memorized the long lines through time and coordinated with the choristers. To this day, however, many of the pieces have been rehearsed and have minimized improvisations during competitions.

It is very significant to note that those original pieces are all from the sharp memory of the lead singer as well as the choristers. It is also very important to consider that it takes to be an Ifugao to recite the Hudhud.

## MEANS OF TRANSMISSION OF HUDHUD

Transmission is one way of conserving and promoting the oral traditions of the Philippines. One cannot rely on the support of the government alone but on the action taken by the community, particularly those that are practicing it. Through the collaborative effort of the government and the community, actions were taken to particularly transmit this unique oral tradition of the Ifugaos. NCCA (NCCA, no date) is one government agency that helps preserve traditional practices all over the country by establishing informal schools called the school of living traditions (SLT). The schools are set up in remote areas where traditional practices are still being observed. Grants are being given to sustain the traditional practices of the specific place. They tap the help of the elderly or master of the traditional practice to lead and teach. According to the agency (NCCA), a school of living traditions (SLT) is the one where a living master/culture bearer or culture specialist teaches skills and techniques of doing a traditional art or craft. The mode of teaching is usually nonformal, oral, and with practical demonstrations. The site may be the house of the living master, a community social hall, or a center constructed for this purpose.

The one who teaches are those considered masters or elderlies who carry with them the virtues of the culture. During this study, I conducted the interview in an SLT located in Kiangan, which is led by its master of Ifugao culture, Manuel Dulawan. They offered to teach many of the Ifugao traditional practices such as weaving, making traditional musical instruments, dancing, cooking traditional foods, and the chanting of Hudhud and Alim<sup>2</sup>. According to NCCA (NCCA, no date), it is the **culturebearer** or **master** or **specialist**. This term refers to an individual who is recognized to possess the skills and techniques in doing a particular traditional art or craft. He shall be responsible for teaching his craft to a group of learners and shall ensure that his/her students learn the craft.

This is true to what M. Dulawan said during the interview in the SLT, Kiangan:

“I taught the children (Ifugao) what I think is necessary for them to learn as part of their identity as Ifugao, regardless of what particular Ifugao tribe they belong (to). We have the same practices anyway. We have here, cooking of traditional food, making of our musical instruments, chanting of Hudhud, and sometimes I invite some teacher also to teach young girls and women how to weave” (Dulawan, 2019).

The students or clients of the school are usually the same children or adults belonging to the ethnolinguistic community. Thanks to the UNESCO’s call on the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage that pushed the NCCA (NCCA, no date) to fund and support the advocacy to sustain the living traditions of the indigenous people of the Philippines which includes the listing of Hudhud as one of the intangible heritage. There it is written that it (SLT) is limited to the young people from the same ethnolinguistic community. The establishment of SLTs is in response to UNESCO’s call for the preservation of cultural heritage by preserving it in a living form, ensuring its transmission to the next generations (the other approach is the recording in a tangible format and conserving it in archives). While there are various facets of cultural heritage that can be transmitted to the next generations, this program would like to specifically focus on the transmission of indigenous skills and techniques to the young. It aims to encourage culture specialists/masters to continue with their own work, develop and expand the frontiers of that work, and train younger people to take their place in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Alim = Aleem. One of the names of God in Islam which means the ‘All-knowing one’.

The master's informal teaching of Hudhud also includes teaching the children to attend Ifugao. I personally observe and interviewed one in Lagawe Central School where the teacher is considered a master chanter of Hudhud. It took her years to become one. During the interview, she narrates with me her own story and how she embraced the culture of chanting Hudhud. Starting as a young girl and being part of the choristers in a group, she took time to memorize some of the Hudhud episodes until she became the leading chanter. She began leading when she was around 40. From simply socialization or wedding, she leads her usual group of friends, relatives, and some members of the community to perform.

At this time of the interview, she teaches children to recite Hudhud after their class in the afternoon in preparation for the fast-approaching competition in 'Gotad ad Ifugao' an annual festival of the gathering of all municipalities in the province, showcasing unity through the display of products, talent, concerts, and competition in Hudhud.

The Blackfoot of Montana (Bruno Nettl, 1984) has no class of professional musicians, no formalized music, and no written or otherwise articulated music theory. The Ifugao has the same experience on how to acquire the skill of singing the Hudhud. One of the important things to understand about the Blackfoot and Hudhud musical culture is the conception of creating music as closely akin to learning. A Hudhud master will take years and maturity to be selected by the community to become a leader or master of a certain traditional cultural practice (otherwise, she volunteers to be a leader—nevertheless societal respect, as to how I observe the instance, is necessary).

From the time Hudhud was written by Francis Lambrecht to this day, this ageless Ifugao epic continues to amaze me and the spectators all over the world, particularly the researchers and writers. In many ways, NCCA, UNESCO, and the Ifugao—both municipal and provincial governments have—hand-in-hand—worked together to preserve, promote, and continue the practice alive among the Ifugaos in the form of performances during important occasions and events in the province and the putting up of SLT where the community (Ifugao) has the chance to decide to continue this intangible heritage of the province and the country. It is important to participate in the preservation of this epic and among other Philippine intangible oral traditions that have been considered treasures that define the identity of every Filipino Indigenous group and the vast culture of the Philippines through research, observations, and presentation of studies in conferences.

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# PLAYING AND FIGHTING AS AN ELECTRIC VIOLINIST

Kirsten Seidlitz<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The violin is an instrument used in various musical genres. Besides preserving, elaborating, and valuating the classical form of the instrument as well as the classical violin repertory, an electronic version of the instrument has entered the music business many decades ago. It allows the musician to produce sounds ranging from classical violin sounds to electric guitar or even electric bass sounds. Nora Kudrjawizki ('Angelstrings', 'One Violin Orchestra') is an electric violinist living in Berlin and using the instrument for as many different genres and occasions as possible: playing Nirvana songs or fighting with the violin bow as an improvised sword to 'Pirates of the Caribbean' music as part of her performance. Her work will be presented as a case study and will be set into a bigger framework with further electric violinist statements generated from the literature. I focus on the differences in the instrumentalist–instrument relation when playing electric or acoustic. My aim is to prove that the electric violin is mostly used to play public and impress others and that there are also musically interesting aspects and individual experiences that should be valued.

## KEYWORDS

Electric violin, Music business, Performance studies, Expressive demands, Instrumentalist–instrument relation

## INTRODUCTION

In the 16th century, a string instrument known as an early version of today's violin was first mentioned in France and Italy (Melkus, 1979: 41-42). Until now, the acoustic violin is a pivotal instrument in orchestras as well as smaller ensembles like quartets and a solo instrument.

The electric violin usually is not seen as an original instrument, and its construction differs a lot from the acoustic violin. Many electric violins don't have a resonating corpus, and one may argue that the instrument therefore doesn't even fit the organological definition of 'violin' (as part of the lute family of instruments) but becomes a zither (von Hornbostel and Sachs, 1914)<sup>2</sup>.

Still, the electric violin culturally is perceived as a violin as it is played by the same people: violinists. As an acoustic violinist myself, having played with many different violinists, I never heard or read about an electric violinist who had not been trained in classical, lute-kind of violin techniques first. So, the electric violin is not an instrument chosen by teachers or parents to introduce young children to musical practice. Obviously, only people who are already instrumentalists decide to play the electric violin. And even for people already trained on the acoustic instrument, there are not many (institutionalized) opportunities to get in touch with the electric violin or to play in an ensemble (whereas there are various opportunities to join amateur orchestras or ensembles when playing the so-called acoustic violin). In general, the electric violin seems to be explored mostly by professional violinists interested in challenging musical

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<sup>2</sup> Classification of musical instruments according to von Hornbostel and Sachs: <https://www.musikwissenschaft.uni-wuerzburg.de/musikinstrumente/organologie/systematiken/hornbostelsachs/>, last visited: 16 May, 2021.

experiments, for example, Victoria Johnson's New Music experiments,<sup>3</sup> and/or by people interested in a cross-genre-career in the show business such as the 1970s 'Mahavishnu Orchestra'<sup>4</sup>.

I am curious to know whether electric violinists such as Nora Kudrjawizki, a violinist from Berlin, regard both kinds of violins as the same instrument or not and if they describe their own relation to the electric instrument differently from their relation to the acoustic instrument learnt since childhood. Do they play the electric violin just to be heard in bigger halls or is there anybody playing the electric violin for himself or herself as an intimate pleasure that needs no listeners? I was looking for interesting statements and held one longer interview with Nora Kudrjawizki that I am going to present as a case study in this context.

I would like to start by quoting Trueman who described the experience of learning to play the electric violin in his PhD thesis as follows:

“The first thing a violinist notices when playing electric is that the primary sound source is no longer directly under the ear. This sense of *detachment* can be at once both empowering and distressing. Freed from the limits of the box that fits on our shoulder and projects squarely into our ear, we can turn the volume up and point the amplifier at our electric guitarist friend, deafening him with gruesome *ponticello*. On the other hand, there is a striking loss of intimacy, even with a small amplifier placed nearby. What was once a voice whispering in our ear becomes a remote presence, no longer seeming part of our body” (Trueman, 1999: 5–6).

Trueman described the advantage of impressing the other instrumentalist when playing electric. But he also noted a loss of intimacy which seems to confirm my thought that an electric violin is impressive to the outside, whereas it is more satisfying to play acoustic for the violinist himself or herself. He described the amplified music as ‘no longer seeming part of our body’, so less personal. But he also mentioned feeling ‘freed from the limits of the box that fits on our shoulder’. I would like to put a focus on the idea of overcoming these limits.

The acoustic violin works via vibration: the wooden violin bridge passes the string's vibration to the wooden corpus. This corpus is mostly hollow, but there are also a wooden bass bar and a wooden sound post inside the corpus stimulated by the vibration (Melkus, 1979: 8). Most electric violins – but not all – are wooden too, but as there is no hollow, resonating corpus the strings' vibration can't be transmitted to a common medium. So, each string is vibrating independently, which makes the instrument getting definitely a zither-like attitude.

For me, playing – and most of all – tuning my acoustic violin sitting in the middle of a noisy orchestra, is hard to imagine without feeling the right vibration transmitted by the wooden corpus to my chin, to my jaw. When tuning, I often don't listen to my strings, but I feel if the vibration of two strings played at once is right or not.

This is not possible with an electric violin, but of course, it is not necessary too, as electric violinists don't sit in the middle of an orchestra where everybody is tuning the instrument at once.

When playing the electric violin, the instrumentalist hears the sound being reflected back to himself or herself depending on the amplifier or a whole technical system. Lähdeoja et al. employ the term ‘instrumental environment’ for the electric guitar noting:

“It is comprised of acoustic, electromechanical and digital parts, all of which are integrated into an instrumental environment. [...] The instrumental environment offers a high degree of configurability for the musician: tone woods, pick-ups, effects, amplifiers, loudspeakers, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Transformation’ by Alexander Refsum Jensenius and Victoria Johnson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTk7vZsj7Fc>, last visited: 14 April, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> The Mahavishnu Orchestra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-0bMRcBik4>, last visited: 14 April, 2021.



All these elements can be chosen separately and therefore allow for thorough customization of the instrument” (Lähdeoja et al., 2010: 41-42).

I would like to adopt this term for the electric violin. The instrumental environment may differ for the violinist from one concert to the other, whereas the acoustic violin always stays on the shoulder vibrating close to our skin and bones. So, even though instrumentalists changing from the classical to the electric violin do not have to learn a lot of new finger techniques, they still have to get used to completely new circumstances.

But the difficulties in playing this somehow different instrument don't hold up violinists who find something that makes it worth putting all this effort in.

I held an interview with Nora Kudrjawizki, an electric violinist from Berlin, who studied the classical violin at conservatories in Berlin and Dresden before she decided to go for a pop career and bought her first electric violin in order to be able to play in big halls. Asked about new possibilities and new limits when playing the electric violin, she said:

“You can play all songs on the electric violin, but you cannot play everything on a classical violin, because the circumstances change a lot. If you want to play pop in a big hall, you need an electric violin. [...] There are no songs that I would not be able to play on the electric violin” (Kudrjawizki & Seidlitz, 2021).

Answering so, Nora automatically put the focus on the public performing context, thus strengthening my initial thought that an electric violin is used most of all to impress others.

## **'ANGELSTRINGS' – A SHOW CONCEPT WITH ELECTRIC VIOLINS**

Nora Kudrjawizki is a founding member and playing musician of 'Angelstrings' (figure 1), a show project with two female electric violinists<sup>5</sup>. The duo disguises as the black and white angel who represent the fight between good and evil. I would like to analyse their 'Pirates of the Caribbean' show where they imitate a fighting scene from the movie with their violin bows held as swords. In this show, the white angel starts by playing the calm, beautiful Beatles' song 'Yesterday'. She is interrupted by the black angel playing some bars of the powerful Bach 'Tocatta'. Then, the intro of the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' soundtrack is played in the background, whereupon the two women start a fight with their bows choreographed to the music before they finish the show playing on their electric violins in synchrony.<sup>6</sup>

Even though Nora Kudrjawizki and the second angel, Katie Barlas, are very skilled instrumentalists, this scene impresses more in terms of a show than in terms of a concert. The duo 'Angelstrings' is represented by 'Legrain Production', an event company founded by Nora Kudrjawizki and her husband. The couple has deliberately developed the 'Angelstrings' concept as something that is new to the show business and has organized the casting for the second angel: a female electric violinist able to dance while playing. Nora told me, as she is blond, they were specially looking for a brunette violinist – I would like to add that they were looking for a young, attractive violinist. Most of the decisions regarding 'Angelstrings' have been made out of pragmatic considerations. Nora Kudrjawizki and her husband were interested in creating a show concept that sells: You can book 'Angelstrings' for company events and so on. Nora told me that most of the company event attendees were male and were interested in looking at female artists.

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<sup>5</sup> The 'Angelstrings' show can be booked with more than two violinists as well. I focus on this performance with two female violinists.

<sup>6</sup> 'Angelstrings' Show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7GRxF3YMVE>, last visited: 28 February, 2021.

In this show concept, the electric violin – and most of all the violin bow – becomes part of the aesthetic concept. Hold as a sword, it even is a part of the fairy tale disguise.

Nora described the violin she plays on in this show as a very regular electric violin but admitted she would not do the ‘fight scene’ with her regular wooden bow. Even though the two bows are not really touching each other (this is just an impression of the spectator sitting apart from the stage), the two women use special carbon bows which would not break if accidentally touching each other or falling down. So, the decision for the bow has not been made out of sound quality considerations but due to its designation to fit into a dancing show concept.

Nora Kudrjawizki also told me about other music shows she had developed in the past where she had played on a luminous electric violin. So, using the electric violin to make a show visually more interesting is something that worked out for her in different arrangements.



**Figure 1: ‘Angelstrings’ (Katie Barlas and Nora Kudrjawizki) fighting with the violin bow, photographed by Bjoern Kommerell, open source.**

It is notable that the instrument violin is visually impressive and that it fits a show that plays with the cliché of beauty and the fight of good against evil at this level. Behrens argued that synthetic violin pop music usually doesn’t refer to the long classical music tradition but to the ‘perfect world’ esprit associated with classical musicians, with violinists (Behrens, 1997: 29). When creating this show concept, Nora Kudrjawizki and her husband seem to have known exactly what people would love to book.

One may claim that Nora’s whole idea to change from an acoustic violin (after long years of studying the instrument and the classical repertory) to an electric violin to play pop music was just a pragmatic choice – a sort of fighting for survival in the music business with the violin bow in her hand. But doing some research about her further work on the electric violin, it became clear to me that Nora Kudrjawizki loves playing the electric violin for creative reasons as well, that she has also succeeded in musically overcoming some of the ‘limits of the box that fits on our shoulder.’

## ‘ONE VIOLIN ORCHESTRA’: ELABORATING THE MUSICAL POSSIBILITIES AS AN ELECTRIC VIOLINIST

Besides playing in different formations, Nora Kudrjawizki pursues a very interesting solo career as ‘One Violin Orchestra’. When performing as ‘One Violin Orchestra’, Nora fills the stage on her own with a special electric violin and a loop station: she plays pop song arrangements recording one audio track after the other with her loop station and later replays them all at once. To have the whole range of sounds, Nora plays on a five-string electric violin which has a lower string added to the usual four strings: it is a C-string as normally associated with a cello. She also works with an octaver, an electric effect unit as used by electric guitarists (Wicke & Ziegenrucker, 2007: 502), which permits the C-string to sound even one octave lower than usual. So, Nora is able to produce the sounds of a whole band all on her own. She also sings and adds rhythmic elements with beatboxing.<sup>7</sup> Acting as ‘One Violin Orchestra’, Nora puts the focus much more on her instrumentalist abilities and her arranger capabilities than on the show effects. She also sells CDs and digital downloads of her sound recordings – songs that are beautiful to listen to without needing a visual aspect.

‘Angelstrings’ would not work without something to look at putting Nora Kudrjawizki and the second violinist in a position where their dancing, acting, modelling, and designing (Nora has designed the angel costumes herself) qualities are valued more than their instrumentalist ones. But the ‘One Violin Orchestra’ live shows and sound recordings are the product of a creative, inspired musician playing the electric violin. When recording in a small studio, the electric violin is as pivotal to the sound experience, to the expressive, aesthetic thought, as at live concerts played in big halls. The electric violin therefore is valued for its sound qualities.

It would not be possible to record the same songs with an acoustic violin.

Adding lower strings to a small acoustic violin corpus would not be easy as its hollow resonating body is constructed for a defined frequency range (Trueman, 1999: Chapter Two, 15). Lower tones are played on bigger instruments. In a ‘The Strad’ focus article the luthier Martin Brunkalla is quoted:

“[...] the body of the violin was never intended to respond to frequencies lower than those produced by the open G string. Typically, the C string on a converted four-string will take more effort to get moving, and sound flabby once it does respond” (Brunkalla in Todes, 2014).<sup>8</sup>

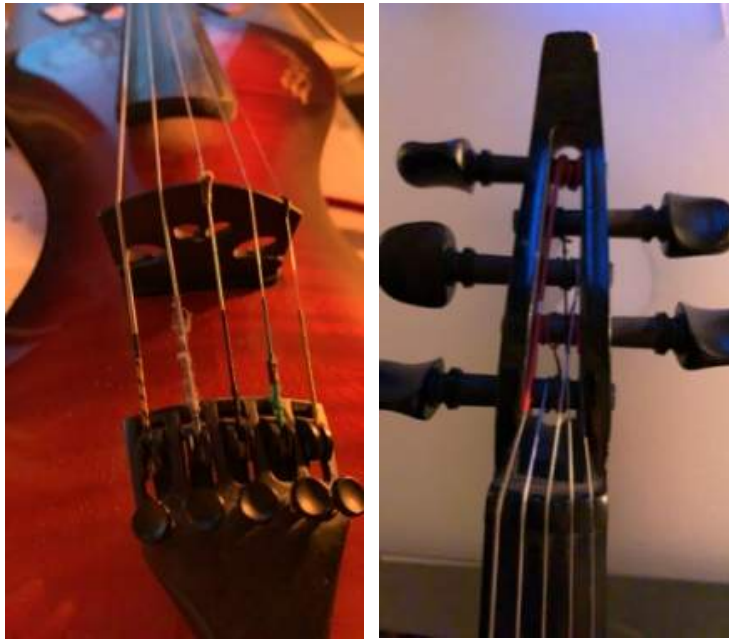
This luthier, among others, has worked on the five-string viola, an acoustic fusion instrument of the violin and the viola.

But Nora Kudrjawizki’s five-string electric violin (figures 2 and 3) is especially small and filigree. Often, five-string electric violins have a wider fingerboard than a usual four-stringed one (even if not shifting in corpus size). Nora decided to look for an individual construction being comfortable to play on with small hands: her violin has a regular-sized instrument corpus and a regular-sized fingerboard, so the five strings are very close to each other.

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<sup>7</sup> ‘One Violin Orchestra’ Show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60BNCV9PTxQ>, last visited: 28 February, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Brunkalla, Martin, quoted by Todes, Ariane. 2014. *How to make a five-string viola*. Available at <https://www.thestrad.com/how-to-make-a-five-string-violin/2916.article>, last visited: 28 June, 2021.



**Figures 2 and 3: The five-string violin. Photos by courtesy of Nora Kudrjawizki.**

Playing as ‘One Violin Orchestra’, Nora Kudrjawizki performs arrangements of famous pop songs, such as Nirvana’s ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit’, Sting’s ‘Shape of My Heart’, or Camila Cabello’s ‘Havana’. There is not only a big variety in the song and genre choices (within the pop range) but also in the creative decisions on organizing these arrangements or sound collages. Sometimes, Nora sings the main melody, so that the electric violin is an accompanying instrument (see, e.g., ‘Shape of My Heart’ and ‘Havana’), in other songs, the main melody is transferred to the electric violin (see ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit’). Asked about her decision-making for different arrangements, Nora Kudrjawizki said that she liked to perform songs as you have never heard them before. So, in a Nirvana cover, putting the main focus on the very melodic instrument violin was more interesting to her than singing the lyrics.

## **VIOLINISTS ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL RELATION TO THE ELECTRIC AND TO THE ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENT**

Even though the electric violin permits Nora to develop musical arrangements that are unimaginable on an acoustic violin, she has a very emotional and personal relation to her classical violin. Asked about her favourite violin when just playing for herself, she responded:

“I would always choose the classical one, because the sound of the classical violin is warm and different ... livelier than the one of the electric violin” (Kudrjawizki & Seidlitz, 2021).

I would like to argue that when playing to oneself, visually attracting elements are less needed than when playing to impress others. One would like to focus on the music itself or on the chemistry between the own body and the instrument. Probably Nora’s choice also means that – when playing to herself – she is more interested in playing regular violin repertory than in achieving uniqueness. This would be no surprise as she has studied the classical violin for many years.

But who says that playing for oneself is the most important situation in a professional violinist’s life? So, finally, I asked Nora Kudrjawizki about her favourite violin out of all her violins, in general. Nora said:

“My acoustic violin is my soul. It’s the one everything started with. And everything that needed to come out of me came out through it. And the electric violin was simply a progression of this. And my favourite violins are the classical one and the five-stringed one.

The five-stringed one simply adds the possibility for me to discover a spectrum that normally is not part of a violin: the low string sounding a bit like a cello” (ibidem).

So, playing electric is not just a pragmatic choice for her but motivated by expressive wishes as well.

Of course, Nora possesses a lot of different electric violins for different show concepts. And not all of them seem to have been built and bought due to their sound quality. Some of them were bought because they guarantee a visual show element (they are luminous and so on) or because they make it a bit easier to dance with. In the interview, Nora Kudrjawizki (2021) told me that some electric violins were simply too heavy for some dancing parts of her shows. Choosing a certain violin due to its weight is very pragmatic and shows again that in some parts of the ‘Angelstrings’ shows her dancing or acting qualities are put more into focus than her violinist ones. But the five-string electric violin, I would like to point out, is an instrument adding musical possibilities to be discovered: It does not feel like a new instrument to Nora but like a ‘progression’ of her instrument learnt since childhood making it possible to realize new expressive ideas as a skilled instrumentalist. She thereby overcomes the ‘limits of the box that fits on our shoulder.’

In the spirit that electric instruments are needed to fulfil some expressive demands of musicians, I would like to quote Patteson who published a study about the first electric instruments for New Music in 2015. Patteson states for musician-inventors in Germany in the 1920s that they

“staked their careers on the claim that electric instruments could be reconciled with the expressive demands of performing musicians. [...] Whereas mechanical instruments represented the complete externalization of music from the human being, electric instruments were conceived as technological extensions of the human body” (Patteson, 2015: 66–67).

Nora described her acoustic violin as her soul – the acoustic violin made her into a violinist, so this is a big part of identity and of personal musical taste evolution. But as Patteson notices, an electric instrument can be seen as an extension of the human body and – I would like to add – as the extension of a creative spirit as well.

Electric instruments are needed to play in certain circumstances, to play with a loud band in a big hall. But this is not the only benefit of electricity. When comparing the classical guitar to the electric guitar, it is obvious that these two instruments often fit into different style categories (even though it would be more or less possible to play the same compositions on it) and that, because they attract a different group of people such as composers, musicians, and the public, different guitarists deal with different expressive demands. These expressive demands motivated them to create more and more genres, to develop more and more effect units, and so on.

Of course, this spirit affects other electric instrumentalists, such as electric violinists, as well. And even though Nora Kudrjawizki possibly may have aspired to a classical violin career in the first place, since playing electric she found out a lot about the expressive possibilities when playing electric. Kucherenko and Sediuk noted for the aesthetic experience of the musician:

“The nature of the performance experience directly depends on the instrument through which a musician develops a system of muscular and auditory sensations, reveals and expands the spectrum of emotional reactions, and acquires an individual type of thinking” (Kucherenko & Sediuk, 2020: 22).

So, Nora Kudrjawizki experienced new expressive demands, looked for a changed construction of her instrument, and tried out for arrangements that are innovative.

For me, as a passionate acoustic violinist, it was not surprising that Nora stated always choosing the classical violin when playing for herself. But of course, this is a personal choice and other electric violinists may answer differently. Trueman, for example, noted about playing the electric violin for himself:

“For me, playing through headphones induces a sort of private (after all, nobody else can hear what I am hearing), meditative state where I can create my own virtual world” (Trueman, 1999: 21–22).

On the one hand, it must be aesthetically less fulfilling to hear yourself via headphones. You can’t feel how your musical action fills the room you are in. The instrumentalist’s ears are not directly stimulated by what the same person’s fingers do and what reality reflects instantly (e.g., a resonating room you are standing in). On the other hand, playing with headphones may free instrumentalists like Trueman from other – again – pragmatic choices as the time of the day, the room, and the atmosphere for playing. Being an acoustic violinist, I can’t freely choose when and where to play. I decide for it due to rest protection regulation. I always close the windows.... So, possibly the new options when playing with headphones help people like Trueman to feel independent, making it a very personal moment.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Of course, being creative and innovative in terms of instrument making is not a privilege to electric violinists. For creative experiments on modelling the hollow, wooden corpus of an acoustic violin for expressive reasons, see, for example, Massimo de Bonfils and Mauro Fabretti, teachers of the Lutherie Course at the Conservatory of Santa Cecilia in Rome (De Bonfils & Fabretti, 2019) or the already mentioned ‘The Strad’ article about the violin-violin-fusion-instrument, the five-string viola (Todes, 2014).

But in the popular music business, it seems to be a bit more common to look for a modified construction than in the classical milieu. The ‘The Strad’ article mentions jazz, world, and folk players as instrumentalists looking for new constructions. I would like to add that in the pop business, visually attractive individual constructions of the electric violin are appreciated. This can be explained as electric violinists act less as part of a long tradition and more as pop stars looking for something that makes them unique.

Trueman furthermore discusses the individual sound experience for the instrumentalist himself or herself while playing a concert in a big hall. He compares the acoustic violin and the electric violin:

“[...] detachment [as it is possible when playing electric] can minimize the differences in sound that the player and listener perceive. ‘Classical’ violinists are trained to ‘project’ their sound, which can result in the violin sounding harsh and unpleasant under the ear, but strong and full in the back of a large hall. With an electric violin, we have the option of ‘projecting’ by simply placing a speaker in the back of the hall, or in some other configuration between listener and player” (Trueman, 1999: 6).

So, there even may be situations where the electric instrument enables the music to be enjoyed more by the instrumentalist himself or herself in a precise moment than it would be possible with an acoustic instrument. In a certain sense, this can be seen as a moment where somebody plays for himself or herself (in the spirit of enjoying oneself), too. So it would be too easy to say that an acoustic violin generally allows a better individual playing whereas the electric instrument creates bigger show effects. There are effects created on an acoustic violin for the public sitting apart as well. And there are very intimate possibilities to play electric.

In addition, I would like to mention that there are experiments, on how to improvise a solo, to have a musical dialogue with oneself, thanks to electrics. ‘Transformation’ by Alexander Refsum Jensenius and Victoria Johnson is such an ‘improvisation piece’: the electric violinist Victoria Johnson moves within an interactive 2D space that reacts by randomly playing back fragments of a pre-recorded violin sound collection. She plays simultaneously on her electric violin, thus responding to herself (Jensenius & Johnson, 2012: 36). This shows that there are a lot of expressive

ideas on how to change the instrumental environment and the personal experience of the instrumentalist and the public thanks to electrics.

I'm sure that new musical and technical experiments may follow all over the world leading to new individual perceptions of the violinist–violin relation. One driving experience is the force of being competitive on the local music market, which is opening up to another kind of global exchange.

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## APPENDIX: VIDEO MATERIAL WITHOUT AUTHORS

- ‘Angelstrings’ Show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7GRxF3YMVE>, last visited: 28 February, 2021:



- ‘One Violin Orchestra’ Show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60BNCV9PTxQ>, last visited: 28 February, 2021:



- The Mahavishnu Orchestra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-0bMRcBik4>, last visited: 14 April, 2021:



- ‘Transformation’ by Alexander Refsum Jensenius and Victoria Johnson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTk7vZsj7Fc>, last visited: 14 April 2021.





# RECONTEMPLATING THE CLASSIFICATION OF MULTIPLE REEDS

Liu Xiangkun [刘祥焜]<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The 2011 Revision of the von Hornbostel and Sachs Classification of Musical Instruments by the MIMO Consortium categorises the ‘reedpipes with double (or quadruple) reeds’ (422.1) according to the number of pipes, bore shapes, and finger holes, as it does to many other instrument groups. However, this scheme rather overlooks the significantly varied features of the multiple reeds themselves – their structural difference that determines their making and functioning, and how they connect to the pipe body – especially considering the vast varieties and distribution of multiple reeds compared with other types of reed pipes. Following the hierarchical classification of reed pipes (422) primarily according to the types of reeds, this paper would propose a further classification based on the ‘subtypes’ of multiple reeds. The first level divides into ‘idioglot reeds’ and ‘staple-mounted reeds’ based on the connection of reeds with the pipe body. Idioglot reeds make one-part and two-part reed pipes, the former ‘usually a flattened stem’ of the upper end of the pipe itself and the latter made from unbroken thick cane that fits inside the pipe bore. In contrast, staple-mounted reeds make three-part reed pipes. Some have fixed sides so that only the tips of reed blades are free to vibrate, while others have detached individual leaves that can vibrate on all sides. Given that reeds, as the primary source of sonic vibration, decide many fundamental features of a reed pipe, this recontemplated classification is likely to provide more distinct insight into their construct, functioning, and historical lineages.

## KEYWORDS

von Hornbostel and Sachs, Classification, Multiple reeds, Shawm, Timbre

## INTRODUCTION

The 2011 “Revision of the Hornbostel–Sachs Classification of Musical Instruments” by the MIMO Consortium (MIMO Consortium, 2011) categorises the ‘reed pipes with double (or quadruple) reeds’ (422.1) according to the number of pipes, bore shapes, and finger holes, as it does to many other instrument groups. However, this scheme rather overlooks the significantly varied features of the multiple reeds themselves – their structural difference that determines their making and functioning, and how they connect to the pipe body – especially considering the vast varieties and distribution of multiple reeds compared with other types of reed pipes. In fact, there have been earlier scholars who noticed the significance of the multiple reeds themselves rather than the body in the characterisation of these instruments. For example, Anthony Baines gave a widely quoted definition of the shawm type as ‘the reed-instrument sounded with a double reed carried on the narrow end of a conical metal staple. The body of the instrument usually, but not always, continues the bore-expansion of the staple’ (Baines, 1957: 228). This statement from 60 years ago already challenges the classification according to the bore shapes as it still does today. On the other hand, from the perspective inside the ‘von Hornbostel and Sachs Classification’, following the hierarchical classification of general reed pipes (422) primarily according to the types of reeds, this

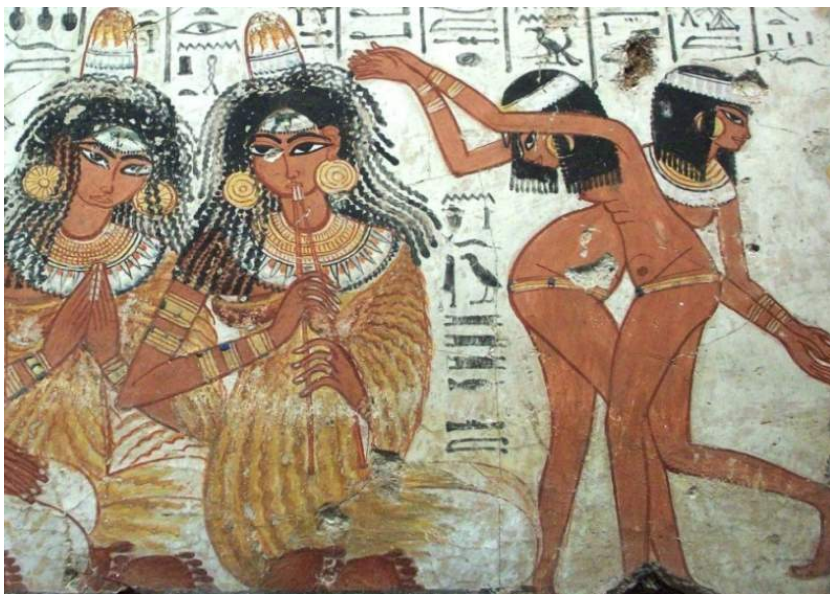
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paper would propose a further classification based on the ‘subtypes’ of multiple reeds, in the hope of providing more distinct insight into their construct, functioning, and historical lineages.

## IDIOGLOT REEDS VERSUS MOUNTED REEDS

As the above definition by Baines has pointed out, it is the staple, a small conical metal tube onto which the reeds are inserted, that defines shawms as opposed to other multiple reed pipes. But shawms are actually a latecomer in this family, and the idioglot double reeds predate shawms for thousands of years, at least from the time of the ancient Egypt (Figure 1). Idioglot double reeds are conceivably much easier to make, just by flattening an end of a natural tubular material, usually the stem of herbaceous plants. It is probably for this reason that the idioglot double reeds are the earliest documented reed pipes among all types. Yet, despite their facility in making, idioglot double reeds have a severe drawback as follows: the flattened and scraped tips are very fragile, and once they are broken, the whole pipe is useless. Therefore, idioglot double reeds today usually serve merely as disposable toys for children, for example, *pipi* of the Uyghur people (Figure 2). In order to make genuine durable musical instruments, harder materials like wood are used for the pipe body, which leads to the separation of the reeds since they must still be made of softer flexible materials. Nevertheless, such detachable double reeds retain the traits of idioglot reeds, made from unbroken thick cane that fits inside the bore of the pipe body. So far, we have one-part and two-part double-reed pipes; the extant examples of the latter include Central Asian *duduk/mey* and East Asian *bili/hichiriki*.



**Figure 1: Painting from the tomb-chapel of Nebamun, circa 1350 BC, Ancient Egypt (British Museum, London, open access). Figure 2: Pipi of the Uyghur people (MUSIC Musée des instruments Céret, open access).**

Mounted reeds, on the other hand, make three-part reed pipes. Such multiple reeds are comprised of separate blades made from tubular materials (usually herbaceous stems, but locally also cocoons, or nowadays plastic drinking straws) cut in half or flat and tough leaves (usually from palm-like species) cut in small pieces. The blades of varying numbers from 2 to 8 are tied together in a circle that fits on top of a small metal tube; some remain detachable like on bassoons and many Asian shawms, while others are permanently glued like on European oboes and many bagpipe chanters. This, however, does not make a difference in the nature of the reeds and should still be regarded as three-part reed pipes.

The relatively advanced craftsmanship required to make the small metal tube put shawms much later in the history of reed pipes compared with idioglot double reeds, with the earliest extant

evidence dating back no further than the third century AD (Farmer, 1977: 69–86), on artefacts such as silver plates from the Sasanian Empire (224–651 AD) that depicted shawms with a staple. Yet, the latecomer’s effort has paid off: the mounted reeds have become the more prevalent type of reed pipes in the Eurasian continent and found new roles for its repertoire. Around a millennium later, Śārngadeva (1175–1247 AD) spoke of the shawm as ‘sweet-sounding’ instead of a warlike instrument as it was in the Persian and Arabian empires, which sound was attributed to the staple-and-reed (Dick, 1984: 89).



**Figure 3: Sasanian plate depicting a shawm with a staple being played (Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, open access).**

As in Baines’s definition, the metal tube has to be conical in shape (figure 3) in order to become known as the staple, but the pipe bore does not have to be. Many European Renaissance double-reed pipes with wind caps also have their reeds tied to a small metal tube that is inserted into the bore of the pipe body, including *crumhorn*, *cornamuse*, and rarer *kortholt*. These instruments, however, are obviously not shawms, not only because they have a narrow cylindrical bore instead of a conical bore but also because the tube that connects their reeds to the body is also cylindrical. This should be classified into another type of three-part reed pipes. In fact, some instrument makers have already noticed that the cylindrical metal tube plays a different role than a staple: being the extension of the pipe body, it can be lengthened or shortened to adjust the pitch just like a trombone and hence, the ingenious innovation of the ‘telescoping reeds’ (Figure 4).

On the other hand, reed pipes with conical staple and (nearly) cylindrical bore should also be regarded as shawms. Examples of such instruments are actually not rare: *zurna* in Bulgaria and Turkey, among others (Dick, 1984: 94; Montagu, 1997: 74–79; Liu, 2019: 74–75), *terompet* of East Java that uses bamboo to make the body which is naturally cylindrical (Figure 5) and possibly also *pi-nai* of Central Thailand despite its unusual outer shape (Liu, 2020: 99).



**Figure 4: ‘Telescoping reeds’ of a bass crumhorn, contracted (above) and extended (below).<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> All photographs were taken by the author if not stated otherwise.



Figure 5: Terompet from Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia, featuring a large conical staple and a cylindrical body.

## FIXED SIDES VERSUS OPEN SIDES

Among the multiple reeds, some have fixed sides so that only the tips of reed blades are free to vibrate, while others have detached blades that vibrate on all sides. Idioglot double reeds, being made of a whole unbroken tubular material, all must have fixed sides. But mounted reeds are different: although their individual blades primarily all have open sides, they are sometimes glued together into fixed sides during the later process (like the Scottish Highland bagpipe chanter reeds) or their sides join naturally due to their curved shape and elasticity (like European oboe reeds). This is common on reeds made of cane; however, on other multiple reeds made of leaves, the sides of the blades usually remain open, which is quite common on South Asian and Southeast Asian multiple reeds (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Reeds of 2–8 blades with open sides, from left to right: terompet (East Java), horanawa (Sri Lanka), pi-nai (Central Thailand), pi-nai (Southern Thailand), and hne (Myanmar).

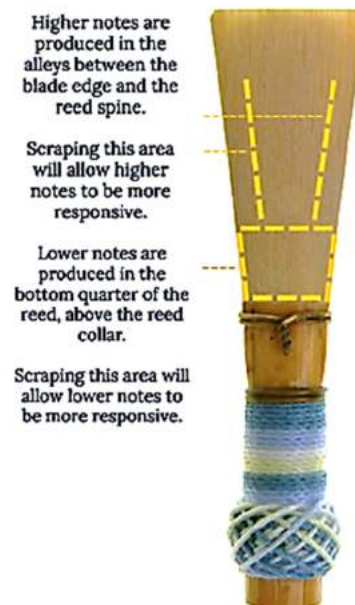


Figure 7: Analysis of bassoon reeds (Double Reed Ltd., UK, open access).

Fixed sides reduce the width of the entrance where the air current is forced between the reed blades, thus raising the air pressure required to vibrate the reeds, as on modern oboe compared with Baroque oboe. If the blades are made wider to counter the reduction of width by fixed sides, it would result in louder volume with equally high air pressure, as in the case of the Scottish Highland

bagpipe chanter.<sup>3</sup> Generally, fixed sides enhance the stability of pitches with a more defined timbre, as in both cases above. Open sides, on the contrary, allow playing in relatively lower air pressure and reduce the stability of notes, which actually better serves the ubiquitous inflection and intonation in Asian music. Also, open sides totally free up the vibration all around the reed blades, including their bottom area. An analysis of the bassoon reeds (Figure 7) reveals that their bottom area is responsible for lower frequencies. Multiple reeds with the broader bottom area and open sides may induce lower frequencies, which facilitate the technique of under blowing (the opposite of overblowing, it utilises lower air pressure for downward extension of the playing range), and sometimes this lower frequency is involved with another fundamental frequency to produce multiphonics, the instinctive feature of the musical language of central Thai *pi-nai* and *pi-chawa* (Liu, 2019: 182).

## EFFECT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF MULTIPLE REEDS ON TIMBRES

The proposition of reclassification of multiple reeds is not only due to their different appearances and making, but more importantly based on their effect on timbres, given that reeds, as the primary source of sonic vibration, decide many fundamental features of a reed pipe.

A spectrum comparison of audio samples of the same pitch of  $^b e^1 \approx 153$  Hz played on *duduk*, bass *crumhorn*, tenor shawm, and clarinet is done using the software Adobe Audition CC 2018 and SpectrumView version 1.26, as shown in Figure 8. Psychoacoustic studies have suggested that peaks in spectrum envelope, or formants, play a key role in the perception of the attributes of different timbres (Campbell, 2001: 153–154). Therefore, the following comparison mainly focuses on the formants and troughs of the spectra.

In the current H-S classification, both *duduk* and *crumhorn* fall in the category 422.111.2 ‘Reed pipes with double reeds, with cylindrical bore, with finger holes.’ However, their spectra reveal contrary traits: overall, *crumhorn* has a nearly even distribution of energy across the spectrum up to around 6 kHz, while *duduk* has much weaker partials above 2 kHz. More specifically, the spectrum of *duduk* has a trough around 1.5 kHz and a formant near 2 kHz, while that of *crumhorn* has a formant near 1.7 kHz and a slight trough near 2 kHz, which are almost the opposite. Interestingly, clarinet, although being single reed, has some similar spectrum features to *duduk*: a trough around 1.7 kHz and a formant near 2.3 kHz. In fact, this result also corresponds to a common impression that *duduk* is more similar to clarinet compared with other double reeds, in terms of both sound and playing, which leads to the invention of a hybrid instrument ‘ClarDuk’ (Figure 9). The multiple similarities between *duduk* and clarinet could be due to the fact that the large inherent cavity inside the idioglot double reeds resembles the cavity inside the clarinet mouthpiece, both with a tapered tip and bulging body (Figure 10), while other types of double and single reeds only have little space inside.

Also contrary to the common knowledge that reed pipes with cylindrical bore lack even-number partials (Benade, 2001), *crumhorn* has a very dense spectrum over all partials, and *duduk* also gives a spectrum containing all partials, though the even-number ones are truly weaker. This unusual phenomenon incoherent with theoretical models is also attributed to the reeds as the narrow aperture-tipped cavity inside them may function as a conical part, providing even-number partials missing on the cylindrical bore, similar to the conical mouthpiece on cylindrical lip-reed instruments (Howard, 2006: 193–194). This further demonstrates the underestimated effect of the

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, besides the entrance width of the air current, the air pressure required to vibrate the reeds also depends on the elastic modulus of their materials as well as the distance between their apertures; these factors are not exclusive to multiple reeds.

reeds themselves on the acoustic nature of reed pipes and hence the emphasis laid on them in terms of classification.

The case of the low shawm shows the difference made by the staple in combination with the pipe bore. With its reeds almost identical to tenor *crumhorn* reeds (Figure 11), the conical staple combined with conical bore contribute to the characteristic timbre of low shawms, including bassoon. The combination of a conical staple and a cylindrical bore is common, as mentioned above; but on the contrary, a cylindrical tube may not connect the reeds to a conical bore, as no such instrument has been mentioned so far. The mechanism behind this disparity requires further studies, but it is comparable that the combination of a single reed and a conical bore did not prevail until the modern invention of saxophone and the modified *tárogató* in Hungary around the same time. This parallelism again hints at some similarity between the idioglot double reeds and the single reeds.

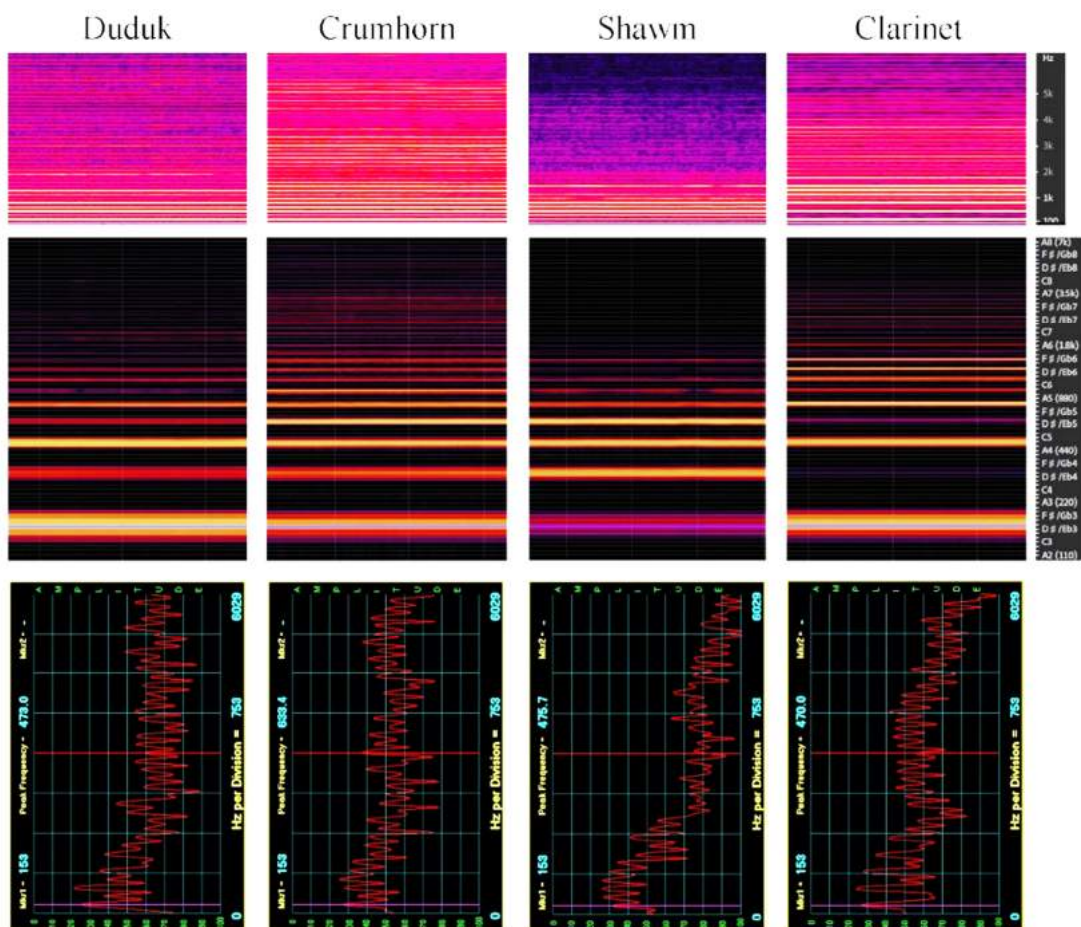


Figure 8: Spectrum comparison of audio samples of the same pitch played on duduk, bass crumhorn, tenor shawm, and clarinet.



Figure 9: ‘ClarDuk’ made by Hovsep Grigoryan, Yerevan, and Armenia (open access).



Figure 10: Comparison of idioglot double reeds (Turkish mey) and clarinet mouthpiece.



Figure 11: Comparison of tenor shawm reeds (above) and tenor crumhorn reeds (below), both made by Volker Kernbach.

422.1a Idioglot reeds		422.1b Mounted reeds (Three-part reedpipes)		
422.1a1 1-part reedpipes <i>Uyghur pipi</i>	422.1a2 2-part reedpipes <i>duduk</i>	422.1b1 On a conical staple		422.1b2 On a cylindrical tube <i>crumhorn</i>
		422.1b1.1 With fixed sides <i>bassoon</i>	422.1b1.2 With open sides <i>pi-nai, hne</i>	

Figure 12: Proposed classification table under the hierarchy of ‘reed pipes with double (or quadruple) reeds’ (422.1), wherein letters *a* and *b* are to temporarily distinguish proposed categories from currently existing ones.

## CONCLUSION

The multiple reeds as the primary source of sonic vibration decide many fundamental features of a reed pipe. Following the hierarchical classification of general reed pipes (422) primarily according to the types of reeds, a proposed classification table under the hierarchy of ‘reed pipes with double (or quadruple) reeds’ (422.1) is shown in Figure 12. The first level divides into idioglot reeds and

mounted reeds. On the second level, the former comprises one-part and two-part reed pipes, and the latter is differentiated by the shape of the small metal tube that connects the reeds to the pipe. On the third level, multiple reeds made of separate blades are further divided according to whether they have fixed or open sides. All these types of multiple reeds are not only different in terms of their appearance and making but also affect the timbral characteristics of the reed pipe to a great extent. One mechanism among others is that the cavity inside the multiple reeds introduces additional acoustic properties to the pipe bore, capable of producing more partials that would otherwise be missing in the spectrum. By focusing on the multiple reeds themselves rather than the pipe body, each group in this recontemplated classification better embodies the similarities and differences of instrumental timbres, which is likely to provide more distinct insight into their construct, functioning, and historical lineages.

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# KERALA'S ANCIENT MIZHAVU DRUM: TRANSFORMATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

K. Sajith Vijayan [കലാമണ്ഡലം സജിത്ത് വിജയൻ] and Karin Bindu<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The Kerala state in India offers a huge assemblage of various percussion eccentricities. Each percussion instrument sustains and preserves its own attributes: some drums accompany visual arts, others create a vibrant world of percussion music, and a few maintain both attributes. Almost all instruments are related to ceremonial pursuance and worship customs.

*Mizhavu* is a single-headed drum from Kerala that employs these kinds of ceremonial pursuance. The purpose of the instrument, which had also been used in temples in Tamil Nadu, is to accompany the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performances in the great temples (*mahakshetras*) for the pleasure of God's souls and the invocation of their powers. *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* – Kerala's Sanskrit drama performing art forms – have been recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage due to 2000 years of tradition. As 'visual sacrifice' staging scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, they combine dance with theatre performance, Sanskrit verses (*slokas*), and percussive music in a ritualistic context. The main supporting percussion instrument (*mizhavu*) serves as *deva vādyam* – an instrument for the deities. Its classification as a one-headed drum covered with skin (*avanaddha vadya* of the *dardura* type) goes back to the *Natya Shastra* of Bharatamuni – some 2000 years ago. Definitions as kettledrum (*bhanda vadya*) trace it back to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. The Buddhist *Pali Tripitaka* refers to pot drums (*kumba toonak*). Tamil epics mention a *muzha* or *kuta muzha* drum. Publications in recent decades nearly mention that drum.

Production methods, forms, and material of the drum have changed over the ages. Attached to the artistic heritage of a certain Brahmin caste – the *Nampyar* – the drum has spent a long period in the environment of temple theatres. Since 1966, it has been taught to pupils of all castes at the Kerala Kalamandalam, Thrissur District. P.K.K. Nambiar worked as the first *mizhavu* teacher in the later added *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* department. He was followed by his pupil K. Eswaranunni, the first *mizhavu* guru from another caste, fighting for acceptance among members of *Chakyar* and *Nampyar* families. As a passionate master with numerous awards and performance experience all over the world, K. Eswaranunni has trained most of the contemporary *mizhavu* percussionists, who are still performing all over India as well as abroad. This paper gives an overview of the instrument and shows how the *mizhavu* is described by both gurus in their books written in Malayalam and by both authors including their personal relations to the drum.

## KEYWORDS

Mizhavu, Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Percussion, Kerala, Nampyar, Kalamandalam

## INTRODUCTION

The percussion instrument *mizhavu* (figure 1) is considered as the breathing sound element of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performance art forms in Kerala. Originally, it was played in temple theatres (*Kuthambalam*) exclusively by men of the *Nampyar* caste, who were accompanied by the cymbal (*kuzhitalam*) playing women of the *Nangiar* caste. Male and female performers of the Dramas came from the *Chakyar* caste. The temples had their own drums residing in the *Kuthambalam*. If no

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<sup>1</sup> Kalamandalam Sajith Vijayan, MA [കലാമണ്ഡലം സജിത്ത് വിജയൻ] is an artist and contemporary *mizhavu* teacher of Kerala Kalamandalam, Deemed University of Performing Arts in South India. From 2001 to 2007, he studied the percussion instrument *mizhavu* at the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* Department of the Kalamandalam in Cheruthuruthy. For more information: [sajithvijayankkm@yahoo.com](mailto:sajithvijayankkm@yahoo.com); Karin Bindu, Magistra Dr works independently as percussionist and as cultural and social anthropologist. She also taught, as Senior Lecturer, the Introduction into the Ethnology of India at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna. For more information, one can consult her website: [www.rhythmuse.at](http://www.rhythmuse.at).

drums were available, they were borrowed from other temples.<sup>2</sup> There might have been other communities as well, who used the *mizhavu* for various purposes. In one of his recent interviews, P.K. Nambiar also mentioned the community Manapatta, who used to play *mizhavu* for the *Mane* art form with rings on the copper side instead of hands striking the calfskin covering.<sup>3</sup>

According to P.K. Nambiar (Bindu, 2013: 40), 18 families from the *Nampyar*, *Nangiar*, and *Chakyar* castes have existed in Kerala for more than 800 years. G. Venu (1989: 5) described an economical exchange business between the castes and the temples in former times: an annual performance over 40 days secured land for agricultural cultivation for the members of the castes. However, due to land reforms in the 1970s, the castes lost their land rights. Prior to the dramatic economic change for the artist communities, Rama Chakyar had begun to perform *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and the solo performance *Kuttu* outside the temple to reach audience from other castes and thereby secure the survival of the art forms. In our recent interview, K. Eswaranunni told us that Rama Chakyar had therefore made a small *mizhavu* – the first portable *mizhavu* in the history of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* – to play outside the *Kuthambalam*.<sup>4</sup>

Other South Indian art forms were threatened by extinction during the same timeframe. Consequently, the poet Vallathol Narayana Menon founded the Kerala Kalamandalam in Cheruthurutti in 1930 as a training centre for various performing art styles. Vasudevan Namputirippad worked as a tour manager and wrote curricula at the beginning of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* at the Kerala Kalamandalam. He mentioned in our interview in 2006 that Rama Chakyar's opening of the art form to the public was the starting point for opposition among the caste families. To date, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performers of other castes sometimes feel a kind of rivalry (Bindu, 2013: 41).

Knowledge of how to play the *mizhavu* instrument, made of copper, was transferred from teacher to pupil (*guru-shishya*) in an oral tradition. While Sanskrit Dramas have been recorded on palm leaves and in books for centuries and their performances have been researched by regional and international scientists, there are no publications about the *mizhavu* except later presented books by P.K. Nambiar and K. Eswaranunni. Sangeet Acharya (1956), Sambamoorthy (1960), Day (1983), Panchal (1984), Wade (1987), Nair in Sangeet Natak (1994), Pisharoty (1994), Deva (2000), Danielou (2004), Paniker (2005), Rajagopalan (2005), Paulose (2006), Moser (2008), and a few others are the only researchers of Indian musical instruments, who mentioned the *mizhavu* as a percussion instrument in secondary literary works written in English.

As mentioned in the abstract, different classifications of the instrument are known. Apart from scientific classifications, a mythological genesis of the instrument is transmitted orally from guru to pupil (*shishya*). In our recent interview, K. Eswaranunni repeated the story of how the *mizhavu* gained importance among the deities and became known as an instrument:

“In the epics, Nandigeshvara is mentioned as the first *mizhavu* drummer, who played for Lord Shiva's cosmic dance. One day another one of Lord Shiva's devotees, Banasura, played for Shiva. He enjoyed his play so much, that he blessed him with 1000 arms. So, then he drummed with 1000 arms for Lord Shiva's cosmic dance. Through the epics, we got to know about the drum, so their age could be related to the time epics were created.”<sup>5</sup>

Playing techniques and mnemonic syllables for the drum are taught in the oral tradition. “Whatever the guru teaches and says, the pupil should learn by heart and repeat. Whatever the guru said was

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<sup>2</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by K. Sajith Vijayan.

<sup>3</sup> ANTARANG: Guru Shree P K Narayanan Nambiar is talking on 'Mizhavu – An Accompanying Instrument of Kūṭiyāṭṭam'. <https://www.facebook.com/watchparty/373588287168099/>, last accessed 12 April 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by K. Sajith Vijayan.

<sup>5</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by K. Sajith Vijayan.

his study material.”<sup>6</sup> Eswaranunni (figure 2) mentioned that during his first teaching period at Kerala Kalamandalam, there were no books at all. This was one of the reasons why he decided to follow his guru’s inspiration and wrote a book about the *mizhavu* – a few years after the first book about the drum had been published by his guru P.K. Nambiar in 2004.



Figure 1: Sajith’s *mizhavu* in K. Eswaranunni’s house, 31 January 2021 (photo by the authors).<sup>7</sup>

In our interview, K. Eswaranunni emphasized the significance of the drum for a successful performance by saying that during a performance, all emotions come from the audience. Whatever the performer does on the stage, the drummer should follow, every moment of his expression with all his effort. Without the sound of the drum and all efforts of the drummer, every performance would be a waste. Only with the sound of the *mizhavu* will a performance be successful for the audience to enjoy it.<sup>8</sup>

According to P.K. Nambiar (Bindu, 2013: 197–198), there are not many instruments like the *mizhavu*, which are played after prolonged rites and rituals for empowerment. Each *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performance starts with an invocation called *Mizhavoccappettal*, in which the drum cleans the stage of demons and invites the deities to participate. After the rhythmical phrase, the drum gives its energy to the actors and actresses, who enter the stage behind a temporary curtain and bow in front of the drum before the curtain is lifted.

In *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, there are generally three kinds of percussion systems implemented by *mizhavu* percussionists: (1) areas that emphasize dance, (2) areas that give prominence to histrionics, and (3) areas that are more expressional. When there are no characters on stage, there is a kind of playing on the *mizhavu*. “Charikalakala vadyam/jathi kalakala vadyam/thappiyirangi thattu, nirgeetha, bandhananirgeetha parikramam” (Bindu, 2013: 114).

In the first system, the drummers react partly in unison to certain rhythmic movements (*kriyas* and *charis*) of the actors and actresses. In the second, however, adjustments are required from the more experienced *mizhavu* percussionists in response to various situations expressed using emotions by the characters on stage (*rasa abhinaya*). Face, eye, and hand movement details cannot be seen by the percussionists due to the position of the *mizhavus* at the back of the stage. According to their contextual knowledge, musical improvisations by the percussionists respond to all the physical movements of the actors (Nambiar, 1994: 107).

In addition to their duties as percussionists, *mizhavu* drummers act as directors, who handle stages and green rooms alike. The drummers announce the performance before it starts, fill and refill the

<sup>6</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by K. Sajith Vijayan.

<sup>7</sup> All photos by the authors unless stated otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by K. Sajith Vijayan.

oil lamp on stage, and help by decorating the stage as well as costuming the actors. Other duties involve the tuning, packing, and unpacking of the drum, placing it on the stage, helping their gurus and reciting the *Arangutali Sloka* before performances. They also must learn how to perform *Padhakam* – an oral delivery of epic stories outside the *Kuthambalam* (Bindu 2013: 249–250).



Figure 2: K. Eswaranunni played Sajith’s “travel *mizhavu*” in Cheruthuruthy for the joint contribution at the 23rd Symposium of the ICTM study group on musical instruments, 2021.

While these art forms testify to the heritage of nearly 20 centuries, the citizens of Kerala are less acquainted with *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, as K. Sajith Vijayan (figure 5 and figure 6) points out. *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* even demand training to become an audient. The joyful pleasure of a performance can only be attained if one knows the basics of primitive Sanskrit, Malayalam, *Mudra* (hand gestures) action, and *Rasa* acting (*rasabhinaya*).<sup>9</sup> The nomination by UNESCO as “Intangible Heritage” in 2001 impacted on practitioners and researchers, who are attached to the eight *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* centres all over Kerala. Richmond (2011: 29) remarked that “the level of sophistication of the *mizhavu* drumming, the large number of new young artists, and the vigour and subtlety of their playing has provided an opportunity for the actors to extend and expand the range of their *bhava* and *rasa* ... *mizhavu* drumming has become so popular that *mizhavu* thayambaka has come into being and appears to be recognized as independent form of artistic expression.”

In our recent article entitled ‘Contemporary Types of Ritualistic South Indian *mizhavu* Percussion Ensembles in Kerala,’ we described ritualistic *mizhavu* ensembles (Vijayan and Bindu 2019: 28–41). For the first time, we considered those that follow different rhythmic patterns than for *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performances, such as *mizhavu Thyambaka* and *mizhavu Panjari Melam*.<sup>10</sup> Their artistic creation goes back to guru K. Eswaranunni and his guru P.K. Nambiar. In an interview, K. Eswaranunni mentioned that these popular art forms contain sufficient potential for research in the future.

The following sections illustrate how four *mizhavu* drummers – imagined as links in a chain of *guru-shishya* relations – describe the instrument in different ways. As already mentioned, P.K. Nambiar and K. Eswaranunni – his pupil – wrote their books about the *mizhavu* in Malayalam. Being the first for English language scholarship, K. Sajith Vijayan gives an overview of their books’ contents before describing the instrument from his own viewpoint,<sup>11</sup> followed by aspects of my research structure as the ‘last link’ in our chain. In different ways, all of us are ‘writing in devotion’ for the *deva vadyam*.

<sup>9</sup> Sajith Vijayan 2021. Personal Interview among the authors.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGzMm-Lliek>, last accessed 18 February 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Vijayan, Sajith 2021. Personal Interview among the authors.

## MIZHAVU: NAMPYARUDE KRAMADIPIKA BY P.K. NARANAYAN NAMBIAR

Kochambully Mattathil Narayanan Nambiar (figure 3) is the supreme *Gurunadhan* of the percussion instrument *mizhavu*. He is known by the nickname “Nambiarashan” among *mizhavu* artists in Kerala. His Malayalam language book – “*mizhavu – Nampyarude Kramadipika*” (Nambiar: 2005) – can be regarded as an encyclopaedia, starting from the exposition of the practice of *mizhavu* to various related subjects. This book contains 10 important chapters after the preface titled “Nandhi.” After these chapters, another seven chapters serve as addendums. In addition to a corrigendum and pictures of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* performances, his book also includes the mythology related to *mizhavu*. Mythological resources form the prime motif in the first chapter “Poorvarangam.”

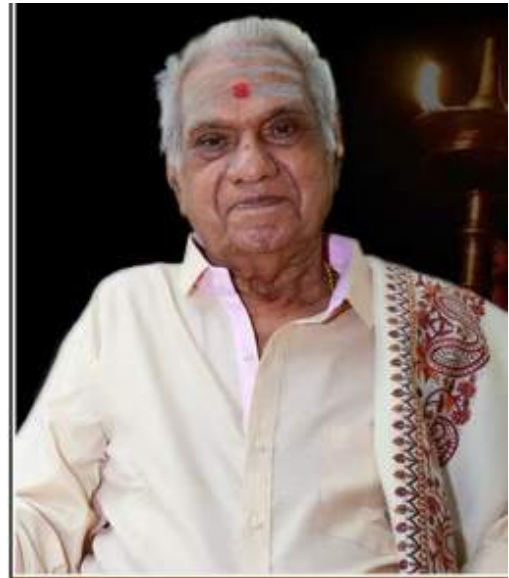
The next part cross-references *mizhavu* from other books. Hints and references to the ancient Tamil *Sangam* literature “Chilappathikaram” are denoted. The other “4ms” included in the first chapter comprises production methods of the *mizhavu*, shapes, and its different pursuance rituals and ritualistic duties on the stage.

“ക്ഷേത്രം അശുദ്ധമായാൽ പുണ്യാഹം ചെയ്തു ശുദ്ധമാക്കുന്നതിനോടൊപ്പം കൂത്തമ്പലവും പുണ്യാഹം ചെയ്തു ശുദ്ധമാക്കണം. കൂത്തിനല്ലാതെ മറ്റൊന്നിനും ഈ വാദ്യം ഉപയോഗിച്ചുകൂടാ.” (മിഴാവ്, നാരായണൻ നമ്പ്യാർ പി. കെ 2005 പേജ് 9).

[If any impurity happens inside the temple, the temple should be made pristine with a divine procedure called ‘punyaham.’ At the time of this divine pristine, the *mizhavu* and Kuthambalam should also be aseptic. Apart from that, the instrument called *mizhavu* must be used only for Koothu, Koodiyatam, and Nangyarkoothu, as it has been decided by the ancestors.] (Nambiar, 2005: 9).

*Mizhavu* teaching methods are described next. There is explained oral notation and its usages for the art of playing. The following is based on the musical rhythms (*talas*). Various aspects of the characters and their emotions are elaborated in the same chapter. Thereafter, Nambiar explains the conjunction of dance and acting in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. Stage performance used for ritualistic enactments of the national epics is explained too. Another part explains the percussion challenges in the performance of special characters. Dance movements and their differences according to the characters are explained in the chapter ‘Kootiyattathile chareebhedhangal.’ The next chapter explains the prelude hymns sung by the *mizhavu* player before *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* performances to clear the stage.

Figure 3: P.K. Nambiar October 2020, granted by Hareesh Nambiar on April 2021.



In the following part, the *Manipravala* Prose – “Nambiar Tamizh” – is added to explain the oral presentation of “Anguliangam Koothu” by the *Nampyar* or the *mizhavu* player. This part contains the fifth act of “Ascharyochoodamani,” written by Shaktibadra in the 13th century AD. It’s significance results from the fact, that it was the first play ever to become a part of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. As the main character, Hanuman performs all parts in a performance lasting 12 days. The next chapter explains the costume and ornament-making methods required for various characters, which should be known by *mizhavu* players to differentiate them. The following chapter “Anubhandham” includes details about hand gestures (*mudras*), which are used to narrate the stories, and acting parts (*attangal*), special portrayals of characters such as the trickster

*Vidhooshakan*. It also mentions *Natya Shastra* affirmations related to *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, special presentations related to *Kuttu*, as well as data about the lifestyles of Kerala's *mizhavu* percussionists, who lived in the house of P.K. Nambiar. Sri Narayanan Nambiar's book analyses all aspects related to the art of playing the *mizhavu*.<sup>12</sup>

## NAMBIAR'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS DRUM

Sri P.K. Narayanan Nambiar is an indigenous player of the instrument *mizhavu*, as Sajith Vijayan told me during our interview in January 2021. Therefore, he can testify to the persistence of Nambiar's book concerning his care not to break the traditional ceremonial pursuances and disciplines of this art form. P.K. Nambiar perceives it as more than a percussion instrument; it is a deity. Consequently, the concentration and care for practicing and handling applications are explained in detail in the chapter 'Anubhandham.'

P.K. Nambiar emphasizes the artist's responsibilities in the last portion under the heading "Some Special Things the Nambiar Must Know about Koothu and Kootiyattam." Traditional habits and his analytical reflections are included in this section. *Mizhavu* is considered as a conception of God with various attributes rather than a "dead thing creating rhythm." This perspective runs like a thread through Narayanan Nambiar's words. The percussionist on stage is not merely a drummer but also a director, who knows and controls all activities and responsibilities throughout the play as well as in the green room and around the stage. Nambiar also gives clear instructions for a rhythmic *mizhavu talas* reciter – the required graceful versatility and the demanded insistence on practicing. To be born into Nambiar's ancestry is not sufficient to play *mizhavus* well; Nambiar emphasizes in his book, that intense practice, continuous studies, the capacity to be active in combination with a sense of responsibility are the qualities that shape *mizhavu* players: "*Mizhavu* has been handled by the Nambiaris with ritual devotion. It is their *kulathozhil* (community-profession). If they don't do it properly, their family and successors will be affected. They should keep in mind the rituals observed rigorously by the predecessors. The non-Nambiaris should play with an extreme devotion to the artistic content of Koodiyattam" (Bindu, 2013: 117).

## MIZHAVOLI BY KALAMANDALAM ESWARANUNNI

"Mizhavoli," written by Kalamandalam Eswaranunni (2010), is the second Malayalam book about *mizhavu*. The author's intention was to codify all subjects that must be studied by *mizhavu* students. Rhythmic applications, Sanskrit studies, and articles form the contents. To date, two editions have been published. This review introduces the second edition: a preface and foreword written by K.G. Paulose in the first edition are included in the first part of the second edition. Thereafter, a preface written by N.P Unni is adjoined. In the following chapter, K. Eswaranunni introduces the instrument *mizhavu* as well as its appropriate residency within a temple compound:

“ക്ഷേത്രത്തിലെ പഞ്ചപ്രസാദങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നായ നാട്യപ്രസാദത്തിലെ രംഗ പീഠത്തിൽ കൂതപസ്ഥാനത്തു ിരുന്നു നിത്യബ്രഹ്മചര്യം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ച് ഓങ്കാരത്തെകൊണ്ട് നാദബ്രഹ്മത്തെ ആരാധിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണെന്നാണ് ഈ ദേവവാദ്യത്തിന്റെ സങ്കല്പം.” (ഈശ്വരനൂണി, മിഴാവൊലി 2019 പേജ്-24).

[If a temple should become a "mahakshethra" (big temple) among other temples, it must fulfil certain requirements and arrangements. The temple should contain five types of buildings called "Panchaprasadhangal." One part inside the area is called "Nrithanatkshala" (dance-drama stage) alias "Koothambalam." This building is also known as "Natyaprasadham." Behind the screen of this building, there is a particular place to keep the instrument *mizhavu*, which is regarded as an

<sup>12</sup> Vijayan, Sajith 2021. Personal Interview among the authors.

unmarried celibate, who sits and worships the “Nadhabrahma” by enchanting “om.”] (Eswaranunni 2019: 24).

Preliminary lessons required for the study of percussion are given in the next chapter. The mnemonic syllables (*vaittari*) memorized by the instrument players are included in the following five chapters. The next six chapters provide general knowledge of the Sanskrit language needed by the percussionist. After these instructions, abstracts, theses, and interpretations of the epic *Ramayana* are included, which are required for the study of solo performance (*Kuttu*) and storytelling (*Padhakam*). The last chapters include stories of the epic *Mahabharata* in Sanskrit Verses (*Savyakyanam Panchalisabhadham Prabhandam*) and a story about *Shiva* from the *Shivapurana* (*Tripura Dhanam*).<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 4: K. Eswaranunni as *Padhakam* performer. Photo granted by Eswaranunni, March 2021.**

## SIGNIFICANCE OF MIZHAVU IN ESWARANUNNI’S WRITING

Sri Eswaranunni (figure 4) clarifies the germane perspective of his writing in the foreword: he offers a study book for all Kerala Kalamandalam *mizhavu* students ranging from the eighth standard to master’s degree students. In preparing this book, the author includes all subjects for memorization by *mizhavu* students as well as all requirements for language practice. At the outset, he includes general information about the performance art forms *Chakyar Kuttu*, *Padhakam*, Sanskrit verses, the play of the *mizhavu* drum, among others. The author gives simple explanations for the students who enjoy primary education in *mizhavu* and for all people interested in learning the basics about *mizhavu*.

In comparison with Narayanan Nambiar, the only living supreme traditional veteran among *mizhavu* practitioners, Sri Eswaranunni was the first outcaste *mizhavu* maestro. He served as guru to more than 90% of all contemporary *mizhavu* practitioners. While Narayan Nambiar’s book explains more about *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, *mizhavu*, *Kuttu*, its presentation, interrelations, and attributes for practitioners, Eswaranunni’s book converges on educational matters concerning the performance of *mizhavu* and the information about the language.

Asked about his personal way of drumming, he said that whatever problems arise, forget about them while drumming. The mind should observe the stage, the drummer should follow, whatever comes. He must concentrate his mind on that”. Eswaranunni never learnt *Thyambaka*, but when he is drumming on the stage, something automatic, spontaneous is coming, because he is concentrating on it. Something from his mind, from his Lord, is coming, he can think, about which way is better to drum, this way or that way. Concentration is the main thing for drumming, and his way is the same.<sup>14</sup>

Despite retiring, K. Eswaranunni is still actively involved in teaching, performing, and writing books. In recent years, he has published more than 11 books about the stories (*Prabhantas*) he performs as a *Kuttu* and *Padhakam* artist. The local newspaper reported about his “mission to

<sup>13</sup> Vijayan Sajith 2021. Personal Interview among the authors.

<sup>14</sup> Eswaranunni, K. 2021. Personal Interview among the authors, translated by Sajith Vijayan.

regain the lost popularity of the works of Malpathoor Narayana,” which are made public by the art forms.<sup>15</sup>

During our interview in 2021, K. Eswaranunni stated that he would stay at home and spend most of his time writing books because of the pandemic.



Figure 5: K. Eswaranunni being interviewed, 31 January 2021.

## AUTHOR K. SAJITH VIJAYAN AND THE MIZHAVU

I am Sajith Vijayan, officially known as Kalamandalam Sajith. I was born in Kerala and deal with a fascinating Kerala art form. I started my *mizhavu* studies at the Kerala Kalamandalam in 1999. Prior to my training and life as a contemporary *mizhavu* teacher at Kalamandalam, art forms like *Kuttu*, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, and *mizhavu* were familiar to me due to my life circumstances: my home place maintains many unique temple traditions and most hold festivals on specific days. Located near Thrissur – originally named Thrissivaperoor – the ‘cultural capital of Kerala,’ it is known for traditional arts and performing arts.

Anyone from this place knows about percussion instruments as well as performing art forms like *Kathakali*, *Kuttu*, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, and a special dance performance including songs, called ‘Thullal.’ During my childhood, I saw greenish make-up and colourful costumes. I loved *Kuttu* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and I tried hard to become the actor and “background scorer” of the art forms. In the case of *mizhavu*, I wanted to express my endless love towards the study of the instrument. I genuinely enjoyed my journey towards the heart of *mizhavu*. Its history, usage, customs, and traditions were my favourite research topic as a child. I adored the concept of altruistic performing arts, the presumption of the percussion instrument as *Deva* (God), and the resulting mundanity of God. I am, however, a person who believes that the backbone of the art is its customs. Following the scriptures should therefore be protected. The structure, attitude, and quality have been changing over recent decades. This kind of affinity for tradition always made me stand up against the malpractices about to happen in the usage, presentation, and explanation of the instrument *mizhavu* by fast-growing generational cohorts.

In contrast, I do not want this instrument to remain in isolation in the darkest caves covered with mould and rust. The performing stage should follow its own path of rightness; without doubt, the emergence of the art and the instrument’s core should be shared with interested audiences. Presentations should be created and protected, and the consumption of *mizhavu* in *Kuttu* and *Kuttiyattam* should not be limited to high-class audiences. Free orchestration should not only

<sup>15</sup> <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/books/books-news/-mizhavu-maestro-easwaranunni-pens-books-for-future-generation-1.5089491>, last accessed 19 February 2021.



happen as an experiment but also as a permanent feature. Over the last decade, *mizhavu* has shown its significance in various ways. Keeping traditions in mind, we must treat the *mizhavu* as embodied and involved instrument, not just as a stereotype-producing sound. Maintaining its pride will help this instrument to assume its deserved throne, supported by in-depth studies and mindful practices. According to these principles, I supervised the doctorate theses and publications written by Karin Bindu. An overview of her published research is described in the following chapter.



Figure 5 (left): K. Sajith Vijayan at Bammanur Bhagavathi Temple, April 2021. Figure 6 (right): Kūṭiyāṭṭam Performance “Subadradananjayam” with Kalamandalam artists at Bammanur Bhagavathi Temple, granted by Sajith Vijayan.

## PERCUSSION ART FORMS: ASPECTS OF PRODUCTION AND COMMUNICATION OF SOUTH INDIAN TALAS IN THE KŪṬIYĀṬṬAM BY KARIN BINDU

This book was written as a PhD thesis at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna, based on various field studies at the Kerala Kalamandalam; it was finally published in 2013. As the “last link” in the chain of the just presented *mizhavu* masters, I still feel far away from mastering the drum itself. I (figure 7) saw the drum in 2004 when I visited Kerala Kalamandalam for the first time. Before that, I had never seen an Indian percussion instrument played with full hands, which was comparable to African drums, which I had already practised for some years. The strange sound of the *mizhavu*’s copper body touched me inside and awoke my curiosity. When I learnt of its spiritual roots, ancient history, and ritualistic use, I decided to enrol at Kerala Kalamandalam as a pupil of K. Eswaranunni in 2005. My research focused primarily on South Indian musical rhythm systems, which I had already partly experienced by studying *Tablas* and *Mrdangam* – percussion instruments for classical North and South Indian music. Generally, I feel deeply connected to the bond between drums, healing, and spirituality in various cultures, but I “fell” for Indian drums in a special way in 1991. Since that time, their rhythms have provided certain internal energy and happiness, which I always wish to be part of my life.

When I discovered the underrepresentation of articles about *mizhavu* drummers in comparison to numerous studies and publications about the acting in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu*, I decided to include various aspects of the drummers’ ways of life and education in my book. Female *mizhavu* drummers are generally rare; nevertheless, I was lucky to be among K. Eswaranunni’s short-term pupils in 2005/2006. He has never rejected me because of my gender and even has accepted the presence of my children during tutorials and discussions. I was initiated into play the *mizhavu* in a ritualistic way but never reached the level of first stage performance (*arrangetam*). This would require a lot more practice in the community, which does not exist in Austria.

Since my PhD graduation, I have sometimes given lecture demonstrations about the *mizhavu*, have observed, produced publications, and followed the developments of my drumming brothers and teachers in the hope of intensifying my practical playing one day. Until then my travel *mizhavu* is resting in her place in front of my house shrine waiting for reactivation. I hope once more to be accepted by K. Eswaranunni as a pupil and want to thank him with all my heart, as well as his guru P.K. Nambiar, for all discussions and interviews.

K. Sajith Vijayan has helped me to understand various aspects of *mizhavu* drumming and drummers. He translated or answered my questions and supervised the creation of my book. I invited him twice to Austria to give lecture demonstrations at the University of Vienna and other institutions. Our collaboration has always been joyful, familiar, blessed, and informative. Every kind of occupation with South Indian drumming includes inner development in the mystic history and richness of Indian rhythms. I still intend to journey deeper into the knowledge of Indian drums, their rhythmic evolution, and the history of *mizhavu*.



**Figure 7: Karin Bindu, lecture demonstration at Natya Mandir, Vienna, May 2019 (photo courtesy: Eva Bräuer).**

In my book, written in German, I dedicated a comprehensive chapter to the *mizhavu* drum. Inspired by Mantle Hood (1982: 123–124), I titled it “Organology.” The title also honours the anthropomorphic qualities of the drum. The first chapter (Bindu, 2013: 155–160) relates to various classifications of the drum depending on its form, position, material, and references in different written resources such as the Tamil Epos *Shilappatikaram*, the *Natya Shastra*, and others. The following chapters (Bindu 2013: 160–170) describe the body of the *mizhavu*, the Malayalam nomenclature, and how its terms are identical to those for the human body. Moreover, they contain knowledge about the construction methods of the *mizhavu*. Kerala tourism provides some insights<sup>16</sup> into the physical construction, and P.K. Nambiar explained the rituals for the *mizhavu*, regarded as a pupil of Brahma (*brahmacari*). The sacred drum receives all Hindu rituals like humans except the marriage ritual.

The following chapters (Bindu, 2013: 170–188) give detailed information about the mnemonic syllables (*vayttari*), playing techniques, and sound qualities of the drum. Syllables connect the human breath with the movement of the drumming hands and contain the playing technique as well as the structure of the rhythm. *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* actors practice their movements with the same syllables, hence, why a performance with drummers would be possible without common rehearsals (although the quality of the performance would be reduced).

Positions of the drums and drummers as well as energy flow are described in the following chapters (Bindu, 2013: 193–197). The relation of the *mizhavu* to the deities (*devas*) forms the content of the last chapter dealing exclusively with the instrument (Bindu, 2013: 200–203).

## CONCLUSION

*Mizhavu*, a South Indian drum originally made of clay, has existed for more than 2000 years in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The functions, forms, and materials of the instrument changed over the

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCJfUW9M7DU>, last accessed 20 March 2020.

course of time. For 700–800 years, it has provided the principal sound atmosphere in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performances attached to temple theatres and to certain castes. The size and form of the instrument vary according to the size and form of the temple theatres, to guarantee the best sound quality. As an instrument for the deities (*deva vadyam*), the *mizhavu* pleases deities and humans alike, who participate in those performance art forms. *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Kuttu* performances – reenactments of stories from the national epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* – are regarded as visual sacrifices; therefore, all musicians, performers, and materials must be purified.

With instruments such as *edakka* (an hourglass shaped drum), *kurum kuzhal* (horn), *shanku* (conch), and *kuzhitalam* (cymbals), the *mizhavu* forms the five instruments (*panchavadyam*) of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. During recent decades, these art forms transcended the exclusivity of their performance by members of the *Chakyar*, *Nampyar*, and *Nambiar* castes. Today, the number of practitioners of all castes has increased and thereby provides sustainability. As a percussion instrument, the *mizhavu* is becoming more and more involved in orchestral temple performances (*thyambaka* and *melam*) in combination with percussion instruments such as the *thimila* drum, *centa* drum, gong, *kuzhal* (wind instrument), and *talam* (big cymbals). Contemporary artists are attached to more than eight *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* centres all over Kerala, some of which tour within and beyond India.

The retired *mizhavu* maestros P.K. Nambiar and K. Eswaranunni have written Malayalam books about the all-embracing art of performing as *mizhavu* drummers and *Chakyar Kuttu* and *Pathakam* artists to guarantee the survival and sustainability of the art and instrument. New articles are rare, while numerous posts on social media and YouTube channels by contemporary *mizhavu* drummers and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* actors spread its unique sound and performance beauty around the world. Interests in the historical, political, spiritual, poetical, dramatic, emotional, artistic, and aesthetic principles of the described art forms are pursued by Indian and international scientists, art lovers, and more than 100 practitioners in Kerala and abroad. Complex rhythmical arrangements provide limitless potential for development and exploration. K. Eswaranunni emphasizes the importance of the *mizhavu* drum. It should be heard and played everywhere in a manner that respects and honours its heritage and ritual requirements. In times of crises, such as the current pandemic, artists – deprived of performance possibilities – suffer the most. The state and the people should support artists and offer more opportunities for the survival of the art.

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# VINAY MISHRA AND THE ARTISTRY OF THE HARMONIUM

Lahiru Gimhana Komangoda [ලේඛන ශිල්පීන්ගේ] <sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Vinay Mishra is an accomplished Indian solo and accompanying harmonium player born and brought up in Benaras and currently residing in Delhi serving as a faculty member of the Department of Music, Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, University of Delhi. The rigorous training of both vocal and instrumental music under veteran Hindustani Music virtuosos, the academic and scholarly scope built up till the degree of PhD in Music, the realizations, and understandings on music must have conspicuously made an impact of his practice and artistry as a harmonium player. Harmonium was originated in the west and adopted by Indian musicians in the colonial era which was brought up to the present day through many artistic, cultural and political controversies, and obstacles.

This work focuses on discovering the insights of the harmonium art of Vinay Mishra. Hence, his academic background, musical training, musical career, his playing style as a soloist, general techniques and techniques of accompaniment, sense of machinery, perspectives on raga Taal, and thoroughly the tuning methods were studied in-depth through personal conversations and literature resources where it was observed that modern Hindustani harmonium artists favor a typical natural tuning method over the 12 equal temperaments of the common keyboard instruments. According to him, the stable sound of the harmonium was the reason to be vocal music- friendly in classical and light vocal music accompaniment which was only interrupted by the equal temperament earlier and was later overcome by the artists and harmonium makers.

The idea was also raised that apart from gaining the basic command of an instrument, a Hindustani instrumentalist may learn and practice all other aspects of Hindustani music from the teachers of other forms too. Vinay Mishra's thoughts of machinery, musical forms, compositions, applying Hindustani vocal, and plucking string instrumental ornamentations on the Harmonium were also reviewed.

## KEYWORDS

Harmonium, Hindustani music, Equal temperament, Natural tuning, Consonance

## INTRODUCTION

The harmonium was invented in Europe, and initially it was a foot bellowing instrument. The harmonium discussed in this paper is the hand bellowing harmonium, which is also identified as the Indian harmonium. The hand bellowing Indian harmonium is undoubtedly an adaptation of the foot bellowed Western harmonium by Indians. The modification of the hand-pumped harmonium was well compatible with the Indian setup of music performances as it allows the harmoniumist to be seated on the ground with other artists. In contrast, the number of octaves decreased up to 3, which generally cover the tonal range of an Indian singing composition and mono melodic expressions (attributed to Indian music) were carried out predominantly with one hand playing while the other engaged in the bellowing. Apart from these modifications, Ghose also added drone stops for accompanying classical music (Brockschmidt, 2003: 19). This harmonium began to replace the sarangi as the principal melodic accompaniment for Hindustani Music. Later, more advanced experimental modifications, such as scale changing and 'collapsible to a suit case' model, were added.

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Despite the appropriative measures made on the harmonium by Indian harmonium makers, there have been severe rejection and criticism on its usage in Indian music since the beginning of the 20th century. According to Rahaim (2011: 662; Abels, 2010), three major objections to the harmonium are as follows.

1. The harmonium cannot glide smoothly between discrete notes.
2. The tuning is wrong.
3. The harmonium is a Western instrument.

All these objections carrying acoustic, cultural, aesthetical, social, psychological, and political phenomena led the harmonium to be officially banned from Indian radio from 1940 to 1971 (Abels, 2010; Meddegoda, 2013). The violin as a Western instrument got adopted to Indian music far firmly than any other Western instrument but still provided less ground for such political controversy. This presentation will throw a light on how Dr. Vinay Mishra as a post-banning era-harmonium artist has overcome or attempted the objectional facts on the harmonium other than the ones caused in the social and political context.

## VINAY MISHRA – HIS LIFE AND CAREER

Born in Bihar to a middle-class Brahmin family, Dr. Mishra developed his absorption into music with the help of his family background. He took his training on the harmonium from several gurus (masters) of various disciplines as follows.

- 1) Ustad Mahatab Khan – harmoniumist
- 2) Pt. Appa Saheb Jalgaonkar – harmoniumist
- 3) Sanjaya Guha – sitarist
- 4) Pt. Ulhas Kashalkar – vocalist
- 5) Pt. Madhup Mudgal – vocalist
- 6) Dr. Ashwini Bhide – vocalist
- 7) Pt. Harish Tiwari – vocalist.

His debut performance as an accompanist come harmoniumist at a mass public concert was accompanying the famous Hindustani classical singer Ashwini Bidhe Deshpande took place in Banaras in 2001.

## ACQUIRING THE HARMONIUM

Acquiring the harmonium has been an accidental incident for Mishra.<sup>2</sup> Vinay Mishra obtained his bachelor's degree in Hindustani vocal music from Banaras Hindu University. He earned his

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<sup>2</sup> “It was an accident that I chose the Harmonium. I wanted to become a Vocalist. I took vocal training from Pt. Rajan and Sajan Mishra and Pt. Channu Lal Mishra. But during the year 1999–2000, while I was following my bachelor's degree, I suffered from laryngitis very badly that the doctors advised me to not to talk nor sing. Since then, the time of 2–3 years was a tough time for me. The music was inside me. It wanted to come out in any medium. My Grandfather used to play harmonium that I had been experiencing since my childhood. So, the harmonium had a soft corner in my heart. During the three years I practiced all my musicality on the harmonium 'cause I had no choice. I did not know any other instrument”. (Mishra & Komangoda, 2020). This incident tallies with the ideas of the modern writers such as Rahaim and Qureshi that the harmonium gained a swift acquiring by the Indian society

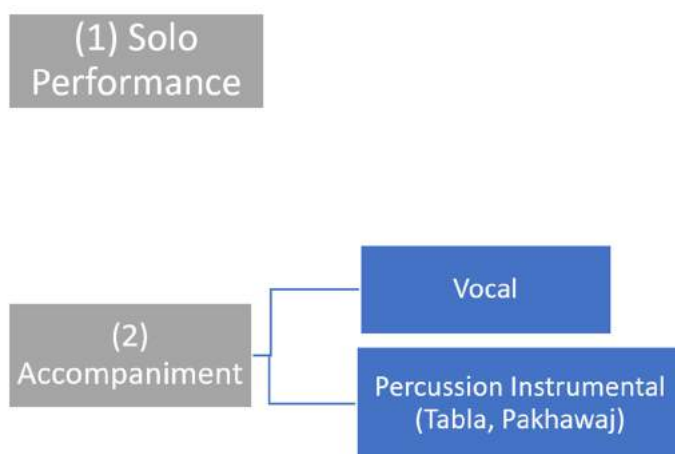
master's degree in the same discipline from Delhi University, and MPhil and PhD from Delhi University specializing the harmonium. He is currently serving as a guest lecturer in harmonium at the Department of Music, Delhi University.

Mishra believes that music is the same but the different disciplines may merely require practices of unique techniques (Mishra & Komangoda, 2020). This is proved on his own musical training under several masters of various disciplines such as vocal, sarangi, and sitar. Hence, he affirms that learning and practicing of ragas and talas, and acquiring Indian tonal intonation are the highest priorities for him (Sinha, 2017). According to him, there are two aspects that a harmoniumist has to cover in training. One is accompanying vocalists following their dynamics and singing style where all the glissandos, oscillations, and continuous tone are required (Mishra & Komangoda, 2020). Although the harmonium has been claimed to be incompatible with these dynamics, modern harmoniumists have overcome them with appropriative techniques that he, too, follows. The other is to cover the aspects of solo performances where high-speed movements of melodies and other musical ornamentations unique to instrumental music like 'Jala' and 'Jod alap' will be employed.

He believes that a harmonium solo performance should not follow the 'khyal' vocal style but its alap improvisation style helps in the improvisation of harmonium solo performance (Mishra & Komangoda, 2020). Apart from them, Mishra states that he has practiced his repertoire taking every key as the tonic of the keyboard and one who wishes to excel in the harmonium should also do so (Sinha, 2017).

## PLAYING STYLE

Vinay Mishra describes his performances mainly in two types (figure 1).



**Figure 1: Differentiation in performing types according to Vinay Mishra.**

### VOCAL ACCOMPANIMENT

In a vocal performance, he would follow the main vocal artist or artists mainly that would make a heterophonic texture of sound but still more resonating rather than clashing the sounds. The main artist would pause for some rest while the tabla meter is still running so that space will be filled by the harmonium accompanist. The harmonium accompanist will follow the main composition of the

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due to its quality of easy to make sound and the force it made for musical egalitarianism even though he hails from a musical family background.

vocalist and do some improvisation like ‘alaps’ and ‘taans,’ which are fast melodic improvisations until the main artist would give the sign that he or she is to start again.

Mishra says that he has about 30 harmoniums tuned to many keys (of the standard keyboard) in natural tuning that he would select one according to the requirement of the main artist’s desired tonic of the concert (mostly based on their gender). He mentions that there are also sets of two harmoniums tuned to the same key but having different tonal qualities to support different artists among the 30 harmoniums.

### PERCUSSION ACCOMPANIMENT

For Tabla and Pakhawaj percussion accompaniment, he would use a harmonium tuned to the key the main percussion instrument is tuned to. An introductory ‘alap’ of the particular raga will be played in the beginning. Thereafter, a metrical melodic loop called ‘nagma’ or ‘lehera’ will be played on the harmonium on which the main percussion artist will do the improvisation.

Throughout the performance in a particular ‘thala’, the ‘nagma’ will be employed on the same raga and normally there are three speeds a percussion recital done as ‘vilamba’ (slow), ‘madhya’ (mid), and ‘druta’ (fast) so the ‘nagma’ may have slight differences in the three speeds. Sometimes, he makes variations not breaking the metrical circle and the raga to enhance the beauty of the performance (Mishra & Komangoda, 2020).

### HARMONIUM SOLO PERFORMANCE

According to Vinay Mishra, a solo performance will follow the basic principles of any other performance including accompaniment but differ at points of its unique appliances like the set composition, speed, and improvising materials such as ‘Jala’ and ‘Jod.’ Vinay Mishra says that he is very much comfortable with the black keys of the keyboard that he uses the D sharp as the tonic for his solo performance. He is more into the ‘Gatkari’ style of playing which most of the plucking string instruments like sitar and sarod follow where rather shorter tones employed and speedy rhythmic improvisations done and no longer glissando parts done like vocal music.

Though the general techniques that a Hindustani music comprises such as ‘gamakas’ (oscillations), ‘meend’ (glissando), and ‘aandolan’ (slightly raising and allying the pitches) have been founded challenging for the harmonium. Vinay Mishra believes that a raga can still be well constructed without them so he manages his solo performance accordingly.

### PERSPECTIVES ON THE HARMONIUM MACHINERY

According to Mishra, the body of the harmoniums should be made with the 25–100 years seasoned Burma teak wood that impacts on the good sound resonance and keeps resistance to any weather as he mentions. He only uses **vertically** positioned two free reeds (figure 2) to set harmoniums.

According to him, vertically positioned reeds in contrast to the reeds positioned both vertically and horizontally provide balanced sound between the double reeds, and those harmoniums give a good height to the keyboard that makes the hands of the harmoniumist seated on the ground more comfortable in reaching it.





**Figure 2: View on the inner harmonium (picture courtesy: Vinay Mishra, Mishra, 2021).**

He preferred a harmonium with one ‘bass’ (informal term) set (lower, ex; middle octave A=220 Hz) and the other set ‘male’ (higher, ex; middle octave A=440 Hz) reed set to accompany a male singer while a ‘male–male’ double reed set harmonium for a female artist, which makes sense on his acoustical approach to the beauty of the accompaniment.

## TUNING

The harmoniums imported to India from the west were normally tuned to 12 equidistant intervals within an octave that Vinay Mishra thoroughly denies its compatibility for Indian intonation. Many musicians have engaged in experimental works in overcoming this challenge, and Ustad Abdul Kareem Khan has made the first trial of tuning a harmonium to Indian music (Sinha, 2017). Vinay Mishra’s natural tuning systems have a major principal of being directly or indirectly consonant to the tonic which is called the ‘Sa.’ His tuning system can be merely related to just intonation or pure intonation. He states that he has transposed D to the key D# on harmonium for the reason he finds it comfortable to play on the black keys.

Indian Note	Ratio	Mishra’s Tuning (Hz)	Key Name	12 ET Tuning (Hz)
Sa	1	220	A	220
Re	1x9/8	247.5	B	246.94
Ga	1x5/2	275	C#	277.18
Ma	1x4/3	293.33	D	293.67
Pa	1x3/2	330	E	329.63
<u>Dha</u>	1x5/3	366.666	F#	369.99
Ni	1x15/8	412	G#	415.3

**Figure 3: Table of comparison.**

According to Mishra, the tonic ‘Sa’ provides consonance basement to the major 3rd (Ga), 4th (Ma), and 5th (Pa). The 5th (Pa) provides the consonance basement to the major 2nd (Re) and major 7th (Ni) while the major 3rd (Ga) provides the basement for major 6th (Dha). Vinay Mishra’s tuning system can be demonstrated as follows, using the ratios on the frequencies of the notes of ‘Shudh Saptak’ (Major Scale) assuming A3=220 Hz as its tonic (figure 3).

Mishra mentions that other than the keys of the ‘shudh saptak’ he keeps the other five keys (‘vikrit swar’) as it is tuned to the TET system I explained in an earlier writing (Komangoda, 2020) which will be demonstrated as follows taking A3 as the tonic (figure 4).

Indian Note	Western Key	Frequency (Hz)
Komal Re ( <u>R</u> )	A#	233.08
Komal Ga ( <u>G</u> )	C	261.63
Teevra Ma ( <u>M</u> )	D#	311.13
Komal Dha ( <u>D</u> )	F	349.23
Komal Ni ( <u>N</u> )	G	392

Figure 4: Table of comparison in absolute frequencies.

## CONCLUSION

Vinay Mishra getting trained under many gurus in various disciplines to develop his harmonium playing shows that uniformity of the elements of Hindustani music makes less boundaries to the medium of its expression or either some of Indian instruments and voice have no significance to each other in their repertoires.

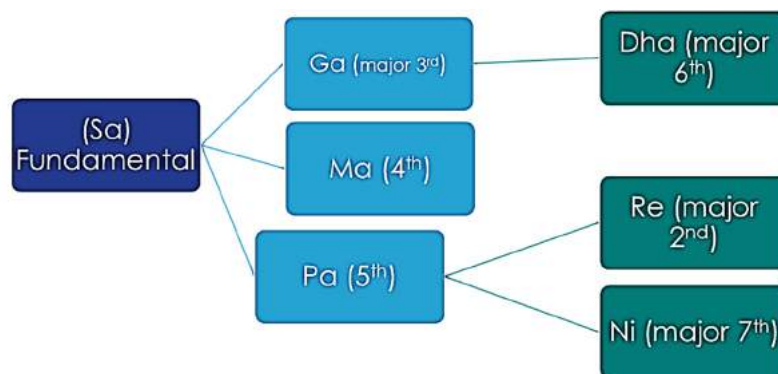
The tuning method on the major scale tones that Mishra follows shows a link to the harmonic series of the fundamental tone (Sa in this case) which can be considered as just intonation or pure intonation tuning.

But according to the viewpoint of intonation of Indian musicians including Vinay Mishra, an idea of primary and secondary fundamental tones can be found. As the ‘Sa’ acted as the fundamental tone for Ga, Ma, and Pa, Pa constructed out of Sa acted as the fundamental (secondary) tone for Re in the same Sa–Pa relation and Ni on Sa–Ga relation. Ga acted as the fundamental (secondary) tone for Da on Sa–Ma relation. This will be simplified in the following chart.

One major challenging outcome of this tuning (figure 5) is that one harmonium will sound well-tuned only for the melodies that take its main key as the tonic of the harmonium. Therefore, any other key on the keyboard can neither be taken as the tonic nor as transposing melodies. This was the main reason that Vinay Mishra had to keep a number of harmoniums which is more than 12.

The techniques like oscillation and glissandi are still not well attempted that the harmonium artists justify not doing so. But the harmonium has faced no less demand on the classical music stage.

The natural tuning system of Vinay Mishra strongly supports the Hindustani intonation but less attention has been given to Vikrit tones can be a minus credit to the tuning system which in comparison with the 22-shruti-harmonium tuning system implemented by Vidyadar Oke sounds like a more advanced system of tuning perfectly supportive to Indian intonation (Oke & Singh, 2020).



**Figure 5: Overview of tonal relationships.**

The seven tones of the major scale show that closer relations through the harmonics of the fundamental tone in contrast to the other five (vikrit swar) in a chromatic scale can be the reason for Vinay Mishra to pay less attention of positioning the vikrit swar.

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## APPENDIX – PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MUSICIAN



An intimate concert with Pandit Ashis Senguptaji on tabla, Torvi, Vinay Mishra on harmonium and Torvi's disciple Shiddartha Belmannu was held at the Auburn Lakes Clubhouse in The Woodlands. Photo by courtesy of Jawahar Malhotra.<sup>3</sup>



Profile picture of the young Vinay Mishra playing on harmonium and singing. (Photo open access).

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<sup>3</sup> Sources can be compared to <http://www.indoamerican-news.com/over-the-hills-and-valleys-of-vocal-music-with-a-maestro/>, last accessed 24 November, 2021.

# STUDY ON 24 JIELING DRUMS AS URBAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN MALAYSIA

Yang Yunxi [杨蕴茜] and Chow Ow Wei [曹爾威]<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The 24 solar terms, a knowledge system incorporated in the East Asian lunisolar calendar, reflect a typical agricultural life shaped by the astronomical and phenological nature in ancient China. The UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage embodies this Chinese tradition and culture. It is also commonly observed among Chinese diasporas in other parts of the world. Since 1988 when Tan Chai Puan and Tan Hooi Song established 24 Jieling Drums [二十四节令鼓] in Johor Bahru, Malaysia by exploring this Chinese traditional heritage, artistic performances of this vibrant music genre have effectively transmitted drumming aesthetics in Malaysian urban landscape into the Chinese cultural sphere for over three decades. This study explores a characterised link between this millennia-old Chinese cultural heritage and 24 Jieling Drums as an urban cultural landscape in Malaysia, and discusses several issues on the cultural elements applied in a diversified land through the narrative.

## KEYWORDS

Solar terms, 24 Jieling Drums, Malaysia, Chinese tradition, Urban culture

## INTRODUCTION

The 24 solar terms [二十四节气] are a body of knowledge developed in ancient China through observations on the annual movement of the Sun. Being not only an almanac to guide farming activities, they also become a cultural symbol of the East Asian continent, which has enriched cultural and spiritual life with diverse historical legends, folklore, and scientific discoveries. This Chinese heritage has inspired the birth of 24 Jieling Drums, an art form invented in Malaysia which has emerged as a cultural representation for Malaysian Chinese culture. It incorporates the 24 solar terms into the design of drumming rhythms and choreography that are closely related to agricultural life. It becomes a form of performing arts as popular as the lion dance in Malaysia, while numerous studies indicate that troupes of 24 Jieling Drums are established not only in Malaysia but also in other countries. Interestingly, local drummers of this tropical country may have not experienced seasonal changes as reflected by the 24 solar terms and the farming life in the bygone era. Their interpretation of the intended cultural meaning behind the 24 Jieling Drums is rather a curious question to ponder on.

This study mainly contains a comprehensive literature review as a preliminary survey before entering the ethnographic field. The first part elaborates the 24 solar terms and their significance in the Chinese culture, while the second part narrates a brief history of the art form, its Malaysian context, and how it links with the solar terms. Primary data sources include the existing literature from magazines, books, and newspapers, while additional data gathered by an author whose first-hand experience in administering the activities of a drum troupe in 2006–2007 are included as a supplementary narrative. The authors hope to explore the connection between the 24 solar terms

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and 24 Jieliang Drums and attempt to trace the characterised link between a cultural heritage of the ancient Chinese agrarian society and an urban cultural landscape in Malaysian modern society.

## THE 24 SOLAR TERMS AND THEIR ORIGIN

The 24 solar terms are a set of 24 periods in equal length in the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar synchronised with seasonal changes according to the measurement of the Sun–Earth distance. They are not just a knowledge system but also play a crucial role as a divination guide or almanac in East Asian customs. During the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage on 30 November 2016 held in Addis Ababa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed the 24 solar terms as Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, n.d.). This millennia-old knowledge system that integrates both astronomy and phenology<sup>2</sup> has been referred to as China’s ‘fifth invention’ by the World Meteorological Organisation. Although the solar terms are not strictly associated with the climatic influence, including Earth’s rotation, revolution, and atmospheric circulation, as well as solar radiation, they still reflect the ancient Chinese understanding of natural phenomena which characterise Chinese climatic characteristics of the four distinctive seasons and the synchronisation of the high temperature and rainfall (Wu, 2019).

Adapted by the ancient Chinese people as an almanac signifying climate changes in a lunisolar year, the 24 solar terms incorporate astronomical knowledge and characterised agricultural activities. This divination guide is rather unique to East Asian culture, such as the significance of the Mayan calendar is to the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilisation. During the Warring States period (481–403 BCE), the solar terms were developed and applied not only in agriculture but also in medicine, politics, and folklore. The theory of 24 solar terms continued to mature during the Qin and Han dynasties (221–220 BCE; Shen, 2001: 55). The inheritance of this ancient knowledge was made possible due to the following reasons:

1. A region must be in a geographical zone that has observable climatic and phenological periods such as annual seasons as the 24 solar terms were developed through observing astronomical activities and describing climate changes. Otherwise, it could not function accurately as an almanac (Xu, 2017: 96). In China, the lower and middle plains of the Yellow River meet this condition exactly, and therefore this region is the origin of Chinese agriculture.
2. Cultural bearers of the solar terms should possess a rather philosophical cultural foundation. Considering China as a land that is predominantly agrarian for thousands of years, an agrarian society, however, is not efficient enough to incubate the concept of the solar terms. There was an uninterrupted epistemological system of literature, philosophy, and document archives that helped sustain the inheritance and development of knowledge. The creation of the solar terms combined a highly developed agricultural civilisation with Zhuangzi’s [庄子] view of ‘harmony’ between man and nature. Therefore, it was the unique idea of ‘harmony’ that developed a philosophy of respecting nature and a willingness to take advantage of it all (Xu, 2017: 97).
3. The prerequisite in astronomy has formed a corpus of knowledge to be relied on. The creation and application of the solar terms required a deep understanding of astronomy. Historically, Chinese scholars have been more enthusiastic about exploring the various laws of Sun–Earth movements to guide daily routine and lifestyles, while the 24 solar terms were utilised as a systematic way to organise astronomical observations. During the Spring and Autumn periods (770–221 BCE), a sundial, which is an ancient chronological instrument to measure the shadow of the Sun, was used to determine the four primary solar terms of

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<sup>2</sup> Coined by Charles Moran in 1853 (Demarée & Chuine, 2006: 815), *phenology* is the study of cyclical events that occur during an organism’s life cycle, and how these events are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations of the climate and environment. Furthermore, it affects the abundance and distribution of organisms, the productivity of ecosystem services, the structure of food webs, and the global water and carbon cycles (USA National Phenology Network, n.d.). Among the research fields that use phenological observations today are past climate reconstruction, climate change impact assessment, and climate change management (Demarée & Chuine, 2006: 820).

winter solstice or *dongzhi* [冬至], summer solstice or *xiazhi* [夏至], spring equinox or *chunfen* [春分], and autumn equinox or *qiufen* [秋分]. Through observations under the noonday glare, the day with the shortest shadow in a sundial is *xiazhi* and the day with the longest is *dongzhi*, while a moderate length of the shadow is observed during *chunfen* or *qiufen* (Cui, 2009:162).

4. The nature of the political system established since ancient China helped in keeping the custom alive. Since the political unification during the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE), a custom that celebrates festivals based on the solar terms was established and continued to be consumed until today (Xu, 2017: 98).

Therefore, the unique geographical locality, the profound farming culture and thoughts, the advanced astronomical knowledge, and the nature of the Chinese political system have contributed to the complete system of the 24 solar terms as demonstrated at present.

## THE 24 SOLAR TERMS IN AGRICULTURAL CIVILISATION

During the long history of agricultural activities, ancient Chinese placed great importance on the concept of *tianshi* [天时]. While it has different connotations in various contexts, in this discussion, it refers to the changes of weather in certain time cycles, such as annual seasons. In ancient Chinese societies that were mainly self-sufficient by means of agriculture, *tianshi* affected every person regardless of their social classes (Chen, 2011: 125). During the Northern Wei dynasty [386–534 CE], Jia Sixie [賈思勰] compiled ‘Qimin Yaoshu [齐民要术],’<sup>3</sup> an ancient Chinese agricultural text, which explained that:

“Follow the appropriateness of the season, consider well the nature and conditions of the soil, then and only then least labour will bring best success. Rely on one’s own idea and not on the orders of nature, then every effort will be futile” (Shi, 1982: 32).

This phrase further confirmed the importance of *tianshi* in Chinese agrarian civilisation. In Chinese vocabulary, *tianshi* can be explained with separate terms of *tian* [天] and *shi* [时]. In the agricultural context, *tian* refers to agro-meteorological conditions, while *shi* means changes that reflect all seasons and weather (Zhang, 2012: 33). Seasonal changes have direct impacts on the growth, development, and maturation of crops, which leads to the need for an accurate study on the *tianshi*. Moreover, different climatic conditions have different effects on crops (Chen, 2011: 127).

To calculate *tianshi* accurately, the Chinese used a traditional lunisolar calendar that contains 4 seasons, 12 months, 24 solar terms, and phenology that are calculated based on the position of the Sun around the ecliptic. According to Chinese astronomers, the 24 solar terms that have been recorded in ancient literature are based on strict scientific calculations (Wu, 2016: 21). It contains a diversity of terrestrial climates caused by the changing relative position of the Sun on the ecliptic in a calendar year, which is divided into 24 equal periods (Cui, 2009: 162). Each period was named specifically as a solar term (Figure 1). In the Northern hemisphere, a solar term rotates from *lichun* [beginning of spring 立春] to *yushui* [rain water 雨水], *jingzhe* [insects awakening 惊蛰], *chunfen* [spring equinox 春分], *qingming* [fresh green 清明], *guyu* [grain rain 谷雨], *lixia* [beginning of summer 立夏], *xiaoman* [lesser fullness 小满], *mangzhong* [grain in ear 芒种], *xiazhi* [summer solstice 夏至], *xiaoshu* [lesser heat 小暑], *dashu* [greater heat 大暑], *liqiu* [beginning of autumn 立秋], *chushu* [end of heat 处暑], *bailu* [white dew 白露], *qiufen* [autumnal equinox 秋分], *hanlu* [cold dew 寒露], *shuangjiang* [first frost 霜降], *lidong* [beginning of winter 立冬], *xiaoxue* [light snow 小雪], *daxue* [heavy snow 大雪]; *dongzhi* [winter solstice 冬至], *xiaohan* [lesser cold 小寒], and finally *dahan* [greater cold 大寒] (UNESCO, 2016).

In agricultural practice, solar terms serve as an almanac with instructive meanings. This almanac guides farmers on what and when to do the farming. For example, *lichun* is the first solar term and represents the beginning of spring when all living things revive and the temperature, sunshine, and rainfall tend to rise or increase; the weather of *lixia* is very suitable for crops because the

<sup>3</sup> The book title has been translated as “Essential Farming Skills of the People of Qi” (Li Wenhua, and Zhang Renwu, 2001: 26).

temperature rises significantly with more thunderstorms; *liqiu* is a time of harvest when the temperature starts to drop gradually; and *lidong* marks the end of farming, and farmers begin to manage the storage of crops after harvesting (Cao, 2017). Furthermore, solar terms are widely used in farming proverbs that sum up the long-standing practices in farming as useful guidance in agricultural activities as well as a daily routine. For instance, ‘planting melons and beans around *qingming*’ [清明前后，点瓜种豆] instructed farmers to sow melon seeds and beans when the temperature rises with increasing rainfalls around *qingming*.

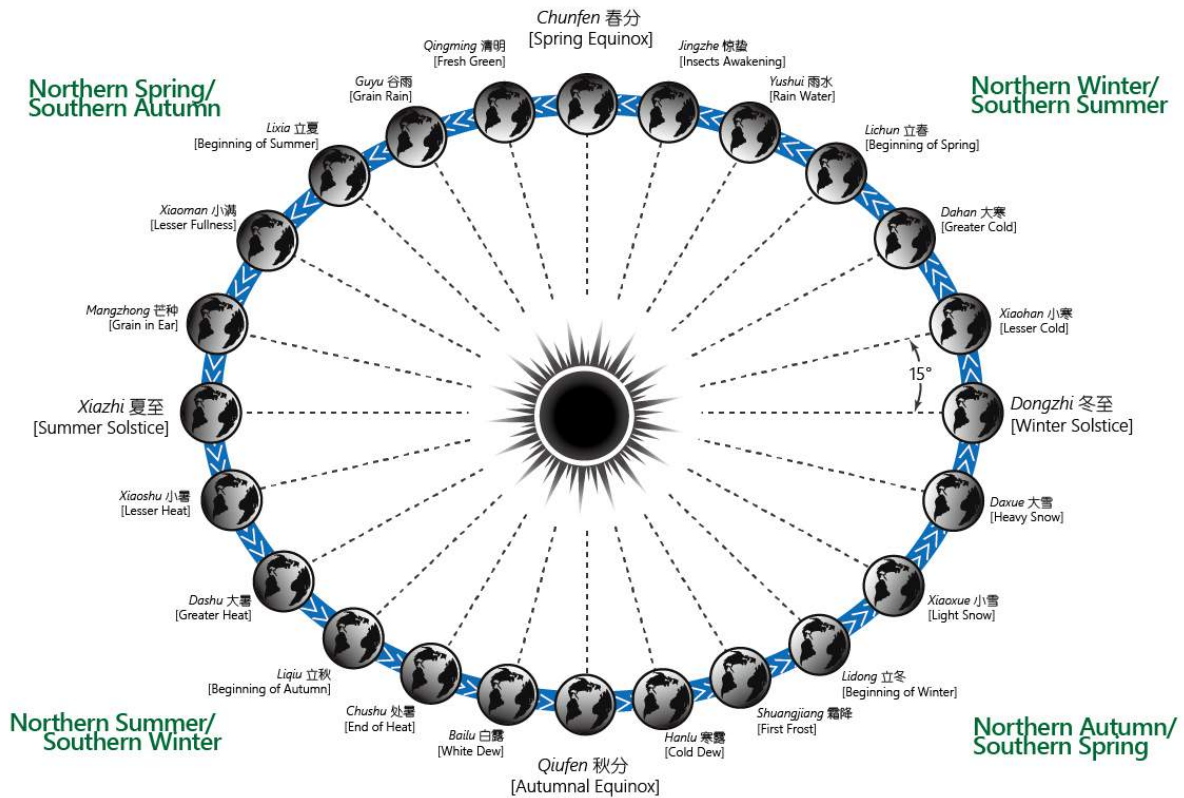


Figure 1: The relationship between 24 solar terms and Earth’s position in its orbit during a lunisolar calendar year (drawing by Yang Yunxi).

## THE 24 SOLAR TERMS AND CHINESE URBAN FOLK CULTURE

The integration of the 24 solar terms in human activities has given rise to a range of folk cultures. Folk culture is the behavioural language and patterns regulated by people over a long period of time in work and social practices. In other words, it means that the rules of behaviour are created and observed by common people (Zhou, 2015: 145). Over the centuries, folk activities related to certain festivities had become part of folk culture. For instance, during the late Qing dynasty (1840–1912 CE), the custom of ‘spring ox beating’ [打春牛] was practiced all over China. Clay sculptures of an ox and a goblin called Mangshen [芒神] were made on the day of *lichun*, which marked the arrival of springtime. After a magistrate presided over the ceremony of ‘spring ox beating’ with a colourful whip, the folks would compete to grab home some of the clay pieces. This ritual signified a good harvest in the year (Xiao, 2015: 13). This folk custom is a precursor for the arrival of the spring season and farming is about to begin. Besides, common people usually hang a picture of ‘spring ox beating’ during *lichun*, which becomes one of the popular new-year paintings (Figure 2).





Figure 2: Spring ox beating (Han & Wang, 1998: 42).

Apart from the above example, there are many other customary activities related to agronomical timing, such as the Tomb Sweeping Day during *qingming*. Since the social system in ancient China was based on the farming system, agricultural practices were ingrained in many Chinese customs. However, the use of modern technology has vastly changed modern agricultural practices. As most people do not need to farm in their daily lives, it became harder to associate customs with 24 solar terms (Zhang & Tian, 2017: 1170). Nevertheless, the solar terms are still an integral part of modern Chinese culture through written and oral transmission and continue to influence the lifestyle of modern Chinese. Despite the decline of agricultural civilisation, folk cultures and 24 solar terms are still well-preserved and ingrained in people's awareness of health and wellness nowadays (Shang & Zhou, 2015). In the book entitled 'The Regimen of Huangdi Neijing and Twenty-four Solar Terms' [黄帝内经二十四节气养生法], a sum of knowledge about healthcare is introduced with connections with the solar terms.

## CHINESE COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, West Malaysian population records showed that Chinese merchants and envoys visited the Malacca Sultanate in the early 15th century. After the British occupied Penang in 1786, the Chinese population surged. A similar phenomenon was observed in Malaya after the British effectively colonised the area. There have been four stages of Chinese migration:

1. Before 1786, Chinese in Malacca were mainly merchants;
2. From 1786 to 1921, many Chinese migrants who settled in Malaya worked in a variety of professions, such as traders, carpenters, farmers, miners, and labour force;

3. The third phase lasted from 1921 to 1947 with an interesting piece of information: in 1933–1938, the Alien Ordinance implemented in Malaya restricted adult males from immigrating except women and children as to better balance the gender demography in the Chinese population;
4. The last phase is from 1947 to 1990 when there was a natural increase in population in West Malaysia. Chinese migrants during this period also tend to migrate to Singapore, Australia, and the United States (Lim et al., 1998: 200–209).

There are various reasons to explain Chinese migration throughout history, and these include economic factors, political turmoil in the homeland, and maritime development (Zeng, 1984: 19–43). Chinese migrants carry different dialects, occupations, customs, and habits. Demographically, the Chinese in West Malaysia can be divided into a few dialectic groups: from 1911 to 1980, the Hoklo people made up the Chinese majority and were followed by the Hakkas, the Cantonese, and finally the Teochew. These major dialectic groups accounted for 90% of the total Chinese population, and this situation has been maintained since 1921 (Lim et al., 1998: 213). According to the official statistics, the total population of Malaysia is estimated as 32.75 million in 2021. The *bumiputera* (which consists of the Malays and indigenous ethnics) accounted for more than half of the population (69.7%); the Chinese represented a bigger minority population constituting 22.5%; the Indians and other ethnic groups occupied only 6.8% and 1.0% of the population, respectively (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2021).

Although the Chinese are deemed a minority in the population of Malaysia, much evidence shows that folk culture is persisted as a carrier for transmitting the Chinese culture, and traditional festivities are largely important to the Chinese in Malaysia. Soo (1994) pointed out that the Chinese in Malaysia have only inherited not all but some of the traditional Chinese festivals. Some of these festivals have retained their original spirit, while others have been changed due to differences in the geographical locality and other factors, thus creating a festival with many local characteristics (Soo, 1994: 2). Of all the festivals celebrated by the Chinese in Malaysia, Lunar New Year<sup>4</sup> is the most important festivity. A month before Lunar New Year, families are busy with preparations for the New Year: buying new clothes for children and cooking local delicacies such as *kuih bakul*. On New Year's Eve, special rituals of ancestral worship, a reunion dinner, red envelope giving, and *shou sui* [守岁] are still practiced (Soo, 1994: 6). Over time, the Chinese culture has generally retained the spirit and essence of tradition in the Sinosphere; but due to the unique nature of the locality, it is often contextualised according to local circumstances, especially due to social, political, or climatic influences (Lew, 2012: 35).

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF 24 JIELING DRUMS IN MALAYSIA

Chinese drums have a long-standing history and culture. There are a wide variety of drums, including *yaogu* [腰鼓], *yugu* [渔鼓], and *huapengu* [花盆鼓]. The close connection between a drum and its local cultural heritage where it was originally manufactured shaped the characteristics of the drum carries. In ancient China, a clay block was used to make early drums, which were mainly used for wars, festivals, and labour. 'I-Ching', or the 'Book of Change', recorded the accounts of people who used drum beating as signals to attack their enemies or to retreat (Ji, 2017: 104). This proved that drums were used as instruments to accompany songs and dances when people wept for their defeat or sang for their victory. This custom spread to Chinese neighbouring regimes together with the Chinese drums. According to the archaeological evidence, there were up to 30 records with mentions about drums in the ancient texts excavated from the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) (Sun, 2015: 4). In the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), music performance that combined drums and dance was rather popular, especially the *banguwu* [般鼓舞]. Drums were laid flat on the ground as performers danced and sang on them while being accompanied by chimes, small drums, and other plucked chordophones (Pu, 2013: 203). Between the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–

<sup>4</sup> The Lunar New Year is celebrated by Chinese descendants throughout the major diasporic communities of Southeast Asia, Europe, and Canada. In Canada, it is one of the biggest celebrations that are equally important as Christmas and Hanukkah. On 1 June 2016, the Canadian Parliament recognised the Lunar New Year as an official holiday in the country so that the festivity can be celebrated by Canadians of all backgrounds (Bonikowsky, 2012).

589 CE), culture bearers from the Central Plains (the lower and middle regions of the Yellow River) and the Western regions often interacted, which led to the development of a new type of drum called *jiegu* [羯鼓]; it later gained much popularity during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). During Song (960–1279), Yuan (1271–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1636–1912) dynasties, drums were not only utilised widely in songs, dances, and theatrical works but also combined with other musical instruments to create musical sound with local timbres, such as Xi’an wind and percussion ensemble [Xi’an *guyue* 西安鼓乐], Xingjiang hand drum [新疆手鼓], and waist drums in Northern Shaanxi [陕北腰鼓]. In modern times, Chinese drums were distributed through modern waves of the Chinese migration southbound to Southeast Asia as common people in China sought after a better living within a diasporic community (Zhuo & Cai, 2016: 101).



**Figure 3: Tan Chai Puan (left) and Tan Hooi Song. The date of the photography is unknown (Shen, 2020).**

Although Malaysia is deemed as a country with a highly diversified environment in ethnicity, culture, and religiosity, the complexity of ethnic politics and the need for cultural identity and inheritance have enriched the conditions of the establishment of 24 Jieling Drums. In 1988, at the opening ceremony of the 9th National Chinese Dance Festival, the sonorous beats of nine drums have inspired Tan Chai Puan [陈再藩], a Malaysian Chinese literatus, to create his artistic and cultural masterpiece. He envisaged a large drum formation with the concept of ‘harmony’, which embodies 24 single-skin lion drums that represent the 24 solar terms with bold calligraphy of each solar term engraved on the instrument body. Therefore, the drums received the name ‘24 Jieling Drums’<sup>5</sup>, as *jieling* [节令] denotes the customary festivities paralleling the solar terms. This initial idea was supported by Tan Hooi Song [陈徽崇], a Malaysian Chinese artist who composed music for the drums. The combination of their ideas created a complete form of 24 Jieling Drums as performing arts (Onn, 2011: 11; Figure 3).

Tan Hooi Song (1947–2008) can also be considered an important figure of Chinese music in Malaysia. He was born in 1947 and migrated from China to Malaya at the age of 6. He was a Malaysian musician who has contributed considerably to the development of local music. He once expressed a metaphor that as sports are the art of physical education or physique and music is the art of emotions or will, the school must be responsible for the education of the next generation. Therefore, he spent much time promoting the music clubs in schools. In the 1970s and 1980s, he wrote numerous poems and songs and was active in the Chinese education movement in Malaysia.

<sup>5</sup> The English-translated terminology for this art form is rather not standardised. The drums received an official name as ‘24 Festive Drums’ since 2009, but within 30 years, this art form was also known as ‘24 Season Drums’ and ‘24-drum Ensemble’ (Siu, 2020: 26). Not many literatures written in the English language have acknowledged the formalisation of this art form (Chan, 2009; Chan, 2013; Nithyanandan, 2015; Mastusky & Tan, 2017). Due to the difficulty to translate the Chinese term *jieling*, which does not entirely fit into known English terminologies such as *festive*, *season*, or *solar term*, this study rather adopts the translation as ‘24 Jieling Drums’ in order to instil the awareness of the context in the Chinese term *jieling*.

One of his major achievements was the establishment of 24 Jieling Drums (Akademi Kewartawanan & Informasi Taima, 2013).

Tan Chai Puan, 68 years old, is genealogically from Chaozhou, Guangdong Province. He is a renowned poet and a strategist of cultural activities in Malaysia since the 1980s, typically performing the roles of programme planner, coordinator, or curator. He actively promotes traditional Chinese culture in Malaysia, ‘packaging’ the presentation in a novel way for the appreciation of young people (Chinese Who’s Who Society, 2014).

In the beginning, Tan Hooi Song created a set of basic drum scores and techniques for 24 Jieling Drums, which used many of the symbolic meanings of traditional Chinese culture. For example, the drum rhythm of ‘Dong Nan Xi Bei’ [东南西北] describes the scene of ‘one hundred flowers in full blossom of spring’, a cheering crowd that celebrates the Spring Festival and behavioural symbols of agricultural praxis such as *chayang* [插秧], *shouge* [收割], *dagu* [打鼓], and *huanqing* [欢庆]; it can thus stand as a repertoire for flower markets and temple fairs (Onn, 2009: 243). On 12 June 1988, 24 Jieling Drums took its form at the Old Temple of Johor in Johor Bahru, by incorporating shigu [狮鼓, literally lion drum), the solar terms, and calligraphy into lion drum sets. Meanwhile, the world’s first troupe of 24 Jieling Drums was formally founded in Foon Yew High School in the same year.

The drums used in the 24 Jieling Drums are the southern lion drums, which are generally used for conducting and accompanying the lion dance. The southern lion drum is a single-sided membranophone made of buffalo skin, wooden boards, bamboo circles, nails, and black and red lacquer. This single-skinned lion drum, also known as *jinshengzao* [金声造], is made by a century-old company in Kaiping City, Guangdong Province, China. The drums generally have a diameter of 1.8 feet (Xu & Tian, 2016). Tan Chai Puan pointed out that the traditional culture left behind by their ancestors was rich and colourful. Therefore, 24 Jieling Drums is an inheritance and creation of the Chinese culture. For the younger generation to better appreciate the traditional culture, there is a need to constantly ‘innovate the culture’ and ‘package’ in a contemporary way (Hu, 2016: 30). Tan Chai Puan once spoke of this idea in a documentary:

“The performance of drums comes in two forms. We can call it ‘drum dance’, (it) means that the drum is a part of the dance. The other form is ‘drum music’, (and) it is a kind of musical performance. The festival drums consist of the characteristic of ‘drum dance’ and try to achieve for the higher level of drum music” (Leonghoe Workshop, 2009a).

“In my personal opinion, teenagers (are) so attracted to 24 (Jieling) Drums, because everyone can design for the drum scores... We hope that we can show our (cultural) concept (and) a stronger face through the performance of playing the drums” (Leonghoe Workshop, 2009b).

To young people, one of the most attractive features of 24 Jieling Drums is its flexibility. There is no fixed form in the performance, and drummers are free to create their compositions by incorporating foreign musical elements based on their interpretation.



Figure 4: 24 Jieling Drums with a sound adsorbing mat (photograph by Yang Yunxi).

The popularity of 24 Jieling Drums is deemed phenomenal since its establishment, making it gradually an equivalent cultural symbol for the Chinese in Malaysia. It is nowadays common for institutions, corporates, and community organisations of the Chinese in Malaysia to patronise a drum troupe of such that can contribute cultural performance for social functions and during festive times, while it has also been a prevailing trend for decades that almost every Chinese national-type or Chinese-medium school in Malaysia owns a drum troupe which is active in performance. Most drummers at schools, demographically aged 7–18 years, are trained by engaged, professional coaches during the extracurricular hours. When getting mature, they are selected by the school to perform publicly. Years later, many of them carry on their engagement in their university troupes that were formed in most public and private universities in Malaysia, while some of them turn out as coaches who return to teach drumming at their alma maters. The repertoire used in a drum troupe is usually compositions arranged by a coach who plays the mastermind and who materialises cultural concepts, musical ideas, choreography, costume, as well as the visual effects in performance. The coach usually uses a music score with drum notation, which is sometimes a new composition (Figure 5), but drummers are required to learn memorising the music finally. It is common to observe the performance of drum troupes in related concerts and competitions in West Malaysia, especially in Johor Bahru<sup>6</sup> (Figure 7 and Figure 8). In a Chinese-majority city such as George Town, Penang, public performances of 24 Jieling Drums are omnipresent during official functions or Chinese festive events (Figure 6 and Figure 7).

**Figure 5:** A composition by Quah Beng Chye [柯明财] in 2019, dedicated to 24 Jieling Drums (Quah Beng Chye, open source).

<sup>6</sup> Located in the Southern end of Peninsular Malaysia that is accessible by visitors from the Singaporean border through a 1.056-kilometre causeway, Johor Bahru has many inseparable connections with Singapore. Hundreds of thousands of Malaysians commute from Johor Bahru to Singapore on the daily basis, while there is an increasing number of Singaporeans buying landed properties in Johor Bahru. With the commencement of Iskandar Malaysia as the southern development corridor in the Johor state, the Johor Bahru—Singapore region has been coined as the next Shenzhen—Hong Kong financial hub in Southeast Asia (Wan, 2015). Culturally, it is reported that almost all Chinese in Johor Bahru grew up with watching Chinese programmes of Singapore television stations (Leung et al, 2015).



**Figure 6:** A drum troupe from Foon Yew High School in ‘Huiju’ [匯聚], a thematic concert held in Foon Yew High School on 8 December 2006 (photography by Chow Ow Wei).



**Figure 7:** A drum troupe from Penang Chinese Girls’ High School in ‘Huiju’ on 8 December 2006. The school is one of the rarest in Malaysia to feature all-female drummers in a troupe (photography by Chow Ow Wei).



**Figure 8:** Penang Miaohui [檳城庙会] or the official Chinese New Year celebration is one of the major functions in Malaysia with a constant showcase of 24 Jieling Drums. This scene depicts the setup for guest arrivals in Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, George Town, Penang, on 24 February 2007 (photography by Chow Ow Wei).



**Figure 9: Young drummers from Chung Ling Private High School and SJK (C) Wen Khai (opposite rows) stood by for the opening show in Penang Miaohui on 24 February 2007 (photography by Chow Ow Wei).**

Hands Percussion [手集团], the first Malaysian professional drum group derived from 24 Jieling Drums, attempts to transform the community-based performance of 24 Jieling Drums into a professional theatrical show while adding new elements to illuminate on-stage intercultural interactions (Hands Percussion, 2016). Established in 1997, the troupe is renowned in the Kuala Lumpur art scene for its innovative and avant-garde approach in drumming, and it has delivered many world-class international concerts. Hands Percussion's performance incorporates a variety of musical instruments from Asia which drives the music out of its original cultural context. These instruments include the Malay drums, chimes and gongs of gamelan Melayu, taiko, jinggu [京鼓], and sitar (Chan, 2013: 107). In recent years, Hands Percussion has brought new energy to the stage, moving the shigu away from its central role as a mere rhythm provider and incorporating modern theatrical drums and other instruments. Their drummers delved into the strengths of the shigu to explore the possibilities of the art of drumming. For example, installing a shigu on a movable stand with wheels instead of a non-movable one thus increases the drum's mobility in a stage show. They work on new compositions with a constant stream of inspiration, putting themselves in a refined and polished state before a stage show (Chan, 2013: 105). Since its inception, Hands Percussion has been invited to perform in many countries. A prominent example is being invited to participate in the 6th Shenzhen International Percussion and Culture Festival, China, in 2015.

## **24 JIELING DRUMS IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF MALAYSIA**

Although the fundamental elements that establish 24 Jieling Drums were derived from traditional Chinese culture, this art form was created in an equatorial country that is geographically different from China. Therefore, the drums stand as a cultural brand that was created by the Chinese in Malaysia, as this art form has gained popularity and undergone a successful process of internationalisation through fusing other ethnic cultures from a pluralistic cultural context in Malaysian society.

Since Johor Bahru is the historical birthplace to 24 Jieling Drums, Tan Chai Puan transformed some public spaces in its home city to honour the drum culture, such as the world's first 24 Jieling Drums Cultural Museum (Sinchew Daily, 2019), and Drums Café was decorated with the 24 Jieling Drums arts. Across the country, the International Jieling Drums Festival in Malaysia took the drum culture to another level by setting standards for the stage performance of this unique drum ensemble and established judging criteria for elite competitions. For instance, the International Jieling Drums Competition 2018 featured drum troupes from other countries such as China, Singapore, the United States, and the United Kingdom (Nanyang Siang Pau, 2018). Besides, the status of 24 Jieling Drums is highly recognised by the Malaysian institution. In 2008, Tan Hooi Song was honoured as a National Cultural Figure, the first Chinese citizen to receive this national cultural award in Malaysia under the National Heritage Act 2005 by the Minister at the Department of Tourism, Arts

and Culture (Akademi Kewartawan & Informasi Taima 2013). In 2009, 24 Jieling Drums were recognised as one of the National Cultural Intangible Cultural Heritage in Malaysia (Sinchew Daily, 2017). In 2019, Tan Chai Puan, the co-founder of 24 Jieling Drums, was acknowledged as Warisan Kebangsaan Orang Hidup (WAKOH) or National Heritage Living Person (Chung, 2019).

The biggest difference between 24 Jieling Drums and other traditional Chinese arts, such as lion dance, is that the Jieling Drums is neither a product of single inheritance nor a borrowing of Chinese culture, but a newly created form of artistic expression through cultural fusion and reinvention (Zhou, 2017: 37). In fact, ethnic, cultural, and national identities in the contemporary time are very complex among the Chinese in Malaysia. It is not uncommon that most Chinese born as natives to a land outside China do not culturally adopt a sense of belonging to China as the 'motherland'; generation after generation, they have adapted to the surrounding local communities, and some Chinese do not feel the need to become Sinophonic or a Chinese speaker; they see themselves as descendants of Chinese migrants (Tan, 2007: 72). Growing up in a diverse society, the Chinese diaspora, especially in Malaysia, is influenced by the local cultural practices of the surrounding communities, and a localised brand of culture that represents their own ethnicity is thus created (Nithyanandan, 2015: 7).

Nevertheless, the emergence of 24 Jieling Drums in Malaysia is deemed to be related to the development of lion dance, one of the most representative heritages of Chinese culture in Malaysia, in a political way. The lion dance is a popular custom during the Lunar New Year celebration in Chinese communities of Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States; people are all likely to witness lion dancers performing in the streets and being accompanied by gongs, drums, and firecrackers (Carstens, 1999: 40). It originated as a folk performance during the Ming and Qing dynasties with a strong regional style and a rich mythological background. It was brought to Malaysia by the Chinese in the 19th century and plays an important practical role. Its most essential role is to make out a ritual that fends off evil spirits or to celebrate festivity (Loo & Loo, 2016: 131). In contrast, it symbolically disseminates a message to migrating generations that success and fortune in lives do not come easily but they ultimately depend on skills, hard work, and a promising environment (Carstens, 1999: 41).

In fact, from 1970 to 1990, the lion dance was deemed a political controversy under the racial tension in Malaysia. In the National Cultural Policy enacted in 1971, a provision states that the national culture must be based on the indigenous Malay culture. This policy has resulted in the traditions and cultural practices of other ethnics, including the lion dance, that they were marked as 'obsolete' or 'extinct' (Chan, 2009: 92). In a subsequent public debate on Malaysian national culture held in the 1980s, one of the burning issues was whether the lion dance, which represents the traditional culture of China, should be officially included as part of Malaysian national culture (Carstens 1999: 12). The related racial tension was only eased until Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia (1982–2003), stressed on the acceptance of the 'others' in a multicultural society (Chan, 2009: 93). The lion dance is gradually recognised as a localised culture in a rather pluralistic Malaysian society. Nowadays, there is an increasing number of Indians and Malays joining as members of the lion dance troupe, as in the Muhibbah Lion Dance troupe; in its instrumentation, large percussion instruments as well as the South Indian nadaswaram and the thavil have been added (Loo & Loo, 2016: 144).

Based on the historical sources, the escalation of racial tension in Malaysia was predominantly due to the 13 May Incident in 1969, which directly contributed to the implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1971 by the government then. This policy is to resolve suspicion and grievance among ethnicity in order to achieve unity and to construct a just, reasonable, prosperous, and stable nation (Lim et al., 1998: 180–182), but the reality does not develop in line with the idealised condition. The Chinese community was deemed the most overwhelmed ethnic group in Malaysia and left with little room for opposition. Subsequent development in Malaysia highlights the following reflection: a biased public education policy based on racial quota (Lim et al., 1998: 184; Xia, 2018: 22), the enactment of ethnonationalist cultural policy (Tan, 1989: 138), the establishment of numerous Chinese community organisations (Lim et al., 1998: 184), and widespread celebration of Chinese religious customs among the Chinese community with fund-



raising purposes for social aids, such as the Por Tor [普渡] or Hungry Ghost Festival [中元节] (Lim et al., 1998: 185). These are the reflections of cause and effect of the relationship between the state and the Chinese community, leading to a general sentiment of disapproval on how they are affected economically, politically, and culturally. The 24 Jieling Drums, together with the lion dance in Malaysia, are therefore much emphasised with a strong identity of the Chinese culture, as both reflect cultural symbols of resistance and sustainability for Chinese in Malaysia.

As the Chinese cultural identity is gradually recognised in Malaysia, values and traditions of Chinese ethnicity are reshaped by the Chinese community, especially those of the middle class. One may find that the Chinese performing arts in Malaysia do not only appeal to Malaysian Chinese as the cultural bearers but also equally to all Malaysians and foreigners. The contribution of Chinese culture to Malaysian national culture has been evident in terms of national or international recognition (Matondang, 2016: 68). Chinese culture in Malaysia, with intense performativity, is often manifested as performing arts when festivity poses as a platform not only for the promotion of traditional culture but also for the converging demonstration of cultural arts for the senses including sight, sound, aroma, flavour, vibration, and sentimentality. In the beginning month of a lunar calendar year, the Chinese community in South Malaysia holds massive annual parades for the worship of the deities in the Old Temple of Johor. A huge procession is run as a prayer for year-long protection and blessings for productivity, and it always features various Chinese performing arts, including the lion dance and 24 Jieling Drums (Lee, 2018: 134). Since the inaugural of the Chinese Cultural Festival held at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in 1984, there are a line-up of active non-governmental organisations sorting out sizable events to promote Chinese culture in Malaysia. These events include theatre and dance festivals (Onn, 2011: 10), or general gala shows that feature lion dance, 24 Jieling Drums, and calligraphy. Many Chinese-medium schools as well as national-type Chinese schools are dedicated agents of cultural promotions with an array of cultural clubs and the consistent organisation of various art competitions at regional, state, or national levels. The organisation of cultural events is predominantly initiated by Chinese culture or heritage enthusiasts and funded by private sectors or through fundraising campaigns. Talents in performing arts cultivated through related activities set standards in performing arts, and some also have won accolades at the international level. What is even more important about artistic performances by artists is their innovation and integrity to manifest the values in Chinese culture for an appreciation by foreigners (Lew 2012: 27). In short, the dynamics of Malaysian Chinese that connect the arts, artefacts, heritage, activities, and people through local communities have formed a cultural life that is both familiar and also unique to the local people and the Chinese abroad.

## CONCLUSION

In China, the influence of the 24 solar terms is rather significant not only in its ancient agrarian societies but also in its modern cities. As an intangible cultural heritage, the almanac contains a rich cultural connotation, ranging from proverbs, songs, legends, art pieces, calligraphy, and painting to production tools and household utensils. In addition, certain festive events, rituals, and folklore also contain connections to this heritage. In agricultural activities, the solar terms played an important role in guiding farmers on when to plough, sow, harvest, and other cyclic agricultural activities. Many mundane routines in daily life are also guided by solar terms. The folkloric activities associated with the solar terms involve a wide range of customs, rituals, ceremonies, and entertainment, all of which vividly reflect the intrinsic link between the solar terms and the everyday life of China's common people.

The ethnic communities in Malaysia, as Hall explained (1993), bear traces of the specific cultures, traditions, languages, belief systems, texts, and histories that have shaped them. The culture of one ethnic group may intermingle with the culture of another in a multi-ethnic country. However, this is not cultural hybridisation or cultural unity as understood before: it is an intersecting of different cultures and histories, and this culture may belong to more than one ethnic group at the same time (Hall 1993: 362). The Chinese in Malaysia, who reflect this cultural characteristic, have reworked

the traditional Chinese culture in order to adapt to the local cultural context, making the old tradition possible to perpetuate again in another form of modern heritage. Unlike the native Chinese in China, Malaysian Chinese combined several Chinese traditional elements to create a new form of performance called 24 Jieling Drums and promote this art form as one of the culture-oriented brands from Johor Bahru, Malaysia on the international platform.

Considering the narrative of the relationship between the double heritage of the 24 solar terms and 24 Jieling Drums, we see a profound link in Chinese culture that develops from an agrarian civilisation to urban culture and performing arts, as this process brings new meanings to the cultural bearers from one generation to another. However, the narrative still leaves some questions in the fundamental connection between both entities that originated from unparallel cultural contexts, as the founding principle of the 24 Jieling Drums is more driven by factors other than agrarian needs. The successful culture-oriented branding of the drums has instilled pride in many Malaysians, but younger generations may have not learnt enough the essence of the solar terms as an ancient knowledge system in which 24 Jieling Drums are deeply rooted in. These issues require a further examination through a thorough ethnographic work in both countries in the Sinosphere.

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# EVENT REVIEW: CHINESE CHURCH MUSIC SINCE THE TANG DYNASTY

Zhang Zhentao [张振涛]<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This short review is dedicated to the long-awaited event ‘Beijing Symposium of Sinicised Catholic Theology – The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ’ and deals with the historical background of some its events. It is also a personal document filled with statements derived from the given observations.

## KEYWORDS

Church music, Tang dynasty, Chinese compositions, Event review

## INTRODUCTION

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, in Xishiku Cathedral (also known as the North Church), Catholic Archdiocese of Beijing, a concert of Chinese Church Music since the Tang Dynasty was held in the evening, as an event in the “Beijing Symposium of Sinicized Catholic Theology – The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ.” The newly renovated Cathedral, with its full splendour, welcomed over 300 guests from the church and the music academia.

Churches as concert venues are a common European tradition, which is instead extremely rare in China. People usually complain that stage renderings are illusory means that isolate the sound from its original ritual settings and sever the connection with its locations by contextual resetting. Such arrangements, intentional or not, truly compromise the sense of live interaction. However, this concert followed the often criticised “principle of authenticity” that puts the isolated sound back to its cultural site: churches are genuine sites where sacred music is resurrected.

It is practically difficult to hold a concert in an unusual venue, and it is even more difficult to gather a large audience under the pandemic uncertainties nowadays. Yet, greater challenges lie on the ecumenism between the Catholic and Christian churches and singing together – thus, how much courage and fortune was demanded from the organisers!

## THE CONCERT

This concert is jointly performed by the Cathojoy Choir from Catholic Archdiocese of Beijing (directed by Wang Fei), the Glory Choir (directed by Liang Runni), the Northern Kunqu Theatre, the Jingju Theatre Company of Beijing, together with soloists from the China Railway Art Troupe, Wenjin Guqin Society, Kunqu connoisseurs from Wuxi Tianyun Society, as well as students and faculty members from the China Central Conservatory of Music and the Music Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts. Although without payment, all performers, professional or amateur, devoted themselves to the best sonic condition with their impressive passion.

Sun Chenhui, currently vice researcher in the Music Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, hosted the concert. Her dedicated research in sacred music for decades is reflected in the programme arrangements, making the concert ‘a sounding outcome of her 21 years’ work’. Higher homage should be paid to her piety that is enduring and true to the heart. Her historical sensitivity in fieldwork, documentation, and notation qualifies her as a true guide of listening.

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Sun Chenhui's introduction to the programme was fully academic. According to her, there were three major historical records of Christianity in China: the Church of the East in China from the Tang Dynasty, the Roman Catholic Church from the Yuan Dynasty, and the Jesuit China missions from the late Ming Dynasty. Genuine Sino-Western exchanges have not been initiated until then and lasted over 400 years. Western sacred music was being fused with traditional Chinese music, and local features were gradually fostered into two significant scores in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Hymns of Universal Praise* (1936) and *The New Hymnal* (1980's). *Hymns of Universal Praise* is the peak of the last century's musical, literal, theological, and translational attainments, chiefly edited by Louise Strong Hammond, British Anglican missionary and musician, Bliss Wiant, American Methodist pastor and head of the music department at Yenching University, as well as Yang Yinliu, Chinese musicologist who had both Chinese and Western knowledge and contributed greatly to the sacred music of Christianity in China. As founder of the Chinese Music Institute, Yang must be glad to have inheritors like Sun Chenhui who continues to tell what he only dared to speak of near the end of his life – a deeply planted seed. With such prominent predecessors, Sun's excellent work is not unexplainable.

The programme of this concert was dedicated to works in Chinese style; therefore, those in Western style were excluded. The pieces were organised in chronological order; those from the Church of the East and the Catholic Church for the first half, and those from the Christian churches for the second half. They roughly fell into four categories: (1) proposed sacred songs that set historical texts to contemporaneous tunes; (2) sacred songs composed by Chinese theologians; (3) sacred songs transcribed from Guqin (seven strings) repertoires; and (4) sacred songs transcribed from other sources.

## PROPOSED SACRED SONGS THAT SET HISTORICAL TEXTS TO CONTEMPORANEOUS TUNES

The *Éloge de la Sainte Trinité* (*All Heav'n Worships in Great Awe*) from the Tang Dynasty was the earliest sacred song of Christianity in China; together with the Xi'an Nestorian Stele, they had over 1200 years of history. The tune is transcribed by Chen Yingshi in Shanghai Conservatory of Music, from *Shuiguzi*, a Tang Dynasty ancient pipa tablature discovered in Dunhuang by Paul Pelliot (Pelliot & Chavannes, 1911). The text is set to this tune by Li Hongfeng, the historian in the Music Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts.<sup>2</sup>

It may be questioned whether such a combination of texts with tunes is true to history. Almost all ancient songs are used to be poems and lyrics set to pre-existing tunes and optionally accompanied by instruments. In the Chinese context, this practice is convincing enough to set the text from a Tang Dynasty stele to a Tang Dynasty tune played on Tang Dynasty instruments, which would have become a branch in the pluralistic sounds of the Tang Dynasty.

*My Promises Are Above* is similarly arranged. In the year 1600, Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary, presented a Clavichord as a tribute to the Ming Dynasty court and wrote *Eight Songs for Western Keyboard*, a set of Chinese poems notifying Christianity. They are set to tunes from *Mozi's Elegy* (墨子悲歌) and *Boya's New Method* (伯牙新法, 1609) by John Thompson, a contemporary American Guqin musician.

Wu Li (Yushan), the composer of *The Mass Music – Corrected Scores of Heavenly Music* (天乐正音谱·弥撒乐音), was the first to compose Catholic hymns in the Qing Dynasty, who studied theology, philosophy, and Latin language in St. Paul's College of Macau. His settings of Mass and sacred hymns to folk tunes and ancient songs comprised nine cycles of Southern and Northern tunes and 20 chapters of pseudo-archaic chants. *The Mass Music* performed in the concert was set to folk tune *Yizhijhua* (score edited by Liu Youheng).

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<sup>2</sup> Introductions to each piece were taken from Sun Chenhui's live comments on the concert.



Some months ago, Sun Chenhun obtained a four-volume score written in the Chinese language with staff notation and Gongche notation in the 18th century from the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Its first three volumes were traditional Chinese music pieces, while 13 pieces of church music were found in the fourth volume, an evidence of the Sinicization of sacred songs in churches in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. These scores were notated by Jean Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718–1793), a French Jesuit missionary who had dwelled in Beijing for 42 years before he completed his *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinoise, tant anciens que modernes* in 1774 (Amiot, 1769), the earliest book dedicated to Chinese music. In the 20th century, François Picard (1991) from Sorbonne Université rediscovered the scores posted from Beijing over two centuries ago. From Beijing to Paris and back again, *Ave Maria* from the fourth volume is sounded again two centuries later in their original location, in the church that witnessed the Sino-Western communication through history.

Another piece from Amiot's *Musique Sacrée* (1779), *Lord's Prayer*, was also set to folk tune *Liuyejin*, found in his *Divertissements chinois 3<sup>e</sup> cahier: La merveilleuse harmonie de tous les sons rassemblés*. The magnificent sound of the newly assembled pipe organ in Xishiku Cathedral emanates unusual tastes to Chinese tunes. Times have changed – pipe organs that were quite rare in Yang Yinliu's times become increasingly common nowadays. Back then, only few churches had pipe organs that were mostly ruined in the riots (e.g., one was smashed up in Qingdao during the Cultural Revolution). Now, churches are regaining their giants as well as their players. Wang Jue is such a young musician who arranged and performed this piece.

Padre Aureo Castro Nunes e Castro (1917–1993) was born in Portugal, who founded the “Grupo Coral Polifónico” in 1959 and the “Academia de Musica de S. Pio X” of which he became director in 1962. His compositions combined Chinese and Western styles. *Nostalgia* is a piano solo piece imitating Guzheng composed in the 1960s. Although a foreigner, Father Aureo Castro's lifelong mission to China has resulted in his proficiency in Chinese music and his compositions that combined it with Western style.

## SACRED SONGS COMPOSED BY CHINESE THEOLOGIANs

Undoubtedly, these songs made up the majority of the programme.

*Golden Breaks the Dawn*, perhaps the best-known hymn in Chinese style worldwide, was composed in 1934 by Hu De-ai, a student in the music department at Yenching University, harmonised by Bliss Wiant, and included in the *Hymns of Universal Praise* (1936). Zhao Zichen (1888–1979), the most influential theologian in China, wrote the text that was translated into English by Mildred A. Wiant in 1946 and became the first hymn composed by Chinese authors to be included in American hymnals.

*Holy Night, Blessed Night* is known as the Chinese counterpart of *Silent Night*. The text was written by Priest Zhu Weiyu and Wu Jingren in Suzhou, originally to the melody of *Silent Night*. Yet, a poem by Chinese priests deserved a Chinese tune, and Shi Qigui's composition fulfilled it.

John Ching Hsiung Wu was a renowned jurist who translated the *Book of Psalms* into Chinese poetry in an archaic style, for which an oriental composer Jiang Wen-ye (1910–1983) composed a musical cycle in Chinese style. In 1938, Jiang also set *Ave Maria* to *Xijiangyue*, a tune attributed to Ou-yang Xiu from the Song Dynasty, which became his most popular hymn.

Father Li Zhen Bang was a pioneer of Chinese-language sacred music, who obtained a master's degree and PhD in the Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra from 1953 to 1959 and founded the Music Department at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan where he became dean in 1983. His compositions combine plain texts with simplistic tunes. The hymns *Ricci Matteo* and *Gloria* from his *Common Mass* were performed in the concert.

The last piece in the programme was *Agnus Dei* composed by Xie Xiangmin, a contemporary composer graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He composed his first Mass in 2020 based on Jiangnan style, of which *Agnus Dei* is the last section.

## SACRED SONGS TRANSCRIBED FROM GUQIN REPERTOIRES

The concert staged Guqin songs in their original form before the performance of the arranged sacred songs. *Yangguan Sandie* (阳关三叠) was found earliest in *Zheyin Glossed Tablature* (浙音释字琴谱) in 1491, and the version in *Guqin Primer* (琴学入门) compiled by Zhang He in 1864 was most popular. In 1932, Yang Yinliu arranged it into *Friends of Years with Just One Heart* with three stanzas and harmonised it in 1934. The version performed in the concert was Wang Di's transcription of Guan Pinghu's rendering. I used to listen to this piece when the Music Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts compiled the album *Heritage: In Memory of a Chinese Music Master Yang Yinliu*. My first time listening to its live performance deepened the impression of Yang's middle-aged times.

*Creator's Artistic Brush* from *The New Hymnal* was arranged by Chen Zeming in Nanjing Union Theological Seminary based on a Guqin piece *Pingsha Luo Yan* (平沙落雁). Chen, a Guqin connoisseur, arranged it into the four-part choir in 1956 and wrote a heptameter poem to it in 1982. The Guqin piece was found earliest in *Authenticity of Archaic Sound* (古音正宗) in 1634. The version performed in the concert was Wang Di's transcription of Guan Pinghu's rendering of the tablature in the *Series of Guqin Studies* (琴学丛书).

The earlier generations tried to combine some most elegant archaic Chinese music with Western hymns, where Guqin repertoire became a good choice. The study of Guqin comprises solo playing and singing accompaniment, and the latter is more suitable for arrangements. A Guqin song *Yuge Diao* (渔歌调) or *Jile Yin* (极乐吟) popular in the Ming and Qing Dynasties was based on Liu Zongyuan's poem *Fisherman* (渔翁) from the Tang Dynasty. It usually serves as an introduction to the large Guqin cycle *Ainai* (欵乃). In 1929, Yang Yinliu arranged it into a hymn *Nature Glows with Colours Rare*.

## SACRED SONGS TRANSCRIBED FROM OTHER SOURCES

Can folk songs be arranged into sacred songs? We answered in the affirmative. When *The New Hymnal* called for outstanding works in Chinese style nationwide, a hymn based on a folk song of the Buyi people was accepted. *Haohuahong* was originally a tune of the Buyi people in Guizhou, which was arranged by Pei Huizhen, a local musician, into a four-part hymn *May the Divine Life* in 1982.

When Sun Chenhui arranged the programme, she chose a rarely performed old Chinese hymn entitled *Lord Before Our World Was Formed*. The problem was that its information is scarce and its provenance obscure: text by Wu Yushan, in iambic recitative, marked *Yundan*, arranged by Qiu Changnian in 1920. What is iambic recitative, what is *Yundan*, how to sing it, and who is Qiu Changnian?

Fortunately, Yang Yinliu's *Priliminary Research on Linguistic Musicology* (《语言音乐学初探》) provided a source of this tune. He notated the archaic tunes of slow recitative and fast recitation of *On a Spring Occasion* (春日偶成) by Cheng Hao from the Song Dynasty in Wuxi. The slow tune highly corresponds to *Yundan* and has an almost identical melody to the old hymn *Lord Before Our World Was Formed*. In the concert, Chen Qian, chair of Wuxi Tianyun Society, chanted the slow recitative in Wuxi Mandarin and then read the fast recitation in the local Wuxi dialect.

Also, Gong Hongyu's study reveals who Qiu Changnian was (Gong, 2020). He discovers that Louise Strong Hammond (1887–1945) noticed the striking similarities between Chinese literature recitatives and early Gregorian chants, so she collaborated with Qiu Changnian, a bookman in Wuxi, to compile a Christian hymnal based on Chinese poetic recitatives, where Hammond transcribed, arranged, and translated Qiu's recitatives. Her English version of the slow recitative of *On a Spring Occasion* was reset to Wu Yushan's (1631–1718) poem in the *Hymns of Universal Praise* in 1936 and became the hymn *Lord Before Our World Was Formed*. Finally, the lineage has been found, truth clarified, and mysteries solved. What a miraculous song that involves Sino-Western cultural fusions and recalls the long-forgotten recitatives!

## SOME IMPRESSIONS

Generally, the concert has a very Chinese style overall. Far from adhering to the Western style of torment and salvation of souls willing to undergo suffering and trials, the music sound was not confined by the visceral complex of sinful feelings and conscious deliverance. The means by which Chinese folks dissolve their realistic stresses is not profound harmonies and sophisticated polyphonies on the pipe organ, but instead a pentatonic austerity. Although the Chinese sacred songs are accompanied by the pipe organ's magnificent timbres, they do not get thicker or heavier, in which we cannot hear agony or struggle. There is no such culture of sinful feelings in the Chinese world, but there is consciousness, conscience, and pity. Musicians love the style of Bach's Masses, but the masses cannot hold their nerve on such music – they hope to sing for their heart in their own way. The style of tunes that suit the believers' identities came from the composers' deep understanding of the Chinese laity.

It reminded me of the Mass in village churches that I visited in fieldwork sessions. Tired peasants, wrinkles on their faces and hoes in their hands, came to church and sang together the sacred songs as plain as water that rinsed their fatigue. Without such experiences, one cannot understand why Chinese sacred music has taken on such familiar tunes in a plain style.

Sun Chenhui's comments were both academic and realistic, both profound and palpable, and always informed of a classical hint of sorrow connected to the vicissitudes of historical figures in touching pathos. The salvage for memories became a narrative of remembrance. People sometimes thought that pious believers were gone – no, in fact, they are always around. Without this concert, Sun Chenhui's devotion would still have remained unseen. It also fulfilled her wish to demonstrate what Chinese Christian music has been through and what is still present to be heard and seen. Substantial fieldwork added to the historical depth of the concert programme as well as to the credibility of her comments.

Taiwanese scholar Chen Chi-nan frequently says that the mainstream of historians is to find a wing in place A, another wing in place B, the antennae in place C, and the abdomen in place D, then piece them together, and call it a butterfly, while anthropologists see whole butterflies in fieldwork (Liu Yonghua, n.d.: 23). However, Sun Chenhui has demonstrated the common pursuit of historians and anthropologists – she “found a wing in place A”, “another wing in place B”, and then the antennae and the abdomen from all places nationwide and worldwide. Significantly, she not only assembled them together but also breathed life into all pieces on the spot – “Constantly dancing butterflies stay to play/ Unrestrained, the lovely orioles cry.” (Poem by Du Fu)

The year 1985 saw the reopening of Xishiku Cathedral after the Cultural Revolution; it was also the first year when I came to college in Beijing and had my very first Christmas abustle and astir with huge crowds – one of the series of unexpected events in the good old times in the “1980s”. I clearly remembered that Christmas night with all-Western music. Now, 36 years later, I'm here again (in the first row) to listen to Chinese sacred music of a totally different style. As Sun Chenhui (2021) wrote in her comments, “It is no exaggeration to say that this concert has been waited for seventy years and was anticipated for twenty years.” For me, this is a concert I have waited for 36 years.

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## APPENDIX

SOME PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EVENT PRODUCED BY THE 3 LITTLE LAMBS STUDIO. BY COURTESY OF THE COMPANY'S PHOTOGRAPHERS.



Figures 1–4: (From left to right and from above to below): on a spring occasion, poetry chanting, tune by Chen Qian; Creator's Artistic Brush by Chen Zemin, the Glory Choir directed by Liang Runni; Ave Maria, Choir from the Catholic Archdiocese of Beijing directed by Wang Fei; All Heav'n Worships in Great Awe, solo singing by Fenghao, imitation of a five-string lute pipa as found during the time of the Tang Dynasty played by Sun Chenhui.

# REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE ‘CHINA SOUNDS ABROAD: MIGRATION, MOBILITY AND MODERNITY’

Xiangjun Feng [冯相郡]<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This short report is about the virtual conference “China Sounds Abroad: Migration, Mobility and Modernity” held in May 6–8, 2021. Many scholars involved could attend in this online event. This report comments on the program and how it was conceptually organized.

## KEYWORDS

Online conferencing, China sounds, Migration, Global presence

## REPORT

The international and interdisciplinary conference, China Sounds Abroad: Migration, Mobility and Modernity, was held on May 6–8, 2021. The conference was organized by Andreas Steen (Aarhus University) in cooperation with Frederick Lau (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and Andrew F. Jones (UC Berkeley). Originally envisioned as an event in Copenhagen, Denmark, the conference had to be switched online due to the ongoing global pandemic of COVID-19. However, the pandemic did not affect the outcome of the conference. Notably, 18 scholars from all over the world gave high-quality presentations, with a sizable audience joining from a diverse array of geographical locations.

The conference ‘aims at a systematic investigation of the sonic dimension of China’s modern history and rising global presence’—to quote the organizers’ words—with particular concerns on questions including how Chinese sounds (interpreted in its broadest sense) have traveled around the globe from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, how they might have adapted or changed in different geographical locations and historical contexts, and how they affect the perceptions and imaginations of China in a changing world. These questions were addressed in various ways in 18 presentations that were made up of 7 panels. The details of the panels could be found at the website <https://conferences.au.dk/chinasounds2021/>, an innovative and effective platform thoughtfully designed by Andreas Steen and his colleagues at Aarhus University to facilitate the online conference. Through browsing the website, one would find a striking diversity of participants and their presentations. In terms of disciplines and methodologies, scholars brought forth insights from musicology, ethnomusicology, history (intellectual, cultural, social, and economic), cultural studies, anthropology, etc. In terms of the variety of sounds, the presentations not only focused on a wide spectrum of musical genres, such as classical, traditional opera, pop, reggae, rock & roll, and jazz

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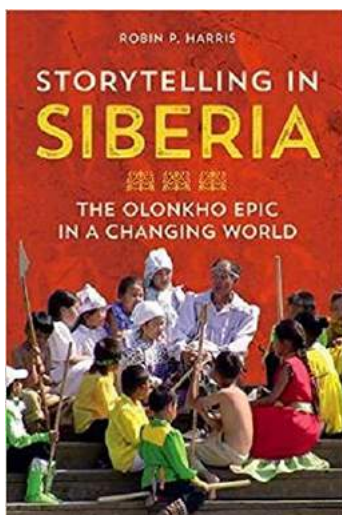
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(broadly defined, including the localized jazz forms in, for example, China and Korea), but also extended to include sounds that needed to be discovered with particular critical ears, such as Buddhist chanting and reciting, pigeon whistles, gongs and drums accompanying lion dancing, ‘euphonies and cacophonies’, heteroglossic discourses, and even silence. Scholars traced these sounds everywhere in the world, including East and Southeast Asia, Oceania, Africa, Europe, North America, and the Caribbean. In terms of the agents that made possible the global dissemination of these sounds, these presentations covered migrations of Chinese indentured workers to the Americas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sojourns of elitist musicians and intellectuals in search of transcultural communications, commercial tours of artists and their bands, global profit-seeking by cultural entrepreneurs, and even cassette ‘smugglers’, as well as overseas proselytizing missions. As a whole, this diversity has most convincingly epitomized the aforementioned ‘aim’ of the conference, i.e., a ‘systematic’ investigation of Chinese sonic representations from a ‘global’ perspective.

Yet, the conference does much more than creating an exhibition of various sorts of ‘China sounds’, and the celebration of diversity does not prevent the participants from finding shared insights, getting multiple-way inspirations, as well as collectively pushing forward the ‘aural turn’ in the humanities in general and China studies in particular. I observe that the conference has brought up several theoretical and methodological issues that go beyond any particular disciplines or areas and thus shed new light on the greater academia. Here, I briefly address three among many observations.

First is a ‘networked’ mode of thinking. Many presentations contextualize the subject in question in transnational networks—not only the human networks of migrants and sojourners which are commonly examined in transnational studies but also networks of objects, media, and information. Andreas Steen’s paper, for example, traces the global travels of ‘Rose, Rose, I love You’ (1940), China’s first international hit song, and in the process that reveals an unexpected global network of singers, producers, gramophone records, live shows, and their consumers, all centered around a piece of song but spanned from China to the UK, the USA, Japan, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Nancy Rao, similarly, delineates a ‘transpacific network of opera in early 20th century’ through which sounds, printed materials, and human agents traveled between Shanghai and San Francisco. Using the film *Crazy Rich Asians*, both Marc L. Moskowitz and Andrew Field map out the intertwined sonic, visual, and discursive networks connecting China, Singapore, and Hollywood. The second observation is that these presentations simultaneously question an essentialized ‘Chineseness’, problematize the so-called ‘China sound’ in dialogue with other sounds, and explore how the two shape each other. For example, Barbara Mittler, Christina Till, Di Wang, and Frank Kouwenhoven all offer new insights to complicate the dichotomy between China and the West. Edgar W. Pope, Frederick Lau, Fumitaka Yamauchi, and Yuan-yu Kuan each in their own ways decentralizes China in the traditional Sinosphere and carefully avoids a Sinocentric trap. Andrew F. Jones, Edwin E. Porras, Hwee-San Tan, and Xiangjun Feng shift to the ‘Global South’ and observe how the China sounds reverberated in each of the comparatively unfamiliar lands. Third is the special attention that most participants give to media. That is, they not only study ‘sounds’ per se but also investigate the particularities of the material means through which the sounds travel. In addition to gramophone records and films that are commonly observed in sound studies, Odila Schröder discusses how pigeon whistles spread the Beijing sound to the West, Chang Liu traces how the *dakou* cassettes delivered the ‘authentic’ rock & roll to China, and Andrew F. Jones reveals how the cold war was played out in the Jamaican sound system.

The conference was a great success, not only because of the diversity of the topics but also how well they cohere with each other. Moreover, each paper is a showcase of solid research, rich materials, and innovative thoughts. A short review as such could not do justice to their quality. However, the good news is that these papers will be published in an edited volume in the near future, and readers of AEMR will no doubt find the breadth and scope of these papers enlightening.



## REVIEW OF: STORYTELLING IN SIBERIA — THE OLONKHO EPIC IN A CHANGING WORLD

BY ROBIN P. HARRIS  
URBANA, CHICAGO, AND SPRINGFIELD:  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS.  
PUBLISHED IN 2017

Gisa Jähnichen<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This book review highlights the specific features of an important publication about Siberian traditions. The author spent much time and energy in compiling convincing material. The reviewer goes through some details regarding the contents and structure of this publication.

### KEYWORDS

Storytelling, Siberian cultures, Epic songs, Music education

The cover picture creates seemingly specific expectations: children with handmade wooden weapons surround an elderly man who is dressed up in a traditional costume. Some children also wear traditional symbols such as footwear, outfits like robes with stitching patterns and headscarves.

The man, old enough to remember important events of the past 60 years, is symbolizing a storyteller (olonkhosut). This picture may also indicate that the audience consists of children, eventually with a fresh mind yet in a mood of their current symbolic appearance. Generations exchange their wisdom. Old teaches young. The old person's dress looks feminine and appears outdated, echoed in the unified symbols of the traditional children's outfit.

The scene takes place on wooden stairs. Looking like a stage, some palettes, in front of a brick-red wall, which reflects some shadows of cave drawings. Covers are important and indicate purposes and statements. Much later in this volume, the same picture but in black and white carries a caption: "Semyon Chernogradskii at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ysyakh of Olonkho in Borogontsy 2009. Photo by Maria Vasilyeva, [www.ysia.ru](http://www.ysia.ru), used by permission" (page 48). Then, the expectations are resolved in the direction of a modernized staging. It represents the current imaginations of storytelling rather than trying to revitalize traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Gisa Jähnichen is currently teaching and researching at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She is an active member of various international organizations and publishes frequently.

The book is structured into a small beginning part, seven chapters, and a back part that consists of a very helpful glossary, notes section, a list of works cited, and an index of terms.

The introduction is part of a bigger contextual scene. In addition to this, the first chapter also serves as an introduction, since it focuses on historical and social preconditions. Right at the beginning is a helpful description of the main topic. Olonkho is, according to the author, an “oral epic tradition composed of alternating sections of narrative poetry and song...” (page 11). The author opens the chapter with a short statement about an epic singer made by Albert Lord. Its central theme is “tradition”. However, the author is in no part of his work explicitly defining “tradition”, which is central to all following chapters, and does not require any definition. This first chapter is a summary of findings and statements about the history of the region and its cultural ties in changing social contexts. Since the extant literature and historical dates are rare, this part cannot be really large.. It turns out that the author goes to operate with the expressions “pre-Soviet”, “Soviet”, and “after-Soviet” for periods of time, which puts a specific emphasis on the undefined term “Soviet”, which one would definitely need as the imagination about it are widely varied. Remarkably, the fact of being Soviet or not makes a difference in the author’s descriptive standards. While pre-Soviet times are summarized as the “pre-Soviet centuries” (page 18), the Soviet times play a much more significant role in later analyses of narrated text and context (chapter 2–7).

The first chapter is critical to the understanding of the author’s motivation and the way of interpreting current issues of preservation and revitalization. While the author has overwhelmingly used the writings of authorities in the field, such as Slobin or Khazanov, in search for the support of the author’s opinion about oppressing minority arts in the Soviet period, he is less stringent toward parallel studies quoted in several other places. This phenomenon may be a general sign of today’s academic literature dealing with a social system that seems to be not popular in present times.

Other terms, such as “epic”, are well discussed and put in use. The contents of the olonkhos are unfortunately, only in later chapters, dealt with from a musical perspective. The places associated with musical contents had very few remarks. The author mentions, i.e., distinct leitmotifs, central tones, and other melodic-ambitus-related factors, rhythmic and temporal characteristics. Musically relevant parameters in this specific context stay possibly far in the background and the dominant discussion, elaborated and thoughtfully classified, is the sung text, or as the author puts it “sung speech” (page 19). Thanks to the authors’ own knowledge and many reliable partners, these text parts are a great resource for further studies in epics as art expressions that are key to musical developments within and beyond Siberian communities.

The author had shown bravery in collecting nearly all “sung speeches” and honest opinions of the practicing performers available at the time of the fieldwork. The material concentrated in this volume is of yet unidentified richness and surely a great addition to already existing research materials provided earlier by Ignatieva (2013) and her team. This is without doubt the most valuable contribution to this research area. The data collection presented in this study is excellent.

Another achievement is a detailed look at the development after the Soviet period that is – at first sight – slightly idealized. The author writes “The surge in freedom of expression for minority peoples during that period of Russian history laid the groundwork for widespread cultural renewal among the Sakha” (page 33). The central point of the author is the cultural liberation of the Sakha, seen as a unique and distinct people inhabiting their geographical places in Siberia. The author provides a map of the Republic of Sakha with Yakutsk as its capital, yet he does not state time frames and other important parameters such as the dynamics of population density, income generation, age structure, or any other demographics of this republic, which would be helpful to understand the relationship of the Sakha to the overarching power. Most of the author’s photographs and figures are not easy to identify according to their strength of proof or their actual rights. This can only be excused as being highly focused on the main topic of the olonkho. However,



the author brings UNESCO's "Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" program into discussion and analyzes related processes from different perspectives by dividing them into pre-application, during application, and after-application periods of time. Orality and literature-based transmissions play an important role in this regard. Yet again, significant terms are missing a clear definition such as "renewal", "revitalization", "vitality", or even "minority". In this regard, it might have been more helpful to look specifically into the fate of diverse epics performed throughout Asia, in order to avoid an ideologization of thoughts, which, in an ironic way, are a dominating tone in explanations about the changes during the Soviet period. Ideological oppression happened in many places throughout the world regardless of social systems and the number of operating political parties within a country. Different religions and common beliefs were often twisted and taken as an alibi in order to introduce advanced cultural products, mass products, and, at the same time, controlled entertainment that became possible through technological advancements. Therefore, Chapter 2 is, compared to the following chapters 3–7, a rather less inspiring since it is overloaded with quotes from economically frustrated informants, which do not contribute much to the understanding of olonkho as an art. The revitalization after the Soviet period, so it seems, is subsequently surprising and appears artificial. Thankfully, the author tries hard to find a balanced view by providing a large number of quotes from many informants and supporting academic and other writings. Especially profound and detailed reports are delivered by the performers. The author also tried to give hints and insights into genuine conflicts among performers, audiences, their expectations, and their will to modernize. Looking at the different perspectives taken through the interviews, a picture of the entire story appears that is close to current experiences of cultural changes, not only referring to olonkho.

This book by Robin P. Harris is an important work that greatly contributes to the current understanding of a number of burning cultural questions among people seeing themselves as large minorities within an even larger state. Continuous observations and more such collections are required to follow up and to make use of the interesting insights provided in this volume.

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# EVENT REVIEW: THE XXXVI EUROPEAN SEMINAR IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

Fulvia Caruso<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This review describes the XXXVI European Seminar in Ethnomusicology as a virtual event organized by colleagues. The event is important to all ethnomusicologists and people interested in the field of ethnomusicology globally. It is mainly to inform about the organization and the way of interactions among its members.

## KEYWORDS

Event organization, Ethnomusicology, Europe, Scholarly traditions, Technology in ethnomusicology

The XXXVI European Seminar in Ethnomusicology was held from 13 to 18 September 2021 as a virtual conference ([https://whova.com/portal/webapp/msee\\_202109/](https://whova.com/portal/webapp/msee_202109/)).

Normally, ESEM organizes a seminar per year and the XXXVI edition should have been held in 2020 at the University of Valladolid, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organizers to postpone it.

Founded in 1981 by Professor John Blacking as a European network for ethnomusicologists, ESEM welcomes scholars and topics from all over the world. It also functions as a platform for exchanging news on recent events, publications, and job offers (<http://esem-music.eu/about/>).

The program committee included Enrique Camara, Susana Moreno Fernandez (University of Valladolid, chairs), Laura Leante (Durham University), and Marko Kölbl (Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien), and the seminar theme was *Ethnomusicology and Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The aim of the seminar was to reflect on the concept of cultural heritage as historically constructed, re-elaborated, and transmitted in various ways. How the public and private initiatives have contributed and still contribute to preserve intangible cultural heritage (ICH)? From archives to festivals, there are many possibilities to do it. This also include technologies, social media, dynamics of large-scale commercialization, and touristification.

As mentioned in the call for papers: “For this conference, we welcome proposals that reflect on how the use of new technologies, internet, and social media has changed the systematization, preservation, and dissemination of music as intangible cultural heritage. The connections between the global production and consumption of music and local cultural heritage re-appropriation and re-elaboration may also be explored. We also want to encourage discussion of the tensions that arise, in a postcolonial world, between the ethnocentric concept of universal cultural heritage and the needs, goals, epistemologies, and ontologies of other cultures whose cultural property is being used and consumed. Decolonial approaches to the preservation and dissemination of culturally sensitive musical materials in archives and museums will be valued. Additionally, presentations

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that deal with folklorism, revival and spectacularisation of culture and how these processes dialogue with ethical concerns will be appreciated.”

The result has been a six-day seminar full of presentations: 21 paper sessions, more than 50 papers from all over the world (from China to Canada), one roundtable, a film session and, as usual since Blacking’s death, the John Blacking Memorial Lecture.

This year’s lecture was given by Professor Naila Ceribašić, a research advisor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, and professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Zagreb. Naila Ceribašić has also been a representative of ICTM at UNESCO since 2011, and in that capacity, she had crucial roles in the UNESCO policies and practices around ICH. A perfect introduction to the seminar was a lecture entitled “Music as heritage: On do-it-yourself curators, culture bearers and ethnomusicologists in the context of experience economy, liquid governance, and other facets of late modernity.” Her contribution offered a deep insight into the role of do-it-yourself curators in the processes of nomination and safeguarding ICH. Issues such as money, intellectual property, access to global education and information system, and viability of the inscribed heritages were all discussed. Ceribašić also discussed the characteristics of music as a specific domain of ICH, as a recorded object or a process of recording, and as an encounter of experiences and memories, the complexity of identifying a community of practice, and of course the role music has in every society. Her lecture insisted on the crucial role of ethnomusicologists in UNESCO policies while advocating the need for an ethic and decolonized approach.

The distribution of the papers in the sessions was effective, leading to good debates and deep reflections.

Several papers were related to the role that states are having in the life of ICH from inventorying, to archiving, to creating formal educational programs. Do these processes help cultural heritage to be alive or do they freeze it in specific features hindering the normal adaptation that every tradition achieves when passing from a generation to the next?

UNESCO 2003 Convention and ethical principles are very clear, as all the regulations the states part of the convention should apply. The reality that emerged from several papers was often different from what is envisaged in the UNESCO policies. Additionally, ethnomusicologists should be more involved in local processes connected with the 2003 Convention, as was suggested by Tiago de Oliveira Pinto.

Many papers dealt with reinventions more than revitalization or safeguarding. This emerged especially in contributions related to tourism and commodification. Moving from the real life to the stage inevitably produces modifications in music, dance and related emotions, symbols, and meanings. Things can be extremely different from case to case. For example, in Portugal, luthiers complain about the inclusion of their violas in the national inventory, claiming that it freezes their art (from the paper of Rui Marques, Carlos Batista, and Jean-Yves Durand). In Goa, the recognition of the Ghumot as a heritage instrument is a way of liberation, ecological conscientization, and coexistence (in the paper of Susana Sardo). Both in music and in dance (to which the organizers devoted a special session), legacy, tradition, and sustainability are crucial but very delicate issues. We need to acknowledge that the changes occur from one generation to another, that some traditions change or are revived, and that some others die. At home or in migration, the processes of adaptation are crucial for the understanding of human cultural behaviors.

How can we manage the restitution of old recordings preserved in European archives, or understand if and when it must be done? Some traditions disappeared, while others have changed radically. At the same time, does it make sense to collect cultural heritages that are kept only in the memory of the elderly? For whom? Community-driven research is more and more needed if

we want not to become archaeologists and to detach ourselves once and for all from colonial attitudes.

Special attention around the decolonization debate in ethnomusicology was given in the roundtable chaired by Enrique Cámara de Landa on the second day of the seminar. Several ethnomusicologists from different European countries debated around the issue and stressed the need to take further steps toward decolonization not only in research but also in the academic world and in institutions dedicated to culture. Still, questions of hegemonies and representation in fieldwork and restitution are to be addressed. Interestingly, several papers gave good examples of decolonized fieldwork, as in the case of Ignazio Macchiarella's on Sardinian cultural heritage, where research has now been carried out for decades through dialogism.

I cannot conclude this report without mentioning the film session and the concert.

The film session took place on 15 September 2021. Chaired by Matías Isolabella, it featured Michael B. MacDonald, Professor and Cine-Ethnomusicologist. We watched together the film *And, And, And...*, which MacDonald produced in 2021, and then we discussed the efficacy of filmmaking in research and the need to involve the producers of the realities we study in the process of documentation. As a matter of fact, the film mixes shootings of MacDonalds with cell phone footage made by the protagonist of the film, as well as YouTube footage. Thanks to the possibilities offered by the Wohva platform, McDonald uploaded other three films we could see separately, to add material for reflection.

On Thursday, 16 September 2021, we had the opportunity to enjoy a Castilian Music Concert: "From Tradition to Recreation". To give a high-quality performance through the web, it had been previously recorded in the Palacio de Santa Cruz, Valladolid University's Rectoral palace. Wonderfully realized by Olaia Sánchez, it showed several examples of Castile music, from traditional music preserved in Cancioneros performed by *Dulzaineros de Tierra de Pinares* to authored songs performed by the music duo *Alicornio* and the duo formed by Jaime Vidal and Carlos Martín Aires. The first duo performs a repertoire of songs compiled almost entirely in the province of Valladolid, which they extracted from the Joaquín Díaz Foundation's sound library, as well as other songbooks and recordings of traditional music. The latter creates new songs with a strong emphasis on rhythm and traditional lyrics, adding melodies and harmonies influenced by other types of music to traditional styles and forms.

To conclude, it was an intense week full of exchanges and food for thought.

Next year, in September as usual, the XXXVII ESEM Seminar will take place in Graz, hosted by the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz/Austria (KUG).



## REVIEW: THE YANDONG GRAND SINGERS BY PAN RECORDS 2122 CD

Catherine Ingram and Wu Jiaping [伍家平]<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This CD album provides an opportunity to hear the range of different forms of Kam songs currently featured in staged Kam singing performances, as well as the acoustic environment of Kam communities. This review offers an analysis of some of the many layers of history, meaning and significance of the songs featured, as well as commentary on the accompanying CD notes.

### KEYWORDS

Kam people, Minority culture, China, Vocal traditions, Big song

It was a great pleasure to listen to the beautiful singing of this group of Kam singers from Ngum (in Chinese, Yandong 岩洞), in Liping 黎平 county, Southeastern Guizhou Province, that is recorded on this CD. While this group of four women and two men, aged in their 30s–50s, is named in English as the “Yandong Grand Singers”, on this 19-track album they perform a range of different Kam (pronounced “gum”, and known in Chinese as Dong 侗) songs besides “big/grand song”. The 12-page CD liner notes mainly provide the song lyrics in Kam orthography and English translation, with a very brief introduction to this minority group (including some colour images) and some aspects of Kam musical culture.

As the notes state, the recordings capture performances given especially for the sound recordist, Mu Qian, in May 2019 in two locations in Tong (Tongguan 铜关 village, in Yandong district). Given the types of songs featured and that the songs with instrumental accompaniment feature toward the end of the CD, the sequence of tracks seems likely to reflect the program the group uses in staged performances. As a whole, the album provides a glimpse into the current form of staged Kam performances that began in the 1950s, as well as the present form of the various audio and video recordings of Kam musical culture, which have been available at least from 1980 (including *Vocal Music* 1980, *Les Miao* 1996 and *Dong Folksongs* 2007).

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The first ten tracks, as well as tracks 13 and 14, feature only voices and no instruments, and the 13 songs on those 12 tracks (track 10 is a medley of two different songs, though this is unclear from the notes) are contemporary examples of the choral genre inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity that today is usually categorized in Chinese as *da ge* 大歌. This genre is known in English as “big song” or “grand song” and now often referred to as *ga lao* by many Kam people. While not explained in the CD notes, such post-1949 categorization of the Kam choral songs originating among communities speaking the second lect of the Southern Kam dialect varies from older conventions that persist in village contexts today, wherein choral songs are classified in different ways within each distinct regional repertoire (Ingram and Wu 2017: 81–82). For instance, my (Catherine Ingram's) teachers and friends in the Kam region of Sheeam (in Chinese, Sanlong 三龙), around 6 hours' walk from the centre of Ngum/Yandong, classify the songs on tracks 1, 2, 4, 9, second part of 10 (missing in the accompanying translation), 13 and 14 as *ga sor* (literally, “song” + “sound, melody, breath”) and the first song on track 10 as *ga ma*. Some songs can also be named for their region of origin, and it is wonderful that these singers have included a terrific rendition of the well-known Ngum/Yandong big song *Kong ma ban lai*, categorized by Sheeam singers as *ga Ngum*, on track 3.

On tracks 11, 12, and 15–18, the group perform songs with instrumental accompaniment. The Kam instruments used are pictured on the CD sleeve but the listener needs to seek further descriptions of them elsewhere (for example, Ingram and Wu 2014). Unfortunately, the instruments are labelled incorrectly on the back cover: *gor-gee*/govkgis should be labelled as a two-string bowed lute and *bee-ba*/biicbav as a four-string plucked lute. Some of these songs are typically a part of the repertoire of various big-song-singing areas, such as the narrative *ga jin* usually performed only by men accompanying themselves with a larger Kam *bee-ba* (track 12), and the love songs categorized as *ga lart* (“drawn-out songs”) in Sheeam. The latter includes *ga gharng* involving the two-string horizontally held Kam fiddle called *gor-gee* (track 15), and *ga bee-ba* usually involving the smaller Kam plucked lute called *bee-ba* (track 18). The remaining accompanied tracks feature adaptations of songs from other Kam areas that have been popularized through the various Kam performance troupes. These troupes have existed since ‘big song’ became known to and reported more widely by Han Chinese involved in Land Reform work in Kam areas 1950s, not initially through those individuals' fieldwork as claimed here (Ingram and Wu 2017: 71–72).

In the final track 19, the listener hears a field recording of flowing stream waters, crowing roosters, the sounds of birds and insects, and a small boy calling to his older brother. This track provides a sonic illustration of important components of the environment of Kam regions, as Kam villages are usually located in river valleys. To me (Wu Jiaping), as a Kam person who grew up in a remote Kam village, this creates a soundscape for fully appreciating big song.

The back cover of the CD states that “all songs are traditional repertoire”, while in the notes, the group is described as providing an “authentic representation of traditional Dong music” (p. 4). Although to our knowledge the word “tradition” has no direct equivalent in the Kam language, its ability to be used with various different meanings can make it helpful for understanding current forms of Kam musical culture (Ingram 2012a, 2012b). Here, its use is impossible to unpack briefly, as every song on the album has many layers of history, meaning, and significance that demand lengthier explanation. Perhaps the recording could be described as featuring an “authentic representation of the range of different forms of Kam songs currently featured in staged Kam singing performances”.

For example, tracks 2 and 14 are two different *ga sor* that Sheeam singers claim as part of their own local repertoire. Sheeam singers typically refer to track 2 as *Ga neng* (rather than by its opening line of lyrics, as here), since its lyrics feature the cicada called *neng*; track 14 is usually known as *Ga numleng* and imitates the cicada called *numleng* or *leng-lee*. Here, the women-only performance of *Ga neng* closely resembles the way I (Catherine) have observed Kam *sang ga* (song

experts) born in the 1940s teach the song. However, the mixed-voice performance of *Ga numleng* resembles the version I learnt together with Sheeam singers for the 2005 performance of 10,000 people singing a big song for the Liping Airport–Opening Arts Festival. Kam friends and teachers in Sheeam sometimes referred to this version as *ga Yuanlong* due to its having been altered by Kam composer Wu Yuanlong from the Liping Arts Troupe, and laughed when singers accidentally sang this version in village contexts.

Track 10 consists of a medley of two songs. The first is a version of a well-known *ga ma* from Sheeam, adapted here for mixed voices and with some minor alterations to verse endings, followed immediately by the song *Da long lai low* that is popular in the song and dance troupe repertoires. The two songs are seamlessly combined in a manner typical of the so-called *yuanshengtai* 原生态 (“authentic”) big song performances popular from the early 2010s. Track 12 is based on a men’s *ga jin* melody also known in Sheeam; the performance of it here is clearly intended for staged entertainment, with interjections from women that are almost certainly based on the performance of these songs in the various state-operated performance troupes.

It would be fascinating to hear from the singers involved in making this CD as to their decisions regarding the songs they include in their performance – especially since I have recently heard some Kam friends describe many of these versions of Kam songs using the new phrase *ga gaibian*. *Ga* is the Kam word for “song”, while *gaibian* is a Chinese word meaning “changed”. Many questions about the performances emerge, reminding us of the incredible importance to Kam musical culture of Kam song experts who, as living repositories of song, hold onto and pass down these understandings of musical meaning and history.

The CD notes make several further claims about Kam musical culture that warrant attention: first, that the vocal drone acts as a base for two singers to “take turns to deliver the main melody” (p. 2), and second, that “the transitions between dissonance and consonance are one of the most interesting parts of the song, and they remind one of a similar process in the chirping of cicadas” (p. 2). These ideas were never presented to me (Catherine) by Kam singers or song experts in any of the Kam areas where I have conducted research. To my understanding, the closest approximation of a “main melody” would be the *wair may* (lower vocal line) that is sung by most singers, and which delivers the main lyrics. The sections where *wair may* provides a drone and *wair say* (upper vocal line/s) takes a different melody above are mainly those passages that conclude song sections, and the *wair say* acts as a kind of aural conductor to coordinate the singers. The Kam description of poor singing as *git*, a word that refers to a “bite that wounds” and used to describe singing that is uncoordinated or out of tune, is the only concept I have encountered that very remotely connects to an idea of dissonance. However, unlike Western musical concepts of dissonance, *git* is to be avoided at all times. The intervals between musical lines are not considered to have any connection with the sound of cicadas; while they may be interesting to outsiders, older singers in Sheeam always take the greatest interest in big songs with lyrical content considered as important, deep, or educational.

The song lyrics are provided in Kam orthography, usually without including the many vocables typical of Kam songs. The English translations are generally clear, though sadly the lyrics and translation for track 5 are for a different song, and the notes to track 10, as mentioned, are missing the entire second song. Occasionally, the standard Kam orthography provided does not reflect local word pronunciations – for example, *sins juh* rather than the *hen juh* used by the singers (track 10). In the Kam orthography, the final letter is used to indicate linguistic tone, and given this orthography is based on the tonal systems for a different Kam lect not used in big-song-singing regions, it becomes somewhat redundant and awkward – therefore, the use of alternative systems.

Overall, this CD and accompanying notes provide a welcome contribution for music lovers and researchers alike to appreciate Kam song and the acoustic environment of Kam communities. The album further illustrates how big song is rapidly becoming an icon and a cultural symbol of the Kam people, moving from its core region of second lect Southern Kam dialect speakers to the

entire Kam area and beyond. As the “staged tradition” (Ingram and Wu 2017: 77–80) is a more effective “marketing” form, it has been a viable means for cultural diffusion and, to some degree, conservation. But it also raises some questions about tradition, authenticity, and the transformation of big song singing – particularly because of the close connections between village and staged singing and the fact that more research is needed on the main characteristics and values of the different regionally specific Kam village traditions. We would do well to carefully consider what constitute the crucial musical differences among the different Kam villages, and how we might work to preserve them.

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