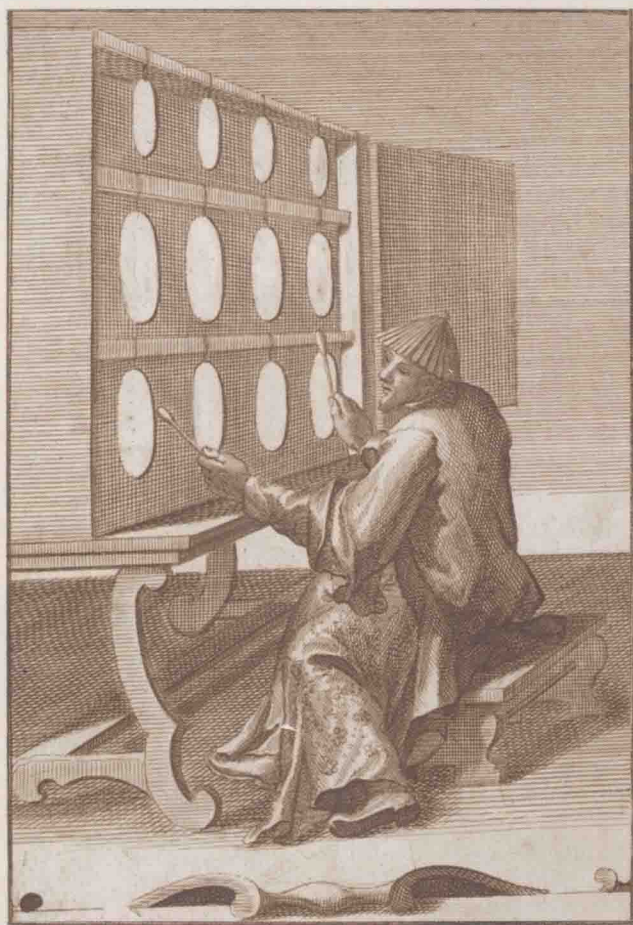


中乐西渐的历程（英文版）

# *The Idea of Chinese Music in Europe up to the Year 1800*

*Ching-wah Lam*

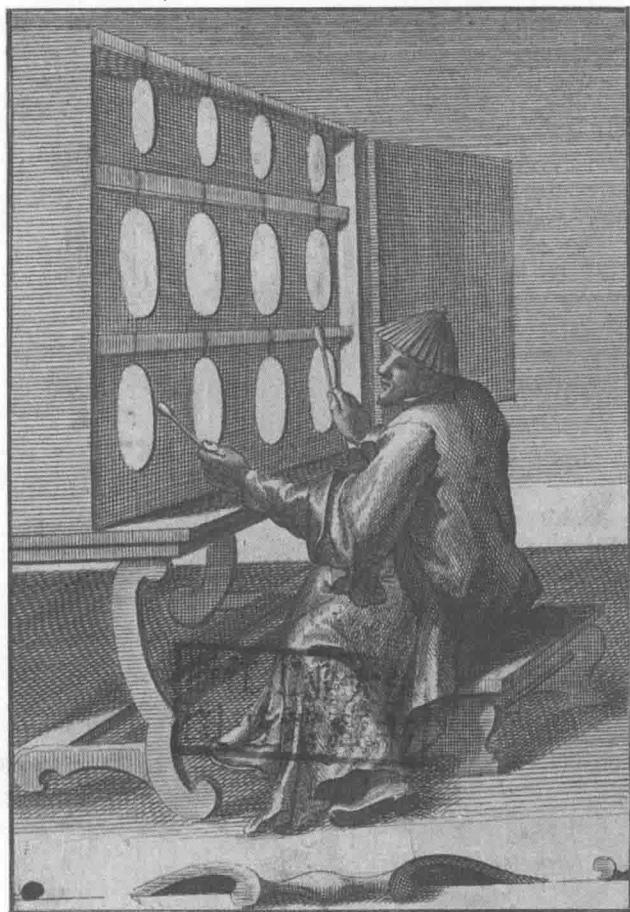


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Central Conservatory of Music Press

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——对1800年以前中国音乐流传欧洲的历史探讨

林青华著

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Ching-wah Lam

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## Foreword

I met Ching-wah Lam in September 1996 in Shandong at the Ninth Annual Meeting of the China's Traditional Music Society Conference, during which I listened to his academic reports for the first time. I can recall vividly that his report was on the music exchanges between China and the West in the 18th-century. Then he had collected rich materials and presented a thorough analysis that impressed all participants. It was the early days of China's economic reform and social opening-up, and scholars in China were eager to gain experience of the research from the West.

Lam's presentation fitted well with China's academic environment and complemented the needs of Chinese music scholars. It came to my mind that Hong Kong had not reverted to China then, but there would be much more exchanges between the mainland and Hong Kong in the future. His research area will enable scholars of two sides to learn from one another. Since then, Lam, as the Head of Music Department of Hong Kong Baptist University, worked with me, as the Head of Musicology Department of the Central Conservatory of Music, to promote scholarly exchanges between the two Departments. Many HKBU academic staff members visited the Central Conservatory of Music, while the entire academic staff members of my Department exchanged visits with them. These academic visits have, of course, led to communications, discussions, lectures, among scholars of both Departments, strengthening the relationship between two institutions, while also enriching knowledge transfer and raising the standard of research and teaching. This is especially true for the lectures presented by Lam as well as other scholars from HKBU. They shared their findings to teachers and students at the CCOM and offered a great impact to the scholarship in mainland China. Lam is an ethnomusicologist trained in Oxford and Durham Universities, but over the years he has impressed me by remaining humble in getting my advice on research and teaching in traditional Chinese music. This has led to the successful incorporation of essential aspects of

traditional Chinese music into the music curriculum of Hong Kong Baptist University.

Publication of this book reflects the achievement of Lam over many years of research on historical ethnomusicology. He was educated in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, and has in-depth knowledge of music cultures of China and the West, therefore possesses a unique advantage for tackling topic such as this. The book adopts a historical approach and discusses music exchanges between China and the West until the end of the eighteenth century systematically. The author has consulted rich resources on Chinese music in many European languages, filling the gaps not only on the research of Chinese music history, but also on traditional Chinese music. It forms an important channel for linking today's understanding of Chinese music with that of the previous centuries.

Since the book will be published bilingually in English and Chinese, I am sure it will be a significant contribution to Chinese musicology, and it is to be recognised by the international academic community.

My heartfelt congratulations!

Yuan Jingfang

(Former Head of Department of Musicology, CCOM)

## Preface

For centuries, China has remained a fascinating country to the West. This is partly due to her greatness geographically and in population, and partly the mystery surrounding every aspect of her evolution, as a result of her distance. Her political system, for example, is believed to have been instituted for over two millennia and based so much on a succession of benevolent dictators, in contrast to the somewhat enlightened systems of the West founded on human values of Christianity. The Chinese have also given the impression that sciences of any kind are ignored, and the survival of her civilisation relies much on the mercy of nature, which maintains a tight balance between three vaguely defined spheres of general existence, namely heaven, earth and human. In short, the Western world has been puzzled by how such a vast country can survive centuries of natural disasters and human turmoils, but only with a seemingly primitive approach to the tackling of problems.

The rapid economic development of China in the past three decades has accelerated Western interest in all aspects of the old Middle Kingdom. In music, the general audience in the West may wonder why the living tradition of Chinese music is so close to that of the West, especially in terms of orchestration, temperament and instrumental range, if there is a chance to attend a concert at the Musikverein featuring a Chinese Folk Orchestra, or indeed, most of the ensemble and solo performances of Chinese instruments. The desire to modernise in the early twentieth century means that Western standards in intonation and form had to be conformed, even to the extent of creating a new tradition, as the notion of "professionalism" was evolved from music culture of the West. This is in stark contrast to the attitude of a modern ethnomusicologist, who longs for discovering Chinese music in its original form, perhaps also with a view of preserving the imminent lost of a tradition. Such efforts can be considered as an attempt to reverse the trend of the Westernisation of Chinese music.

It will be apparent that a historical study of Western understanding of Chinese music will throw light on how aesthetic views on the art have changed over the past centuries, beginning with mere hearsay of a complicated musical tradition, but evolving into a more scholarly approach. The view taken by a commentator will be governed by his political stance, as well as his degree of enthusiasm towards Chinese culture.

This book examines the development of knowledge of China and Chinese music in Europe, from Marco Polo to the first English embassy to China and goes on to a brief discussion of the influence of this knowledge of China on European music.

Reports of early travellers are examined for descriptions of Chinese or Mongolian musical practice, and the impression these made on strangers, with the European summaries of knowledge on China by scholars who stayed at home, such as Mendoza in the sixteenth century, Kircher in the seventeenth and Du Halde in the eighteenth.

The opinions and activities of Matteo Ricci and his companions, the first of the Jesuit mission to be accepted at court in Peking are noticed, with the increasing amount of material, from travellers, residents and commentators, and the first attempts at an account of Chinese musical theory, with the beginnings of the China fashion in Europe.

Later chapters deal with music in the time of the Kangxi Emperor, his encouragement of Western music, and the impressions brought to Europe, leading, at the end of the eighteenth century, to the work of Amiot, the first European scholar to undertake a serious study of Chinese musical theory.

Particular attention is paid to the Macartney embassy in 1793, in view of the large number of written accounts that were published after its return. The attitude of the English is contrasted with that of the Jesuit scholars in Peking.

A final chapter surveys Chinese themes in early opera and drama, the effect this has on décor and music, and the use of musical symbolism in *chinoiserie* decoration.

It is concluded that by the time any serious technical knowledge of Chinese music was becoming available, notions of Chinese music had already been formed on an imaginary model, and that this serious study had little effect on the relatively hostile attitude of later visitors, with a greater interest in trade than in an ancient culture.

As China's economic and military power began to deteriorate in the nineteenth century, Western critics were quite ready to pass derogatory judgements on Chinese music, based on their feeling of superiority: the failure to understand music from a cultural perspective was passed unnoticed, so long as enough accusations were made on the supposed shortcomings of an abstract art based so much on the misunderstanding of a long performing tradition.



## Note on Transliteration from Chinese

There are a variety of problems that arise in writing in a Western language on a subject that may demand the inclusion of Chinese words and names. Various systems have been used by writers, varying from those idiosyncratic phonetics used in *the New Oxford History of Music* or the less common system of Zhao Yuanren, to the more generally accepted forms used by scholars such as Joseph Needham.

In the present book I have endeavoured to use the system endorsed by Peking (which becomes Beijing in the process) and known as *pinyin*. I have, however, left Peking or Canton in the form in which it is best known in the West.

The various versions of Chinese words that occur in quotation in different European languages have been left unchanged where the quotation is direct, and are, in case, usually easily identifiable.

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## Introduction

For some seven centuries, since the days of Marco Polo, the idea of China has exercised fascination over Europeans. Conceptions of the country, often wildly inaccurate, have changed from generation to generation, fulfilling, as Raymond Dawson has pointed out,<sup>①</sup> a need in the interpreter, rather than providing any reflection of reality.

The story of Chinese relations with the West is an older one. Connections established through the use of the chariot have led some to see a relationship between Chinese civilization of the second millennium B. C. and that of the Middle East. Such a relationship is, of course, hypothetical. Nevertheless in later times there were established trade routes across Central Asia, the famous silk route.

For Romans of the Augustan age the Chinese, like the Britons, were remote. Their appearance in Vergil, for example, joins them, with typical poetical geography, with Ethiopians and Indians.<sup>②</sup> The Chinese are mentioned chiefly for their silk and their distance from the West.<sup>③</sup>

Silk was to play a further part in a less happy event during the later Roman Empire, when its secret was betrayed by two monks to the Byzantine Emperor, while other contacts with the West may be seen in the Nestorian monument outside Peking, a relic of the Tang Dynasty.

There must, in fact, have been a multiplicity of connections between China and the Occident. Yet it is only from the time of Marco Polo that this begins to intrigue the European. In China the lover of marvels was able to find entertainment; the philosopher could recognize his ideal. That both might be

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① Raymond Stanley Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* (London, New York: Oxford UP, 1967), 7.

② Vergil, *Georgics*, V. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 120-22.

③ Horace, *Carmina*, translated by William Oldisworth (London: B. Lintott, 1713), V. 3: 27, 29 & V. 4: 15, 23.

wrong is another matter.

The present book is concerned, however, with European ideas of Chinese art, and in particular with ideas of the art of music in China, and the effect of these ideas, however marginal, on Western music. For the majority of travellers, adventurers, merchants or missionaries, music was not necessarily of the first importance. Their reports reflect a generally inexpert attitude to Chinese musical performance, an additional strange incident to relate to their compatriots at home. There grew, however, a more expert view of matters, particularly over questions of acoustic theory, which had preoccupied Chinese scholars for some two thousand years. Music as a branch of Mathematics was to exercise its own fascination, culminating, as far as the Western study of Chinese music is concerned, with the work of Amiot in the eighteenth century.

The Jesuit mission to Peking was of the greatest importance in transmitting a knowledge of China to Europe, and Amiot represents the summit of work on Chinese music. His study of the subject, published in Paris in 1780, was by no means the last word. It was still possible for Europeans, particularly from Protestant countries, to treat with contempt an art of which they knew nothing. Jesuit admiration of China may, ironically, have served to alienate those for whom the Society of Jesus represented only unscrupulous cunning.

Ideas of Chinese music have their part to play in the humanistic approach to sinology in the seventeenth century, a time for building many an intellectual edifice with remarkably little straw for the bricks. More extreme fancies prevail as the mania for *chinoiserie* seizes the imagination of the eighteenth century, with a consequent influence on theatre and opera, in the choice of exotic subjects, with décor to match, and a decorative use of imaginary musical motifs in applied art.

The extent of the Chinese vogue in applied art is difficult to overestimate. Even today there is evidence of the fashion, in a debased form, at every turn. The eighteenth century brought the furniture of Chippendale and Sheraton, the building of Kew, and a wide range of decorative motifs in textile design, wall-paper and carpeting. The successors of these are all too obvious.

In music *chinoiserie* was far less pervasive. Until the publication of Du Halde's compendium on China in 1735 there was no example of Chinese music

available to Europeans.<sup>①</sup> The five melodies given in that seminal work were prefaced by an old violin clef, which could have led to misunderstanding. It was on these melodies that others, such as Rousseau in his *Dictionary*, drew. Although other transcriptions were by that time available, Weber made use of the first of Du Halde's melodies for his *Overture* to Schiller's version of Gozzi's *Turandot*. It is only in the late nineteenth century that any real oriental influence can be detected in Western music, and with the eclecticism of the twentieth century.

In fact the debt of Europe to China in the field of music may be a much deeper one, and less obvious than any superficial exoticism of the eighteenth century. It has been suggested that the Chinese mathematical work on equal temperament, published by Zhu Zaiyu in 1584, may have provided a basis for Western theorists.<sup>②</sup> There is nothing particularly Chinese about Bach's 48 *Preludes and Fugues*, but it is interesting to speculate about the possible origin of the theory on which they are based.

In the present book I propose to examine the accounts of Chinese music that travellers brought to Europe, and the consequent ideas held on the subject by those who stayed at home, the later scholarship in this field, and the use made of *chinoiserie* in music, and music in *chinoiserie*. The subject of China became popular in the theatre, at the same time the supposed Chinese instrumentarium provided a topic for the great painters and designers in this mode, for Watteau and Boucher, among others.

In the course of this study, it should be possible to see, from time to time, the Chinese view of matters, usually a very different one. Although there is no place here for a full examination of the idea of Western music in China, and indeed most inhabitants of China would have had as little to say about it as the inhabitants of Fujian who took flight at the sound of the Dutch ambassadors' trumpets in 1655, the introduction of Western musical instruments into China is of relevance to the general theme.

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① Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, V. 3 (Paris, 1735), 267.

② Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, V. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pt. 1.

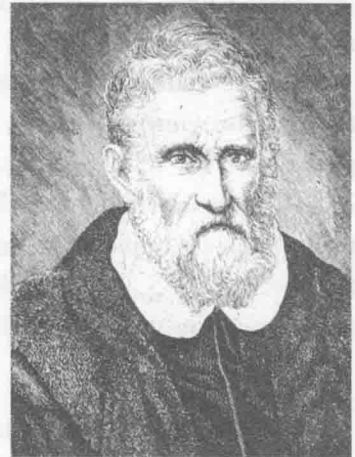
## I Medieval Travellers

It was in the period of the Yuan Dynasty, established in the North of China in 1234, and in the South in 1279, that there was closer contact between China and Europe. This was facilitated by the unification of Central Asia under Genghiz Khan, and the subsequent conquests in Europe and China.

The Mongolians ran, as part of their feudal responsibilities a system of post-horses, which made communication across Asia relatively rapid. The fact that some Mongolian tribes were Nestorian Christians, and that the Great Khan seemed a possible ally for Europe against the threat of Islam brought about missionary and diplomatic contact.

The conquest of China by the nomadic Mongols eventually resulted in the acceptance by the conqueror of the methods of government and of the culture of the conquered. Nevertheless in the time of Khubilai Khan, who ruled in Khanbalik (Cambaluc), as Peking was known, at the time of Marco Polo, four distinct classes existed, subject to different laws. The superior class were the Mongols themselves, then came the foreign administrators, of whom Marco Polo became one. The third class were the northern Chinese, who had acceded earlier to Mongolian claims, and the fourth the southern, who had retained their independence longer.

Marco Polo proves remarkably disappointing as a source for knowledge of China. He seems to have had little curiosity about the people who had been conquered, and his contacts are primarily with the ruling class, during his seventeen years in the Far East. As a merchant, he notices the size of cities, the richness of a country, but ignores literature and the arts.



Marco Polo c. 1254-1324

His descriptions of music concern primarily the Mongolians and their

kinsmen. He speaks of the music used before a battle, when Khubilai was dealing, yet again, with rebel leaders who had caused dissension in the West of the Empire.

“Then might be heard a tumult of many instruments, the shrilling of fifes and sound of men singing at the pitch of their voices. For the usage of the Tartars is such that when they are confronting the foe and marshalled for the fray they do not join battle till the drums begin to beat—that is the drums of the commander. While they wait for the beat of the drums, all the Tartar host sound their instruments and join in song. That is why the noise of instruments and of singing was so loud on both sides alike.”<sup>①</sup>

He has much the same to say of a later battle at Karakorum, where he speaks of

“both armies... only waiting for the sound of the kettle-drum. For the Tartars do not dare to start a battle till their lord’s drums begin to beat; and while they are waiting it is their custom to sing and play very sweetly on their two-stringed instruments and to make very merry in expectation of battle. Accordingly both armies, while they waited for the sound of the kettle-drums, sang and played so well that it was a marvel to hear.”<sup>②</sup>

The specific reference to an actual instrument, perhaps the Mongolian ancestor of the Chinese *erhu*, a kind of two-stringed fiddle, is disappointingly different in other manuscripts of Marco Polo, in some appearing as ‘four-stringed’.<sup>③</sup> The reader may, also, detect the hand of Rustichello, to whom Polo related his adventures in the prison at Genoa. Rustichello was a romance-writer

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① Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated by Ronald Latham (London, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958): 116-117.

② Ibid, 315.

③ Latin Compendium & Venetian dialect MSS of Marco Polo have ‘four-stringed instruments’, *ibid*.

of experience, and, like a modern journalist, knew well how to add a telling phrase to create an impression on the reader. There seems no need to suppose that these warlike exercises were an occasion for any great artistic achievement.

Marco Polo's other references to music concern the music at a banquet in Peking, where the musicians strike up whenever the Great Khan is about to drink, and a description of funeral customs that have their counterpart in later Chinese practice.

Of a funeral in the Mongolian province of Tangut, he says: "Lastly, let me tell you that when a body is being taken to the pyre, all the instruments in the land go in front of it making music. And all this is done in proportion to the rank of the deceased and the requirements of his station."<sup>①</sup> Later travellers have something to report on funeral customs, and the modern funeral band may still astonish visitors to China. In this respect at least there seems some common custom between the Mongolian rulers of China, and the Chinese.

A few years after Marco Polo's departure from China, the first Catholic mission was established in Cambaluc, as it was still known to Europeans. In 1294 John of Montecorvino had a church built near the Great Khan's palace, and taught the boys he had bought or recruited to sing Gregorian chant, much to the delight of the Khan, we are told.<sup>②</sup> Nothing is said of the music of the inhabitants, but in 1342 we hear again of a performance of Western music in the capital, as John of Marignolli, the newly appointed bishop, entered the court to the chant of the Credo, to great effect.

Later travellers report the similarity of Buddhist to Gregorian chant. Benedict Goes, the Jesuit lay-brother who established the identity of Cathay with China at the close of the sixteenth century, tells us that the Chinese are often reported to be Christian, because of the use of images, and "chaunting in a style almost exactly resembling the Gregorian chaunts of our churches."<sup>③</sup>

Other medieval travellers include the indefatigable Ibn Battuta, whose work is not likely to have been generally known in Europe before its translation in the

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① Latin Compendium & Venetian dialect MSS of Marco Polo have 'four-stringed instruments', 86.

② Henry Yule, ed and tr, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* V.3, new ed., rev. by Henri Cordier (Tai Pei: Ch'eng-wen Pub. Co., 1966, reprint in 1972), 47.

③ Ibid, 236.



nineteenth century. He visited China during the Yuan Dynasty, and has left a description of a boating trip with the Mongolian Amir Kurtai, who demonstrated some breadth of musical taste. "The young lord got into another (boat), taking singers and musicians with him. The singers sang songs in Chinese, Arabic and Persian. The lord's son was a great lover of Persian songs and there was one of these sung by them which he caused to be repeated several times..."<sup>①</sup> Ibn Battuta transcribed the words from memory.

Earlier accounts of China, and, incidentally, of elements in its music, survive in other Arabic sources. An account from the ninth century, for example, draws attention to the musical distinction accorded a city.

"A Town is dignify'd with the Title of City, when it is allowed some of those great Chinese Trumpets which are fashion'd after this manner. They are three or four Cubits in length, and are as much about as can be grasped with both Hands; but they grow narrower towards the End, which is fitted to the Mouth of a Man. On the Outside, they are coloured with Chinese Ink, and may be heard a Mile off. Each City has four Gates, at each of which are five of these Trumpets, which the Chinese sound at certain Hours of the Day and of the Night. Moreover, in each City are ten Drums, which they beat at the same time; and this they do as a public Token of their Obedience to the Emperor, as also to signify the Hour of the Day and of the Night, to which End they have also Dials and Clocks with Weights."<sup>②</sup>

The same traveller recounts the use of a bell as a request for justice from a magistrate. "In each City there is a small Bell hung to the Wall above the Prince's or Governor's head; and this Bell may be rung by a String which reaches about three Miles..."<sup>③</sup> The punctuation of the English version is unintentionally

① Henry Yule, ed and tr, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* V.3, new ed., rev. by Henri Cordier (Tai Pei: Ch'eng-wen Pub. Co., 1966, reprint in 1972), 132.

② E. Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts of India and China, by two Mohammedan travellers*, translated from the Arab (London: Printed for S. Harding, 1733), 20.

③ Ibid, 25.