

# Double Reeds along the Great Silk Road

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## Preface

The present volume *DOUBLE REEDS ALONG THE GREAT SILK ROAD* is a result of the 25<sup>th</sup> International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Colloquium, *Double-reeds of the Silk Road: The Interaction of Theory and Practice from Antiquity to Contemporary Performance*, which was held from 29 November to 1 December, 2018, at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in the People's Republic of China. The colloquium was highly international, with twenty-two presentations by scholars from fifteen countries. It was indeed a rare and felicitous occasion to gather this many music scholars interested in the topic at the colloquium, sharing their research outcome and ideas.

The double-reed instruments can be divided into two main types based on the shape of the bore of the pipe: conical and cylindrical. The primary focus of the colloquium was on the former, while the latter were also included in our discussion, especially when they were related with each another. The sounds of the conical-bore double-reed instruments tend to be extremely loud, sharp, and penetrating, and thus more suitable for public and outdoor venues, while their cylindrical-bore counterparts usually have deeper and softer sounds, and are thus performed more frequently for indoor and intimate occasions, and played accompanied by softer-sounding instruments.

The double-reed instruments (of either type) have been under-represented in ethnomusicology and related fields and deserve much more serious and sustained attention. Even in organology, a subfield of ethnomusicology that specifically studies musical instruments, research on the double reeds substantially lags behind that of other types of instruments, such as string instruments and drums. Only a handful of scholars have engaged in full-fledged research on these instruments, despite their historical importance, wide dissemination, and the significant embedded social, cultural, and political issues.

It is generally agreed that the double-reed instruments originated in one region from where they spread through vast areas of the world through trade, migration, warfare, and religious and colonial expansions<sup>1</sup>. These instruments can be found in most of Eurasia and parts of Africa and the Americas. Such wide dissemination alone undoubtedly underscores the importance of this type of instrument in human history, and more specifically in the global history of music. The Silk Road played a decisive role in the movement of music, musical instruments, and musicians, and the reference in the title of the colloquium attests to its enormous importance in exploring the *longue durée* of double-reed instruments.

While the monogenetic theory of double-reed instruments is widely accepted, the place of origin remains debatable: Sassanid Persia (present-day Iran) is most

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<sup>1</sup> Sachs, Curt. 2006 [1942]. *The History of Musical Instruments*. Mineola, New York: Dover; and Bryant, Wanda. 1990. The Keyless Double-Reed Aerophone: Its Usage, Construction, and Worldwide Distribution. *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, 14: 132-175.

frequently cited, but South Asia and the Middle East have also been suggested. The routes and timings of dissemination also remain largely unclear. For certain particular areas and routes, theories have been advanced pertaining to the movement of the instruments and music played on them. Ian Hancock<sup>2</sup> believes that Roma musicians played a major role in disseminating double-reed instruments as they migrated from South Asia to Europe. According to Jean Jenkins and Poul Rovsing Olsen<sup>3</sup>, many instruments of eastern origin were introduced to the Balkan region through the westward expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which was famous for military bands featuring double-reed instruments. The expansion of Islam is considered responsible for spreading the instruments eastward. Muslim merchants from South Asia are believed to have introduced the double-reed instruments to Sumatra in the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>4</sup>, to China in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and then to the Korean peninsula in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. Iberian missionaries introduced double-reed instruments to the Americas and parts of Asia, including Japan and the Philippines, as part of their effort to propagate Christianity<sup>6</sup>.

Since the 2000s, several significant monographs on the double-reed instruments have been published<sup>7</sup> which provide detailed information on performance practice, repertoire, the social organization of musicians, patronage, transmission methods, as well as religious and cultural symbolism. Considering the instruments' wide dissemination, however, the areas covered by these monographs remain extremely limited, and similar research needs to be conducted for other areas, particularly the Middle East, West Asia, and South Asia, where double-reed instruments are believed to have originated. In addition, rigorous attempts to synthesize existing and emerging work for a large-scale interregional comparison is yet to be made.

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- <sup>2</sup> Hancock, Ian. 2002. *We are the Romani People*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.
- <sup>3</sup> Jenkins, Jean and Poul Rovsing Olsen. 1976. *Music and Musical Instruments in the World of Islam*. London: Horniman Museum.
- <sup>4</sup> Matusky, Patricia and Tan Sooi Beng. 2004. *The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk and Syncretic Traditions*. Surrey: Ashgate; Simon, Artur. 1985. The Terminology of Batak Instrumental Music in Northern Sumatra. *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 17: 113-145.
- <sup>5</sup> Lee, Yong-Shik. 2010. Structure, History and Usage of the Korean Conical Double-Reed Pipe. *Double-Reed Instruments in Eurasia: History, Context, and Representation*. Edited by Terada Yoshitaka, National Institutes for the Humanities, 77-91.
- <sup>6</sup> Ebisawa, Arimichi. 1947. *Yogaku Engeki Kotohajime: Kirishitan no Ongaku to Engeki* [Introduction to Western Music and Theatre: Christian Music and Theatre]. Tokyo: Taiyo Shuppan; Rimmer, Joan. 1976. The Instruments Called Chirimia in Latin America. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis*, 4: pp. 101-110; Irving, D. R. M. 2010. *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>7</sup> Nercessian, Andy. 2001. *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*. Scarecrow Press; Keil, Charles, Angeliki Vellou Keil, Steven Feld and Dick Blau. 2002. *Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press; Peycheva, Lozanka and Ventsislav Dimov. 2002. *The Zurna Tradition in Southwest Bulgaria: Romany Musicians in Practice*. Sofia: Bulgarian Musicology; Pettan, Svanibor. 2002. *Rom Musicians in Kosovo: Interaction and Creativity*. Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Wolf, Richard. 2005. *The Black Cow's Footprint: Time, Space, and Music in the Lives of the Kotas of South India*. Delhi: Permanent Black; Jones, Stephen. 2007. *Ritual Music of North China: Shawm Bands in Shanxi*. Surrey: Ashgate.

The present volume aims to fill the void in current scholarship by gathering and analysing existing documents, whether written, iconographical, or ethnographical, and by providing information from previously neglected regions (such as East Africa and smaller communities in Southeast Asia). The book is divided into four parts, which reflect the interest of current scholarship.

## Part I: History and Dissemination

As mentioned above, their history and dissemination have been primary concerns in the study of double-reed instruments. While theories have been advanced ever since the beginnings of comparative musicology, the lack of detailed and reliable information has prevented the refinement and elaboration of such theories. Essays in this volume are expected to make previously unavailable data accessible, and thereby contribute to our collective knowledge on the history and dissemination of the double-reed instruments.

Jürgen Elsner provides a comprehensive overview of the double-reed instruments of North Africa, with particular attention to morphology and names of the instruments. Complementing Elsner's essay, Anne van Oostrum gives a carefully constructed account of a history of the *mizmar* in relation to other woodwind instruments in the Arab world. Both Elsner and Oostrum stress the decisive role of Islam in the dissemination of double-reed instruments in the region. Timkehet Teffera's essay provides much-needed information from East Africa, where scholarship on double-reed instruments is still in its infancy. The two possible routes of dissemination she has suggested (i.e. from the Middle East to East Africa via North/North-east Africa, or from West Africa to East Africa via North Africa) deserve further analysis. Esbjörn Wettermark advances his theory that the Vietnamese *ken* has a dual origin, identifying two routes of dissemination: by land from China, and by sea from Indonesia. Liu Xiangkun's engagement in a cross-regional comparison of the thumb hole, a particular structural element of the double-reed instruments, is unique among the contributions in this volume. His essay reminds us of the relevance of looking at the interplay between ergonomic restrictions and cultural/musical expectations and requirements.

## Part II: Performance Contexts

With their loud and penetrating sound, the conical-bored double-reed instruments are considered suitable for public and outdoor performances such as religious ceremonies, life-cycle rituals, military, and traditional theatres. In many parts of the world, their sounds are regarded as exerting tremendous power over human emotions, invoking a range of strong emotions, from joyous and auspicious to sad and fearful. Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda describes various contexts in which the little-investigated *horanawa* is performed in Sri Lanka, including temple rituals and processions, funerals, and in traditional theatre. Working on the *zurna* in Western Turkey, Şebnem Sençerman describes its use in various contexts, including life-

cycle rituals (circumcisions, marriages, and others), in martial arts and in military bands, and examines how the competence of musicians is determined by the gender of the audience.

The power of double-reed instruments over human emotions have been appropriated in martial arts and military exercise, in which the sounds of the instruments are believed to cheer, inspire, and encourage allies, while threatening and instilling fear in the enemy. This connection is particularly evident in Southeast Asia where traditional martial arts are often accompanied by a music ensemble featuring double-reed instrument. Rewadee Ungpho and Gisa Jähnichen provide a rare glimpse into forms of martial arts as practised in small-scale local communities (*muay gayok* of Urak Lawoi people in Thailand and the *silat* in a small village in Kelantan, Malaysia respectively). Research on such “little traditions” is invaluable in understanding the formation and influence of the nationalized forms of martial arts (“great traditions”) and similar research should be encouraged further. Uwe Umberto Paetzold combines ethnography and historical research on *penchak silat* in West Java, Indonesia, and suggests that the use of the double-reed instrument (*tarompét*) may have been preceded by the shell horn (*sankh*). The last chapter of Part II by Raja Iskandar Bin Raja Halid gives a historical account of the Malay *nobat*, which forms part of once-ubiquitous ceremonial and military ensembles throughout the Islamic world. The ensemble and the sound emanating from it is a symbol of the power which legitimizes the authority of the sultanate.

### Part III: Sounds of Otherness

One peculiar feature of double-reed instruments is its association with the notion of otherness. While a majority of the musical instruments of a given locality have a foreign origin, they tend to be adapted into a local musical culture deeply enough to represent the locality as an iconic symbol, such as the *sitar* in India and the *shamisen* in Japan. The double-reed instruments appear to be an exception to this overall tendency. In many cultures, the double-reed instruments and their practitioners continue to invoke the image of the foreign and the exotic. The *zurna* in Bulgaria was forbidden in the 1970s and 1980s by the authorities because it was considered Turkish, although it had been played in Bulgaria for centuries<sup>8</sup>. The construction of an image of such otherness by double-reed instruments is the theme pursued in Part III. Rastko Jakovljevic analyses the representations of the *zurla* in the complex web of tradition, otherness, and identity in the Balkan region. Terada Yoshitaka traces the image of the *charumera* in Japan’s cultural history and argues that it has retained its foreign image, thus occupying a unique place in the Japanese soundscape.

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<sup>8</sup> Psycheva, Lozanka and Ventsislav Dimov. 2002. *The Zurna Tradition in Southwest Bulgaria: Romany Musicians in Practice*. Sofia: Bulgarian Musicology; Buchanan, Donna A. 2006. *Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Part IV: Revival

Charles Keil, an eminent ethnomusicologist who studied *zurna* in Greek Macedonia, once described the sound of double-reed instruments as having had a magical and overwhelming presence in pre-modern society<sup>9</sup>, but their previous lustre has waned considerably as many of the traditional contexts have become discontinued, attenuated, or simplified, and the custom of performing double-reed instruments in such contexts has also declined. While the decline is easily discernible in many parts of the world, we are also witnessing a revival of the double-reed instruments as a marker of rejuvenated local pride and identity. In Part IV, Sahereh Astaneh discusses a selective and accidental revival of a traditional song associated with the Persian New Year (Nowruz) on a double-reed instrument: a rendition of Nowruz music by Ali Akbar Mehdipour Dehkordi became famous enough to now serve as the aural symbol of the celebration. Yves Defrance informs us that the revival of folk oboes in France since the 1970s has gone hand-in-hand with an increasing interest among musicians who wish to reconstruct older forms of the classical music tradition.

The title of the colloquium and of this volume requires some explanation. Although the main focus is on instruments with double reeds, those with four or six layers of reed are also included in the category of “double reeds” in this volume, as they can be treated as closely related subtypes of double-reed instruments and thus analysed together, as there is little discernible difference in playing techniques and performance contexts. Yet, as can be seen from the essays in Part II, the instruments used to accompany martial arts tend to have more than two layers of reed, and further research is in order regarding the relationship between the tonal characteristics of multiple reed instruments in the context of martial arts.

The editors of this volume would like to thank the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for sponsoring the colloquium and providing the venue, and the local arrangement committee chaired by Xiao Mei for warm hospitality and efficient management. We believe that this volume presents a fair overview of the current scholarship on double-reed instruments and identifies areas of future research. It is our sincere wish that this modest book will further strengthen the network of scholars created at the colloquium, and inspire others to participate in the continuing endeavour to understand, preserve, and reinvigorate the double-reed instruments.

The Editors  
(Gisa Jähnichen & Terada Yoshitaka)  
Berlin, October 2019

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<sup>9</sup> Keil, Charles, Angeliki Vellou Keil, Steven Feld and Dick Blau. 2002. *Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

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### Editorial Remark:

The reference system in this volume is aiming at accommodating all readers, also those readers that are less familiar with the subject matter. We tried to avoid in-text citations in order to allow for a better reading flow. Sources can be accessed through footnotes and as a final reference list. Where possible, titles of writings are given in original language of the cited publication. Depending on the authors' preferences, we also tried to keep referencing within footnotes at a minimum. The consistency among reference systems of the authors may differ in some cases due to special requirements of the authors. Their autonomy is of utmost importance in order to reach a wider horizon. All copyright issues regarding figures and schemes were solved by the authors prior to the submission.