

# Court music of China, Japan and Korea in the 16th - 17th centuries: a comparative analysis

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**Abstract:** Throughout history, social and economic events had a great impact on the development of culture and music as a part of it. As soon as different events have forced a cultural shift, the historical changes are considered important for music analysis. The research examines the court music of China, Japan and Korea in the 16th-17th centuries. Special attention is paid to the main characteristics, similarities and differences of music in these states. Moreover, a comparative analysis of court music in different countries was made. The purpose was to investigate the stages of the court music development, explored the historical and social events that influenced the shift in musical genres, and identified similarities and differences between musical art in different countries. The research discusses the contact between Chinese, Korean, Japanese and European cultures and its impact on the development of court music. Moreover, the research identifies similar and different characteristics found in classical musical genres such as nanxi drama (theatre) common in China, fairy tale singing popular in Japan, and ceremonial music performed in Korea. In the Far East countries, court music had features of both ceremonial and epic music associated with great orchestras with a wide variety of instruments. The musical instruments had many common features. The materials used to make the instruments and the production cycles were similar. Many instruments had analogues in other countries. The Chinese guzheng had many similar features with Japanese koto and Korean kayagum; pipa (China) is similar to biwa (Japan). Many instruments migrated from one country to another. The shakuhachi musical instrument moved from China to Japan and became very popular

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in this country. The music instrument was created in about 20 shapes and sizes to make distinctive sounds. Further research should consider other aspects that influenced the development of cultural values and court music in China, Japan and Korea. It is important to analyse other cultural changes and trends to understand the societal transformations, values and characteristics of the Far East countries.

**Keywords:** Art in China, Japan and Korea. Music in the 16th and 17th centuries. Musical instruments in Japan, China and Korea. Japanese puppet theatre. Chinese pentatonic. Lu musical system. Korean ceremonial music.

**Resumo:** Ao longo da história, eventos sociais e econômicos tiveram grande impacto no desenvolvimento da cultura e da música como parte dela. Assim que diferentes eventos forçaram uma mudança cultural, as mudanças históricas são consideradas importantes para a análise musical. A pesquisa examina a música da corte da China, Japão e Coréia nos séculos XVI-XVII. Atenção especial é dada às principais características, semelhanças e diferenças da música nesses estados. Além disso, foi feita uma análise comparativa da música da corte em diferentes países. O objetivo foi investigar as etapas do desenvolvimento da música de corte, explorar os eventos históricos e sociais que influenciaram a mudança nos gêneros musicais e identificar semelhanças e diferenças entre a arte musical em diferentes países. A pesquisa discute o contato entre as culturas chinesa, coreana, japonesa e europeia e seu impacto no desenvolvimento da música de corte. Além disso, a pesquisa identifica características semelhantes e diferentes encontradas em gêneros musicais clássicos, como o drama nanxi (teatro) comum na China, o canto de conto de fadas popular no Japão e a música cerimonial realizada na Coréia. Nos países do Extremo Oriente, a música da corte tinha características de música cerimonial e épica associada a grandes orquestras com uma grande variedade de instrumentos. Os instrumentos musicais tinham muitas características comuns. Os materiais usados para fazer os instrumentos e os ciclos de produção eram semelhantes. Muitos instrumentos tinham análogos em outros países. O guzheng

chinês tinha muitas características semelhantes com o koto japonês e o kayagum coreano; pipa (China) é semelhante a biwa (Japão). Muitos instrumentos migraram de um país para outro. O instrumento musical shakuhachi mudou-se da China para o Japão e tornou-se muito popular neste país. O instrumento musical foi criado em cerca de 20 formas e tamanhos para produzir sons distintos. Outras pesquisas devem considerar outros aspectos que influenciaram o desenvolvimento de valores culturais e música de corte na China, Japão e Coréia. É importante analisar outras mudanças e tendências culturais para entender as transformações sociais, valores e características dos países do Extremo Oriente.

**Palavras-chave:** Arte na China, Japão e Coréia. Música nos séculos XVI e XVII. Instrumentos musicais no Japão, China e Coréia. Teatro de marionetes japonês. Pentatônica chinesa. Sistema musical Lu. Música cerimonial coreana.

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## Introduction

The globalisation processes have proceeded hand in hand with intellectual success and inspired the research on the music of the Eastern hemisphere. The musical styles that appeared in Asian countries are of special interest to the researchers specialising in the history of music. Music is an important part of life surrounding individuals from childhood to old age, on holidays and other days. The music reflects rituals, traditions and the most important stages of human life (DEZALAY and GARTH, 2010). The history of music is an important discipline that helps to understand musical traditions, stages of cultural development and factors that influence worldviews and opinions of individuals. Moreover, cultural education still has an important place in Asian countries. Music is used in religious ceremonies, parades, and important social events (JONES, 2016).

The analysis of oriental music should concentrate on the historical events that influenced its development. The geographical location of countries, extensive relationships and cultural exchange has resulted in a cultural mixture. The music of China, Korea and Japan has many similar features and characteristics (DEZALAY and GARTH, 2010). For centuries, Korea had close relationships with China. The scholars found many common characteristics in their state structures, culture, music, and art. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, conflicts between these countries arise regarding the origins of their artefacts (PROVINE *et al.*, 2017).

The historical events that influenced art and music during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries helped to investigate the main characteristics and changes in cultures. Chinese culture, closed to the rest of the world and flourished in isolation, was not influenced by European culture (LUKIN, 2006). In the 1601 year, Matteo Ricci brought the first European instrument, the *harpsichord*, to China. In spite of the fact that the court in China admired the new instrument, it remained unpopular throughout the country. The war between

China and Western countries resulted in negative attitudes of the Chinese society towards all European traditions (PFAFF, 2022). Asian musicians had different musical genres, theatrical performances and trends that differed greatly from European music. China had its musical mode, *Lu system*, developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A similar musical system appeared in Europe only in later historical periods (SHELBOGASHEV, 2017).

In Korea, this historical period was marked by the development of secular vocal genres and folklore. A new musical genre, formed during this time, was known as *pansori*. Its distinguishing features were the combination of musical drama and folk songs, while only one drummer and one actor performed on stage and played the roles of all the acting characters (LUKIN, 2006). This art form has survived to modern times and is recognised as a masterpiece of the oral heritage of mankind. Korean art borrowed musical trends, genres and musical instruments from other countries. For example, *kayagum*, a plucked musical instrument from Korea, is likened to the Japanese *zither* or Chinese *guzheng* (CHU, 2011). *Haegum*, a bowed two strings fork instrument, was brought to Korea from Mongolia. Korean musicians consisted of two groups. The first group, *kugaka*, performed only traditional music such as folk tunes on the classical Korean musical instruments. The second group, known as *yangaka*, performed Western music and adopted many genres and traditions from Europe. For a long time, a barrier between two musical groups was very difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, the development of these musical trends resulted in a new and non-standard musical genre, *New Traditional Music* (HAN, 2010).

In Japan, this historical period was characterised by unification and state development. Art and music flourished during this time. Culture spread across the country and went beyond the big cities becoming available to all social classes. This development has given rise to a vast variety of musical genres, trends and instruments. New schools of music were founded for the education of performing musicians (HERD, 2017; TOKITA, 2017). Theatrical art

was actively developing. A new puppet theatre and classical kabuki theatre appeared in Japan. A special interest was given to *koto*, a popular musical instrument that accelerated the development of instrumental music (DUDDEN, 2005). The literary sources suggested that it was typical for Japan to use music in religious rituals. Buddhist music was especially popular among the population (DAY, 2015). The scholar, Stephen Nelson, analysed Buddhist Japanese writings and concluded that music supported the religious rituals, based on powerful and revered ritual texts. Texts for these Buddhist rituals came to Japan from China (VARNACHEVA, 2016). Japanese musicians had their communication traditions and interchange repertoire. The musical compositions could be transferred between the groups of musicians. The *koto* or *shamisen* repertoire as well as stories and information about other musicians were shared between the players. The playing skills and the secrets of playing a musical instrument was transferred in a different way: the teacher might teach students the playing techniques, and knowledge was spread within a narrow circle of musicians (TOKITA, 2016).

### Literature review

*A tradition* is an important factor in the development and research on changes of cultural life in a particular state. The existence and development of cultural traditions helped scholars to evaluate different views and approaches to the concept of tradition and understand how musical art has evolved. The music scholars had different views on the role of traditions in the cultural development of society and how they affected cultural change and the historical development of a particular territory. Hesselink supposes that cultural traditions are preserved and remained unchanged, opposing innovations (BHAMBRA, 2007). This viewpoint contradicts the views on the development, spread and mixing of cultures. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cultures have many similar characteristics discussed in this research. For scholars, it is difficult to single out the root traditions dominated



in each country during a certain period. They analysed traditions influenced by other countries, defined a culture mixing framework, and examined traditions borrowed from neighbouring states. The connection between Asian social traditions and music is very significant. Robert Provin, in his writings on China, Japan and Korea stated that musicians and music were considered as an elite art, expressed through cultural heritage and influenced the society's attitudes and values (WANG, 2021).

The anthropologists, Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin discuss that historical development should be focused on the present achievements but with an eye to the past (HAN, 2010). Henry Glassey follows the same approach in his research interpreting the tradition as an opportunity to learn from the past (GRANET, 2013). Both theories view *traditions* as a changing quantity. For the Far East countries, traditions and worldviews are fundamental cognitive orientations of the society in relation to the world. Historians underline the importance to learn about the traditions and musical culture as a part of this process. Even if the ancient traditions have a strong impact on the Asian cultures, there is a place for new ideas that must be conveyed with respect for customs, beliefs, and culture. Art has not existed in its past form but undergoes constant changes and developments (SERVAES, 2017).

In his research, Creighton suggested that the traditions of Japan played a crucial role in the development of culture, making significant changes in attitudes and values of the population and proliferation of innovative approaches to urban life (CREIGHTON, 2007). In the traditional Japanese culture, the historians underlined the importance of an artistic tradition known as *the Ryuha system* (Japanese 流派, a school of thought) that had a strong impact within the society to increase social respectability. Maintaining and strengthening cultural *continuity were its primary goals*. This tradition can be interpreted as a cultural concept based on rethinking benchmarks, changing traditions, and keeping fundamental values (JUDE, 2020). The scholars believed that *Ryuha* was a powerful institution that has a strong influence on its

followers, their perception of art and the transmission of traditional values. In music, it was reflected in the cultural concepts, social traditional, idealised music images considered symbols of identity and century-old traditions (RAFOLT, 2021).

Another musical genre popular in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries was *juita* (*Japanese* 地歌/地唄/ぢうた, literary *not a song from Edo*), a style of traditional Japanese music. It likened instrument music played on *shamisen* or *koto* with vocal performances. Most often, *juita* was performed at courts, becoming part of large musical ensembles (PROVINE et al., 2017). During the *Muromachi period* (1392-1573) the *heikeku* genre was very popular. The unique feature of this genre was that only blind musicians sang songs accompanied by *biwa*, a classic Japanese musical instrument. This genre became more and more popular, especially among warriors. However, during the Edo period (1600-1868) it gave way to another genre known as *juita sōkyoku*, which meant *music for the koto* (FLAVIN, 2017). In the 20th century, *juita sōkyoku* spread across Japan. It was mixed with other musical genres reflecting the features of both *juita* and *sōkyoku* and performed on very popular musical instruments such as *koto* and *shamisen*. The *Todo Guild* or the *Tōdōza* (当道座), a Japanese guild for blind men, contributed greatly to the development and popularity of new musical genres (EHLERS, 2018). The process described above illustrated the way new traditions had been developed. The old musical genres gave rise to new musical trends under the influence of older ones.

In the Korean musical tradition, new musical genres appeared under the influence of pre-existing ones. Korean music was shaped in the early 1st century BC. At the same time, traditional Korean instruments appeared: *komungo* (현학금 / 玄鶴琴, literary *black zither*) a long six-string zither and *kayagum* (가야금), a zither with twelve strings. These trends played an important role in the development of new musical instruments, genres and styles. There is no evidence that the music of ancient Korea has kept in its original form. The changes in traditions resulted from the evolution process driven by creativity and assimilation of cultural



traditions (KOO, 2015; ROBISON, 2019). For Koreans, music always held a special place in their lives as a way to express feelings and emotions. The traditional music was simple but beautiful, melodic and tinged with a refined sensuality atypical for religious music of China and Japan. Korean music reflected the features of musical traditions of the neighbouring countries. In the period of the 16th and 17th centuries, Japanese traditions influenced Korean culture. One of the main causes was the Imjin war, an important historical event that mixed cultural traditions of Asian countries (HEISE, 2017).

### Setting goals

The culture of Asian countries differs greatly from the European one, but educational institutions usually spend less time on it. There is a need to learn how the culture was formed, developed, and examine the main similarities and differences of musical trends. The research classified knowledge about different cultures and explored how these cultures had influenced each other.

The purpose was to analyse how the court music of China, Japan, Korea was developed during the 16th and 17th centuries and identify the similarities and differences of these cultures.

The **research objectives** include but are not limited to the following:

1. analyse the historical facts that influenced the development of court music in China, Japan and Korea;
2. identify musical genres formed during the 16th - 17th century, and examine the characteristics of the music of this period;
3. analyse different musical instruments and materials used to produce them, and identify similar and different characteristics of these musical instruments;
4. classify the information on the development of musical art and identify similar and different features of the music of these countries.

## Methodological framework

### Research design

The research is based on **a comparative historical analysis**. Three other methods were also used in the study. **The explanatory-illustrative method**, which was based on the selection of pictures to demonstrate theoretical and technical-instrumental information about musical instruments. **The method of collecting and processing the scientific views** of scholars, historians and musical personalities of China, Japan and Korea. **The method of aesthetic-stylistic, technical-instrumental and semantic analysis** of music to effectively compare rhythmic-melodic, musical harmony, sound and singing techniques, instrument materials, as well as multicultural influences.

The following criteria were pillars of the research: the fundamentals of the musical trends, the materials used to produce musical instruments, the influence of other cultures, and stages of development. The historical facts, the main characteristics of historical events and the stages of the musical culture of China, Korea and Japan were compared. The scholars identified similar and different characteristics of the traditional musical instruments, their country of origin and how they changed over time. Moreover, the research investigated the relationship between music in traditional culture, the influence of religion, and views that influenced the development of new musical genres. The relationships between Japanese, Korean and Chinese cultures with Western culture and traditional European music and musical instruments were considered.

The following instruments of traditional China were analysed: *guqin* (a sacred string instrument associated with many historical figures), *pipa* (an instrument with four strings; its name was formed by names of the lower and upper notes), *erhu* (a two-string instrument used in theatrical music; it was very popular among the

ordinary population), *gong* (a concave metal instrument; one of the most famous instruments in China). The folk Japanese instruments include *shamisen* (one of the most popular stringed instruments in Japan used in the Japanese puppet theatre), *koto* (a stringed instrument that was widespread and popular in Japan; the school of music was created to teach playing the instrument), *biwa* (the instrument was made of mulberry wood with silky strings; different versions of this instruments have been developed over the history), *taiko or daiko* (a percussion instrument made of wood and leather and used for solo and orchestral performances). *Kayagum* (a string instrument made of wood; it was popular and widespread in Korea), *haegeum* (an instrument used in ensembles and orchestras; it had similar features with the European violin or cello). It was admired and widespread in Korea.

### Statistical processing

The data were analysed using the Microsoft Excel programme. The MEQR service was used to create a QR-code to listen to the sounds, melodies and pieces of music played on the musical instruments. The proposed approach helps not only to review an image of an instrument and read its description, but to listen to its sounding and differentiate how the sounding of the Korean, Chinese and Japanese instruments differs. Moreover, it is possible to learn how to play the instrument, identify the differences between European and Asian playing techniques and understand their application. The research includes 11 (eleven) QR-codes for musical instruments such as *guqin* (China), *pipa* (China), *gong* (China), *shamisen* (Japan), *koto* (Japan), *biwa* (Japan), *taiko or daiko* (Japan), *kayagum* (Korea), *haegeum* (Korea).

### A sample of instruments and illustrations

The analysis of the selected musical instruments and rhythmically-mediated melodies was based on their overall

uniqueness and their belonging to the national and cultural heritage of China, Japan and Korea. Thus, these instruments are the objects of interest of many Western and Eastern scholars. Moreover, in the context of the study of the multicultural influences of Chinese, Japanese and Korean musicians, the scholarly work becomes even more relevant. The illustrations presented in this paper have been selected with the support of contemporary internet portals. Some of the images are accompanied by a QR-code, which can be used to access videos on YouTube to check the sound of the musical instrument.

### Research limitations

This research has some limitations. It was impossible to manage concepts that may affect the results, but cannot be tracked or eliminated within the research. These concepts have a significant impact on the indicators used to identify the relationships and examine the cause and effect of events important for music development.

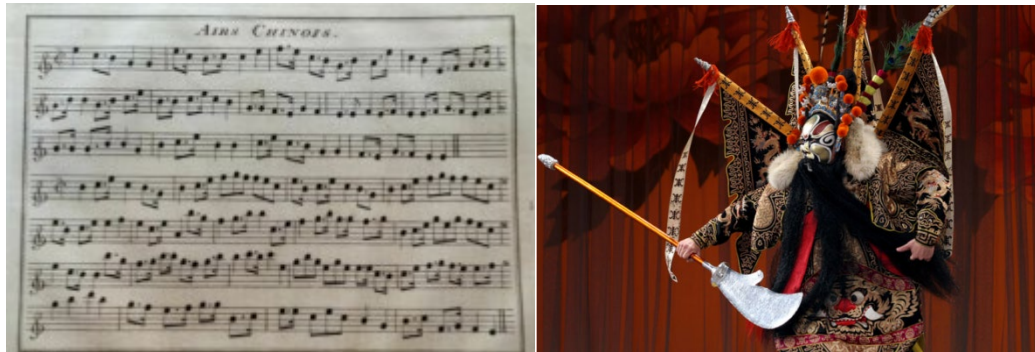
## Results and discussion

### China

The development and perfection of Chinese traditional music took place from *the Three Kingdoms to the Tang Dynasty*. China was ruled by *the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties*. The period of *the Ming Dynasty* covered 1368-1644. *Nanxi* (drama) (Chinese 南戲), was one of the most popular genres during *the Ming Dynasty*. The four main tunes typical for this time were as follows: *Yuyao* (余姚), *Haiyan* (海盐), *Yiyang* (弋阳), and *Kunshan* (昆山). The Kunshan tune was very popular among different social classes. One of the reasons for such popularity was that it reflected the southern and northern opera traditions. *Melody* is a traditional term used in China referring to opera. It was well-known and popular even in

the most remote provinces in China. The tradition was influenced by the regional characteristics and changed accordingly. During the time, it was reorganised into the traditional Peking Opera. During

Figure 1 - a) Traditional Chinese Melody; b) A fragment of the traditional Chinese opera.



Source: ISTOCKPHOTO (2022b) and DEPOSITPHOTOS (2022a)

the Qing Dynasty, the melody consisted of two main tunes: *Xipi* and *Erhuang* (see Figure 1) (VARNACHEVA, 2016).

The traditional Chinese musical system is known as *Shi-er-lu* (Chinese: 十二律), twelve-pitch scale). It includes the 12 sounds. Traditional culture assigns magical meaning to each sound: the even sounds reflect the dark power of the Sky, and the odd sounds mean the light power. The whole system reflects the day-night cycle, the months of the year and the seasons. The system includes 12 notes within one octave. This system had a cultural significance for the Chinese population. The unique attitude of individuals to their cultural traditions, in particular to music, determined the development and traditions of the state.

Table 1 - The Chinese chromatic scale, standardized gamut of twelve notes. The table includes names, relations to the European note system and constellations of the Xu system.

No	Lu	European Keys	Cardinal Points	Chinese Constellations (Xiu)
1.	Huang Zhong	c (C)	The North	Wei, Xu, Nu

2.	Da Lu	cis (C sharp)		Niu, Dou
3.	Tai Cu	d (D )		Ji, Wei
4.	Jia Zhong	dis (D sharp)	The East	Xin, Fang, Di
5.	Gu Xian	e (E)		Gan, Jiue
6.	Zhong Lu	f (F)		Zhen, Yi
7.	Rui Bin	fis (F sharp)	The South	Zhang, Xing, Liu
8.	Lin Zhong	g (G)		Gui, Jing
9.	Yi Ze	gis (G sharp)		Shen, Zu
10.	Nan Lu	a (A)	The West	Bi, Mao, Wei
11.	Wu Yi	b (B flat)		Lou, Kui
12.	Ying Zhong	h (B)		Bi, Shi

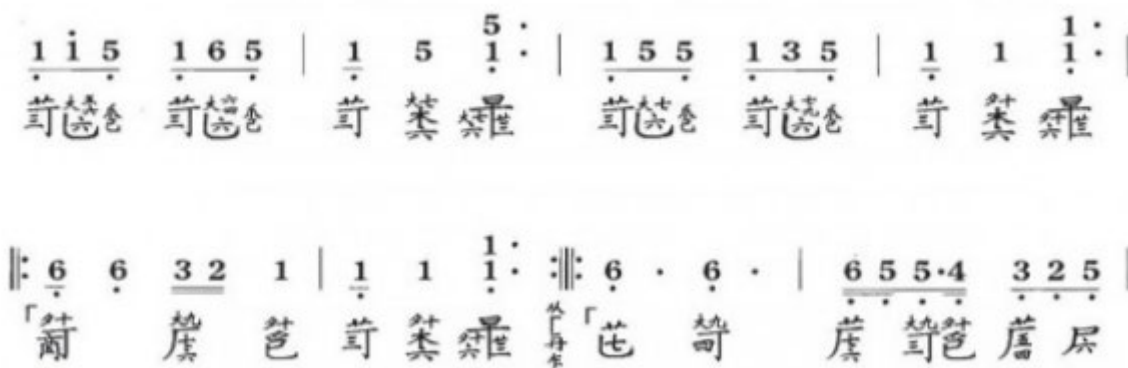
Source: SYNOLOGIA (2022)

This system formed the musical taste of Chinese society. *Individuals* tried to establish *harmonious* relationships with the natural world. *Shi-er-lu* became the basis of many measurements and weights. It was used in calendars (see Table 1) (WANG, 2021).

A *mode* or *modus* (a type of musical scale) had a specific place in traditional Chinese music. It determined the tonality of all melodies. The entire musical culture took part in its development, during all historical periods. *Tonality of modes*, as a semantic element, was of particular importance for the scholars describing the aesthetic ideas of an entire nation (FLAVIN, 2008). If traditional European modes can be divided into two types - minor and major modes, Chinese music is characterised by six modes and seven sounds. Based on the first five notes, five main types of modes are as follows: *Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zi, Yu* (DU, 1995) (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Numbered music notation and Chinese traditional music.



Source: SNOWMAN (2018)

Another important feature of Chinese folk music was the pentatonic scale. In the *Guanzi Treatise*, written in the 7th century BC, the authors described the main features and stages of the pentatonic scale. The scale had a unique structure using numbers. The notes of the scale were referred to as *numbers*. All other playing stages were based on a decrease or increase in this number by one third, in comparison with the previous one. The structure of the pentatonic scale was unique (MALYAVIN, 2000). The pentatonic mode of five notes *Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zi, Yu* corresponded with the classical European mode in the following way C-G-D-A-E. The sequence will be built in such a way if a musician starts from the note *Gong* (C). Starting with a different note, the pentatonic scale will change (GLASSIE, 1995). Despite the fact that the initial note can be changed, *Gong* is considered the basis for the construction of the pentatonic scale and, accordingly, the notes *Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zi, Yu* in the tonic. Sounds in the pentatonic scale always have an auxiliary use and add artistic colouring to the piece of music, but, at the same time, they are not used in the tonic. The most used sounds are: *jue, bianzhi, biangong, jun*. Their European analogues are *F, F sharp, B, B flat* (SHESTAKOV, 1966).

Chinese musical instruments differ from modern instruments. The most common materials used for musical instruments were silk and bamboo. Duets were popular in China. They were known

as the *Duet of Silk and Bamboo* (丝竹 *si zhu*). In addition, musical instruments were made from traditional materials such as wood, leather, clay, stone, metal and gourd common in China (WANG, 2021).

The most popular musical instruments in China were the instruments described below.

### *Guqin* (*qin*)

*Guqin* (Chinese: 古琴) musical instrument is one of the most famous ones in the Chinese culture. Its existence is associated with historical figures such as a Chinese philosopher, poet and politician Confucius, military commander and statesman *Zhuge Liang*, and poets Li Bo, Tao Qian and others. These historical figures were mentioned along with the instrument in the historical literature. *Guqin* is a plucked seven-string instrument with a rounded top, a flat bottom and silk strings often used in ancient China. For this reason, the instrument is referred to as the group of *silk-string* instruments. At the present, the instrument is not considered unique and the strings are made of steel. Steel strings are stronger than other materials.

Similar to many other things in China, *the guqin* has a sacred meaning. The length of the instrument is 36 qins (134.36 cm). It symbolizes the number of days in a year – 360 days. It has 13 dots on the body used as a reference point while playing and mean 12 traditional months and one for the leap year. This instrument symbolises 8 winds and 4 seasons (the widest part of the instrument equals 8 qins and the narrowest is 4 qins) (See Figure 3) (CHATTERJEE, 1993).

Figure 3 - A girl with Guqin musical instrument.



Source: PINTEREST (2022)



SCAN ME

### *Pipa*

Pipa (*Chinese*: 琵琶) is a traditional Chinese instrument with four-strings and frets (lines on the fretboard of an instrument) painted on the body. The instrument's name means the method of playing: the top string produces the *pi sound* (圆周率) and the bottom string produces *the pa* bottom sound (呐) (See Figure 4). There are two main types of instruments: large and miniature ones. Moreover, the instruments were used for military and secular purposes. When playing, the musician clamps the strings with one hand and plucks them with the other to produce musical sounds. This instrument is used in lyrical music and fantasy performances, and as an instrumental accompaniment for singing or other performances. Pipa is associated with one of the most famous wars in the history of China: the Chu–Han Contention (CHU, 2011).

Figure 4 - Pipa musical instrument.



Source: ABIRUS (2022)



SCAN ME

### *Erhu*

The history of *erhu* (*Chinese*: 二胡) is associated with the ancient populations inhabited in the North and West of China. The second part of its name, *hu* (胡), was the name of the ancient population. The first syllable *er* (二) means *two*, referring to the number of strings on the instrument (See Figure 5). *Erhu* has been popular in China since *the Tang era*. It was used in theatrical performances. The instrument received great popularity among the population accompanying singing or as a solo instrument. The main materials were leather or wood. The instrument used in the Peking Opera was made of bamboo. A musician needed a bow to play (CHATTERJEE, 1993).

Figure 5 - Erhu musical instrument.



Source: MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (2022)



SCAN ME

### Gong

*Gong* (Chinese: 銅鑼) is the most famous Chinese folk instrument in world culture. Its origin dates back to the 2nd century BC. It came from the island of Java, Southwest China. Gong is a metal concave disk freely suspended on special mounts. There is a huge variety of gongs: they differ in shape, size, sound and other factors. The most common type of gong has a diameter of 50 to 80 cm, made of copper alloy with edges bent at right angles (See Figure 6) (CHU, 2011).

Figure 6 - Gong musical instrument.



Sources: CHINA RADIO INTERNATIONAL (2021) and DEPOSITPHOTOS (2022b)



SCAN ME

### Japan

Japan of the 16th – 17th centuries was known for its flourishing culture and changes in music styles. In *the Edo era*, music, poetry, theatre, painting, and ikebana transformed into serious spiritual practices. They were perceived as pillars of morality and echoed values of the Japanese society. During this period, Japanese art was

shaped reflecting cultural and philosophical views of the different social classes. The traditional Japanese arts such as ikebana, aikido, haiku poetry, and music reflected the life philosophy practised by the society.

Japanese music took its roots from the music of the 6th-7th centuries. Buddhism had a great influence on Japanese musical traditions. Starting from the 16th century, European music trends had penetrated Japan and resulted in a cultural mixture (CHU, 2011).

The history of the Japanese musical tradition had several important stages. In the *Ashikaga period* (1335-1573), the first classical musical theatre appeared. It followed the traditions of *the dengaku theatre* (performances of landowners) developed from *the dengaku*, rice planting and harvesting rituals) and *sarugaku* (or monkey music) entertainment scenes from *the Heian era* (CREIGHTON, 2007). The theatre that emerged from these genres is known as *Noh drama* (しかし). The main theatrical themes included classical Japanese and Chinese legends, historical chronicles, biographies of real and mythical heroes (DU, 1995).

The next stage of music development took place during *the Momoyama era* (1573-1615). Its main feature was the emergence of new vocal and musical instruments. During this period, the dawn of art was explained by the fact that many musicians fled from Kyoto to the North being afraid of civil strife. As a result, in the 16th century, a school of playing the musical instrument *tsukushi-goto* was founded on the Koshu island. The instrument accompanied vocal and solo performances. The Momoyama culture is known for material values, wealth, goodness, greatness and power. The new values were contributed to the style of Japanese castles finished with gilding and decorated with paintings by the best artists (SHESTAKOV, 1966).

### *Shamisen*

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Japanese national puppet theatre was formed (See Figure 7). The plots were very



similar to classical Japanese literature: the most popular plot was a love affair between a landowner and a young girl. *The Tale of Princess Joruri in 12 Songs* was written in 1530 (SHESTAKOV, 1966). The most popular during this period was the *shamisen* (Japanese: 三味線), a three-stringed plucked musical instrument (See Figure 7). It accompanied different theatrical performances, marionette theatre, plays and singing. The shamisen was made of wood. Its body was covered front and back with the skin of animals. A musician should pluck the strings from top to bottom to extract a sound similar to drums. If a musician played from bottom to top, the sound was more melodic (DU, 1995).

Figure 7 - a) Japanese puppet theatre; b) Shamisen musical instrument



Source: 900IGR (2022) and MUSIC ENCYCLOPEDIA FROM A TO Z (2022)



SCAN ME

### *Koto*

At that time, a special style, *yoruri* (*katarimono*) or *fairy tale singing* appeared in Japan. In such a theatre, *giday* (storytellers) played different roles. They sat next to the stage and told the story accompanied by the shamisen. The storyteller spoke the lines of all the characters and the author's notes, drawing listeners attention to different nuances. The theatre became popular among the audience and the palace nobility (VARNACHEVA, 2016). In the 17th century, the performer Yatsushashi Kengyo gained great popularity. He introduced a new musical style for playing the *koto* (Japanese: 箏) a musical instrument. The well-known Rokudan suite for koto and many other pieces of music performed by singers and accompanied by the koto musical instrument was written by Yatsushashi Kengyo. He became popular and the koto instrument



was named after him. And at the end of the 17th century, in Kyoto, a school of music was founded for children to learn how to play the koto (see Figure 8) (GRISCHUK, 2006).

Figure 8 - Playing the koto musical instrument.



Source: LEON (2022)



SCAN ME

### *Biwa*

*Biwa* was a popular musical instrument in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is an almond-shaped musical instrument about a meter long. This instrument appeared before the popular *shamisen* and evolved in Japan over the past 1300 years. It was made of mulberry wood with silk strings. Throughout the history of this instrument, many different types were produced. They differed in shape and sounding (see Figure 9) (MALYAVIN, 2000).

Figure 9 - Biwa musical instrument



Source: MET MUSEUM (2022)



SCAN ME

### *Taiko (daiko)*

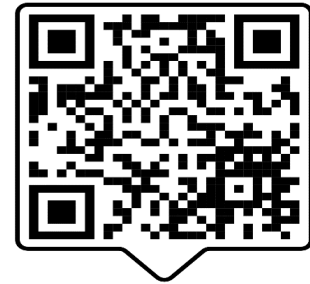
Taiko (daiko) are national Japanese drums. They consist of a wooden frame covered in leather on both sides. These drums differed in size and could be used for any purpose. They had

differences in settings and the number of musicians who could use them. There were two main types of taiko: *sime-daiko* and *byo-daiko* drums. They vary in their settings and collection techniques (see Figure 10) (GLASSIE, 1995).

Figure 10 - Taiko (daiko) musical instrument



Source: ISTOCKPHOTO (2022b)



SCAN ME

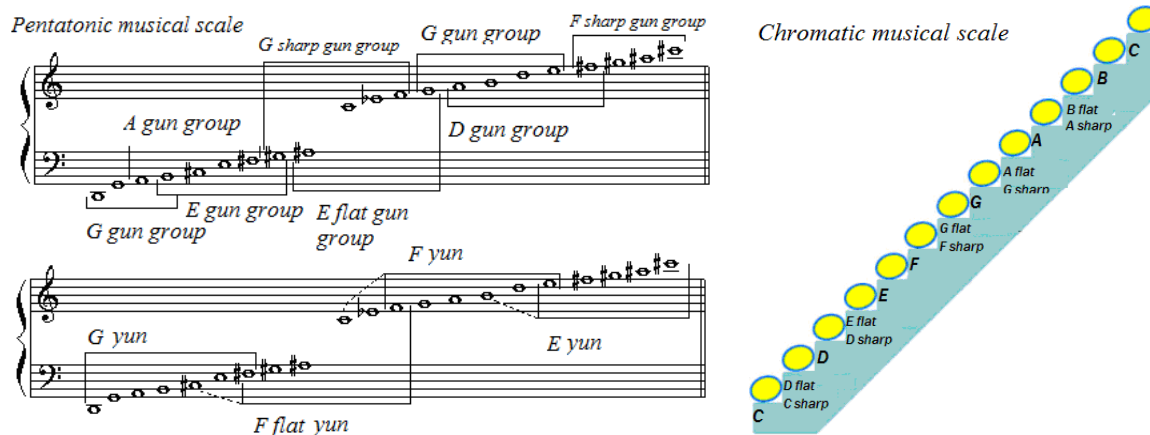
## Korea

Music of the Great Joseon state (1392 - 1910) consisted of two periods: before the Imjin War and after the War. The first stage is characterised by the improvement of musical instruments made of different materials: *pyeonjong* (a set of sixteen bronze bells hung on a wooden frame and played with a stick made of cow horn) and *pyeonggyong* (a set of sixteen stones hung on a wooden frame played with a stick made of cow horn). They were used in magic rituals. During this period, music and other forms of art reflected Confucian traditions and classical ideological music. Confucianism, adhering to the principle music helped to rule the country, positioned music as the official art (DEUCHLER, 1992).

During the reign of *the Monarch Sejong*, music becomes widespread, especially in court. During this period, music played an important role in ceremonies. Special state bodies were formed to control music and musical texts. This development resulted in two main musical styles: *dangak* and *hyang-ak*. Music of this period had unique features. Instead of using the *pentatonic musical scale*,

the new chromatic musical scale was developed, consisting of 12 tones (itches) (see Figure 11) (TKACHENKO, 2001).

Figure 11 - a) Pentatonic musical scale; b) Chromatic musical scale.



Sources: SANTI (2022) and UROKIMUZ (2022)

In the 16th century, short hymns became popular. They could be fragments from odes and three-line verses or a long epic. A unique feature of Korean music of that period was the melodies composed by dancers and based on folk music. During this period, folklore became common across the country. Throughout the history of Korea, many genres of music were spread among the low-class citizens and the privileged caste. The most popular were *dangak*, *aak*, *hyang-ak* and others (MALYAVIN, 2000).

The *dangak* genre came from China as early as the 8th century but became popular in the 16th century. It had a *heptatonic scale* (a musical scale that has seven pitches) and an easy-to-perform rhythm. This genre was used during ceremonies and secure rituals. The main musical instruments of this genre were percussion and multi-barreled flutes. *Hyang-ak* was developed in Korea in the 5th century. Its peculiarity was the pentatonic melody. The famous tunes were performed during entertainment and dancing rituals. This genre was typical for musical instruments such as *kayagum*, *bipa*, *tunso*, and *changgo drum*.

*Aak* came from China. It was based on Confucian traditions. Playing in this genre had to end on the same note (LUKIN, 2006). The orchestra that performed the melodies had a variety of musical instruments: *hun*, *pyeonggyong*, *seul*, *panhyang*, and *teukjong*. These instruments were used only to play this genre. The genre was used in ceremonial, military, cult and banquet music (See Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Traditional Korean performances.



Source: KOREAMUSEUM (2022)

The secular music of that period in Korea was known as *chonak*. This style was formed on the basis of the Buddhist melody *Yongsan hwesan*. It was performed on musical instruments such as *komungo* and *phiri (piri)*. The musician could play on the musical instrument or accompanied vocal performances. The music of that time reflected the emotions and thoughts of the audience. Moreover, the music was used to ridicule the individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings. Such genres as *chapka*, *kharen* and *tolgori* were very popular. The upper social classes preferred orchestral music (SHESTAKOV, 1966).

Korean music can be divided into two types: instrumental and vocal. The *pungmul* genre (Korean: 풍물) includes dancing, singing, and drumming performances popular among the population. The unique features of this genre were that all performances were quick and in constant motion. In contrast, *the chonggak melodies* were characterised by a calm, slow pace, ideal for meditation practices and reflecting the breathing rhythm (GEN-IR, 2011).



### *Kayagum*

*Kayagum* (*gayageum*) (Korean: 가야금) is a traditional Korean musical instrument. Its length is 160 cm and it is made of wood. There are some variants of this instrument made of hardwood and smaller in size. The body is flat and empty, with two openings on one side. The number of strings in this instrument may vary depending on the territory of its popularity. Some variants have 12, 21 and 25 strings. In ancient times, strings were made of silk but now they are made of nylon, steel or copper to be strong and durable (See Figure 13).

Figure 13 - Kayagum musical instrument



Source: ISTOCKPHOTO (2022a)



SCAN ME

### *Haegeum*

*Haegeum* (Korean: 해금) is another very popular instrument. A two-stringed instrument played with a bow (See Figure 14). It was brought to Korea from Mongolia and underwent some changes. The instrument became popular throughout the country. It was used in ensembles, orchestra and solo performances. This instrument was made of wood with horsehair string. Musicians played this instrument, pressing the strings to the fretboard. It produced very melodic and pleasant, but unusual sounds.

Figure 14 - Haegeum national musical instrument.



Source: ISTOCKPHOTO (2022b)



SCAN ME

The research suggests that many features of Chinese, Japanese and Korean music were interrelated. It refers to musical instruments, materials, the influence of religion and other social and economic factors on the music of that time. Historically, these neighbouring countries had cultural exchanges that caused a significant shift in their traditions and values (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Comparison of Chinese, Japanese and Korean music

Fundamentals of music	Pentatonic and melody. Music harmony was specific and different from the European tradition. The use of musical instruments for solo performances and an accompaniment for vocal art.	Many harmonic melodies were borrowed and mixed with traditional Japanese tunes. Special attention was paid to melody and singing, beauty and depth.	During the 16th-17th centuries, there was a transition from the pentatonic to the chromatic style. A strong influence of Buddhism and other religious views. The music became melodic and gentle. The popularity of martial music was on the rise.
Materials of musical instruments	Wood, leather, clay, stone, metal, gourd, silk and bamboo.	Wood, silk, leather, stone, metal, clay.	Wood, horsehair, silk, metal, wood.
Influence of other cultures	China, being a closed country at that time, did not experience the strong influence of other cultures. There was little exchange and interaction within Asian countries.	Direct communication with European countries. The influence of European culture on the traditions of Japan, including music.	The strong impact of Japanese culture. Korean music borrowed some elements from Mongolian culture. Korea actively exchanged music traditions with Asian countries.
Development	The development of musical art in China was hidden from the rest of the world. Chinese culture had a significant impact on other cultures but did not borrow elements of their styles.	In Japan, a national puppet theatre appeared including new types of art, musical performances, combined with theatrical performances, such as Singing Fairytale.	Music underwent many changes. New genres and styles were introduced. One of them was chonak or music based on Buddhist philosophy.



The cultures of China, Japan and Korea are vivid examples of cultural interchange. These countries had similar musical instruments. For example, the well-known *guzheng* in China is an analogue of the Japanese *koto* and the Korean *kayagum*. The Chinese instrument *pipa* is also known in central and southern Japan as the *biwa*. The *shakuhachi* instrument (an end-blown bamboo flute) migrated from China to Japan and became popular among the population. This analogue of the flute has more than 20 varieties. The Korean instrument *kayagum* is a relative of the Japanese *koto* or *zither* or Chinese *guzheng* (CHU, 2011).

The Imjin War had an economic and social impact on the Korean state and its culture. In 1592, Japan invaded the Korean peninsula. The Korean army had poor military resources and lost many military battles. Busan, Hanyang (now Seoul) and Pyongyang, major cities in Korea were captured in one week. After numerous losses and gains, negotiations and search for a solution, intrigues and conquests, the war ended and the Japanese troops withdrew from the Korean territory. For Korea, the war consequences were catastrophic: a huge amount of land was not ready for planting, thousands of Koreans were killed or exiled to hard labour in Japan (NETTI, 1978). The war had a negative impact on musical art. The culture was in decline and it took many decades to recover after a violent conflict. At the end of the war, new musical genres appeared. The unique feature was that folk art flourished as well as court music. *Chapka* is a genre that means a complex song, *talgori* means a calendar song, *labour songs* include such genre as *tharen*, gaining more and more popularity during this period (HESSELINK, 2004). The dance music was based on a slow and flowing melody (*yombul*) or fast melody (*thaeryeong*). *Pansori* (Korean 판소리) is a Korean musical genre based on long vocal and percussive music played by one singer and one drummer. This is a folk drama that combines a song tale and a musical drama. Later, the well-known national opera *Changguk* was formed (LI, 2013).

The historical development of the musical culture of Asian countries was analysed by many researchers. They described the development of court music and investigated the similarities and differences found in Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures as a result of a cultural mixture. The research on Chinese music by Ageeva describes the features of Chinese art in comparison with other cultures, for example, European ones. This research examines the main feature of Chinese musical culture: the concentration on *the Heart of Man* concept. Music, in Chinese culture, reflects morals, ethical principles, strength and weakness of a human, nobility and dishonesty, intelligence and foolishness (MALYAVIN, 2000). The results of our study are similar to these statements, but we still rely on the fact that China has long been a closed country that has not been openly influenced by Western culture. Japan, on the contrary, borrowed Western influences. Thus, European culture was transmitted to China and Korea through Japanese music.

A well-known researcher of Chinese culture and history Maljavin writes the following on culture: "Among connoisseurs of fine music, a concert performed may be limited to the performance of one single note that will convey the unity of all instruments. This is a feature of all the ancient Chinese music, for whom the combination of all sounds into a single harmonic system reflects in sounding (the way of feelings, thoughts, gestures, etc.). For Chinese music lovers, music was not excitement, but the way to control emotions ... " (MALYAVIN, 2000). In the research, Ageeva discusses the opposite view on the problem of music interpretation. In her works, the music of ancient China has become a powerful ideological weapon, used to shape political views and opinions. Music was controlled by a state institution, which, at that time, was responsible for other social spheres dealing with military affairs, ceremonies, taxes, and others. Music had a mystical and ritual meaning. The social life followed its rhythms (GRISCHUK, 2006). Our study also emphasised the ritualistic and mythical nature of Chinese music, but this ritualism was largely dictated by the imperial dynasties that developed China's cultural heritage.

In Japanese music, a special place was occupied by a completely new and unique *Noh theatre*. The present research discusses the formation of the theatre and its influence on the culture of Japan. Noh theatre was founded by Kanami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384) and his son Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443) who developed, the first in history, a unique artistic method based on hidden, inner beauty (*yugen*) and imitation of things (*monomane*) (GEN-IR, 2011). In the research by Varnaeva, *Noh theatre* is described as a canonical art theatre that has remained unchanged for many years. It is an expressive art associated with beauty and aesthetics. The researcher highlights that the *Noh theatre* combined the features of Eastern and Western theatrical thinking (VARNACHEVA, 2016). In the present research, *Noh theatre* is described as a traditional art form. The theatre used different theatrical themes, not from the Western world, but Chinese ones. The stories were based on chronicles, descriptions of famous personalities, Japanese and Chinese myths and legends. The results of our research also describe the emergence of classical musical theatre Noh in Japan, which was based on the tradition of the dengaku theatre and sarugaku.

The music history of Korea underwent similar transformations. For Koreans, music has always had a special place. Many researchers, including Grischuk, pay attention to a unique musical rhythm typical for Korean music. It has a rhythm with three beats, that, as the researcher highlights, distinguishes it from Japanese or Chinese music. Music is divided into two types, classical palace music (*chonak*) and folk music (*minsogak*). Palace music included complex melodies that were ideal for celebrations, while folk music was used for shamanic rituals (HANDLER and LINNEKIN, 1984). The conclusions of our study are based on the idea that most research on the history of Korean culture focuses on the political and economic complexities of certain historical periods and their impact on the cultural development of Korean society.

The development of the musical culture of the Far East was closely connected with different political and historical events. At

the same time, historians and researchers point to relationships between cultures, similar music styles and features, similarities of historical periods and the stages of music development (SHELBOGASHEV, 2017).

The common features are found in the development of Japanese and Korean cultures. These regions developed in the same direction over many years, and after the Imjin War their societies mixed their traditions. Nevertheless, cultures kept their specific and unique features. This is considered the phenomenon of the Far East cultures (TOKITA, 2016). Our research showed that, in modern conditions, the musical culture of China, Japan and Korea is divided into two types: traditional stylistic trends and Europeanised music. The change in the political and economic situation of the country forced society to change. This view is supported by many types of research and the present one.

In European countries, the development of music during this time was influenced by the *Renaissance period*. During this period, there was a development of all spheres of human life. In large cities, national schools of music begin to function. The Dutch school of music was considered the most influential at that time. The culture developed at a tremendous speed and a new type of professional musicians appeared on the scene. They learnt music in specialised singing boarding schools. In *the Renaissance*, the active form of secular music started. It became more popular, new genres and musical instruments appeared (NAKAI, 2005). Among them were the viola, violin, organ, harpsichord, and clavichord. Similar instruments were common throughout Europe, but not in Asia. Unless these instruments penetrated Japan, they had not gained great popularity. At the same time, the famous polyphonic style was developed. During the Renaissance period, musical culture was based on the spiritual values of the society similar to those in Asia. European views reflected the spiritual worldviews, the sublimity of a person, and the high aspirations of a human soul. Thus, the findings of our study showed that Japan was more rapidly assimilating European musical currents and motifs

than China and Korea, but the culture of the Far East adhered to Buddhist views.

## Conclusions

The research investigates the development and characteristics of the musical culture of China, Japan and Korea. It identified political and social events that influenced the development of court music. The research found that it was the interaction of cultures that served as the foundation of art. In China, Japan and Korea music had similar features such as musical styles based on the pentatonic mode that was the same in Korea and China, musical instruments (*guzheng* was an analogue of *kayagum* and *pipa*, also known as biwa and other instruments) and the materials from which musical instruments were made (wood, silk, leather, metal).

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Japanese culture was strongly influenced by European traditions. Historians emphasised that Japanese society interacted with European society and exchanged cultural traditions. China and Korea were neighbouring states, so they shared many of their cultural traditions, social *characteristics* and adopted cultural features. The Imjin War was one of the most important historical events that influenced the development of these countries and cultural interchange.

The research analysed musical genres that appeared and gained popularity during this historical period. The main features of Japan in the 16th and 17th were the spread of a new puppet theatre and a shamisen musical instrument that accompanied the performance. Over time, Japan began its school of music. Special attention was played a koto musical instrument.

Strong relationships existed between Chinese and Korean cultures. The *dangak* music genre, popular in Korea, came there in the 8th century from China, but only in the 16th century, it became popular among different social classes. Buddhism had a great impact on the development of Korean music. Plots and stories in Korean culture were based on religious traditions. The

impact of religion on music could be found in Japan and China. It is considered one of the common features of these three countries.

Music in China, Japan and Korea have many similarities: musical styles and trends characterised by epic and romantic styles, similar musical instruments and materials (wood, leather, silk and others). The similarities were a result of many cultural and historical factors. The Imjin War between Japan and Korea had profound effects on music.

Further research was needed to analyse the historical factors that influenced the development of music in Asian countries. The research should examine the development of the different art forms in Far Asia including but not limited to such areas as painting, poetry, and theatre. The results of this study may provide useful material for further exploration of multicultural influences on the development of Chinese, Japanese and Korean music, as manifested both instrumentally and genre-wise. Moreover, the findings of our work can be used in the study of such practices as the history of oriental music, cultural studies and oriental musical instrumentation.

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