

University of Southampton Research Repository

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis and, where applicable, any accompanying data are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis and the accompanying data cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content of the thesis and accompanying research data (where applicable) must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder/s.

When referring to this thesis and any accompanying data, full bibliographic details must be given, e.g.

Thesis: Author (Year of Submission) "Full thesis title", University of Southampton, name of the University Faculty or School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.

Data: Author (Year) Title. URI [dataset]

University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

Music department

**Hearing the Twilight of an Empire: A Soundscape Study of
Dianshizhai Pictorial and Late 19th Century Sino-Western
Cultural Exchanges, 1884-1898**

by

TENG CHEN

Presented at 59th Royal Musical Association Annual Conference (2023), Paper
Title: *Music in the Boudoir: The Music History of China 's Earliest Recording, The
Berthold Laufer Collection*

Presented at 24th CHIME Annual Conference (2023), Paper Title: *Pipa Recital in
Dianshizhai Pictorial - A Comparative Study of Transcultural Soundscapes in
Shanghai Concession through Musical Iconography, 1884-1898*

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4894-3651>

June 2025

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of Music

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Hearing the Twilight of an Empire: A Soundscape Study of Dianshizhai Pictorial
and Late 19th Century Sino-Western Cultural Exchanges, 1884-1898**

by

TENG CHEN

In the twilight of the late Qing dynasty in the 19th century, an essential chapter of Chinese music history was enshrouded in silence due to the scarcity of textual materials, and it became obscure due to the absence of visual documentation. Among the salient resources unearthed is the Dianshizhai Pictorial, initiated by Ernest Major, a British merchant and editor, during his tenure in Shanghai. This periodical, pioneering the pictorial genre in China from 1884 to 1898, emerged as a pivotal influence in the Late Qing epoch, offering rich insights for historical musicology research. This investigation further incorporates a synthesis of visual and auditory data, notably Berthold Laufer's Collection of Chinese recordings from Shanghai and Peking, circa 1901-1902, postulated as the earliest instances of Chinese sound recording. The aim of my PhD thesis is to reconstruct an overlooked chapter in the late 19th-century Chinese musical narrative. Positioned at the confluence of music iconography, philology, historiography, and ethnomusicology, this study endeavors to unravel the complexities of Sino-Western musical interrelations and their enduring influence on subsequent intercultural exchanges.

This study sits at the crossroads of music iconography, philology, historiography and ethnomusicology. Finally, this study will discuss the intersection between Sino-Western music cultures and its inspiration to later generations of cross-cultural material.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Abstract | - 3 - |
| Table of Contents | 4 |
| Acknowledgment | 7 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| 1. Literature Review | 9 |
| 1.1 Overview of Research on <i>Dianshizhai Pictorial</i> | 9 |
| 1.2 The Historical Trajectory of Sino-Western Cultural Encounters | 13 |
| 1.2.1 The Great "Other" | 14 |
| 1.2.2 The Relatable "Other" | 14 |
| 1.2.3 The Declining "Other" | 15 |
| 1.2.4 The Despicable "Other" | 16 |
| 2. Methodology | 18 |
| 2.1 "Meta-picture" | 18 |
| 2.2 Colonial History in <i>Las Meninas</i> | 20 |
| 3. Chapter Structure | 25 |
| <i>Chapter One</i> | 27 |
| 1. Musical News Across Different Geographical Areas | 28 |
| 1.1 <i>Musical activities within and outside the Shanghai concession</i> | 30 |
| 1.2 <i>Musical Activities in Chinese Urban and Rural Settings</i> | 39 |
| 1.3 <i>Musical Activities of the Qing Imperial Court</i> | 49 |
| 1.4 <i>Overseas Music News Imaginations</i> | 54 |
| 2. <i>Classification of Different Musical Activity Scenarios</i> | 59 |
| 2.1 <i>Teahouses & Theatres (16)</i> | 60 |
| 2.2 <i>Large Celebrations (29)</i> | 62 |
| 2.3 <i>Animals and Music (7)</i> | 64 |
| 2.4 <i>Courtesan House (30)</i> | 66 |
| 2.5 <i>Street Performers (12)</i> | 68 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 2.6 Soirées & Balls (10) | 70 |
| 2.7 Military Bands on the March (7) | 72 |
| 2.8 Concerts (10) | 73 |
| 2.9 Curious Musical Anecdotes (8) | 74 |
| 2.10 Temple Fairs for Welcoming Deities (14) | 76 |
| 2.11 Acrobatic Shows (15) | 77 |
| <i>Chapter Two</i> | 80 |
| 1. <i>Hearing Authority: The Beginning of Dual Soundscapes</i> | 81 |
| 1.1 Dual Misalignment of Vision and Soundscape | 83 |
| 1.2 The Dual Soundscape Within and Beyond the Boundary of Power | 85 |
| 2. <i>Tools for Marking "Acoustic Territories": Military Music</i> | 86 |
| 2.1 Invented Traditions | 87 |
| 4. <i>A "Meta-picture" of dual soundscapes-Pipa Ya Ji</i> | 99 |
| 4.1 Pipa Ya Ji (Elegant Gathering) | 99 |
| 4.3 The Meta-pictures Narrative of <i>Pipa Yaji</i> | 105 |
| <i>Chapter Three: The Imagined "Western World" in Dianshizhai Pictorial</i> | 110 |
| 1. <i>A Worldmaking Series in Dianshizhai Pictorial</i> | 110 |
| 1.2 Worldmaking in Dianshizhai Pictorial | 121 |
| 2. <i>Cultural Mutual Interpretation: A Homogeneous Interpretation of Heterogeneous Cultures</i> | 128 |
| 2.1 The Initial Impressions of Europeans on Chinese music | 129 |
| 3.A <i>"Dianshizhai-ised" "Western World"</i> | 140 |
| <i>Chapter Four</i> | 153 |
| 1. <i>The Courtesan Culture During The Late Qing Dynasty</i> | 154 |
| 1.1 Highly Skilled Courtesans in Music: Shu-yu | 155 |
| 1.2 Singers Adorning Banquets: Changsan | 165 |
| 1.3 Yao'er Tangzi | 170 |
| 1.4 Yeji Prostitutes | 173 |
| 2. <i>"Timely Tune" in Laufer's Collection and the Issues of Prostitution in Late 19th Century</i> | 175 |
| 2.1 Ongoing Research on the Laufer Collection | 176 |
| 2.2 Musical Characteristics of "Timely Tune" in the Laufer Collection | 178 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 2.3 Timely Tune in Anthology of Vernacular Songs and Quyi | 184 |
| 3. <i>Harrowing Tales of Blood and Tears: The Tragic History of Chinese Prostitutes in the Lyric Booklet of the Laufer Collection</i> | 186 |
| 3.1 The Classification of Timely Tune in the Laufer' s Collection | 186 |
| 3.3 Violence and Sexual Exploitation | 192 |
| 3.5 Death | 198 |
| 3.6 Old Age | 200 |
| 4. <i>Crying Out and Seeking Help</i> | 202 |
| Chapter Five | 215 |
| 1. <i>Dominant Discourse</i> | 216 |
| 1.1 Establishing a Girls' School | 216 |
| 1.2 The Ladies' Assembly | 218 |
| 2. <i>Commonality Discourse</i> | 220 |
| 3. <i>Superiority Discourse</i> | 222 |
| 4. <i>Echoes Through Time: The Guqin in the Confluence of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange</i> | 226 |
| Conclusion | 240 |
| Bibliography | 242 |

Acknowledgment

Four years have passed in the blink of an eye. What began as a whimsical idea has transformed into a piece of work I hold dear to my heart. It feels both like a distant memory and as though it all happened just yesterday. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Thomas Irvine, for his guidance and mentorship throughout these four years. No matter the circumstances, he has always supported and encouraged me, and whether in moments of challenge or triumph, I could always find solace in his radiant and gentle smile. What touched me the most was his philosophy towards students—viewing each one as a “future colleague.” I, too, have now become a university lecturer in a higher education institution in China. I will carry forward the spirit he instilled in me and strive to live up to the care and dedication he invested in me over these years.

At the same time, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all the radiant souls who have brightened my otherwise monotonous doctoral life over these four years: Wang Wenjun, Wang Ziyang, Pang Bei, Chen Jiayi, Li Linhao, Zhou Yangqing, Weiran, Sun Chuang, Li Jiayi, Liu Ruiyi, Brother Willmore, Richard, Reymart, Roland, Gus, Sister Jiayi, Marria, Irene, Christine, Mei Mei; Chengyu, Fernanda, as well as my parents and my beloved husband Gao Jinxiang, who has stood by me through it all.

Additionally, I am grateful to the members of the band “Future Orient,” which I had the fortune to form in the final year of my doctorate. They are: Tao Zhonghao, Chen Jiayi, Sister Kang Miao, Mao Danni, Xu Yiyuan, Hu Jingyang, Luo Shimeng, Ye Yuqi, and Hou Kaiyi.

Thank you all, each and every one of you! I am profoundly grateful to you all!

Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

Print name: **TENG CHEN**

Title of thesis: **Hearing the Twilight of an Empire: A Soundscape Study of Dianshizhai Pictorial and Late 19th Century Sino-Western Cultural Exchanges, 1884-1898**

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signature:

Date:

Introduction

Through its interactions with the West, China reinforced its own voice—this is the argument of this thesis, which offers a rarely addressed perspective in modern Chinese music history: how, during the late Qing dynasty, the Chinese experienced the “auditory” aspects of the “West” via visual media. The medium in question, which forms the basis of this research, is *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the first pictorial magazine in Chinese history, edited by the British businessman Ernest Major. Over a period of nearly fifteen years, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* published more than 4,000 illustrations and over 1.2 million words of commentary, offering a multifaceted view of late 19th-century Chinese society, cultural phenomena, and key historical events. Within this vast corpus, various depictions of musical scenes were included. As a leading publication of its time, its artists and editors keenly grasped the Chinese audience's fascination with foreign novelties. Music-related illustrations frequently highlighted scenes within Shanghai's foreign concessions as well as news from Europe and America, illustrating the gradual exchange and interaction of musical cultures between China and the West. Yet these visual “conversations” were rife with complications: unequal power relations, epistemic challenges, ideological biases, cultural misunderstandings, and confusion arising from the Chinese artists' unfamiliarity with Western subjects. Based on an examination of these issues, this research seeks to interpret and understand Western music (and sound) as it was heard by Chinese audiences, through the lens of “cultural exchange.”

This study further integrates both visual and auditory data, with particular attention to the Chinese recordings collected by Berthold Laufer, produced in Shanghai and Beijing around 1901-1902, regarded as the earliest known sound recordings in China. My doctoral research aims to reconstruct an overlooked chapter in the musical narrative of late 19th-century China. Positioned at the nexus of music iconography, philology, historiography, and ethnomusicology, this research strives to illuminate the complexities of Sino-Western musical interactions and their profound influence on subsequent cross-cultural dialogues.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Overview of Research on *Dianshizhai Pictorial*

Before the 1950s, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was largely treated as a mere illustrative source in scholarly accounts of the history of periodicals and pictorial publications, as well as studies on late Qing social phenomena.¹ However, academic studies focusing solely on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* were relatively rare. In the 1950s, research on the pictorial was driven by political needs, emphasising “the imperialist invasion of China in the late 19th century and the heroic

¹ See Sa, Kongluo. (1955). Three Periods Of Fifty Years Of American-Chinese Newspapers. In Zhang Jinglu (Ed.), *Historical Materials On Modern Chinese Publishing*, Vol. 2 (pp. 1-12). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; A, Ying. (1958). The Development Of Chinese Pictorials. In *A Brief Account Of Late Qing Literary And Art Journals* (pp. 1-15). Shanghai: Classical Art Studies Press; Zheng, Wei. (1958). *Preface To Selected Contemporary Events In Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Beijing: China Classical Art Press.

struggle of the Chinese people against foreign aggression,” casting the editors and illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* as fighters against feudalism and imperialism.²

From the 1970s onwards, with the broadening of academic perspectives and the introduction of new concepts and approaches—such as the rise of popular culture studies, the emergence of oral history, social "collective memory," social imagination, and public mentality—scholars, including historians, have expanded their focus to include materials that represent and reflect popular culture. These materials include symbols, architecture, utensils, images, songs, and other non-verbal sources, which have come to be recognised as important historical materials for studying past societies.³ In this context, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the first illustrated newspaper in China, is now widely regarded as a key resource for understanding the tastes and behaviours of late Qing urban residents.⁴ As Chen Pingyuan observed, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* published over 4,000 illustrations accompanied by textual commentaries, offering an invaluable resource for directly engaging with the late Qing period and understanding the various dimensions of modern Chinese social life.⁵ In the past few decades, numerous eminent scholars, such as Chen Pingyuan, Xia Xiaohong, Rudolf G. Wagner, Harold Kahn, Wang Ermin, Ye Xiaoqing, Shi Xiaojun, Nakano Miyoko, Takeda Masaya, Erik Zürcher, and Wang Juan, have conducted in-depth studies on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from various angles, laying a solid foundation for future research.

Dianshizhai Pictorial was first published on 8 May 1884 and ceased publication on 16 August 1898. It was in circulation for fifteen years, during which time 4,653 illustrations were produced, each accompanied by textual explanations. Although the publication period of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* lasted only just over a decade, it emerged in a unique historical context and adopted a special format combining images and text to report current events. As a result, its influence is indelible across many academic disciplines, including history, literature, painting, music, folklore, media studies, sociology, and gender studies.

Dianshizhai Pictorial contains more than 4,000 illustrated representations of late Qing social life, making it a unique and valuable resource for the study of modern Chinese popular culture. These illustrations often function independently of the accompanying textual descriptions, and modern sociologists have classified them as “material evidence”.⁶ Indeed, scholars investigating fields such as the "social history of late Qing life"⁷, "customs of the late Qing"⁸, "Western influence on late Qing society"⁹, and "urban life in late Qing Shanghai"¹⁰,

² Zheng, W. (1958). *Selected contemporary tunes from Dianmenzhai pictorial*. Beijing: China Classical Art Press, p. 36.

³ Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). p.11.

⁴ Kang, Wuwei (Harold Kahn). (1993). *A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: The History Before the Formation of Mass Culture in Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In Kang, Wuwei, *Reflections on History: Three Academic Lectures* (p. 90). Taiwan: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.

⁵ Chen, Pingyuan. (2000). Introduction to *Selected Works of Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Guiyang: Guizhou Education Press, p. 11.

⁶ Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). p.14.

⁷ Zhang, Qiang, Qu, Zhe, & Qu, Yanbin. (2009). The significance of social life history in newspaper illustrations since the late Qing dynasty. *Library Theory and Practice*, (12), p.5.

⁸ Yang, Lianfen. (2003). *From the Late Qing to the May Fourth: The Emergence of Modernity in Chinese Literature*. Peking University Press.

⁹ Xiong, Yuezhi. (1994). *The Introduction of Western Learning and Late Qing Society*. Shanghai People's Publishing

"media and culture in the late Qing"¹¹, "exoticism in late Qing media"¹², and the "intellectual history of the late Qing"¹³, have all to some extent referenced the illustrations and texts of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. As stated in the preface to the 1983 edition by Hong Kong Wide Angle Press:

Dianshizhai Pictorial is an immensely valuable publication. It is of particular reference value for those researching Hong Kong's history, and for the study of Chinese customs, it holds significant scholarly importance. Those interested in Chinese painting will find it valuable for appreciation and collection. The pictorial records the introduction of Western objects and ideas into China through a combination of text and illustration. It provides rich material on the French invasion of Vietnam and the Japanese aggression towards Korea, making it indispensable for the study of modern history. Even its depictions of brothels, prostitutes, madams, and rogues contribute to its overall value.¹⁴

There is some disagreement within academic circles regarding the influence of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. On the one hand, some scholars argue that as a supplement to *Shenbao*, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* had a significant domestic impact through the extensive distribution of *Shenbao*, with circulation at one point reaching approximately 20,000 copies.¹⁵ On the other hand, other scholars have questioned its influence, suggesting that even at its peak, the limited circulation prevented it from having a profound impact on a broader societal level.¹⁶

Nonetheless, evaluating the influence of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* should not rely solely on its circulation numbers. It is noteworthy that the pictorial was reprinted several times in 1892, 1895, and 1897, eventually expanding to 44 collections.¹⁷ The phenomenon of frequent reprinting not only highlights its popularity among the general public but also suggests that it may have played a significant role in shaping contemporary societal views.¹⁸

House.

¹⁰ Zhang, Wei, & Yan, Jieqiong. (2020). *The Social History of Late Qing Shanghai: Urban Style in Xiaoxiaochang New Year Pictures*. Shanghai Scientific and Technological Literature Publishing House.

¹¹ Yue, Lisong. (2013). *A Study of Late Qing Erotica and Beijing-Shanghai Culture (Series of Research in Literature, History, and Philosophy)*. Shanghai Classics Publishing House.

¹² Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University).

¹³ Zheng, Dahua. (2005). *The Intellectual History of the Late Qing Dynasty*. Hunan Normal University Press.

¹⁴ Cited in Chen, Pingyuan. *Introduction to The Introduction of Western Learning in the Eyes of Late Qing People*. Guiyang: Guizhou Education Press, 2000, footnote on p. 74.

¹⁵ Kahn, H. (1993). Pictures that speak: The history preceding the formation of mass culture in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In H. Kahn, *Random thoughts on historical studies: Three academic lectures* (pp. 97-98). Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.

¹⁶ Wagner, R. G. (2001). Entering the global imagination: Shanghai's *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. *China Scholarship*, (Special Issue), pp. 55, footnote 137.

¹⁷ Chen, H. W. (1994). Exploring the mysteries of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. *Journal of Editing Studies*, 5, p. 70.

¹⁸ The original issues of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* are now rarely seen. Some libraries hold collections of these original issues, including the National Library of China in Beijing, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, the Shanghai Library, the British Library in London, the University Library of Cambridge, the Bodleian Library and the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford, the Portheim Stiftung Museum in Heidelberg, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, the East Asian Library at Columbia University, the University Library at Berkeley, as well as several libraries in Japan. However, many of the original issues in these libraries are missing covers and inserts.

Although *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was founded by the British merchant Ernest Major, another significant aspect lies in the fact that its primary editors and illustrators were traditional, lower-class Chinese individuals. These contributors had relatively simple backgrounds and little experience or interaction with Westerners and their culture. As a result, Western knowledge, including musical instruments and theatre, was often disseminated "incorrectly" or, more precisely, was "adapted" by Chinese editors and illustrators in ways that were easier for Chinese readers to comprehend. Consequently, some scholars argue that rather than simply accepting Western knowledge during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chinese intellectuals were inspired by Western stimuli to cultivate and create their own theoretical frameworks.¹⁹ Moreover, because the audience of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was broad and representative of the general populace, the Western knowledge it conveyed is highly significant for studying late Qing perceptions of the West, understanding of Western concepts, and the evolution of Chinese views on Western ideas.

The unique nature of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* has made it the subject of study across numerous academic disciplines. However, due to differing academic backgrounds and research focuses, the points of emphasis vary, resulting in a wide variety of perspectives on the Pictorial, making it difficult to evaluate comprehensively. When first encountering *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it is easy to be drawn in by the major social and historical events reported in its pages. Yet, when examining the full collection of more than 4,000 illustrations, it becomes clear that viewing the Pictorial as a modern form of current affairs reporting is somewhat overstretched. Some critics have suggested that, rather than categorising *Dianshizhai Pictorial* as a news pictorial, it would be more accurate to view it as an "entertainment" publication aimed at the general public. Many of the news reports featured in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* had already been published in major newspapers, meaning that, in a sense, they had lost their timeliness. Furthermore, the selection of topics, reporting angles, and methods of presentation often differ greatly from the modern conception of current affairs reporting.²⁰

For instance, between March and June 1898, "Prince Henry of Germany" visited China, and *Shenbao* covered his journey extensively. From his arrival in Hong Kong, his subsequent travel to Guangzhou, his stop in Shanghai, his passing through Jiaozhou Bay, and finally reaching Tianjin before entering Beijing for an audience with the emperor, *Shenbao* detailed every aspect of his journey. This included the means of transportation he used, the notable figures he met, the places he toured, and the gifts exchanged during his audience with the emperor. By contrast, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* published only one illustration with accompanying text — A Strange Photography Incident — reporting a peculiar event during Prince Henry's tour of the capital.²¹ The report recounted how Prince Henry enjoyed taking photographs at various famous sites in Beijing, successfully capturing clear images at most of them. However, when attempting to photograph the Hall of Great Achievement, both attempts failed. The first produced a white blur, and the second, a black blur. It was said that Li Hongzhang and other officials, who accompanied him on the tour, witnessed this strange

¹⁹ Qi, X. (2003). *Oral history analysis: American missionaries in modern Chinese history*. Beijing: Peking University Press, p. 81.

²⁰ Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). p.17.

²¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. (1897). Heng Collection.

occurrence. It is clear that the editor and illustrator (He Yuanjun) were less concerned with documenting the details of Prince Henry's visit and more interested in emphasising the mysterious nature of Western photography.

Wang Juan argues that after a series of processes including “selection,” “revision,” “illustration,” and “commentary” applied by the editors and illustrators to previously published news reports, the news in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* often became almost unrecognisable compared to the original publications. Therefore, it should be understood more as a popular pictorial with a clear touch of vulgar appeal.²² However, it is precisely this process of “creation” that offered the editors and illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* a space for free imagination and artistic expression. It is also through this “secondary creation”—or as Goodman would call it, “worldmaking”—that a wealth of fascinating material has been provided for this study on the exchange and dialogue between Chinese and Western musical cultures.

Therefore, the first question this research aims to explore is: **with perceptions of the West shaped largely by imagination, what kind of “West” did late Qing Chinese audiences “hear” through the visual depictions in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*?**

1.2 The Historical Trajectory of Sino-Western Cultural Encounters

When discussing Sino-Western cultural exchange, it is common in Chinese contexts to see expressions such as “exchange” or “fellowship,” which convey a sense of equal dialogue. However, Western scholars tend to use more cautious terms like “encounter” or “intersection,” which imply a meeting or crossing rather than an exchange of equals. For example, in Thomas Irvine's *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*²³, the term “encounter” is used, indicating a passing event without necessarily implying a conclusive outcome. Indeed, the case study Irvine examines, the Macartney mission to China (1792-1794), is widely recognised as a failed encounter between China and the West. Irvine's goal in this study is highly representative, as he states in the introduction: “I want to show how China sounded to Westerners around 1800, in order to give to the history of Western constructions of China a previously missing perspective. At the same time, I want to ‘globalise’ the idea of a specifically Western music history—a history that often makes claims to ‘universal’ value—by showing how comparison with a great ‘other’ (China) helped this history to emerge. In this sense, I am exploring the conceptual foundations and limits of ‘Western music history’ itself”²⁴.

Looking back on the history of Sino-Western musical exchange, “China” has always been an important point of reference in the eyes of Westerners, an “other” that could not be ignored. From the 16th to the early 20th century, the image of China in Western narratives underwent several transformations. I summarise these stages as follows: the great “other,” the relatable

²² Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). p.19.

²³ Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press. p.5.

²⁴ Ibid, p.3.

“other,” the declining “other,” and the despicable “other.” The narratives of reverence and equality dominated from the 16th to 17th centuries, while those of diminishing and disdain emerged from the 18th century to the early 20th century.

1.2.1 The Great "Other"

In 1585, Spanish author Juan González de Mendoza published *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China*, based on the knowledge of China gathered from missionaries, travellers, and merchants. This influential work was translated into thirty languages within a decade.²⁵ The English version featured an even more elaborate and enticing title: *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China, and the Situation Thereof: Its Very Abundant Resources, Vast Cities, Well-Governed Government, and Rare Inventions*.²⁶ The book records the musical practices of the Chinese people during funerary rites, as well as the musical performances during New Year celebrations: “On this day, everyone entertains and delights with fine singing and instrumental music, which is performed with great skill. Their voices blend harmoniously with the instruments, producing great admiration. The actors perform various comedies with utmost perfection and naturalness” .²⁷ Similarly, Peter Mundy, a sailor accompanying the first English expedition to China in 1637, praised the country, especially its music: “This nation is truly remarkable in the following respects: its ancient history, vast territory, beauty and prosperity, and abundant resources. Overall, in terms of arts and governance, I believe no country in the world can compare to it” .²⁸

In the 17th century, European narratives of China as the "great other" developed a trend of admiration for Chinese institutions and reverence for its ancient civilisation.²⁹ Whether in material or cultural terms — be it language, calendar systems, religion, or philosophy — the travelogues of missionaries and travellers to China held great appeal in Europe.

1.2.2 The Relatable "Other"

In 1569, the Dominican friar Gaspar da Cruz published his report, which was later cited by numerous authors. He documented various musical activities he encountered at festivals and banquets, and in his descriptions of Chinese instruments, a sense of comparison to his own culture’s instruments is quite evident. He directly used terms such as “bandora,” “cittern,” and “leg-viol” to describe Chinese instruments. Regarding the auditory effect of instrumental ensembles, Cruz noted: “Sometimes they play many instruments together, forming four parts, making the sound extremely harmonious” .³⁰ Although his descriptions of the form of the instruments and the concepts of harmony and polyphony may have caused

²⁵ Lin, Qinghua. (2014). *The Journey of Chinese Music to the West*. Central Conservatory of Music Press, p. 14.

²⁶ De Mendoza, J. G. (1854). *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof* (Vol. 2). Burt Franklin.pp.61.

²⁷ De Mendoza, J. G. (1854). *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof* (Vol. 2). Burt Franklin.pp.108.

²⁸ Mundy, P. (1914). *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667* (No. 35). Hakluyt society.p.303.

²⁹ Lin, Qinghua. (2014). *The Journey of Chinese Music to the West*. Central Conservatory of Music Press, p. 14.

³⁰ Gaspar da Cruz, *Tractado em que se cõtam muito por estẽso as cousas da China*. (Euora,1569), c. xiv & *Samuel Purchas His Pilgrimes in Five Books, Part Three* (London: Printed by William Stansby,1625),81.

misunderstandings among European readers—due to limitations in the recorder’s knowledge system and his limited exposure to Chinese culture—the tone of this narrative lacks any condescending superiority. Instead, it presents a straightforward account of Chinese folk music, based on an equal and friendly foundation.

The Jesuit monk Benedict Goës, during his travels to China in the late 16th century, described the religious music he encountered: “The style of Chinese religious music is remarkably similar to the Gregorian chants of our own churches”.³¹ Similarly, in the account of the traveller Pereira (1549), he remarked during a religious festival: “Sometimes they sing in the manner of chants, sometimes like hymns”.³²

Additionally, the 17th-century Portuguese Jesuit priest, Álvaro Semedo (later known as Zeng Dezhao), provided a more systematic account of Chinese music in his work *Imperio de la China* (The Great History of China). In this text, he introduced key elements of Chinese music, including its tonal system, scales, rhythms, notation, instruments, and the classification of the eight sounds (mentioning seven categories), as well as the Chinese aesthetic preferences for music. This became an important source for Europeans seeking to understand Chinese music.³³

1.2.3 The Declining "Other"

The 18th century represents a pivotal shift in the Western portrayal of Chinese music. In contrast to the 16th and 17th centuries, when firsthand sources such as travel notes and diaries were frequently referenced, scholars like Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743) exemplified a new paradigm. Their research on Chinese music was often critiqued by early ethnomusicologists as a typical example of “armchair scholarship”—studies conducted without direct engagement with the subject.³⁴

The French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, who never visited China, compiled and published *The General History of China: Containing a Geographical, Historical, Chronological, Political and Physical Description of the Empire of China* (1735) using materials and letters sent from 27 missionaries then residing in China. One of the most influential sections is in Volume 3, where he includes five musical notations of Chinese melodies. However, the purpose of listing these melodies was not to introduce or analyse Chinese music, but rather “to demonstrate the imperfection of Chinese music”.³⁵ Du Halde wrote: “They claim to be the inventors of music and boast that ancient Chinese music reached the highest perfection. If what they say is true, their musical tradition must have been lost, for the music now heard is

³¹ Yule, H. (1866). *Cathay and the way thither: being a collection of medieval notices of China* (Vol. 4). Hakluyt Society. pp.236.

³² Boxer, C. R. (Ed.). (2017). *South China in the Sixteenth Century (1550-1575): Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, OP, Fr. Martin de Rada, OESA, (1550-1575)*. Routledge. pp. 288-89.

³³ Hsia, F. C. (2024). Out of Habit: Jesuits in Flux. *From Rome to Beijing: Sacred Spaces in Dialogue*, 17, 216.

³⁴ Lin, Qinghua. (2014). *The Journey of Chinese Music to the West*. Central Conservatory of Music Press, p. 35.

³⁵ Harrison, F. L. (1985). *Observation, Elucidation, Utilization: Western Attitudes to Eastern Musics, ca. 1600-ca. 1830*. pp.7-8.

far from perfect and does not live up to its name” .³⁶

Although the introduction to Chinese music occupies only a few pages in *The General History of China*, its impact far exceeded that of the various books published in the previous two centuries. Du Halde's views were repeatedly cited in numerous music dictionaries, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Dictionary of Music*. For instance, he asserted that the Chinese had no musical notation, and that key signatures or clefs were absent in their music. Additionally, the Chinese melodies recorded in the book became sources of inspiration for composers creating music with Chinese themes, such as Weber's *Chinese Overture* (1804) and Turandot (1809). However, this armchair research method soon revealed its limitations. For example, the melody included in Rousseau's *Dictionary of Music* contained errors—the original notation was intended to be a folk tune titled *Wan Nian Huan*—which sparked a debate in Western musicological circles over the Chinese scale. Qian Renkang summarised this phenomenon as “two centuries of miscommunication” .³⁷

Even in the 18th century, there were European authors like the French Jesuit Joseph-Marie Amiot, who conducted systematic and in-depth research into Chinese music theory. However, his works never reached the same level of popularity and acceptance as those of Du Halde. Lin Qinghua believes this was because Europeans at the time were no longer able to accept the kind of reverence for Chinese culture that Amiot demonstrated.³⁸

1.2.4 The Despicable "Other"

“(Chinese music) sounds like a dog stretching its limbs and yawning after just waking up”—this was the public remark made by composer Hector Berlioz after hearing a Chinese music performance at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London.³⁹ This disdainful view of Chinese music seems to have become a widely accepted consensus in 19th-century Europe.⁴⁰ With the rise of European economic and technological power, the expansion of colonialism globally, and the cultural climate shaped by the Enlightenment, the mindset of Eurocentrism reached its peak during the 18th and 19th centuries. In contrast, China, long seen as a global leader in politics, economics, and culture, had stagnated. This contrast was the fundamental reason why Western narratives about China took a turn towards comprehensive denigration and belittlement. In the realm of music, Charles Burney's research is particularly illustrative and dramatic. Burney was involved in many key events regarding Western encounters with Chinese music. He played a direct role in the musical preparations for the British diplomatic mission to China (the Macartney mission) from 1792 to 1794, contributed the article on

³⁶ Du Halde, J. B. (1739). *The General History of China: Containing a Geographical, Historical, Chronological, Political and Physical Description of the Empire of China, Chinese-Tartary, Corea, and Thibet. Including an Exact and Particular Account of Their Customs, Manners, Ceremonies, Religion, Arts and Sciences..* (Vol. 3). J. Watts. pp.275.

³⁷ Qian, R. K. (1986). Two Centuries of Miscommunication: The ‘Chinese Melody’ in Weber and Hindemith's Works. *Music Art: Journal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music* (2), p. 3

³⁸ Lin, Qinghua. (2014). *The Journey of Chinese Music to the West*. Central Conservatory of Music Press, p. 77.

³⁹ Qian, R. K. (1992). The History and Current State of Sino-French Musical and Cultural Exchanges. *People's Music* (1), p. 5.

⁴⁰ Han, Guohuang. (1981). *Western Perspectives on Chinese Music. In From West to East: Collected Essays on Chinese Music*. Taipei: China Times Publishing, pp. 127-133.

Chinese music for an encyclopaedia, and spent more than thirty years gathering material on the subject. Despite his lifelong dedication to researching Chinese music, Burney never once visited China nor heard a single note played by a Chinese musician.⁴¹ His research approach led to persistent misunderstandings about the development of Chinese music history, which he never resolved, even at the end of his life. For instance, he could not understand why Chinese instruments clearly had semitones, yet Chinese music still relied on a pentatonic scale, or why, despite its long history, Chinese music remained so simple in his view.

Burney's attitude towards exploring music was: “ I determined to allay my thirst for knowledge at the source... to hear with my own ears, and to see with my own eyes: and if possible, to hear and see nothing but music ” .⁴² Yet instead of listening to Chinese musicians play, Burney experimented with Chinese instruments he had collected, attempting to play them himself in order to understand the sound of Chinese music. From the outset, Burney’ s engagement with Chinese music was shaped by this hands-on experimentation.⁴³ This ultimately led to conclusions that today appear quite absurd. For instance, Burney reasoned that anyone who understood the concept of semitones — 12 semitones forming an octave — would naturally apply this in practice. Based on this reasoning, he “ concluded with probability ” that “ Chinese scales and music have no semitones ” .⁴⁴

Another example is Burney's analysis of the Chinese scale (as he understood it). He concluded that “ any melody played from these scales cannot help but resemble the music of the ancient Scots. ” To support his claim, Burney even provided two musical examples showing similar melodies — one being the Scottish “ Highland Tune, ” and the other a “ Chinese Tune. ” His final conclusion was: “ The Chinese favour simple Scottish melodies and are particularly fond of them; other types of music are far beyond their comprehension ” .⁴⁵ All these “ efforts ” only further reinforced the Eurocentric mindset.

Overall, the four stages of Western narratives about Chinese music not only reflect the surface of Sino-Western cultural exchange but also reveal the profound shifts in power dynamics during the process of globalisation. The transformation of Chinese music from a revered “ great other ” to a cultural commonality viewed as equal, then to a diminished “ declining other, ” and finally to a despised cultural symbol, mirrors the changing power relations between China and the West in the context of globalisation. This process also illustrates the reconstruction of power discourse in cultural exchange.

By comparison, the narrative of Chinese music history is much simpler, or perhaps more “ extreme. ” With the sound of gunfire during the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命), the Qing government was overthrown, and on 12 February 1912, the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty,

⁴¹ Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press, p. 73.

⁴² Burney, C., & Scholes, P. A. (1959). *An eighteenth-century musical tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands*, being Dr. Charles Burney's account of his musical experiences. (No Title).

⁴³ Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press, p. 74.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Puyi (溥仪), officially announced his abdication. This marked the end of Qing rule and the conclusion of over two thousand years of imperial feudalism in China, paving the way for the establishment of the Republic of China. From that point on, the focus of modern Chinese music history shifted almost entirely towards the development of “school songs”(学堂乐歌), which were based on Western music theory, pedagogy, and instruments.⁴⁶ These school songs combined traditional Chinese musical elements with Western compositional techniques and became an important means of promoting patriotism, modern moral values, and strengthening national identity.⁴⁷

The "extreme" nature of this historical narrative lies in the fact that, unlike the West's gradual shift through multiple phases in its attitude towards China, the mainstream narrative of Chinese music history seems to have only two forms: from “never paying attention to Western music”⁴⁸, to “fully embracing Western music.” It is difficult to find any middle ground in the writing of Chinese music history that describes how Western music first entered the consciousness of ordinary Chinese people. In this regard, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* vividly captured these “intermediate forms” through its illustrations. Moreover, the accompanying textual commentary provides insights into how both intellectuals and ordinary citizens interpreted Western music at the time. Based on this feature, the second question this study addresses is: **How did *Dianshizhai Pictorial* document and reconstruct a narrative of Sino-Western musical exchange?**

2. Methodology

2.1 “Meta-picture”

In the study of music iconography, Panofsky's three-tiered interpretation method is commonly employed. However, this paper extends it into a broader interdisciplinary context, exploring how iconography itself can assist and enhance musicological research. The “meta-picture” method, introduced by W. J. T. Mitchell, builds upon the theories of Panofsky and other scholars of iconography and visual philosophy. In his *Picture Theory* (1995), Mitchell proposed the concept of the “meta-picture” as a means of addressing or resolving what he identified as a “universal anxiety about visual representation” in postmodern language philosophy.⁴⁹ Mitchell argued that the interpretation of visual art at the end of the 20th century had reached an impasse due to disproportionate attention being given to philosophical concerns such as semiotics and metaphor, and thus required a new approach to steer “the history of visual culture away from idealism”.⁵⁰ This approach does not overturn Panofsky's method but rather extends and continues Panofsky's unfinished work in

⁴⁶ Qian, Renkang. (2001). *A Study on the Origins of School Songs*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, p. 117.

⁴⁷ Li, Shiyong. (2013). A Study on the Historical Significance of the Political Orientation of Music Education in the Late Qing and Early Republican Periods. *Modern Education Science*. Higher Education Research. P.19.

⁴⁸ Before the late Qing Dynasty, Western music was accessible only to the royal court, with ordinary people having little exposure to it.

⁴⁹ Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Vol. 81). Princeton university press.p.371.

⁵⁰ Cray, J. (1988). Techniques of the Observer. *October*, 45, 3-35.

“critical iconology.”

The “meta-picture” can be simply defined as “a picture about pictures.” It offers a concrete response to the postmodern claim in visual art that “artworks are self-analytical” .⁵¹ The meta-picture primarily explores two questions: first, can an image provide its own metalanguage? Second, can an image reflect upon itself?⁵² Accordingly, studies of the meta-picture should exhibit several key characteristics: (1) a rejection of interpretation and conclusions, favouring surface description; (2) an emphasis on the process of image creation; (3) an exploration of the multi-layered meanings of images through historical context; and (4) a passive approach to images, creating an immersive interaction between the viewer and the artwork.⁵³ As Michel Foucault and Ludwig Wittgenstein suggested, the meta-picture aims to break free from rigid, outdated disciplinary frameworks, freeing the image from professional discourse.⁵⁴ The ultimate goal is to “use the self-awareness of representation to inspire the self-awareness of the viewer” .⁵⁵ Only in this way, according to Mitchell, can a painting gradually release the brilliance of a visual art masterpiece.⁵⁶

Painted by the 17th-century Spanish court artist Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* is acclaimed as "the most sophisticated and perhaps most profound painting of the seventeenth century" and "one of the most brilliant perspective compositions ever conceived".⁵⁷ There is an extensive body of scholarly work on the aesthetics and philosophical debates surrounding *Las Meninas*. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, responses to the painting were primarily within the realms of Impressionist and Realist aesthetics; however, from the latter half of the 20th century onwards, interpretations have increasingly focused on visual philosophy.⁵⁸ In the first chapter of his book *The Order of Things* (1971), Michel Foucault examines the issues of visibility and invisibility in *Las Meninas* within the framework of power and representation. While Velázquez depicts himself painting, he only shows the back of the canvas, leaving viewers perpetually uncertain of what the painting portrays. Foucault describes this as "a representation of classical representation".⁵⁹ By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, iconologist W. J. T. Mitchell, in his book *Picture Theory* (1995), introduced the concept of "meta-pictures," asserting that *Las Meninas* "most comprehensively summarises all the characteristics of a meta-picture".⁶⁰

⁵¹ De Duve, T. (2005). *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade* (Vol. 51). University of Minnesota Press.

⁵² Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*. University of Chicago Press, pp.30.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 53.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ Alpers, S. (1983). Interpretation without representation, or, the viewing of *Las Meninas*. *Representations*, (1), 31-42.

⁵⁷ Waite, G. (1986). *Lenin in Las Meninas: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision*. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 248-285

⁵⁸ Brown, J. (1978). On the meaning of *Las Meninas*. *Collected Writings on Velázquez*, pp. 47-75

⁵⁹ Foucault, M. (1971). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, pp. 16

⁶⁰ Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, University of Chicago Press, pp. 50-51

2.2 Colonial History in *Las Meninas*

In the summer of 1656, a room in the Royal Alcázar of Madrid, adorned with numerous artworks, was about to witness the creation of another exclusive royal portrait. Through the light coming from a large window on the right, nine figures in various poses come into view: Infanta Margarita in the center, flanked by her maids of honour; in the foreground, two dwarfs and a dog; in the shadows on the right, a nun and a courtier; on the left, beside a large easel, Velázquez himself, and in the background, a man holding open a curtain.⁶¹ On the back wall, between two large canvases and two equidistant doors, is a mirror, set like a jewel in the compositional space.⁶² It indirectly reflects two other characters—the owners of this palace (and the country), King Philip IV and his wife Mariana.

At first glance, this appears to depict a scene of "family drama." The various binary oppositions in the character relationships suggest a complex visual and symbolic game: royalty and attendants (ruling class and the ruled), humans and animals, normal and abnormal (male and female dwarfs), male and female.⁶³ We can also discern key transitions through different life stages—childhood, youth, middle age, widowhood⁶⁴—and thereby almost every allegorical representation of past, present, and future time.⁶⁵

⁶¹ All the figures in the painting, except for the dog and the male courtier on the right wall, have known identities and their genealogies can be precisely traced.

⁶² Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 248-285

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Mariana remarried King Philip IV after being widowed.

⁶⁵ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 248-285.



Figure 1 *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez

However, if you linger before the painting for a while longer, you will be mesmerised by the endless charm radiating from its composition. As Waite (1986) and Steinberg (1981) pointed out, from the position of the young princess at the "center" of the painting, the line extends along the central axis of the room, through the mirror, and finally converges at the vanishing point of the central perspective, ending at a "deferred center"—this center represented by "the" spectator.⁶⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell (1995) describes it as an "encyclopedic labyrinth," as it recreates the complex cycles of exchange and substitution between the viewer, the painter, and the subject or model.⁶⁷ More specifically, in terms of visual experience, through this mirror, we (the viewers) are somehow "instantaneously absorbed"⁶⁸ into the scene of the

⁶⁶ Steinberg, L. (1981). Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. *October*, 45-54.

⁶⁷ Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁸ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 248-285.

painting. But the mirror reflects none other than the king and queen. Does this mean that the viewers, through the mirror, become substitutes for the king and queen, appearing/frozen in this classical artwork? Velázquez's greatness might lie in his provision of a safe existence for the king and queen, allowing them to undergo an endless cycle of presence, untouched by time.⁶⁹

Thus, the concept of "meta-picture" expands. According to Mitchell, "it questions the identity of the viewer, using the self-awareness of representation to stimulate the viewer's self-awareness".⁷⁰ One key aspect of engaging with a meta-picture is experiencing "a strange sense of passivity before the image, allowing the picture to speak for itself".⁷¹ Both Foucault and Wittgenstein aimed to describe images through the perspective of meta-pictures, seeking to escape the rigid, outdated constructions of academic disciplines and liberate the image from professional discourse⁷², enabling a painting to gradually reveal its brilliance.⁷³

So, what story does *Las Meninas* itself narrate? Merely concentrating on the figures or the dynamics of gazing and being gazed upon does not suffice to tell the full story. We also need to direct our attention to some of the objects and often overlooked material "characters" within the painting. Hamann's "The Mirror in *Las Meninas*: Cochineal, Silver, and Clay" (2010) and Waite's "Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision" (1986) provide a more complete historical picture.⁷⁴ By closely examining the small silver tray, the red clay jar, and the red curtain behind the king and queen as reflected in the mirror, they reveal a broader narrative—the colonial history of the Spanish Empire in the context of globalisation. Through the lens of historical materialism, they discern in *Las Meninas* the crisis of the Spanish Empire's decline and the end of its global hegemony.

In fact, all the items depicted by Velázquez in this painting are products of the Spanish colonial empire.⁷⁵ Among these, three items that appear along the central axis of the composition—the clay jar, tray, and curtain—can be seen as virtual portraits of the labourers in the Spanish colonies.⁷⁶ The red clay jar being presented to Infanta Margarita by the kneeling maid on the left originates from Guadalajara in Spanish America (modern-day Mexico). This type of container, known as a búcaro, was made from fragrant red clay.⁷⁷ Waite notes that the presence of these objects, the jar and the silver tray, continuously evokes the shadow of capital extraction. Historical records indicate that the labourers who mined these

⁶⁹ Brown, J. (1978). *Images and ideas in seventeenth-century Spanish painting*. Princeton University Press. pp.101.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 54.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 53.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Alpers, S. (1983). Interpretation without representation, or, the viewing of *Las Meninas*. *Representations*, (1), 31-42.

⁷⁴ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3), 265.

⁷⁵ Hamann, B. E. (2010). The mirrors of *Las Meninas*: cochineal, silver, and clay. *The Art Bulletin*, 92(1-2), 16.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 20.

⁷⁷ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas*: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 251

materials in the West Indies were nearly all worked to death, and the mines were almost depleted.⁷⁸ The curtain reflected in the mirror was dyed with cochineal, a dye derived from insects found on cacti in the Americas. During the 16th century transatlantic trade, cochineal was traded in vast quantities, becoming the second most valuable commodity after silver.⁷⁹



Figure 2 Close-up of *Las Meninas*

Eric Wolf, in his book *Europe and the People without History*, uncovers how Europeans' appetite for tropical goods shaped the history of colonisation and the histories of the colonised nations, even impacting contemporary Western history.⁸⁰ Foucault also asserts that the "brightly visible tributes" represented by the silver tray, clay jar, and curtain reflect the labour and economic value of the colonised people in Spanish America.⁸¹ Marx, in *Capital*, compares commodities to "mirrors" and "reflections." He argues that commodities are not just physical objects but reflections of specific phenomena of production and social relations.⁸² Hence, the narrative conveyed by this meta-picture does not stop here; we must return to the Madrid court studio and reconsider the social relationships among the figures in the painting.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 275.

⁷⁹ Hamann, B. E. (2010). The mirrors of *Las Meninas*: cochineal, silver, and clay. *The Art Bulletin*, 92(1-2), 27.

⁸⁰ Wolf, E. R. (1982). *Europe and the People without History*. University of California Press.

⁸¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things, Las Meninas*, pp. 307–12.

⁸² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (1867; New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 164, 165, and see 144, 150, 155, 184, 205.

In the 17th century, Spain was in constant financial trouble, with the royal family declaring bankruptcy in 1647 and 1653. During the time when the painting was created (around 1656), letters indicate that the royal finances were so dire that "there was not only a shortage of food but also of firewood".⁸³ Under Philip IV, Spanish society faced a multitude of issues, including external wars, domestic rebellions, severe crop failures, and currency collapse. Concurrently, "the most burdensome and complicated tax system humanly possible" fell almost entirely on the oppressed.⁸⁴ This means that besides the princess and the royal couple, everyone else in the painting was under the heavy burden of these taxes. Furthermore, Velázquez himself faced long-term salary delays and, as a court painter, had to pay heavy taxes on all non-royal-themed works.⁸⁵ Ironically, whenever new taxes were collected, the money was immediately used for grand banquets, bullfights, hunting, beauty contests, and masquerades—exclusively royal activities.⁸⁶ Waite and Hamann argue that Velázquez deliberately placed the three highly representative colonial luxury items in the center of the canvas and along the central axis, rather than by coincidence. As Philip IV's only child, Infanta Margarita, upon becoming the female heir, would face a shattered future of a continuously declining empire.⁸⁷

Waite's article creatively asks how the historical materialist Lenin might view *Las Meninas*. He suggests that Lenin would not ignore the details about the real living conditions of the Spanish people, who endured wars, rebellions, migrations, expulsions, diseases, and plagues throughout their lives. The figures in *Las Meninas*, like the bourgeois spectators themselves, do not represent true power but symbolize the onset of the end of particular power structures: late absolutism and late capitalism.⁸⁸ When studying the reception history of *Las Meninas*, it is essential to remain vigilant, as this "artifact of high culture" is actually the result of the interplay between social and economic barbarities.⁸⁹

The discrepancy between what is described about *Las Meninas* and the story it tells is astonishing. Waite, through Lenin's perspective, allegorically suggests that they will continue to be "**looked at**," yet never truly "**seen**."⁹⁰ This also underscores the appeal of studying meta-pictures, as they challenge the authority of the speaking subject over the image they perceive.⁹¹

Although this thesis does not employ the meta-picture method to meticulously deconstruct

⁸³ Davies, R. T. (1957). *Spain in decline, 1621-1700*. London, pp.105.

⁸⁴ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision*. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 251.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 274.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

⁸⁷ Umberger, E. (1995). Velázquez and Naturalism II: Interpreting *Las Meninas*. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 28(1), 94-117.

⁸⁸ Marx K. (1977). *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. and transl. Joseph O'Malley. Cambridge, pp. 4

⁸⁹ Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in *Las Meninas: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision*. *History and Theory*, 25(3), pp. 250.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 284.

⁹¹ Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 61.

each image in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, its application to music history research is nonetheless insightful. We must always remember to listen to the stories that the images themselves tell. Moreover, one may come to realise how the interdisciplinary approach combining iconography, global history, and musicology can create and reconstruct vivid and unexpected narratives.

3. Chapter Structure

This thesis is organised into five main chapters. **Chapter One - Music News in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*** will explore nearly a hundred pictorials featuring musical scenes, employing two distinct classification methods to offer a thorough display. Typical case studies will be highlighted, and the chapter will provide a “museum-like” bird’s-eye view by considering the spatial scope of the reports, the contexts in which music was utilised, the participants in musical activities, and the balance between global and local news.

Chapter Two - The Dual Soundscape of Music Scenes in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. This chapter furthers the exploration initiated in the first chapter, focusing on the distinct differences in musical activities within and beyond the Shanghai concessions. It illustrates how the pictorial captured the lifestyles and attitudes of different classes of Chinese people living in the densely concessioned semi-colonial environment through their engagement with musical entertainment. Similarly, it also revealed how colonizers from different countries in Shanghai utilised music as a lens to let people “see” their power. This “Dual Soundscape” is an authentic historical representation of late Qing China’s semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.

In Chapter Three, **The Imagined “Western World” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial***, the focus still rests on a characteristic of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* mentioned in the first chapter - its inclusion of not just news but also tales of the curious and the bizarre, a point that has often drawn criticism towards its claim to be a “news pictorial” by its editor Major. However, it is precisely this “global consciousness” that renders the pictorial an indispensable visual record in the history of Sino-Western cultural exchanges. This chapter, by contrasting the narratives about Chinese music by early Western missionaries, merchants, and travelers who came to China with the “imagination” and interpretations of Western music scenes by Chinese artists, delves into the “homogenization” phenomenon in the process of interpreting heterogeneous cultures. It introduces a new term, “Mutual Interpretation,” which has been obliquely referenced in literary translation studies but has yet to be acknowledged in the realm of music.

In Chapter Four, **The Secrets of Boudoir Music: Courtesan Culture in Laufer’s Collection and *Dianshizhai Pictorial***, I focus on the research findings from the collaboration between the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Indiana University in 2022 on the Laufer Recordings, specifically analyzing recordings made in a courtesan house by Laufer in 1902, alongside related imagery from the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. The decadent lifestyle of embracing beauties, reciting poetry, and singing songs, as depicted in the “Zhu Zhi Ci”(竹枝词) poems

penned by many literati residing in Shanghai, was universally desired, giving rise to a specific genre of fiction known as “Libertine Tales” (狹邪小说). This research delves into the intricately detailed lives of renowned courtesans of the time. However, the less-discussed flip side of this glamour is revealed through the 45 songs recorded by the courtesans themselves in the Laufer Recordings, echoing voices from over a century ago that unveil the shadowed aspects of their lives. The lyrics expose the courtesans' dire circumstances, which correspond to some of the reports in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, further unveiling how the precarious Late Qing era, influenced by various factors, evolved into a "man-eat-man" society.

Finally, in Chapter Five - **Remodelling and Enduring: The Multiple Narratives of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange Revealed in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial***, the thesis explores the narratives of Sino-Western cultural exchange in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. It analyses the differences in terminology used by China and the West in their cultural interactions and identifies three main dialogue modes: dominant, common, and superiority discourse. Drawing on Habermas' s theory of the Public Sphere, the chapter presents the diverse responses of different social strata in China to Western culture within the public space created by *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. By analysing a story published in the 1888 edition, where a Chinese scholar plays the guqin in London, and linking it to contemporary news events, the chapter discusses the symbolic nature and continuity of these three modes of dialogue between China and the West.

In conclusion, by focusing on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and the recordings of Berthold Laufer, this thesis unveils a largely overlooked episode in late 19th-century Chinese music history. It investigates the diverse musical landscapes both within and beyond the Shanghai concessions and explores the broader implications of Sino-Western cultural exchange. This research offers insights into the complex interactions between music, culture, and social transformation during the late Qing period, and highlights the enduring impact of these cross-cultural dynamics on the narrative of music history.

Chapter One

Music News in the Dianshizhai Pictorial

In the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* vast archive of over four thousand detailed and precious images, about 200 directly illustrate musical scenes, making up roughly 5%. This relatively low percentage is due to the periodical's focus on domestic political and social news rather than entertainment. Entertainment news, including societal curiosities and anecdotes, takes up only a small portion of the publication. Additionally, as a ten-day publication that includes eight illustrations per issue, not every issue continuously features music-themed content. Thus, these illustrations might initially seem to have a minor impact. However, when closely examining all the music-related illustrations across these 15 years, the content's richness and diversity, the wide array of covered topics, and the extraordinary skill and limitless creativity exhibited by Chinese artists and editors are remarkably impressive. In the first chapter of my thesis, I will provide a comprehensive overview of the various themes of these musical news illustrations from two dimensions, setting the stage for the in-depth discussion and analysis in the subsequent chapters.

In the discourse on the dissemination of news within varied geographical contexts, the instance of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* serves as a quintessential model. As Rudolf G. Wagner elucidates in *Joining the Global Public*, from 1884 onwards, the publication leveraged the capabilities of the Dianshizhai Lithographic Printing Studio in collaboration with *Shen Bao* publishing house. This strategic alliance not only fostered a widespread distribution network in Shanghai but also extended its reach nationally, covering every province. Such an expansive distribution facilitated the pictorial to preemptively secure a dominant stance within a nationwide network, establishing itself as a pivotal conduit for readers across the country to access current news. Wagner highlights the pioneering role of the pictorial in connecting a national readership with contemporary events through its innovative distribution strategies.⁹²

Further enriching this narrative, Chen Pingyuan in *The Late Qing Visual Culture* meticulously enumerates the locations of 20 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* branches across various provinces.⁹³ Noteworthy is the inclusivity of this network, spanning economically prosperous regions like the Jiangnan area and coastal zones, as well as the less developed southwestern mountainous regions predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities, such as Guizhou, Yunnan, and Guangxi. The distribution also extended to remote northwestern areas like Shaanxi and Gansu, which were culturally and developmentally distinct from Shanghai. Interestingly, many of these

⁹² Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press. pp. 131-133.

⁹³ Chen Pingyuan. (2001). Interpreting the "Late Qing" through "Images" - Introduction to "The Late Qing Image". *Open Times*, (5), 56-65.

branches were strategically located near "Gong-yuan" (贡院) - the examination halls for the imperial examination system, which played a crucial role in the selection of officials and scholars in ancient China. This placement suggests a deliberate association with the scholarly and intellectual community, ensuring that the pictorial would be readily circulated among the literati and intelligentsia. Additionally, the affordability of the pictorial, priced at five cents per issue, where one hundred cents equated to one tael, made it accessible to a wide readership, reflecting its significant impact and acceptance in society at the time.⁹⁴

When categorising musical scenes by their reported spatial scope, four distinct categories emerge: 1. Musical activities within and outside the Shanghai International Settlement; 2. Musical activities in cities and villages throughout China; 3. Musical activities of the Qing imperial court and aristocracy; 4. Imagined reports of overseas music. Given the broad readership, it is clear that the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* endeavours to meet the varied interests and tastes of its readers, whether they are drawn to Western music and modernisation or to indigenous folklore and traditional musical culture. This spatial categorisation acts as a kaleidoscopic lens, offering a glimpse into the richness and diversity of musical culture across different regions of China during the late Qing dynasty.

Classifying music by its application in various settings reveals how it permeated the lives of the people in late Qing China. From teahouses to opera theatres, from temple fairs and deity celebrations to the birthday festivities of the Emperor and Empress Dowager, from female entertainers in the teahouses within the concessions to singers on musical boats (画舫), from the drills of Western military bands to the racetracks within the concessions—each setting provides a distinct lens through which to understand music.

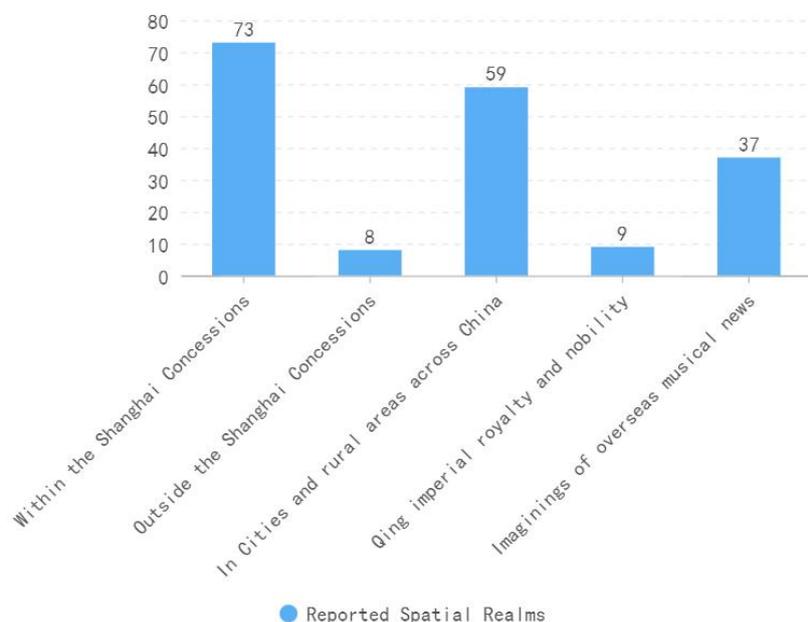
Therefore, in this chapter, I will employ the two aforementioned categorisation methods (geographical space & musical scenes) to present a “museum-like” panoramic view at the outset of this study. This approach is not merely to demonstrate the diversity and richness of musical scenes but to attempt to capture their historical significance within the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* through these intertwined multi-dimensional perspectives. By integrating these perspectives, the aim is to go beyond the constraints of a single viewpoint, exploring how music forges connections between different spaces, occasions, and groups of participants, and how these connections reflect the cultural exchanges and social transformations in late 19th-century Qing society.

1. Musical News Across Different Geographical Areas

In the initial classification method of this chapter, I categorise geographical spaces, with consideration of the differing degrees of influence that the distribution of the pictorial might exert across various regions. Below are the charts depicting musical news reports within

⁹⁴ Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press. pp. 118.

different geographical ranges.⁹⁵



In the analysis of the geographical distribution of musical news in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it is not difficult to see that the pictorial functioned as a medium for cultural exchange in 19th-century China, as demonstrated by its choices in reporting from various geographical locations. Of particular note is the concentration of the newspaper's reporting on the Shanghai International Settlement, a hub for Sino-Western cultural fusion, with 73 reports documenting musical activities in this area. By comparison, there were only 8 reports on musical activities outside the Shanghai International Settlement. This disparity may be due to the lesser attention paid to musical activities outside the settlement at the time.

Additionally, musical activities in Chinese cities and villages also occupied significant coverage, with a total of 59 reports. These reports, through vivid descriptions and illustrations, linked scattered musical historical materials together to form a three-dimensional historical scene of music. Not only did these reports document musical activities across various regions, but they also showcased the diversity and richness of Chinese music in different locales, providing valuable data for understanding the music history of the late Qing dynasty.

When analysing the musical news related to the Qing dynasty's royalty and nobility, only 9 reports were found. This number might suggest Major's awareness of power structures--such a content strategy might have been aimed at presenting a more populist and modern cultural atmosphere.

Furthermore, the pictorial exhibited a special interest in overseas music news, with 37 reports

⁹⁵ It is important to note that the data on musical/soundscape news pictorials fluctuates between 160 and 190. This fluctuation is partly due to occasional overlaps in the categorisation of certain images, and also because some pictorials do not fit neatly into any major category due to differing focuses in classification, thus resulting in their exclusion from strict categorisation.

in total. This interest may reflect the international outlook that the British Chief Editor Major could have brought to the publication. These reports were probably intended to expand Chinese readers' awareness of global musical trends. They provided a unique perspective on the music news from East Asian, Southeast Asian, and Western countries, while also revealing the artists' cognitive limitations. These reports demonstrate how the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* depicted globalised musical scenes and the reaction of late Qing Chinese society to foreign cultures.

These data not only offer a glimpse into the varying degrees of importance placed on musical culture across different regions in Chinese society at the time but also reveal Major's vision as the editor. Major might have utilised this platform to foster a multicultural exchange environment, conveying modernity through diverse content selection while also highlighting his commercial acumen and deep market understanding. Through the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Major not only showcased Shanghai as a hub of international cultural exchange but also established the publication as a pioneer in the dissemination of musical culture across China.

1.1 Musical activities within and outside the Shanghai concession

At the close of the 19th century, as globalisation advanced and international interactions deepened, China increasingly became the focus of Western powers, experiencing significant social and cultural transformations and conflicts during this period. It was against this backdrop that Ernest Major founded *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, an endeavour that was not only an experiment with new media formats but also an exploration of cross-cultural communication. Major, a British national residing in the international metropolis of Shanghai, China, observed the limitations in content presentation and technical application of traditional Chinese media. He noted that "traditional Chinese media, heavily reliant on text, failed to fully capitalise on the potential of visual elements to enhance information dissemination".⁹⁶ Concurrently, he recognised that "Western illustrated newspapers, with their rich visual presentation and vivid news reporting, had gained widespread popularity and acclaim among the public".⁹⁷ Faced with these differences between Chinese and Western media formats, Major saw opportunities for innovation and integration. He realised that combining Western illustration techniques with the rich cultural content of China "could significantly enhance the appeal and educational value of news, thereby better serving China's growing readership".⁹⁸

Additionally, the Sino-French War in 1884 and other international events ignited a strong demand among the Chinese public for both domestic and international news, providing a substantial market opportunity for pictorial newspapers. As Major pointed out, illustrated newspapers were not only tools for news dissemination but also vehicles for expressing and stimulating national sentiments, which was particularly evident in the early issues of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Although only a small portion of the content focused on war discussions, it is undeniable that the pictorial still held a certain degree of political colour and

⁹⁶ Master of the Zunwenge(尊闻阁主人) News Studio, 1884, p. 1

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

attributes. During the Sino-French War, the public's concern for the progress of the war was intense, and the newspaper, through vivid illustrations depicting battlefield situations, greatly enhanced the impact of news and deepened the public's emotional investment in the war. Major mentioned, "Recently now, because the Chinese court has decided to deploy its soldiers in the struggle between France and Vietnam, deep hatred for the enemy sweeps through the land. People who wish to do something good draw pictures about victories in this war, and they are bought and looked at in the market places, and quite easily become props for the conversation".⁹⁹ Through such means, Major not only provided visual records of the war but also used the newspaper as a cultural and political tool to enhance national unity and patriotic sentiment—illustrating a position distinctly different from the typical Western "colonialist" or "imperialist" stance of the time. In 1962, a former *Shenbao* journalist revisited the early years of the newspaper, eventually affirming that Ernest Major, the English founder and owner, "was truly a friend of China".¹⁰⁰ This sentiment was echoed by Xu Zaiping in 1988.¹⁰¹ Major's impact and influence stand as robust testimonials to his role as "a friend of China".¹⁰²

In the inaugural editorial of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in 1884, Major explicitly stated his motives for publishing the newspaper: "I have therefore asked people with a fine skill for drawing situations to pick sensational and entertaining scenes and draw illustrations of them".¹⁰³ His aim was not only to showcase Western visual art techniques but also to emphasise the importance of local cultural elements. Through this approach, Major sought to create a new form of news dissemination that would satisfy visual demands and enhance the effectiveness of information transmission. He was optimistic about the future market prospects of the pictorial newspaper, predicting that this new media format would have widespread appeal and practical value, stating, "once these drawings will be published, they will [sell so well as if they were] flying without having wings and rushing without having legs" (斯图一出, 定将不翼而飞, 不胫而走).¹⁰⁴ This statement not only revealed his foresight into the commercial potential of the pictorial newspaper but also reflected his recognition of its social impact.

Furthermore, Major's writings also highlighted the potential of the pictorial newspaper to enhance leisure and cultural literacy, pointing out that this combination "will also contribute to the 'pleasure of having one's mien dance and one's eyebrows fly'" (以增色舞眉飞之乐).¹⁰⁵ These insights demonstrate his forward-thinking mindset and a profound understanding of cultural integration.

In examining the cultural activities within the Shanghai Concession and their depiction in the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Xu, R. (1962). *Shenbao qisbiqinian shiliao* 申报四十年史料 [Seventy-seven years of *Shenbao* historical materials] Mimeographed internal publication, Liubuzhaiwencun 六不齋文存, Shanghai. Available at Zhongguo guojia tushuguan. (Vol. 1, p. 8).

¹⁰¹ Xu, Z., & Xu, D. (1988). *Qing mo sishinian Shenbao shiliao* 申报四十年史料 [Forty years of *Shenbao* historical materials at the end of the Qing Dynasty]. Peking: Xinhua, p. 13.

¹⁰² Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press. pp. 107.

¹⁰³ Master of the Zunwenge(尊闻阁主人) News Studio, 1884, p. 1

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Dianshizhai Pictorial, it becomes evident that, although Ernest Major, the founder of the Pictorial, did not explicitly state in the inaugural editorial that the newspaper would focus on events within the Concession, there is a substantial representation of entertainment and social activities from the Concession within its pages. This not only reflects the role of the Concession as a cultural hub of Shanghai's society but also highlights its importance within the colonial urban structure. For instance, the frequent coverage of concerts, balls, and theatrical performances within the Concession vividly documents the bustling scenes of social gatherings, thereby attracting a broad readership that includes foreigners.

However, while these reports showcase the vibrancy and diversity of the Concession as a stage for cultural exchanges, they inevitably expose issues of racial segregation and class stratification prevalent at the time. The detailed coverage in the pictorial is not merely a display of cultural life; it also reflects the social structures and cultural identities being forged. Through an in-depth analysis of these pictorial reports, a comprehensive understanding of the patterns of cultural consumption and the construction of social identities during the colonial period is facilitated, revealing the complexities of cultural dynamics under colonial rule and their impact on local societies. Such an analysis aids in understanding the cultural and entertainment activities within and beyond the Concession from a more critical perspective, providing new insights into the interpretation of urban cultural life and social interactions during the colonial era. This approach contributes to a broader comprehension of the historical nuances and the intricate interactions that shaped the cultural landscape in colonial cities.

1.1.1 Dance of Western Children



Figure 1-1 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Stone Collection, pp.77, 1892¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ The original title: 西童跳舞: 《点石斋画报》石集

During 1891-1892, Russia experienced a catastrophic famine that captured the attention of the international community. The famine was widespread, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and sparking large-scale international relief efforts. In this era of increasing global charitable activities, the Shanghai French Concession, not only a bustling international commercial hub, also gradually became a platform for cultural exchange and international assistance. Against this backdrop, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* reported in 1892 on a special dance performance organised by the Municipal Council of the Shanghai French Concession to raise funds for the Russian famine. Held in the central stage of the Municipal Council's Grand Bell Garden, the performance featured Western children dressed in exotic costumes, some impersonating Chinese or Japanese children, others adorned with exaggerated makeup, dancing creatively. Whether portraying elders or adorned with leaves and lotus petals, their dance moves resembled butterflies flitting through the garden, lively and harmonious. The report noted that the children's performance was warmly received by the audience, who were willing to pay an entrance fee to watch the performance and support the charitable cause.

While the depiction of the dance performance in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* might seem on the surface to be a cross-cultural charitable event, it actually revealed the complex social and racial structures under the colonial context. The predominance of Western spectators in the illustration may not accurately reflect the actual level of participation of the Chinese audience. Indeed, the social life within the Concession was often closed to Chinese residents, reflecting the exclusionary and racially segregated nature of society at the time. In the Shanghai French Concession of that period, such events were more likely to represent cultural and social class boundaries rather than an inclusive public space. While the dance performance aimed to raise funds for the Russian famine, for most Chinese residents, it represented an unattainable luxury.

1.1.2 Dancing for Matchmaking

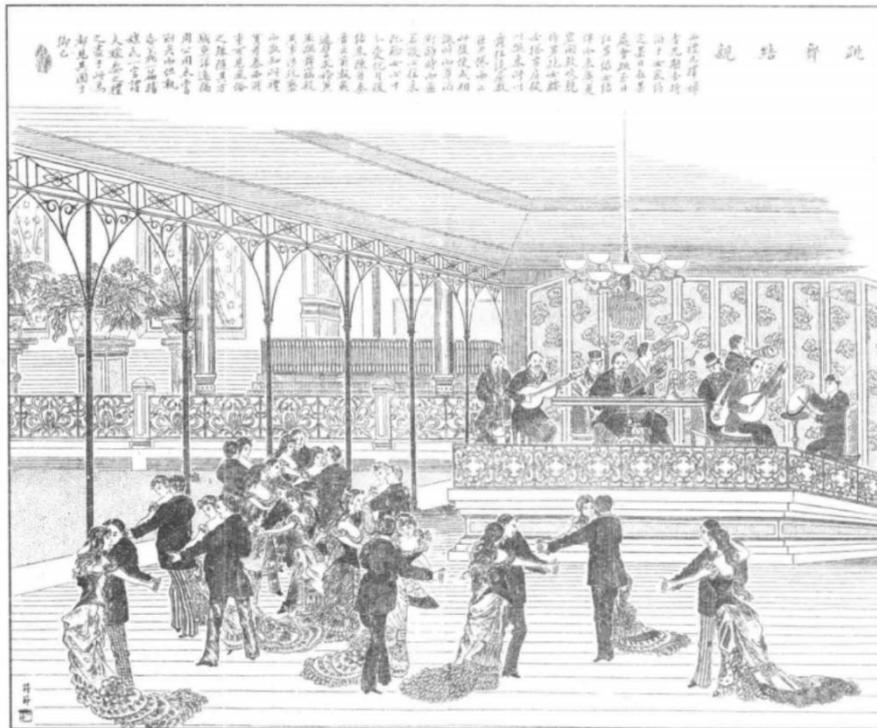


Figure 1-2 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Wu Collection, pp.48, 1889¹⁰⁷

The pictorial depicted a Western ball held in the Shanghai Concession in 1889, showcasing a scene of cultural differences between the East and the West through the brushwork of a Chinese artist. The artist not only provided a vivid depiction of Western matrimonial customs but also delved deeply, from a Chinese perspective, into the practices of male and female interaction within the context of marriage introduction. According to Western wedding traditions, the initial courtship process typically begins with a dance. Dressed in formal attire, gentlemen and ladies pair up in the spacious ballroom, moving to the rhythm of drums and music. The accompanying report describes how men gently encircle the women's waists, while the women lean on the men's shoulders, dancing in unison, advancing and retreating, circling the house several times until they grow weary, signalling the beginning of their acquaintance. At times they share toasts of wine, at others they converse over tea, and as their interactions become more frequent and the woman feels utterly delighted, they consent to marriage, reminiscent of the ancient alliance between the states of Qin and Jin (秦晋之好)¹⁰⁸.

In 19th-century Western society, balls played a significant role in the courtship process of young people. These social gatherings were not only assemblies for entertainment but also

¹⁰⁷ The original title: 跳舞结亲: 《点石斋画报》午集

¹⁰⁸ During the Spring and Autumn period (circa 771 to 476 BCE), the State of Qin and the State of Jin were two neighbouring major powers whose relationship fluctuated between tension and ease. Throughout this period, several matrimonial alliances occurred between the two states, such as when Duke Mu of Qin gave his daughter in marriage to Duke Wen of Jin, an event known as the "Harmony between Qin and Jin." These marriages not only fortified the political connections between the two states but also helped stabilise their borders, hence the nuptial union was celebrated as the "Harmony between Qin and Jin." In modern Mandarin, "秦晋之好" (Qín Jìn zhī hǎo) is commonly used to describe matrimonial alliances between two families and is sometimes metaphorically used to refer to friendly relations between two groups or countries.

critical for the upper-class to meet future spouses. The ballroom scene crafted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* indeed reflects the cultural significance and societal functions of such social dances at the time. These occasions allowed young men and women to engage and become acquainted in a relatively open and relaxed atmosphere. The interactions at these balls included dancing, talking, and socialising, providing a platform for young men and women to know each other and for families to be involved and supervise the process. Although the reports in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* might contain exaggerations and imaginings, it is clear that balls, as a social form, indeed played a part in the courtship customs of the time, especially within the upper echelons of society, where establishing emotional connections through dance was viewed as part of social customs and the marriage market.

However, it is important to note that, although Western social balls appear to be open and free, in reality, they were closely tied to social class and economic status, often confined to interactions among social elites. The class restrictiveness might not be apparent in the depiction of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, but through an in-depth study of historical documents, we can understand that the common populace rarely had the opportunity to participate in such events. Therefore, the cultural significance and societal roles of balls were not limited to romantic love stories; they also reflected deeper cultural phenomena of the 19th-century society, including gender roles, class differences, and social control.

The ballroom scene in the pictorial, portrayed by a Chinese artist attempting to mimic Western painting styles, presents both familiarity and strangeness to Western and Chinese audiences alike. The artist's depiction of the Western band shows a certain level of knowledge but also obvious misconceptions and imagination. For example, the trumpet is drawn to resemble a Chinese suona, and the action of playing the cello is depicted as if playing an oversized pipa; the shapes of the wind instruments also do not conform to the actual construction. The band in the painting mixes a variety of instruments, including string instruments that look like guitars and slender-necked plucked instruments resembling the Chinese sanxian, one of which is even depicted to look like a lute. The string instruments might include cellos and double basses, while the percussionist appears in an unusual kneeling position, which is extremely rare in Western bands.

Despite the painting's misunderstandings and imaginative elements, the overall image conveys the vivacity and joyous atmosphere of the ball in a unique way. It reveals the curiosity and acceptance of Western culture by people in late 19th-century China, as well as some misinterpretations of Western culture within Chinese society at that time. Through this painting and its description, we gain insights into the confusion and curiosity of Chinese people when confronted with Western culture, and the level of openness and acceptance of foreign culture by Chinese society during that era.

1.1.3 Song and Dance of Geisha



Figure 1-3 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Ren Collection, pp.2, 1886¹⁰⁹

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century within the Shanghai International Settlement, the cultural influences of various empires interlaced. Though the area lacked a formal Japanese concession, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* depiction of the Japanese Tennō Tanjōbi (天長節), or Emperor's Birthday, in 1886 vividly showcased the vibrant presence of the Japanese community in this enclave. The geishas, with their dance and songs, played a celebratory role during the festivities, brandishing fans and decorated sticks, and engaging in dances on the streets that were imbued with traditional cultural hues. In the illustration, geishas are seen holding shamisen (三味線) and small harps, with these instruments' melodious and distinct timbres adding a defining touch to the festival's celebrations. The shamisen, a major plucked string instrument in traditional Japanese music, contributed a rhythmic flair to the dances with its crisp tones. The small harp, though compact in size, produced harmonious accompaniments that lent a dreamy musical backdrop to the singing and dancing. Furthermore, other geishas appeared to play small percussion instruments, providing a steady and delicate beat foundation for the performance. The phrase "accompanying the orchestral path with drums and trumpets, thoroughly indulging in song and dance for the ultimate audio-visual entertainment" vividly captures how music enriched the atmosphere of the festival, immersing spectators in dual sensory delight.

Tennō Tanjōbi, the Japanese Emperor's Birthday, is not only an important national celebration within Japan, signifying reverence for the Emperor and the nation but also has a particular significance when celebrated outside of Japan, especially in an international city like

¹⁰⁹ The original title: 日妓歌舞《点石斋画报》壬集

Shanghai. It maintains the cultural identity of the overseas Japanese community and serves as an expression of political and cultural allegiance.¹¹⁰ The public festivities in Shanghai's Japanese community demonstrated their intent to uphold and disseminate their motherland's traditions, thereby showcasing their cultural force on the international stage.

However, when reviewing this historical moment in late Qing Shanghai, we must view these depicted scenes from a more comprehensive perspective. They are not just a simple display of cultural activities but also a testament to historical complexity and imperialist influence. Shanghai, as an international city, has a history marked by cultural prosperity and exchange, as well as by the scars of war and silent testimonies to struggles for power. In studying this history, while recognising the diversity of cultures and the value of exchanges, one must not overlook the profound impacts wrought by conflict and aggression. The performances of geishas recorded in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, though a medium for cross-cultural exchange, potentially carried the shadows of imperialist propaganda. The celebration of Tennō Tanjōbi in Shanghai confirmed the reach of Japanese culture abroad and revealed the tensions and competitions within the global political landscape of the time.

1.1.4 Procession for Welcoming the Gods into the Temple



Figure 1-4 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Jia Collection, pp.56, 1884¹¹¹

This section of the pictorial text describes the grand ceremony for the completion of the newly built Tianhou Temple on the Hongkou Railway. On the 24th day of the fifth lunar month in 1884, the Tianhou statue was ceremoniously escorted from the Xiaodongmen Palace to the new Tianhou Temple, with crowds of residents eagerly watching along the route, creating a lively and festive scene. The procession included performances by the Qingke Ban (清客班), elaborately dressed actors and young girls on horseback, and children dressed as celestial beings. The ceremony featured stage performances, Cantonese people striking gongs

¹¹⁰ 奥田尚. (2013). 都市上海と日本人: いくつかの断面. *アジア観光学年報*, 14, 70-80.

¹¹¹ The original title: 迎神入庙《点石斋画报》甲集

and carrying flags, and a band playing in a boat-shaped pavilion, with incense pavilions and flag bearers on horseback following. The air was filled with the scent of incense. The deity's palanquin was ornately decorated and followed by about forty people carrying incense in sedan chairs. Spectators filled the streets and alleys, creating an extraordinary spectacle that reflected a scene of peace and prosperity.

From this illustration of a musical event outside the Shanghai concessions, we capture a glimpse into the complexity of urban culture and social life at the time. Although musical activities within the concessions far outnumbered those outside, the mere existence of 8 depictions of extra-concession scenes, such as the grand scene depicted, signals the vital role traditional culture and religious activities continued to play outside the western-dominated areas. The newspaper not only mentioned the common "drum-led procession" in religious parades but also highlighted a marching ensemble—"Qingke Ban." Typically composed of literary aficionados passionate about music, "Qingke Ban" provided entertainment in daily life and performed at significant occasions like weddings and longevity banquets. Their music, mainly "Jiangnan Sizhu," featured string and bamboo wind instruments, characterised by a lively and bright style, reflecting the simple and robust nature of the people in the Jiangnan region.

The depiction of "Qingke Ban" and the young men and women in resplendent attire marching along with the cavalcade reveals the vibrant life force of local traditions. It shows not only a sense of cultural identity among community members but also illustrates how Shanghai, while retaining its cultural heritage, was gradually integrating into the trends of globalisation. However, the existence of these cultural phenomena also reminds us that, although Shanghai upheld its traditional arts in the face of foreign cultural impacts, such steadfastness was not insular but continuously evolved under the interaction of various cultural forces.

Within the illustration, figures can still be seen maintaining "order"—even outside the concessions, the western powers' influence permeated through their police force's involvement in local events, reflecting the extent of western imperial interference in China's domestic affairs, even during a religious commemoration. Simultaneously, the western-style buildings in the distance visually manifest the tangible evidence of western modernisation, signifying the penetration of western culture and architectural style into every corner of the city. These details provoke thoughts on the relationship between concession powers and local society and how this relationship manifests in urban space, social order, and cultural activities. They alert us to the presence and influence of international powers even against the backdrop of local traditional activities. This offers scholars studying Shanghai's and even China's modern history a crucial perspective for understanding social dynamics at the time: on the one hand, traditional cultural activities provided social entertainment and religious celebration, expressing social identity and connection; on the other hand, the "order maintenance" by western powers revealed their desire to control local affairs and the potential for cultural and power conflicts in this process. The richness and dynamism of the scenes also showcase the diversity and vitality of late Qing Shanghai as an international metropolis, not just as a battleground between foreign forces and local traditions, but as a space where multiple

cultures intertwined and influenced one another. From a broader historical perspective, this interweaving reflects an early form of globalisation, where various cultural and social forces jointly shaped the city's unique character within a specific geographic and political context.

1.2 Musical Activities in Chinese Urban and Rural Settings

When we extend our gaze from the bustling concession areas to the musical activities in other Chinese cities and rural areas, from a folkloristic perspective, it is undoubtedly an excellent case for exploring the daily entertainment life of Chinese commoners during the Qing Dynasty. However, this perspective is still insufficient to fully appreciate the true value of the musical landscapes captured by the lens of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. From the perspective of an "insider" — one who studies Chinese music history — these pictorials are like strong and resilient threads that connect the numerous scattered musical historical materials about the Ming and Qing periods, much like pearls being strung together, forming an immersive, intimate, and lively scene. Indeed, every discipline has its regrets constrained by temporal and spatial backgrounds and objective factors. Chinese music history, especially ancient music history, faces not only the scarcity of ancient scores and the difficulty in deciphering them on the musical level but also a serious lack of visual historical materials, as Major pointed out in the general issues of Chinese historical records, the awareness of pictorial history is severely insufficient.

The author has reviewed almost all existing Chinese music history works since the 20th century that include the music history of the Ming and Qing periods, exceeding fifty volumes. A considerable number of these works have been used directly as textbooks for the discipline of Chinese music history at different historical periods (the Republican period, the Cultural Revolution period, the Reform and Opening-Up period, and the 21st century to the present). They usually originate from the different "streams" of two representative figures: Yang Yinliu, who pioneered Chinese ethnomusicology, and Wang Guangqi, an early modern musicologist versed in both Chinese and Western traditions.

Yang Yinliu (杨荫浏, 1899-1984) was a distinguished Chinese music educator and a foundational figure in ethnomusicology. His academic career was primarily devoted to the study of Chinese music history. He dedicated his life to the fieldwork and documentation of Chinese music, particularly enriching the academic resources related to Chinese opera and religious music through his in-depth research. Yang Yinliu's 1925 work *Outline of Chinese Music History* marked a milestone in his academic career, while his 1981 *Draft History of Ancient Chinese Music* represented the pinnacle of his research. This comprehensive work meticulously recorded the history and evolution of Chinese music, setting a benchmark for future scholars of Chinese music history. For example, Qi Wenyan's (祁文源, 2002) *History of Chinese Music*¹¹² adopted the periodisation method from Yang's *Draft History of Ancient Chinese Music*, dividing the history into eight periods by dynasties¹¹³, while making some

¹¹² Qi Wenyan. (2002). *History of Chinese Music*. Gansu People's Publishing House. pp. 117-130.

¹¹³ The eight periods specifically are: Prehistoric and Xia-Shang, Western Zhou and Spring-Autumn-Warring States, Qin-Han and Wei-Jin-Northern and Southern Dynasties, Sui-Tang and Five Dynasties, Song-Jin and Yuan,

refinements or expansions in the content regarding musical forms. Similarly, Qin Xu's (秦序, 1998) *History of Chinese Music*¹¹⁴ follows a comparable structure, detailing the characteristics of music, the development of musical instruments, music theory, and notable musical works and figures from ancient times to the modern era. These two books have become standard textbooks or reference materials for music history courses in numerous Chinese conservatories and universities.

Interestingly, although Yang Yinliu advocated for a multi-evidence approach—utilising archaeological data, traditional literature, and folk music to construct a more multidimensional framework for music history research—the visual materials in his works are still notably lacking. This "lack" does not merely refer to the quantity of illustrative content but rather to the absence of a "holistic pictorial consciousness" as Major described. The illustrations in Yang's books typically introduce individual instruments one by one, with most ancient instrument images extracted from murals, artworks, and tomb paintings. While this method allows readers to closely examine the instruments being discussed, it also has significant drawbacks: the fragmented images can create a sense of "vacuum," as most authentic musical scenes involve the collaborative performance of many instruments. In other words, there is a lack of a coherent context that links the instruments, dances, performance forms, and musical styles into a credible vision of a specific historical period of music. Yang's successors have also not fully addressed this issue.

Wang Guangqi (王光祈, 1892-1936) was a distinguished figure in the field of early modern Chinese musicology. His research encompassed various aspects, including Chinese music history, Eastern ethnomusicology, and Western music. His scholarly contributions were particularly significant in the in-depth study and compilation of Chinese music history and ancient Chinese musical theory. Wang Guangqi's works, such as *History of Chinese Music*, *Music of Oriental Nations*, and *The Rhythmic Structure of Chinese Poetry and Music*, not only enriched the academic resources of Chinese musicology but also provided important channels for the Western world to understand Chinese music. His articles were included in both the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Italian Encyclopaedia*.

In contrast to Yang Yinliu, Wang Guangqi utilised the framework of "Lü-Diao-Pu-Qi" (律-调-谱-器) - translated as "Musical Temperament-Scale-Notation-Instrument" - from traditional Chinese music research methods to write the history of Chinese music. This approach allowed readers to clearly trace the development of these four elements throughout China's millennia-long history.¹¹⁵ For instance, the evolution of Chinese musical tuning systems from the five-tone scale to the seven-tone scale, and ultimately to the twelve-tone equal temperament, involved complex intermediary stages such as the sixty-tone and three-hundred-sixty-tone systems. The long-standing issue of "the irrecoverability of Huangzhong"(黄钟不能还原) was eventually resolved during the Ming Dynasty, establishing

Ming and Qing, Republic of China, and People's Republic of China.

¹¹⁴ Qin Xu. (1998). *History of Chinese Music*. Culture and Art Publishing House. pp. 115-139.

¹¹⁵ Wang Guangqi. (2016). *History of Chinese Music*. China Culture and History Press. pp. 2-3.

the twelve-tone equal temperament system.¹¹⁶

Each chapter of Wang Guangqi's "History of Chinese Music" is titled as the "Evolution of XXX," such as "Evolution of Scales," "Evolution of Notation," "Evolution of Instruments," along with smaller chapters like "Evolution of Yue-Wu" (music and dance Performance), and "Evolution of Opera." The illustrations in his book mainly consist of diagrams of calculation formulas, plan and perspective drawings of individual instruments, and diagrams of music and dance formations. Therefore, Wang Guangqi and Yang Yinliu faced a similar issue in constructing a visualised music history: they both struggled to provide readers with a vivid and interconnected representation of these musical activities.

More scholars have opted to combine the strengths of both Yang and Wang. For instance, Hong Kong scholar Zhang Shibin's 1975 publication *A Draft History of Chinese Music* includes a dedicated chapter on guqin music.¹¹⁷ Taiwanese scholar Xiao Xinghua's 1995 publication *History of Chinese Music*¹¹⁸ and Zang Yibing's 2006 revised *History of Chinese Music*¹¹⁹—which expands on the music of Chinese ethnic minorities—reflect the academic influence and penetration of both Yang and Wang. Similarly, Ye Bohe's 2019 publication *History of Chinese Music*¹²⁰ also demonstrates their impact. These works often feature illustrations that range from individual instrument displays to sparse representations of musical scenes. Acknowledging the importance of visual references in education, as early as 1957, the Central Conservatory of Music led the publication of the three-volume *Reference Pictures for the History of Chinese Music*.¹²¹ Unfortunately, despite improvements in quantity and clarity over the illustrations in Yang and Wang's works, the images still lack fundamental logical cohesion, making it difficult for readers to envision the practical application of these instruments in performance settings. Interaction between performers and the audience, which could convey more historical context, remains largely absent.

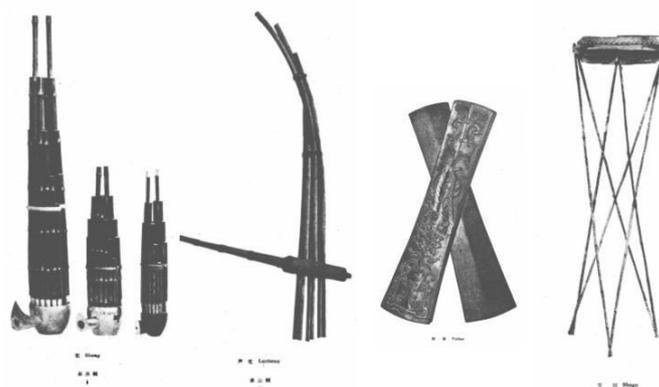


Figure 1-6 Reference Pictures for the History of Chinese Music¹²²

¹¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁷ Zhang Shibin. (1975). *A Draft History of Chinese Music*. Union Publishing Co., Ltd.

¹¹⁸ Xiao Xinghua. (1995). *History of Chinese Music*. Wenjin Publishing House. pp. 222-255.

¹¹⁹ Zang Yibing. (2006). *History of Chinese Music (Revised Edition)*. Wuhan University Press. pp. 135-178.

¹²⁰ Ye Bohe. (2019). *History of Chinese Music (Volume One)*. Bashu Publishing House.

¹²¹ Central Conservatory of Music. (1957). *Reference Pictures for the History of Chinese Music*. Music Publishing House.

¹²² 中央音乐学院. (1957). 中国音乐史参考图片. 音乐出版社. pp.1-11.

The truly groundbreaking perspective comes from Wu Zhao's 1999 publication *Tracing the Lost Tracks of Music: Illustrated History of Chinese Music*. Wu employs a music archaeology methodology, focusing on reconstructing musical performance scenes. He meticulously details musical scenarios from tomb reconstructions, bronze inscriptions, Han Dynasty stone carvings, murals, and ancient paintings. By linking geography, humanities, history, folklore, key historical figures, and significant musical works, he significantly addresses the lack of illustrative support in Yang and Wang's histories. However, due to the fact that the tombs and paintings documented typically belonged to emperors, nobles, or aristocrats, the book falls short of portraying the musical entertainment life of commoners. For example, when discussing Qing Dynasty music, Wu references the "Wan Shou Sheng Dian Tu" (万寿盛典图 Illustration of the Grand Ceremony for the Sixtieth Birthday of Emperor Kangxi), "Wan Shou Tu" (万寿图 Illustration of Longevity), and "Qing Long Dance" (庆隆舞) for the sixtieth birthday celebrations of Empress Dowager Chongqing(崇庆), showcasing traditional Manchu and Mongolian dances and grand royal festivities.¹²³

Liu Dongsheng's *Illustrated History of Chinese Music* (2008) is another commendable work aiming to showcase comprehensive historical scenes of musical performances.¹²⁴ However, like Wu's book, the illustrations predominantly focus on the imperial class. For instance, in discussing Qing Dynasty opera history, Liu uses scenes from the ninth volume of the "Illustration of Emperor Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour" (康熙南巡图), as well as exquisite opera albums collected and printed by successive Qing emperors. These invaluable historical images are well-preserved precisely because they were royal collections, which is understandable. Nevertheless, it is widely known that the musical life of the imperial aristocracy represents only a small fraction of China's vast musical history. As music historians, who wouldn't yearn to glimpse the daily musical entertainments favoured by ordinary city dwellers and rural villagers? **The *Dianshizhai Pictorial* effectively achieves this by depicting urban and rural musical activities.**

1.2.1 Tan Si Lian Xiang (A Four-Person Band, Each Playing Two Instruments Simultaneously)

¹²³ 吴钊. (1999). 追寻逝去的音乐踪迹: 图说中国音乐史. 东方出版社. pp. 336-364

¹²⁴ Liu Dongsheng. (2008). *Illustrated History of Chinese Music*. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House. pp. 242-269

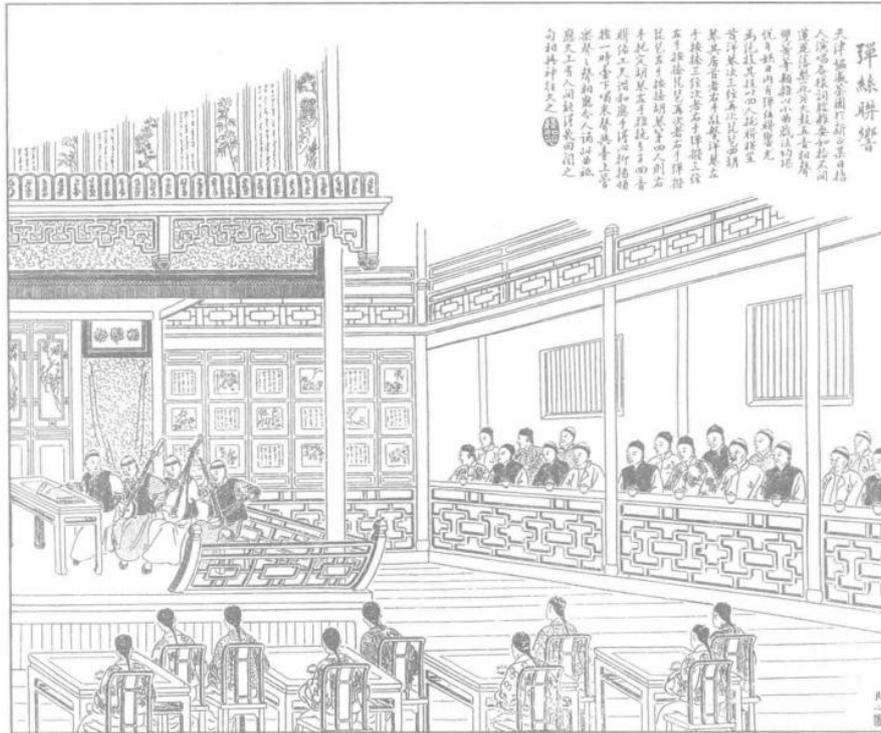


Figure 1-7 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Tu Collection*, pp.64, 1893¹²⁵

The *Dianshizhai Pictorial* reported a musical entertainment event held at the Xiasheng Teahouse 协盛茶园 in Tianjin in 1893, offering a vivid glimpse into the cultural life of late Qing society. A particularly notable performance was "Tan-si-lian-xiang,"(弹丝联响) where four performers played the yangqin, sanxian, pipa, and huqin. This intricate performance required each musician to master their instrument and collaborate closely, ensuring coherence and harmony. The audience highly praised the precise and harmonious performance, with the editor quoting Tang poet Du Fu: "This tune should only exist in heaven; rarely does it resound on earth (此曲只应天上有，人间能得几回闻)."

The term "Tan-si-lian-xiang" was actually known as "Wuyin Liantan" (五音联弹) or "Bayin Lianhuan" (八音联欢), as documented in Sun Yun's 1873 work "Yu-mo Ou-tan" (余墨偶谈). Sun wrote, "Tanci storytelling has a long history, particularly flourishing during the Xianfeng period (1851-1861). Known as 'Bayin Lianhuan,' it involved eight performers sitting in a circle, each playing string and wind instruments interchangeably, with one person outside the circle beating a drum to keep rhythm. The music was exceptionally melodious, and the storytelling was captivating, garnering widespread acclaim".¹²⁶ This skill was popular from the late Qing to the early Republic period, both as a standalone performance and as accompaniment for opera troupes.

¹²⁵ The original title: 弹丝联响: 《点石斋画报》土集

¹²⁶Zhang Cuilan. (2005). Examination of Yangqin Historical Materials in "Qingbai Leichao." *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute* (Music and Performance Edition).



Figure 1-8 Ba-yin Lian-huan¹²⁷

The musical scenes captured in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* not only offer a visual experience but also provide visual evidence for understanding urban musical culture in late Qing China. Beyond music performance, the pictorial records abundant "offstage information." This high-end teahouse setting is enhanced by intricate floral paintings and poetry, highlighting the literati's pursuit of "elegance." Observing the attire and demeanor of the all-male audience, mostly in elaborately embroidered waistcoats, reveals their social status. The teacups on tables, the audience's rapt attention, and stage details make these records invaluable for compiling Chinese music history.

When modern viewers gaze at this vivid musical scene in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it feels as though they are transported to that culturally rich, upscale teahouse in Tianjin. The delicate floral paintings and poetry-laden walls create an elegant atmosphere. Male patrons, either sitting upright or reclining, exhibit their appreciation for music and reverence for culture through their elaborate attire and attentive expressions. As the music ebbs and flows, the soft clinking of teacups accompanies the melodious tunes, immersing the audience in a serene and sophisticated world of art. Every detail, from the storied old teacups to the nuanced musical performances, brings the era's musical journey to life. This vivid depiction prompts curiosity about the music they listened to—the melodies, scales, notations, timbres, and the stories told through the tunes—making the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* a living record of Chinese music history.

1.2.2 Elusive Thieves

¹²⁷ Image sourced from "Chinese Quyi Annals: Beijing Volume," China Quyi Annals National Committee. (1999). "Chinese Quyi Annals: Beijing Volume." China ISBN Center. pp. 112.

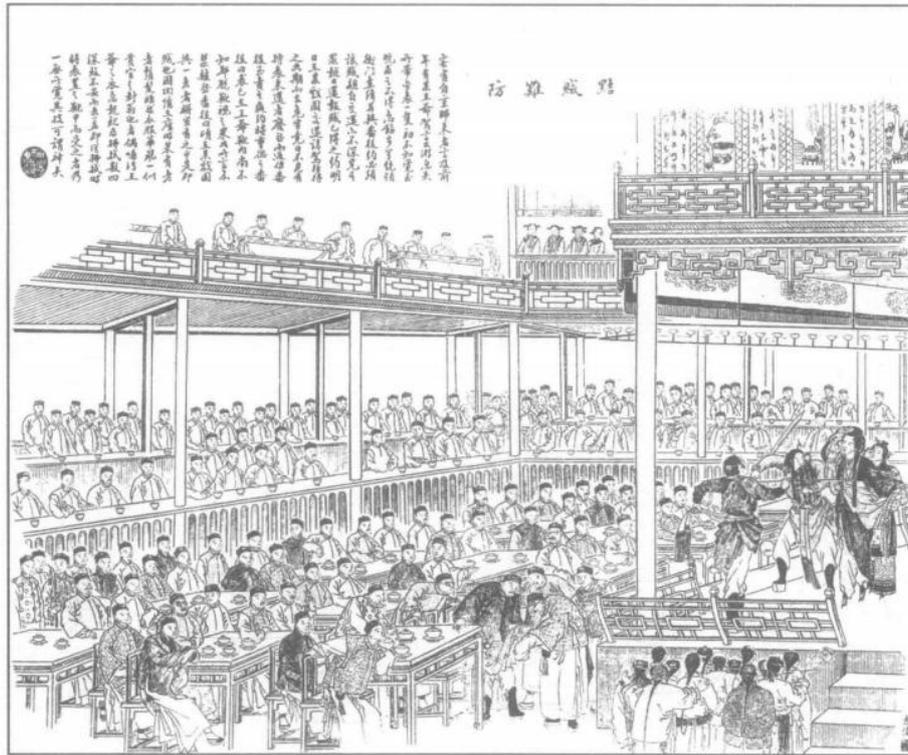


Figure 1-10 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Xu Collection, pp.58, 1890¹²⁸

This illustration depicts a bustling scene in a theatre, showcasing people from various social strata gathering to watch a Peking opera performance. The audience is divided into different seating areas, with upper-class women in Manchu headdresses possibly being royal consorts. The venue is complex, with multi-tiered seating, and the audience is engrossed in the performance. The focus of the accompanying story is not the stage performance but an offstage incident involving the theft of a prince's gold watch. After discovering the theft, the prince ordered a search, promising no consequences if the watch was returned. Although the thief did not return the watch at the theatre, they cleverly slipped it back into the prince's boot, allowing him to find it "magically" upon leaving. This story highlights a skilled pickpocketing incident in an ancient Chinese theatre.

The illustration and its story provide a window into public entertainment and social interactions in historical China, another precious aspect of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In fact, such pictorials were more numerous than those specifically focusing on musical activities. Major's primary intention was to enhance the appeal of the news with cultural content to better serve the growing readership in China. It was not a medium dedicated to disseminating "Chinese music." Therefore, for music historians, finding a structured framework like Wang Guangqi's "Musical Temperament-Scale-Notation-Instrument" within these illustrations is nearly impossible.

However, as Alan P. Merriam emphasises in *Anthropology of Music*, "Music, as a cultural

¹²⁸ The original title: 黠贼难防《点石斋画报》戊集

behaviour, is a product of human society" .¹²⁹ While the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* lacks a detailed "zoom in" on specific aspects of late Qing music history, it provides a "zoom out" perspective, showcasing how music intertwined with social life. These scenes vividly reveal that music is more than an arrangement of notes; it is a part of social activities, reflecting individual and collective identities. Although the pictorials do not delve deeply into the specifics of musical practice, the visual materials profoundly demonstrate how music was closely linked to the social life of the people in late Qing China. Bruno Nettl's observation that "the ubiquity of music in society makes it essential for understanding culture"¹³⁰ further underscores the social nature of music and its central role in cultural understanding. For example, the theatre scene conceals substantial background information; since the narrative does not specify the performance, it leaves room for imagination. Analysing the four-tiered seating arrangement also reveals much about the social background. All in all, the reports in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* provide a macro perspective for studying how music functioned in social interactions and cultural expressions during the late Qing Dynasty by depicting its role in public entertainment and daily social activities.

Combining these "zoom out" perspectives with the detailed "zoom in" descriptions from the numerous excellent musicological works on Chinese music history can form a more comprehensive and vivid account of late Qing music history. This approach can present both the artistic dimension of music and its active influence in society. Here, music evolves beyond a simple blend of melody, rhythm, instruments, and dance to emerge as a dynamic social and historical force, deeply resonating and inviting profound reflection and appreciation. In subsequent exhibitions, more pictorials of this category will be encountered.

1.2.3 Following Qu Yuan

¹²⁹ Merriam, A. P. (1969). Ethnomusicology revisited. *Ethnomusicology*, pp. 213-229.

¹³⁰ Nettl, B. (2005). *The study of ethnomusicology: Thirty-one issues and concepts*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 125.

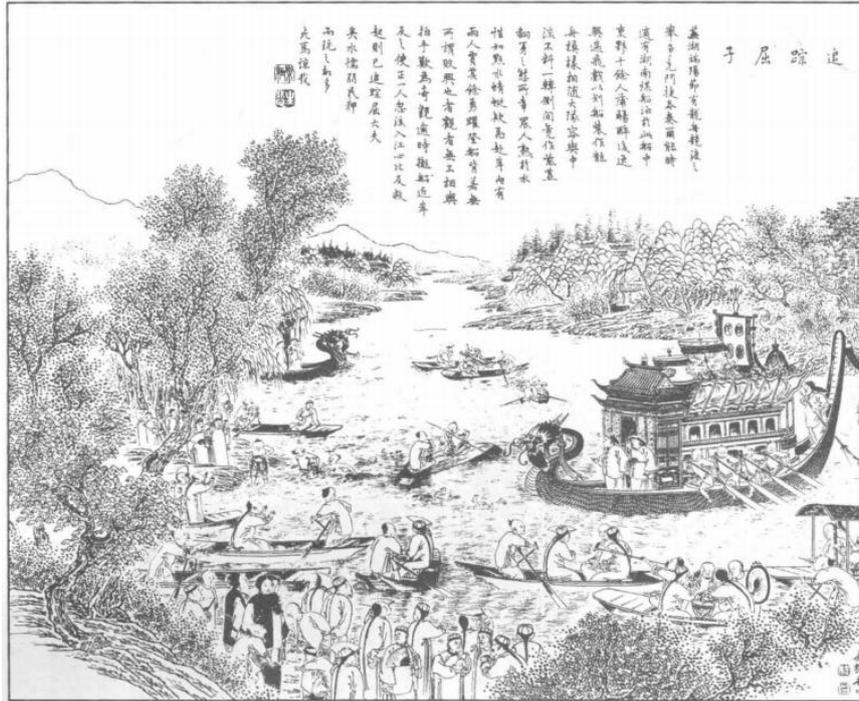


Figure 1-12 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Zi Collection*, pp.70, 1887¹³¹

This illustration depicts a dragon boat racing scene during the Duan-wu Festival in Wuhu, Anhui, in 1887, showcasing the lively boat race and the gathering of spectators along the riverbank. The Duanwu Festival (known as Dragon Boat Festival) commemorates the patriotic poet and statesman Qu Yuan, with traditions dating back to 278 BCE during the Warring States period in the State of Chu. On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Qu Yuan drowned himself in the Miluo River, and people began holding various activities to honour him. Dragon boat racing originated from the Chu people's desire to scare away fish and protect Qu Yuan's body. Similarly, to prevent fish from eating his body, people threw zongzi (rice dumplings) into the river, evolving into the custom of eating zongzi. The accompanying text describes an incident during the Duanwu Festival, where a drunken sailor mimicking the dragon boat race accidentally fell into the water and drowned, sparking a social news story. The report mockingly states that the sailor "followed in the footsteps of Lord Qu," implying he "imitated" Qu Yuan's suicide, serving as a warning to other sailors about the dangers of such reckless behaviour.

Due to the festival's long history, the music played during dragon boat activities varies by region. In Anhui, the traditional music played during the Duanwu Festival has distinct regional characteristics. Wuhu, mentioned in the text, often features "Jiangbei Dragon Boat Ballads" during the festival, with beautiful melodies and heartfelt lyrics expressing anticipation for the race and love for the homeland, still sung today. The music during dragon boat rowing is not just for entertainment but also serves as an accompaniment to the labour. It typically involves a lead singer with a strong voice, accompanied by the chorus, creating a unique labour chant. The illustration shows two accompaniment boats, one with five

¹³¹ The original title: 追踪屈子《点石斋画报》子集

musicians playing gongs, drums, small cymbals, long horns, and sheng. This is a typical rural "Wind and Percussion band" combination. The music's rhythm synchronises with the rowing, coordinating the team's movements. Next to the rightmost boat, partially visible, is a person playing the erhu. If the first boat provides rhythm, the second one offers melody. On Duanwu Festival, singing, and beating gongs and drums, people celebrate the festival, with music bridging the human, nature, and ancestral spirits, creating a festive atmosphere. This traditional continuity makes the pictorial a rare example where one can almost imagine the soundscape, as today's Chinese people still maintain the same music and cultural spirit despite changes in time, attire, and technology.

1.2.4 Splendid Views of the Imperial Capital



Figure 1-14 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Jia Collection, pp.49-50, 1884¹³²

The last pictorial of the rural series, "Scenic Views of the Imperial City," is a two-panel illustration from the first issue of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in 1884, reflecting its early style. The left panel shows a broader scene, while the right focuses on a pavilion. These illustrations depict activities around the Nanding Goddess Temple on the outskirts of Beijing. The left panel shows people walking on a bridge, enjoying riverside scenery, washing clothes, and children playing in the water. The right panel depicts a bustling scene with worshippers entering and exiting the temple, and vendors attracting numerous visitors. The soundscape centres on the pavilion in the lower left, where people are seated at four tables enjoying tea and snacks. Among them are young men and women, including some female performers brought by wealthy young men to entertain with music. The music, along with the sounds of socialising, creates a joyful and harmonious atmosphere. Those who do not drink tea beside a spring or fish by the stream, enjoying a more peaceful leisure activity. The stream below the pavilion is shallow, with naked children frolicking in the water, adding to the cheerful environment.

To historians, 1884 China was tumultuous. Politically, Emperor Guangxu was an ambitious ruler with reformist intentions, but he was never able to escape the control of Empress Dowager Cixi. Militarily, the Qing army's corruption and technological backwardness

¹³² The original title: 帝城盛景《点石斋画报》甲集

rendered them ineffective against foreign adversaries, leading to continuous defeats. Economically, due to wars and peasant uprisings, the Qing Dynasty's finances were in dire straits. At this time, China was viewed as a nation beset by internal and external crises, with an air of imperial decay and ruin. However, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* consistently offered a micro perspective, reminding people that despite political turmoil and economic hardship, the Chinese still sought their own peaceful lives, finding solace in cultural and traditional activities. By depicting these details, the pictorial emphasised the importance of cultural identity during social change and symbolised the people's unwavering pursuit of a better life amidst adversity.

1.3 Musical Activities of the Qing Imperial Court

Musical activities of the royal family and nobility represent a distinctive category in the pictorials, notable for their unique spatial context and for being featured exclusively during the first two years of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s publication, from 1884 to 1885. A review of the 15 years of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* shows that after initially attempting to cover this subject, the pictorial soon abandoned its focus on the royal family, or more precisely, stopped "glorifying" the royals. To understand this shift, one must consider the developmental history of *Shenbao* 申報, the parent newspaper of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Rudolf G. Wagner, in multiple articles, has argued that the strategies of a few British merchants in China, exemplified by Ernest Major, were influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, especially its concepts of "improvement" and "progress" in the public sphere. This philosophy led Major to adopt an editorial policy aimed at fostering long-term intellectual emancipation and progress in Chinese society.

At the same time, Major was unwilling to bow to any regime for profit, whether it was the Qing dynasty or the British monarchy. In *The Role of the Foreign Community in the Chinese Public Sphere*, Wagner mentions that an 1872 issue of *Shenbao* used a disrespectful term for the British Queen and that the newspaper occasionally published content detrimental to British interests in China, often leading to difficulties with the British consulate. For example, when Major sought assistance from the consulate for their official duties, the consulate refused to help him recover debts from inland distributors.¹³³ Despite these adversities, Major steadfastly maintained *Shenbao*'s independence, refusing to serve British interests. Similarly, in *The Shenbao in Crisis*, Wagner notes that due to some articles published in *Shenbao* that displeased Qing officials both in Shanghai and nationwide, the British consulate not only refused to assist him but also suggested that Chinese officials sue Major for libel in the consular court.¹³⁴ Through diplomatic mediation, Major eventually reached a compromise, successfully resolving the crisis and ensuring *Shenbao*'s long-term survival and development.¹³⁵

¹³³ Wagner, R. G. (2005). The role of the foreign community in the Chinese public sphere. *The China Quarterly*, 181, 78-96

¹³⁴ Wagner, R. G. (1995). The *Shenbao* in crisis: The international environment and the conflict between Guo Songtao and the *Shenbao*. *Late Imperial China*, 16(1), 107-158

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Shenbao sustained its existence and achieved success through its rapid, reliable dissemination of information and its influence in China's political, economic, and literary realms. Wagner argues that Major played a crucial role in the modernisation of the Chinese public sphere. He utilised the newspaper to facilitate the swift spread of information and public discourse, promoting reform and progress within Chinese society. Moreover, Major positioned *Shenbao* as a commercial newspaper, enabling it to avoid being seen as a foreign propaganda tool and thereby achieving greater acceptance and influence among Chinese readers. Thus, when reflecting on the content regarding “musical activities of the Qing imperial family and nobility” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it is clear that a "new media" with a mission to propagate modern ideas was fundamentally incompatible and contradictory with the "old order" of feudal imperial extravagance. The numerous pictorials related to the Qing royal family that appeared during these two years might have resulted from *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* submission process, where Major accepted submissions from Chinese artists and printed those he found satisfactory.¹³⁶ Consequently, it can be speculated that from the last royal content issue in 1885, Major may have deliberately avoided allowing artists to submit such content or declined to accept these submissions.

1.3.1 Prosperous Singing and Dancing

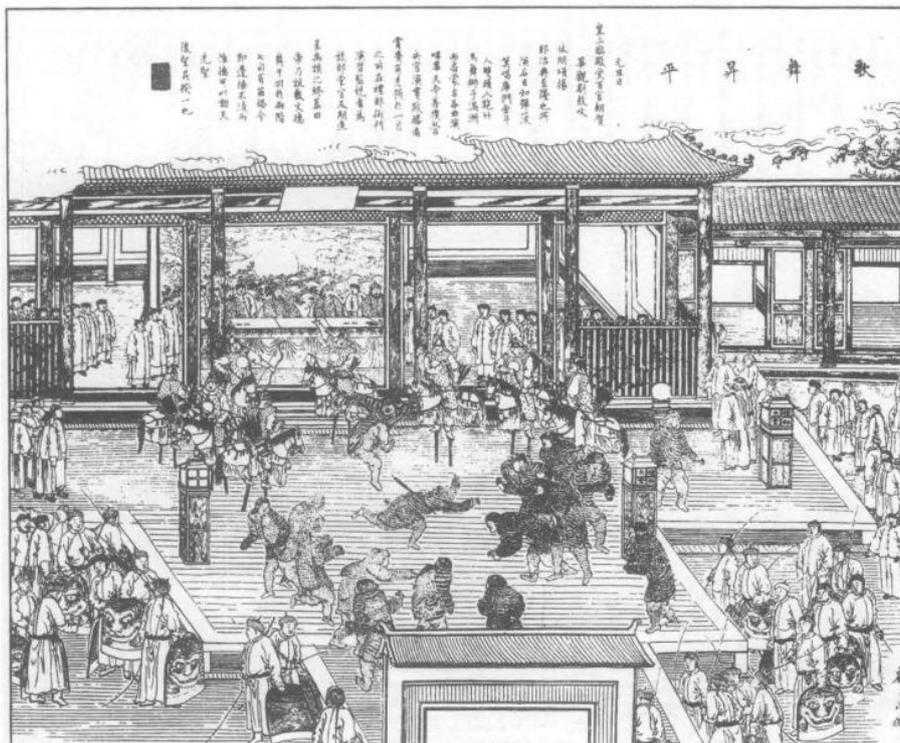


Figure 1-14 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Bing Collection, pp.87, 1885¹³⁷

The 1885 edition of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* featured an illustration titled “Prosperous Singing

¹³⁶ Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press. pp. 126

¹³⁷ The original title: 歌舞升平 《点石斋画报》丙集

and Dancing,” portraying the New Year’s celebration within the Qing court. The accompanying text explains the celebrations that occurred after the emperor received the officials’ homage in the palace on New Year’s Day. The illustration depicts a variety of performance forms, including gold jugglers 金斗人, “two-headed” performers 双头人, bamboo horse races 跑竹马, and lion dances 舞狮子, showcasing the richness and sophistication of Qing court entertainment. On the central stage, performers from various regions take turns, including Han actors and participants from Manchu and Mongolian minorities, highlighting the cultural integration and coexistence of multiple ethnic groups in the Qing dynasty. The lower section and the periphery of the illustration are filled with numerous spectators, including officials, soldiers, and common people, creating a lively scene that illustrates the grand scale and wide participation in the celebration. This pictorial not only depicts the grandeur of the court celebrations but also conveys the Qing emperor’s political intent to solidify his rule and promote civil and military achievements through grand ceremonies.

What most highlights "political correctness" in this context is the title of the pictorial: “Prosperous Singing and Dancing.” This idiom literally means using the atmosphere of people singing and dancing to metaphorically indicate social stability, economic prosperity, national peace, and the people's well-being. In conjunction with the illustration, it additionally conveys the idea of people celebrating together during festive or joyous occasions. However, in different contexts, this term also carries a layer of irony, suggesting that the apparent prosperity and stability might hide underlying conflicts and issues, with singing and dancing used to disguise the true state of affairs. This meaning is often employed to criticise governments or social organisations for masking problems and creating a facade of false prosperity. On New Year’s Day in 1885, China and France were in the midst of intense battles, which ultimately resulted in China’s defeat and the signing of the Sino-French Treaty on June 9. In the ensuing years, defeats, territorial concessions, and indemnities continued to plague the vast empire centred on the Forbidden City like an ominous spectre.

1.3.2 Empress Dowager Cixi and Emperor Guangxu’ s birthday

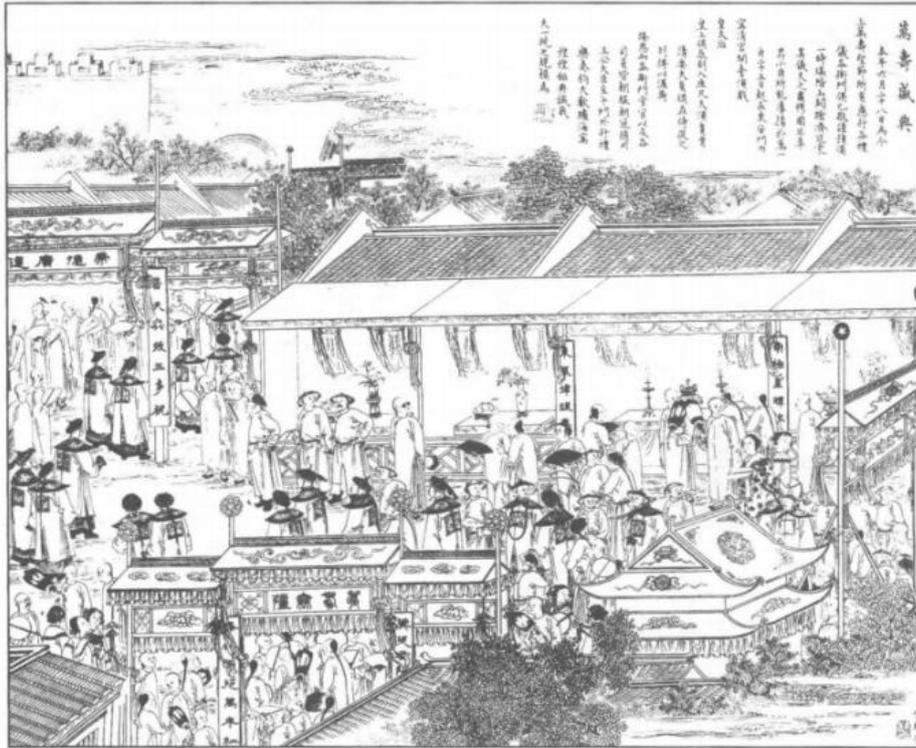


Figure 1-15 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Bing Collection*, pp.2, 1884¹³⁸

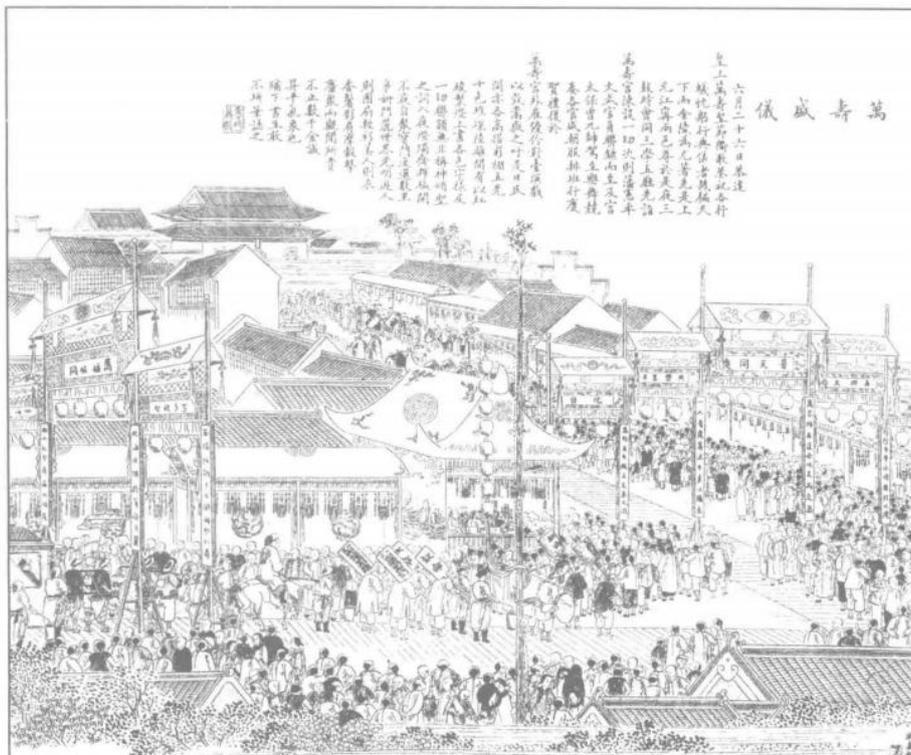


Figure 1-?: *Dianshizhai Pictorial You Collection*, pp.81, 1890¹³⁹

¹³⁸ The original title: 万寿盛典 《点石斋画报》丙集

¹³⁹ The original title: 万寿盛仪 《点石斋画报》酉集

The two pictorials above provide a clear contrast. The first and second illustrations respectively depict the grand celebration of Empress Dowager Cixi's sixtieth birthday in the imperial palace in 1884 and the festive activities in Nanjing in 1890 to celebrate Emperor Guangxu's birthday. The 1890 pictorial does not contradict the assertion that Major avoided glorifying the royal family after 1885; rather, it confirms this view, further highlighting his unwavering editorial principle of serving the broad Chinese readership rather than a select few elites. By comparing the visuals, textual content, and historical backgrounds of the two images, one can gain a profound understanding of the complexities of power dynamics at play.

The first pictorial, "The Grand Celebration," portrays the scene of Empress Dowager Cixi's sixtieth birthday festivities. The image features magnificent architecture and elaborate decorations, with numerous nobles and high-ranking officials in ornate Qing ceremonial robes entering the palace to offer their congratulations, creating a dignified and majestic atmosphere. Through such grand celebrations within the palace, Cixi continually reinforced her authority and power, asserting her leading role in the court and the royal family. The noblewomen and princesses offering their blessings signify their submission to Empress Dowager Cixi's authority. This type of celebration amplifies the symbolic meaning of feudal imperial power, embodying the "old order" previously discussed.

In comparison, another pictorial shows the celebrations of Emperor Guangxu's Wanshou Festival 万寿节. "Wanshou," meaning "longevity," signifies good wishes for the Emperor's long life and reflects a long-standing tradition of venerating the Emperor's birthday as a festival with deep ritual significance. The notion of the Emperor as the "Son of Heaven" is rooted in ancient Chinese political theology and social institutions. The term "Son of Heaven" first appeared in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and was widely adopted during the Zhou Dynasty, symbolising the Emperor as Heaven's intermediary, charged with maintaining cosmic order and governing the realm. This title, closely tied to the Mandate of Heaven, granted the Emperor a sacred and inviolable authority. However, in the Qing Dynasty of 1890, although Emperor Guangxu was the nominal ruler, real power was wielded by Empress Dowager Cixi. The "Wanshou Shengyi" (1890) highlighted the extensive public participation and celebratory atmosphere. In contrast to the 1884 "Wanshou Shengdian," which centred on palace festivities, the 1890 celebrations depicted the bustling scenes across the city, especially in Jinling (present-day Nanjing). On the day of the Wanshou Festival, Jinling's residents erected colourful pavilions, and the city was brilliantly illuminated, creating a lively and sleepless city. People sang, performed, and celebrated in the streets, adding to the festive ambience. Compared to the aristocratic palace rituals, the public celebrations were more diverse and vibrant. The pictorial featured scenes of celebration in Nanjing rather than Beijing, implying Emperor Guangxu's political vulnerability. The bustling scenes and festive atmosphere in Nanjing showcased local prosperity rather than central authority. This depiction of celebratory scenes reflected the Qing Dynasty's attempt to create an illusion of social stability and prosperity through local festivities, masking the Emperor's declining power.

Since 1885, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, a "new media" outlet with the mission of promoting

modernity, has increasingly directed its attention towards content that serves the broader public. The depiction of celebrations in Nanjing, as opposed to the imperial palace in Beijing, was intended to emphasise local prosperity and public festivities, thereby downplaying the representation of imperial authority. These two images not only illuminate the intricate power relations of the late Qing Dynasty but also exemplify the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* distinctive editorial approach in spreading modern ideas and serving the general readership.

1.4 Overseas Music News Imaginations

The category of "Overseas Music News Imaginations" in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* will be thoroughly examined in Chapter Three. In this section, I will summarise some representative examples from the pictorial to showcase the unique perspectives of its creators on cultural exchange, music dissemination, and social imagination of the time. These examples illustrate how the news pictorials of the era reflected the global music scene and provide a glimpse into the late Qing Dynasty's reception and response to foreign cultures.

This section highlights images from East Asian/Southeast Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Burma, as well as anecdotes from the United States and France. A clear pattern can be observed: the musical scenes in reports from East Asian/Southeast Asian countries are more realistic, while those from the Western world—an area quite alien and distant from Chinese culture—are often riddled with errors. For instance, an piano is depicted without black keys etc. The main reason for this is that the illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* were Chinese artists who submitted their works and were limited by their own understanding. Thus, converting text-based news (some of which were oral anecdotes, others published in *Shenbao*) into images was a considerable challenge to their knowledge of foreign cultures. Wagner hypothesises that these artists were not employees of *Dianshizhai* but continued to produce artworks for other clients and the general market. Major detailed the illustrators' fees in *Shenbao* on June 4, 1884, with each illustration paying two yuan.¹⁴⁰ From then on, the artists' names appeared on each illustration, and the number of contributors increased rapidly.

1.4.1 Exotic Customs of Japan

¹⁴⁰ Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press. pp. 137. Wagner points out that this was the first recorded instance in China of offering payment for newspaper contributions through advertisements.



Figure 1-17 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Shi Collection*, pp.64, 1892¹⁴¹

This pictorial illustrates a local custom on Laozhou Island 劳州島, Japan, where the phenomenon of male chauvinism is notably severe. The scene depicts several men in a brothel, accompanied by geishas, drinking and reveling, while the women nearby appear very obedient. The accompanying text describes the area's unique custom: once men reach adulthood, regardless of marital status, they often become engrossed in brothels and stay there. If these men are married, their wives, upon learning of their location, must personally prepare millet meat soup and take it to the brothel as a sign of not daring to show jealousy. The husbands then continue their revelry with the prostitutes, singing and drinking, paying no attention to their wives who are present. The pictorial shows a Japanese woman playing the shamisen, with the overall playing technique, posture, and the plectrum in her right hand depicted with considerable accuracy.

1.4.2 Korean Singing Customs

¹⁴¹ The original title: 东瀛异俗《点石斋画报》石集



Figure 1-18 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Xin Collection*, pp.20, 1886¹⁴²

The 1886 pictorial "Great Abundance of Folk Songs" illustrates scenes of Korean folk music and dance performances. The image depicts a group of Korean people celebrating a bountiful harvest. The celebration includes group music performances, with five individuals playing traditional wind instruments such as the sheng, xiao, guan, and flute, gathered on the ground in a flat area. Another individual, dressed in everyday attire, is dancing nearby, similar to the "tiao jia guan" 跳加官 in Chinese theatre, but without singing. The "tiao jia guan" originated during the Tang Dynasty and is a ritual dance performed at the beginning of theatrical shows, where the performer usually wears a mask, dresses in red or other colours, and holds banners with auspicious words, conveying congratulations and blessings to the audience through dance. The caption's concluding commentary states: "Music is an expression of joy, which comes naturally. When joy arises, it is impossible to suppress. Hence, those who experience joy will naturally stamp their feet and wave their hands." This scene reflects the influence and heritage of Chinese culture on Korean folk culture, while also emphasising the common tendency of people to find joy and express it through music and dance. The illustration vividly captures a segment of 19th-century Korean social and cultural life.

1.4.3 Renowned Dancer of Myanmar

¹⁴² The original title: 民歌大有 《点石斋画报》辛集



Figure 1-19 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Wu Collection, pp.41, 1889¹⁴³

This pictorial depicts the story of a famous Burmese courtesan named "Pearl," renowned for her exquisite dancing skills. In the image, Pearl is performing a dance surrounded by several musicians accompanying her, with an audience in the background enjoying her performance. The accompanying text describes the story's background: a Chinese traveller in Burma heard of a courtesan named Pearl, famous for her exceptional dancing, and the cost to watch her performance was as high as fifty gold coins. Pearl took the stage with graceful movements, dancing like a flower on the ground. Notably, this pictorial accurately captures the details of the characters' clothing decorations, the dancer's postures, and the depiction of musical instruments. Among the accompanying musicians on the right, two are playing the Saung-Gau, one of Burma's oldest string instruments, characterised by its elegant curved body and round resonating chamber, producing a crisp and pleasant sound. Another musician is playing the Pattala, a percussion instrument made of a series of wooden or metal bars with resonating boxes underneath, which the player strikes with small hammers to produce a clear and melodious sound. In the back row, one musician is possibly playing the Burmese flute Sein, while another plays a string instrument resembling a tambura. The text concludes with the author's commentary: although the instruments played by the musicians differ from Chinese instruments such as the zheng, pipa, yu, and zhu, the Chinese traveller felt that the melody of Burmese music had similarities to Chinese music.

1.4.4 Barmaid in a French Tavern

¹⁴³ The original title: 西剧二则《点石斋画报》午集



Figure 1-21 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Mao Collection, pp.16, 1888¹⁴⁴

This pictorial shares similar issues with the previous one. While the artist has depicted the basic shape of a piano, a closer look reveals that it lacks black keys. This pictorial illustrates a scene in a Western tavern where several female waitresses are attending to guests, creating a relaxed and joyful atmosphere. The author mentions that his inspiration for the painting came from reading about French barmaids in *Notes on Postal Travels* 《邮程笔记》. The book describes a traveller accompanying an ambassador abroad, temporarily staying in France, where a British friend led him to a tavern. In the tavern, there were three or five young women, around sixteen or seventeen years old, with delicate features, serving the guests. They would greet the guests, accompany them to their seats, and engage in lively conversation, creating an unrestrained atmosphere, as if in a paradise overseas. The accompanying text also references the ancient Chinese story of Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君, a beautiful woman who sold wine herself for her husband's sake, highlighting differing views on the roles of women in Eastern and Western cultures. The scene in the pictorial reflects the contemporary Chinese understanding and imagination of Western social customs, while also showcasing interesting contrasts and reflections in cultural exchanges.

This section is structured into four parts, each covering different geographical scopes of music news reports in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. The first part examines musical activities inside and outside the Shanghai concessions, emphasising the role of the concessions as the centre of cultural entertainment in Shanghai society, while also uncovering issues of racial segregation and class division within the concessions. The second part, from an “insider’s” music history perspective, seeks to demonstrate how the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* integrates scattered Ming and Qing music historical records into a vivid historical tableau, addressing the deficiency of

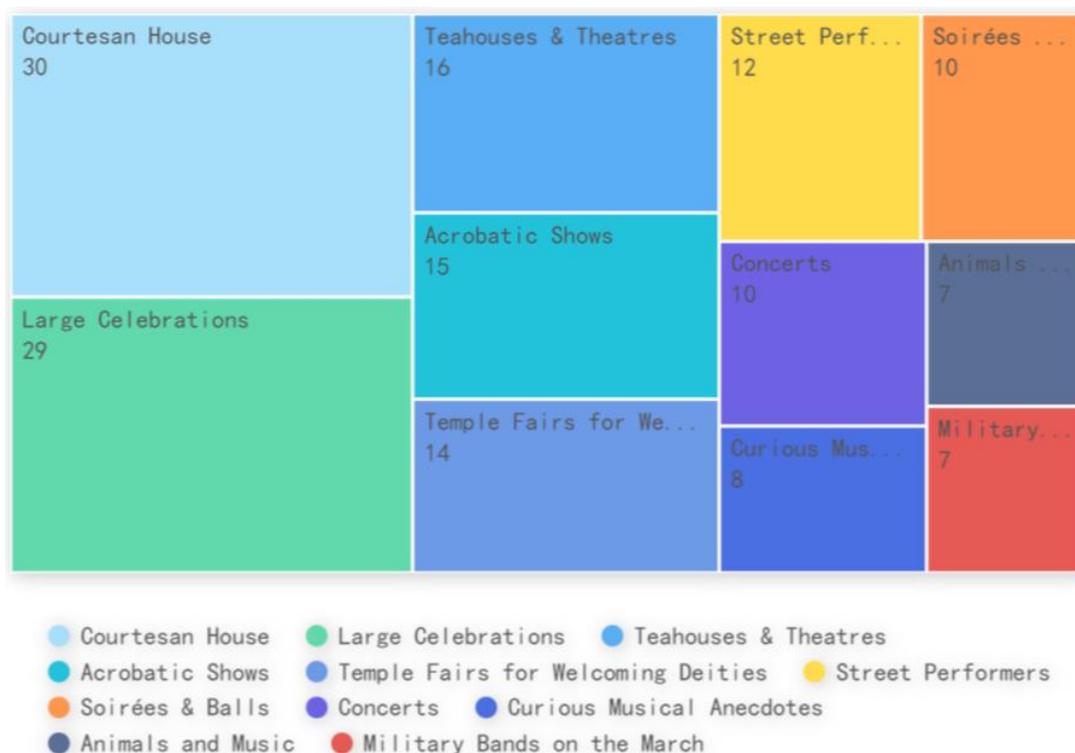
¹⁴⁴ The original title: 西妇当卢 《点石斋画报》卯集

visualised materials in traditional music history and presenting a comprehensive image of late Qing music history. The third part discusses the musical activities of the Qing imperial family and aristocracy, highlighting the power dynamics and political intrigues within the late Qing court. The final part explores the imagination of overseas music news, revealing the unique perspectives and cognitive constraints of the illustrators in cultural exchange and music dissemination through reports on music news from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Western world, reflecting the globalised music landscape and late Qing China's reactions to foreign cultures.

2. Classification of Different Musical Activity Scenarios

This section accentuates a more "museum-like" visual presentation, showcasing how the daily lives of the 19th-century Qing Empire's populace were intertwined with music as depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Based on the classification and statistical charts of different scenarios for music news in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it is clear that courtesan houses (30) and large-scale celebrations (29) are the two most prevalent categories of different scenarios. Tea houses and theatres (16), acrobatic performances (15), and temple fairs welcoming deities (14) also exhibit high application frequency, indicating the widespread presence of music in these everyday and entertainment contexts. In contrast, other categories, although less frequent in music scenarios, still demonstrate a rich and varied social and cultural life.

In the following section, I will provide a quick and concise summary of the core content of these pictorials **in one or two sentence**.



2.1 Teahouses & Theatres (16)



Figure 1-22 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Ren Collection, pp.102, 1887¹⁴⁵

In the Yeshilou Teahouse on Fourth Avenue within the Shanghai International Settlement, a Western courtesan performs Chinese erotic ballads.



Figure 1-23 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Li Collection, pp.53, 1894¹⁴⁶

The incident in the Pinyulou Story House on Fourth Avenue of the Shanghai British Settlement where a well-dressed customer was beaten for being unable to pay the exorbitant fee for song requests.

¹⁴⁵ The original tile: 西妓彈詞 《点石斋画报》 壬集

¹⁴⁶ The original tile: 当众出丑 《点石斋画报》 礼集



Figure 1-24 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Zhong Collection*, pp.52, 1896¹⁴⁷

During a performance, an actor abruptly lost his sanity. The theatre troupe members thought that this unusual event was due to neglecting to pay homage to the "Lao Lang God" before the show.

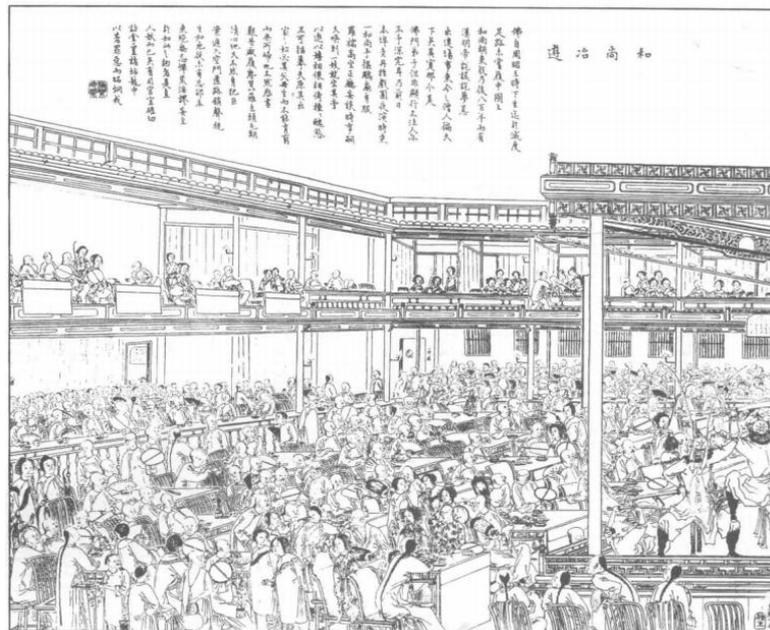


Figure 1-25 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yi Collection*, pp.24, 1884¹⁴⁸

In a theatrical performance, a monk, dressed in luxurious clothing, called for a prostitute and frolicked with her, displaying various forms of disgraceful behaviour. The author criticised such lascivious and shameless conduct of the monk, stating that officials should investigate and severely punish him to serve as a warning to others.

¹⁴⁷ The original tile: 演劇笑談《点石斋画报》忠集

¹⁴⁸ The original tile: 和尚冶游《点石斋画报》乙集

2.2 Large Celebrations (29)

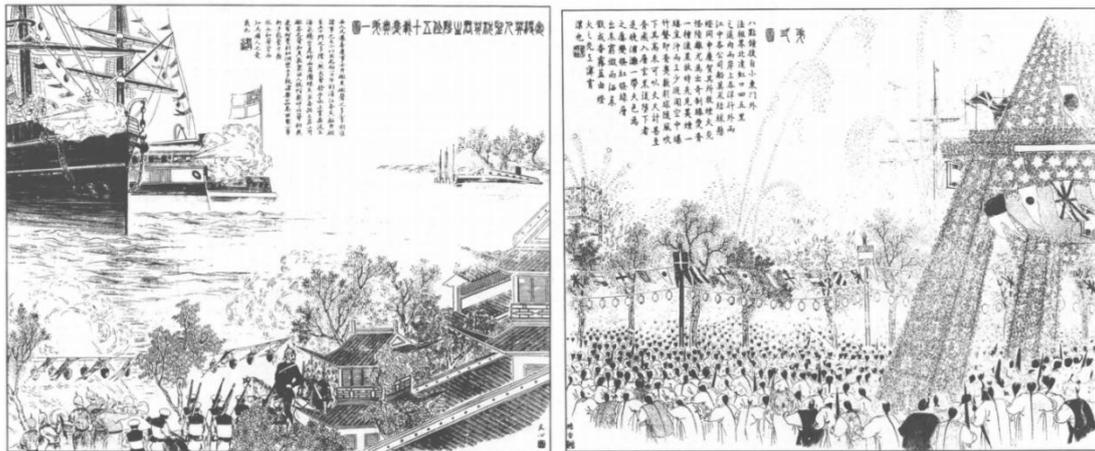


Figure 1-26 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Kui Collection, pp.92,94, 1887¹⁴⁹

At the celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the British troops stationed in Shanghai fired cannons in celebration. Numerous Westerners cheered, doffing their hats, while African musicians performed Western tunes, and everyone danced merrily to the music, showcasing a spirit of patriotism and festivity.

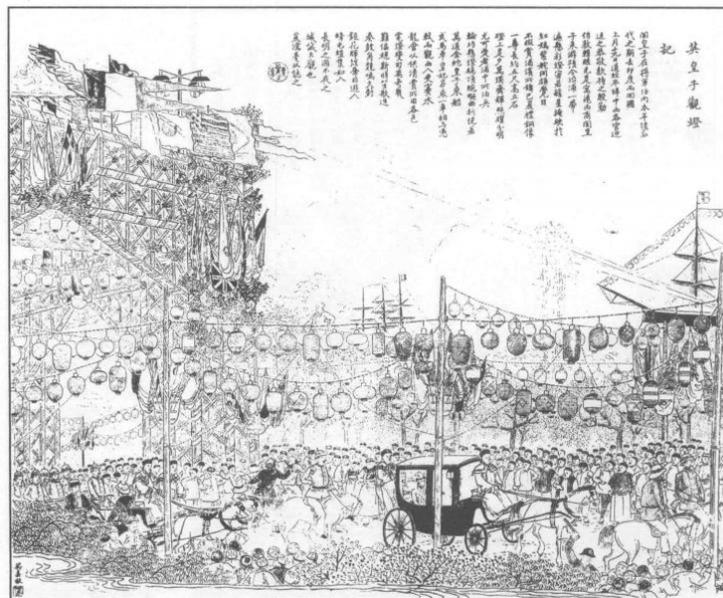


Figure 1-27 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Shen Collection, pp.44, 1890¹⁵⁰

While serving as a general, Prince Albert Edward¹⁵¹ was warmly received and hosted by Chinese and Western officials during his stop in Shanghai on his return journey. To welcome Prince Edward, the riverside area was decorated with numerous colourful lanterns, presenting a stunning view.

¹⁴⁹ The original title: 离沪英人望祝英维多利亚女王加冕五十载庆典(1)&(3)《点石斋画报》奎集

¹⁵⁰ The original title: 英王子观记《点石斋画报》申集

¹⁵¹ Prince Albert Edward, later King Edward VII, was the eldest son of Queen Victoria and reigned as the King of the United Kingdom from 1901 to 1910, known for modernising the British monarchy and his diplomatic influence in Europe.



Figure 1-28 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Mu Collection*, pp.65, 1893¹⁵²

The text depicts the magnificent lantern festival commemorating the 50th anniversary of Shanghai's port opening. The Bund and nearby streets were festooned with a variety of flags and paper lanterns, and the citizens also decorated their homes to signify the bond of Chinese and foreign friendships. On that day, Western merchant militias, along with British, German, and American troops, conducted drills at the racecourse to celebrate fifty years of commerce.



Figure 1-29 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Tu Collection*, pp.91, 1893¹⁵³

In honour of General Gordon's success in quelling the Taiping Rebellion, numerous Chinese dressed as Gordon and Western soldiers, mimicking foreign military attire, and organised a procession. Some individuals even dressed as Li Hongzhang, leading troops on an inspection and personally handing the victory report to an actor portraying the Viceroy of Liang jiang. Through

¹⁵² The original title: 赛灯盛会 2-3 《点石斋画报》木集

¹⁵³ The original title: 英将遗烈 《点石斋画报》土集

this form of reenactment, the Chinese conveyed their admiration and gratitude for Gordon and Li Hongzhang.

2.3 Animals and Music (7)

In ancient Chinese culture, the concept of animism is deeply ingrained in philosophy and literature, holding that animals can feel the beauty of music. For example, in the *Book of Songs*, the verse "The deer bellows as it feeds on wild apples; I have fine guests, playing zithers and flutes" (鹿鸣食野之苹，我有嘉宾，鼓瑟吹笙) uses the deer's call to liken the joy of guests gathering, demonstrating the ancient belief that animal sounds resonate with music. This belief that animals can appreciate music as humans do plays a significant role in ancient Chinese culture, impacting literature, philosophy, and art. The following illustrations carry on this idea and expand it in overseas imaginations.



Figure 1-30 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Zhu Collection, pp.86, 1892¹⁵⁴

In French Saigon, on a certain evening, a group of military musicians were performing when a deer, drawn by the music, came to listen and showed signs of being mesmerised. Despite being kicked by Westerners or chased by dogs, the deer remained, fully immersed in the music. When the performance concluded, the musicians returned the deer to its owner and narrated this unusual event.

¹⁵⁴ The original title: 野鹿知音 《点石斋画报》竹集



Figure 1-31 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Zhen Collection*, pp.87, 1898¹⁵⁵

A gentleman who was fond of music owned a dog that would appear every time it heard music, sitting before the musicians as if it were harmonising. Despite attempts to shoo it away, the dog remained. People referred to it as the "melody-loving dog."



Figure 1-33 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Li Collection*, pp.65, 1894¹⁵⁶

The illustration narrates a tale of a smart trained elephant in a Hong Kong circus. When the

¹⁵⁵ The original title: 知音犬《点石斋画报》贞集

¹⁵⁶ The original title: 象有孝思《点石斋画报》礼集

elephant saw the piano keys made from its mother's ivory, it became frightened and ran away. The author remarks that the feeling of filial piety is not unique to humans; animals also share these emotions.

2.4 Courtesan House (30)

In the late Qing and early Republican periods, frequenting courtesans (male leisure activity) was a prevalent form of entertainment with complex historical roots. Social and economic upheavals led many poor families to sell their daughters to brothels for financial survival. Additionally, the accelerated pace of urbanisation and the increase in urban commercial activities led to the emergence of entertainment venues like tea houses, taverns, and theatres. Courtesan houses, as part of these venues, provided places for male amusement. Especially within the foreign concessions, where regulations were lenient, courtesan houses faced little oversight. The concession authorities often tolerated or even encouraged the existence of brothels, allowing them to operate relatively freely and sometimes even protecting them from stringent Qing government crackdowns. Shanghai, being a hub of Chinese and foreign cultural exchange, saw its local culture influenced by foreign elements. The courtesan houses in the concessions, with their unique blend of services and cultural ambiance, contributed to the distinctive "Shanghai style culture"海派文化. Additionally, the variety of entertainment available in the concessions, including tea houses and dance halls, attracted a diverse clientele. Moreover, these courtesan houses served not only as venues for male entertainment but also as places for socialising and business negotiations, enhancing their prosperity. These establishments gathered individuals from different social classes, from wealthy businessmen to scholars and even lower-class people, creating complex social networks. The activities within these courtesan houses were often captured in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.



Figure 1-34 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Wen Collection, pp.25, 1896¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ The original title: 秦淮盛会 《点石斋画报》文集

The pictorial portrays a Nanjing merchant who specifically employs the premier Western-style lantern boat on the Qinhuai River to entertain Westerners with a lavish banquet.



Figure 1-35 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yin Collection*, pp.19, 1888¹⁵⁸

At a party, each guest was required to bring a courtesan dressed differently; otherwise, they would be penalised with a drink. As a result, courtesans appeared in various outfits, including men's clothing, Taoist nun attire, Western dresses, Hanfu, qipao, and kimonos. The atmosphere of the banquet was lively, and the guests were in high spirits.



Figure 1-36 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yin Collection*, pp.19, 1888¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ The original title: 花樣一新 《点石斋画报》 寅集

¹⁵⁹ The original title: 瞽姬度曲 《点石斋画报》 寅集

A blind courtesan from eastern Guangdong, proficient in music and dance, was widely adored. A rich young man named He fell in love with her and offered a hefty sum to buy her freedom, bringing her into his home. After a few years, the courtesan felt unsettled and yearned to play the pipa once more. In a fit of anger, He cast her out. She returned to the courtesan houses and resumed her old trade. Despite the fleeting nature of youth and the decline of her beauty, her singing retained a lasting appeal, evoking deep admiration.

2.5 Street Performers (12)



Figure 1-38 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Jia Collection, pp.16, 1884¹⁶⁰

A dwarf from a peasant family was brought to a temple in Wumen to perform, drawing a large crowd. After a few days, he made several hundred silver dollars and returned home rich.

¹⁶⁰ The original title: 小人得志 《点石斋画报》甲集



Figure 1-39 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Shu* Collection, pp.16, 1895¹⁶¹

Many women were delighted by the melodies sung by blind storytellers and regarded them as harmless, frequently inviting them to recite stories and sing. However, a scoundrel posing as a blind man infiltrated an official's residence with nefarious intentions, harbouring improper thoughts towards the official's daughter.



Figure 1-41 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Shu* Collection, pp.62, 1895¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ The original title: 手揮自送《点石斋画报》书集

¹⁶² The original title: 鼠子演戏《点石斋画报》书集

A conjurer from Shandong presented a distinctive performance. Employing a wooden frame with suspended rings and an array of props such as knives and spears, he had over ten large rats perform. These rats moved to the sound of a gong, staging plays like "Li Sanniang Fetching Water"(李三娘挑水) and "Monkey King Wreaks Havoc in Heaven" (孙悟空闹天宫), with very lifelike actions. They could even use their paws to grasp bamboo knives and wooden spears, twirling them skillfully. The audience was amazed by this show and admired the rats' nimbleness.

2.6 Soirées & Balls (10)



Figure 1-42 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Chou Collection, pp.91, 1887¹⁶³

A Chinese merchant, returned from Austria, shared an intriguing story. He had been invited by Western friends to a banquet, where a towering machine, about two zhang high (about 6 meters), made an appearance. This machine was decorated with numerous wheels, pulleys, and flowers, with the lower section encircled by glass cups. Several courtesans climbed the machine, turning the wheels to produce music box-like sounds. At the same time, a light rain sprinkled down into the cups below, eventually filling them with wine. The guests drank this "Meat Pagoda Wine" (肉宝塔酒), marvelling at its unique aroma and noting that it was a special hospitality reserved for distinguished guests.

¹⁶³ The original title: 肉宝塔酒《点石斋画报》丑集



Figure 1-43 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Shi* Collection, pp.106, 1892¹⁶⁴

The illustration depicts the prosperous family of a Fujian merchant doing business in Singapore, who has a total of eighteen children. This scene shows the celebration of the hundredth day banquet for the newborn.

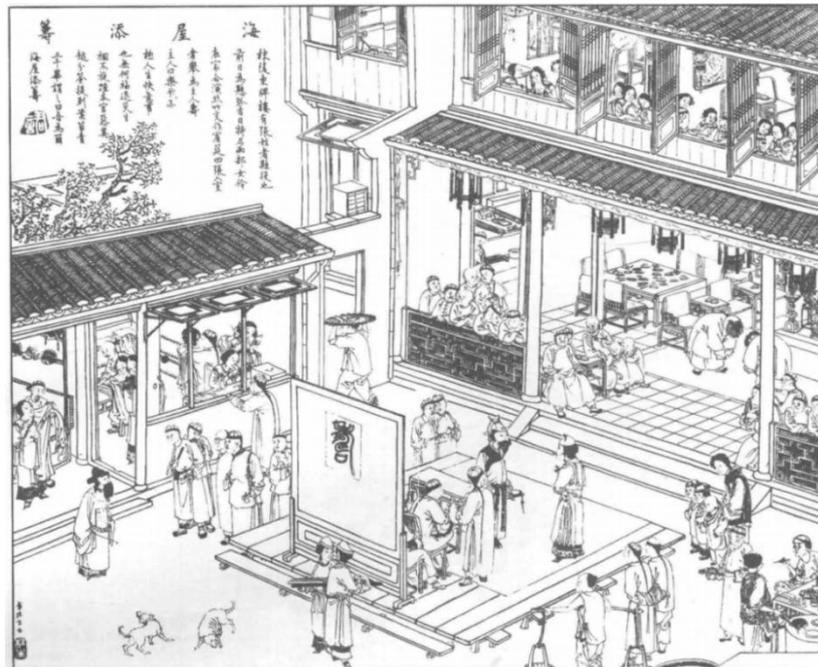


Figure 1-44 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Jia* Collection, pp.24, 1884¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ The original title: 蠡斯衍庆《点石斋画报》石集

¹⁶⁵ The original title: 海屋添筹《点石斋画报》甲集

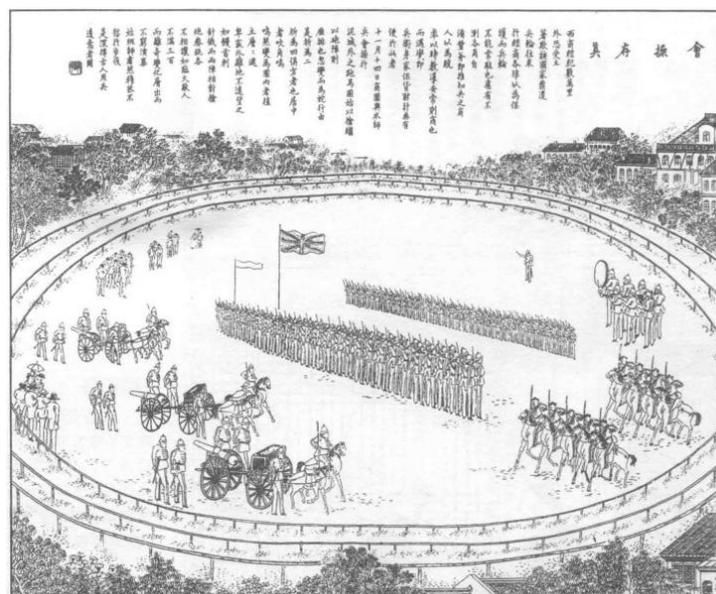
A county official, in celebration of his birthday, invited two troupes of female performers to his home for entertainment. The melodious music of strings and bamboo filled the air, and the hall was crowded with guests who came together to celebrate. However, his superior fined him three thousand silver dollars for holding such an extravagant event beyond his rank.

2.7 Military Bands on the March (7)



Figure 1-45 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yi Collection*, pp.53, 1884¹⁶⁶

The funeral for two German naval commanders. Over ten Western musicians led the procession, playing Western music as they went, followed by two glass carriages slowly carrying the coffins. Several naval officers in gold-embroidered uniforms and about two hundred sailors escorted the cortege.



¹⁶⁶ The original title: 入土为安《点石斋画报》乙集

Figure 1-47 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Ren Collection*, pp.20, 1887¹⁶⁷

Western Troops' Drilling Exercises in the Shanghai Concession.

2.8 Concerts (10)



Figure 1-48 *Dianshizhai Pictorial You Collection*, pp.13, 1890¹⁶⁸

Renowned pipa artist Zhou Junyong was invited to perform at the Shanghai Methodist Church. The event drew hundreds of attendees, including consuls and foreign merchants from various countries. The audience was mesmerised by Zhou's performance, responding with resounding applause and unanimous praise. Zhou's exceptional mastery of the pipa was evident, and his performance left everyone in awe.

¹⁶⁷ The original title: 会操存真《点石斋画报》壬集

¹⁶⁸ The original title: 琵琶雅集《点石斋画报》酉集

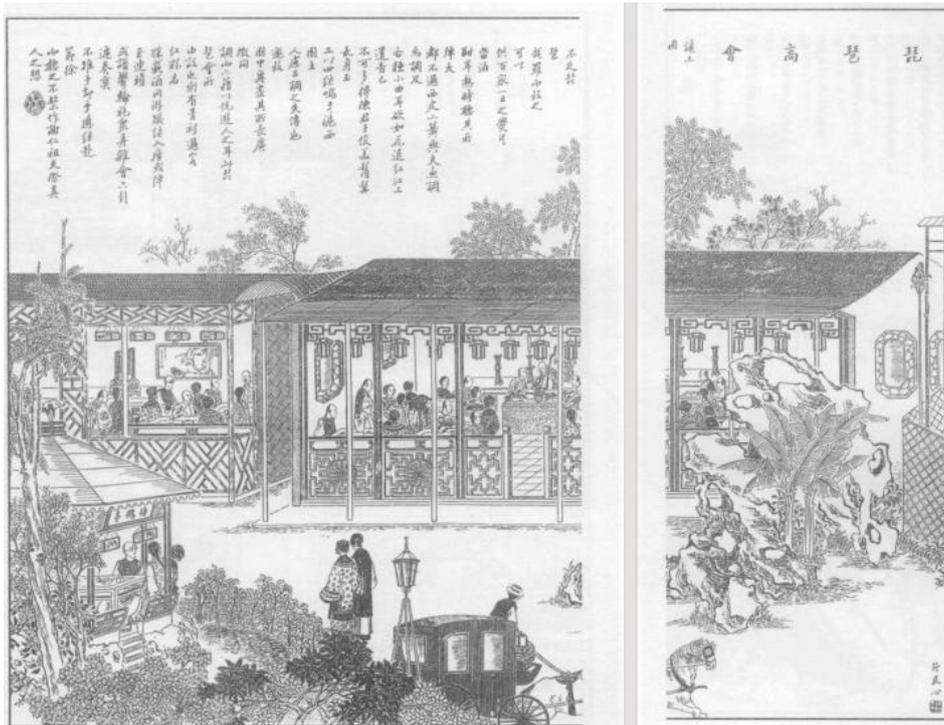


Figure 1-49 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yin Collection*, pp.66-67, 1888¹⁶⁹

The highly skilled pipa virtuoso Chen Junzijun was invited to perform at the Huxi Garden. The garden owner hoped to showcase Chen's talent through this pipa recital and attract visitors. Scholars in green robes and beautiful ladies in red brought wine and strolled together, enjoying live performances of pieces such as "Jade Chains" and "Yulun Robe." The ensemble played harmoniously, creating a spectacular and captivating scene.

2.9 Curious Musical Anecdotes (8)



¹⁶⁹ The original title: 琵琶高会《点石斋画报》寅集

Figure 1-51 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Shen Collection*, pp.46, 1888¹⁷⁰

The pictorial narrates the dream of a scholar who had frequently failed the imperial examinations in ancient China. These examinations determined who could enter the imperial bureaucracy and serve as officials. He dreamt of ascending a tall tower and finding out that he had become the top scholar (状元). Afterwards, a Taoist priest led him to a celestial paradise filled with fairy maidens playing music and dancing.



Figure 1-52 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Wen Collection*, pp.12, 1896¹⁷¹

In the Xijiang 西江 region, people are fond of performing "The Story of Yue Fei" 说岳全传 to extol the virtues of loyalty and righteousness. However, thunderstorms often occur whenever the scene of Yue Fei's murder is staged, leading to the deletion of this scene. In late autumn, when this play was performed again in Wanzai County, the weather became gloomy and torrential rain poured down as soon as the scene of Yue Fei's son's murder was enacted, astonishing the audience.

¹⁷⁰ The original title: 续南柯 2 《点石斋画报》申集

¹⁷¹ The original title: 武穆声灵 《点石斋画报》文集

2.10 Temple Fairs for Welcoming Deities (14)



Figure 1-54 *Dianshizhai Pictorial Chou Collection*, pp.5, 1888¹⁷²

While boating on Pengli Lake, a tourist noticed the mirror-like surface of the water and the rows of fishing boats. The sounds of flutes and drums filled the air with a melodious tune. An old fisherman informed him that this was the annual "Net Boat Festival" held from late autumn to early winter. During this festival, fishermen honour the ancient sages to express their gratitude and pray for blessings. Various kinds of fish are cooked and offered as sacrifices, and the fishermen bow deeply to signify their remembrance of the sages.



¹⁷² The original title: 渔师报赛《点石斋画报》丑集

Figure 1-55 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Xin Collection, pp.76, 1886¹⁷³

On the Double Ninth Festival, a Cantonese merchant living in Shanghai added a Western band to the traditional deity procession at the Tianhou Temple, alongside the usual sacrificial decorations. This imitation of Western practices, commonly seen in military parades, funerals, and horse races, was noted by the pictorial, which criticised the adoption of foreign customs as being contrary to traditional Confucian values and inappropriate for a learned and principled gentleman.

2.11 Acrobatic Shows (15)



Figure 1-56 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Bing Collection, pp.90, 1885¹⁷⁴

The pictorial described a magic show opposite the First Tea House on Fourth Avenue in the Shanghai International Settlement. An American had rented a house, displaying a sign at the entrance that read, "New Arrival: American Wildman, Head without Body, for Public Viewing." The exhibition hall was separated by railings, with a piano inside the enclosure. Positioned a yard above the piano was a human head, surrounded by red cloth with only a glass window for viewing. After the Westerner played a tune, he extended a candle towards the head, which was promptly blown out.

¹⁷³ The original title: 西乐迎神 《点石斋画报》 辛集

¹⁷⁴ The original title: 卖野人头 《点石斋画报》 丙集

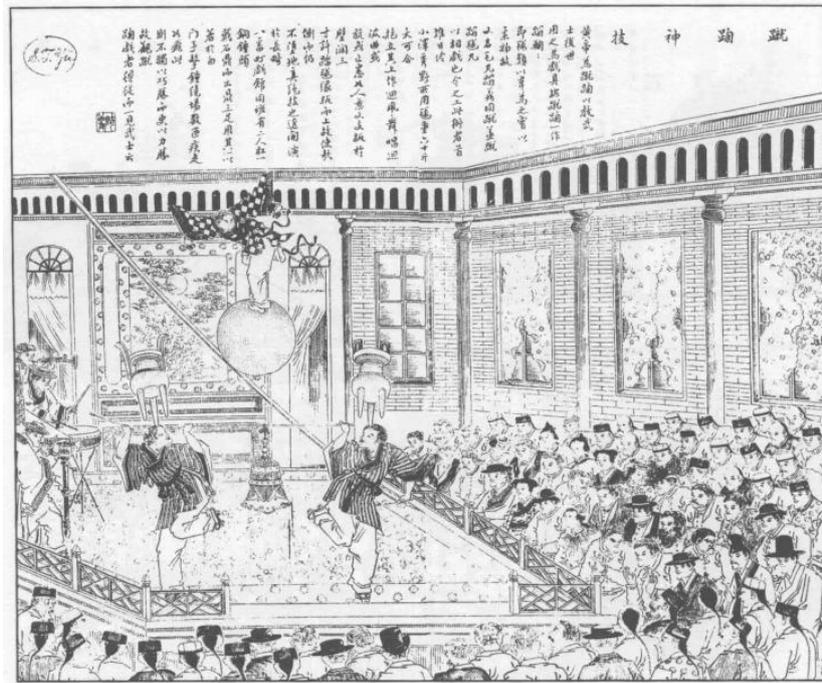


Figure 1-58 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Chou Collection, pp.62, 1887¹⁷⁵

The pictorial covered the performance of a Japanese acrobatic troupe. Ozawa Hideno performed using a large ball weighing sixty jin, dancing atop it. He also balanced the ball on a three-inch-wide support plank without falling, demonstrating his exceptional talent.

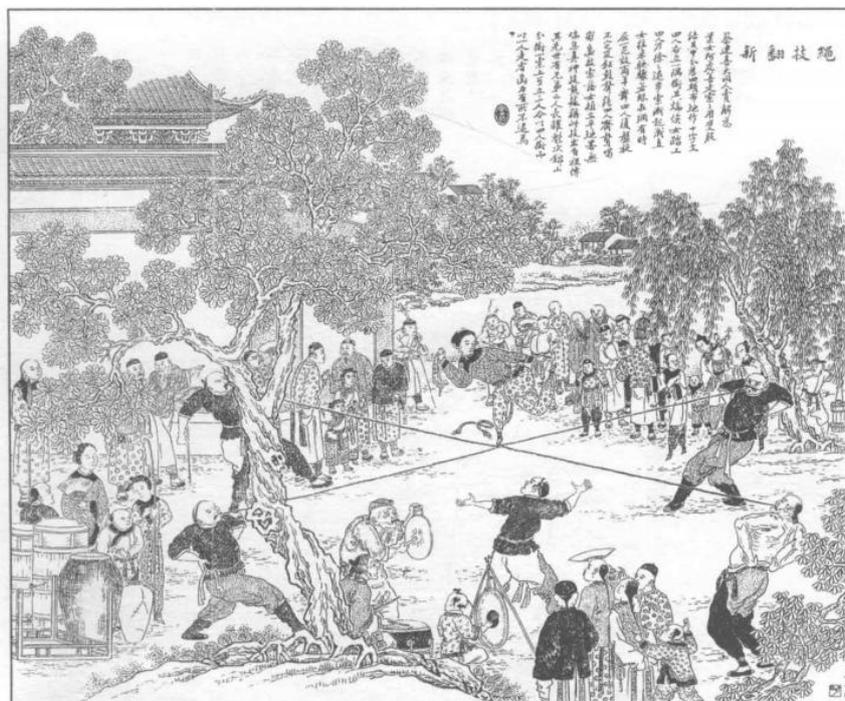


Figure 1-59 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Chen Collection, pp.73, 1888¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ The original title: 蹴鞠神技 《点石斋画报》丑集

¹⁷⁶ The original title: 绳技翻新 《点石斋画报》辰集

This portrays the Cai family's livelihood through performing arts. The daughter is skilled in tightrope walking and occasionally dances on the rope. The four members constantly rotate and shift positions, and when the gong and drum sounds cease, they all cheer together and lower the rope. The daughter stands firmly on the ground, showing no signs of fatigue.

To this end, this section offers a view into the musical entertainment life of 19th-century Qing Empire Chinese through the 11 categories of entertainment news pictorials in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. From courtesan houses to large festivals, teahouses and theatres, acrobatic performances, temple fairs, and street performers, the presence of music in these scenarios highlights its integration into daily entertainment and religious activities. The pictorials from concession areas also show the mingling influence of Western and Japanese colonisers, reflecting the semi-colonial society of late 19th-century China. This further emphasises the importance of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* as a historical resource, with its significance extending beyond visual, media, and public discussions. Additionally, the editor Ernest Major's goal of serving ordinary Chinese people with an emphasis on entertainment allows researchers to reconstruct history more thoroughly and gain deeper insights into the social conditions of that era.

Having briefly reviewed the variety of musical news pictorials in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in this chapter, the subsequent four chapters of this thesis will thoroughly examine the cultural revelations of Sino-Western encounters portrayed in the images from different perspectives.

Chapter Two

The Dual Soundscape of Music Scenes in the Dianshizhai Pictorial

This was a rhapsody to light, to modernity, style, display, and opulence. And what was there not to love in the self-styled 'model settlement', this neon-lit gateway to China? Shanghai was not only a city of wealth but a city unashamed of displaying wealth. It was a city in China, but with an orchestra playing soft music in an English-style garden on summer evenings, it hardly seemed to be a city of China, at least not the willow-pattern China of the British imagination, or the China which had developed before its opening to the West in the nineteenth century.

—Bickers, Robert. *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*.¹⁷⁷

The academic consensus holds that after 1840, China entered an era marked by a dual structure: the Western-influenced coastal cities (Coastal China) and the extensive inland rural areas (Inland China).¹⁷⁸ In some regions, urbanisation accentuated the disparity between the Westernised modern cities and the inland villages, gradually resulting in a "fractured" society.¹⁷⁹ Shanghai, the most representative among them, exemplified this duality everywhere: a dual economic system, dual sovereign administration, dual social structure, and dual cultural forms. However, "duality" in this context refers not only to a "binary opposition" but also to a barrier, a separation, and a power hierarchy where one force supersedes another. In this power hierarchy, foreign concessions became the principal means of Western imperial economic and political control in China.

In 1845, the British concession was established first, followed by the American concession in 1848 and the French concession in 1849. These concessions represented foreign power in China and served as entry points for Western capital, technology, and culture. Additionally, countries like Japan, Germany, and Russia held certain rights and influence within the Shanghai concessions. Despite not having their own concessions, they shared governance and economic benefits within the International Settlement. Moreover, the most significant impact came from the Public Settlement, created in 1863 by merging the British and American concessions. This Public Settlement surpassed other single-nation concessions in terms of area and population, and its governance model and economic activities were more varied and complex. Managed by the Shanghai Municipal Council, the Public Settlement developed an administrative system independent of the Qing government. This governance structure

¹⁷⁷ Bickers, R. (2003). *Empire Made me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*. Allen Lane. pp.49.

¹⁷⁸ Jiang Wenjun. (2011). *History of Modern Shanghai Employees' Life*. Shanghai Ci Shu Publishing House. pp.61

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

contributed to the modernisation of Shanghai, improving urban infrastructure, public health, and education. Simultaneously, it accentuated the power disparity between the Qing government and foreign powers — foreign powers exercised direct control over the concessions through extraterritoriality and consular jurisdiction, thereby superseding Chinese sovereignty.¹⁸⁰ This management approach fostered new social classes, such as foreign merchants, mixed comprador classes, and an emerging middle class, but it also intensified internal divisions within Chinese society.

As with many colonial tales, the governance of the International Settlement exhibited significant discrimination against the Chinese, heightening tensions and conflicts between the Chinese and foreign residents. The Shanghai Municipal Council's policies and measures often favoured foreign interests while ignoring or suppressing Chinese rights. One of the most infamous examples is the "No Dogs and Chinese Allowed" incident.¹⁸¹ This explicit racial discrimination policy not only aroused strong resentment among the Chinese but also caught the attention of the international community, causing significant agitation.¹⁸² The incident became a quintessential symbol of colonial oppression and racial discrimination, further deepening the divide between the Chinese and foreigners.

Moreover, the cultural exchange and conflict within and outside the concessions further intensified the binary cultural ecology of Shanghai. The concessions became centres for the dissemination of Western culture, heavily influencing education, journalism, entertainment, and leisure. The coexistence, clash, and integration of these modern cultural elements with traditional Chinese culture in Shanghai created a unique urban cultural landscape. What moments of this culturally complex binary social structure were captured through the lens of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*? More specifically, what different lifestyles of various social strata within the semi-colonial concession-dominated regions were documented, particularly in their musical and entertainment engagements? This chapter will further investigate the broader "soundscape" within the concessions as portrayed by the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, discussing how Western colonisers in Shanghai used "music" to make their power visible and how the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* visually elucidated the way "power" was heard.

1. Hearing Authority: The Beginning of Dual Soundscapes

The notion of soundscape was first proposed by Canadian composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer in the 1970s and thoroughly detailed in his book, "The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World" (1977). Schafer defined soundscape as "the sound environment of a specific location, including both natural and artificial sounds",¹⁸³ viewing it as a crucial tool for exploring the interactions between sound, environment, and human activity. In the 1980s and 1990s, ethnomusicologists began employing the soundscape

¹⁸⁰ Bickers, R. (1997). Ordering Shanghai. *English Historical Review*, 112.

¹⁸¹ Bickers, R. A., & Wasserstrom, J. N. (1995). Shanghai's "Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted" sign: legend, history and contemporary symbol. *The China Quarterly*, 142, 445.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Schafer, R. M. (1993). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Simon and Schuster. pp.39

concept to study the acoustic environments and musical practices of various cultures. Steven Feld, for instance, introduced the concept of "acoustemology" in his book "Sound and Sentiment" (1982) by examining the sound world of the Kaluli people in Papua New Guinea, investigating the connections between sound, emotion, social relations, and cultural meaning.¹⁸⁴ Feld's work underscored the significance of sound in cultural transmission and social interaction, laying a theoretical foundation for soundscape research in ethnomusicology. Michael Bull and Les Back's edited volume "The Auditory Culture Reader" (2003) gathered essential essays on soundscape and auditory culture, providing a multidisciplinary approach and theoretical framework for soundscape research. They argued that sound's cultural and social importance is as critical as its physical properties. The book elaborated on the concept of "auditory culture," exploring how auditory experiences can be utilised to understand and analyse culture—how people use sound to construct and perceive their world, and how sound shapes their identity and social interactions.¹⁸⁵ Bull and Back stressed the interdisciplinary nature of sound studies, covering sociology, anthropology, geography, media studies, architecture, and other disciplines, advocating that a comprehensive understanding of sound's complex roles in society and culture requires a multidisciplinary approach.¹⁸⁶

Soundscape research in iconography is inherently interdisciplinary. In visual art history, scholars have enhanced our understanding of historical events and cultural contexts by visually analysing "sound scenes." Nira Pancer, in her article "The Silencing of the World: Early Medieval Soundscapes and a New Aural Culture" (2017), investigates the soundscapes of the early Middle Ages and their role in developing a new auditory culture. Pancer explores how environmental sounds, religious ceremonies, and everyday sounds shaped the auditory culture of the time. She focuses on the impact of natural sounds (such as running water, wind, bird songs) and human activity sounds (such as blacksmithing, market noise) on medieval social life. She also examines how sounds from religious rituals (such as bells, chants, hymns) shaped religious experiences and collective memory.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, "Resounding Images: Medieval Intersections of Art, Music, and Sound," edited by Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly, compiles sixteen essential essays on the intersections of medieval art, music, and sound.¹⁸⁸ These essays explore, from a multidisciplinary perspective, the varied roles of sound as a cultural and social phenomenon in medieval society. The studies range from the representation of sound in the rise of naturalistic sculpture, to the regulation of sound in monastic and ecclesiastical contexts; from the symbolism of sound in religious conversion processes, to sound and embroidery in Byzantine rituals. Through the analysis of architecture, manuscripts, murals, and liturgical texts, scholars reveal the complex relationship between visual art and auditory experience, emphasising the significance of sound in religious, political, and daily life. These studies highlight the complementary relationship between

¹⁸⁴ Feld, S. (2012). *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Duke University Press. pp. 13.

¹⁸⁵ Bull, M., Back, L., & Howes, D. (Eds.). (2015). *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Bloomsbury Publishing. pp.16.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. pp.22

¹⁸⁷ Pancer, N. (2017). The silencing of the world: Early medieval soundscapes and a new aural culture. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales-English Edition*, 72(3), pp.421-423.

¹⁸⁸ Boynton, S., & Reilly, D. J. (Eds.). (2015). *Resounding Images: Medieval Intersections of Art, Music, and Sound*. Brepols Publishers. pp.12-15.

sound and image in the analysis of specific historical and cultural contexts and the critical role of sound in shaping social order and personal identity. This theoretical framework underpins the study of soundscapes within the concessions as depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

1.1 Dual Misalignment of Vision and Soundscape

In 1884, the sixth illustration in the first edition of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was titled "French Festivals." This news illustration ingeniously uses a misalignment narrative through text and visual images to reveal the complex dual social and cultural structure of Shanghai at the time. This disjunction is evident not only in the visual aspect but also in the soundscape.

The illustration "French Festivals" starts with a detailed caption describing the grand celebration of French National Day in the French Concession of Shanghai. At the beginning of the month, the French Municipal Police station decorated the area in front of the Great Self-Ringing Bell with multicoloured glass lanterns, creating a dazzling display. On the day of the celebration, numerous Westerners gathered in the hexagonal pavilion within the garden of the French Municipal Police station, engaging in **"dancing and singing wildly"** and **"enjoying themselves to the fullest."**¹⁸⁹ The caption also mentions many Western women in narrow-sleeved dresses with slim waists arriving in luxurious carriages to watch the festivities. To aid Chinese readers' understanding, the author thoughtfully includes a more "localised" metaphor in the final sentence, likening the scene of Western beauties arriving in droves to the lively scenes of noble women going for spring outings in the ancient city of Chang'an.¹⁹⁰

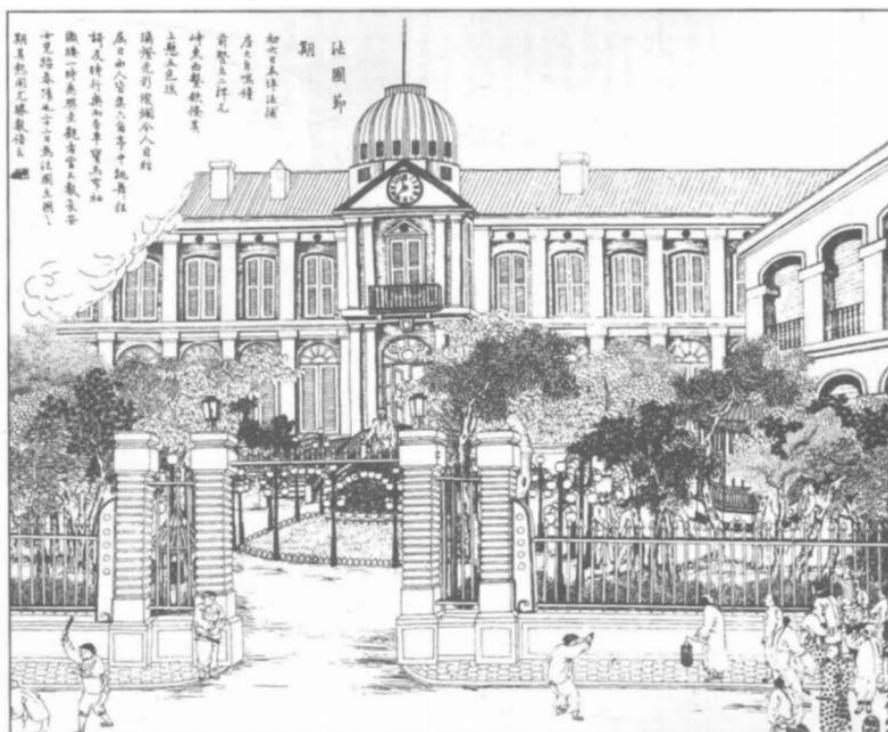


Figure 2-1. *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Jia Collection, pp.6, 1884¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ The original: “跳舞狂歌”，“及时行乐”。

¹⁹⁰ The original: “一时乘兴来观者，当不数长安女儿踏春阳也。”

¹⁹¹ The original title: 法国节期，《点石斋画报》，甲集

Compared to the harmonious and bustling scene depicted in the text, the illustration's content is starkly different. The main subject of the illustration is a grand and imposing Western-style building—the French Municipal Police. In front of the building, there appear to be some decorative lanterns arranged in a circle, and the garden in front of the building is lush with trees, making it difficult to discern any clear festive atmosphere. On the right, a few indistinct figures in suits and a pavilion partially obscured by trees can be vaguely seen. The image conveys a sense of oppression and desolation, rather than a strong festive atmosphere.

Here, the visual disjunction and auditory metaphor begin to play out. In the lower left corner of the image, a Chinese man is depicted being driven away by a policeman wielding a baton (almost out of the frame), his bent posture reflecting fear and helplessness. In the lower right corner, about ten Chinese civilians are shown, most of whom are men, with only one woman accompanied by children. A child on the right is riding on an adult's shoulders, being lifted high, clinging to the railing and peering into the garden, showing their intense interest and curiosity about the activities inside. A policeman stands in the middle of the road, facing the crowd, sternly raising his arm to issue commands and warnings. From the direction of the policeman's reprimand, it can be inferred that he is warning the child's parent, while also issuing a stern warning to the entire crowd.

In "French Festivals," the artist deftly discloses the metaphor of power through the contrast of light and shadow, constructing a "light-dark-light" visual structure. The most prominent and brightest part is undoubtedly the French Municipal Police building—it stands tall, majestic, and solemn, representing French territory on Chinese soil. The bright lighting accentuates the building's grandeur and assertion of power, embodying the peak of Western colonial authority within the Shanghai concession. Through this use of bright lighting, the artist underscores the French Municipal Police as the centre of power, making it the focal point of the entire illustration, a symbol of "visible power."

However, the scenes within the garden are obscured by tall vegetation and the building, cast in shadows. These "delightful" festive activities, such as "dancing and singing wildly" and "enjoying themselves to the fullest," are hidden behind another barrier formed by the vegetation. Even the artist cannot clearly view these scenes and must rely on text for supplementation. This dark treatment enhances the mystery and inaccessibility of the garden's activities—power not only excludes the outside world with the first layer of walls but also hides the internal luxury and revelry through the second layer of visual blurring and obstruction, indicating the concealed and exclusive nature of "invisible power."

The last bright area features the Chinese people outside the fence, perhaps the most relatable scene for local readers. The bright light illuminates the Chinese individuals being driven away by the police, capturing their frantic postures and fearful expressions in detail. The presence of the police and their actions of driving away further underscore the inferior status of these Chinese people—they are not allowed, nor can they enjoy the life within the fence. This bright treatment not only exposes their passive and marginalized state but also reflects the

unequal dual structure within the concession society. Moreover, the artist uses rich auditory elements to build a complex dual soundscape. Here, I attempt to speculate on what sounds we might hear in this space and understand the operation of power and social division through these sounds.

1.2 The Dual Soundscape Within and Beyond the Boundary of Power

The sharp fence serves as the "boundary of power," dividing the scene into two worlds: the inside and outside of the garden. Inside the garden, Baroque music, symbolising the "high taste" and enjoyment of Western culture, fills the air; light-hearted and pleasant French conversations drift among the crowd; the clear clinking of wine glasses intermingles with the music and chatter; exaggerated female laughter and male cheers are heard intermittently. Outside the garden, a policeman with a baton shouts and drives away someone who might approach the garden; another policeman sternly orders the crowd to leave; a child's cries are provoked by the policeman's yelling; and a wealthy young man, wearing an embroidered robe with money patterns and holding a folding fan, loudly argues with a policeman.

In essence, both inside and outside the garden are scenes of "clamour," but their implications are vastly different. The music and laughter inside the garden are just a fence away from the intimidation and crying outside. The lively sounds of merriment and indulgence within the garden symbolise the unrestricted lifestyle of Western colonisers and their wanton flaunting of power. In contrast, the clamour outside the garden is filled with fear and oppression—the shouts and orders of the police represent the forcible execution of power, while the cries of children and the argumentative defiance of a wealthy young man highlight the helplessness and resistance of the oppressed.

Moreover, there is another silent voice of resistance that should not be ignored—the very existence of this painting and its creator. The artist, Jia Xingqing, was a relatively well-known painter of the late Qing Dynasty "Shanghai School," whose works mainly reflected the social conditions and the diverse lives of the people. Unlike Wu Youru and Jin Chanxiang, he was not a regular artist for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. This is a submission, not a commissioned work. A Chinese painter like Jia Xingqing, in observing and deciding to create French Festivals, undoubtedly underwent a complex emotional journey.

Initially, he might have been like other "pictorial reporters," keen to chase and report on a social hotspot. However, upon seeing the reality on the ground, he realised that, as a Chinese person, he was utterly excluded from this topic. Additionally, he witnessed the sorrowful scene of Chinese police driving away Chinese onlookers to protect "French territory." Observing from the street, he saw and heard the clash between the two kinds of "clamour" inside and outside the garden. Thus, under the guise of capturing the lively scene of the French festival, Jia Xingqing uncovered the underlying social issues. By meticulously depicting the distinct Chinese crowd outside the fence and the blurred Western celebration within, he underscored this visual and cultural displacement, alluding to the significant disparity in social status between Chinese and foreigners. The fence and vegetation

metaphorically represent the boundaries of power and racial segregation, revealing how Western colonisers utilised both visual and auditory means to manifest and cement their power. I believe that in publishing this illustration, the artist aimed to evoke empathy and contemplation among readers, drawing more attention to such injustice and oppression. As Antonio Gramsci observed, "Every time a ruling class manages to maintain hegemony, it will face resistance from the subjugated".¹⁹² Jia Xingqing, through his work, articulated a silent protest against violence and oppression, seeking to awaken and inspire resistance by exposing the truth, thus challenging and destabilising this unjust power structure.

2. *Tools for Marking "Acoustic Territories": Military Music*

Within the classification of music different scenarios in the first chapter, military bands have been briefly mentioned. Despite the fact that fewer than ten illustrations have been made, the auditory landscape dominated by military band sounds far surpasses the range covered in the pictorial's reports. As highlighted in a caption from the 1886 edition of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the feedback of Shanghai residents on Western musical activities within the concessions was encapsulated:

Westerners cannot seem to do without music in any circumstance. From what I have observed, music accompanies military drills, funeral processions, horse races in spring and autumn, and the arrival of officials at their posts. One can hear music everywhere. The rhythm of the music is dictated by the footsteps, with thousands of people marching in unison, as if keeping time to a beat.¹⁹³

These three simple sentences thoroughly outline how Western empires, led by Britain, America, and France, utilised music to craft the auditory landscape within the Shanghai concessions. To Chinese observers, "Westerners cannot do without music," indicating the high dependency of Westerners on music, making it a vital part of their culture and life. From the phrase "the rhythm of the music is dictated by the footsteps, with thousands of people marching in unison, as if keeping time to a beat," it is evident that the author is referring not to orchestras or classical chamber music but to highly organised and ceremonial military music. This hypothesis is corroborated by the four activities listed by the author: "military drills, funeral processions, horse races in spring and autumn, and the arrival of officials at their posts." In these activities, "music" is endowed with diverse functions and meanings, such as boosting morale, demonstrating discipline, maintaining order, and expressing solemnity and courtesy. "The rhythm of the music is dictated by the footsteps, with thousands of people marching in unison, as if keeping time to a beat," directly illustrates the role of

¹⁹² Gramsci, A. (2020). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Routledge, pp. 141-142.

¹⁹³ Original: “西人无事不用乐，以予所见，围兵会操也，死丧出殡也，春秋两季之跑马，与夫官员调任到岸之时，唔唔亦自可听。节奏之疾徐系以足，万足齐举如拍板然。”《点石斋画报》辛集，《西乐迎神》76页

music in coordinating and controlling collective actions. This uniform visual and auditory effect creates an "Acoustic Authority," making military bands a symbol of the high organisational efficiency and strong control of Western armies.

2.1 Invented Traditions

The book *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* comprehensively traces the history, organisational structure, training practices, and the extensive impact of military music on British society and culture during the 19th century.¹⁹⁴ In the chapter titled "The Empire and Other Foreign Fields," the authors examine the symbolic significance and practical roles of British military bands in the colonies. In India and Africa, colonial governments frequently organised military band performances. Herbert and Barlow argue that these musical activities were not merely for cultural entertainment but served as important tools for displaying British cultural hegemony. By playing British military and patriotic music, these bands conveyed British authority and cultural superiority.¹⁹⁵

In *Inventing Traditions* by Eric Hobsbawm, the author proposes a theoretical framework for "Invented Traditions," a concept used to explain that certain seemingly ancient traditions in modern society are, in fact, deliberately designed to address social, political, and cultural needs. Through repeated rituals, symbols, and practices, these invented traditions create a sense of historical continuity and legitimacy in the public consciousness.¹⁹⁶ The use of military music in various Western ceremonial events seems to align with this definition. Hobsbawm identifies two key features of "invented traditions": the establishment of legitimacy through repetition and the creation of a sense of history through the design of rituals. He notes that "invented traditions" often emerge during significant historical transitions, such as imperial expansion, the Industrial Revolution, and the formation of nation-states. In these periods, the societal demand for new forms of social norms and identities promoted the invention of traditions.¹⁹⁷

For instance, music plays an indispensable role in British royal ceremonies, enhancing the atmosphere, iconic melodies, and emotional resonance, making the occasion more grand and memorable. Music not only adds a sense of solemnity and sanctity to the ceremony but also communicates the authority of the monarchy to the public through meticulously crafted soundscapes. David Cannadine, in his work *The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition,' c. 1820-1977*, explores the crucial role of music in ceremonies, particularly in shaping the image of the monarchy and reinforcing its authority.¹⁹⁸ Cannadine remarks, "Music played an indispensable role in royal ceremonies, enhancing the grandeur and solemnity of the occasion, and reinforcing the symbolic power of

¹⁹⁴ Herbert, T., & Barlow, H. (2013). *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 318-320.

¹⁹⁶ Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (2012). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press. p.21.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 37.

¹⁹⁸ Cannadine, D. (2012). The context, performance and meaning of ritual: The British monarchy and the 'invention of tradition', c. 1820 - 1977. In *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 131-133.

the monarchy.” He adds, “The grand marches and anthems performed during royal ceremonies were designed to evoke a sense of historical continuity and national pride, linking the monarchy with the glory of the British Empire.”¹⁹⁹ The connection between music and royal authority is not only expressed in the form of ceremonies but also in its symbolic meaning. For example, the Silver Jubilee of George V used the music of Wagner and Elgar to convey a sense of historical continuity, reinforcing the King’s status as a symbol of the nation. In these ceremonies, music not only aroused emotional resonance with the public but also enhanced the image of the monarchy as noble, sacred, and untouchable through the power of sound.²⁰⁰ Ceremony music not only enriches the celebration but also communicates the sacredness and continuity of royal power. This music often carries a high degree of symbolism, such as Edward Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance*, and particularly the *Imperial March*, performed during Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897. These became “signature pieces” of the ceremony, frequently appearing in late Victorian and subsequent royal events, symbolising royal authority in the public’s perception, and significantly elevating the cultural and political influence of royal ceremonies.²⁰¹

Building upon Hobsbawm’s concept of "invented traditions," Cannadine emphasises that many seemingly "ancient traditions" of the monarchy, such as the sacred anointing during coronation ceremonies, were actually reinvented and redesigned in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The invention of these "traditions" served to strengthen the monarchy’s legitimacy and enhance public identification, specifically crafted to address the changing political conditions in Britain, particularly in the contexts of modernisation and imperial expansion.²⁰²

This coincides with some of the perspectives of Carolyn Birdsall in her book *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Birdsall explores the application of sound and new technologies (such as radio and loudspeakers) in public and urban spaces during the Nazi regime, analysing how sound was utilised as an ideological tool to shape public auditory experiences and collective memory. Through specific examples such as the Nuremberg rallies, the "People's Receiver" (*Volksempfänger*), and Hitler's speeches, her study reveals the pivotal role of sound technology in Nazi propaganda and social control, and its profound influence on the public psyche.²⁰³ In her analysis of the Nuremberg rallies' soundscape, Birdsall found that amplification equipment was strategically positioned at key points throughout the venue. High-quality microphones and powerful loudspeakers ensured comprehensive sound coverage, creating an immersive auditory environment. She contends that this method of controlling the rally soundscape heightened the emotional impact of the events and reinforced political authority.²⁰⁴ The *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* remarks about "Westerners cannot do without music" and "music accompanies every activity, and music can

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, pp.116-117.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, pp.135-137.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.138.

²⁰² Ibid, p.108.

²⁰³ Birdsall, C. (2021). *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-102.

²⁰⁴ Birdsall, C. (2021). *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge University Press, p. 89.

be heard everywhere" similarly highlight the auditory experience crafted under the pervasive influence of Western military music within Shanghai's urban space.

Birdsall's research highlights the immense power of sound in "political propaganda," demonstrating how the Nazis utilised sound technology to manipulate and shape public collective memory and social behaviour. In late 19th-century Shanghai, the "political propagandistic" use of Western colonial sound also served as a "sovereignty declaration." Similarly, in Shanghai, as captured in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, music (military bands) was a tool of power. Western colonisers frequently organised performances, circulating and expanding these sounds to continually mark and assert their territory and sovereignty in the "new land" of the East.

How did *Dianshizhai Pictorial* specifically record and propagate the Western "acoustic authority"? By following the scenes mentioned in the opening quote of this section—military drills, funeral processions, horse races in spring and autumn, and the arrival of officials—and considering the common repertoire of British, American, and French military bands from the mid-to-late 19th century²⁰⁵, it may be possible to reconstruct the soundscape within the Shanghai concessions during the late Qing Dynasty.

a. Military Drills

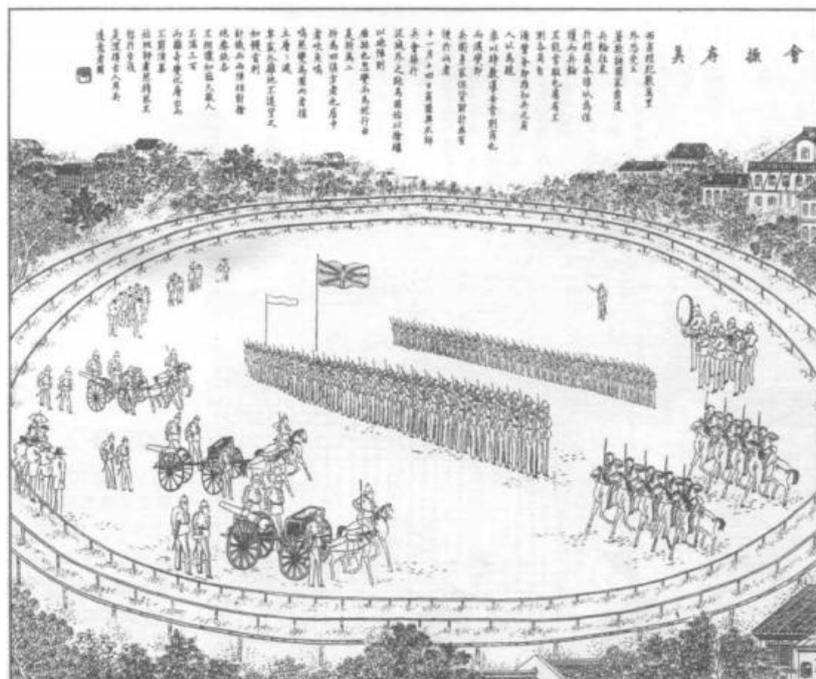


Figure 2-2. Drill Depiction: *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Ren Collection, pp. 20, 1887.

This figure shows a naval drill by a Western merchant escort fleet. The merchant sailors, directed by auditory signals, nimbly adjust formations and participate in joint defense training.

²⁰⁵ Herbert, T., & Barlow, H. (2013). *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford University Press, USA, pp. 33-36.

Funerals

| Country | Songs |
|----------------|--|
| United Kingdom | - Funeral March: Famous funeral marches like Frédéric Chopin's Funeral March. |
| | - Nearer, My God, to Thee: A well-known Christian hymn often played at funerals. |
| United States | - Taps: A famous bugle call used in military funerals. |
| | - Nearer, My God, to Thee: Also used in American funerals as a Christian hymn. |
| France | - Chant du Départ: Although a patriotic song, it was sometimes played at significant occasions such as funerals. |
| | - Funeral March: Classical funeral marches like Chopin's were also commonly used in France. |
| | - Hail Columbia: An early American anthem suitable for various formal occasions. |
| | - The Battle Cry of Freedom: A patriotic song by George Frederick Root. |
| France | - La Marseillaise: The French national anthem, suitable for important military occasions. |
| | - Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse: A famous French march, ideal for military drills. |
| | - Pas redoublé: A march from the Napoleonic era, often used in military exercises. |

b. Funerals



Figure 2-3. Rest in Peace: *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Yi Collection, pp. 53, 1884.

This illustration depicts the solemn and respectful funeral of two German naval commanders. Over ten Western musicians are shown, playing Western music along the procession route.

c. Spring and Autumn Horse Races

Spring and Autumn Horse Races

| Country | Songs |
|----------------|---|
| United Kingdom | - Rule, Britannia!: A patriotic song commonly used in public events. |
| | - The British Grenadiers: Also suitable for lively public events. |
| United States | - The Star-Spangled Banner: The national anthem, suitable for various formal and public events. |
| | - Yankee Doodle: A lively patriotic song, suitable for public gatherings and events. |
| France | - La Marseillaise: Suitable for various important occasions, including public gatherings. |
| | - La Marche Lorraine: A patriotic march also suitable for public events. |

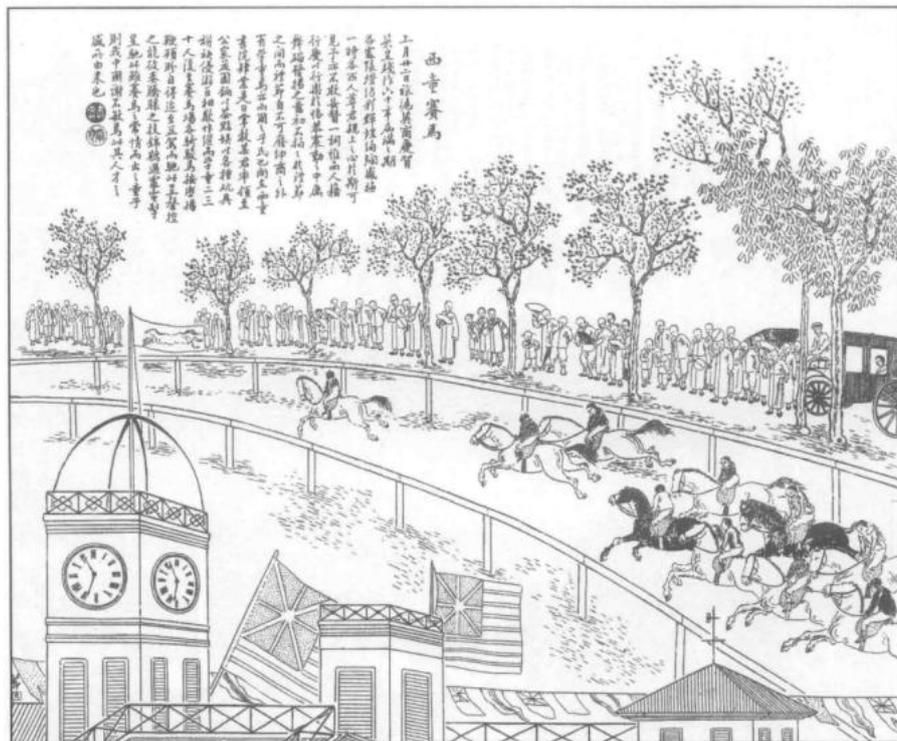


Figure 2-4. Western Children Horse Racing
Dianshizhai Pictorial, Yuan Collection, pp. 66, 1897.

This pictorial depicts a children's horse racing competition held by British merchants in Shanghai to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the British monarch's ascension to the throne.

Arrival of Officials

| Country | Songs |
|----------------|---|
| United Kingdom | - God Save the Queen/King: The national anthem, suitable for welcoming officials and formal occasions. |
| | - Heart of Oak: A march of the Royal Navy, suitable for welcoming ceremonies. |
| United States | - Hail to the Chief: The official anthem used to welcome the President and other officials. |
| | - The Liberty Bell March: A march by John Philip Sousa, although published in 1893, similar marches were commonly used for formal welcomes. |
| France | - La Marseillaise: Suitable for welcoming officials and formal occasions. |
| | - Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse: Suitable for welcoming and formal events. |

d. Arrival of Officials

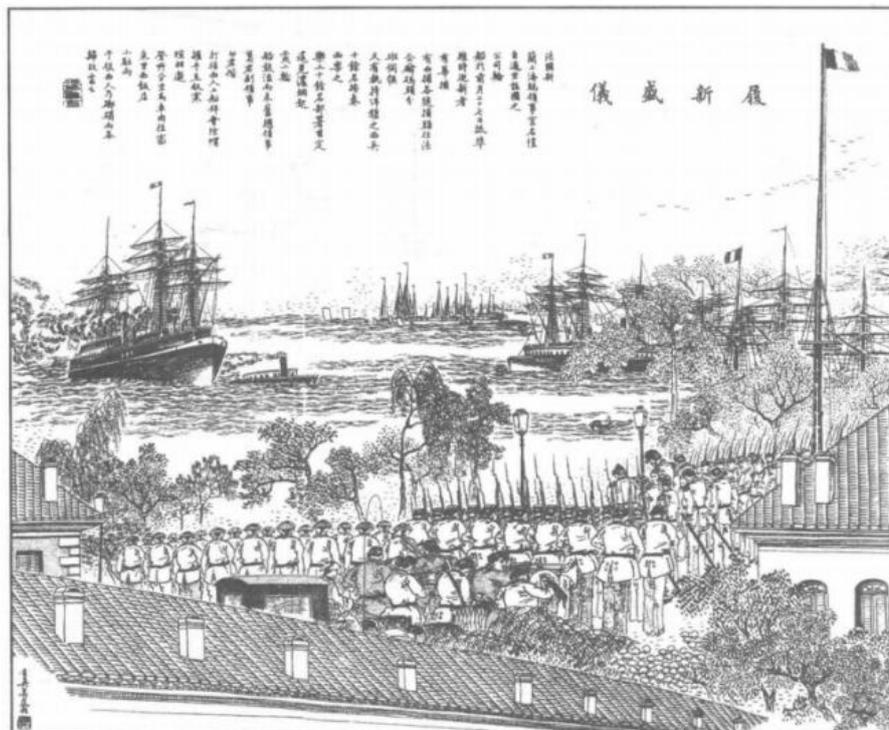


Figure 2-5. Grand Inauguration Ceremony,
Dianshizhai Pictorial, Wu Collection, pp. 61, 1885.

The image illustrates the arrival of Georges Cogordan, the new French Consul General in Shanghai. The reception is solemn and lively, with over ten Western musicians performing on the shore.

The "potential repertoire" listed in each entry above was very popular at the time and many pieces continue to be performed today. As a result, it is easy for us to envision the melodies and sounds of the military bands within the concessions. However, for the Chinese people during the late Qing Dynasty, the encounter with the "sound territories" created by Western colonisers' military bands and the resulting clash with their traditional way of life vividly highlighted the social and cultural divide.

3. Dual Soundscapes in Festive Atmospheres

Significant festival celebrations seem to be a favoured topic in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Over its fifteen years of publication, the majority of multi-image series were related to festivals. For example, in 1893, the pictorial featured a nine-image series celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Shanghai's opening as a port. In 1887, another nine-image series commemorated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, marking the fiftieth anniversary of her reign. Additionally, there were series depicting the welcome celebrations for Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, during his visit to Shanghai in 1881.

In many ways, the celebrations dominated by Western colonisers had a positive impact on the participation of Chinese citizens. Economically, these celebrations were often linked with prosperous commercial activities and economic opportunities. As a key international trade port, Shanghai drew numerous foreign merchants and tourists through these events, directly promoting local economic growth. The trade boom not only brought wealth but also offered Chinese merchants opportunities to broaden their networks and business dealings, facilitating better integration into the international trade network. Furthermore, these celebrations showcased numerous new technologies and cultural elements, often mentioned in *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* reports, such as electric lights, fireworks, fire brigade lantern displays (also known as water dragon festivals), and hot air balloons, thereby widening the modern perspectives of the local people.

It's important to note that the auditory experiences during these celebrations were also of significant importance. In everyday life, the management rules of the Shanghai concessions strictly limited Chinese access to venues with Western musical performances, such as concert halls and public gardens (as depicted in the previous section on "French Festivals"). This made it challenging for ordinary Chinese people to access high-quality Western music. Through these large celebrations, many performances of symphonies, military music, and other high-level musical forms, which were originally private or exclusive to Westerners, became public. Thus, these celebrations acted as a window for cross-cultural exchange, enabling the Chinese public to gradually gain a deeper understanding and recognition of Western culture.

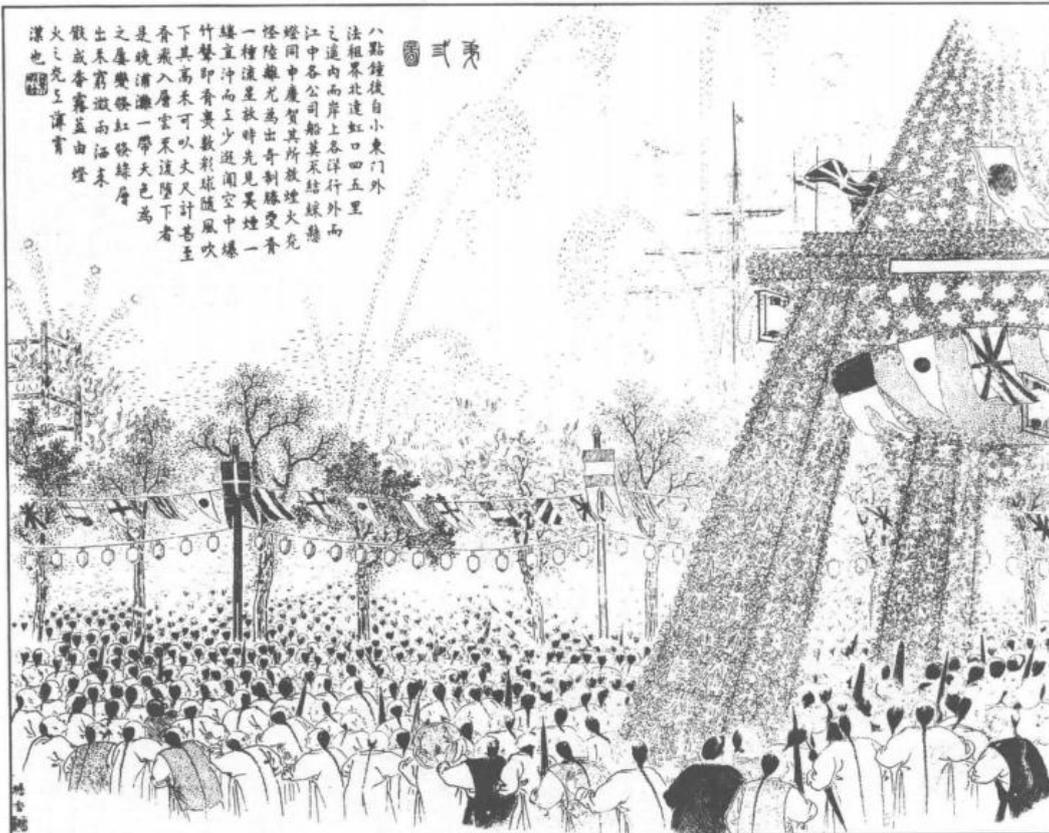
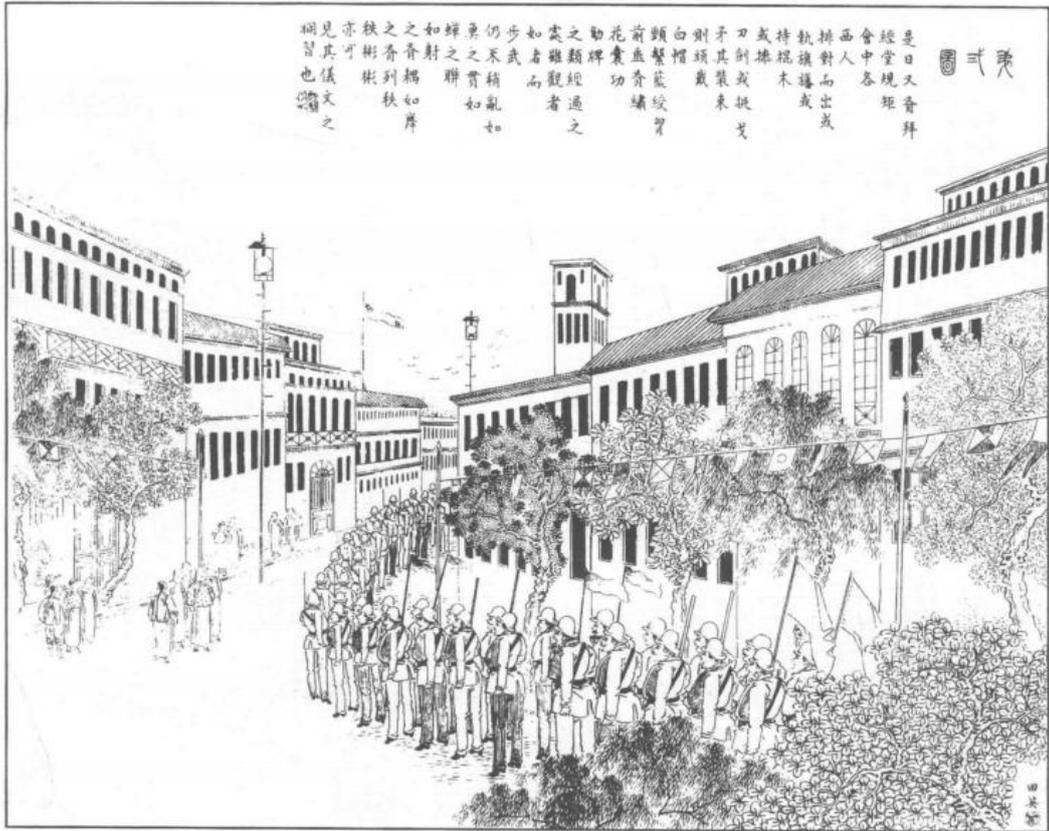


Figure 2-8 & 9. Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria's Fiftieth Anniversary of Ascension: *Dianshizhai Pictorial Kui* Collection, pp. 92-93, 1887

The images above are taken from the first four illustrations in a long series published in 1887 in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. This series, consisting of nine illustrations, reported on the grand celebrations held by the British community in Shanghai to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of her accession to the throne.

As the opening piece of this series, the first illustration features a portrait of Queen Victoria. The accompanying text provides a detailed account of her ascension, coronation, marriage, the death of Prince Albert, and her descendants. It also conveys the British people's respect and admiration for Queen Victoria.

The second illustration features the cannon-firing ceremony conducted by various warships on the Huangpu River. The description states: "Westerners always fire cannons on festive occasions, with the number of cannon shots corresponding to the event's significance." On the celebration day, precisely at noon, the warships fired up to fifty cannons, creating a loud roar. The Western militia on the shore also lined up and fired cannons in response, resulting in an impressive spectacle. The text also notes that "American musicians played Western compositions," enhancing the festive and solemn atmosphere. The "American musicians" likely refer to the foreign military bands or the Municipal Council Band stationed in Shanghai, which commonly performed musical accompaniment for welcome ceremonies of foreign visitors in the concessions.²⁰⁶

The third illustration features British troops marching past a chapel. The accompanying description reads: "In the procession, Westerners marched in formation, some carrying flags, others holding staves, swords, or spears." The soldiers were smartly dressed, donning white hats, blue sashes, and bearing embroidered pouches and medals on their chests. Despite the numerous spectators, their marching was orderly, reflecting a high standard of organisation and discipline.

The fourth illustration showcases the nighttime fireworks display. "From the small eastern gate of the French Concession to the northern parts of Hongkou, stretching four to five miles, all the foreign firms along the shore and every ship in the river were adorned with lights and lanterns, celebrating together." The fireworks display was extraordinary and innovative, with meteor fireworks being especially striking, lighting up the night sky in a spectacular fashion. The skies over the Bund were constantly changing colours, the crowds were immense, and the atmosphere was exuberant.

It is worth noting that the sequence of this series naturally creates a contrast of "dual soundscapes" between the third and fourth images. These scenes clearly illustrate the "dual soundscapes" within the concession during different celebratory events. The third image visually expresses a strict sense of discipline and ceremony, with the soundscape likely consisting of rhythmic marching footsteps, military commands, the rustling of flags, and the

²⁰⁶ Gong, H. (2017). *Musical Events in Shanghai: A Study of Western Musicians and Musical Activities after the Opening of Shanghai (1843-1910)*. Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, pp. 102.

solemn music of the ceremonial band. Only a few Chinese passersby are seen across the street, quietly observing and conversing in low tones. This soundscape conveys the discipline of the Western military and the authority of Western powers within the "nation within a nation," setting the tone for the orderliness of the celebrations.

In sharp contrast is the fourth illustration depicting the fireworks celebration. Under the night sky, fireworks burst into colorful displays, their lights and sounds blending to form a vibrant, festive atmosphere. The cheers and exclamations of the audience are constant, while the illuminated boats and buildings enhance the sense of joy and festivity. The varied fireworks create different sounds, further intensifying the festive mood. At this point, the Chinese audience is no longer the excluded outsiders but active participants, their voices becoming a crucial part of the celebratory soundscape. This brings to mind Birdsall's discussion in the chapter "The Festivalisation of the Everyday" about the soundscapes of "Hitler's Birthday" celebrations and the evening torchlight processions of the "Nuremberg Rally." During Hitler's birthday celebrations, streets and squares were decorated extensively with flags and Nazi symbols, creating a powerful visual atmosphere.²⁰⁷ The soundscape included military band performances, crowd cheers, and synchronized chants, producing a profoundly impactful auditory effect. Birdsall notes that these sounds not only amplified the solemnity and authority of the events but also bolstered the cult of personality around Hitler.²⁰⁸ Similarly, in the third illustration of the Golden Jubilee series, the impressive British military parade through the streets of the Shanghai concession created a comparable visual and auditory impact.

Ironically, the fervent atmospheres and carefully designed soundscapes were not innovations by either Hitler or the British Empire; rather, they drew inspiration from cultural practices in other non-Western countries or colonies. Some of these influences came from Africa²⁰⁹, others from Mongolia, Ottoman Turkey²¹⁰, India²¹¹, and possibly even traditional Chinese rituals.²¹²

Particularly in the administration of the British Empire's concessions in Shanghai, we can often discern echoes of the "Indian model." Similar scenes to those in the Golden Jubilee celebrations can be observed in major celebrations in British India, such as the Delhi Durbar and Empire Day. The Delhi Durbar was a grand celebration held in Delhi to commemorate the coronation of the British monarch and other significant events, while Empire Day, first celebrated in 1902, aimed to celebrate the glory and power of the British Empire, enhancing

²⁰⁷ Birdsall, C. (2021). *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 77

²⁰⁸ Birdsall, C. (2021). *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 82

²⁰⁹ Ranger, T. (2012). The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (pp. 211 – 262). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²¹⁰ Hobsbawm, E. (2012). Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870 – 1914. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (pp. 263 – 308). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²¹¹ Cohn, B. S. (2012). Representing Authority in Victorian India. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (pp. 165 – 210). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²¹² Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press. p.38.

the loyalty and identity of the colonial people. Barlow suggests that these festivals, through carefully designed ceremonies and events, demonstrated the legitimacy and grandeur of British rule to the Indian people.²¹³ In these celebrations, military bands played an essential role. At the Delhi Durbar, military bands performed powerful marches and patriotic songs, displaying the Empire's strength and majesty. During Empire Day celebrations, the military band's performances were central, with patriotic tunes and military marches interwoven with solemn official speeches, enhancing the festive atmosphere while spreading British culture and values and reinforcing British authority in India.²¹⁴

In his essay *Representing Authority in Victorian India*, Bernard S. Cohn analyses how the British rulers in Victorian India utilised various rituals, drawing upon local cultural traditions, to reconstruct and consolidate the legitimacy of British rule.²¹⁵ Cohn observes that the British rulers faced a significant cultural gap: as outsiders, they were tasked with governing a vast and culturally diverse Indian population. To position themselves as "internal" rulers, the British reshaped their image through symbolic acts and ceremonies.²¹⁶ Cohn notes that the British adopted Muslim and Hindu traditions in India, such as the grand ceremony of the Delhi Durbar, which was designed to mimic the court rituals of Mughal emperors. By awarding symbolic honours — such as prestigious clothing, animals, and jewels — to loyal Indian princes, the British displayed their legitimacy as rulers.²¹⁷ This tactic proved highly effective, as the British managed to embed their authority within Indian cultural practices by adopting and modifying local rituals. Despite appearing to honour Indian traditions, these ceremonies were, in fact, part of the British strategy to maintain colonial rule through symbolic gestures.

Meanwhile, Herbert notes that the use of British military bands in Indian celebrations demonstrated the function of music as a tool for cultural dissemination, showcasing strong military deterrence through the soundscape created and subtly influencing the cultural identity and emotional allegiance of the Indian people. He argues that it was these multisensory experiences, frequently triggered by such celebrations, that emotionally aligned the Indian people more closely with British rule.²¹⁸ These ideas are consistent with the core themes conveyed in the latter two images of the *Golden Jubilee series*. Whether it was the Delhi Durbar, Empire Day, or the Shanghai Golden Jubilee celebrations, all used music and visual effects to create a festive atmosphere, showcasing the rulers' power and consolidating their authority.

Reflecting on the visual and auditory experiences of the latter two images in the *Golden Jubilee series*, we see that it extends beyond mere soundscapes, revealing dualities at every

²¹³ Herbert, T., & Barlow, H. (2013). *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford University Press, pp. 326-328

²¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 337

²¹⁵ Cohn, B. S. (2012). *Representing Authority in Victorian India*. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 175-177.

²¹⁶ Ibid, p.179.

²¹⁷ Ibid,p. 179.

²¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 349

turn: order versus chaos, the few versus the many, solemnity versus noise, managers versus the managed, and ultimately, the West versus China. These images offer a clear explanation of the "visualised" dynamics of power. It was an era marked by contradictions and collisions, where elements, emotions, desires, and cultures from East and West continually encountered and clashed, gradually and unconsciously melding together.

4. A "Meta-picture" of dual soundscapes-Pipa Ya Ji

As we mentioned in the introduction, by the late 20th and early 21st centuries, iconologist W. J. T. Mitchell, in his book *Picture Theory* (1995), introduced the concept of "meta-pictures," asserting that *Las Meninas* "most comprehensively summarises all the characteristics of a meta-picture".²¹⁹ Within the 1890 publication of the pictorial, one finds an illustration that could be regarded as the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* equivalent of *Las Meninas*—both in terms of the numerous figures and the symbolic meanings they represent, which correspond to the symbols and characters in *Las Meninas*. This part of the chapter will apply the "Meta-picture" analytical approach outlined in the introduction, through which a detailed historical examination will allow the image to narrate its own story—*Pipa Ya Ji* (琵琶雅集 Pipa Elegant Gathering).

4.1 Pipa Ya Ji (Elegant Gathering)

Drawn by the artist Zhang Zhiying²²⁰, *Pipa Ya Ji* reports on the news of a wealthy Zhejiang gentleman named Zhou Yonggang, who is proficient in playing the pipa, being invited by a Western missionary to hold a solo concert at the Methodist Church in Shanghai. The accompanying text is as follows:

Throughout history, true masters of music have been exceedingly rare. Xiao Shi excelled at playing the xiao (vertical flute), Xiang Ling was skilled at the se (zither), Hao Su was famous for the qin, and Huan Yi was renowned for the flute. Ji Kang's expertise on the qin produced the unmatched "Guangling San," while Mi Heng's drumming prowess created the unparalleled "Yuyangzan." In the realm of pipa playing, Zhu Sheng, Ruan Xian, Sun Fang, and Kong Wei were illustrious figures, along with He Huaizhi in the Tang Dynasty and Fan Ye in the Song Dynasty. Their elegant and classical playing styles were peerless.

Unexpectedly, Zhou Yonggang from Cixi, Zhejiang, also performs with deep sentiment akin to Xiang Xiu. Two years ago, Zhou performed at Yeshilou in Shanghai, where the audience applauded and acclaimed his music, comparing it to the marvel of "Yulun Pao." The praise endures to this day. Even Zhou Yu would have been astonished. This April, a westerner, having heard of Zhou's fame, invited him to perform at the Methodist Church. Zhou's performance ranged from rapid, dense notes reminiscent of thousands of galloping horses and sudden downpours, to gentle, slow melodies akin to "Xunyang," evoking tears

²¹⁹ Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, University of Chicago Press, pp. 50-51

²²⁰ Artists of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* would sign and stamp their works in the lower right corner of each illustration

from the audience. The audience included numerous foreign missionaries, consuls from various countries, and merchants, numbering in the hundreds, all applauding fervently.

A Tang Dynasty poet once said: "With the golden pick and zitan (rosewood) pipa, once the strings are tuned, the tone soars higher." Can we not be astounded and applaud in admiration at Zhou's marvelously exquisite skill?

This is a quintessential *Dianshizhai Pictorial* "narrative style," typically adhering to a three-paragraph framework: the first paragraph introduces the theme of the pictorial with historical context or anecdotes; the second paragraph provides the news report; and the third paragraph includes the author's commentary on the news. The first paragraph mentions several famous musicians and important musical works in Chinese history, leading to the introduction of Zhou Yonggang's pipa skills, which can evoke memories of the performances by ancient pipa masters. The second paragraph details the performance, mentioning two pieces and the audience's enthusiastic feedback. The third paragraph, which is more characteristic of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, offers an editorial comment, quoting a Tang poem to describe how Zhou's pipa artistry is "marvelously exquisite (绝妙入神)."

We might wonder if readers can "hear" the music when viewing the pictorial. Chen Pingyuan (2019), in his article "Sound in Late Qing Pictorials," suggests that through the use of text, particularly familiar verses (such as Bai Juyi's "Pipa Song" with its onomatopoeic descriptions like "the strings clash and clang in intricate patterns, large pearls and small pearls falling on a jade plate"), the auditory experience of the readers is linked with their general literary knowledge, making the painting "resonate with melodious music".²²¹ In the third paragraph of the narrative, the author similarly uses the line "With a golden pick and a zitan pipa, once the strings are tuned, the tone soars higher (黄金捍拨紫檀槽，弦索初张调更高)" as a cue to stimulate the reader's auditory experience, thus achieving a complementary effect with the image.

²²¹ Chen Pingyuan. (2019). Sound in Late Qing Pictorials. *Literature and Art Studies* (6), 11.

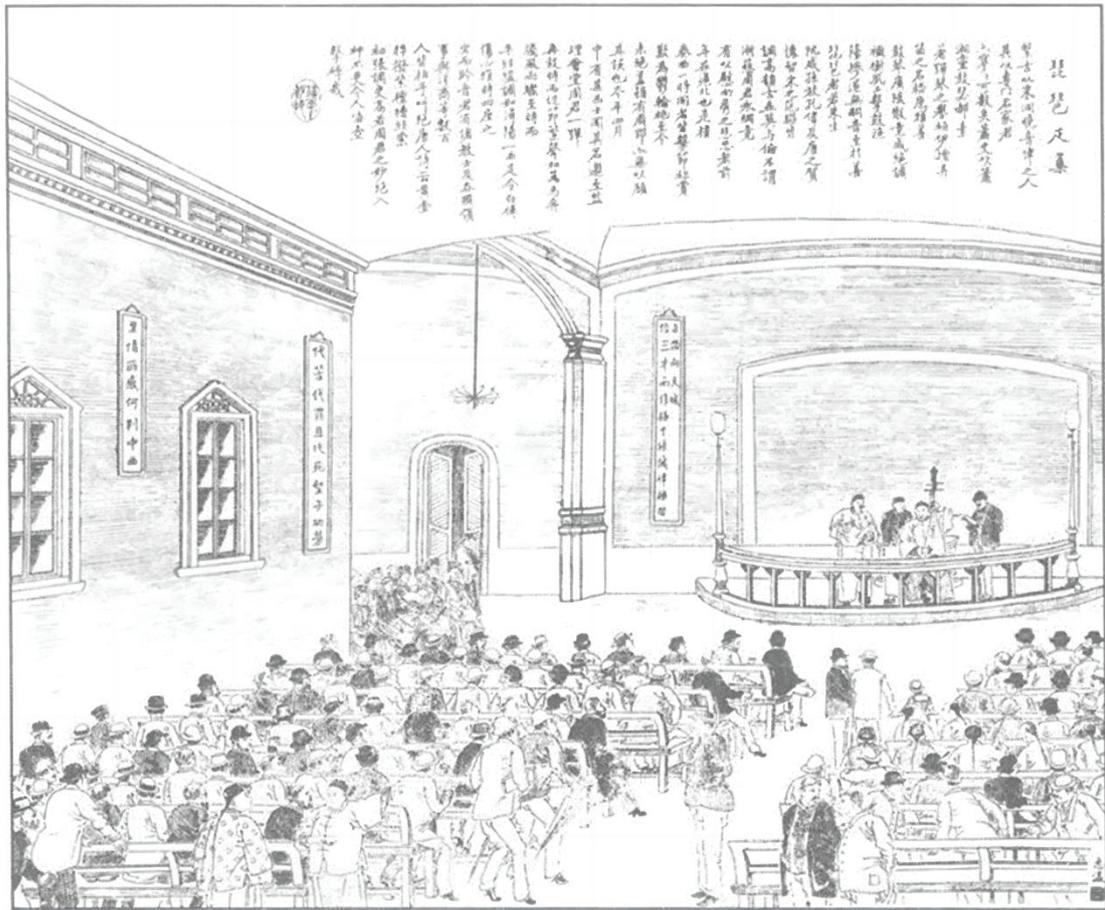


Figure 2-10: *Dianshizhai Pictorial You Collection*, pp. 13, 1890

Examining the image itself, we find Zhou Yonggang at the centre of the stage, playing the pipa, flanked by two Chinese individuals and a Westerner. The gestures of the two Chinese individuals suggest they are part of a small percussion ensemble accompanying the pipa. The Westerner on the right is holding a piece of paper, possibly examining today's programme. This individual might be the missionary who invited Zhou, or perhaps the event's host or translator. The performance is a full house, with the audience displaying a range of appearances. Most audience members facing the stage wear European gentlemen's hats, with only two rows in the middle-right dressed in Qing dynasty-style clothing. The foreground of the illustration conveys more information, with almost symmetrically positioned groups of conversing individuals on each side, creating a stark visual contrast: on the left, two Chinese individuals are engaged in conversation, one facing the stage and the other pointing towards it, slightly leaning back and speaking loudly; on the right, two Westerners are whispering to each other with their heads slightly inclined towards each other and hands behind their backs. At the forefront of the central aisle, two Westerners are hurrying forward, holding umbrellas (suggesting it might have rained), with a clear aim to attend this highly anticipated concert. Further to the right stands a person on the main aisle, hands on hips, facing the left-side audience. His posture implies he might be maintaining order, but his attire does not resemble the uniform of

the Shanghai Municipal Police of the era, so he might be waiting for a friend; he seems uninterested in the performance. Along the main aisle, in the front row, two more Westerners are standing, one of whom, a man on the right, is holding a hat-wearing child. This father might be greeting an acquaintance. The depicted venue is likely the Methodist Church built in 1887, renamed Moore Memorial Church in 1900, now located at 316 Middle Xizang Road (西藏中路), in central Shanghai.

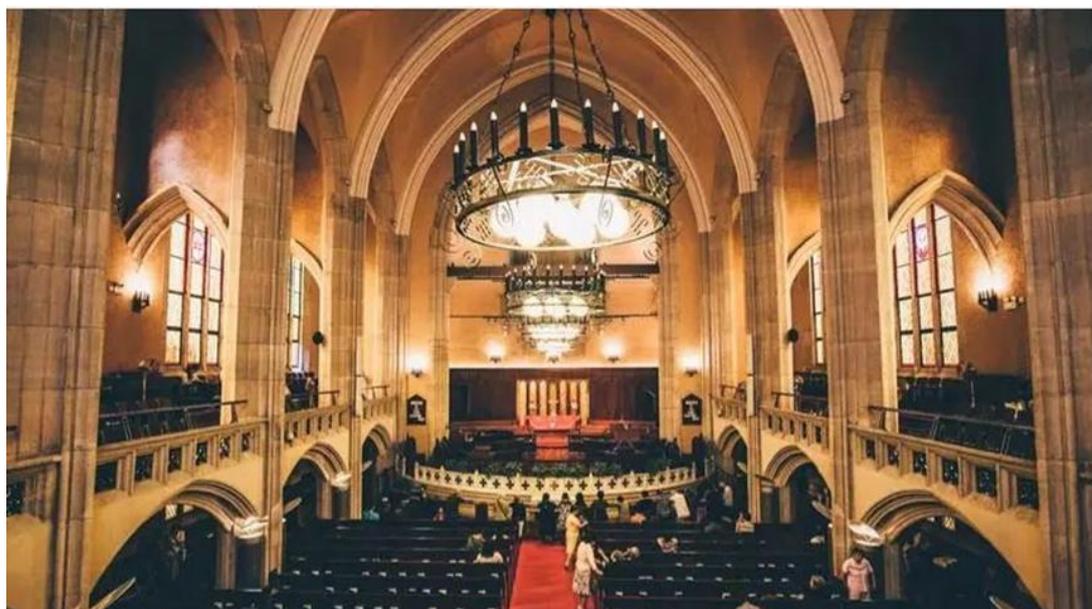


Figure 2-11. The interior of Moore Memorial Church in Shanghai

From the abundant details provided, we can reasonably reconstruct the scene of the performance on that day: a rainy day in mid-April 1890 of the lunar calendar, where a pipa solo concert introducing Chinese musical art to Westerners took place at the Methodist Church in the Shanghai International Settlement. Zhang Zhiying, the artist of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, captured the moment just before the performance began. The accompanying text mentioned two pieces that were played: the martial tune "Yulun Pao" and the literary tune "Xunyang." The concert was met with great acclaim. This is the initial information we can extract from the image.

4.2 Who is King Philip IV?

In this seemingly harmonious scene of "Sino-Western musical cultural exchange," the original image continuously reminds us to seek out the invisibility within the painting and to listen for the inaudibility within the soundscape of the image. When comparing *Pipa Ya Ji* with "*Las Meninas*," we are astonished to find certain correspondences between the characters in the two works: Princess Margarita and her maids around her correspond to Zhou Yonggang at the centre of the stage and those assisting him with the performance; the two dwarfs in the foreground of *Las Meninas* correspond to the two groups of conversing Chinese and Westerners in the foreground of *Pipa Ya Ji*; the nun and the courtier in the shadows observing the entire process correspond to the

large audience with their backs to us, watching the concert; in *Las Meninas*, a man of unclear intent stands at the doorway in the background, uncertain whether he is coming or going, paralleling the man standing in the central aisle of *Pipa Ya Ji*, whose intention to attend the concert or merely being in the church is ambiguous. The court painter Velázquez is mirrored by Zhang Zhiying's signature and seal in the lower right corner of *Pipa Ya Ji*, as well as the textual description at the top of the image—both highlight the presence of the artists themselves.

What we need to ask is, what corresponds to that magical mirror in *Las Meninas*? Where are King Philip IV and his queen, reflected in the mirror, and who do they correspond to? In *Pipa Ya Ji*, is there an element that, as Foucault revealed, “the true centre symbolises sovereignty because it is occupied by King Philip IV and his wife”²²²? Further, we must ask whether the true protagonist of this pictorial is really Zhou Yonggang. To discuss this issue, we need to return to the auditory experience.

From the text stating “the audience included numerous foreign missionaries, consuls from various countries, and merchants, numbering in the hundreds” and observing the audience depicted in the pictorial, it is evident that this concert was primarily aimed at a Western audience, comprising upper-class individuals, dignitaries, and elites. So, how did Chinese music sound to Western ears? Or, in the words of Thomas Irvine (2020), “How did China sound in the (Western) imperial ear?” In his monograph *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*²²³, Irvine analyses the works of three prominent European music scholars: Charles Burney, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, and Adolf Bernhard Marx. These scholars, significant figures in European music historiography, consistently expressed dissatisfaction and criticism towards Chinese music and its history in their writings. Irvine points out that their disdain for Chinese music stemmed from its incompatibility with their understanding of musical development, which, fundamentally, was aligned with the so-called developmental model of European history at that time.²²⁴

Ironically, none of these scholars had actually heard Chinese music or visited China. Their impressions and judgments about Chinese music were mostly based on scores recorded by Western missionaries and musically educated travellers and merchants. They never experienced the harmonious blend of different materials in Chinese musical instruments, never heard the diverse and unpredictable timbres and tones that the guqin can produce at the same pitch, and were unaware of the vast array of musicians, musical events, and compositions throughout Chinese history. They knew nothing about the brilliant and rich musical culture and history spanning over five thousand years. Based on a few notations, they hastily condemned “Chinese music,” asserting that European music should eliminate the rigid Chinese music, or at least

²²² Foucault, M. (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, pp.45.

²²³ Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press, pp.5

²²⁴ Ibid. pp.4

erase it from the narrative of world music history. And indeed, they executed this view—owing to their prestigious reputations in European music academia and their control over the narrative, such opinions deeply influenced European listeners of their time and even today. Regrettably, no matter how the music heard by those upper-class European audiences at the pipa solo concert in the Shanghai Methodist Church defied their expectations and perceptions of "Chinese music," it could not change the entrenched impression of "Chinese music" in the European mind at the time. In 19th century Europe, the ideas that Chinese music was "atonal," that Chinese people had "no musical concept," and that Chinese music was "terrifying" were not only widespread but mainstream views.²²⁵

In *Las Meninas*, a mirror reflects the king and queen, subtly yet clearly signalling to the world who the true rulers in the painting are. Foucault, at the end of his essay, asserts that the real authority in *Las Meninas* is King Philip IV, and therefore, "the original protagonist status (Princess Margarita) is cancelled".²²⁶ Undoubtedly, the king possesses the actual power over the painter and this portrait, as he is the one who determines whether the painting is displayed or if another should be commissioned.

I believe that the "mirror" in *Pipa Ya Ji* is the Methodist Church—it stands as a symbol of Western imperialistic and colonial expansion into China. From the influx of opium to the Opium Wars, from the drug trade to territorial concessions and indemnities, from the signing of the *Treaty of Nanjing* to the carving out of foreign concessions in Shanghai—these conditions are integral to the existence of this Methodist Church in the "International Settlement." The grander and more majestic the church appears in the painting, the more pronounced the voice of colonialism. Furthermore, we must consider what the Chinese readers who purchased this pictorial might think—do they feel proud that Chinese music is appreciated by "foreign masters"? Are they captivated by the church's grandeur? Or do they perceive the church's provision of a performance venue for Chinese music as an act of generosity? Yet, as Foucault cautioningly remarked: "The generosity of the mirror is feigned; perhaps it conceals as much as it reveals, if not more".²²⁷

Irvine (2020) posits that within the narrative of world music history, many works by European music scholars, similar to those previously mentioned, are steeped in a cross-cultural, cross-historical salon. This group includes ancient Greeks, Renaissance Italians, and nineteenth-century Britons, who collectively defined which music "rose" and which "fell" in the annals of world music.²²⁸ Their arrogance and prejudice, much like the authority held by King Philip IV and his queen, greatly misled the Western world's understanding of Chinese music at the time and, through their prestigious

²²⁵ Gong, Hongyu. (2008). Missionaries and Chinese Music: The Case of William Soothill. *Huangzhong - Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*, (001), 139.

²²⁶ Foucault, M. (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, pp.49.

²²⁷ Foucault, M. (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, pp.51.

²²⁸ Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press, pp.158

reputations, controlled the narrative and defined "Chinese music" within the global music history discourse.

In *Las Meninas*, there is a blind spot, which Foucault describes: "The painter is staring at a point... and we ourselves are that point. Therefore, what he sees is doubly invisible."²²⁹ Similarly, in *Pipa Ya Ji*, there is a double inaudibility: the European audience, who have never directly experienced Chinese music, are misled by erroneous teachings, making Chinese music inaudible in their perception; at the same time, the subject of "Chinese music," exemplified by Zhou Yonggang's pipa music, is excluded from the narrative framework of world music history led by European writers.

4.3 The Meta-pictures Narrative of *Pipa Yaji*

The meta-image of *Las Meninas* shows us the brutality of Spanish colonialism and the death knell of the empire's decline. Similarly, the meta-image of *Pipa Ya Ji* highlights the oppression and disdain of "Eurocentrism" towards Chinese music. But we must always remember Marx's reminder that we need to repeatedly consider that the "mirror" is a "reflection of specific phenomena of the entire production and social relations".²³⁰ Therefore, the story of *Pipa Ya Ji* does not stop here. We need to clarify the social relationships of at least three key figures: pipa master Zhou Yonggang; the founder of *Shenbao* and *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, British merchant Ernest Major; and the leader of the Shanghai Methodist Church, American missionary Young John Allen.

In the second paragraph of the text accompanying *Pipa Ya Ji*, two pieces of news are actually reported. The first concerns Zhou Yonggang competing in a pipa duel at Yeshilou Teahouse, and the second pertains to the event depicted in the painting. The word "the year before last" in the text seems to be a filler. According to a report in *Shenbao* (Figure 2-11)²³¹, Zhou Yonggang's pipa duel at Yeshilou was reported on September 8, 1884, nearly six years before his performance at the Methodist Church in 1890. In the autumn of 1884, pipa master Chen Zijin invited his friend Zhou Yonggang to organize a pipa duel at Yeshilou Teahouse for one month, announcing: "If anyone can defeat me within three moves, I will present them with my family heirloom, a zitan pipa".²³² From Zhou Yonggang's subsequent statement published in *Shenbao*, it can be seen that during the month-long challenge, no one could defeat him,

²²⁹ Foucault, M. (1994). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, pp.52.

²³⁰ Marx, K. (1976). *Capital: A critique of political economy (Vol. 1)*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1867). Refer to pages 144, 150, 155, 164, 165, 184, 205.

²³¹ Original report on the pipa duel: "Last year in Suzhou, there was an elegant gathering of qin at the Shen Garden, attended by many listeners. For the glory of ancient music. Recently, I heard that Mr. Zhou Yonggang from Cixi and Mr. Chen Zijin from Songjiang held a pipa gathering at Yeshilou on Sizai Road. It was a month-long event, and anyone who could win would be awarded a zitan pipa. It is imagined that the performances were highly competitive, captivating the audience, and not allowing 'Mo Xie Yulun Pao' to monopolize the praise. Details have been published in later reports, so they will not be repeated here."

琵琶赌胜报道原文：“去年吴门听桐逸史设琴会于申园，一时听者满座矣。为广陵散尚在人间。近闻慈溪周君永纲，松江陈君子敬，设琵琶会於四再路之也是楼。以一月期，有能赌胜者，即以紫檀槽相赠。想届时六么兢奏，四座倾听，当不使摩洁郁轮袍得以专美於前也。其详已登後幅告白兹不复赘。”

²³² Wang Lin. (1990). A Collection of "Elegant Names" of Pipa Masters through the Ages. *Chinese Music* (4), 2.

earning him the title of "The Unchallenged Champion of Shenjiang (申江独占魁, Shenjiang is another name for Shanghai)".²³³

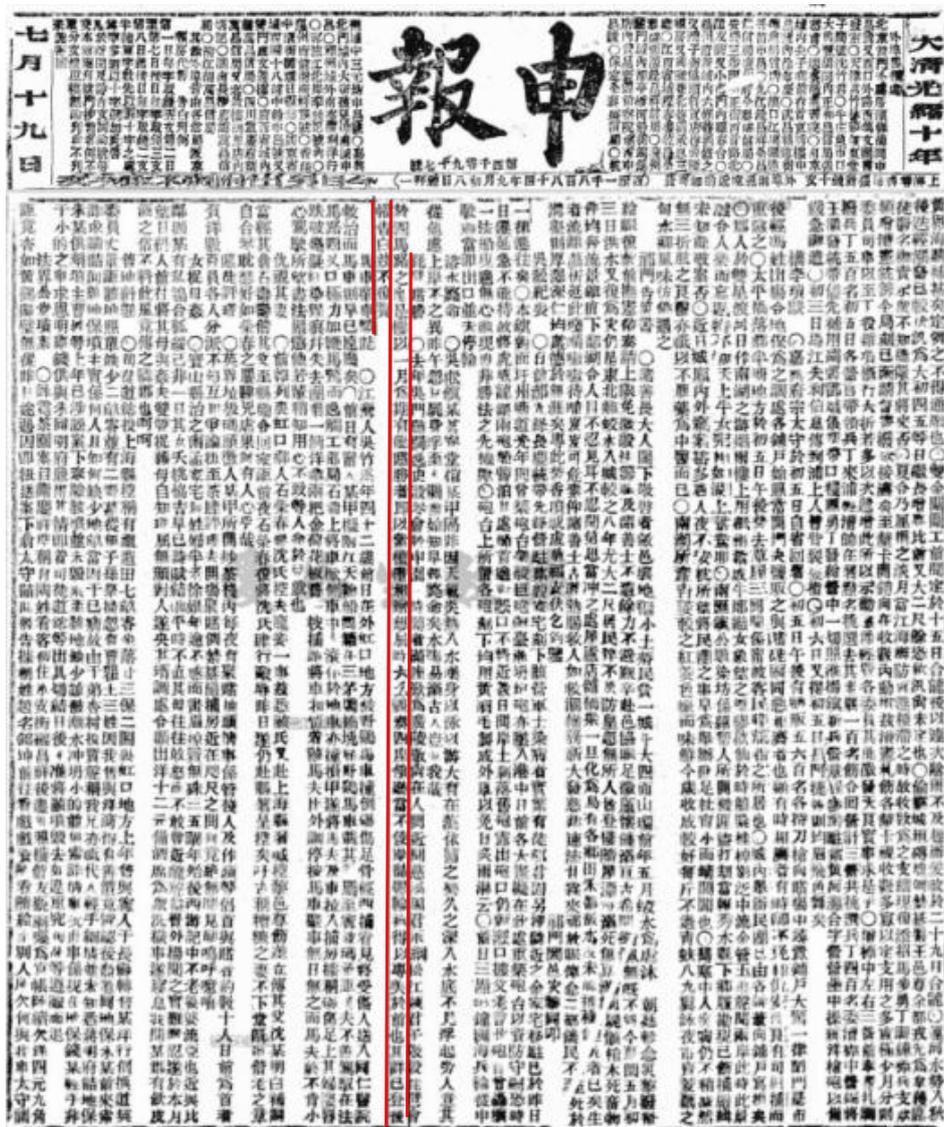


Figure 2-11. Shen Bao, September 8, 1884

Ernest Major was born in 1841 in London to a family of a military clerk. According to Wagner (2008), it is speculated that Major's family was somewhat influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, holding a cosmopolitan perspective²³⁴, which believed that to engage with the people of a country, one should understand their culture and speak the local language.²³⁵ This was in sharp contrast to the arrogance and ignorance displayed by many Europeans involved in Chinese affairs at the time.²³⁶ Major developed an early enthusiasm for Chinese matters

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Hancock, D. (1997). *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785*. Cambridge University Press, pp.386.

²³⁵ Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*. Sunny Press, pp.60.

²³⁶ Ibid, pp. 63.

and first worked for a shipping company in Hong Kong in 1861. Four years later, he started import-export trade in Ningbo and soon moved to Shanghai. In 1872, Major transitioned from trade to publishing, founding *Shenbao* and establishing one of the foremost Chinese publishing houses of the time—*Shenbaoguan*, along with Shenchang Bookstore, which had a national sales network.²³⁷ In 1878, Major introduced lithographic technology, setting up the Dianshizhai Lithographic Printing Bureau and Shenchang Calligraphy and Painting Studio within the *Shenbaoguan* system, paving the way for future image publishing. Initially, Dianshizhai did not publish pictorials but entered the market by selling reproductions of famous artworks, imitations, art reproductions, and lithographic copies. After multiple attempts and several failures, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was finally launched nationwide on May 8, 1884.²³⁸

It is necessary to highlight Major's several unsuccessful attempts prior to publishing *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, as these attempts illustrate his changing approach to the tone of the pictorial. Perhaps influenced by *The Illustrated London News* and similar publications, Major placed an advertisement in *Shenbao* in 1876, stating: *Shenbaoguan* (申报馆 *Shenbao* Office) has commissioned Western artists to create a beautiful album of world customs and cultures, priced at 20 cents per copy, and those interested should purchase quickly.²³⁹ Although this beautiful album was in high demand, with orders surpassing supply and causing delivery delays, the "Huan Ying Pictorial" (寰瀛画报) attempt lasted only a few issues due to high costs and lack of sustainability.²⁴⁰ It was only after Major introduced lithographic technology, which significantly reduced costs; stopped employing British artists and instead relied on local Chinese artists (primarily those who painted Taohuawu New Year prints in Jiangnan); shortened the time for submissions; and enriched the content with popular stories, strange news, and current events²⁴¹, along with introducing technological advances from the European Industrial Revolution and new Western gadgets, that *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, a publication for Chinese people to read about themselves, emerged. Furthermore, inspired by *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, many Chinese initiated their own pictorials, such as *Little Monthly* (小孩月报), *New Illustrated News* (画图新报), and *True Record Pictorial* (真相画报), some of which contributed to the enlightenment and promotion of the Chinese democratic revolution.²⁴²

Much like Major, who displayed keen acumen and execution in the publishing industry, was the American Methodist missionary Young John Allen. Allen was dispatched to China in 1860 by the American Methodist Missionary Society, but later turned to secular work due to financial difficulties,²⁴³ including teaching at the Guangfang Yan Institute (广方言馆), trading

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ Ibid, pp. 65.

²³⁹ *Shenbao* advertisement, May 26, 1876, pp. 1.

²⁴⁰ Ge Boxi. (1988). "Huan Ying Pictorial" Study. *Journalism and Communication Studies* (1), 6, pp. 185

²⁴¹ For instance, the first few issues coincided with the Sino-French War, resulting in a substantial amount of war reports and editorials.

²⁴² A Ying. (1958). *Brief History of Ming and Qing Literary Journals*. Classical Literature Publishing House, pp. 90

²⁴³ Ma Guangxia. (2012). *Research on the Work of the Methodist Church in China (1848-1939)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Shandong University), p. 44.

agricultural products, and serving as a translator.²⁴⁴ By the early 1870s, when his financial situation improved, allowing him to resume missionary work, nearly a decade of varied experiences in China had reshaped Allen's initial missionary strategy. Ma Guangxia (2012) in *Research on the Work of the Methodist Church in China (1848-1939)* outlines several aspects of Allen's evolved missionary approach: firstly, transitioning from conservative "direct evangelism" to "indirect evangelism" by broadening his social network, making connections with upper-class individuals, and engaging in publishing and academic exchanges; secondly, advocating the combination of Confucianism with Christian teachings, termed "Confucius plus Jesus"; thirdly, prioritizing "Western studies" and educational efforts, especially women's education (this is also reflected in the focus of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*). Consequently, he implemented three significant measures: establishing church universities, translating and writing books and newspapers, and founding a translation bureau, creating a new "Sino-Western integration" and "top-down" missionary paradigm.²⁴⁵

Since establishing the *Church News* in 1868, later renamed the *Globe Magazine* in 1874, Young John Allen expanded his social network, which included notable Chinese officials such as Feng Guifen and Guo Songtao.²⁴⁶ In addition, Western missionaries in China contributed articles to the magazine. Bennett (1983) identifies contributors with a keen interest in and deep study of Chinese music, including Ernst Faber, William E. Soothill, and Timothy Richard.²⁴⁷ We might even speculate that among the "numerous missionaries, consuls from various countries, and merchants, numbering in the hundreds," mentioned in the text of *Pipa Ya Ji*, some of these individuals were present. Furthermore, it is plausible to guess that the Western missionary who invited Zhou Yonggang to perform at the Methodist Church, and the Westerner on Zhou's right on stage, was Young John Allen himself.

While Young John Allen and Ernest Major had different starting points for their work in China, they shared commonalities in their approach, especially in their attitudes towards Chinese culture, which were distinctly different from those of music scholars like Burney. Their work demonstrates a strong commitment to understanding and respecting diverse cultures. It was likely due to the open and collaborative attitude of Westerners like Allen towards Chinese culture that *Dianshizhai Pictorial* could capture the scene of Sino-Western musical exchange. Similarly, without Major's support for the Chinese illustrated publishing industry, *Pipa Ya Ji* would not have come into being.

Thus far, the meta-image of *Pipa Ya Ji* narrates two stories, or rather two sides of the same story, illustrating the markedly different outcomes of "refusing exchange" and "embracing exchange" in the context of Sino-Western musical culture. Through the exploration of the history and social relationships of the three key figures, it becomes clear that the existence of

²⁴⁴ W. B. Nance, (1956) *Soochow University United Board for Christian Colleges in China* 150 Fifth Avenue. New York, pp. 13.

²⁴⁵ Ma Guangxia. (2012). *Research on the Work of the Methodist Church in China (1848-1939)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Shandong University), pp. 50-52.

²⁴⁶ Adrian A. Bennett, (1983). *Missionary Journalist in China: Young J. Allen and His Magazines, (1868-1883)*, University of Georgia Press, pp.156-157.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

the *Pipa Ya Ji* pictorial itself serves as a powerful rebuttal to the Eurocentric perspectives held by authors like Burney.

This chapter, employing an iconographic approach, examines the concept of "dual soundscapes" in the Shanghai concessions during the late 19th century, as illustrated through a series of images from *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. From the colonisers' use of military bands to assert "sonic territories" to the heavy reliance on "invented traditions" in ceremonial events to display their "acoustic authority", we observe a dual power structure in which one force supersedes the other. Yet, as the "meta-picture" method of analysis is introduced, it becomes evident that soon after the establishment of the concessions, the power dynamics and soundscapes in Shanghai rapidly shifted beyond this binary model, evolving into a much more complex, multi-layered social structure.

Chapter Three:

The Imagined "Western World" in Dianshizhai Pictorial

In just what sense are there many worlds? What distinguishes genuine from spurious worlds? What are worlds made of? How are they made? What role do symbols play in the making? And how is worldmaking related to knowing? These questions must be faced even if full and final answers are far off.

--Nelson Goodman. *Ways of worldmaking*.²⁴⁸

At the end of the 19th century, Shanghai, as a frontier city in China's march towards modernisation, saw a variety of entertainment activities within its cosmopolitan International Settlement become windows through which people understood and constructed the world. Nelson Goodman's "Worldmaking" theory found vivid practice here: forms such as theater, cinema, and concerts not only enriched the cultural life of the citizens but also, through newspapers and pictorials, extended these interpretations of the "world" to all of China. In this process, Shanghai not only became a capital of entertainment but also a center of intellectual and cultural exchange. Indeed, at that time, the traditional Chinese mindset of "Under the vast sky, no land is not the emperor's land" (普天之下,莫非王土) was seriously challenged. Nevertheless, as Goodman asked, "What are worlds made of," this became a crucial topic for Chinese people in their quest for "new knowledge".

As demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, there exists a "pluralistic world" or "multiple realities" both within and outside the concession areas. As Goodman suggests, various cultures, art forms, and even individual modes of perception are constantly engaged in "worldmaking".²⁴⁹ This chapter, therefore, will examine how *Dianshizhai Pictorial* employs visual and textual narratives through general news (新闻), observation news (见闻), bizarre news (奇闻), to present an exotic and distinct "Western world" to the Chinese audience of the time. It will also explore the implications of these worldmaking methods for the history of Sino-Western cultural interactions in the late 19th century.

1. A Worldmaking Series in Dianshizhai Pictorial

The concept of "worldmaking" was first introduced by Nelson Goodman in his seminal work, *Ways of Worldmaking*. This important philosophical viewpoint argues that the world is not a singular, objectively existing entity but is constructed through various human activities and symbolic systems. Goodman divides worldmaking into five processes: 1) Composition and Decomposition, 2) Weighting, 3) Ordering, 4) Deletion and Supplementation, and 5)

²⁴⁸ Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of worldmaking* (Vol. 51). Hackett Publishing. pp.1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, pp.3.

Deformation.²⁵⁰ This theory explores how symbolic systems and cultural practices allow individuals to continually construct and transform the "world" as they perceive it. Thus, the examination of which cultural practices, symbols, and individuals bestow meaning is key to understanding how Chinese people in the late 19th century comprehended the world. This understanding might be revealed in a series of global travel narratives published in early 1886 in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 3-1²⁵¹

This series reports on an event that took place on the evening of 15 October 1885, where the globetrotter Yan Yongjing (hereafter referred to as Mr Yan) held a shadow play exhibition at the Shanghai Gezhi Academy (上海格致书院), showcasing pictures of famous attractions he had collected from various countries abroad. According to the pictorial's account, this was a charitable fundraising event, with each attendee paying an admission fee of fifty cents, and all funds raised were allocated to aid flood victims in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Shandong. The series was illustrated by Wu Youru (吴友如), the esteemed artist of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, who chose and explained 15 images from among the hundreds Mr Yan had brought. At the end of the series (Figure 3-1), there is an engaging depiction of the scene inside the Shanghai Gezhi Academy during Mr Yan's shadow play (which involved projected slides rather than

²⁵⁰ Ibid, pp.15-31.

²⁵¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Ji Collection, pp.46-61, 1885

traditional shadow puppetry). As shown in Figure 3-1, a globe is projected on the screen on the right side, and the audience is engrossed in Mr Yan's narration of his global travels and the diverse customs of different cultures. In the centre of the scene, a woman can be seen playing the piano as musical accompaniment to his talk. The audience is predominantly Chinese, with a significant number of young people present, likely due to the venue being the "Gezhi Academy."

The Shanghai Gezhi Academy, established in 1874, was one of the earliest modern scientific and technological schools in China. The institute was founded by British missionary John Fryer and renowned Chinese chemist Xu Shou (徐寿), and it was located on Fuzhou Road in Shanghai. The term "Gezhi" is derived from the phrase "gé wù zhì zhī"(格物致知) in *The Great Learning*, one of the classics in the *Book of Rites*(礼记·大学), meaning "to investigate things and thereby acquire knowledge." The establishment of the Shanghai Gezhi Academy marked the birth of the first educational institution in China dedicated to the study of "Gezhi," aiming to cultivate talents capable of mastering and researching Western scientific and technological methods, crafts, and manufacturing principles. The academy adopted a Western educational system and curriculum, employing Western teachers to deliver lessons, and integrated experimental teaching to enhance students' understanding and application of scientific knowledge. The curriculum covered various fields such as mining, electricity, surveying, engineering, steam engines, and manufacturing, with a strong emphasis on mathematics as a foundational subject and the integration of theory with practice. John Fryer not only taught physics and chemistry at the academy but also actively translated and published numerous scientific books, contributing to the widespread dissemination of Western scientific knowledge in China.²⁵² Xu Shou, a pioneer of modern chemistry in China, in addition to teaching chemistry courses, formulated the principles for the Chinese translation of chemical element names, which are still in use today and have had a profound impact on Chinese chemical education and research. The British Consul-General in Shanghai at the time, Horatio Nelson Lay, also provided support during the establishment of the academy.²⁵³

Additionally, the Shanghai Gezhi Academy nurtured numerous talents in science and technology, such as Xu Jianyin (徐建寅), who compiled multiple Western chemistry texts; Zhan Tianyou (詹天佑), known as the "Father of Chinese Railways"; and Hua Hengfang (华蘅芳), a modern Chinese mathematician and astronomer who wrote *New Elements of Mathematics* (算学新编). These individuals contributed significantly to the advancement of modern science and educational innovation in China.

Emphasising the venue of this event is essential. Unlike most entertainment scenes depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, this was not held in a theatre, teahouse, opera house, storytelling venue, or a street where common people watched "Western scenes"(西洋景), nor was it a place for magic or circus performances. Instead, it took place in a school dedicated to

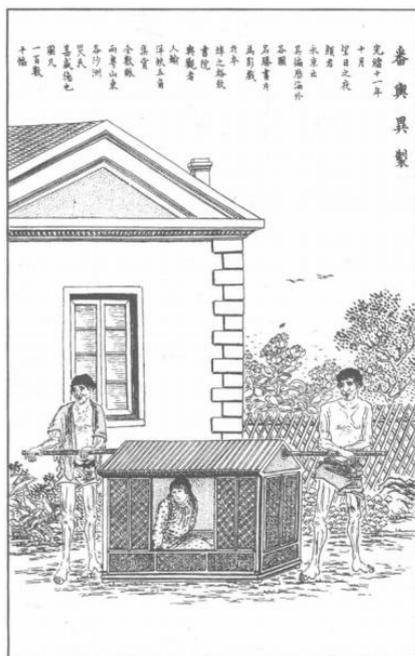
²⁵² Wright, D. (1996). John Fryer and the Shanghai polytechnic: Making space for science in nineteenth-century China. *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 29(1), pp.3.

²⁵³ Gerson, J. J. (1966). *Horatio Nelson Lay: His Role in British Relations With China 1849-1865*. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (United Kingdom). pp.45.

teaching natural sciences and modern industrial technology—the Shanghai Gezhi Academy. Rather than a “performance,” it was more akin to a presentation with musical accompaniment, with the over one hundred scenic illustrations collected by Mr Yan from around the world serving as the content of his lecture. However, upon closely examining all the content selected by the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* artists, one may find that the narrative conveyed through images and text in the pictorial might differ from the understanding of the "world" that the speaker intended to convey.

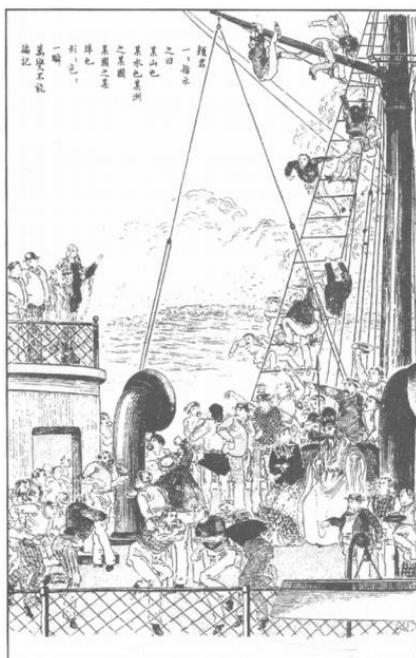
1.1 The World Travel Route Map

Here are the literal translations of the text narrations from the pictorials:



Foreign Lands, Diverse Customs: Mr Yan embarked on his voyage by sailing from his hometown, following China's borders, and first reached Labuan, a British-controlled island near the equator. The island's residents have dark skin and follow Islamic customs. The affluent and women travel in palanquins, which are square-shaped with a downward droop. The palanquins have poles fitted at the top and are carried by two men. When fatigued from extended journeys, they rest in the middle of the road. The rich employ people to carry their palanquins, while the poor and lowly are the ones who carry them, reflecting a common practice throughout the world.

(Figure 3-2)



Crossing the Line Ceremony: When Western ships cross the equator, the sailors must dress up as the Dragon King and perform a play. They sing without any melody and dance without any rhythm, frolicking and leaping about like children. This exuberant behaviour is thought to please the sea god and is considered highly amusing.

(Figure 3-3)



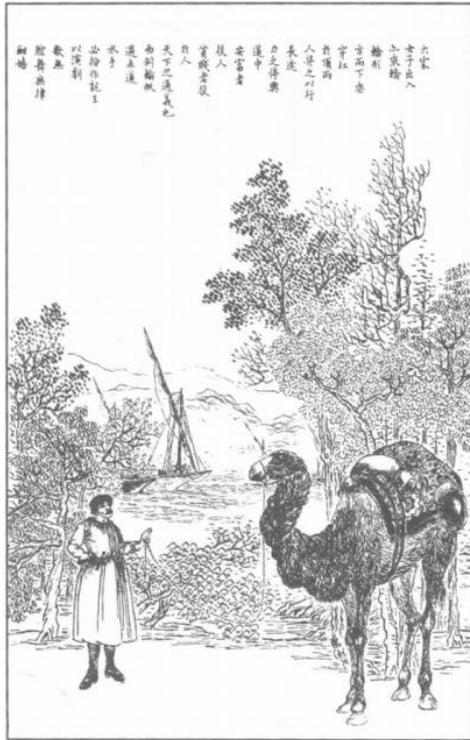
Training Monkeys in Temples: Upon reaching India after departing this area, they discovered temples dedicated to monkeys located inland. These temples are imposing and splendid, housing numerous monkeys revered by the local populace as gods. The tall individual adorned in attire embellished with jewels and stars is Prince of Wales Edward VII, with a few attendants standing respectfully beside him.

(Figure 3-4)



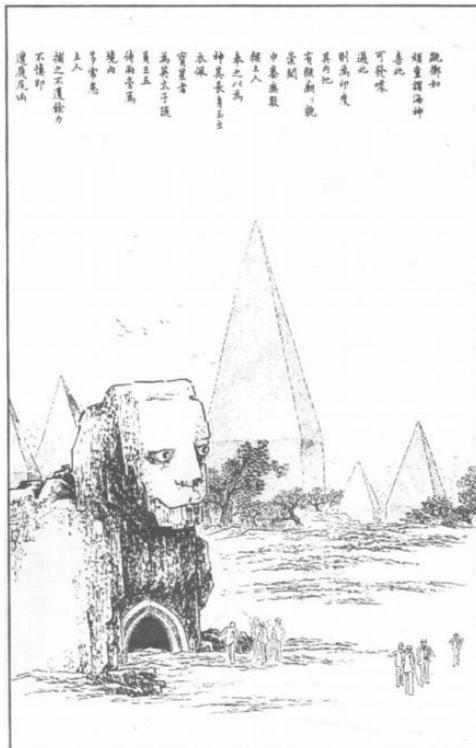
Hunting Ferocious Tigers: India is home to many tigers, and the locals spare no effort in capturing them. Carelessness can easily lead to attacks by these tigers. The method of controlling these beasts to ensure the safety of the populace remains similar to ancient times.

(Figure 3-5)



Caravans of Goods: Travelling west from India across the Red Sea leads to Egypt, which is located on the western side of the Red Sea. Most of Egypt consists of arid land. Except for the port of Mersa Matruh, through which one enters Egypt from India, ships cannot navigate the terrain. Therefore, all transportation relies on camels, often referred to as "ships of the desert." It is said that when cattle and horses catch the scent of camels, they immediately collapse and die.

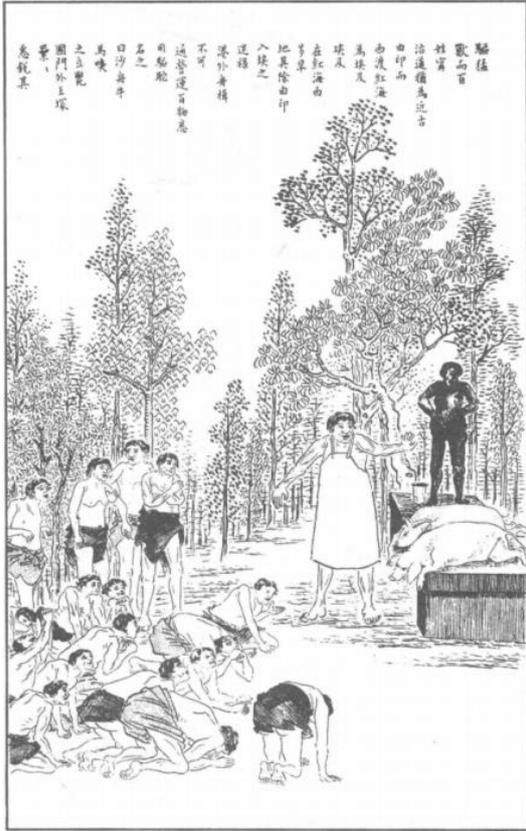
(Figure 3-6)



A Thousand-Year-Old Lion Temple: Beyond the entrance to a particular nation lies a multitude of royal tombs, notable for their sharply pointed tops. Atop one such tomb rests an ancient temple hewn from stone, with a colossal face resembling a lion carved into its exterior. The craftsmanship of the builders is remarkable, marking it as an artefact from a bygone era, dating back hundreds or even thousands of years.

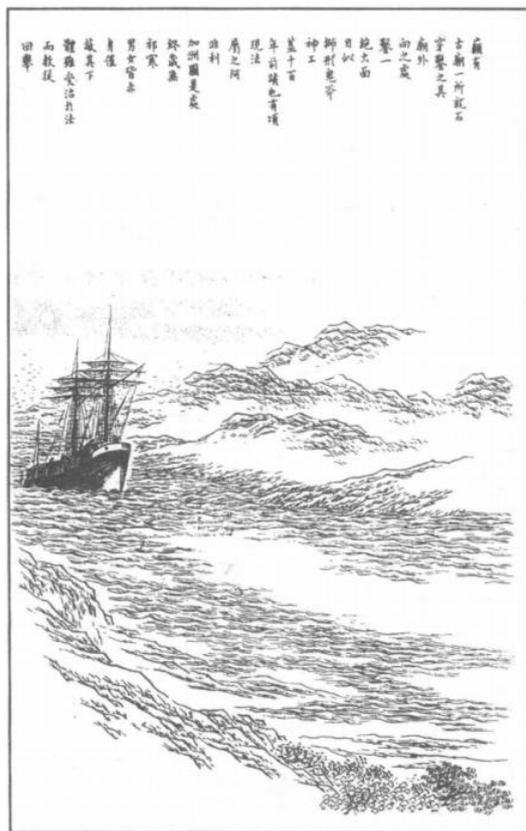
(Figure 3-7)

Mr Yan set sail from the Chinese border, heading south along the way, passing through Labuan Island near the equator in Indonesia, before reaching India. From India, he travelled west, crossing the Red Sea to arrive in Egypt.



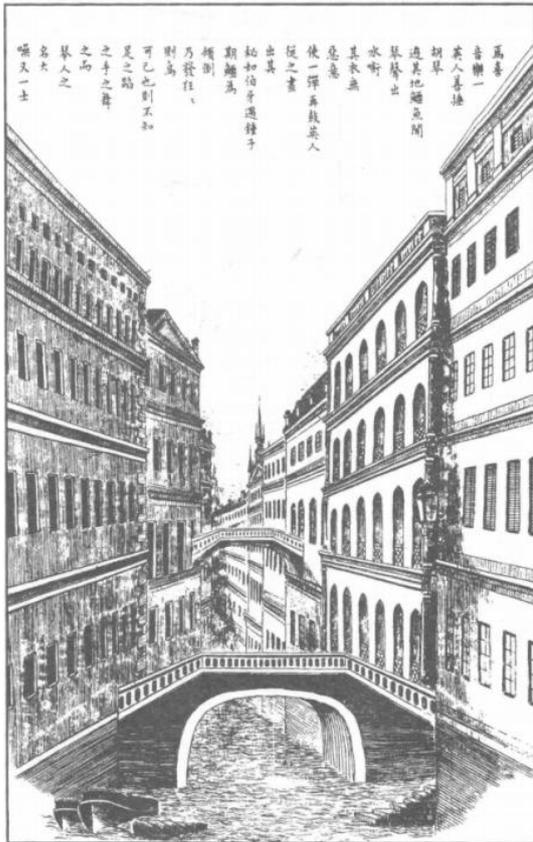
Islamic Devotion in Africa: The next illustration depicts scenes from French-controlled Africa, where severe cold is unknown throughout the year. Men and women typically go unclothed, covering only their lower bodies. Although under French rule, they practise Islam. They are not skilled in literature or politics, and their customs are simple and primitive, which makes governing them relatively straightforward. This image shows a scene of their religious ceremonies.

(Figure 3-8)



The Suez Canal: The next illustration showcases the Suez Canal, which was excavated by the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps. The construction required a substantial financial investment and allows ships to travel between Europe and Asia, reducing travel time by five to six months. Even today, Europeans benefit from this canal and continuously praise de Lesseps for his achievement. Great figures achieve great fame, while lesser figures achieve minor recognition; it all depends on how individuals establish themselves in society.

(Figure 3-9)



Venice, the Water City of Italy: Continuing into the Mediterranean Sea, we reach the northern shores of Italy, a renowned country. The capital city features towering buildings with solid foundations surrounded by water, making boats the primary mode of transportation. Could this be the legendary "land of clouds and water"?

(Figure 3-12)

The traveller passed through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean, beginning his European journey. He toured Venice in Italy, Spain to the west of the Mediterranean, then travelled through Portugal, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia, before turning towards Germany and eventually reaching Austria, exploring the countries across the European continent.



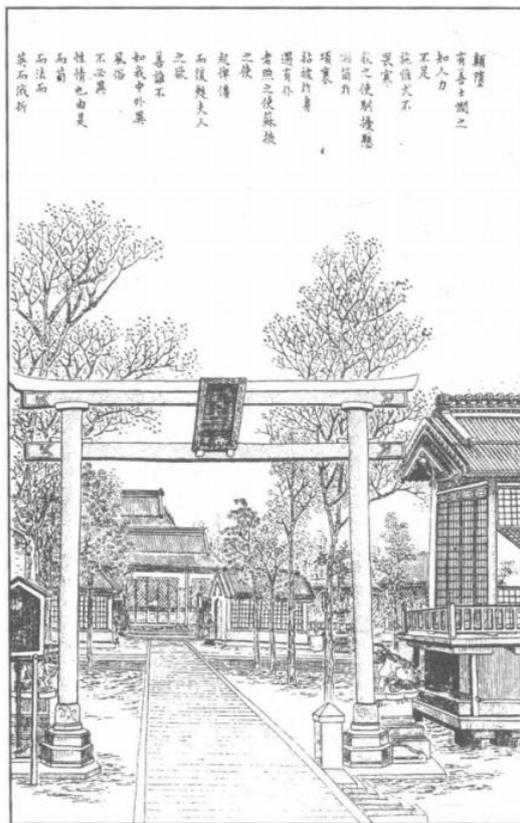
Rescue on the Snowy Mountain: To the west of the Mediterranean lies Spain, a country with mountains perpetually covered in snow. Travellers often slip and fall in these treacherous conditions. A kind-hearted individual, understanding the limitations of human efforts and recognising that only dogs are impervious to the cold, trained them for rescue purposes. These dogs were taught to be obedient and were equipped with small barrels of spirits around their necks and blankets over their bodies. When encountering fallen travellers, the dogs would warm them, help them regain consciousness, and support them as they revived their stiffened bodies. Who would not wish to perform such good deeds? Despite the differences in customs between cultures, human nature remains the same.

(Figure 3-13)



Native Americans: Sailing west across the Atlantic brings us to the Americas, where the indigenous people depicted are generally dark-skinned, akin to charred coal, and perceived as being as naïve as deer and pigs. Since the establishment of the nation by George Washington, these indigenous people have found themselves with no place to settle, leading them to retreat into the interior. To this day, the region's wildlife, including fierce beasts and apes, retains its primeval characteristics. The indigenous people do not engage in agriculture, instead relying on hunting for sustenance. They do not raise silkworms or grow hemp, which results in a lack of clothing and a state of poverty.

(Figure 3-14)



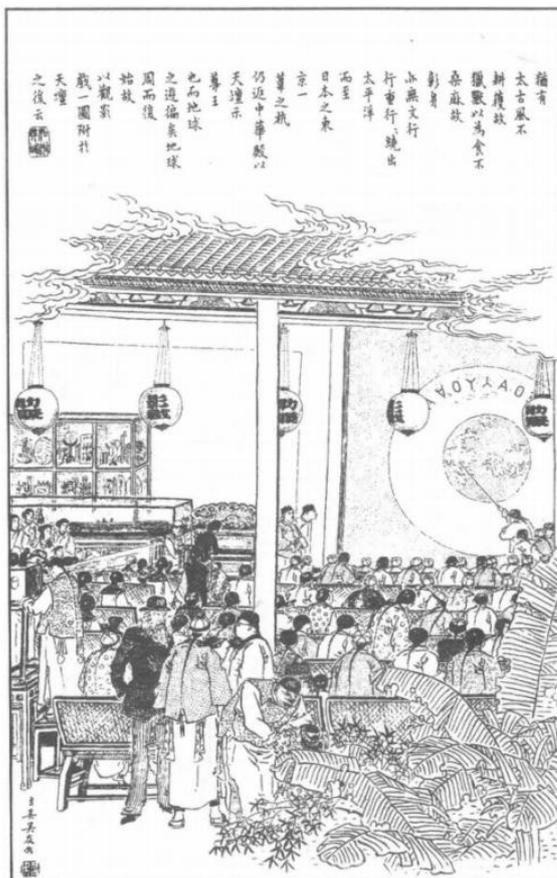
Old Scenes of Tokyo: After many journeys, we circumnavigate the Pacific Ocean and reach Tokyo, Japan.

(Figure 3-15)



Reverence at the Temple of Heaven:
 After a lengthy journey, the traveller finally returns to the Chinese imperial court, symbolised by the Temple of Heaven, thus completing the global voyage.

(Figure 3-16)



Shared Shadow Play: Just as the Earth moves in cycles, the illustration of the shadow play is placed after the Temple of Heaven.

(Figure 3-17)

Based on the descriptions above, a clear route of the global journey can be outlined: starting from the borders of China, the traveller sets sail southward, passing by Labuan Island in Indonesia near the equator, and proceeds to India. From India, the journey continues westward across the Red Sea to Egypt, passing through French Sudan, traversing the Suez Canal, and entering the Mediterranean Sea, reaching Venice in Italy. The route then heads to Spain, and through Portugal, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia, before turning towards Germany and Austria, visiting various countries across the European continent. After this, the journey continues westward across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, and then across the Pacific Ocean to Tokyo, Japan, before finally returning to the capital of China.

What is perplexing is that, based on the images and text from the pictorial, it seems challenging to find content that reflects "scientific" elements or aligns with the scientific principles advocated by the Shanghai Gezhi Academy. There is a noticeable absence of explanations about the "natural world," such as the idea that "the physical shape of the Earth is an oblate spheroid" or explanations about the equatorial region's high temperatures being due to direct sunlight and prolonged daylight hours. Instead, the 15 illustrations chosen by the artists highlight a "cultural world," where the poor still bear the palanquins of the wealthy, where the scale of one's reputation correlates with their societal contributions, and where the acquisition of skills is emphasised as a means to secure one's livelihood. Regardless of the locale, many altruistic individuals are eager to perform good deeds—topics frequently found in other pieces of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

1.2 Worldmaking in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*

Evidently, when we examine the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* coverage of this global travel series, it becomes clear that it significantly deviates from Mr Yan's original lecture content, having been deconstructed and reinterpreted by the artist Wu Youru. This prompts us to further ask: "How is worldmaking related to knowing?" To answer this question, we must follow in the footsteps of Nelson Goodman and explore his interpretation of worldmaking.

Goodman presents five ways of worldmaking. The first is **composition and decomposition**, which encompasses the processes of breaking down complex objects into basic components and then reassembling these components into a unified whole. This process utilises labels—such as names, predicates, gestures, and images—enabling the classification and naming of elements as people perceive and describe the world.²⁵⁴ He also discusses the notion of "metaphorical transfer," providing an example of synaesthesia: "where taste predicates are applied to sounds—may effect a double reorganisation both re-sorting the new realm of application and relating it to the old one".²⁵⁵ This means that metaphorical transfer involves applying concepts from one field to another, thereby reorganising the new field and linking it to the original one, which results in the creation of new concepts.

The second way is **weighting**. Goodman elaborates on how the disparities between different

²⁵⁴ Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of Worldmaking* (Vol. 51). Hackett Publishing. pp. 7.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 10.

worlds are not solely based on the entities they include but rather on the varying emphasis or weighting assigned to these entities. In one world, certain categories might be seen as significant or pertinent, whereas in another world, those same categories could be considered insignificant. To highlight certain categories as important or relevant, others must be viewed as less important or unrelated. Therefore, different worldviews involve not just distinct classifications of entities but also different weightings of these classifications.²⁵⁶ This variation in emphasis or weighting can lead to diverse interpretations and perceptions of the world.

Regarding the importance of **ordering** in worldmaking, Goodman states, “worlds not differing in entities or emphasis may differ in ordering; for example, the worlds of different constructional systems differ in order of derivation”.²⁵⁷ He mentions that in one image, a world is composed of lines made up of countless points, or vice versa. He argues, “these worlds differ in their derivational ordering of lines and points from the not-derivationally-ordered world of daily discourse”.²⁵⁸ Goodman emphasises that in everyday life, we almost always temporarily adopt a frame of reference to understand and describe things, but rarely do we rely on derivational foundations. By using derivation, he demonstrates the critical role of ordering in constructing and understanding the world.

Goodman uses various works of art as examples to illustrate how artists achieve worldmaking through **deletion and supplementation**. He asserts that “our capacity for overlooking is virtually unlimited, and what we do take in usually consists of significant fragments and clues that need massive supplementation”.²⁵⁹ Artists cleverly exploit this by creating images that convey a complete scene or subject with minimal detail: “a lithograph by Giacometti fully presents a walking man by sketches of nothing but the head, hands, and feet in just the right postures and positions against an expanse of blank paper; and a drawing by Katharine Sturgis conveys a hockey player in action by a single charged line”.²⁶⁰ Therefore, in the narrative of many works of art, one can often see this technique, where the deletion of some old material and the addition of new material complete the construction of one world to another.

Finally, Goodman introduces a more expansive way of worldmaking: **deformation**. He suggests that “some changes are reshapings or deformations that may according to point of view be considered either corrections or distortions”.²⁶¹ For example, visual illusions demonstrate how we deform objects during perception. However, it is precisely based on these “weaknesses” in human perception that artists can use deformation to create new visual experiences and understandings. As Goodman notes, “Picasso starting from Velázquez's *Las Meninas* and Brahms starting from a theme of Haydn's work magical variations that amount to revelations”.²⁶² Additionally, caricaturists often “go beyond overemphasis to actual

²⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 11.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 12.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 13.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 14.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 15.

²⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 16.

²⁶² Ibid.

distortion”.²⁶³

Goodman emphasises that these methods of worldmaking are not “**the way**” (the sole or definitive approach), nor are they mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they often represent an interconnected, dynamic, and ongoing process in the construction of worlds. Even though one may develop more systematic and rigorous classifications, no system is definitive.²⁶⁴ These classifications simply assist in enhancing our understanding of the world’s diversity and complexity, as well as the flexibility inherent in worldmaking. Based on the above theory, this section will explore three images from the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s global travel series related to sound and music, to decipher how the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* engages in worldmaking.

David Herman, in his article "Narrative Ways of Worldmaking," expands Goodman's theory from a narratological perspective to investigate how storytelling is used to construct, update, and alter narrative worlds. According to Herman, the four fundamental elements of narrative world creation include **situatedness, event sequencing, worldmaking/world disruption, and what it's like**. Herman focuses on how stories are initiated and states, “I suggest that configuring narrative worlds entails mapping discourse cues onto WHAT, WHERE, and WHEN dimensions of a mentally configured storyworld—dimensions whose interplay accounts for the ontological make-up and spatiotemporal profile of the world in question.”²⁶⁵

1.2.1 Two British Anecdotes

In the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s global travel series, the elements of narrative worldmaking are especially evident, particularly in the accompanying text. The first 15 illustrations in the series generally adhere to Mr Yan's travel itinerary. However, when the artist mentions two incidents in the United Kingdom, this sequence is intentionally broken, highlighting these amusing British anecdotes as a "special feature." The accompanying text includes an introductory remark: “There are two Englishmen, one skilled in playing musical instruments, and the other who made his fortune because of a cat. These two anecdotes are intriguing and serve as fascinating topics for casual conversation, illustrating the significance of skill and ingenuity.” While the author seems to tell two disparate tales, their impressive depiction of situatedness and worldmaking, as well as the narrative style rich with the characteristics of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, merit closer examination.

The text accompanying figure 3-11 states: “an Englishman, lonely and destitute in his youth, made a living as a chef but became dissatisfied with his work and wanted to leave. He learned of a country suffering from a severe rat problem and used his resources to purchase a cat, which he took to the king. The king, recognising his service, rewarded him with money and granted him an official position.” The figure from British history most likely associated with this narrative is Richard Whittington, or Dick Whittington (1354–1423), a prominent English

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 17.

²⁶⁵ Herman, D. (2009). Narrative ways of worldmaking. *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*, pp. 74.

merchant and politician who served three times as the Mayor of London during the 14th and 15th centuries.²⁶⁶ Richard hailed from Gloucestershire and was born into a prosperous family; his father was Sir William Whittington. The figure of Dick Whittington in British folklore, however, is a highly romanticised and fictionalised version of his story.

Legend has it that Dick Whittington was an impoverished orphan who grew up hearing stories of London, a city reputedly so wealthy that its streets were paved with gold. With this dream in mind, Dick set off to seek his fortune in London. However, upon arrival, he found that the reality was quite different from the tales he had heard. Struggling to survive, he wandered the streets until he collapsed in front of the house of a wealthy merchant named Mr Fitzwarren. Mr Fitzwarren, moved by Dick's dire circumstances, took him in and gave him a job as a kitchen helper. Unfortunately, the cook treated Dick cruelly and often abused him. Dick lived in the attic, where he was constantly disturbed by rats and mice at night. To combat this issue, he spent his last remaining coins on a cat that excelled at catching mice, significantly improving his situation. When Mr Fitzwarren planned a trading voyage, he allowed his servants to invest their belongings. Dick had nothing but his cat and asked the merchant to take it with him on the journey. Despite the ridicule from others, Mr Fitzwarren agreed. The ship eventually arrived at the Barbary Coast in North Africa (in present-day Morocco), where the locals were suffering from a severe rat infestation that even reached the king's palace. Hearing this, the merchant presented Dick's cat, which swiftly dealt with the problem. The king, overjoyed, offered a substantial amount of gold for the cat. Upon returning to London, Mr Fitzwarren handed the fortune over to Dick, making him a wealthy man. Dick used his newfound wealth to establish his own business and became a prosperous merchant in London. He eventually served as the Mayor of London three times.²⁶⁷

Of course, we cannot expect the artist to recount this story in such detail, and the intention behind choosing this particular story is clear: to emphasise the importance of skill, whether it be human commercial acumen or the cat's ability to catch mice. This message remains significant, despite the misleading notion that the king granted him an official position. This story may have been selected because it fits the "rags to riches" narrative pattern commonly found in *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* anecdotes. Furthermore, it reflects elements of Buddhist thought, such as the Four Noble Truths²⁶⁸ and the Six Perfections²⁶⁹—through enduring and transcending hardship, one ultimately attains happiness and liberation. Based on this understanding, the storyworld does not remain with Dick Whittington in England. For Chinese readers, the core of the story likely resonates more deeply, as it instantaneously draws them back into a familiar psychological comfort zone within their own cultural understanding.

²⁶⁶ McCarthy, M. (2022). *Citizen of London: Richard Whittington-The Boy Who Would Be Mayor*. Hurst Publishers. pp.35-39.

²⁶⁷ Hershkoff, H. (2005). *The Dick Whittington Story: Theories of Poor Relief, Social Ambition, and Possibilities for Class Transformation*. Tex. Wesleyan L. Rev., 12, 67.

²⁶⁸ Four Noble Truths: The Truth of Suffering (Dukkha); The Truth of the Cause of Suffering (Samudaya); The Truth of the End of Suffering (Nirodha); The Truth of the Path to the End of Suffering (Magga).

²⁶⁹ Six Perfections: Generosity (Dāna); Morality (Śīla); Patience (Kṣānti); Diligence (Vīrya); Meditation (Dhyāna); Wisdom (Prajñā).

If the metaphorical transfer in the aforementioned story was somewhat implicit, the subsequent story in the special British cover offers a vivid illustration of what Goodman calls “weighting” and “deformation”, as well as Herman's concepts of “situatedness” and the experiential aspect of “what it’s like”.

Following the introduction of the Suez Canal, built under the guidance of French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, the narrative continues. The Suez Canal is an essential man-made waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, cutting through the Isthmus of Suez, and greatly reducing the travel time from Europe to South Asia, East Asia, and Australia. De Lesseps is lauded for his achievements. Immediately thereafter, Figure 3-10 depicts an English gentleman in a suit playing the violin to a crocodile. In the foreground, there appears to be a body of water with aquatic vegetation growing around it. In the background, besides some of the Western-style buildings typical of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, there are several tall spires. Given the context of the Suez Canal, these spires are likely the minarets of Islamic mosques, used primarily to call the faithful to prayer five times daily. The narrative accompanying the pictorial is as follows:

The Crocodile Zhi Yin: Along the banks of the Suez Canal, there are crocodiles known for their fondness for music. An Englishman, skilled in playing the violin, travelled to this area. When the crocodile heard the sound of his playing, it emerged from the water and gently grasped his clothing, not with malice but with the desire to listen to his music. The man continued to perform, showcasing his skills, much like the legendary encounter between Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi, with the crocodile thoroughly captivated, eventually becoming entranced by the music. The crocodile danced tirelessly, flailing its limbs with abandon, and the musician's fame spread far and wide.

There is indeed a habitat for crocodiles near the Suez Canal, specifically at Lake Timsah, commonly referred to as “Crocodile Lake.” Situated in Egypt’s Nile Delta, Lake Timsah forms part of the Suez Canal. Historically, it was the northern terminus of the Red Sea, but geological shifts rendered it an inland lake, now linked to the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, there is no account in European history of a British violinist who gained renown for mesmerising crocodiles with his playing. If one were to venture a guess, one might consider the European folklore surrounding Niccolò Paganini, the “Devil’s Violinist.” Paganini was acclaimed as one of the 19th century’s most outstanding violinists, whose unparalleled skill was often deemed to transcend human ability, with legends claiming he had made a deal with the devil to attain his exceptional talents. It is said that Paganini’s music held an enigmatic allure; when he played alone in the woods, animals were drawn to his music, silently gathering around to listen.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ The name “Timsah” in Arabic translates to “crocodile,” reflecting the area’s ancient crocodile population.

²⁷¹ Berger, R. W. (2012). The devil, the violin, and Paganini: The myth of the violin as Satan’s Instrument. *Religion and the Arts*, 16(4), 322-325.

However, any attempt to reconstruct the story Mr Yan might have told is futile, as it has been deformed through the addition of various other elements by the artist. Upon examining the entire *Dianshizhai Pictorial* global travel series, the story of the crocodile and the violinist stands out as particularly unique. Its distinctiveness lies not only in the content but also in the manner of its narration. Unlike the more cursory and broad-stroke storytelling found in other pictorials, this tale uses the preceding depiction of the Suez Canal as a backdrop to create a specific scene through both text and imagery. It devotes considerable detail to describing the interaction between the crocodile and the violinist, such as the crocodile “grabbing his clothes without malice” and the violinist “understanding the crocodile’s intent and performing his music skillfully.” The most striking aspect of the narrative, which bears the author’s personal touch, is the seemingly explanatory or interpretive phrase: “(The crocodile and the violinist) were like Yu Boya encountering a kindred spirit in Zhong Ziqi.” This masterful metaphor instantly draws the story back from faraway Egypt to a well-known Chinese classical anecdote for contemporary readers. It allows them to immediately grasp the story’s deeper meaning and appreciate its cleverness.

The story of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi is a classic Chinese legend about **Zhi Yin** (知音), which translates to “one who knows the music.” Yu Boya was a master of the guqin. During his travels, he met Zhong Ziqi, a woodcutter. When Boya played the pieces “High Mountains” and “Flowing Water,” Zhong Ziqi was able to perfectly understand the imagery of the mountains and rivers that Boya intended to convey with his music. Boya was moved by how Zhong Ziqi was a true Zhi Yin, someone who could deeply appreciate his music, and they became close friends. Following Zhong Ziqi’s death, Boya was heartbroken at the loss of his sole Zhi Yin and broke his guqin strings, vowing never to play again. This narrative has significantly impacted Chinese culture, especially among scholars, highlighting the emotional and spiritual connection valued in friendships. The notion that a Zhi Yin is rare has inspired poets, artists, and musicians to search for those who genuinely comprehend their creations. The story of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi has perpetuated the importance of Zhi Yin within Chinese culture, symbolising the timeless ideal of harmony between friendship and music.

The term “Zhi Yin” (知音) combines “Zhi,” meaning “understanding” or “knowing,” with “Yin,” meaning “music.” The literal translation is “one who understands your music.” There is no direct English equivalent that fully encapsulates the concept of “Zhi Yin” in Chinese culture. It is similar in meaning to “soulmate,” “confidant,” or “kindred spirit,” highlighting a profound mutual understanding, trust, and emotional connection between individuals. In Chinese culture, music serves as a bridge for emotional and spiritual communication—two people who are soulmates must be able to understand each other’s music.

Through this lens, the narrative transforms from that of “a highly skilled violinist gaining fame by enchanting a crocodile” to a story about “a spiritual connection between human and beast through music,” highlighting the importance of the “Zhi Yin” legend.

In the first chapter’s introduction to the musical news categories in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, there is a section dedicated to “animals and music.” The idea that “all things have spirits” (万

物有灵) is a prevalent belief in Chinese folklore. In ancient China, the relationship between music and animals was viewed as a symbol of natural harmony and spiritual resonance. These concepts are reflected in various cultural domains, such as literature, philosophy, and religion. For example, *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (吕氏春秋) records the powerful appeal of the "Shao Music" (韶乐), which could animate all creatures and make birds and beasts dance; in *The Classic of Divine Wonders* (神异经), there is a tale of the Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai (李白), whose music playing caused a crane to dance beside him; and *In Search of the Supernatural* (搜神记) recounts the story of Eastern Jin Dynasty musician Huan Yi (桓伊), whose guqin melodies along the river captivated monkeys, leaving them enchanted by the music. Thus, while we cannot definitively say that this story was fabricated by the artist as a "British version of the story of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi" to appeal to Chinese readers, we can assert that it is at least an "alienated" story.

From the perspective of worldmaking, this case vividly exemplifies Herman's idea of **storyworld design**, in which authors and readers intuitively develop a shared psychological model or cognitive strategy. Like other stories that construct narrative spaces, such as the Crossing the Line Ceremony, this narrative creates a "map" in the reader's mind through shared memories and experiences. Marie-Laure Ryan refers to this concept as **cognitive maps**. This idea originates from psychology and describes how individuals form mental representations of their spatial surroundings. Ryan contends that readers build a multidimensional narrative map using spatial cues, narrative structure, and character dynamics within the text. These cognitive maps allow readers to effectively understand and experience the story's plot.²⁷² According to Ryan, readers construct a multidimensional narrative map through spatial cues, narrative structure, and character dynamics within a text. These cognitive maps enable them to effectively understand and experience the story's plot. For example, the detailed depiction of Dublin in James Joyce's *Ulysses* allows readers to create a complex cognitive map of the city, enabling them to embark on a "mind journey" following the protagonist's path.²⁷³ This same phenomenon is evident in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* global travel series.

The worldmaking approach of this series is complex. On one hand, as shown in Figure 3-1, there is the combination of slides and piano accompaniment, akin to what Tom Gunning refers to as the "cinema of attractions" in early films—an "exhibitionistic confrontation" with the viewer, a style characterised by "look at me performing my tricks." By browsing through old collections of films, Gunning concluded that early films primarily served as a display case for a series of "circus acts".²⁷⁴ Additionally, there is the narrative role of Mr Yan as the main storyteller, who employs face-to-face storytelling techniques as described by Herman. In storyworld construction, narrators utilise immediate interactive environments, such as gestures and deictic expressions (e.g., "over here," "right here"), to cue the construction of the

²⁷² Ryan, M.-L. (2003). Cognitive maps and the construction of narrative space. In D. Herman (Ed.), *Narrative theory and the cognitive sciences*. Stanford University Press. pp. 222-232.

²⁷³ Ibid, pp. 233.

²⁷⁴ Gunning, T. (1994). *D. W. Griffith and the origins of American narrative film: The early years at Biograph*. University of Illinois Press. pp.22.

narrative world.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, the piano music plays an auxiliary role in the storytelling process. As Vincent Meelberg suggests, music can create a sense of time and narrative through metaphorical implications of causality, which “leads to” or “causes” the story’s further development.²⁷⁶

On the other hand, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* combines two other media, as mentioned by Herman: graphic novels and print narratives²⁷⁷, through Wu Youru’s selection and secondary “artistic processing.” The former uses non-verbal visual elements to emphasise and highlight, while the latter relies on textual descriptions to construct the storyworld.

It is challenging to ascertain what kind of world Mr Yan constructed for the audience during his charity performance at The Shanghai Gezhi Academy. However, through the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*’s visual and textual storytelling, particularly in the way that artist Wu Youru highlights several foreign anecdotes in his storyworld design, a common pattern seems to emerge: **superficially distinct, fundamentally alike**—by examining stories from heterogeneous (foreign) cultures, one can gain insights into the same or similar principles found in homogeneous (Chinese) culture.

Is this pattern itself not a way of worldmaking?

2. Cultural Mutual Interpretation : A Homogeneous Interpretation of Heterogeneous Cultures

When two disparate cultures encounter one another, individuals typically undergo a process from the initial reactions based on first impressions, through gradual acquaintance, to a profound understanding. Some historians critique the Western tendency to misconstrue Eastern cultures from their own cultural viewpoint, labelling this misinterpretation as "orientalism" .²⁷⁸ Meanwhile, some philosophers refer to the hybrid space created during cultural encounters as the "Third Space" .²⁷⁹ Within the illustrated periodical *The Crocodile Zhi Yin*, a violin is inaccurately depicted and described as the Chinese vernacular instrument "huqin"—a common occurrence in the music scene reports of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. However, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* is not an isolated case; it exemplifies a widespread cultural exchange phenomenon, particularly when depicting foreign cultural matters, observers often draw upon their cultural background and knowledge when selecting terms. This phenomenon is termed "cultural equivalence" in translation studies. Eugene Nida's theory of "dynamic equivalence"

²⁷⁵ Herman, D. (2009). Narrative ways of worldmaking. *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*, 20, pp. 72.

²⁷⁶ Meelberg, V. (2009). Sounds like a story: Narrative travelling from literature to music and beyond. *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*, 20, pp. 258.

²⁷⁷ Herman, D. (2009). Narrative ways of worldmaking. *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*, 20, pp. 75.

²⁷⁸ Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon. pp. 49-73.

²⁷⁹ Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. pp. 36-39.

posits that cultural equivalence aims to elicit the same effect in the target audience as experienced by readers of the original text.²⁸⁰ Critics such as Lawrence Venuti argue that cultural equivalence constitutes a domestication strategy in translation, potentially diminishing cultural distinctiveness and the visibility of differences. Venuti criticises this approach, suggesting that such translation strategies effectively obscure the original text's cultural characteristics.²⁸¹

The author argues that the studies and terms mentioned above, including cultural equivalence and cultural hybridity within the "Third Space," are more suitably applied to the mid or later stages of interactions between two distinct cultures, rather than the early stages. During the initial phase of Sino-Western cultural exchanges, especially when individuals from different cultures encounter each other for the first time, there is a natural inclination to seek familiar terminology from one's cultural background to explain what is observed, even if the explanation might be inaccurate. I define this method as the "homogeneous interpretation of heterogeneous cultures", abbreviated as "cultural mutual interpretation". This section will explore this phenomenon by examining European diaries and reports on Chinese music from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

2.1 The Initial Impressions of Europeans on Chinese music

The Idea of Chinese Music in Europe Up to the Year 1800, authored by Lam Ching-wah, examines European perceptions and influences of Chinese music prior to the year 1800. Through a thorough analysis of historical documents, travelogues, and correspondence, Lam provides an in-depth analysis of the misunderstandings and misconceptions Europeans held about Chinese music, particularly through sources such as missionaries, travellers, and diplomats. He delves into how Europeans misinterpreted Chinese musical instruments, theories, and performance styles.²⁸² This work serves as a significant document in the study of the history of Sino-European musical exchanges, offering a unique perspective for understanding early cultural interactions between China and the West. Moreover, it provides the most vivid illustration of cultural mutual interpretation.

Illegal immigrant Galeote Pereira describes a music scene at a banquet in 1549 in this manner: "When everyone was seated, the music began to play, consisting of tanpura, gitterns, rebecs, lutes with a big arch, and they played continuously for as long as the banquet lasted."²⁸³ He also describes a religious festival, where a priest and two cantors chant: "Sometimes they sang after the manner of the psalms, and at other times like hymns, always playing on some small handbells and a tambourine."²⁸⁴ Galeote Pereira

²⁸⁰ Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Brill Archive. pp. 158-170.

²⁸¹ Venuti, L. (2017). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge. pp. 15-30.

²⁸² Lam, C. W. (2013). *The Idea of Chinese Music in Europe Up to the Year 1800*. Central Conservatory of Music Press.

²⁸³ Boxer, C. R. (2017). *South China in the sixteenth century (1550–1575): Being the narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, OP, Fr. Martin de Rada, OESA, (1550–1575)*. Routledge. pp.288-89.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, pp.307-308.

mentions the tanpura, gitterns, rebecs and lutes, and psalms and hymns, which are all reflection of his cultural background as a Catholic merchant from Portugal.²⁸⁵

In the sixteenth century, Gaspar da Cruz, a Dominican, published an original account of his experience. His observations in 1569 are detailed and visual:

“The instruments that they use for to play on, are certain bandoraes like ours, though not so well made, with their pins to tune them; and there be some like gitterns which are smaller, and others like a viol de gamba which are less. They also use dulcimers and rebecks, and a certain kind of hoboyse, closely resembling those which we use. They use a certain manner of harpsichord that hath many wire strings, upon which they play with their finger-nails for which purpose they let them grow long. They have a great sound and make a very good harmony. They play many instruments together sometimes, consorted in four voices which make a very good consonancy.²⁸⁶”

Da Cruz goes on to relate a story about a chance encounter with a Cantonese concert-party on the river. Sitting by the riverbank near their lodgings, they see a party of young men on a boat, by the light of the moon:

“passing the time, playing on divers’ instruments; and we, being glad to hear the music, sent for them to come near where we were, and that we would invite them. They as gallant youths came near with the boat and began to tune their instruments, in such sort that we were glad to see them fit themselves that they might make no discord; and beginning to sound, they began not all together, but the one tarried for to enter with the other, making many divisions in the process of the music, some staying, others playing; and the most times they played all together in four parts. The parts were two small bandoraes (viols) for tenor, a great one for counter-tenor, a harpsichord that followed the rest, and sometimes a rebeck and sometimes a dulcimer for treble.²⁸⁷”

These instruments specified by Da Cruz were tentatively identified by Needham as two pipa (琵琶), a zheng(箏), a huqin(胡琴), a qin(琴), and a se(瑟)²⁸⁸. The Portuguese’s approval of the music is interesting, in light of the later condemnation and distaste. Nevertheless, the description of polyphony is misleading, as is, of course, the identification of contemporary European instruments.

Relying on the accounts of the Augustinian friars De Rada (Herrada) and Marin, who had travelled from the Philippines to China in 1577, and having some knowledge of Chinese, he describes the celebration of the New Year:

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Gasparo da Cruz. (1625). *Tractado em que se cõtam muito por estêso as cousas da China*. c. xiv & Samuel Purchas *His Pilgrimes in Five Books, Part Three*. London: Printed by William Stansby. pp.307-308.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. pp.81.

²⁸⁸ Needham, J. (1974). *Science and Civilisation in China* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press. pp.217.

“This day dooth all people generally sport themselves in a great singing and sounding of instruments, in which they are very cunning. Such instruments as the Augustine friars did see, were lutes, gitterns, vyalles, rebukes, wayghtes, virginals, harps and flutes, and other instruments which we do use, although they do differ something in the fashion of them, but yet easie to be known. They do tune their voyces unto their instruments with great admiration: they have all commonly very good voyces.”²⁸⁹

The entertainment of De Rada and Marin by the magistrate at Fuzhou was supposedly accompanied by a "great store of musicke of divers instruments, whereon they played with great consort, some one time and some another. The instruments which they commonly do use are hoybuckes, cornets, trumpets, lutes, such as be used in Spaine, although in the fashion there is some difference.”²⁹⁰ Although De Rada recognised the physical differences between Chinese and Spanish instruments, he does not emphasise on the acoustic differences, such as the difference in timbre and tone quality.

A more detailed and scholarly survey of China appeared in 1642 in the history of the country by the Portuguese Jesuit Alvarez Semedo, translated into English in 1655. On religious music, Semedo's remarks are of some interest, and are, in fact, misleading:

“The Bonzi do use musick in their offices and mortuaries, the tone whereof is not much unlike our cantus firmus, or plainsong: though they have not formally either plainsong or organ note; for they do not raise, nor fal their voice immediately from a note to the next note or half-note; but mediately raise and fal it to a third, a fift, or an eight; in which the Chinesses do much delight.”²⁹¹

Here, the impression he gives is of some extraordinary liturgical music based on the triad. However, it has no correspondence to reality. Despite this, Semedo's words are also repeated by Du Halde, who provided the most significant source of knowledge of China in the eighteenth century.

The Dutch merchant, Nieuhoff, visited China in 1655²⁹². He introduces Chinese music in his own unique way. Here we have the common problem of differing nomenclature. Chinese instruments were conflated with European instruments and subjected to further misrepresentation by translators, at a time when their names were nowhere near as internationally established as they are today.

²⁸⁹ Juan González de Mendoza. (1588). *The Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China, and the Situation Thereof: Together with the Great Riches, Huge Citties, Politike Government, and Rare Inventions in the Same*. Translated from Spanish by R. Parke. London: E. White. pp.108.

²⁹⁰ Ibid,173.

²⁹¹ Semedo, A. (1969). *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China: Wherein All the Particular Provinces are Accurately Described: as Also the Dispositions, Manners, Learning, Lawes, Militia, Government, and Religion of the People. Together with the Traffick and Commodities of that Countrey*. E. Tyler. pp.54.

²⁹² J Nieuhof, J. (1972). *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperour of China...* John Macock. pp.72.

“The chief instrument which the Chinesses use is small, with a few strings made of silk, for guts or wyre are not in use among them. The cittern, or something like it, which some of them handle well, is very common there: and they use also another instrument, much like our violin, but differing in sound. Besides these they have another instrument called zunga, which is much in request, and often used by them to work upon the affections of the people. But above all, they are wonderful expert in the use of castanets, with which they always dance.²⁹³”

The observed expertise on the instrument Nieuhoff calls the *zunga* would have melted the most savage heart, the players compared to Orpheus risen from the grave (ibid). The following remarks verge on the marvellous, in the tradition of Mandeville, which Nieuhoff is apt to follow. Listeners often fall into an ecstasy, he tells us, when they hear these instruments, its effect similar to a draft of mandragora (which would, one supposes, have put the audience to sleep). He comments that the Chinese’s ability in unaccompanied singing should be praised above that of all other nations²⁹⁴. Nieuhoff then concludes his account of the music with a reference to its curative powers, with the customary embellishment that it is virtually the only form of medicine used throughout the Chinese Empire²⁹⁵. This provides an occasion to reference the mythical figures of early European legends, Arion and Terpander, and their undertakings in the field of music therapy.²⁹⁶

In 1720-1721, a Scottish doctor, John Bell, followed the Russian Embassy of Ismailov to Beijing and recorded a musical scene at a diplomatic banquet. He published his description of the mission (for which he was the physician) in Glasgow in 1763.²⁹⁷ “A band of musick was called in, which consisted of ten or twelve performers, on various, but chiefly wind instruments, so different from those of that class in Europe, that I shall not pretend to describe them.”²⁹⁸ Bell’s attempt to be neutral by consciously distancing himself from commenting on the unfamiliar culture initially appears to succeed. However, in the following sentence he subconsciously writes: “The music played all the time of dinner. The chief instruments were flutes, harps, and lutes, all tuned to the Chinese taste.”²⁹⁹

Beyond the "Europeanised" designation of Chinese instruments, early Europeans also demonstrated a culturally mutual interpretation in their visually informed "imaginings" of Chinese instruments. For instance, Filippo Bonanni (1638 – 1725), an Italian Jesuit priest, authored the groundbreaking encyclopaedia of musical instruments, *Gabinetto Armonico (Cabinet of Harmony)*, published in 1723. Bonanni meticulously described and illustrated

²⁹³ Ibid, pp. 41.

²⁹⁴ Nieuhof, J. *L'ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine, ou Grand Cam de Tartarie, faite par les srs. Pierre de Goyer, & Jacob de Keyser... Le tout recueilli par le Mr. Jean Nieuhoff... mis en François, orné, & assorti de mille belles particularitez tant morales que politiques, par Jean le Carpentier... Premiere partie.* pour Jacob de Meurs, marchand libraire & graveur de la ville d'Amsterdam. pp.72.

²⁹⁵ Lam, C. W. (2014). *The Idea of Chinese Music in Europe up to the Year 1800*. Central Conservatory of Music Press, Beijing. pp. 40-41.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. pp.31.

²⁹⁷ Bell, J. (2014). *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press. (Glasgow, 1763). pp. 62.

²⁹⁸ Bell, op. cit.,12.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

musical instruments from around the world, including traditional Chinese instruments such as the pipa, erhu, and sheng. These descriptions were novel and captivating to European audiences of the time. However, as shown in Figure 3-19, their depiction remained heavily influenced by his own homogeneous cultural context.



Figure 3-19³⁰⁰

From the notes of European travelers who visited China between the 16th and 18th century, it is evident that the way in which they referred to Chinese instruments almost invariably depended on their cultural background and identity. No matter what they saw in reality, when they wrote “hoybuckes, cornets and trompets”, “flutes, harps, and lutes”, “a certain manner of harpsichord”, “vyalles, rebukes, wayghtes and virginals”, “the liturgical music based on the triad” etc., for European readers who had never been to China, all these references formed specific symbols. These symbols tightly intertwined with the cultural experience of European readers, thus forming their first impression of Chinese music.

Upon reviewing the content recorded by these Westerners about Chinese music, it becomes evident that their method of worldmaking for their audience is not essentially different from the one used by the illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

2.2 Cultural Mutual Interpretation in *Dianshizhai*

The initial impressions of Chinese music as described by European observers from the 16th to 18th centuries are fundamentally similar to the reactions of the Chinese upon their first exposure to Western music in the 19th century. Mutual interpretation is an unavoidable process in the first encounters between two different cultures. In this stage, cross-cultural misunderstanding, cultural appropriation, and cultural dislocation are completely logical and understandable, perhaps even expected. In *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, there are more dramatic and more intuitional demonstrations of “misunderstanding.” This section will delve into the depiction of musical instruments, stage settings, and operatic scenes in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, offering insight into the cultural phenomenon of Western music “Sinicised” during the process of cultural mutual interpretation.

³⁰⁰ Filippo Bonanni, *Gabinetto Armonico* (Rome, 1723). Plates reprinted in Bonanni's *Antique Musical Instruments and Their Players: 152 Plates from Bonanni's 18th Century “Gabinetto Armonico”*, with intro. and captions by Frank Llewellyn. Harrison and Joan Rimmer (New York: Dover Publications, 1964).

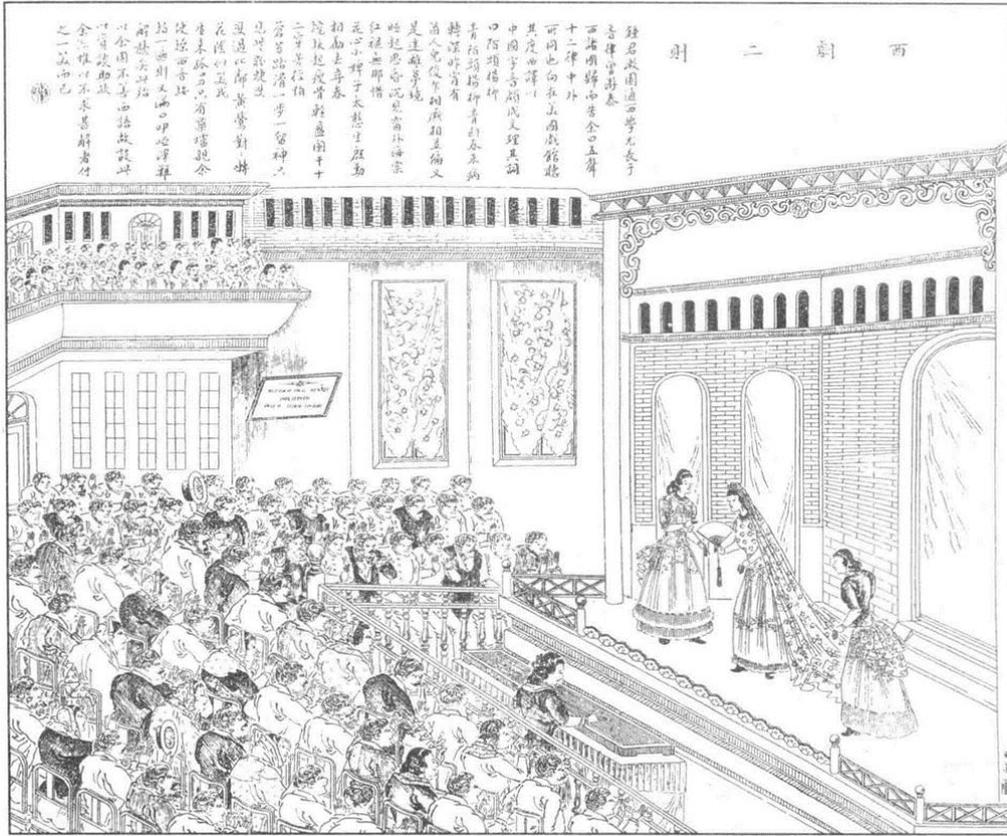


Figure 3-20 Western Opera³⁰¹

This is a picture published in 1889 by the artist Tian Ying. What he draws here is the depiction of an opera scene in an American theatre, not experienced first-hand, but described in his friend, Zhong Shu-yuan's oral account. Right in the middle of the illustration is an orchestra pit, where a large plucked zither-type instrument is played by a female musician. On the main stage to the right is an opera performed by three female characters. There are slight differences in dress and decoration, with the woman in the middle wearing a veil and carrying a fan and the actresses to her left and right dressed less ornately. On the left side of the picture, there is little discernible difference in the proportion of male and female audience, and the seats on both floors are filled.

The first thing to note is that the huge guqin in the middle of the pictorial is eye-catching. According to the number of strings drawn in the instrument's head, it is twelve-stringed. The table where the "guqin" lies flatwise is also covered with an exquisite tablecloth that also acts as an anti-slip surface. In the three-thousand-year history of the Guqin (later called qin), its shape and form have undergone many changes, and there have been many variations. The twelve-stringed qin appeared in the Warring States Period (BC. 770~BC. 476)³⁰², and similar imagery can be traced back to the Han dynasty (AD.25-220). By the Three Kingdoms Period

³⁰¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wu Collection, pp.40, 1889.

³⁰² In November 1991, a twelve-stringed guqin was unearthed from a tomb dated to the Warring States Period in Wuxian county.

(AD.220-280), the shape of the qin was established as "seven strings and thirteen emblems (七弦十三徽), and six and a half inches (about 120~125 cm)³⁰³", which is still in use today.



Figure 3-21 Han dynasty relief stone

But did Tian Ying really mean to imply that the instrument used to accompany this opera in an American theatre was indeed a rare qin from ancient times? If not, what instrument was he referring to here? The author believes that Tian Ying deduced this image from a fragmented oral description of a piano (or clavichord, or any keyboard instrument), potentially from multiple sources.

Tracing back to when a keyboard instrument was first introduced to China, it is generally believed that one was found in the inventory of the gifts Matteo Ricci brought to Emperor Wanli in 1600. However, there are many different names for what we call "piano/clavichord" in different texts. In the *Annals of Emperor Capital Scenery* (1635), it was called a wire qin (铁丝琴); it was called the Atlantic qin (大西洋琴) in the *Chronicle of the West* (1669); in the *Continuation of Literature Textual Criticism* (1747) was called the seventy-two stringed qin (七十二弦琴). It is recorded in volume 110 of *Continuation of Literature Textual Criticism*: "In the 28th year of Wanli of Ming Dynasty (1600 AD), western people presented their music. It was three feet (100 cm) tall and five feet (167 cm) long, with 72 strings made of gold, silver or iron. Each string has a spool that opens outward at one end and sounding when you play the other end."³⁰⁴

Furthermore, one must question what made the painter imagine a piano as a qin rather than any other multi-stringed instrument – this does not come out of the blue. First of all, the practice of using only one musical instrument to accompany a drama has a long history. There are records of keyboard instruments in the archives of the earliest British theatre companies in Shanghai. As mentioned in chapter one, there were various performances played in the Concession. Keyboard instruments were clearly essential for theatre. According to a report in

³⁰³ The seven strings represent the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, earth, and the two strings of King Wen and King Wu; thirteen emblems represent twelve months a year plus a leap month; three feet six inches five represents 365 days in a year.

³⁰⁴ Wang, Q. (1747). *Continuation of Literature Textual Criticism*. (Vol. 110). pp.102.

the North China Herald, on 11 Feb 1868, the French also established the *Societe Dramatique Francaise* in the Concession and performed *Les Cloches de Corneville*³⁰⁵.

With the establishment of the public concession, more and more countries set up their own theatres in Shanghai that gradually gained in popularity. Many of them were just like theatres in *Hankou* (漢口, a district of Wuhan) as depicted by *The Illustrated London News* in 1873, in which a single piano played accompaniment for the entire opera. Even those with little interest in Western culture, like Tian Ying, would have heard of the Western theatres that had already been operating in Shanghai for two to three decades.

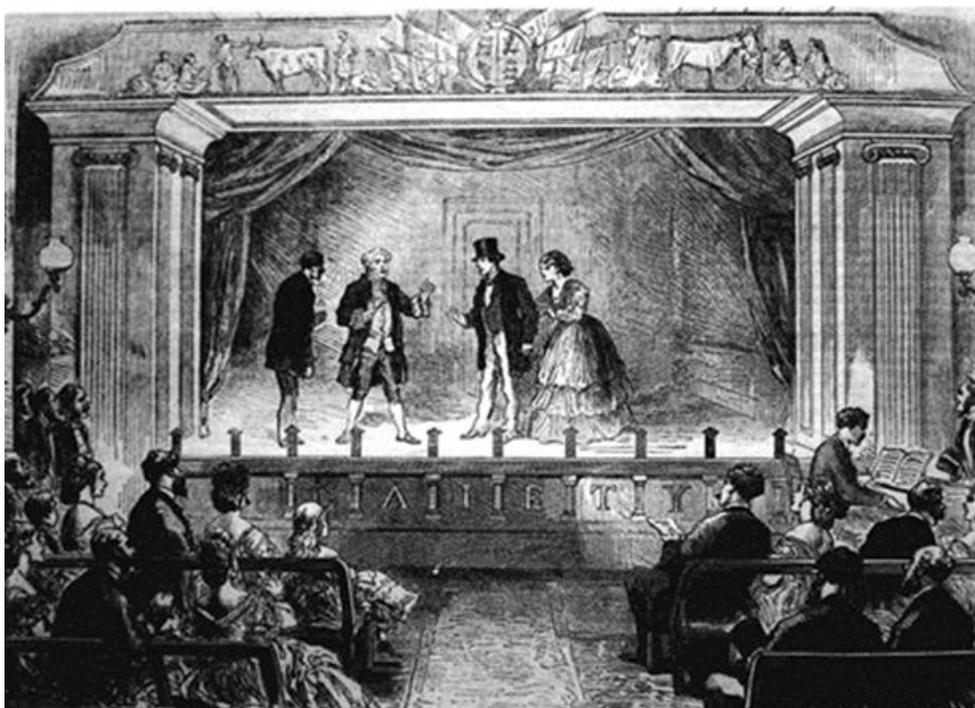


Figure 3-22 The Illustrated London News (April 19, 1873): 368 .

Secondly, the description of keyboard instruments recorded in Chinese in the 19th century is too vague to be misleading. Zhang Deyi (1847-1918), a famous diplomat in the late Qing Dynasty, wrote in his *Voyage Adventure* (1866) that ‘the *qin* (i.e. keyboard instrument) was as big as a cabinet ... and the sound was sonorous³⁰⁶’. In addition to the fact that the *qin* is one of the most important representations of high social status in Chinese history, it would be more natural for Tian Ying, who was more familiar with Chinese culture, to connect these clues and create what he imagined was “a cabinet-sized instrument for theatrical accompaniment”.

³⁰⁵ Brossollet, Guy. *Les Français de Shanghai, 1849-1949*. Belin, pp.109. 1999.

³⁰⁶ Original: “琴大如箱，音忽洪亮，忽细小，参差错落颇觉可听。”张德彝. (1981). 航海述奇. 湖南人民出版社.

Tian Ying's dilemma could be summarised thusly: firstly, there was no "keyboard" instrument to be used as a reference point in China; secondly, the assignment of names throughout history is often confusing and variable; thirdly, there was no physical instrument for him to observe in person, that is to say, there was no sense data for him to collect. Instead, as a pictorial artist, Tian Ying used his own creative approach, through his own logical reasoning, to depict an object that he could not immediately experience as what we see in *Dianshizhai*.

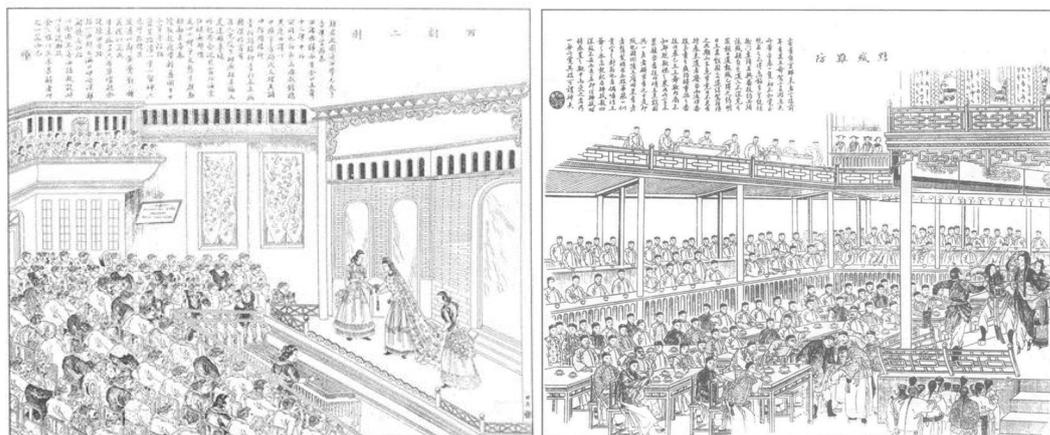


Figure 3-23 The comparison between *Western Opera* and *Chinese opera* pictorials in *Dianshizhai*³⁰⁷

For those familiar with Western opera, the stage in Tian Ying's pictorial may seem strange, but for Chinese audiences who frequented the opera (Jing Jü 京剧 and kun Qü 昆曲) at the time, this stage was a familiar sight. In particular, the pattern of the teahouse stage and the moiré decoration at the edge of the stage, as well as the Chinese-style hollow guardrail at the bottom, were all common Chinese elements. Chinese theatres were generally designed as halls with a rectangular stage that could be viewed from three sides.³⁰⁸

In Tian Ying's painting, there are two long and narrow arches and one slightly wider arch door in the background of the stage, which the author speculates may correspond to the traditional entrance and exit doors for actors in Chinese opera performances. On a traditional opera stage, there are two narrow curtains on the left and right sides for this purpose. There would usually be a plaque atop each curtain stating "Chu Jiang"(出将 literal translation: General's exit) and "Ru Xiang "(入相 Prime-Minister's entry) respectively. Behind the curtain is the backstage area where the actors would rest and have their makeup done up. Entering and exiting the stage followed established rules, with actors only entering from the Chu Jiang door and exiting from the Ru Xiang door. The wider rectangle in the middle of the stage likely represents background decoration and was not a common requirement for stages.

³⁰⁷ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. (1891). Xü Collection (戍集), pp. 58.

³⁰⁸ Xue Lin-ping. (2009). Study on Shanghai Opera Garden in late Qing Dynasty. *Huazhong Architecture* (1).



Figure 3-24 Close-up view of a traditional Chinese opera stage³⁰⁹

In addition to the visual cultural interpretation, Tian Ying added more opera related content for the audience in the caption, which translates as follows:

"Zhong Shu-yuan is well versed in Western knowledge, especially in music. He once studied in Europe and the United States. When he came back, he told me, "The five-tone and twelve-pitch scale³¹⁰ are similar in China and the West." He had been to an American theatre to watch an opera, which is intriguing when he translated it into Chinese for me. The lyrics go like this: "The willows in the fields are beginning to sprout and bud, and there is a scenery of green, but my illness is worse in spring. Last night I talked to him, but it was only a dream. When I woke up, I was still groggy. Even when I saw the begonia outside the window, I was not in the mood to look. The maid naively did not understand me, but gallantly advised me to go for an outing. She carried my thin body through the garden, careful with every step for fear of slipping on the mossy stones. In the spring scenery, there are butterflies flying in pairs, and two yellowbirds singing to each other. The shadow of the flower seems to be laughing at me. I was born alone, and only the medicine stove is close to me." Zhong Shu-yuan then sang this in the Western language with beats, but it sounded squeaky and shrill. It wasn't melodious! It's probably because he doesn't speak the Western language well. I took this as a conversation piece that didn't need further exploration and just laughed it off." ³¹¹

³⁰⁹ <http://nimg.ws.126.net/?url=http://dingyue.ws>

³¹⁰ Shí-èr-lǜ (Chinese: 十二律, 12 pitches) (twelve-pitch scale) was a standardized gamut of twelve notes. Also known, rather misleadingly, as the Chinese chromatic scale, it was one kind of chromatic scale used in ancient Chinese music.

³¹¹ Original: 钟君漱园通西学，尤长于音律，曾游泰西诸国，归而告余曰：“五声十二律，中外所同也。”向在美国戏馆听其度曲，译以中国字音，颇成文理。其词曰：陌头杨柳青，陌头杨柳青，到春来病转深。昨宵有个人儿后，乍相厮相并，偏又是迷离梦境。睡起思昏沉，见窗外海棠红褪，无那惜花心。小婢子太憨生，殷勤相劝去寻春。搀扶起瘦骨轻盈，阑干十二穿芳径，怕苍苔路滑，一步一留神。只见些粉蝶双双过，比邻黄莺对对啭。花阴似笑，我生来孤另，只有药炉亲。”余使操西音按拍一遍，则又满口啞哑，浑难解听矣！此殆以余固不善西语故，设此以资谈助歟。余亦惟以不求甚解者付之一笑而已。”

This caption can be divided into three parts. Firstly, Zhong Shu-yuan's thoughts on Western music. He believed that "the five tones and twelve-pitch scale are the same in China and the West." What is unusual is that the initial premise was that he is "well versed in Western knowledge, especially in music. "Although there are similarities between the East and the West in certain areas of musical theory, such as the fact that the notes within an octave are equally divided into twelve semitones (that said, there are still differences in temperament), in practice, especially in the application of opera music, it is clearly different on both sides. Moreover, from the diaries of Qing officials on diplomatic missions and the accounts of travellers to Europe and America in the 19th century, most of their comments on Western music emphasised the differences above all. Wang Tao (1828~1897) wrote in his book *Fu Sang Travel Notes* (1890): "Although the mountains and rivers are drawings, the demonstration of stage art is almost lifelike." Bin Chun (1803~?), in his *Cheng Cha Notes* (1866), recorded that he watched *Don Juan* composed by Mozart in the Opéra de Paris and marvelled that "the play can be a landscape waterfall, with the sun and moon shining... Fantastic." The stage art used in Western operas was evidently the most significant difference for the Chinese audience. Zhang De-yi commented after watching a performance at the Royal Theatre in Covent Garden that "although I don't understand the lyrics, the music is fair-sounding."³¹² In fact, when encountered with this new art form, the reaction of the Chinese diplomatic envoys appears to be more logical, while Zhong Shu-yuan's comment on their "similarity" is quite unexpected.

The next point of discussion is the nature of the opera's plot. In the caption, the lyrics carry the distinctive colour of Yuan-Qu (元曲 formed after 1271A.D.). The plot of the maid persuading the young lady is reminiscent of "Romance of the Western Chamber"(西厢记)³¹³. The opening scene, described as "the willows in the fields are beginning to sprout and bud ", can be found in the poem "Boudoir's Grudge" (闺怨) by Tang dynasty poet Wang Chang-ling (698-757). This poem depicts a young married woman watching willow branches sprout in the spring, lamenting that her beloved husband is away fighting a war. Besides this, many common metaphorical objects from romantic poems that are used to represent an affectionate couple make an appearance: Yuan Yang(鸳鸯 mandarin duck) swimming along the river, yellowbirds singing to each other, and butterflies flying in pairs. The story in the pictorial is also similar to the story of the *Romance of the Western Chamber*, in which a girl falls in love with a young scholar at first sight, but her mother prevents them from dating. The two lovers then fight for the freedom to pursue their love. Around 1889, if one had to pick a popular Western opera that included a love-sick heroine, it could have been *La Traviata*. However, it is not meaningful to attempt to deduce which opera Zhong Shu-yuan had described to Tian Ying. This is because whichever plot he was told, Tian Ying ultimately chose to summarise the Western opera in his mind as belonging to the specific category of "drama of literati and beauties"(才子佳人戏) that the Chinese audience were more familiar with and enjoyed.

³¹²Zhang De-Yi. (1876). *Diary of the Mission to England and Russia*.pp.455.

³¹³ Romance of the Western Chamber is one of the most famous Chinese dramatic works. It was written by the Yuan dynasty playwright Wang Shi-fu (王實甫), and set during the Yuan dynasty. It is known as "China's most popular love comedy".

Thirdly is Tian Ying's personal aesthetic preferences. His comments after listening to Zhong Shu-yuan's delivery of this opera showed his opinionated aesthetic preference. His reasoning was that "probably his (Zhong) command of the foreign language is not good enough." Nevertheless, one much question how much the pronunciation would have affected intonation, rhythm and melody? This reason alone contradicts the logic. Finally, Tian Ying exposed his mindset: no desire to seek further understanding, just laugh it off. What this has left us with is an incredibly intriguing painting.

In the case of mutual interpretation, "mutual" can be regarded as the means, while "interpretation" is the goal. The follow-up question is then, what exactly does Tian Ying's pictorial explain? By the standards of illustrated journalism at the time, this was clearly a flawed piece. However, because *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was a media publication, its goal was to be distributed to a wide range of Chinese public readers. From this perspective, could Tian Ying's pictorial be considered to be a successful instance of cultural interpretation? From the above analysis and reconstruction of the scene, how might the average Chinese reader react?

Lastly, in terms of their alteration of the plot, telling readers a romantic opera for which they have more empathy is probably far more sensible than describing a fantasy-heavy work such as *The Magic Flute* or *Faust*. For the Chinese who had never been exposed to Western drama, it may have made them feel that the content of Western entertainment culture was consistent with their own to some extent. They may have then been more inclined to consider Western opera as acceptable and accessible, winning over more conservative readers and opening the door for them to increase their contact with Western opera in the future.

In a nutshell, Tian Ying preferred to convey an unfamiliar scene intimately rather than deliver stunning piece that would alienate to the average late-Qing audience. Whether it was the large guqin centrepiece, or the Chinese teahouse-style stage, readers could rely on and allude to the sensory data derived from their life experiences. Moreover, the statement that "the five-tone and twelve-pitch scale are similar in China and the West" seems to transport us back to the narrative style and logic of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* global travel series introduced at the beginning of this chapter—superficially distinct, fundamentally alike.

3.A "Dianshizhai-ised" "Western World"

In her doctoral thesis, *The Imaginary West Told by Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wang Juan summarises several key characteristics of how *Dianshizhai Pictorial* reported Western current affairs: a popularisation of Western news for the masses, a tendency towards sensationalism, fictional elements in illustrations, the symbolic representation of the "West," and formulaic reporting on wars.³¹⁴ Wang points out that the primary purpose of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was not to report news, but to interpret news through illustrations. Therefore, the selection of topics was not driven by the necessity to report certain news, but by the choice of which news to report and the perspective from which to report it. Consequently, in its selection of news,

³¹⁴ Wang, J. (2008). *The Imaginary West Told by Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University).

Dianshizhai Pictorial exhibited a distinct "typification" of subject matter, and in its "interpretation" of news, it displayed a clear inclination towards sensationalism, akin to the tabloid press that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The fundamental difference between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers lies in the emphasis of the latter on timeliness and the former on entertainment value. Broadsheets predominantly focus on hard news, whereas tabloids favour soft news. Broadsheets observe society through direct or straightforward methods, while tabloids adopt oblique or speculative perspectives. As a result, the standout feature of tabloids is their focus on reporting interesting social events for the amusement and appreciation of audiences at all levels.³¹⁵

Furthermore, Wang Juan systematically analysed all the Western current affairs covered by *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and found that the publication predominantly focused on disastrous themes associated with the West, such as natural calamities, human-inflicted harm, scandals, murders, and duels. Additionally, the news reports were characterised by a strong inclination towards popular interests, often highlighting peripheral, sensational, and anecdotal stories rather than the central events themselves. Even the interest in foreign customs was tinged with a sense of exoticism and sensationalism.³¹⁶ Drawing from this analysis and incorporating Goodman's theory of worldmaking, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* not only appealed to the Chinese public's desire for entertainment and amusement but also established a unique narrative style. From a media perspective, the Western world portrayed to Chinese readers was not the "real" West but a "Dianshizhai-ised" Western world. This section will further reconstruct our understanding of how *Dianshizhai Pictorial* created this depiction by examining three areas of its Western coverage: general news, observation news, and bizarre news.

3.1 Sensationalism in News Reporting

Wang Juan highlights that *Dianshizhai Pictorial* exhibited a marked tendency towards sensationalism in its approach to current affairs reporting. Many significant historical events were stripped of some of their political nuances and imbued with elements of entertainment and leisure. For example, the exchange of envoys between China and foreign countries was one of the main themes in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In addition to reports on foreign envoys visiting China, the pictorial often covered Chinese envoys travelling abroad, providing the Chinese public with opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of Western countries through the eyes of these diplomats. The pictorial reported on the missions of Zheng Yuxuan to Peru, Wang Zhichun to Russia, and Li Hongzhang's travels to Russia, Europe, and the United States, paying particular attention to Li Hongzhang's activities in Russia, Britain, and America. On the surface, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* appeared to show considerable interest in the diplomatic missions of Chinese envoys to Western countries. However, an examination of the content and perspective of these reports suggests that the public's interest lay not in the political, military, economic, or diplomatic significance of these missions. Instead, the reports often omitted details about the itinerary and purpose of these visits, focusing more on the

³¹⁵ Zhao, J. H. (1983). *The Modern Chinese Newspaper Industry*. Wenhai Press. pp. 23.

³¹⁶ Wang, J. (2008). *The Imaginary West Told by Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). pp. 70-71.

envoys' experiences and encounters. The envoys' journeys seemed to resemble overseas travels in disguise, providing a lens through which people could "see" the West, observe and understand it, and naturally develop topics of conversation about Western countries.

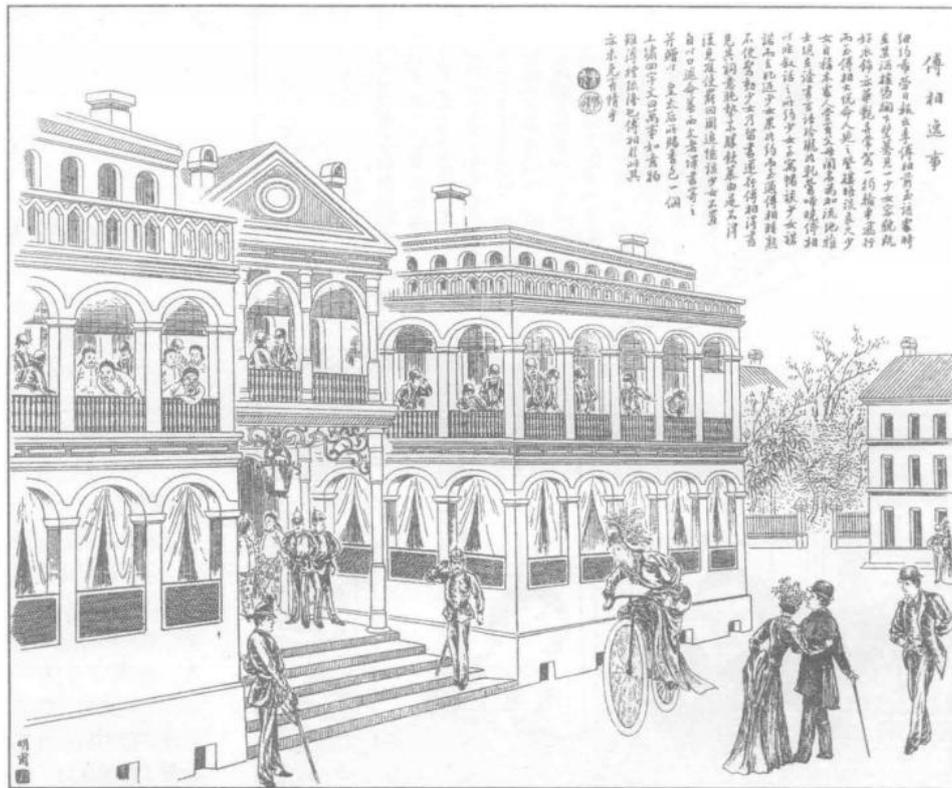


Figure 3-25³¹⁷

For example, when Li Hongzhang visited the United States, *The New York Times* provided extensive coverage of his visit. According to the reports, Li Hongzhang's activities in the U.S. were both tightly scheduled and diverse. The series of articles by The New York Times covered several aspects of Li's visit, including “a warm reception at the Port of New York,” “salutations with steamboat whistles,” “captivating maritime displays,” “fireworks and cannon salutes,” “the grand scene of 500,000 people lining the streets of Manhattan to welcome him,” “meetings with local Chinese communities,” “participation in tree planting ceremonies,” “hosting at the General’s residence,” “holding press conferences,” “releasing statements,” and “giving interviews,” among others.³¹⁸ However, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* did not mention any of these aspects of Li Hongzhang's visit. Instead, it reported a piece of gossip about Li Hongzhang's romantic encounter with a fashionable lady on the streets.

The narrative portion describes an encounter Li Hongzhang had while visiting New York. One day, as he was gazing out from a restaurant, he noticed a beautiful young lady, elegantly dressed, arriving on a unicycle. Li Hongzhang was so taken with her that he invited her upstairs for a

³¹⁷ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Yuan Collection, pp.38, 1897.

³¹⁸ Zheng, X. Y., Li, F. H., & Hu, S. Y. (2007). *Memoirs of an Empire: Late Qing Observations by The New York Times*. Contemporary China Press. pp. 300-342.

conversation. The young lady claimed to be a local and said she was a student. Her speech and mannerisms were as charming as a warbler's song. Believing the restaurant to be an inappropriate setting for their discussion, Li Hongzhang invited her to his residence for a further conversation, to which she agreed. However, when the young lady arrived as promised, Li Hongzhang was asleep, and she did not wish to disturb him. She left a note and departed. Upon awakening, Li Hongzhang read her letter and was moved by her sincerity, deepening his admiration for her. Unfortunately, he never saw her again. After returning to China, Li Hongzhang could not forget her and had his feelings translated into English and sent her a letter. He also enclosed a sachet embroidered with the words “万事如意” (“May all your wishes come true”), a gift from the Empress Dowager. The author concludes with a reflective remark, noting that while the gift was not particularly valuable, it clearly demonstrated the depth of his feelings.

Wang Juan observes that, contrary to The New York Times coverage of Li Hongzhang's busy schedule and the honours he received, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* depicts him as if he were on a leisurely vacation, thus allowing him the time to gaze from a balcony, notice a young lady, converse with her, and arrange to meet again. The illustrator's choice to depict Li Hongzhang's encounter with a fashionable female cyclist in New York likely stems from a greater public interest in the Western woman featured in the event, rather than in Li Hongzhang's official mission to the United States.³¹⁹ Furthermore, comparing this story to the previous analysis of "Western Opera" in the pictorial reveals that it essentially follows the “drama of literati and beauties”(才子佳人戏) narrative paradigm.

3.2 The Symbolic Template of "Dianshizhai-isation"

During the publication period of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Western culture had begun to influence the lives of people in Shanghai and its surrounding areas on multiple levels. Western architecture, modes of transport, clothing, cuisine, and entertainment had become familiar to the people of the time, making the material aspects of the West the primary indicators of Western influence. Although Western architecture and fashion were not unfamiliar to the illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the Western buildings and clothing in Shanghai and its surroundings were not wholly representative of their Western counterparts. The illustrators employed a method of "extrapolating the whole from a glimpse," using what was "seen" to infer what was "unseen," and assuming that Western architecture and fashion were as they appeared in Shanghai. As Homi Bhabha points out, this led to the emergence of a culturally hybrid "Third Space" in many reports about the Western world, where seemingly insignificant, template-like backgrounds became a distinctively *Dianshizhai Pictorial* style, serving as symbolic markers of the West.

³¹⁹ Wang, J. (2008). The Imaginary West Told by *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). pp. 81.



Figure 3-26³²⁰

Figure 3-26 depicts the story of a nine-year-old musical prodigy from Britain. There was a British doctor named McGarty who had a nine-year-old daughter. She was extraordinarily intelligent and mastered music with exceptional proficiency. One day, this young girl performed at the British Prime Minister's residence, and her music was so exquisite and melodious that the audience was packed shoulder to shoulder. Among those present were the British royal grandchild, the new Duchess, as well as the Duchess's father and his wife, all of whom were full of praise for the girl's performance, applauding her with thunderous acclaim. The Prime Minister, after appreciating her performance, awarded her a book in recognition of her skill, and the event was highly lauded by contemporary critics. At the conclusion of the article, the author praises the girl's musical talent and abilities, as well as the honours and achievements she earned at such a young age.

This pictorial was published in 1893, and given the timeframe, the individuals mentioned in the text are likely to be Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone; the British royal grandchild, possibly Prince George, later George V; the new Duchess, Mary of Teck, who was Prince George's newly-wedded wife; and her parents, the Duke of Teck, Francis, and his wife. However, there is little information available about the doctor's daughter, the harp prodigy. The narrative seems to lack a focus on musical elements, as the illustration includes a harp and a woman who appears to be playing a small harpsichord to accompany the girl, none of which is mentioned in the text. It is noteworthy that the left third of the image is dominated by a screen with distinctly Chinese motifs, which is no coincidence. Throughout the more than

³²⁰ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Ge Collection, pp.73, 1893.

one thousand illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the Chinese screen serves as a symbol with multiple layers of meaning.

Of course, the screen is not unique to China. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, with the flourishing of courtly and aristocratic culture, screens were commonly used as interior decorations in Europe. They were adorned with oil paintings, embroidery, fabrics, or wallpaper, reflecting the owner's taste in art and fashion. In aristocratic homes, screens were also used to separate different living areas. In ancient Chinese society, however, screens were not only practical furniture but also important symbols of power and status, especially in imperial palaces and official residences. The use of screens dates back to the Western Zhou period, during which only the emperor was permitted to use them. Moreover, the use, size, material, and patterns of screens were strictly governed by a hierarchical system, with only individuals of a certain rank allowed to use specific types of screens. The design and decoration of screens often reflected the social status of the user; for example, the emperor's screens featured orderly axe-shaped patterns symbolising power and martial strength. Large standing screens used in imperial palaces were regarded as symbols of royal authority, with their grandeur and exquisite craftsmanship showcasing the unique aesthetic sensibilities of the imperial household.

As time progressed, the use of screens gradually extended to the aristocratic and bureaucratic classes. Although screens were no longer exclusive to the royal family, they continued to serve as significant indicators of the owner's status and taste. For instance, in the Ming dynasty, literati engaged in designing and crafting screens, resulting in pieces of high artistic and aesthetic value. These screens were often placed atop writing desks or used as specific decorative items, reflecting the user's cultural refinement and social status. During the Qing dynasty, the craftsmanship of screens became even more exquisite, with materials such as precious rosewood, jade, and metal, making these screens symbols of power and wealth as well as functional items. Furthermore, screens were believed to have feng shui properties, capable of warding off misfortune and gathering good fortune, thus offering protection to the owner. Consequently, the screen in Figure 3-26 is meant to emphasise the prestige of the British Prime Minister and members of the British royal family. Many other examples exist, such as Figure 3-27, which illustrates portraits of Sir Robert Peel as the newly appointed Prime Minister and Queen Victoria. The screen in the background of this image is noticeably more elaborate and larger in scale, further confirming the "Chinese screen" in "Western news" as a homogenous metaphor for Chinese readers.



Figure 3-27³²¹

3.3 The Luxurious Western “Observation News”

During the late Qing dynasty, the Chinese imagination of the Western world was filled with intense curiosity and longing. In an era before globalisation, the affluent material life of Western society greatly appealed to Chinese intellectuals and ordinary citizens alike. Many depictions of the West were imbued with exaggeration and romance, and even an air of mystery and legend, becoming topics of discussion and fantasy. For example, in Xu Jiyou's *Yinghuan zhilue* (瀛寰志略) (Brief Account of the Maritime Circuit), the geography and cultures of various countries around the world are introduced in detail, while the prosperity of Western nations is vividly portrayed. Xu Jiyou's depiction of European cities seemed like resplendent utopias, inspiring endless imaginings about Western material abundance and modernisation among late Qing readers. Wang Tao's *Xiyang jianwen lu* (西洋见闻录) (Observations on Travels in the West) presents the splendour and prosperity of the Western world through his personal travel experiences. In Wang Tao's writing, the luxurious banquets, exquisite clothing, and dazzling consumer culture of Western society seemed to upend and challenge traditional Chinese society. These vivid descriptions not only satisfied readers' curiosity but also allowed them to vicariously experience the allure and temptation of Western life. Zhang Deyi's *Huanyou diqiu xinlu* (环游地球新录) (A New Account of a Voyage Around the World) became a significant source of inspiration and material for *Dianshizhai Pictorial* illustrators depicting the “Western world.” Zhang Deyi, drawing from his extensive diplomatic experiences, depicted the Western world as an almost paradisiacal realm of desire. His portrayal of Western opulence reached a nearly romantic level—European palaces, luxurious recreational facilities, and bustling marketplaces all stirred the Chinese imagination

³²¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wu(戊) Collection, pp.32, 1885

and longing for the unknown world. Through his personal experiences and observations, Zhang Deyi conveyed to late Qing readers a complex emotion blended with awe, envy, and critique. Among these were the images of beautiful women, fine wines, gourmet food, and unrestrained revelry, which became synonymous with the Chinese imagination of the West, as seen in Figures 3-28 to 29.³²² Perhaps to lend more credibility, these occasionally slightly exaggerated pictorials were often presented as “observation news,” further deepening readers’ yearning for the luxurious lifestyle of the Western world.



Figure 3-28³²³

As shown in Figure 3-28, this pictorial illustrates the unusual experiences of a Chinese merchant attending a banquet in Austria. He witnessed a machine approximately two zhang (about 6.6 metres) tall, decorated with flowers and ropes, with several singing girls operating it, emitting sounds similar to musical instruments. Most intriguing was that when the machine was activated, it caused a light rain to descend from above, filling glasses on the lower tier with a beverage known as "meat pagoda wine." This drink was reserved for occasions when esteemed guests were present. This depiction captures the late Qing dynasty's curiosity about the opulence of Western life and its tendency for exaggerated imagination.

³²² Details of the illustrations are explained in Chapter One.

³²³ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Chou Collection, pp.70, 1888.



Figure 3-29³²⁴

Figure 3-29 depicts the experience of a Chinese person visiting a tavern in France. The author begins by mentioning the story of Zhuo Wenjun, an ancient Chinese beauty renowned for selling wine in the marketplace, and uses this as a segue to describe a scene he read about in *Youcheng Biji* (邮程笔记) (Travel Notes), where a French barmaid serves a Chinese traveller in a seductive manner.³²⁵ The tavern employed three to five young waitresses, approximately sixteen or seventeen years old. They were meticulously made up and moved about to serve customers. Whenever a new patron arrived, they would signal with their eyes and sit with them. The author concludes with a reflection: “The mingling of shoes, the fragrance of musk and orchid, the playful banter—there are no taboos, indeed, this is the ultimate paradise abroad!”

Interestingly, the piano illustrated in this picture features only white keys and lacks black keys. Although it is rare to see such detailed depictions as the staff notation in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it is evident that the illustrator made efforts to recreate his “imagined” musical scene. However, this “mistake” also reveals the general unfamiliarity with Western music and culture among the Chinese people of the time, which, in turn, provides readers with a broader “space for imagination.”

³²⁴ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Mao Collection, pp.16, 1888.

³²⁵ Due to a lack of resources or other reasons, the author has been unable to find any relevant information about this travelogue.

3.4 Musical Narratives in “Bizarre News”

Within *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s portrayal of the West, musical topics often act as “spice,” much like the previously mentioned story of the crocodile and the violinist. Many of these so-called “news” stories were concocted by illustrators drawing on their inspirations. In the words of Lu Xun, “Wu Youru did not understand foreign affairs, so when presenting the West, he painted entirely from his imagination”.³²⁶ Despite this, these imaginative illustrations established their distinctive narrative style throughout the 15-year history of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 3-30³²⁷



Figure 3-31

Figure 3-30 illustrates a story about a dog trainer and his dog. The trainer was able to make the dog perform various tricks, and one day, he boasted that his dog could “play the piano,” which piqued the interest of the audience, who were eager to witness it for themselves. However, while the dog was “playing the piano,” someone in the audience suddenly shouted, “Mouse! There’s a mouse!” Upon hearing this, the dog immediately abandoned the piano to chase the mouse. At this moment, the piano continued playing music without pause, and the audience realised that the piano contained a mechanism that automatically played music, and the dog was not actually playing. The audience then understood that it was all a ruse by the trainer. The story concludes with criticism of the trainer's actions, arguing that using a mechanical device to pretend the dog could play the piano was a desecration of music. Ironically, as noted by Wagner, the background of the image is actually taken from a Western newspaper advertisement for a piano,³²⁸ as shown in Figure 3-31. The illustrator, He Yuanjun, replaced the woman playing the piano in the advertisement with a piano-playing dog and

³²⁶ Wang, J. (2008). *The Imaginary West Told by Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University). pp. 87.

³²⁷ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Li Collection, pp.65, 1894.

³²⁸ Wagner, R. G. (2006). *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image and City in the Early Chinese Newspapers 1870–1910*, pp. 65.

added a background of onlookers. While the illustrator ridiculed the trainer's deceit, the illustration itself is a product of the illustrator's "bait and switch" deception—what a piece of dark humour!



Figure 3-32³²⁹

Figure 3-32 is titled "The Wild Deer Zhi Yin," and its narrative style and structure are identical to the previously mentioned "The Crocodile Zhi Yin." This pictorial recounts a story that took place in French Saigon: in Saigon, an ornately dressed military band was performing one night. The music was loud and rhythmic, and the musicians were absorbed in their performance. As the music began, a deer from a nearby garden was drawn to it. The deer approached and listened intently, shaking its head and tail, appearing to be deeply engrossed as if it comprehended the essence of the music. A Westerner observing this was amazed and gently nudged the deer with his foot, but the deer neither flinched nor moved. Even when a pack of dogs barked and chased after it, the deer remained enraptured by the music, completely absorbed and oblivious to its surroundings, unwilling to retreat. After the music concluded, the band returned the deer to its owner and recounted this extraordinary encounter, leaving everyone astonished. The narrative concludes with a quotation from "The Deer Call" in the Book of Songs, noting that music can resonate with animals, just as ancient poets described how the sounds of the qin and se (瑟) express and evoke harmony in nature.

Reflecting on this story alongside the tale of the crocodile and the violinist, both are set in exotic locales with animals as the protagonists. They vividly depict the subtle interactions between animals and musicians and ultimately interpret the stories using references to Chinese historical and cultural allusions.

³²⁹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Zhu Collection, pp.86, 1892.



Figure 3-33³³⁰

Figure 3-33 recounts the story of an extraordinary case of extreme hypersomnia. The central figure is a German man named Henry Sams (phonetically translated), who lives in Minnesota, USA. Seven years prior, he developed a peculiar condition that caused him to enter a seven-year-long state of sleep from which he could not be awakened. His family initially thought he had passed away, but he continued to snore as usual, and neither the sound of metal clashing nor any other loud noises could wake him. Three years later, he unexpectedly sat up and requested food, and after eating, he returned to his slumber. Following another year of sleep, he awoke once more, repeating the pattern of eating and sleeping. He then slept for an additional three years. After waking, he resumed normal life without further episodes of extended sleep, and his condition was fully resolved.

The author devotes a significant portion at the end of the story to contemplating the notion of “life as a dream.” Even if one lives for a hundred years, the actual time spent awake is only about half of that, with the rest resembling a dream. The author cites an adapted interpretation of the Song Dynasty poet Su Shi’s lines, arguing that even if one reaches a century in age, the conscious time equates to merely twenty-five years, underscoring how much of life is frittered away. By referencing Lü Wenmu’s (Lü Mengzheng 吕蒙正) evaluation of the “sleepy man”,³³¹ along with the Tang poet Du Mu’s “ten years in Yangzhou dreaming,” the author criticises those who, even when awake, squander their time as if in a dream. Ultimately, the author asserts that if one can achieve genuine realisation a few times within their limited

³³⁰ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Yin Collection, pp.28, 1888.

³³¹ Lü Mengzheng was a renowned politician and writer in the Song Dynasty. In his early years, he faced poverty, often enduring hunger yet remained calm, earning him the title “the sleepy man.” This reference is used to describe those who maintain inner tranquillity and calm in adversity.

waking hours, it is enough to make life fulfilling. Using this “American curiosity,” the author urges people to value every moment of consciousness and avoid letting life silently pass by in futile dreams.

In the pictorial, we can see symbolic depictions of percussion instruments and wind instruments resembling a combination of a French horn and a trumpet, meant to represent the noise-making efforts to wake Henry Sams. However, after reading the narrative, it becomes evident that this is still a Chinese-style allegorical tale cloaked in “Western imagination,” or rather, a “Dianshizhai-ised” Western story.

In general, much of the Western news reporting in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* is characterised by a clear focus on the secular and the sensational, rather than the newsworthiness as understood in the modern sense. This chapter has examined the unique “ways of worldmaking” of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* through Goodman’s theory of worldmaking and the narratological research of scholars like Herman. When choosing, interpreting, and evaluating Western news, the illustrators often prioritised personal impressions, the event’s sensational nature, and its popular appeal. To cater to the preferences of the urban public, the editors and illustrators of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* deliberately selected topics that were well-liked by the general public. They made extensive use of exaggeration, employing both text and imagery to interpret and dramatise current popular news topics, thus making a “Dianshizhai-ised” version of the “Western world”. Moreover, we notice that the manner in which Westerners recorded Chinese music from the 16th to 18th centuries bears no essential difference from the methods employed by the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* artists.

Chapter Four

The Secrets of Boudoir Music: Courtesan Culture in Laufer's

Collection and Dianshizhai Pictorial

"The paradise of adventurers" was a widely recognised alias for Shanghai from the late 19th to the early 20th century. With the opening of treaty ports and the establishment of foreign concessions, an increasing number of Chinese and foreign merchants, political figures, literati, foreign immigrants, and businessmen from surrounding areas flocked to this burgeoning city. In a short time, opportunities and wealth transformed this once small fishing village into an alluring metropolis. By night, male guests would raise their glasses in the brightly lit restaurants and teahouses, accompanied by the melodious songs of the protagonists of this chapter—Shanghai's renowned courtesans.

In *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the Shanghai courtesans undoubtedly occupied a substantial portion of the publication's social news coverage. As discussed in Chapter 1, they not only featured most frequently in musical contexts, but also constituted the highest proportion of individuals represented. Even in news reports unrelated to music, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* recorded a wide variety of stories about prostitutes—high-class, mid-tier, and low-class, as well as young and elderly. Notably, these records not only showcased their glamorous side, where they flaunted their talents and allure, but also documented the often-overlooked dark and tragic aspects of their lives. The author contends that these portrayals of the tragic lives of ordinary prostitutes provide profound insights into the economic and cultural trajectory of the treaty port society in the late Qing period.

Building on this observation, this chapter introduces a second historical source beyond *Dianshizhai Pictorial*: the earliest recordings in China—wax cylinder recordings made by anthropologist Berthold Laufer during his 1901-1902 travels in Shanghai and Beijing. This study is a continuation of the 2022 collaborative research by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Indiana University on the digital transcription of these recordings, incorporating the song lyrics, Laufer's art collection from his travels in China, his correspondence, and the most up-to-date academic papers. It explores the voices of numerous ordinary prostitutes reflected in the "Timely Tune" of the lyrics book. These voices, nearly silenced and overlooked in Laufer's recordings, find striking resonance and corroboration with the visual records of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, which dates from nearly the same period. This discovery not only enriches the study of 19th-century Chinese women but also provides auditory material for this visual study. By combining the above "visual sources" and "audio sources" with a wealth of "written sources" (guidebooks, editorials, travelogues, and novels published by media figures, literati, tourists, and scholars at the end of the 19th century), this chapter seeks to create a triadic reconstruction of late 19th-century Shanghai courtesan culture, filling an important gap in the study of women during the late Qing period.

1. The Courtesan Culture During The Late Qing Dynasty

For nearly a century, Shanghai's world of prostitution was dominated by high-class courtesan.³³² Christian Henriot argues that the notion that "high-class courtesan" were at the top of the "hierarchical structure of the sex trade" in the 19th-century "flower world" (花界) is a misleading perception propagated by some historians.³³³ Henriot critiques Gail Hershatte's view in *The Hierarchy of Shanghai Prostitution, 1870-1949*, noting that her analysis fails to focus on who was responsible for establishing this hierarchy.³³⁴ Although Chinese society at the time did exhibit a strict hierarchy, this does not imply that it was a fully preordained society. Henriot contends that the "society" within Shanghai's prostitution industry was, in fact, governed by a small gentry class whose power remained unchallenged.³³⁵ This group continued to recruit new members until the abolition of the imperial examination system—a system that was a means of selecting officials through exams, originating in the Sui Dynasty and flourishing in the Tang Dynasty, lasting for over 1,300 years until it was abolished in the late Qing Dynasty. This gentry class, possessing knowledge, power, and wealth, enjoyed privileges and status inaccessible to other social groups. However, Shanghai was not initially a city dominated by the gentry; as an emerging commercial hub, its elite were primarily merchants. At the same time, there existed a literati group in the city that was connected with various government offices, prompting merchants to aspire to join this privileged class, either through donations similar to political contributions³³⁶ or by having their sons participate in the imperial examinations to become their representatives. It was this gentry class that created this atmosphere and set an example for other groups. In fact, there were many commonalities between these two groups; they shared similar lifestyles, social customs, and cultural practices.³³⁷ By the last two decades of the 19th century, these two groups in Shanghai had largely merged.³³⁸ As a result, high-class brothels became highly public, intricately organised businesses where male elites and aspiring future elites could network and strengthen their business or political connections. These relationships also turned courtesans into venues for the elite to display their erudition and charisma—qualities that were more about social sophistication than sexual prowess.

Some literati constructed a cultural field of courtesan culture that catered to this class's pursuit of refined taste by writing "flower world guidebooks"(花界指南)³³⁹, waywardness novels (or

³³² Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, p. 21.

³³³ Ibid, pp.22.

³³⁴ Hershatte, G. (1989). *The Hierarchy of Shanghai Prostitution, 1870-1949*. University of California Press. pp.78.

³³⁵ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, p. 22.

³³⁶ Leung, Y.-s. (1990). *The Shanghai Taotai: Linkage man in a changing society, 1843-1890*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 125.

³³⁷ Rowe, W. T. (1984). *Hankow: Commerce and society in a Chinese city, 1796-1889*. Stanford University Press. pp. 48.

³³⁸ Leung, Y.-s. (1990). *The Shanghai Taotai: Linkage man in a changing society, 1843-1890*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 162.

³³⁹ Chen Sen 陳森. (1984). *Pin hua baojian 品花寶鑑* (The precious mirror for appreciating flowers). Taipei: Guangya chuban gongsi. ;Chongtianzi 蟲天子, ed. (1992). *Xiangyan congshu 香艷叢書*

libertine tales)³⁴⁰, and Zhuzhi poetry, a pretentious form of poetic expression.³⁴¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, a medium that also served this class (though not exclusively), turned its lens on courtesans, a group both alluring and controversial.

The first section of this chapter will provide a detailed account of the operational models and historical development of the four tiers of prostitutes (top-tier, high-class, mid-tier, and low-class) in late Qing Shanghai. Drawing on *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it will investigate the part that music played in shaping their professional lives.

1.1 Highly Skilled Courtesans in Music: Shu-yu

Since the mid-19th century, in Shanghai's foreign concessions—an area teeming with merchants and free from traditional moral constraints—certain "new-style literati" and resident merchants found themselves enchanted by the spectacles of this "foreign market." Their dreamlike lifestyles were often centred around high-class courtesan establishments, commonly referred to as shu-yu (书寓).³⁴² Shu-yu were the most esteemed courtesans, renowned for their musical abilities and storytelling skills, and they captivated both scholars and the elite from political and commercial circles.

In analysing the situation of high-class courtesans in the mid-19th century, Wang Tao's (王韬) works, such as *Records of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬冶游录), *Addendum to the Records of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬冶游附录), *Extra to the Records of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬冶游余录), and *Dramatized Talk on the Flower Country* (花国剧谈), provide numerous details on the musical expertise of prominent courtesans and the comments of their clients (mainly Wang Tao himself and his friends). Wang Tao was a lifelong patron of high-class courtesans, as he indicated in his diaries. He frequently went out with his friends for heavy drinking and revelry, regularly visiting these places of pleasure and immersing himself in the famous gardens of Shanghai, where he recorded his observations and experiences.³⁴³ According to Wang Tao, there were initially around 50 well-known young shu-yu in Shanghai, forming a small group within society. By the mid-19th century, their numbers were estimated to have reached between 200 and 300 at

(Anthology of fragrances of beauties), 20 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.; Banchisheng 半癡生. (1891). *Haishang yeyou beilan 海上冶遊備覽 (A complete guide of touring Shanghai)*, 4 vol. Shanghai: n.p.; Mu zhen shan ren 慕真山人 and Han Bangqing. (1998). *Qinglou baojian 青樓寶鑑 (The precious mirror of pleasure quarters)*. Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe.

³⁴⁰ Han Bangqing 韩邦庆. [1894](1998). *Haishang hua liezhuan 海上花列传 (Flowers of Shanghai)*. In Muzhenshanren and Han, 267 – 619.; Hanshang mengren 邗上蒙人. (1991). *Fengyue meng 风月梦 (Dream of wind and moon)*. Ji'nan: Jilu shushe.

³⁴¹ Gu Bingquan 顾炳权, ed. (1996). *Shanghai yangchang zhuzhi ci 上海洋场竹枝词 (Bamboo poems of the Shanghai settlements)*. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe.; Chen Qiao 辰橋. [1887] (1996). *Shenjiang baiyong 申江百詠 (One hundred poems about Shanghai)*. In Gu, ed., 79 – 92.; Huang Xieqing 黄燮清. [1857](1996). *Yangjing zhuzhi ci 洋泾竹枝词 (Bamboo poems of the Yangjing Creek)*. In Gu, ed., 349 – 51.

³⁴² The term "shu-yu" is often translated as "sing-song girl" and can also denote high-class courtesans. The term first appeared in 1851, coined by a prominent courtesan named Zhu Suolan, and came into wider use after 1860, by which time these high-class courtesans had secured their dominant position in the world of prostitution.

³⁴³ According to Henriot, Wang Tao mentioned a total of 155 women, to varying degrees, whom he had patronised in his works *Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬冶遊錄) and *Dramatized Talk on the Flower Country* (花国剧谈) (Henriot, 2001, p. 98).

their peak, and by around 1896, they had increased to 400.³⁴⁴ This profession had strict entry requirements, where anyone wishing to enter the profession had to meet certain criteria and pass an annual examination, usually held during the seventh lunar month (corresponding to August in the Gregorian calendar, during summer). At this time, all the male and female storytellers of the city would gather at the "East Gate," where each person had to sing an opening piece and tell a story, with no repetitions allowed. Only the last performer was required to repeat the first performer's song, as this method was used to test the number of pieces each participant had mastered.³⁴⁵ Those who did not participate in this event or failed to meet the requirements were not allowed to perform in the storytelling venues.³⁴⁶ Later, the rules became more relaxed, categorising participants into two types: one was the versatile type, capable of both singing and performing, while the other was limited to singing.³⁴⁷ The purpose of the competition was to limit the number of high-class courtesans. This classification also set different levels of artistic value and status for the shu-yu in the minds of customers, despite their officially stated prices.³⁴⁸

Courtesan houses were established and managed by various investors, and sometimes the musicians who accompanied the renowned courtesans became the organisers of these courtesan houses. They would find a suitable house and obtain the necessary permits to operate. These courtesan houses might employ their own musicians, and after the courtesans performed, the courtesan house would charge each table of guests, with a portion of the fees being given to the musicians as payment.³⁴⁹ High-class courtesans were trained from a young age by musicians, who, as masters imparting musical knowledge, effectively held the keys to entering this profession.³⁵⁰ These courtesans began their careers at a very young age and typically left the profession shortly thereafter. Those who were fortunate enough to marry would usually remain in the profession for no more than 5 to 10 years.³⁵¹ Regarding the skills of high-class courtesans, according to Wang Tao's records, 19 of them were famous for their singing. Among them, 6 played the pipa, 6 played the konghou, 2 played the flute, 2 played the sanxian while singing, 2 performed narrative singing with accompaniment, and 3 were renowned for their social skills.³⁵²

Shu-yu considered themselves artists who entertained guests during celebrations and banquets, either at the guests' homes, at traditional entertainment venues in the city, or in their own residences. In principle, they did not engage in prostitution, adhering to the motto of "selling

³⁴⁴ Wang Tao, [1878] (1992c). *Haizou Yeyou Lu Yulu (Extra to the Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea)*, in Chongtianzi (Ed.), vol. 20, p. 810.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 799.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 811.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 808.

³⁴⁸ Wang Tao, [1878] (1992b). *Haizou Yeyou Lu Fulu (Addendum to the Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea)*, in Chongtianzi (Ed.), vol. 20, p. 785.

³⁴⁹ Wang Liaoweng (1922). *Sixty Years of Shanghai's Flower World History 上海六十年花界史*. Shanghai: Shixin Shuju, pp. 12-13.

³⁵⁰ Wang Tao (1880). *Taoyuan Chidu [弢園尺牘] (The letters of Wang Tao)*, 12 vol. Shanghai: n.p., pp. 22-24.

³⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 25.

³⁵² Wang Tao [1887] (1987). *Songbin Suohua 淞濱瑣話 (Miscellaneous talks on the coast of Shanghai)*. Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, pp. 77.

art, not the body".³⁵³ Shu-yu were companions who entertained customers, and the customers respectfully addressed them as “先生” (xiansheng). The term “xiansheng” is traditionally used to address men in formal settings, but in their circles, it was a mark of social recognition.³⁵⁴



Figure 4-1. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1885), Bing Collection, pp. 46.

In *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, there is a report that prominently features the exceptional musical skills and notable reputation of shu-yu.³⁵⁵ The report recounts that in the Jiangnan region, particularly in Qinchuan (modern-day Changshu, Jiangsu), young women were often chosen for their beauty and intelligence to study narrative singing. These women became highly accomplished and gained widespread fame, especially in the shu-yu of Shanghai. Many artists claimed to be from Qinchuan, and some courtesans even pretended to be Qinchuan natives to boost their market value. Though narrative singing was not initially very popular in Qinchuan, it gradually spread as a result of a local gentleman’s initiative. People from various social strata, including officials and merchants, would invariably invite these artists to perform at festive occasions, creating a lively and celebratory atmosphere. The artists in Shanghai’s Beili (a district known for its courtesan houses) prospered due to the frequent visits of dignitaries. Among them, three artists—Kunbao, Shubao, and Zengbao—were especially renowned, to the extent that men would greet each other with the question, “Shall we visit them?” During

³⁵³ Wang Tao (1985). *Manyou Suilu 漫遊隨錄 (The record of my wandering)*. In Wang Xiqi (Ed.), *Xiao fang hu zhai Yudi Congchao [小方壺齋輿地叢鈞 (Collection of geographical works from the Xiaofanghu studio)*, vol. 62. Hangzhou: Hongzhou Guji Shudian, pp. 3225.

³⁵⁴ Mao Xianglin 毛祥麟. [1870] (1985). *Mo yu lu 墨餘錄 (Records of leftover ink)*, ed. Bi Wanchen 畢萬忱. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe. pp.47.

³⁵⁵ *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1885), Bing Collection 丙集, pp. 46.

one such gathering, an official from the Ministry of Agriculture identified 28 women of exceptional talent and grace, referring to them as the “Twenty-eight Generals of Yuntai,” a title that was warmly accepted by all.

This demonstrates that in late Qing Shanghai, shu-yu were not merely entertainers with exceptional narrative singing skills but also instrumental in the dissemination and re-creation of Jiangnan local culture within urban social settings. The cultural identity of these renowned courtesans was closely tied to Qinchuan, which bolstered their cultural capital and allowed them to attain higher social status. The prestige associated with Qinchuan was so significant that some courtesans even falsely claimed Qinchuan origins to secure greater social recognition. Additionally, shu-yu garnered the attention of various elite groups, such as officials and merchants, which enabled these courtesans to play active roles in high society. This involvement further influenced the social etiquette and trends of the time. As significant symbols of urban culture in late Qing Shanghai, these courtesans held sway not only on a local level but also expanded their influence by engaging with external elites, thus becoming vital symbols and integral elements of late Qing urban culture.

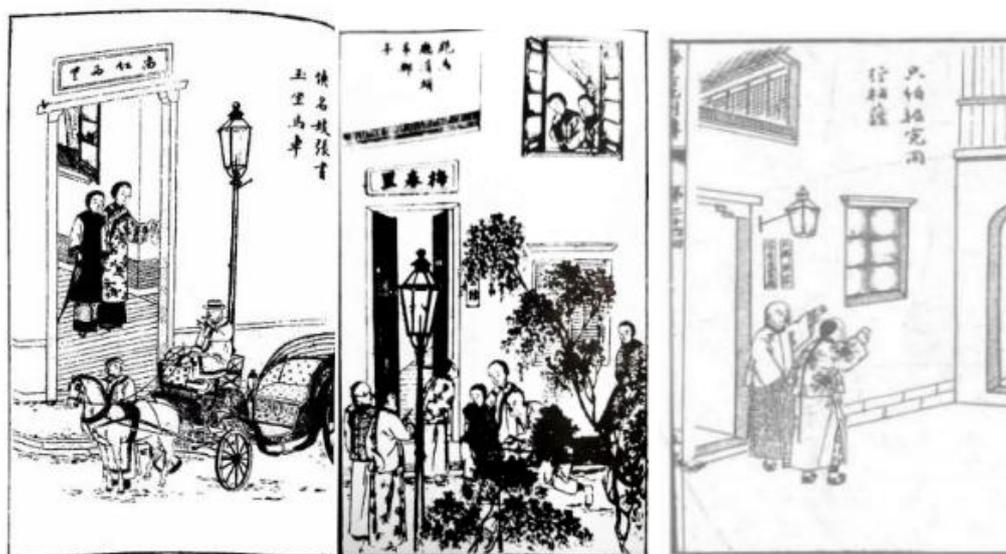
The places where shu-yu resided were called courtesan houses, which served both residential and commercial functions. The names of the courtesans were displayed at the entrance of the courtesan houses and at the street corners, much like business signs—top-tier courtesans had the term "shu-yu" added after their names. The courtesan houses were referred to as "yu" (temporary residences), seemingly equivalent to the "mansion" of a wealthy merchant. Like private homes, these courtesan houses did not entertain strangers; new clients had to be introduced by regular patrons to gain entry (as shown in Figure 4-2). "Zhu-jia" were smaller-scale courtesan houses, which Samuel Liang referred to as "alternative families" for the sojourning merchants.³⁵⁶ He argued that the essential public and commercial nature of Shanghai courtesan houses was intriguingly blended with the "domestic intimacy of family spaces" they created. For example, the daily life in courtesan houses, as depicted in the novel *The Sing-song Girls of Shanghai* (海上花列传), exhibited a formal similarity to traditional family structures: fixed, independent residences with a "wife," the wife's "mother," the wife's "sisters," and residents addressing the clients as "laoye" (master), as if he were the head of the household. However, this simulated family relationship was temporary, unstable, and commercial.³⁵⁷ These smaller, one-woman courtesan houses were sometimes independently operated by the courtesans themselves, who often had a loyal clientele of officials and wealthy individuals. The courtesans personally decorated their residences in a luxurious manner, bringing along their personal maids and servants to assist with the operations. Other courtesan houses were managed by a madam, who rented out rooms to the courtesans and provided basic cleaning services.³⁵⁸ Although the organisational structure of zhu-jia was simpler than that of larger courtesan houses, it is said that clients preferred visiting zhu-jia

³⁵⁶ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai: Space, Gender, and Visual Culture in the Sojourners' City, 1853-98*. Routledge, pp. 65-67.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 66.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

because they did not have to spend as much on the numerous banquets or various fees,³⁵⁹ and the food ordered from nearby restaurants was also tastier.³⁶⁰



*Figure 4-2. Chang-san shuyu, Illustrations of Shanghai Fun (海上快乐图)*³⁶¹

The reverence shown to high-class courtesans by courtesan houses can also be seen in the elaborate rituals that accompanied their arrival. According to guidebooks, the first time a courtesan arrived at a courtesan house, it was a highly ceremonious event. The courtesan house would organize a welcoming ceremony to express their respect for her and her potential to attract wealth, thereby demonstrating her significance to the establishment.³⁶² After dressing and grooming herself carefully, the courtesan would "wait solemnly" in her private residence for the carriage sent by the courtesan house to escort her. Upon reaching the new courtesan house, she would step out of the carriage holding lit incense, greeted by the sound of firecrackers and a festive atmosphere. As she entered the house, she would step over a torch, symbolizing prosperity. Until she was inside, no one was allowed to speak. Once inside, with candles lit, she would place the incense down and receive a cup of tea from a servant. This ritual had to be executed flawlessly, as any mistake would be considered a bad omen. This was because "welcoming the courtesan was like welcoming the God of Wealth"; her presence was believed to ensure the prosperity of the entire courtesan house.³⁶³

1.1.1 Public Performances of Shu-yu

³⁵⁹ Sun Yusheng (1939). *The Life of Prostitutes 妓女的生活*. Shanghai: Chunming Bookstore, p. 21.

³⁶⁰ Wang Liaoweng (1922). *Sixty Years of the Courtesan World in Shanghai (上海六十年花界史)*. Shanghai: Shixin Shuju, pp. 13-14.

³⁶¹ Hai Shang You Xi Tu Shuo, 1898, pp. 2.

³⁶² Ban Chisheng (1891). *A Complete Guide of Waywardness Touring Shanghai (海上冶遊備覽)*, 4 vols. Shanghai: n.p., pp. 51

³⁶³ Sun Yusheng (1939). *The Life of Prostitutes (妓女的生活)*. Shanghai: Chunming Bookstore, p. 31.

According to Wang Tao's records, female storytellers and singers in the Old City (the area outside the concessions) were categorized into different types, with their professional levels determining their rank. At the top were those who specialized in "storytelling" (pingshu) and "singing," followed by those who performed "flower drum opera." However, public performances of this music often faced bans from the Shanghai Daotai (local magistrate) because its content was considered too obscene and improper, posing a threat to public morals and order.³⁶⁴ However, within the concessions, where cultural censorship was more relaxed, talented high-class courtesans (shu-yu) pioneered new forms of entertainment. In his 1876 work *Bamboo Poems of Shanghai* (海上竹枝詞), Yuan Zuzhi wrote that, aside from visiting theatres, listening to courtesans sing, going to opera houses, and inviting courtesans for outings, one of the most popular new forms of entertainment at the time was the nüshuchang—female storytelling venues entirely performed by women.³⁶⁵ The first nüshuchang in the Shanghai concessions was "Yeshilou," a name that followed the tradition of a famous garden in the Old City. It is said that Yeshilou was established in the 1870s by a renowned courtesan. The thriving business at Yeshilou inspired many imitators, and previously male-dominated teahouses and storytelling venues began inviting shu-yu to perform, giving rise to the shuchang.³⁶⁶ Historical photographs from the 1890s depict the architectural style of the nüshuchang, indicating that the performances of Shanghai courtesans were partially exposed to the public eye (see Figure 4-3). As pointed out by Catherine Vance Yeh, whereas courtesan performances were previously held mostly indoors, in private settings without outsiders, they were now opened to the public, with everything under public scrutiny. Courtesans were portrayed as one of the unique sights of the concessions, and they contributed to reshaping the social relationships within this immigrant society.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Wang Tao [1887] (1987). *Miscellaneous Talks on the Coast of Shanghai* (淞濱瑣語). Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, p. 89.

³⁶⁵ Yuan Zuzhi [1876] (1996). *Bamboo Poems of Shanghai* (海上竹枝詞). In Gu (Ed.), p. 17.

³⁶⁶ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press, p. 106.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.



Figure 4-3. Photograph postcard, late 19th century (Private collection, Los Angeles)³⁶⁸

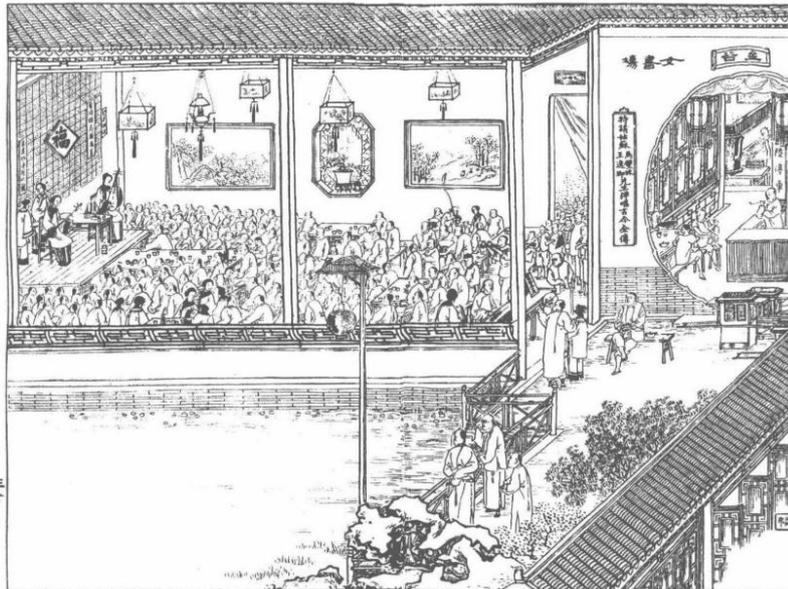


Figure 4-4. Female Storytelling Venues³⁶⁹

The sizes of shuchang (storytelling venues) varied, with some capable of accommodating up to 100 spectators seated around a raised platform (as shown in Figure 4-4), where high-class courtesans would be arranged either individually or in groups (as shown in Figure 4-5). The earliest of these shuchang were established in the early 1860s. Following that, their numbers increased rapidly, and they were predominantly located in areas where high-class courtesans resided, reaching a peak between 1890 and 1892.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press, p. 107.

³⁶⁹ Shen River Grand View Scroll (申江盛景图), 1884, pp.15.

³⁷⁰ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*.

1.1.2 Pinyulou Storytelling Venues



Figure 4-5. Pinyulou Storytelling Venues³⁷¹

Figure 4-5 depicts a scene that took place at the Pinyulou (品玉楼) shuchang on Fourth Avenue in the British Concession. A lavishly dressed young man, around twenty years old, ordered sixteen performances involving fifteen courtesans, spending a total of sixteen silver dollars. The staff at the shuchang assumed he was a "big spender," but when it came time to settle the bill, it was discovered that he had no money, leading to a severe reprimand by the shuchang staff. The editor of the pictorial concluded with a comment that such vanity, ignoring one's financial limitations, was nothing more than self-inflicted humiliation.

Setting aside the plot of the pictorial, the decor and furnishings within the Pinyulou shuchang were in line with the tastes of the literati. The stage was adorned with elaborate decorations, including exquisite calligraphy, poetry, and floral paintings, with similarly delicate designs even on the lampshades of the electric lights at the back, highlighting the shuchang as a cultural and artistic venue. These decorations not only enhanced the artistic atmosphere of the space but also reflected the cultural sophistication valued by the shuchang operators at the time. On stage, the performers, dressed in luxurious costumes and maintaining graceful demeanours, were focused on playing the pipa, showcasing their exceptional skills. In such settings, high-class courtesans attended alone, without accompanying musicians. They chose to perform Peking opera, often singing excerpts from plays or popular tunes of the time,

University of California Press, p. 51.

³⁷¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Li Collection pp.53, 1894.

accompanied by the pipa. Behind the scenes, a group of maids followed the courtesans, tending to customers who were familiar with the courtesans or had requested specific songs. These maids would serve tea or water pipes and engage in conversation with the guests.

The arrangement of the audience area reflects the function of late Qing shuchang as social spaces. All the patrons were seated around individual tables, which formed a square around the stage. The tables were set with teapots, cups, and other items, emphasising the dual role of the shuchang as a teahouse. The attire and postures of the audience varied, indicating their social status and differing motivations for attending the event. Some were intently focused on the performances on stage, while others seemed more engaged in conversation and interaction with those around them. This layout provided a space for appreciating the arts while also creating an environment conducive to social interaction, underscoring the shuchang as a central hub of social culture in late Qing Shanghai.

1.1.3 Yeshilou Teahouse



Figure 4-6. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Ren Collection pp.102, 1887

Figure 4-6 shows a particular protagonist inside the Yeshilou teahouse: a Western courtesan. The text accompanying the image notes that she sang a Chinese folk song with lewd lyrics, "The Eighteen Touches" (十八摸) and the editor harshly criticized this indecorous trend in a tone of disdain. Western courtesans had been in Shanghai since the mid-19th century, following the opening of the treaty ports, with most coming from Western Europe, the United States, and Eastern Europe, but their primary clientele were not Chinese men. *A Register of Shanghai Beauties* (海上群芳谱) mentions Western brothels and describes Western courtesans as "extravagant and shameless," citing that a single visit by a Chinese patron would cost fifty

gold coins, an exorbitant amount at the time. Furthermore, there is no historical record, apart from this account in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, that indicates Western courtesans³⁷² studied Chinese songs and achieved fame. However, we cannot completely dismiss this possibility. The furnishings in the image are similarly refined and tasteful compared to those in Figure 4-5, with only a slight difference in the stage's position. Of note are two programme boards above the stage, displaying the repertoire to be performed soon. The scene also includes male musicians playing the huqin and small percussion instruments, with six courtesans accompanying the "Western courtesan" in the centre by playing the pipa. This setup was considered rather grand, whether in a shuchang or a teahouse.

The residences of shu-yu were known as courtesan houses, which combined both residential and commercial purposes. The names of the courtesans were prominently displayed at the entrances of these houses and along the streets, akin to business signs—especially for top-tier courtesans, who would have "shu-yu" added after their names. These courtesan houses were called "yu" (寓 temporary residences), which could be considered the equivalent of a wealthy merchant's "mansion." Like private residences, courtesan houses did not welcome strangers; new patrons had to be introduced by regular customers to be granted entry (as depicted in Figure 4-2). Smaller-scale courtesan houses, known as zhu-jia (住家), were described by Samuel Liang as "alternative families" for sojourning merchants.³⁷³ Liang observed that the inherently public and commercial nature of Shanghai courtesan houses was intriguingly mixed with the "domestic intimacy of family spaces" they aimed to create. For instance, the courtesan houses portrayed in the novel *Flowers of Shanghai* (海上花列传) reflected a structural resemblance to traditional family life: with fixed, independent dwellings, and roles such as "wife," the wife's "mother," the wife's "sisters," with the residents addressing clients as "laoye" (master), as if he were the household's head. Yet, this simulated family dynamic was temporary, unstable, and commercial.³⁷⁴ Some of these smaller courtesan houses were independently run by the courtesans, who catered to a regular clientele of influential and affluent men. These courtesans took personal charge of decorating their courtesan houses with opulence, and brought along their personal maids and servants to manage the establishment. Other zhu-jia were managed by a madam, who rented out rooms to courtesans and provided basic cleaning services.³⁷⁵ Despite the simpler organisational structure of zhu-jia compared to larger courtesan houses, clients reportedly preferred visiting zhu-jia because it spared them from the expenses of lavish banquets and various fees³⁷⁶, and the food ordered from outside restaurants was also considered better.³⁷⁷

Shuchang usually provided musicians, but shu-yu did not rely on them, as they typically

³⁷² The text does not clarify the specific country or ethnicity; "Western courtesans" generally refers to white courtesans.

³⁷³ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping modernity in Shanghai: Space, gender, and visual culture in the sojourners' city, 1853-98*. Routledge, pp. 65-67.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 66.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Sun Yusheng (1939). *The Life of A Prostitute (妓女的生活)*. Shanghai: Chunming Bookstore, p. 21.

³⁷⁷ Wang Liaoweng (1922). *Sixty Years of Shanghai's Courtesan History (上海六十年花界史)*. Shanghai: Shixin Shuju, pp. 13-14.

accompanied themselves with musical instruments.³⁷⁸ Each quarter, the musicians would organise a performance. During these times, the shuchang would be adorned with bouquets of flowers and colourful lanterns. Each high-class courtesan would invite a loyal customer to sit in the front row, and naturally, these customers were expected to request a few songs.³⁷⁹ However, the high-class courtesans did not earn anything from this; the revenue was shared between the musicians and the owner of the shuchang. For the musicians, this income represented their entire quarterly salary. The "performance sequence" for each high-class courtesan was the same: it began with an introduction, followed by a piece of opera, and concluded with a song.³⁸⁰

In these shuchang, the initial performances typically featured excerpts from chuanqi and Kunqu opera, along with opening pieces accompanied by musical instruments. Kunqu was known to be difficult to master. According to Wang Tao, this was one reason why these women preferred performing Peking opera — implying that Peking opera required less technical skill than Kunqu. He, on the other hand, had a preference for the gentle tunes of women from Jiangnan, particularly from Suzhou and Changzhou.³⁸¹ However, it might have been the widespread popularity of this trend that naturally led to the rise of the Peking opera craze in the 1870s, which persisted thereafter.³⁸² Shuchang, along with theatres, teahouses, and courtesan houses, were favourite haunts of literati and scholars. In the urban landscape of the late Qing period, leisure activities were quite limited. Therefore, it was primarily in the shuchang that literati could find a welcoming atmosphere, away from the common people, suitable for discussing and listening to music.³⁸³

1.2 Singers Adorning Banquets: Changsan

Within the "society" of high-class courtesans, shu-yu naturally stood out as exceptional. However, other groups emerged as the hierarchy within the prostitution world became more stratified. Christian Henriot argues that this stratification was driven by changes in Shanghai society, leading to a "downward movement" — a trend towards making high-class courtesan services more "sensualised," where male clients sought to satisfy both their intellectual and physical desires. This led to the emergence of the changsan group (also known as "sansan").³⁸⁴ The name changsan comes from a tile in the Chinese game of pai gow, and in the context of prostitution, it referred to a type of courtesan who could be hired for 3 silver dollars to "go out" (provide external services) and accompany clients at banquets. If an

³⁷⁸ Wang Tao (1992b). *Addendum to the Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬治遊錄附錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 20. (Orig. pub. 1878). pp.5469.

³⁷⁹ Banchisheng 半癡生. (1891). *A Complete Guide of Touring Shanghai* (海上治遊備覽), 4 vols. Shanghai: n.p., pp. 113-114.

³⁸⁰ Wang Tao (1992d). *Dramatized Talk on the Flower Country* (花園劇談). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 19. (Orig. pub. 1878), p. 203.

³⁸¹ Ibid, p. 225.

³⁸² Chen Sen 陳森. (1984). *The Precious Mirror for Appreciating Flowers* (品花寶鑑). Taipei: Guangya Chuban Gongsu, p. 275.

³⁸³ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, p. 67.

³⁸⁴ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, p. 98

additional 3 dollars were paid, she could stay overnight with the client. Unlike shu-yu, changsan did not shy away from sexual relations with their clients; during the Republican era, they often accompanied clients to hotels for overnight stays. Changsan courtesan houses persisted into the 1940s, becoming a notable feature of Shanghai life.³⁸⁵

The changsan courtesan houses operated as open venues that combined the living spaces of courtesans with social environments for businessmen. The familial setting of these courtesan houses facilitated the formation of social networks among businessmen, with banquets held in the courtesan houses particularly highlighting this function. These banquets, referred to by clients as "eating flower wine," were generally conducted in the courtesan's private chambers and provided her with both financial gain and increased reputation.³⁸⁶ For a new client, organising a banquet in a courtesan's room was the initial step towards establishing a romantic relationship with her. To sustain this relationship, the client needed to host such banquets regularly, particularly during significant holidays. The host would invite his friends, each of whom was expected to hire a courtesan to accompany them. When the number of guests was large, extra tables were added, a practice known as "double table dining".³⁸⁷ Occasionally, the host would ask each guest to bring two courtesans, creating a lively atmosphere. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* often depicted scenes of banquets where each man was accompanied by one or two courtesans (as illustrated in Figure 4-8~10).

The initial shu-yu were female performers who appeared at shuchang or in their own residences, and they were also called to perform at other events, a service known as "chuju" (going out for service). Over time, although the changsan also provided chuju services, these were mainly focused on attending banquets as companions rather than performing. They were not professional artists, yet they carried on the professional reputation of the shu-yu. Even though they were not storytellers, they were still addressed as "xiansheng" (Mister) during their chuju services. The number of chuju engagements a courtesan secured each night became a crucial indicator of her success, with top courtesans having multiple engagements each night and potentially earning their courtesan houses over two thousand silver dollars per quarter.³⁸⁸

Banquets were conducted according to certain rituals. Guests would arrive at the courtesan house by sedan chair, and once they were seated, the attendants would set the table and then loudly call out, "Serve the wine!"—this was the signal for the courtesans from each room to join the guests at the table. As the guests took their seats and raised their glasses, the attendants would call, "Serve the food!" Small appetizers were served first, followed by main dishes, and finally, staple foods like rice.³⁸⁹ When the main dishes were served, the

³⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 101-102.

³⁸⁶ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai: Space, Gender, and Visual Culture in the Sojourners' City, 1853-98*. Routledge, p. 78

³⁸⁷ Banchisheng 半癡生. (1891). *A Complete Guide of Touring Shanghai (海上冶遊備覽)*, 4 vols. Shanghai: n.p., p. 42.

³⁸⁸ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai: Space, Gender, and Visual Culture in the Sojourners' City, 1853-98*. Routledge, p. 79.

³⁸⁹ Wang Tao (1992a). *Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea (海陬冶遊錄)*. In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 20. (Orig. pub. 1860), p. 123.

courtesans would take turns singing while musicians played alongside, using wind instruments, strings, and drums for accompaniment (as shown in Figure 4-7). Afterward, the courtesans would cradle a pipa and sing while playing. One of the most frequently depicted scenes in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* is that of a changsan holding a pipa, seated beside customers at various banquets. The changsan were initially called "pipa jiaoshu" to indicate that they could only play the pipa and not perform more complex operatic pieces, so they mostly sang "opening" songs at banquets.³⁹⁰ During their chuju service, courtesans, apart from occasionally singing, would simply sit beside or behind the guests without eating; however, they could drink on behalf of the guests during toasts, and sometimes their maids could do so as well. Once the guests had finished drinking, the courtesans would quickly leave, thus concluding the chuju service.³⁹¹

Nevertheless, singing was not always required. The activities of high-class courtesans during their chuju engagements varied depending on the occasion, their current popularity, and their level of familiarity with the client who requested their presence. Initially, all courtesans were expected to sing a song with musical accompaniment during their chuju. However, as they distanced themselves from their original role as singers, and with chuju often taking place in hotel rooms, many courtesans replaced singing with a few minutes of casual conversation.³⁹² The Guide to Greater Shanghai notes that courtesans sometimes had to attend up to 30 engagements each night, leaving them utterly exhausted, which may explain why they chose not to bring musicians and thus avoid the obligation to sing.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 129.

³⁹¹ Ibid

³⁹² Wang Tao (1992c). *Extra To The Record Of Visits To the Distant Corner At the Sea* (海陬治遊錄餘錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 20. (Orig. pub. 1878), p. 5781.

³⁹³ Liu, P. (1936). *Guide to Greater Shanghai*. (大上海指南) Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 59.

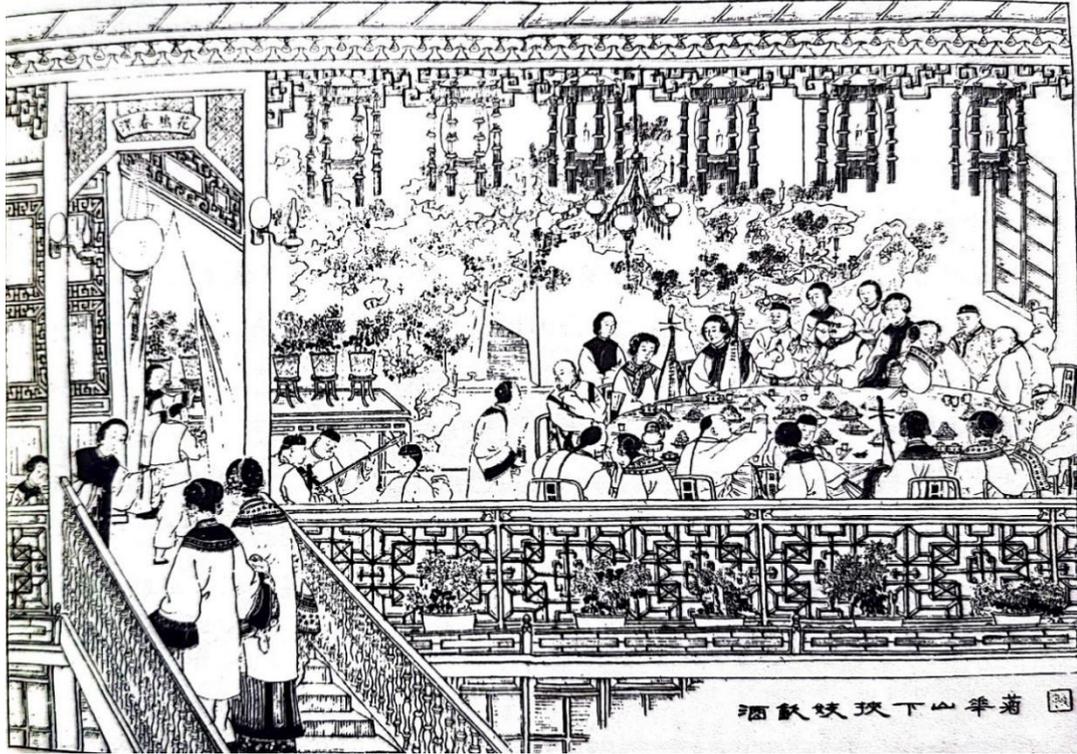


Figure 4-7. Drinking at the Chrysanthemum Mountain accompanied by courtesans (菊花山下狭妓饮酒)³⁹⁴



Figure 4-8. Dianshizhai Pictorial Si Collection pp.6, 1892

³⁹⁴ Dianshizhai, Shen Jiang Sheng Jing Tu (申江盛景图). 2:4. 1884.



Figure 4-9. Dianshizhai Pictorial Yin Collection pp.19, 1888



Figure 4-10. Dianshizhai Pictorial Shu Collection pp.59, 1895

1.3 Yao'er Tangzi

The venues where the lower-ranked courtesans, referred to as yao'er (literally translated as one-two), conducted their business were commonly called "tang" or "tangzi". The *tang* (堂 hall) was a much larger establishment with up to thirty or even fifty *yao'er* girls.³⁹⁵ Above its entrance was hung a lantern, on which was written the name of the establishment rather than those of the courtesans. *Tang* literally means a hall or public space in a house or official mansion, but here it defines a pleasure space open to the public, where strangers could enter and pick one from the many courtesans who eagerly showed up in front of them after the servant announced their arrival. The *tang* was less a homelike space than a straightforward brothel. Such a house ranged from ten to as many as forty, and the business premises might comprise up to one hundred rooms³⁹⁶.



Figure 4-11. Yao'er Tang (Hall)

Wang Tao wrote in his book that the yao'er tangzi (second-tier courtesan houses) in the Old City were also hierarchically divided, primarily based on the women's musical performance abilities. The most popular and luxurious were on the upper level, known as "tangding," while the lower level, called "tangdi," housed about 30 to 50 women of slightly lower status and

³⁹⁵ Skinner, G. W., & Baker, H. D. (1977). *The city in late imperial China*. Stanford University Press.

³⁹⁶ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping modernity in Shanghai: space, gender, and visual culture in the sojourners' city, 1853-98*. Routledge.

cheaper rates, though they were more willing to provide sexual services.³⁹⁷ Various guidebooks consistently noted that the singing skills of yao'er were inferior to those of changsan, and their fees for sexual services were also lower. However, unlike the elaborate protocols of the changsan courtesan houses, where only familiar clients could be received, yao'er houses treated new and regular clients alike, welcoming all comers. One description bluntly commented, "As long as you have six silver dollars in your pocket, you can have her at your feet, subject to your whims".³⁹⁸ One guidebook mentioned that some women left the ranks of the changsan to become yao'er, or were forced into it by their guardians (usually adoptive parents), because yao'er made money quickly, unlike the changsan houses, where the elaborate rituals and protocols made it harder to earn quick money.³⁹⁹ This clearly shows that clients seeking yao'er courtesans were primarily driven by the desire for sexual satisfaction.

There was also a type of establishment known as the "private family gathering," which was positioned between the changsan shu-yu and the yao'er tangzi. These venues were bustling at night when patrons hosted banquets and gambling sessions, but otherwise, they resembled private homes.⁴⁰⁰ These spaces served as the courtesans' bedrooms, and occasionally, guests would stay overnight. In the afternoon, these small-scale, family-like activities were more private and cordial, such as "dachawei" (打茶围, a kind of tea gathering or tea party), where a guest might bring along one or two friends to visit a courtesan they knew for tea and conversation.⁴⁰¹ If a guest developed a close relationship with a courtesan, he would often visit her room to spend time alone with her, similar to how lovers would. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* also depicted some of these scenes.

³⁹⁷ Wang Tao (1992a). *Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬冶遊錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 20. (Orig. pub. 1860), p. 273.

³⁹⁸ Banchisheng 半癡生. (1891). *A Complete Guide of Touring Shanghai* (海上冶遊備覽), 4 vols. Shanghai: n.p., p. 42.

³⁹⁹ Chen Sen 陳森. (1984). *The Precious Mirror for Appreciating Flowers* (品花寶鑒). Taipei: Guangya Chuban Gongsu, p. 274.

⁴⁰⁰ Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai: Space, Gender, and Visual Culture in the Sojourners' City, 1853-98*. Routledge, p. 68.

⁴⁰¹ During dachawei, it was uncommon for guests to request songs, as these gatherings at the changsan houses were free of charge and were seen as a way for the courtesan to maintain and cultivate her relationships with regular clients.



Figure 4-12. *Dianshizhai Pictorial Kui* Collection pp.97, 1887



Figure 4-13. *Dianshizhai Pictorial Yin* Collection pp.54, 1888

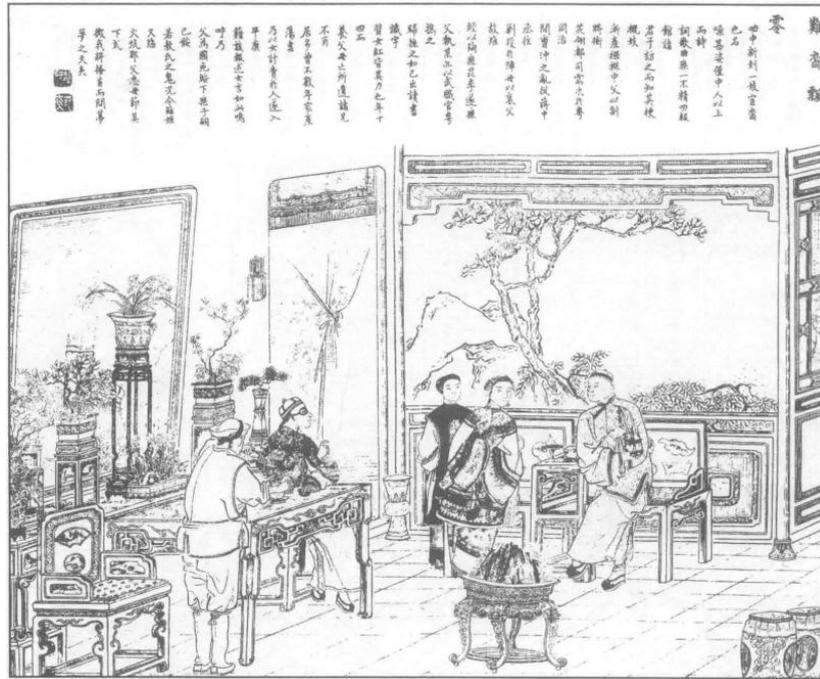


Figure 4-14. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Bing Collection pp.72, 1885

Despite these activities resembling family life, they were fundamentally centred around money and personal interests. Many significant business matters were handled during these private moments. It was also during these times that courtesans would ask their close clients for valuable gifts, such as jewellery and clothing. Samuel Liang remarked that even if such close relationships eventually led to marriage, it was, at its core, still a business transaction.⁴⁰²

1.4 Yeji Prostitutes

During the late Qing and Republican periods in Shanghai, the largest group of prostitutes were known as "yeji" (literally translated as wild chicken) or "pheasant prostitutes," who vastly outnumbered other categories. These women were purely sex workers, with no musical talents. Several guidebooks described yeji in a derogatory manner and advised tourists to be wary. When night fell, groups of yeji could be seen along the main roads of the International Settlement and the French Concession, aggressively soliciting business from small merchants and street vendors. They approached anyone passing by, engaging in activities that bordered on theft.⁴⁰³ *Dianshizhai Pictorial* also reported news of the police arresting these streetwalkers and captured images of yeji soliciting clients (see Figure 4-15). In terms of age, yeji and lower-tier prostitutes were often described in stereotypical extremes: they were either very young, underage girls, or older "fading beauties." The term "older" usually referred to women between the ages of 20 and 30, a range in which there were few high-class courtesans but many yeji.⁴⁰⁴ A 1915 survey by the Shanghai Municipal Council found that the total

⁴⁰² Liang, S. Y. (2010). *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai: Space, Gender, and Visual Culture in the Sojourners' City, 1853-98*. Routledge, p. 82.

⁴⁰³ Banchisheng 半癡生. (1891). *A Complete Guide of Touring Shanghai (海上冶遊備覽)*, 4 vols. Shanghai: n.p., pp. 113-114

⁴⁰⁴ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University

number of prostitutes had reached 7,791, with nearly four-fifths being yeji who solicited on the streets. A report from the Morals Investigation Committee, commissioned by the concession authorities in the 1920s, noted that there were 4,522 Chinese prostitutes in the International Settlement alone, meaning that one in every 147 Chinese residents was a prostitute.⁴⁰⁵ The report further indicated that, assuming Greater Shanghai had a population of 1.5 million and accounting for prostitutes in the French Concession, one in every 300 Chinese residents in Shanghai was a woman making a living through prostitution.⁴⁰⁶

Overall, the large and rapidly expanding group of "yeji" prostitutes reflected the severe livelihood challenges and poverty issues faced by women at the lower rungs of society during that time. Not only were they numerous and widespread across the streets of the concessions, but they were also compelled by economic necessity to engage in low-cost sex work. This phenomenon highlighted the neglect of vulnerable groups by society and the significant social problems caused by the widening gap between rich and poor. This situation was a source of deep concern for the concession authorities, as well as for the press, led by *Shenbao*, and the visual news industry, exemplified by *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 4-15. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Mao Collection pp.43, 1885

Press, p. 62.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 342-343.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 344.

2. “Timely Tune” in Laufer’s Collection and the Issues of Prostitution in Late 19th Century

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chinese prostitutes were always portrayed as a "recorded" "Other" in historical accounts. As Gail Hershatter lamented in the first chapter of *Dangerous Pleasures*: "Like all other marginalized social groups, prostitutes did not chronicle their own lives. Instances of prostitutes directly speaking or representing themselves are extremely rare".⁴⁰⁷ Hershatter argues that prostitutes only entered historical records when someone sought to praise, condemn, count, regulate, treat, analyse, warn against, rescue, eradicate the trade, or use them as social symbols.⁴⁰⁸ Hershatter points out that while these materials provide researchers with valuable insights into the attitudes and strategies of the upper echelons of society, they primarily reflect the narrative strategies of the authors rather than the actual experiences of the prostitutes themselves. Borrowing from a reformer’s sardonic remark, Hershatter says: "These (images) are the prostitutes of the author’s mind, the prostitutes of the author’s ear. When you ask him what they actually ate, what they wore, whether they were willing or unwilling to live this life, he can’t answer".⁴⁰⁹ Whether readers were consuming stories of romantic encounters from salacious tabloids or the utopian works of reformist idealists, they would not find a single word directly from the mouths of the prostitutes themselves.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, Hershatter concludes that although the historical materials on prostitution are abundant, they do not convey the voices of the prostitutes themselves.

In sections 3 to 5 of *Dangerous Pleasures*, Hershatter, through detailed archival research and a multidisciplinary approach, deeply explores the risks associated with the sex industry in late Qing and Republican-era Shanghai, as well as societal interventions.⁴¹¹ In part four, Hershatter examines how various societal sectors attempted to intervene and control the development of the sex industry through reforms and public health measures. Additionally,

⁴⁰⁷ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, pp. 3

⁴⁰⁸ Hershatter details various sources documenting the existence of prostitutes, including entertainment venue guides, collections of strange stories, portraits, poems written by or for high-class courtesans, gossip columns in tabloids, municipal regulations banning street solicitation, police interrogation records of streetwalkers and those accused of trafficking women, court reports on cases involving both high-class and low-class prostitutes, debates between Chinese and foreign reformers on the pros and cons of legalizing or abolishing prostitution, scholarly treatises analysing the local and global history of prostitution, medical and social worker reports on venereal disease rates among different populations in Shanghai, rescue agency records of women kidnapped and forced into prostitution, and fictionalized accounts of the deceitful tactics and painful lives of prostitutes. Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press.

⁴⁰⁹ Zeng Die 曾迭. (1935). Concerning the Investigation of Prostitution. *Renyan Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 36 (November 16), pp. 710-711.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Christian Henriot reviewed a vast array of primary sources, including police records, court documents, and related media reports. These data revealed the close connections between human trafficking, the spread of venereal diseases, and the entanglement of the sex industry with criminal activities. Hershatter systematically analyzed this data to demonstrate how the sex industry became a significant threat to public security and order in the city.

she delves into the relationship between historical memory and contemporary society by comparing historical documents, oral histories, and modern representations of the sex industry to analyse how society remembers and interprets this historical phenomenon. In her own words, the aim of this significant study was to "search for the voices of the prostitutes themselves"—to hear, within the intricate historical records, the sounds of their daily lives, their struggles, and even their reflections on their own identities.⁴¹² Admittedly, oral history might be the most direct method, but as we have seen in countless images of courtesans cradling pipas in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, one might wonder if the "voices of the prostitutes themselves" could be those sung by the women themselves. It is at this point that an audio archive from 1901, the Laufer's Collection, unveils an answer long buried in the dust.

Laufer's Collection, or China's earliest audio recordings, was collected by a German-born American anthropologist Berthold Laufer in a China Expedition from 1901 to 1902. He recorded more than 500 phonograph cylinders of the local sounds which he considered the most representative in Shanghai and Beijing.⁴¹³ All the audio sources studied in this chapter are saved by The Archives of Traditional Music (ATM) at Indiana University (399 volumes in total). And the audio clips are based on the research findings of the joint phonograph digitisation and transcription project conducted by ATM and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2022 — *Anthology of Wax Cylinder Recordings from the Late Qing Empire: The Berthold Laufer Collection*.⁴¹⁴

2.1 Ongoing Research on the Laufer Collection

Since the "*First Chinese Recordings*" project was initially introduced on 25 October 2020 at the *Society for Ethnomusicology* (SEM), scholars in Chinese musicology have been steadily advancing their exploration of the Laufer Collection. This research has led to the publication of several academic papers, making a notable impact in the field of Chinese traditional music studies.

The works of Wei Xiaoshi (2022) and Patrick Feaster (2022) explore the research value of the Laufer Collection from a recording technology perspective. Feaster highlights how Laufer experimented with "stereo" recording techniques by using a dual-horn system during the recording process, which was a groundbreaking endeavour at the time and influenced later developments in audio technology (see Figure 4-16).⁴¹⁵ With the digitisation and restoration of these recordings, they have been permanently preserved, offering significant benefits for researchers worldwide.⁴¹⁶ Based on these recordings, which are unmodified and, as Xiao Mei

⁴¹² Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, p. 3

⁴¹³ Walravens, H. (2000). Popular Chinese music a century ago: Berthold Laufer's legacy. *Fontes artis musicae*. pp. 345-352.

⁴¹⁴ *Anthology of Wax Cylinder Recordings from the Late Qing Empire: The Berthold Laufer Collection* was published by the Sanchen Shadow Library Audio-Visual Press. The collection includes 21 CDs, a comprehensive booklet (a collection of essays), a booklet of letters (containing 85 letters related to Laufer's activities in China), a photo album, and a booklet of lyrics (with lyrics transcribed from the recordings by ear).

⁴¹⁵ Patrick Feaster (2022). Berthold Laufer and the Phonograph. *Music Culture Research*, 2022(4).

⁴¹⁶ Wei Xiaoshi (2022). The Treasures of Laufer: From Collection to Publication. *Music Culture Research*, 2022(4),

describes, do not overly strive for "clean" sound devoid of background noise and ambient sound, and which possess a "stereo" awareness, Xiao Mei further discusses in *The Ontology of Sound Archives*: "Laufer's recordings captured the true sounds of early 20th-century Chinese social life. These sound archives allow us not only to understand the music of that time but also to reflect upon and comprehend the social and cultural backdrop of that era".⁴¹⁷ In an earlier article, she also noted that Laufer's recordings placed great emphasis on the liveliness of everyday life, giving listeners a sense of immersion, as though they were transported back to the streets of Beijing and Shanghai during that time.⁴¹⁸

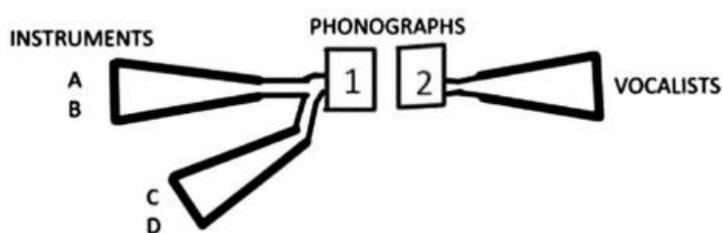


Figure 4-16. "Stereo" Recording Techniques diagram by Patrick Feaster

Laufer's Collection has preserved, in an integrated manner, a wide variety of musical genres from the early 20th century that were prevalent in Shanghai and Beijing. The collection documents the survival of various forms such as Tanhuang opera (滩簧戏), Qinqiang opera (秦腔), Peking opera, lyrics drum (鼓词), instrumental music, and vernacular songs from different regions, which were popular in Shanghai and Beijing at the time. Of particular delight to researchers of traditional Chinese opera is that Laufer's recordings include many works, such as the Peking opera "The Great Fragrant Mountain" (大香山) which have since been lost to history.⁴¹⁹ Additionally, Jin Qiao⁴²⁰ and Guo Yinu⁴²¹ have conducted in-depth analyses of the formal structure, modal characteristics, rhythm, and performance techniques of huqin music from the late Qing and early Republican periods.

However, when I received the Anthology of Wax Cylinder Recordings from the Late Qing Empire: The Berthold Laufer Collection in 2022, I discovered that, in addition to the relatively complete recordings of various operas, there was a category labeled Timely Tune, which consisted of 8 CDs—approximately 38% of the entire collection—featuring over 45

pp. 56-59.

⁴¹⁷ Xiao Mei (2022). *The Ontology of Sound Archives*. *Huangzhong: Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*, 2022(2), p. 17.

⁴¹⁸ Xiao Mei & Ling Jiashui (2021). Historical Echoes in Laufer's "Wax Cylinders". *Music Culture Research*, 2021(1), p. 10.

⁴¹⁹ Zhang Xuan (2021). A Century of Listening—Musicological Research on the Shanghai Opera Cylinder Recordings in the "Laufer Collection". *Music Culture Research*, (002), pp. 128-134.

⁴²⁰ Jin Qiao (2020). Astonishing Two-String Legends—An Analysis of Huqin Performances in the "Berthold Laufer Collection". *Chinese Music*, 2020(2), pp. 7.

⁴²¹ Guo Yinu (2021). Further Exploration of "Shanghai Huqin" in the "Berthold Laufer Collection". *Music Culture Research*, 000(002), pp. 135-145.

songs.⁴²² Despite this, these recordings have yet to attract scholarly attention. The overview of "Beijing Xiaoqu" in the *Anthology of Vernacular Music of China* explains the significance of Timely Tune: "Xiaoqu, also known as Timely Tune or fashionable tunes, is a form of singing and storytelling art that urban performers developed by selecting, refining, enriching, and standardizing widely popular, influential, and highly improvisational vernacular songs".⁴²³ Furthermore, the lyrics of these Timely Tunes are almost entirely related to activities in courtesan houses. However, in the booklet of letters (which includes selected rather than all correspondence), there is no record of any recordings made in courtesan houses or involving courtesans. Moreover, none of the essays in the *Anthology* address these recordings. The only mention of courtesan houses appears in the article by Xiao Mei and Ling Jiashui (2021), where they note that Laufer's recordings were made "in everyday settings such as teahouses, theatres, and even courtesan houses".⁴²⁴ The phrase "even courtesan houses" is the only faint trace of courtesans in these documents.

Given such a vast amount of primary research material, why have scholars seemingly overlooked or remained silent on this subject? One plausible assumption is that some scholars might have already noticed these recordings, but their articles have yet to be published or are currently under peer review. However, the reality may be quite different. The deeper I delve into this research, the more I uncover evidence that "courtesan music" has been deliberately muted or obscured in various forms. But what is the reason behind this?

2.2 Musical Characteristics of “Timely Tune” in the Laufer Collection

In 2023, Dong Ming published an article titled *Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the Laufer Collection*,⁴²⁵ breaking the long-standing silence. He conducted a musical analysis of the song patterns in 15 recordings showcased on Indiana University's Media Collections Online.⁴²⁶ However, Dong Ming did not explain why he chose the incomplete resources available on the Indiana University website instead of the more comprehensive collection of 45 songs in the *Anthology*. In his article, Dong used a comparative approach with musical examples to analyse specific song patterns such as the Meng Jiangnü Tune (孟姜女调), Wugeng Tune (五更调), Jiandianhua Tune (剪靛花调), and Hakka Xiao Tune (客家小调).

First, Dong Ming pointed out that the Meng Jiangnü Tune in the Laufer Collection was widely used across different musical pieces (see Score 1-3).

⁴²² There are still 4 recordings that have not yet been identified, so there are at least 45 or more than 45 songs.

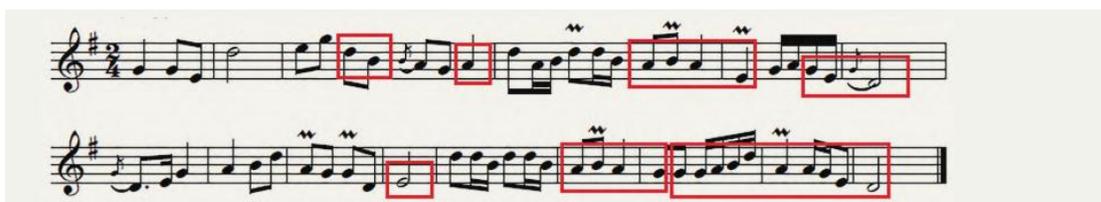
⁴²³ Liu Shufang (1996). *Anthology of Vernacular Music of China, Beijing Volume (Part II)*, China ISBN Center Press, p. 1493.

⁴²⁴ Xiao Mei & Ling Jiashui (2021). Historical Echoes in Laufer's "Wax Cylinders". *Music Culture Research*, 2021(1), p. 11.

⁴²⁵ Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), pp. 79-90.

⁴²⁶

https://media.dlib.indiana.edu/catalog?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field_primary=all_fields&q=laufer



Score 1: Meng Jiangnü Tune, Recording No.: SCY2923



Score 2: Sigh for the Firework-girl (叹烟花), (No.: SCY2958)



Score 3: Makeup Table (梳妆台), (No.: SCY3114)

In the scores, the sections outlined in boxes have nearly identical melodies, aligning with the traditional musical characteristics of the *Meng Jiangnü Tune* (孟姜女调). Among these, the pentatonic melody of *Meng Jiangnü Tune* is the simplest, while *Sigh for the Firework-girl* (叹烟花) and *Makeup Table* (梳妆台) feature noticeably richer ornamental phrases, varied rhythmic patterns, and frequent descending scales that include the seventh degree (VII). Dong Ming noted that the original recording of *Sigh for the Firework-girl* consists of 10 sections, and *Makeup Table* comprises 30 sections, indicating that the Laufer Collection recorded these Vernacular tunes in great detail. However, what Dong did not clarify is that, regardless of whether there are 10 or 30 sections, the basic melody repeats with only minor variations, and the reason for the numerous sections is the variation in the lyrics. His excuse for neglecting the lyrics—"due to the age of the recordings, the lyrics are difficult to discern"—does not hold up to scrutiny. The fact is, in the Anthology's lyrics booklet, only a few characters in *Sigh for the Firework-girl* and *Makeup Table* are marked with “□”, indicating they are "unidentifiable," but these few unidentifiable characters generally do not impede the understanding of the context. Even so, he concludes: "The singing at the time was performed

using multiple verses over a single tune".⁴²⁷ In reality, this "conclusion" is merely a common explanation of the traditional use of Chinese Vernacular tunes and does not reflect any unique characteristic of the Laufer recordings. Although Dong also acknowledged that the *Meng Jiangnü Tune* was widely used across various Vernacular songs and operatic forms, in the "Timely Tune" recordings from the Laufer Collection, songs such as *Ten Flower Plucks* (十採花), *Little Cattle Herder* (小放牛), *Ten Grievances and Ten Resentments* (拾怨十恨), *Ten Cups of Wine Sent to a Lover* (南拾杯酒送情郎), *Shanxi Five Watches* (山西五更), *Ten Sighs* (叹十声), *Sighs from the Underworld* (九泉自叹), and *Scattering Golden Fans* (撒金扇) are also based on the *Meng Jiangnü Tune* or incorporate partial variations, with the lyrics sung over them to narrate lengthy stories.⁴²⁸

Secondly, Dong Ming pointed out that due to regional differences between the north and south, the Wugeng Tune from the Shanghai and Beijing areas shows varying degrees of differences in melodic patterns, modes, and cadences.⁴²⁹ Scores 4-7 illustrate four pieces that all use the same tune, with lyrics added to narrate a story. These pieces are richly ornamented and feature descending notes, characteristic of northern melodies.



Score 4: Strolling on New Street (No.: SCY2961)



Score 5: The Wealthy Lord Tricks the Courtesan (No.: SCY3034)

⁴²⁷ Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), p. 82.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ The characteristic of the Wugeng Tune is that the lyrics narrate the events from the first watch (更 geng) to the fifth watch, with the structure typically being "In the first watch, ..."; "In the second watch, ...," and so on.



Score 6: Ten Loves for the Beautiful Lady (No.: SCY3040, original key: B)



Score 7: Regret Reforming in All Four Seasons (No.: SCY3044)

The Shanghai Xiaodiao (小调) Tea Gathering (打茶会) is melodically and cadentially similar to the Wugeng Tune (五更调) and Qigeng Tune (七更调) found in Anthology of Vernacular Songs from China: Shanghai Volume (see score 8-9).



Score 8: Wugeng Tune⁴³⁰



Score 9: Tea Gathering (No.: SCY2732)

As discussed earlier, "tea gatherings" were a common way for clients to interact with

⁴³⁰ Editorial Committee of Anthology of Quyi Music: Beijing Volume, China ISBN Center, 1996, pp. 612-613.

changsans or yao'er courtesans. The lyrics of Tea Gathering in Score 9 illustrate such a scenario. However, Dong Ming appears to have little interest in exploring the background of the song.

Dong Ming's analysis of two other tunes, *Playing Chess* (下棋调) and *Eighteen Touches* (十八摸), remains focused solely on melody patterns, modal tonality, and comparisons between their scales or cadences and those of tunes still in circulation today. However, it is noteworthy that these two tunes can almost certainly be identified as specifically tailored for courtesan houses and the flirtatious interactions between courtesans and their clients. In the Anthology's lyrics booklet, the lyrics of *Playing Chess* contain sexual innuendos and explicit descriptions of intimate scenes that far exceed those in other tunes. Yet, Dong Ming interprets this as "a depiction of a man and a woman playfully teasing each other while playing chess," rather than the more accurate "a client and a courtesan playfully teasing each other while playing chess."

Eighteen Touches is a typical brothel song, and it was mentioned earlier in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* report about the performance by a Western courtesan at the Yeshilou, where this song was sung. The report stated, "A Western courtesan was invited to sing the Chinese song *Eighteen Touches*, notorious for its lewd lyrics, which was not well received by the audience. It was, indeed, a most trifling and tedious matter!"⁴³¹ Although the editors of the pictorial expressed disdain for this song, it was widely popular. As it originated from the Hakka mountain song genre known as "Nine Tunes and Eighteen Melodies" (九腔十八调), it is still commonly sung in the Fujian and Taiwan regions today.⁴³² Dong Ming compared the Taiwanese version of *Eighteen Touches* with the version recorded in the Laufer Collection (see Scores 10-11), noting that their basic structures and melodic contours are quite similar. The version in the Laufer recordings adds more embellishments to the principal notes but generally revolves around variations on the main theme. Unfortunately, Dong Ming still did not provide any interpretation of the song's content.

⁴³¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Ren Collection, pp. 102.

⁴³² Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), pp. 86

Score 10: Taiwanese Hakka Mountain Song Eighteen Touches⁴³³



Score 11: Eighteen Touches (No.: SCY2743)

Finally, Dong Ming compared the *Complaint of a Courtesan* in the Laufer recordings with the songs of the same name included in *Anthology of Vernacular Songs* from China and *Anthology of Quyi Music from China*. Although his focus remained on the comparison of the scores, this time he provided a brief introduction to the lyrics, noting that the song tells the story of "the soul of a courtesan lamenting her tragic experiences before the King of Hell".⁴³⁴ *Complaint of a Courtesan* is a representative piece of the iron-sheet dagu (铁片大鼓), a musical genre that developed from Hebei Vernacular songs and later spread to Beijing. The performance style involves the singer striking two iron plates together while accompanied by a sanxian and a drum. The earliest recordings of iron-sheet dagu are believed to have been made in the 1920s, with Zhao Lianqing as the performer.⁴³⁵ Although the Laufer recording does not include the signature iron plates and drum of iron-sheet dagu, featuring only sanxian accompaniment, Dong Ming still concludes that the version of *Complaint of a Courtesan* in the Laufer recordings is "the earliest known recording of the existing tune of *Complaint of a Courtesan*".⁴³⁶

Dong Ming's article is the first to focus on Timely Tune research since the digitisation of the Laufer Collection. His meticulous analysis of the melody, rhythm, and modality in these recordings is commendable, yet he ultimately returns to the significance of the lyrics in his conclusion:

The Vernacular songs and Quyi in the Laufer Collection all narrate stories in extended forms based on a single tune, with the lyrics being fully documented. For the incomplete lyrics found in *Anthology of Vernacular Songs* from China and *Anthology of Quyi Music from China*, the Laufer Collection offers the potential to observe and supplement the original content to some extent. Therefore, the value of this 'special collection' lies not only in its recording of the sounds and lyrics of early 20th-century Chinese Vernacular music but also in its reflection of the social conditions of the

⁴³³ Jian Shangren, 1978, *Taiwanese Vernacular Ballads*, Zhongwen Publishing, pp. 66

⁴³⁴ Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), p. 87.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, p. 88.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

time.⁴³⁷

Although I believe that Dong Ming's research methods and focus areas are still open to debate, I fully agree with his conclusion. However, the problem lies in the fact that Dong Ming did not mention at all what aspects of the social conditions the Laufer recordings actually restore. The unsettling aspect of this article is that even professional music researchers might entirely overlook the voices of the courtesans—even when every recording they listen to is sung by a courtesan. This concern deepened as I reviewed the monumental works *Anthology of Quyi Music from China* and *Anthology of Vernacular Songs from China*, which are comprehensive compilations of Chinese Vernacular music.

2.3 Timely Tune in Anthology of Vernacular Songs and Quyi

Anthology of Quyi Music from China (hereafter referred to as Anthology of Quyi) and *Anthology of Vernacular Songs from China* (hereafter referred to as Anthology of Songs) are both large-scale collections of musical materials that were initiated as part of a national-level Chinese arts research project starting in 1979. These anthologies were compiled and published in different stages over several decades. Each volume begins with an overview article that provides a historical review and current analysis of the region's music. The collections also include diagrams of the accompanying instruments used for each genre and performance photos. Additionally, facsimiles of handwritten manuscripts, transcriptions, and original scores of Gongche notation or other ancient notations preserved by folk artists are also published in the anthologies. The historical development of these Timely Tunes often traces back to the Ming dynasty, with many of the tunes being passed down through the ages. These Xiaodiao (small tunes) were frequently performed at private gatherings, brothels, teahouses, and restaurants. The performers of these Xiaodiao were often actors, courtesans, child singers, or blind women.⁴³⁸ The “Child Singers’ Songs” that emerged in the Ming dynasty were known as dangzi in the Qing dynasty. Li Shengzhen’s *Bamboo Branch Poems of an Entertainments* (百戏竹枝词) from the Kangxi era of the Qing dynasty states, “(Huadang’er) are child singers; they were originally called Qinlou Small Songs and typically were around thirteen or fourteen years old”.⁴³⁹ After the late Qing and early Republican periods, the performers of Xiaodiao included both those who primarily sang Xiaodiao and those who incorporated it into their performances. As described in Anthology of Quyi:

Those who primarily sang Xiaodiao were often girls around twelve or thirteen years old, and they would perform while roaming the streets or in brothels. In addition to singing Dagu and other narrative songs, Quyi performers in private residences, Luozi halls, and temple fairs would also perform Xiaodiao to cater to different audience tastes. Luozi halls, also known as Kunshu halls, were venues where female performers would sing Xiaodiao and Dagu, and many famous

⁴³⁷ Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), p. 90

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ *Bamboo Branch Poems of the Qing Dynasty Beijing* (1962). Beijing: Beijing Publishing House. pp. 150

female performers began their careers in these halls. Another characteristic of Xiaodiao is that they were all accompanied by silk-stringed instruments, with the Sanxian being the primary accompaniment, sometimes supplemented by Sihu, Erhu, or Pipa. In terms of accompaniment techniques, only one position was used to match the vocal melody.⁴⁴⁰

The description in *The Anthology of Quyi* corresponds with the depictions found in earlier guides to brothels, erotic novels, and the images in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. This indicates that the business model of the prostitution industry that was popular in Shanghai did not differ significantly from that in the Beijing area. The differences may have been in the style and names of certain tunes, for example, where the accompanists in Shanghai were known as “Wushi” (乌师).

Anthology of Songs provides a more detailed classification of vernacular songs, with content similar to that expressed in *Anthology of Quyi*. However, possibly due to certain historical factors, discussions of Beijing Xiaodiao performers include references to "class struggle" and "feudal remnants":

The performers of Beijing Xiaodiao included both ordinary people and professional or semi-professional artists. Since their performances were not just for personal entertainment but also to entertain others, the composers and performers of these songs often had to consider catering to the ruling class and various audiences of the time. Moreover, their thoughts were influenced by the prevailing social environment, particularly as some Vernacular lyrics may have been written by feudal literati or altered by the ruling class. Therefore, it is inevitable that some feudal and regressive ideas are interwoven into traditional Xiaodiao. Even after careful selection, traces of feudal social thought can still be found in the lyrics of some Xiaodiao in this volume.⁴⁴¹

Several songs in the Laufer Collection share the same titles and melodies as those found in *Anthology of Vernacular Songs*. Unfortunately, as musical resources, both anthologies share the limitation of including only one verse of lyrics in the notations, without providing additional lyric booklets. The complete lyrics documented in the Laufer Collection fill this gap, although the tone of *Anthology of Songs* seems to deliberately avoid discussing the courtesan performers. This brings us back to Gail Hershatter’s assertion: "Even when we strive to hear the ‘voices of the courtesans themselves,’ to some extent, they have already been constructed by the voices and institutions of others".⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Liu Shufang (1996). *Anthology of Quyi Music from China, Beijing Volume (Part II)*, China ISBN Center Press, p. 1494.

⁴⁴¹ Geng Shenglian & Yu Yudai, (1996), *Anthology of Vernacular Songs from China, Beijing Volume*, p. 507.

⁴⁴² Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous pleasures: Prostitution and modernity in twentieth-century Shanghai*. University of California Press, p. 49.

3. Harrowing Tales of Blood and Tears: The Tragic History of Chinese Prostitutes in the Lyric Booklet of the Laufer Collection

As a literature research expert at the Chinese Theatre Academy, Chai Junwei (2024) has sharply criticised the studies on opera and huqin in the Laufer Collection reviewed at the beginning of this section, arguing that the project suffers from "serious deficiencies in foundational research on opera studies, opera history, and the history of recorded sound, with numerous flaws and biases in the existing results".⁴⁴³ However, when discussing the Timely Tunes portion of the Laufer Collection, he provides a more nuanced analysis.

Before the Laufer recordings (1901-1902), there was no documentation of courtesans performing on wax cylinders produced by foreign firms, which typically commissioned renowned opera singers to record operas. Even when Pathé Records recorded Quiyi and Vernacular songs in the early 20th century, they invited famous artists to do the recordings. The voices on these records were fuller and more polished, with delicate ornamentation, showcasing the singers' vocal techniques and mastery over vocal tension and control.⁴⁴⁴ In contrast, most of the voices in the Laufer Collection reveal little ornamentation or technique, making them artistically incomparable to the recordings published by Pathé Records. Chai Junwei suggests that recording the songs of courtesans in China might have been "Laufer's pioneering effort".⁴⁴⁵

Given the nature of Laufer's ethnographic research, he documented a form of performance that is almost entirely absent from other audio records—a form frequently described in guides to pleasure districts and in wayward novels, where courtesans would sing "opening ballads." Chai Junwei points out that before the release of the Laufer Collection, "this type of performance existed only in textual descriptions, and Laufer is currently known to be the first—and quite possibly the only—person to have recorded it".⁴⁴⁶ In more general terms, Chai Junwei argues that the musicality and artistic value of the Laufer Collection are not as exalted as claimed by scholars like Xiao Mei, Zhang Xuan, and Jin Qiao—a viewpoint that aligns with my own. Laufer himself admitted in a letter that he was not an expert in Chinese opera or music.⁴⁴⁷ **Therefore, shifting the focus from musicology to exploring the sociological and historical content within the songs marks a crucial turning point in this chapter.**

3.1 The Classification of Timely Tune in the Laufer's Collection

⁴⁴³ Chai Junwei. (2024). "The Value and Research Issues of the Laufer Wax Cylinders—A Critical Review of 'Anthology of Ethnic Music Wax Cylinders (Late Qing)'". *Music Culture Research* (2), p. 91.

⁴⁴⁴ For example, the 1920 Pathé Records release of "Courtesan Visiting a Grave" (妓女上坟), performed by Wang Peichen 王佩臣, a master of the iron-sheet dagu 铁片大鼓.

⁴⁴⁵ Chai Junwei. (2024). "The Value and Research Issues of the Laufer Wax Cylinders—A Critical Review of 'Anthology of Ethnic Music Wax Cylinders (Late Qing)'". *Music Culture Research* (2), p. 91.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Letter from Laufer to Franz Boas, dated September 19, 1901, from Shanghai, China. AMNH Archive No.: 1901-69.

Based on an analysis of the 45 songs in the Anthology of the Laufer Collection, I have categorised them into three types according to their lyrical content.

Type 1: Love Songs from Ming and Qing Dynasty Tune patterns (16 songs), Specific titles include:

Little Cattle Herder (小放牛, version one)
Bachelor Weeping for His Wife (光棍哭妻)
Makeup Table (梳妆台)
Shanxi Five Watches (山西五更, version one)
Twenty-Five Watches: First Meeting (二十五更·初会五更)
Twelve Pairs of Red Embroidered Shoes (十二双红绣鞋)
Ten Flower Plucks (十采花)
Little Cattle Herder (小放牛, version two)
Embroidered Frame (绣花绷)
Seeking a Lover (探情郎)
Ten Loves for the Beautiful Lady (十爱美女)
Shanxi Five Watches (山西五更, version two)
Twenty-Five Watches: Wedding (二十五更·合登五更)
Flower Viewing Platform (照花台)
Scattering Golden Fans (洒金扇)
Makeup Table (梳妆台, version two)

Type 2: Brothel Songs (21 songs), Specific titles include:

Playing Chess (小下棋)
Ten Comparisons, Ten Thoughts (十比十想, version one)
Learning from the Frequent patron (学热客)
Strolling in the New Street (逛新开, version one)
Brother-in-Law Teases the Younger Sister-in-Law (姐夫戏小姨)
Regret of the Frequent Guest (热客后悔)
Strolling in Nanting (逛南顶)
Strolling in the New Street (逛新开, version two)
Ten Grievances, Ten Resentments (十怨十恨, version one)
Ten Comparisons, Ten Thoughts (十比十想, version three)
Fear of Changing Brothels (怯跳槽)
The Lament of the Frequent Guest (嫖客自叹)
The Wealthy Lord Tricks the Prostitutes (阔大爷诓妓女)
Frequent patron Changes Brothels (热客跳槽)
Ten Cups of Wine Sent to a Lover (南拾杯酒送情郎)
Ten Comparisons, Ten Thoughts (十比十想, version two)
Ten Grievances, Ten Resentments (十怨十恨, version two)
Playing Chess on the Board (下上盘子棋)
The Client's Sorrow (嫖客悲伤)

The Ten Loves of a Couple (男女双十爱)
Women Smoking Opium (娘们抽大烟)

Type 3: Lament of Brothel Songs (7 songs), Specific titles include:

Sigh for the Firework-girl (叹烟花)
Five Grievances of the brothel keeper (五恨领家)
The Prostitute's Complaint (妓女告状)
Regret after Reforming in All Four Seasons (四季从良后悔)
The Lament of the Firework-girl in Ten Sighs (烟花女子叹十声)
Sigh for the Firework-girl (叹烟花, another performer)
Nine Sighs of the Mountain Spring (山泉九自叹)

The category of "love songs" refers to lyrics that narrate relatively normal love stories without much sexual innuendo or references to debauchery and brothel activities. These tunes are still being adapted with new lyrics today or have been integrated into instrumental or vocal compositions in other forms. The "brothel songs" category includes lyrics that clearly depict the relationships between clients and prostitutes, with explicit sexual innuendos and descriptions of sexual activities. Finally, the "lament of brothel songs" category is the focus of this section. The lyrics of these songs contain the prostitutes' laments about their tragic lives and the miserable conditions they endured in brothels, addressing issues such as child trafficking, sexual violence, corporal punishment, forced prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, and death, all of which are deeply shocking. The content of these lyrics can be corroborated and overlapped with many historical records. Moreover, some of the lyrics can be matched with reports on the issue of prostitution in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Below is a complete set of lyrics that I have translated into English, ensuring that the English version maintains the poetic form while accurately conveying the meaning:

***Sigh for the Firework-girl*⁴⁴⁸ (叹烟花)**

First Watch:

一更里来叹烟花，
As night falls, I lament my fate,
思想起小奴家命运里太差，
Reflecting on a life that's bound to pain and hate.
从小算过命我也打过了卦，
From early on, fortune tellers spoke my doom,
算出了我小奴家命儿里头犯桃花。
A life of peach blossom curse, no room to bloom.

哭了一声爹来怨了一声妈，
I cried for father, blamed my mother too,
养活女孩儿决不该不给人家，
For selling me, what else could they do?
家中贫寒难将小奴家我们怨，
Though poverty's chains bound them so tight,
决不该将小奴家卖在了柳巷烟花。
Selling their girl to a brothel wasn't right.

⁴⁴⁸ "Firework-girl" is a Chinese metaphor for a prostitute, signifying a life that is brilliant yet fleeting.
Recording Source: ISRC CN-A76-21-00471, Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music, Wax Cylinder Nos. SCY2958-2960.

Second Watch:

二更里来进秀兰房，
 The night grows late as I enter this room,
 可怜众姐妹泪珠儿又汪汪，
 Sisters weep, our eyes filled with gloom.
 姐妹的各个我们全都是一个样，
 We're all the same, sharing this plight,
 小奴家我还没留客小心眼里没主张。
 With no will to serve, lost in endless night.
 闲来没事□学弹唱，
 To pass the time, I sing and strum,
 多咱晚逃出了这座是非坑，
 Dreaming of escape from this sorrowful slum.
 自己个的爹娘见也见不着面，
 My parents are gone, I see them no more,
 这也是小奴家我们烧了断头香。
 This incense I burn severs all ties before.

Fourth Watch:

四更里来泪双流，
 Tears stream again as she enters the room,
 领家的妈妈走进来，进门来紧两眉皱，
 The madam's frown seals my doom.
 小奴家一见我是哆哆嗦嗦的战，
 I tremble with fear as she draws near,
 跪在了尘埃地下苦苦把她哀求。
 Kneeling down, I beg her, sincere.
 板子打来鞭子又将奴家抽，
 The cane strikes hard, I dare not cry,
 只打的我不能哭小手儿堵着咽喉，
 Silently I suffer, my throat so dry.
 众姐妹讲情情儿她也不准，
 No words of kindness, no reprieve,
 还得忍耻含羞小奴磕上几个头。
 I bow my head, this pain I must receive.

Third Watch:

三更里来奴家我泪满腮，
 Tears flood my cheeks as I sit and sigh,
 水里的浮萍草难以长出根来，
 Like rootless duckweed, I drift and try.
 有钱的客官我交了千万万，
 Rich patrons come, one by one they go,
 没有人与奴家巧了巧安排。
 But none offer hope, just another show.
 也是小奴家命里头实在活该，
 I guess this fate is truly mine,
 陪客吃酒见天寄了阳台，
 To serve, to drink, to smile, to pine.
 小奴家有一点到与不到的处，
 A humble plea to each guest I make,
 尊一声我的客官爷担待女裙钗。
 Spare some mercy for this heart you break.

Fifth Watch:

五更里来小心眼里太明白，
 In the silent room, I deeply know,
 坐在了兰房内滴滴答答泪满腮。
 Tears fall like rain, a steady flow.
 小奴家若是接上一个小白脸的客，
 If a kind soul could buy me free,
 总算是小奴家一在世没白来。
 This life wouldn't be wasted for me.
 商量着去赎身将奴家买出水来，
 But no one cares, no plan in sight,
 并没有一个人与奴家巧安排，
 A flower in the wind, lost to the night.
 闷坐在兰房自思又自叹，
 Alone in my chamber, I sigh and moan,
 那就是烟花女子一个下场台。
 This is the fate of a firework-girl overthrown.

In the song *Sigh for the Firework-girl* (叹烟花), the lyrics of each verse begin with phrases like "At the first watch... at the second watch...", a common template in Timely Tune lyrics used to introduce a new section. This song, through five verses, vividly portrays the brief and sorrowful life of a young girl sold into a brothel. Key phrases connect the tragic arc of her fate: poverty at home, the young girl being sold to a brothel by her parents, serving clients, being whipped, and yearning to be redeemed.

It is noteworthy that these keywords correspond closely to or can be cross-referenced with the reports in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* on the sex industry in Shanghai (and other cities in China). This section will explore five dimensions: **1) human trafficking, 2) violence and sexual exploitation, 3) venereal diseases, 4) death, and 5) old age**, by integrating the voices and stories sung by the prostitutes captured in Laufer's Collection with the grim social realities revealed in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Together, these elements form a clearer depiction of the specific history of female oppression in 19th-century China.

3.2 Human Trafficking

Gail Hershatter, in her discussion on the study of human trafficking, notes that women were often sold into prostitution either because their parents, driven by extreme poverty, were forced to sell them to traffickers, or because they were kidnapped without their families' knowledge. In either case, the descent into prostitution was framed as a rupture from family ties, with women being cast as sacrificial victims thrust into the urban social environment of Shanghai's brothels.⁴⁴⁹ News reports and Shanghai guides echoed this sentiment, indicating that human trafficking and abduction were rampant both in urban and rural areas. Once a woman fell into the clutches of these traffickers, it spelled doom for her entire family. This theme was repeatedly woven into various stories told to the general public. For example, a collection titled *One Thousand Dark Secrets of Shanghai* includes a section on *The Dark Secrets of Female Traffickers*. The book describes traffickers who operated both locally and long-distance, portraying them as a group of highly coordinated, extraordinarily patient, and exceptionally cruel individuals.⁴⁵⁰ Related reports can also be found in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (see Figure 4-17).

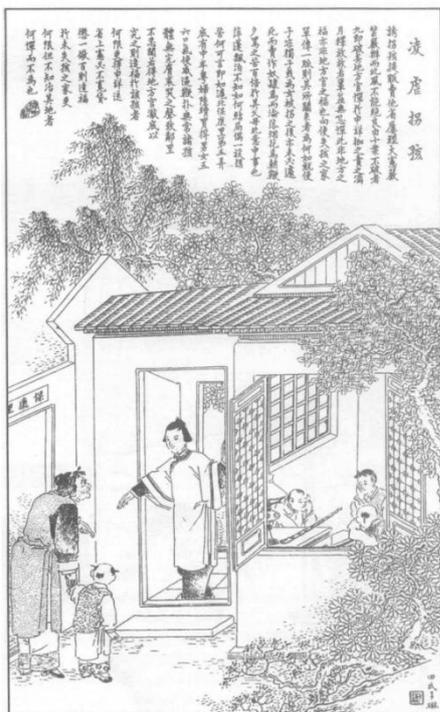


Figure 4-17.

⁴⁴⁹ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, pp. 227-228

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

Pictorial Content: The phenomenon of abducting children and selling them to other provinces is alarmingly frequent. Although the government has issued stringent bans and imposed harsh penalties on such activities, this trend has yet to be eliminated. In the fifth alley of Baokang Lane in northern Shanghai, a middle-aged woman from Guangdong had successively purchased five or six boys and girls. She subjected them to intimidation and whipping, leaving not a single part of their bodies unscathed. The children's wails were so heartrending that even the neighbors could not endure them. For families where the abducted child is the only descendant, what could such a loss mean? Even if the abducted child is not the only one or is a girl, the prospect of being sold into slavery, or even worse, into prostitution, brings suffering far beyond what their parents could ever imagine.⁴⁵¹

The precise location of "Baokang Lane in northern Shanghai" mentioned in this news report is difficult to confirm due to discrepancies in existing records of Baokang Lane, but it is clear that "Beili" (北里 North Alley) was a well-known red-light district in the northern part of Shanghai during the late Qing dynasty. It was one of the three major red-light areas in Shanghai, along with "Dongxiuli" (东绣里 East Embroidery Alley) and "Nanshi" (南市 Southern City).⁴⁵² By the mid to late 19th century, Beili had become a gathering place for numerous brothels and courtesan houses, making it emblematic of Shanghai's pleasure districts during the late Qing era. In Beili, many prostitutes earned their living through performances, but the area was also rife with social problems such as moral decay, the breakdown of families, and the spread of diseases.⁴⁵³ The pictorial vividly shows the very young age of the children sold, consistent with accounts that the age range for those sold was between 5 and 12 years.⁴⁵⁴ Christian Henriot, in his study of the geographical spread of Shanghai's prostitution industry in the late 19th century, pointed out that the northern section of the International Settlement was where Cantonese prostitutes who were willing to serve Chinese clients resided. Some of these Cantonese prostitutes later moved to Hongkou, an area on the periphery of the International Settlement and the Chinese territory that remained largely undeveloped. After a bridge was constructed in 1856 linking this area to the International Settlement (then called the British Settlement), it gained a reputation as a noisy and disreputable area.⁴⁵⁵ The woman shown whipping the children in the pictorial is also identified as being from Guangdong. While the exact location of "Baokang Lane in northern Shanghai" remains unclear, it is likely situated in the northern part of the International Settlement, close to the Hongkou district.

⁴⁵¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1886), Xin Collection, pp. 64.

⁴⁵² Wang Tao. (1992a) *Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬治遊錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 3 (Orig. pub. 1860), pp.

⁴⁵³ Lynda C. Johnson. (1987). *The Decline of Soochow and Rise of Shanghai*, op. cit., pp. 177.

⁴⁵⁴ Wang Tao. (1992b) *Addendum to the Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬治遊錄附錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 1 (Orig. pub. 1878), pp. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Wang Tao. (1992a) *Record of Visits to the Distant Corner at the Sea* (海陬治遊錄). In Chongtianzi, ed., vol. 3 (Orig. pub. 1860), pp. 2.

During the late Qing period, there were no precise statistics or related surveys on the population of prostitutes. It wasn't until the 20th century that more data gradually began to outline the overall picture of Shanghai's prostitution industry—though it remains somewhat unclear. A 1948 survey revealed that among 500 licensed prostitutes, 60% were forced into the trade by poverty, 18% by sudden unemployment or bankruptcy, 5% due to family pressure, and 13% chose the work willingly.⁴⁵⁶ Yu and Wong added that "Our social workers did not find any significant psychological abnormalities among the prostitutes. Although they do not particularly wish to leave their current lives, they are not antisocial. Only 10% of them have some form of affection for their clients, while 67% are indifferent; their sole purpose is to earn money for themselves, their families, and their children." A survey conducted by the Shanghai Municipal Government in 1951, following the closure of brothels, of 501 prostitutes showed that 43% entered the trade due to the death, unemployment, or underemployment of their parents or husbands. Another 27% did so because they could no longer stay at home or due to divorce, though details are unspecified. Additionally, 11% were sold or pawned by their parents or husbands, and 9% were trafficked.⁴⁵⁷

This data indicates that by the 20th century, during the Republican period, the demographic composition of women engaged in prostitution had shifted significantly from the late Qing period, likely due to the government's management and policy interventions during the Republican era (though this topic is beyond the scope of this article). However, judging by the lyrics recorded in the Timely Tune section of the Laufer Collection, being sold into a brothel due to parental poverty was indeed very common, as described in most guidebooks. For instance, in the lyrics of A Prostitute Lodging a Complaint: "At nine and ten, I suffered from famine; at eleven and twelve, the madam bought me in".⁴⁵⁸ Likewise, in The Lament of the Firework-girl in Ten Sighs: "I remember how my parents raised me with such care, only to sell me because of our poverty. At seven, I was separated from them twice, forced to part from my parents. Alas, it was my fate to be born under a bad star, and so I was sold into the world of prostitution".⁴⁵⁹

3.3 Violence and Sexual Exploitation

Even until a relatively late period, and as late as 1949, Chinese prostitutes lived and worked in environments that are difficult for 20th-century people to imagine.⁴⁶⁰ These women typically endured relentless hardships of surveillance, exploitation, and punishment. Prostitutes were often forced to submit to the demands of madams and clients, and when they failed to provide satisfactory service or attempted to refuse certain demands, they frequently

⁴⁵⁶ Yu Wei and Amos Wong, 1949, A Study of 500 Prostitutes in Shanghai, *International Journal of Sexology*, 2.4 (May), pp. 237.

⁴⁵⁷ Yang Jiezeng & He Wan' nan (Eds.). (1988). *The History of Prostitution Reform in Shanghai*, Shanghai Joint Publishing Company, pp. 61.

⁴⁵⁸ ISRC CN-A76-21-0051, Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music, Wax Cylinder No. SCY3021.

⁴⁵⁹ The Lament of the Firework-girl in Ten Sighs, ISRC CN-A76-21-00495, Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music, Wax Cylinder No. SCY3067.

⁴⁶⁰ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 155.

faced various forms of violence.⁴⁶¹ The lyrics of *Sigh for the Firework-girl* in the Laufer Collection only describe a fraction of this harsh reality. Christian Henriot's survey of *Shenbao* reports on madams' abuse of prostitutes from the late 19th century to the early 20th century reveals levels of brutality that are truly shocking.

Violence was a routine part of daily life for prostitutes in their interactions with madams and other brothel employees. Prostitutes were often subjected to beatings and sometimes forced to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs on bamboo rods or washboards, a punishment known as "bamboo torture".⁴⁶² In winter, this punishment could become even more severe, with the girls being left naked outside. Another story frequently recounted is of madams placing a cat inside a prostitute's pants and then beating it.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, to treat the wounds, madams would not hesitate to use scissors to cut away the labia sores caused by untreated syphilis and then cauterize the wounds with a hot iron—a level of cruelty that is almost unimaginable.⁴⁶⁴

Beatings were the most common form of punishment for prostitutes who failed to satisfy clients or who showed any form of resistance.⁴⁶⁵ Fifteen-year-old Fan Yubao (范玉宝) was viciously beaten by her madam because a client left dissatisfied. She was only saved thanks to the intervention of neighbors and the police. Another woman, sold to a "wild chicken" brothel, was beaten by the madam for refusing to take clients, in an attempt to break her resistance.⁴⁶⁶

In the oral history *My Life as a Prostitute*, the prostitute Kang Suzhen recalls the details of being whipped when she was sold into a brothel:

"Chunxi (春熙) Brothel was one of the larger, high-end brothels in Chengdu. Upon entering the gate, there was a courtyard with two symmetrical buildings on either side where the prostitutes entertained clients, singing, dancing, and playing instruments. The elegantly decorated guest rooms were upstairs. Passing through a small door on the west side led to the back courtyard. In the courtyard, there was an old mulberry tree, which was where the madams punished the prostitutes. When prostitutes violated brothel rules, such as attempting to escape, disobeying, or not serving clients properly, they were hung from this tree and whipped".⁴⁶⁷

The "family discipline" was a leather whip with a handle over a foot long and a three or four-foot lash made of three strips of cowhide twisted together. Before use, the whip would be dipped in water, and when struck on the body, it wouldn't

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp.155.

⁴⁶³ According to Henriot, the punishment involving a cat was reported by a journalist who heard the story from a prostitute detained by authorities after 1951. The story had been mentioned in earlier accounts as well, pp. 168.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ta Kung Pao*. (1951). November 24, 1951; December 28.

⁴⁶⁵ *Shenbao*. (1909). June 21.

⁴⁶⁶ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 169.

⁴⁶⁷ Kang Suzhen 康素珍. (1988). *My Life as a Prostitute*, Hebei People's Publishing House. pp. 47-48.

damage the bones but would cut deep into the flesh. The moment the whip hit the skin, a purple-red welt would rise immediately... I passed out from the pain several times before the madam finally ordered them to stop".⁴⁶⁸

The beatings endured by prostitutes are not only recounted in lyrics, newspapers, and oral histories, but are also vividly depicted in the pictorial reports of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 4-18. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Yuan Collection pp.30, 1897

Figure 4-18 illustrates an incident in Suzhou where a madam was abusing a young prostitute. During a banquet hosted by a young man named Mr. Peng at a brothel, he heard a heart-wrenching cry and discovered a young prostitute collapsed on the floor. Nearby, the madam was viciously beating the girl with a cane. Mr. Peng immediately ordered the madam to be seized and brought the young girl before him. He saw that she was about thirteen or fourteen years old, with refined manners and an unusual beauty. She was dressed only in her undergarments, as all her other clothes had been stripped away. Her body was covered in bruises and injuries, with no unblemished skin remaining. Enraged by the sight, Mr. Peng ordered the madam to be tied up and prepared to hand her over to the authorities for punishment.⁴⁶⁹ However, according to Christian Henriot's research into legal records of the time, madams were only subject to criminal prosecution in extreme cases, and usually only faced varying levels of fines.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, pp.49.

⁴⁶⁹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. (1897). Yuan Collection pp.30.

⁴⁷⁰ In most cases of abuse, madams were not detained, even if the case went to court. Their punishment often

Violence could also take on more extreme forms. A brothel manager was arrested after a prostitute accused him of brutally beating her and stabbing her with needles.⁴⁷¹ In another case, a 15-year-old girl was viciously beaten with an iron rod by a madam because no clients had stayed overnight. The girl was severely injured, but was fortunately rescued by neighbors.⁴⁷² In yet another brothel, a prostitute was beaten to death.⁴⁷³ A girl named Hua Yuxian was sold to a brothel on Fuzhou Road, where, despite serving many clients, she was frequently beaten. Later, after contracting a painful venereal disease and refusing to take

clients, the madam burned her face and chained her in a room.⁴⁷⁴ All of these incidents were reported in *Shenbao*. Similar horrifying stories were also documented in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 4-19. Horrific Abuse of a Prostitute:

In Suzhou, a notoriously cruel madam adopted a beautiful young girl, hoping she would become a lucrative asset. However, the girl refused to please wealthy merchants and could not generate the substantial income the madam had expected. Infuriated by this, the madam cruelly heated a cigarette holder and brutally pierced the girl's breasts with it. The girl was so tortured by this ordeal that she could barely make a sound, and her suffering was unimaginable.⁴⁷⁵

3.4 Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Women afflicted with sexually transmitted diseases often faced tragic outcomes. The discomfort and pain caused by these diseases during intercourse made them unwilling to take on clients. Yet, madams showed no concern for these women's health, nor did they allow them to seek medical treatment. These circumstances are also depicted in the songs from the Laufer Collection. For example, the eighth verse of *The Lament of the Firework-girl in Ten Sighs*⁴⁷⁶ describes:

took the form of financial loss, as the prostitute would be removed from the brothel and sent to a charitable institution. Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 176.

⁴⁷¹ *Shenbao*, June 27, 1879.

⁴⁷² *Shenbao*, February 25, 27, 1899.

⁴⁷³ *Shenbao*, December 6, 1899.

⁴⁷⁴ *Shenbao*, October 8, 1919.

⁴⁷⁵ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Mao Collection, pp. 23, 1888

⁴⁷⁶ "The Lament of the Firework-girl in Ten Sighs" ISRC CN-A76-21-00495, Wax Cylinder No. SCY3067.

烟花女子怕害病叹了口气，
The courtesan sighed, fearing illness she
can't withstand,
奴最怕发疟子又怕伤风。
I dread the fever's grip, and chills that
come unplanned.

卧倒了牙床三五日，
If I'm confined to bed for days, weak and alone,
谁给我来打药谁人给我请先生。
Who'll bring the medicine, who'll call the
doctor to my home?

思想起来泪纷纷，
Thinking of this, my tears begin to flow,
谁是奴知心合意的人。
Who truly understands me, who shares my
woe?

病轻病重无人来问信，
Whether my illness is light or grave, no one
comes to see,
独躺在素罗帷心儿想亲人。
Alone in silk curtains, my heart longs for family.

Additionally, the most explicit depiction of disease in the Laufer recordings is found in the final verse of *The Five Laments of the Madam*⁴⁷⁷:

五恨好悲伤，两只眼睛泪汪汪。
Five sorrows fill my heart, my eyes brim with tears,
最怕得了病，独自躺在了牙床。
I dread falling ill, alone in bed with fears.
谁与我请先生，谁与奴家我将脉来访。
Who'll call the doctor, who'll check my pulse with care?
思想起真可惨，奴家得了病就没有人管。
The thought is tragic, when I'm sick, no one is there.
你说发疟子，害白眼，月经不调前后赶。
Malaria strikes, pale eyes, and menstrual woes align,
杨梅的癍也上了脸，腥臭难闻敢情真现眼。
Syphilis scars my face, its stench so vile, it's hard to confine.

领家的妈妈她也翻了白眼，叫她抓药她也不管。
The madam rolls her eyes, my request for help denied,
李干妈，心眼软，给奴家抓了一剂耗子散。
But kind Li Mama brings rat poison, her pity misapplied.
奴家吃了药病儿也难痊，你说可惨不可惨。
I took the dose, but still my illness stays,
Isn't it tragic, in so many ways?
一定我还要去从良，早打一个准主张。
I must seek a better path, make a firm resolve,
To leave this life behind, and let my fate evolve.

⁴⁷⁷ "The Five Laments of the Madam" ISRC CN-A76-21-00473, Indiana University Traditional Music Archives, Wax Cylinder Nos. SCY2965-2969.

The devastating effects of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) on prostitutes are obvious, but the reach of these diseases extended far beyond the women themselves. According to data from *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Christian Henriot estimated that 10% to 15% of the urban population in early 20th-century China was infected with syphilis, with even higher rates of gonorrhea.⁴⁷⁸ In 1935, a doctor reported that gonorrhea was often dismissed as unimportant, with many patients not seeking medical care, particularly since there were no effective treatments available at the time. Female patients often did not even realize they were infected.⁴⁷⁹ Henriot's conclusions match post-war estimates, which suggested that 10% to 15% of Shanghai's population was infected with syphilis, and up to 50% with gonorrhea.⁴⁸⁰ This means that approximately 500,000 Shanghai residents had syphilis, and another 2 million suffered from other venereal diseases.⁴⁸¹ In 1920, Wang Jimin published an article titled "The Social Evil in China" in *The Chinese Medical Journal*, stating, "Every doctor knows that the number of these venereal disease patients is shockingly large and continues to grow rapidly".⁴⁸²

Infection rates varied significantly across different professions. A 1927 survey conducted in Suzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai found that over 35% of soldiers and police officers were infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), compared to 31.8% of merchants and 19.5% of the general population.⁴⁸³ Among female patients, most were married women who had been infected by their husbands, who in turn had contracted the disease from prostitutes.⁴⁸⁴ Lower-class prostitutes were the most dangerous vectors, as they had more sexual partners, a wider reach, and neither they nor their clients had the knowledge or financial means to protect themselves from STDs.⁴⁸⁵ New forms of disguised prostitution were also unsafe: in the escort agencies that catered to pleasure-seeking clients, it was reported that 80% of the guides were infected.⁴⁸⁶ In fact, by 1941, a series of articles in *Shenbao* cited local experts who claimed that at least half of Shanghai's population was infected with STDs; 90% of these infections were initially transmitted by prostitutes, and 90% of Chinese lower-class prostitutes and 80% of foreign prostitutes were infected.⁴⁸⁷ These figures are shocking, revealing that while STDs were not a pandemic, they spread like a plague in these seemingly prosperous cities.

⁴⁷⁸ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 162

⁴⁷⁹ *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 49 (October 1935), pp. 1126.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 49 (October 1935), pp. 1125.

⁴⁸¹ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 274

⁴⁸² Wang Jimin, 1920, The Social Evil in China, *China Medical Journal*, 34.6 (November), pp. 632

⁴⁸³ *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 1927), pp. 30.

⁴⁸⁴ *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1928), pp. 549.

⁴⁸⁵ *The Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 7 (July 1928), pp. 547.

⁴⁸⁶ During the 20th century, the extreme commercialization of sex for profit found its ultimate expression in a form of prostitution where customers could select a specific woman based on provided information. Before 1949 in Shanghai, these women were known as "guides." They offered companionship to visitors, taking them to places of interest in the city while also catering to other non-travel-related needs.

⁴⁸⁷ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 274-275

3.5 Death

For prostitutes, illness was nearly synonymous with the end of life. This is the central theme of the Laufer recording *The Prostitute's Complaint* (妓女告状). The song narrates the tale of a wronged female spirit who, after her death, pleads before the King of Hell, recounting her tragic life and expressing the wish not to be reincarnated as a prostitute in the future. The lyrics, through the ghost's lament in the underworld, trace her journey from birth, to being sold into a brothel, and eventually dying in shame. This piece is a prominent example in several northern Chinese folk performing arts, such as Iron Plate Drum (铁片大鼓), Xihe Drum (西河大鼓), and Lianhua Lao (莲花落).

The "Posthumous Humiliation" section of *The Prostitute's Complaint* represents the emotional apex of the song, serving as a powerful denunciation of the prostitute's tragic life. In traditional Chinese belief, death should be followed by a dignified burial, with the deceased receiving proper mourning and respect from family and society. However, in *The Prostitute's Complaint*, the ghost suffers not only in life but is also denied even the most basic dignity after death. The specific details of this posthumous humiliation are as follows:

1) A Hasty Burial:

The female ghost describes her funeral, which was conducted without any mourning from loved ones, and her body was handled with utter disregard. Her golden hairpin was removed from her head, and her clothing was stripped away. This depiction not only reveals her loneliness in death but also suggests that even in death, as a prostitute, her body was seen as worthless, subject to being stripped of any remaining value.

2) A Crude Burial:

The lyrics describe how the ghost's body was unceremoniously wrapped in a single reed mat, secured with three rough cords, and carried off for burial on a makeshift bier. The rudimentary nature of this interment mirrors the degradation she suffered in life, symbolizing a lifetime devoid of dignity and respect, with even her final moments marked by callousness.

3) Body Devoured by Dogs:

The ultimate tragedy is that the ghost's body, denied a proper burial, was left exposed and vulnerable to being devoured by stray dogs. The lyrics include, "Dogs from the south, hounds from the north, when they come, they'll tear at my breast." This chilling image reflects the extreme humiliation faced by prostitutes, where even after death, their bodies are treated with utter contempt, exposed to the elements and wild animals. This powerful metaphor highlights the dehumanization and exploitation experienced by the oppressed in society, where even in death, they are denied the dignity and respect owed to any human being.

“One form of abuse was particularly common,” noted Henriot, “which was forcing sick prostitutes to continue serving clients.”⁴⁸⁸ In 1872, a madam forced a woman she had bought for 200 yuan to continue working despite her illness, and the woman soon died. The newspaper lamented that a human life was worth less than 200 yuan.⁴⁸⁹ Wang Jingzhu was sold into a brothel at the age of 10 and started working at 13. Despite her illness, the madam still abused her and forced her to continue serving clients.⁴⁹⁰ Another prostitute, Zhang Yuehong, was beaten by the madam and her son for refusing to return to work immediately after giving birth.⁴⁹¹ A man sent his wife to a brothel and took 200 yuan in compensation; when his wife, already sick, was not allowed to leave by the madam, she committed suicide.⁴⁹² This situation bears a striking resemblance to a news report from *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in 1884:

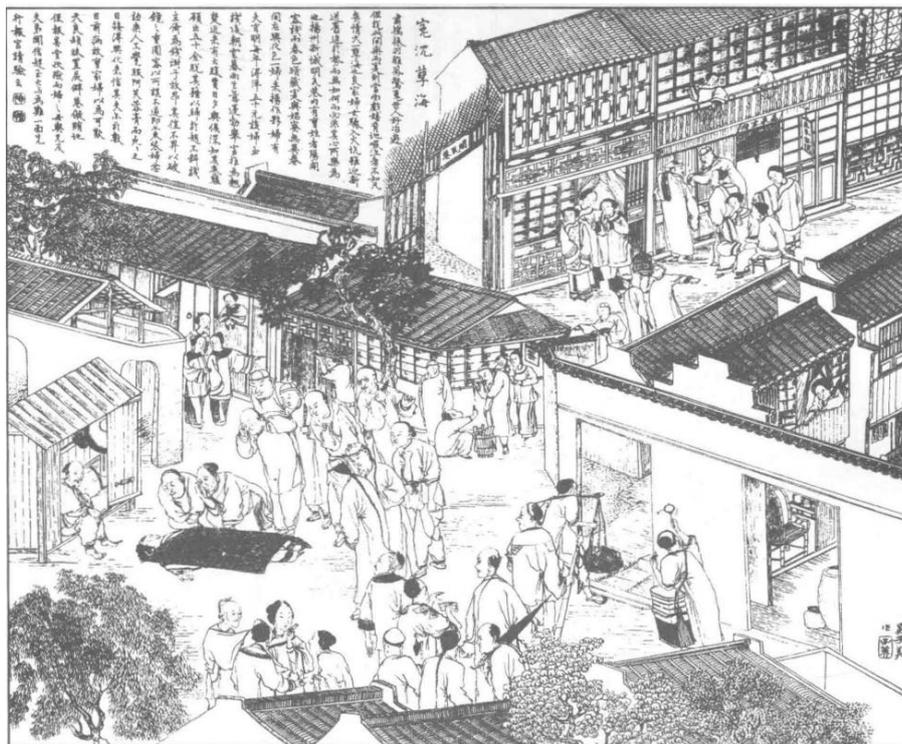


Figure 4-19. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Jia Collection pp.55, 1884

The *Dianshizhai Pictorial* reported a tragic case of a respectable woman who was driven to suicide after being forced into prostitution. The woman had been coerced into working at a brothel disguised as an inn. Although she was married, her family’s poverty forced her to accept an annual payment of fifty yuan. While business was booming at the inn, the woman was deeply unwilling to engage in such work. Later, a wealthy merchant offered to pay for her release, but the madam refused to let her go. In utter despair, the woman took poison and ended her life. On the day of her death, she learned that her husband had also passed away a

⁴⁸⁸ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 170.

⁴⁸⁹ *Shenbao*, August 8, 1872.

⁴⁹⁰ *Shenbao*, June 21, 1909.

⁴⁹¹ *Shenbao*, October 12, 1920.

⁴⁹² *Shenbao*, October 30, 1879.

few days earlier. The madam attempted to cover up the truth by dumping the body in a secluded alley.⁴⁹³ Tragedies like this were all too common in China's rampant prostitution industry at the time.

Every so often, newspapers reported cases of prostitutes who were subjected to extreme exploitation: In 1899, a streetwalker suffering from advanced syphilis was sent by her madam to a private hospital in the French Concession. After ten days, her condition worsened, and the hospital expelled her. The madam, unwilling to take her back, abandoned her on the street.⁴⁹⁴ In 1909, the police discovered the body of a prostitute during a patrol; she had died from complications related to venereal disease, but no one had reported her death.⁴⁹⁵ In 1921, a patrol officer found a severely ill prostitute in a brothel, but the madam had refused to allow her to seek medical treatment.⁴⁹⁶ In 1924, a sick prostitute was thrown out onto the street by the madam of her brothel and later died in a small inn.⁴⁹⁷ The cases reported in the newspapers likely represent only the tip of the iceberg—countless other prostitutes may have met the same fate, their stories never told.

3.6 Old Age

Growing old was not a privilege that many ordinary prostitutes could hope to attain. In certain guidebooks and illustrated reports, "old prostitutes" were considered a status reserved for high-class courtesans—but this did not signify a fortunate end. Quite the opposite, the inevitable conclusion for most in the prostitution trade was to become a destitute beggar.⁴⁹⁸ For example, the once-famous courtesan Wong Meiqian, who was well-known around the turn of the century, eventually fell into destitution due to her opium addiction, and thirty years later, she was discovered singing on the streets to make ends meet.⁴⁹⁹ Hu Baoyu, born in 1853, was the leading courtesan of Shanghai, adored for her ability to speak English, her silver water pipe, and her fierce competition with other courtesans. Despite her fame and long career, she met a tragic end in poverty, trapped within the old city, far from the bustling areas of the International Settlement where she had once dominated.⁵⁰⁰ The anxiety surrounding old age is also voiced in the lyrics of *Sigh for the Firework-girl*. The ninth verse vividly describes:

⁴⁹³ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Jia Collection, pp. 55. 1884.

⁴⁹⁴ *Shenbao*, October 14, 1899.

⁴⁹⁵ *Shenbao*, September 29, 1909.

⁴⁹⁶ *Shenbao*, April 2, 1921.

⁴⁹⁷ *Shenbao*, April 20, 1924.

⁴⁹⁸ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, pp. 98.

⁴⁹⁹ Wang Liaoweng (1922). *Sixty Years of the Courtesan World in Shanghai* (上海六十年花界史). Shanghai: Shixin Shuju, pp. 183-184; *Shenbao*, September 4, 1929, pp. 7.

⁵⁰⁰ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, pp. 78.

烟花女子要下桥叹了第九声，
The courtesan sighed her ninth deep breath,
ready to descend,
也无儿也无女怎样来收成。
No child, no heir—how will this story end?
光阴似箭催人老，
Time flies swiftly, pushing youth away,
一过了三十春脸上有皱纹。
Past thirty springs, and wrinkles begin to stay.

多搽胭粉多抹朱唇，
More powder on her face, more rouge on her lips,
灯影儿底下苦命人。
A shadowed life she leads, beneath the light's eclipse.
遇见客人嘴头儿损，
She meets rude guests, with words so sharp and sly,
满面含羞不敢来答应。
Blushing with shame, she dares not to reply.

The *Dianshizhai Pictorial* also contained reports of a similar nature:



Figure 4-20⁵⁰¹

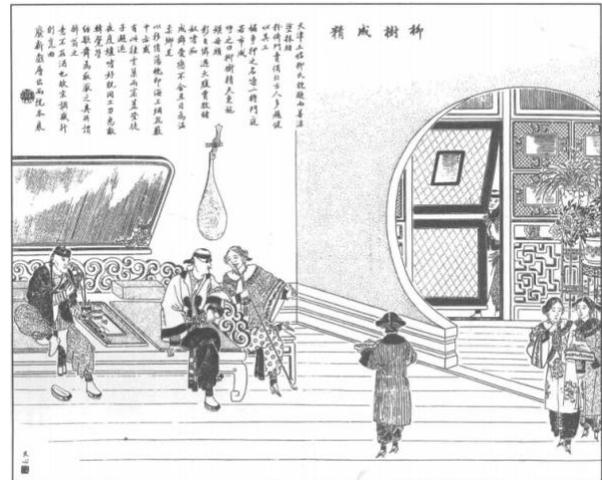


Figure 4-21⁵⁰²

Figure 4-20, titled "The Downfall of a Famous Courtesan," describes the later years of Zhu Guixian, a well-known courtesan from Yangzhou, highlighting her journey from the glory of her youth to the poverty and despair of old age. In her younger days, Zhu Guixian was famed for her beauty, attracting the attention of many wealthy men and exuding an air of superiority. However, as she aged, she gradually lost her looks and social standing, ultimately finding herself in dire straits. She was reduced to making and selling crispy cakes and carrying her old pipa around the red-light district to earn a living. During a chance meeting with an old patron, Zheng Yuanhe, who was also struggling, they exchanged stories of their difficult lives. Zhu Guixian played her pipa and sang "Selling Rouge" and "Crying for the Little Lover" for him. The patron, having no money left, could only watch as others gathered thirty copper coins to assist her. Figure 4-21 depicts a similar tale involving an elderly courtesan from Tianjin. According to Gail Hershatter, such depictions of fallen courtesans often served as a vehicle for male writers to explore two recurring themes: "a longing for a past replaced by a

⁵⁰¹ *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Ji Collection pp.100, 1885.

⁵⁰² *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Si Collection pp.26, 1889.

harsh and ugly present”, and “the lamentation of life’s fleeting nature”.⁵⁰³

4. Crying Out and Seeking Help

In my exploration of the Anthology of The Berthold Laufer Collection, I continually searched for what might be the most distinctive feature of this century-old recording. After analysing the correspondence between Laufer and Franz Boas,⁵⁰⁴ I concluded that this uniqueness stems from Laufer's choices. If Laufer had been Chinese, he might not have recorded these pieces, as they were deemed "too vulgar." Various guidebooks, when describing the mutual contempt among prostitutes from different regions, mention that Shanghai's local patrons often looked down on the "upper-class wild chickens" (domestic prostitutes) from Zhejiang, criticising their loud, nasal singing and the coarseness of their songs.⁵⁰⁵ Referring to the hierarchy discussed in the first section—shu-yu (elite courtesans), changsan (mid-tier), yao'er (lower-tier), and wild chickens—it is probable that the songs Laufer recorded were sung by prostitutes from yao'er halls or grass halls. The shu-yu and changsan typically performed kaipian (intro) pieces derived from Peking opera and Kunqu. For these high-status courtesans to perform the "brothel songs " from the Laufer recordings would have been tantamount to “professional suicide”.

Likewise, if Laufer had been a music specialist, it’s doubtful that he would have recorded these songs. Wax cylinder recording devices were extraordinarily valuable at the time, and if his focus had been purely musical, he would not have "squandered" such a resource on ordinary prostitutes with less refined vocal skills. Instead, like some of the recording companies of the day, he would have sought out renowned guci artists to perform.⁵⁰⁶ Dong Ming also pointed out that many of these tunes had origins not in the 1900s but in tune patterns from the Ming dynasty or even earlier. Moreover, lyrics sung by professional performers would have been much more refined. Yet, as his letters reveal, Laufer was a tenacious and empathetic anthropologist. His "outsider" perspective and "cross-disciplinary" understanding made this brothel recording truly one-of-a-kind—he offered ordinary prostitutes an opportunity to be heard, or more precisely, to have their voices preserved.

A key feature of the Timely Tune recordings is the repetition found among the 45 tracks. Tunes such as *Xiù Qilin Tune* (Embroidered Qilin Tune), *Meng Jiangnü Tune*, and particularly *Xīn Yuānyāng Tune* (New Mandarin Ducks Tune), appear frequently, with the latter accounting for ten of the recordings, while the other two tunes have eight and five instances each. However, as Dong Ming pointed out, these repeated tunes are not identical songs; most

⁵⁰³ Hershatter, G. (1997). *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press, pp. 191

⁵⁰⁴ Details of the correspondence between Laufer and Franz Boas can be found in Chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁵ Jin Buhuan, 1885, Spring River, Flower and Moonlit Night, p. 166; Wang Dingjiu, 1898, Shanghai Advisor, p. 674

⁵⁰⁶ Chai Junwei. (2024). "The Value and Research Issues of the Laufer Wax Cylinders—A Critical Review of 'Anthology of Ethnic Music Wax Cylinders (Late Qing)'". *Music Culture Research* (2), pp. 91.

are variations where different lyrics are set to the same musical patterns.⁵⁰⁷ It is important to note that I do not suggest Laufer lacked a sense of musical aesthetics or that he could not have found better singers. Laufer's correspondence with Boas frequently reveals his passionate commitment to documenting the leisure activities of ordinary people. He wrote on October 14, 1902, "I consider people's entertainment to have such significant cultural value that failing to fully capture it would be a crime".⁵⁰⁸ During his two years in China, Laufer collected numerous Chinese musical instruments, theatrical costumes, puppetry, shadow play props, and recorded over 500 phonograph cylinders. His correspondence reflects his obsession with musical art and the extraordinary efforts he made in its preservation. So, the question arises: why did Laufer choose to record in brothels? What was he aiming to preserve? Upon further analysis of the courtesan music lyrics, I realised that perhaps my original question was flawed—Laufer was not simply preserving "**what music**," but rather focusing on "**whose music**" he was preserving.

Considering the content, "love songs" likely stem from a broader tradition, as they are fixed tunes with limited room for improvisation. These songs might have been orally taught to the prostitutes (more specifically, young girls) by madams or musicians. On the other hand, "brothel songs" demonstrate a more confined tradition specific to the brothel environment. When it comes to the "lament of brothel songs," filled with sorrow and pain, one must ask: who authored these lyrics? It seems probable that the prostitutes themselves composed these lyrics, adapting familiar tunes. Even if the lyrics we hear in these recordings were not written by the performing prostitutes, they likely inherited these laments from women who had already been deeply scarred by their experiences. Laufer, who was proficient in Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Manchu, must have been well aware of the content of these songs. Perhaps what he intended to preserve was not only the music but also the lives of these women as conveyed through their songs.

If "love songs" and "brothel songs" are seen as "seductive signals" from prostitutes to their clients, then the "laments" discussed in this section are more like cries for "help signals". This raises another question: were these lamenting songs effective? A news report in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* keenly captured a story of a prostitute who sang a lament in an effort to gain her freedom.

⁵⁰⁷ Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*, 2023(4), pp. 86

⁵⁰⁸ October 14, 1902, Letter from Laufer to Boas, File No: aps-1901-1902 1903.



Figure 4-22. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* Jin Collection pp.60, 1891.

This 1891 report narrates the incident involving a local official who became embroiled in a dispute at a brothel. The official, while in a Nanjing brothel, summoned a courtesan named Xiao Lan. As she accompanied him with drinks, Xiao Lan began to sing and tearfully expressed her sorrows to the official in a soft voice. Her lament moved the official, prompting him to hide her away to protect her from further harm. However, this act infuriated the brothel owner, who, along with a group of others, harassed the official and dragged him into the street, publicly humiliating him. The official, overwhelmed, was forced to comply and agreed to return Xiao Lan. Although the local authorities later investigated the incident, it was hastily resolved to preserve the official's dignity. Xiao Lan's lament not only showcased her personal tragedy but also highlighted the broader challenges faced by courtesans at that time. While the report does not specify the exact song Xiao Lan sang, given the previously discussed lyrics, one can surmise the general content of her lament.

2. *The Silenced Voices*

The discovery of connections between the recordings of prostitutes' songs in the Laufer Collection and reports in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* does not lead us to the naïve conclusion that this vulnerable group has finally been given a voice. On the contrary, these connections provide important clues, creating a roadmap that shows us how the voices of ordinary prostitutes were systematically hidden.

First, the tastes of the literati and gentry determined which subjects were documented—the

high-class courtesans (shu-yu and changsan). These women were idolised, polished, and became a symbol of Shanghai's culture, woven into novels and zhuzhi poems, and exposed by various media. Eventually, they carried these glamorous images into history. However, the ordinary prostitutes, who outnumbered the high-class courtesans by tens or even hundreds of times, were forgotten in history. No one documented their joys and sorrows, and it wasn't until the early 20th century that more newspapers and research data began to trace their footprints.

Secondly, the Qing government, though at times it attempted to prohibit unlicensed prostitution, was ultimately ineffective due to its inability to enforce laws and its political weakness and corruption. This resulted in ambiguous legislation, allowing the black market of human trafficking and widespread prostitution to flourish unchecked. Brothels could thus oppress prostitutes with impunity, often leading to fatal outcomes without facing significant legal consequences. Countless young girls from rural areas found themselves, while still children or teenagers, in the tragic situations described in the lyrics of "Sigh for the Firework-girl" and "A Prostitute's Lament" in the Laufer recordings.

Thirdly, when "New Society" figures conducted musical fieldwork (such as those compiling the *Anthology of Chinese Vernacular Music*), only a selective portion of these "Old Society" voices was included. This was partly due to space constraints, but also because much of the content was considered "politically incorrect" and was therefore carefully excluded by the collectors.

Fourthly, even with sound archives like the Laufer recordings at their disposal, musicologists may still fall into the "trap" of disciplinary limitations due to an obsession with "music" itself. A Chinese idiom—"a single leaf obscures one's view of the mountain" (一叶障目)—captures this phenomenon well. While the melodies themselves are undeniably important, equally crucial are the questions of who sang them, why they were sung, for whom they were sung, and what these songs from the past can tell us today. For historians, these questions may be even more vital.

Each of the ways in which the voices of ordinary prostitutes were silenced has its own historical context and justification. Some of these methods can still be corrected, while others have themselves become part of history. However, among these various methods, there exists a particularly indifferent one—a combination of Western centrism and the preferences of the literati and officialdom. Though it appears to document the history of prostitutes, it actually serves to deny that very history—making it even more indifferent than the four previously mentioned methods. This indifference is most evident in a work dedicated to the study of Shanghai's entertainment industry and modernity in the 19th and 20th centuries: Catherine Vance Yeh's *Shanghai Love*.

In *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*, Catherine Vance Yeh explores how the high-class courtesans of the late Qing dynasty emerged as central symbols of Shanghai's modernity. Through their close relationships with

intellectuals, these courtesans contributed to and spurred innovation in literature, art, and thought, highlighting the complexity and diversity of urban culture. Yeh points out that these courtesans embodied a new female identity that challenged traditional gender norms; their active involvement and influence in the public sphere marked Shanghai as a unique site for the birth of modern Chinese culture. In her research, courtesans are seen not merely as historical figures but as vital symbols in the shaping of Shanghai's modern identity, shaped through cultural and social interactions. Yeh's work intersects with sources discussed in this chapter, such as Gail Hershatter's *Dangerous Pleasures* and Christian Henriot's *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai*, both of which seek to document the broader history of ordinary prostitutes. Building on this, Yeh writes: "Inspired by Hershatter's work, I have pursued the question of how these women might have thought about themselves and their contribution to Chinese modernity". However, her conception of Chinese modernity stands in stark contrast to, or is perhaps entirely disconnected from, that of Hershatter and Henriot. This section will largely employ direct quotations to illustrate and analyse how the voices of ordinary prostitutes have been coldly "denied." Yeh introduces Shanghai's courtesans in the following way:

The Shanghai courtesan was the force that pushed most unabashedly for the transformation of traditional cultural and social values. Her incorporation of Western material goods into a world of luxury, ease, and enjoyment, her re-casting of the new as a desirable part of her lifestyle in contrast to its traditional low status, and her exploration of the public arena were instrumental in defining the contours of Shanghai urban culture. Much of Shanghai urban culture was about image and image-making. The shock of Shanghai's new was both attractive and intriguing to contemporaries. In order to reconcile this contradiction, the narration of the city found a symbol in that unique creation of the Foreign Settlements, the Shanghai courtesan.⁵⁰⁹

In Yeh's discussion, she exhibits an almost obsessive fascination with the presence of Western objects in scenes involving courtesans:

The courtesan was best qualified to represent the combination of tradition and Western innovation under the banner of fanhua (prosperity). Unlike any other figure, she was able to subvert without offending. In traditional culture, she already had the license to be innovative, even outrageous. The literary and artistic motif of the courtesan had great potential for representing the unusual, and the courtesan's success in being attractive might have rendered the unusual acceptable. The Shanghai courtesan glorified the prosperity of the city and mediated between traditional culture and provocative Western-style innovations. In this process, the Western innovations did not appear as the advent of a new agenda of technology and commerce but were socially accommodated in the category of the curious,

⁵⁰⁹ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai love: Courtesans, intellectuals, and entertainment culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press. pp.4.

fascinating, and exotic.⁵¹⁰

According to Yeh, Shanghai courtesans acted as "walking billboards" for Western innovations—whether riding in Western-style carriages, dining in foreign restaurants, learning billiards, decorating their homes with Western furniture, or visiting photography studios. But these Western items would have still entered "Chinese" life because Shanghai, as an early treaty port, was exposed to them first. Other women, such as society wives, young ladies, and female students, would have similarly adopted these Western inventions. However, Yeh's assertion that "the Western innovations did not appear as the advent of a new agenda of technology and commerce" completely misses the historical reality—she seems to forget that the 1840 British invasion of China was certainly not about showcasing what was "curious, fascinating, and exotic."

Yet, Yeh finds it puzzling when she encounters the actual beginnings of modernist thought in China. She notes that during the 1870s and 1880s, Shanghai's literary works were generally favourable towards the city. But by the 1890s, writers' enthusiasm seemed to wane, as their style turned towards realism, and they began to criticise courtesans, portraying them as vulgar symbols of commercialisation.

Shanghai's transformation into an industrial town, the growth of organized crime, and finally the "new culture" movement, with its disdain for the "feudal" leftover of courtesan culture, brought additional change in the image of the courtesan as well as the city. It moved from "dream" to "nightmare." While the actual capacity of the entertainment industry to attract ever greater numbers of sojourners and tourists to Shanghai continued to grow unfazed, the literary image of the Shanghai courtesan along with that of the city shifted from 奇, or "the extraordinary," to 怪, or "the strange," and, later in the Republican period, "the ugly" (丑). However, throughout all the changes in the perception of Shanghai, one element remained constant: the uniqueness of Shanghai and of its emblem, the Shanghai courtesan. Nothing else could compare.⁵¹¹

Yeh references the "New Culture Movement" in her analysis, and she appears to view it with some disapproval, perhaps mourning the fact that courtesans could no longer retain their former honour. Yet, it was the New Culture Movement that truly guided China from its feudal past into an era of early modernisation. The movement represented a profound shift in Chinese social thought, using cultural reform as a means to save the country from impending crisis. By opposing feudal traditions and advocating for science and democracy, the New Culture Movement helped intellectuals realise that the root cause of China's backwardness and weakness lay in the feudal system and the stranglehold of old cultural practices.⁵¹² They

⁵¹⁰ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai love: Courtesans, intellectuals, and entertainment culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press. pp.31-32.

⁵¹¹ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai love: Courtesans, intellectuals, and entertainment culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press. pp.270.

⁵¹² Cameron, M. E. (1931). *The Reform Movement in China 1898-1912*. Stanford University Press. pp.147.

aimed to adopt Western ideas of science and democracy to push China towards modernisation.⁵¹³ This movement not only ignited a desire for freedom and equality among the people but also provided the ideological basis for the more radical social reforms that would follow.

Moreover, the New Culture Movement advanced the cause of personal liberation and freedom of thought. Pioneers of the movement like Chen Duxiu (陈独秀), Hu Shi (胡适), and Lu Xun (鲁迅) urged people to cast off traditional constraints, advocating for individual freedom and intellectual autonomy.⁵¹⁴ This liberation of thought was vital in overcoming feudal oppression and fostering social progress. Although the movement did not immediately resolve all of China's issues, it provided a direction for the country's future, establishing it as a milestone event in modern Chinese history. Therefore, under the banners of "Science" and "Democracy," and in the quest to break traditional bonds and broaden the dissemination of knowledge among the common people, the questioning and criticism of courtesans who relied on patrons' wealth and traded their beauty to make a living underscored the reality that the former glorification of courtesans was part of the "old thought" and "old customs" that impeded modernity. Nevertheless, Yeh appears not to recognise this point as she continues:

Seen from a broader perspective, the Shanghai courtesans' most significant impact on a Chinese society that valued conformity to tradition was to establish the "new" and even iconoclastic as desirable in an urban environment that became the emblem of Chinese prosperity and modernity. This happened decades before political reformers such as Liang Qichao set out to "renew the people" (新民), to make them fit for modernity, and to publish journals such as *New Fiction* (新小说), with a program to revamp cultural values.⁵¹⁵

Firstly, Liang Qichao introduced the concept of "New Citizens" as a means to awaken the Chinese people's national consciousness and modern civic awareness through ideological enlightenment and cultural education. He believed that for China to overcome its difficulties and achieve prosperity, it was essential to cultivate citizens with new ideas and new spirit, thereby enabling a fundamental transformation of society.⁵¹⁶ The "New Citizens" ideology reflected the reformists' pursuit of individual freedom, democracy, and modernisation, aiming to fundamentally change the backwardness of China's feudal society and propel it towards modernity.⁵¹⁷ The rampant prostitution industry, whether it be the lower-tier Yao'er brothels or even the more prominent courtesans who lived like stars, trapped these women in a vicious cycle of fetishism and opium addiction, offering them no escape or hope. However, in Yeh's narrative, these courtesans appear as if they were angels descended from heaven—without

⁵¹³ Fei, Xiaotong 费孝通. (2003). Some Reflections on "Cultural Consciousness." *Academic Research*, (7), 5.

⁵¹⁴ Li Zehou. (1987). Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun—Reflections on May Fourth, Part Three. *Fujian Forum: Humanities and Social Sciences Edition*. pp.12.

⁵¹⁵ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai love: Courtesans, intellectuals, and entertainment culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press. pp.341.

⁵¹⁶ Mei, J. (2017). New Historiography for the cultivation of the character of the "new citizen": Liang Qichao's ideas of history education and their practice. *Chinese Studies in History*, 50(2), pp.78.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. pp.82.

parents, without the need for children, immune to illness, and ageless. But in reality, these girls began receiving clients as early as thirteen or fourteen years old, and by the time they reached twenty, many had already lost their clientele. What would their lives be like for the remaining decades? Yeh seems uninterested in addressing such practical questions in her discourse.

In addition, during the spread of the "New Citizens" ideology, Liang Qichao and the reformists launched the magazine *New Fiction*, as Yeh mentions. Liang sought to propagate reformist ideas widely through literature. Unlike traditional classical Chinese novels, *New Fiction* was written in a straightforward, easy-to-understand vernacular, which made it accessible to the broader public.⁵¹⁸ This linguistic innovation allowed more ordinary people to grasp and accept new concepts. *New Fiction* was not merely a literary journal but an essential tool for the reformists in driving social change. Through their stories, Liang Qichao and other reformist writers expressed criticism of the social status quo and their ideal visions for the future society, encouraging the masses to participate in social reforms and nation-building.⁵¹⁹ These novels, by depicting personal struggles and societal change, ignited readers' patriotism and social responsibility, using literary works to convey political ideas. This fusion of culture and politics in literature significantly influenced contemporary and future generations, offering vital ideological support for China's social transformation and modernization, with far-reaching historical implications.⁵²⁰ To suggest that these ideas align with Yeh's claim that courtesans made "the 'new' and even iconoclastic as desirable in an urban environment" and that this is comparable to "renew the people" and *New Fiction's* role in Chinese modernity is, to me, an unconvincing comparison.

At this stage, I find myself genuinely troubled. I do not believe *Shanghai Love* is a flawed book. Yeh's expertise in researching Shanghai's entertainment industry and the history of modern Chinese literature is undeniably solid, and the sources she has meticulously gathered are impressively extensive. If one were to read this book, following Yeh's narrative alone, without a broader understanding of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the Laufer Collection, or the studies by Christian Henriot, Gail Hershatter, and Samuel Liang regarding the context of Shanghai's prostitution industry, it would be a compelling and convincing work. My dilemma stems from the fact that her primary sources overlap significantly with those cited by the above-mentioned scholars, yet she reaches conclusions that starkly contrast with theirs. This perplexity persisted until I reached the final conclusions of Yeh's book:

This study focused on the actual power dynamics of Shanghai rather than conceptualizing the city in colonial or semi-colonial terms and then reading the sources within this framework. The concepts of imperialism and colonialism, or the helpless hybrid semi-colonialism, offer only flat frameworks for a city as

⁵¹⁸ Chen, P., & Chen, P. (2021). Birth of New Fiction in China. *A Historical Study of Early Modern Chinese Fictions (1890—1920)*, pp.14-15.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid. pp.16.

⁵²⁰ Wang, B. (2012). Geopolitics, Moral Reform, and Poetic Internationalism: Liang Qichao's *The Future of New China*. *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*, 6(1), pp. 6-9.

complex in its legal status, inner dynamics, and overall impact as Shanghai. It was run by foreigners but hosted a multi-ethnic population, the largest part of which would classify themselves as “Chinese” as opposed to “foreigners.” It was created as a trading port for foreigners and quickly became one for all nationalities. The Shanghai Foreign Settlements were not a colony. The Qing government continued to hold sovereignty over the city but had less and less to say in its day-to-day management. To conceptualize Shanghai in terms of colonialism misses the actual power dynamics of the city and shortchanges its cultural identity. Another view claims that the very fact that Shanghai or China itself was not a colony actually shows the power of “cultural imperialism” in its purest form. Such an approach obscures the true dynamism of the city and is self-defeating in its radicalism. As is typical for a multi-ethnic immigrant community, there was much mixing and fusing among different cultural traditions.⁵²¹

The erroneous statement, “The Shanghai Foreign Settlements were not a colony,” along with her attempt to whitewash Western colonialism, unravels the entire mystery. This is precisely what I mean by the most cold-hearted and indifferent way of burying the voices of Chinese prostitutes. It is “colonialism” and “imperialism” that truly lie at the heart of the prostitution industry.

Reflecting on the “human trafficking” section and the themes of poverty, disaster, and famine frequently mentioned in the lyrics, the main driving force behind these problems was the disruption of China's natural economy (smallholder economy) by colonialism, particularly through the enforcement of extraterritorial rights in the treaty ports. After China's defeat in the First Opium War and subsequent wars, the country not only faced massive indemnities and territorial losses but also saw the establishment of 110 treaty ports, with Shanghai being the most notable.⁵²² The influx of foreign capitalists and the flooding of Chinese markets with foreign goods severely undermined the traditional self-sufficient feudal economy, plunging rural economies and farmers' livelihoods into crisis. Some farmers, who previously could sustain themselves through agriculture, were forced to sell their land, and in times of natural disasters, they had to sell their children to survive.

Meanwhile, the large influx of foreign capital into China's coastal cities spurred the transition of China's economy from its nascent stage to the phase of primitive accumulation, leading to the continuous growth of commerce and industry, and the flourishing of urban economies.⁵²³ These two aspects of modern social economy fostered the development of prostitution culture. The expansion and prosperity of urban commerce and industry, in particular, needed the support and stimulation of the prostitution industry, while the bankruptcy of farmers

⁵²¹ Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai love: Courtesans, intellectuals, and entertainment culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press. pp.346.

⁵²² Ladds, C. (2016). China and treaty - port imperialism. *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, pp.1-3.

⁵²³ Fangyin, Z. (2007). The role of ideational and material factors in the Qing dynasty diplomatic transformation. *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 1(3), pp. 447-449.

provided an inexhaustible supply of women for urban brothels.

Below is a chronological table I have compiled, detailing major events from 1800-1900 that illustrate how land consolidation, foreign concessions, power vacuums, and the prostitution industry were interconnected, and how they continuously impacted China's agrarian economy:

Major Events Impacting the Natural Economy of the Qing Dynasty in the 19th Century

- **1800 - Opium Ban and the Expansion of the Opium Trade** ⁵²⁴
- **1822 - The Jianghuai Flood** ⁵²⁵
- **1839 - The Destruction of Opium at Humen** ⁵²⁶
- **1840-1842 - The First Opium War and the Establishment of Concessions** ⁵²⁷
- **1849-1850 - The Great Drought in Northern China** ⁵²⁸
- **1850-1864 - The Taiping Rebellion** ⁵²⁹ **and Social Turmoil** ⁵³⁰
- **1856-1860 - The Second Opium War and Expansion of Concessions** ⁵³¹

⁵²⁴ The Qing government began to address the smuggling of opium and its detrimental effects on society and the economy. The massive influx of opium weakened the rural economy, leading many farmers into debt. McCoy, A. W. (2000). From free trade to prohibition: A critical history of the modern Asian opium trade. Some were forced to mortgage or sell their land, marking the early stages of land consolidation. *Fordham Urb. LJ*, 28, pp. 307.

⁵²⁵ The Yangtze River's lower reaches suffered from severe flooding, disrupting agricultural production. Unable to recover, many farmers sold their land, which was then concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy landlords. The impoverished, landless farmers found themselves in desperate straits, with some families resorting to selling their daughters for survival. Zhang, X., Ren, G., Yang, Y., Bing, H., Hao, Z., & Zhang, P. (2021). Reconstruction and analysis of extreme drought and flood events in the Jianghuai River basin. *Climate of the Past Discussions*, 2021, pp.21.

⁵²⁶ Lin Zexu's anti-opium campaign sparked the First Opium War, with the Qing's defeat exposing the dynasty's vulnerability to foreign economic pressures. The widespread use of opium exacerbated land consolidation issues and further impoverished rural families, forcing many to sell their daughters to brothels. Hanes III, W. T., & Sanello, F. (2004). *Opium wars: The addiction of one empire and the corruption of another*. Sourcebooks, Inc.. pp. 37-41.

⁵²⁷ After the Qing's defeat and the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, five ports were opened for trade, and Hong Kong was ceded to Britain. Foreigners established concessions in these trading ports, forming special administrative zones. The Qing government's prohibitions were difficult to enforce within these concessions, where the prostitution industry found refuge and rapidly expanded. Mao, H. (2016). *The Qing Empire and the Opium War*. Cambridge University Press. pp.21-23.

⁵²⁸ A severe drought in northern China caused crop failures, pushing farmers to sell their land as they could not pay rent or taxes. With increasing impoverishment, the practice of selling young girls to brothels became more common, particularly in cities near the concessions, where the prostitution industry flourished. Ni, Y. (2023). *China's Road in the Great Divergence: Qing's Model of Economic Development in the 1644-1911 Era*. Tsinghua University Press. pp.101-105.

⁵²⁹ The widespread chaos and agricultural devastation caused by the Taiping Rebellion intensified land consolidation. Wu, J. T. (1950). The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion upon the Manchu Fiscal System. *The Pacific Historical Review*, pp. 267.

⁵³⁰ Many farmers lost their land and livelihoods, forcing families to sell their daughters into prostitution. Meanwhile, the relative stability in the concession areas during the rebellion allowed the prostitution industry to further entrench itself. *Ibid*, pp. 271.

⁵³¹ The Qing's defeat in this war led to the signing of the Treaties of Tianjin and Beijing, which expanded foreign concessions, especially in cities like Shanghai and Tianjin. The semi-autonomous nature of these concessions weakened the Qing government's control over the prostitution industry, which flourished in these areas and attracted more young girls from impoverished families. Mao, H. (2016). *The Qing Empire and the Opium War*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 221.

- **1861-1895 - The Self-Strengthening Movement and Land Consolidation** ⁵³²
- **1876-1879 - The Great Famine of Dingwu** ⁵³³
- **1884-1885 - The Sino-French War and Socioeconomic Pressure** ⁵³⁴
- **1894-1895 - The First Sino-Japanese War and Further Expansion of Concessions** ⁵³⁵
- **1898 - The Hundred Days' Reform and Land Issues** ⁵³⁶
- **1899-1900 - The Boxer Rebellion and the Eight-Nation Alliance Invasion**⁵³⁷

In the 19th century, the increasing opium trade by Britain in China resulted in a substantial outflow of silver, while the proliferation of opium addiction forced many farmers into debt to obtain the drug, leading to widespread family bankruptcies and the forced sale of land. This economic plight and social unrest significantly damaged the natural economy of the Qing dynasty, further intensifying land concentration and leaving impoverished families even more incapable of sustaining their livelihoods. The subsequent military defeats, the heavy burden of indemnities, and the establishment and expansion of foreign concessions eroded the Qing government's control over society. In these concessions, where Qing authority could not effectively extend, the prostitution industry grew rapidly, with many impoverished farmers compelled to sell their daughters for survival. These concessions became major centres for the trafficking of these girls, leading to the rampant spread of prostitution in the late Qing period. It was the Western practices of "commodity dumping," "colonialism," and "imperialism" that resulted in the severe socio-economic crises in late Qing China, with the massive war indemnities imposing devastating tax burdens on ordinary Chinese people.

⁵³² During the Self-Strengthening Movement, the Qing government attempted to bolster the nation's industrial and military strength but failed to alleviate the problem of land consolidation. Many displaced farmers became tenants or vagrants, and the concessions became places where they sought livelihoods, with prostitution continuing to expand in these regions. Halsey, S. R. (2014). Sovereignty, Self-strengthening, and steamships in late imperial China. *Journal of Asian History*, 48(1), pp. 91-92.

⁵³³ A prolonged drought in northern China led to a devastating famine, with many farmers losing their land and struggling to survive. The sale of young girls to brothels increased as poverty spread. The growth of the prostitution industry in the concessions provided a space for these transactions to become increasingly common. Zhai, X., Fang, X., & Su, Y. (2020). Regional interactions in social responses to extreme climate events: a case study of the North China Famine of 1876 – 1879. *Atmosphere*, 11(4), pp. 393.

⁵³⁴ Following the war, the Qing government signed the Sino-French Treaty, which increased the burden of indemnities, exacerbating tax pressures and land consolidation. The expansion of the concession areas provided further shelter for the growth of the prostitution industry, with impoverished families continuing to sell their daughters into brothels. Harris, L. J. (2018). The Sino-French War, 1884 – 1885. In *The Peking Gazette*. Brill. pp. 235.

⁵³⁵ The Qing's defeat led to the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which opened more ports to trade and imposed a huge indemnity of 200 million taels of silver, further increasing the tax burden. Concessions became hubs of foreign capital and prostitution, with poor farmers selling their daughters to brothels in large numbers, leading to a rampant prostitution industry in these areas. Micollier, E. (2004). Social significance of commercial sex work: implicitly shaping a sexual culture?. In *Sexual Cultures in East Asia*. Routledge. pp. 12.

⁵³⁶ The Hundred Days' Reform attempted to address several socioeconomic issues but failed to tackle the problems of land consolidation and poverty. The independence of the concessions continued to shelter the prostitution industry, and the sale of young girls from poor rural areas into prostitution remained widespread. Kwong, L. S. (2000). Chinese politics at the crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34(3), pp. 675.

⁵³⁷ After the Qing dynasty's defeat, the Boxer Protocol was signed, imposing an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver, further increasing the tax burden and exacerbating land consolidation. The foreign concessions, serving as bases of foreign influence, continued to foster the prostitution industry. The practice of impoverished families selling their daughters into prostitution became increasingly widespread. Otte, T. G., Bickers, R., & Tiedemann, R. G. (2007). The Boxer Uprising and British Foreign Policy. *The boxers, China, and the world*, pp. 167.

Consequently, my argument is diametrically opposed to that of Yeh, as I believe that the proliferation of brothels significantly undermined China's progression towards modernity. The prostitution issue in late 19th- and early 20th-century China acts as a mirror, reflecting the weakening national strength, political corruption, and social chaos of the era. It also served as an accelerant, hastening the collapse of a dynasty under the guise of lavish entertainment. The outward glamour and celebrated fame of renowned courtesans were nothing but the "emperor's new clothes" of Western capital under imperialist control. The "lament of brothel songs" recorded by Laufer is akin to the voice of the child who revealed the emperor's nakedness, exposing the arrogance and inversion of truth in Yeh's Western-centric narrative.

"Prostitution is the most overt and direct physical exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie."⁵³⁸ Engels believed that when labour is commodified, so too are women and their sexuality. Within the prostitution industry, women's humanity is stripped away, and their worth as individuals is determined by their market value. These women, driven by economic pressures, are forced to work under conditions where they "do not affirm themselves in their labour, but rather negate themselves; they do not find happiness, but misery; they do not freely develop their physical and mental capacities, but instead endure physical torment and mental degradation."⁵³⁹ The views of Marx and Engels more accurately reflect the true conditions faced by the broader group of Chinese prostitutes of the time. As Henriot observed, the environment in which Chinese prostitutes existed was extraordinarily harsh, with violence being a ubiquitous part of their lives. They were often treated as little more than animals or slaves, frequently subjected to forced labour. For some, there was almost no hope of escaping this life alive. To the brothel madams, prostitutes were merely "cash cows," to be exploited until their last bit of value was extracted. Occasionally, even high-class courtesans would be beaten, though this was relatively rare and typically occurred later in their careers.⁵⁴⁰ It is unnecessary to attempt to quantify the extent and frequency of these occurrences, as the suffering experienced by these women defies measurement. As long as they remained in brothels, their lives were filled with misery and suffering.⁵⁴¹ However, none of this was evident in the promotional imagery of Shanghai's famous courtesans or the city's promotional posters, where their suffering was carefully masked by an image of "prosperity and pleasure."

This chapter begins its focus on the courtesan class by meticulously tracing the hierarchical stratifications within Shanghai's prostitution industry and pairing these with scenes of renowned courtesans playing music as depicted in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Through the recordings and lyrics of "Timely Tunes" from Laufer's Collection, and supported by a wealth of historical evidence, this chapter strives to bring forth the voices of this tragically overlooked group, ensuring they are no longer buried in obscurity. While the chapter is filled with in-depth analysis and speculation, the reason why Laufer dedicated such substantial financial resources, effort, and energy to recording this "artistically lacking" brothel music

⁵³⁸ *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (1991), Vol. 3, p. 664.

⁵³⁹ *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (1998), Vol. 42, p. 93.

⁵⁴⁰ *Shenbao*, July 6, 1924.

⁵⁴¹ Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 56.

remains unclear. Yet, within these recordings lies their greatest value: from the voices of these prostitutes, cast aside by society, we hear their cries against the injustices of their time, their accusations against society, and in doing so, these recordings tear off the false mask worn by those who, under the guise of "promoting modernity," attempt to justify and sanitise colonialism.

Chapter Five

Remodelling and Enduring: The Multiple Narratives of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange Revealed in the Dianshizhai Pictorial

When discussing the topic of Sino-Western cultural exchange, terms like “exchange” or “fellowship” are frequently encountered in Chinese contexts, reflecting a desire for equal dialogue. However, when Western scholars address this subject, they are more likely to use terms such as “encounter” or “intersection,” with “exchange” rarely appearing. This difference in terminology reflects the divergent understandings between China and the West in approaching cultural interaction. The Chinese academic discourse of “exchange” and “fellowship” emphasises an active, reciprocal relationship, imbued with an idealised notion of mutual understanding and cooperation. In contrast, Western scholars' preference for “encounter” or “intersection” aims to underscore the uncertainty and potential conflict inherent in cultural contact. This choice of words hints at an awareness of cultural differences and misunderstandings, highlighting the complexity and inevitable tensions of cultural intersections, rather than merely focusing on communication and integration. For instance, Thomas Irvine (2020) in his monograph *Listening to China* employs “encounter,” signifying a process rather than an outcome-driven concept. Indeed, the case study he examines, the Macartney mission to China (1792–1794), is widely acknowledged as a failed Sino-Western encounter.⁵⁴² Some also describe cultural “collision” or “impact” to depict the lack of mutual understanding and recognition between China and the West. From the perspective of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Chinese views on Western culture are far from monolithic; instead, they are diverse. Overall, I categorise these into three types of discourse: **dominant discourse**, **commonality discourse**, and **superiority discourse**.

If we consider *Dianshizhai Pictorial* as a “public sphere” in late 19th-century China, it can be seen as a “cultural intermediary,” creating a platform for the exchange of cultural information and public discussion for a multi-layered audience, including intellectuals, officials, merchants, and ordinary citizens. Within this space, the manifestations of cultural conflict between different social strata and groups were also displayed. These diverse discussions not only reflected a variety of opinions on Western culture but also revealed the anxieties and contradictory psychological states of Chinese literati regarding their own cultural identity. This chapter, from a broader cultural perspective, will explore three distinct “voices” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* concerning Sino-Western cultural exchange. Through detailed analysis, it will depict a historically and culturally significant dialogue of Sino-Western cultural exchange facilitated by guqin music, offering a cross-temporal view.

⁵⁴² Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press. pp.5.

1. *Dominant Discourse*

Jürgen Habermas, one of the most influential contemporary German philosophers and sociologists, is renowned for his in-depth research on the public sphere and communicative action. His theory of the public sphere has had a profound impact not only in philosophy and sociology but also in journalism and communication studies, providing a crucial framework for research in these fields. In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argues that the ideal public sphere is a space where all members of society can freely and equally participate in discussions on public matters, with the validity of discourse depending on reason rather than power.⁵⁴³ In this ideal state, participants reach consensus through rational dialogue, and everyone enjoys equal speaking rights. However, Habermas acknowledges that in reality, the public sphere is often influenced by political power and economic interests. Particularly in capitalist societies, dominant groups, by controlling media, education, and other tools of communication, steer the public agenda, leading to the formation of a dominant discourse. This dominant discourse distorts the communication process through unequal speaking conditions, weakening the voice of the disadvantaged and rendering rational dialogue ineffective. As Habermas notes: “Power in communication can distort the dialogue process by creating asymmetrical conditions of speech, where one side dominates the exchange and the other is forced into compliance”.⁵⁴⁴ The concept of dominant discourse reflects Habermas’s sharp critique of the relationship between power and discourse in modern society. Powerful cultural or social groups, through their economic, technological, or political advantages, not only control the content of information dissemination but also shape the public’s understanding of reality through their privileged status. This phenomenon is further explored in his work *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, where Habermas observes: “The institutionalization of unequal power relations in communication leads to a distortion of rational discourse, where one side uses their privileged position to impose their view of reality”.⁵⁴⁵

1.1 Establishing a Girls' School

In the context of Sino-Western conflict during the late 19th century, the phenomenon of dominant discourse was particularly prominent. After the Opium Wars, Western powers entered China’s public sphere through military aggression, economic expansion, and cultural infiltration. In this process, the West not only relied on its military and economic strength to gain superiority but also gradually influenced Chinese cultural perceptions through the dissemination of education and technology, shaping an image of the West as a model of "modernity." At the same time, Western culture was widely regarded as advanced and civilised, while traditional Chinese culture was marginalised within this discursive framework. *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, as a significant visual medium of communication in China at the time, recorded this unequal cultural exchange between China and the West. Through its depictions of Western technology, culture, and lifestyles, the Pictorial reinforced the dominant position

⁵⁴³ Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. MIT Press. pp.128.

⁵⁴⁴ Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Beacon Press. p.228.

⁵⁴⁵ Habermas, J. (1987). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Polity Press. pp.56.

of Western culture, while Chinese culture often appeared in a modest and self-deprecating manner. This aligns with Habermas's view that power in discourse not only affects the content of communication but also controls the framework and conditions of dialogue.⁵⁴⁶ A typical example of this "dominant discourse" can be found in Figure 5-1.



Figure 5-1, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Ge Collection, pp. 91 (1893)

The illustration "Establishing a Girls' School" in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* depicts the scene of Western residents in Shanghai, a treaty port, providing education for their children. The accompanying text mentions that missionaries, in order to promote Western educational ideas, established a girls' school in addition to the boys' school for Western children. This girls' academy was located to the west of the Third Road in the foreign concession. The text provides a detailed description of the strict teaching environment within the academy, emphasising that the girls' education not only included cultural subjects such as reading and music but also a wide range of skills, demonstrating the breadth and diversity of the curriculum. Moreover, the text specifically highlights the strict supervision by female teachers, ensuring that the teaching regulations were meticulously implemented, which ultimately led to the girls making significant progress in their studies, showcasing the rigour and efficiency of the Western educational system.

However, the statement "Westerners value girls over boys, and the accomplishments of girls are no less than those of boys. Whether in reading, playing musical instruments, or various other skills, they are no different from men" is evidently exaggerated. Although Western

⁵⁴⁶ Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1. Beacon Press. pp.73.

society had made advances in women's education compared to China, the West had not yet achieved such a high level of gender equality by the late 19th century. The depiction of Western women as being on par with men in terms of education and skills reflects a tendency to idealise. The subsequent sentence, "One only sees the remarkable talents of Western women, without knowing that they have been trained from childhood," further demonstrates a dominant discourse, as it attributes the success of Western women to their early education. This subtly positions the Western education system as an advanced model, worthy of admiration and emulation. Such an ideological output constructs an idealised image of the Western education system in the context of cultural exchange, aligning with Habermas's concept of dominant discourse, where a dominant culture, by controlling the discourse, influences the perceptions and value systems of the subordinate culture.

1.2 The Ladies' Assembly



Figure 5-2, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Li Collection, pp. 43 (1897)

This illustration from *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, titled "The Ladies' Assembly," depicts a grand women's gathering. The accompanying text explains that the event was initiated by the Director of the Telegraph Bureau, with the support of several officials, and focused on important matters related to the church. The assembly was held on the 13th of November of the previous year at the Zhang family's Garden (张园), with participants including both Chinese and Western women from various circles in Shanghai. The event was highly ceremonial, attended by prominent figures such as the wife of observer Cai Hefu, as well as consular wives and virgins from the church. Notably, the majority of attendees were Western women, underscoring the significance of this meeting as a moment of cultural exchange

between Chinese and Western women. According to the record, the number of attendees reached 122, with Western women forming the majority. This scene showcases the interaction and exchange between Chinese and Western women in modern Chinese society.

The phrase “Western women comprised the majority” deserves particular attention, as it emphasises the dominant presence of Western women at the meeting, conveying a sense of admiration and deference towards their active participation in social affairs. Additionally, the phrase “This is indeed a rare event in our two-thousand-year history, a fortunate sight in our time” further reveals a dominant discourse output. The author contrasts the social activities of Western women with traditional Chinese culture, highlighting the role of Western women in modern society, and by describing the event as “unprecedented,” constructs an idealised perception of Western social culture. This discourse output aligns with Habermas’s concept of dominant discourse, where the dominant culture, through control of discourse, portrays the leading role of Western women at the assembly as a model of progress for Chinese society, influencing Chinese readers’ perceptions of women’s roles in the social sphere.

1.3 Western Children’s Horse Race

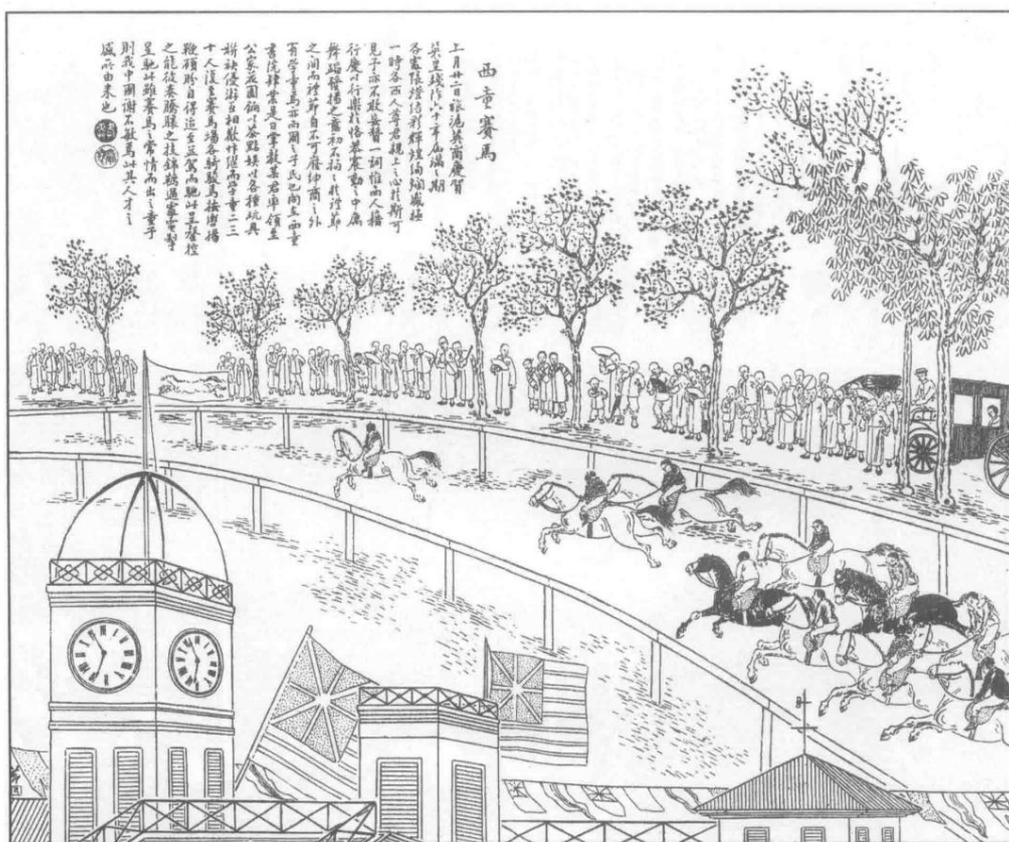


Figure 5-3, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Yuan Collection, pp. 66 (1897)

The illustration “Western Children’s Horse Race” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* portrays a horse race organised by British merchants in Shanghai to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s accession. The text provides a detailed record of the festivities, noting that the streets were festively decorated and the atmosphere was lively, showcasing the Westerners’

deep respect and loyalty towards their monarch. Among the participants were Western students who, after finishing their studies at the Western academy, collectively went to the racetrack to compete. Around twenty to thirty students rode magnificent horses, demonstrating their expert riding skills as they raced, drawing the admiration of spectators. The article concludes by stating that Chinese children were evidently not as skilled as these Western children in horse racing, further emphasising the excellence of talents cultivated by Western education.

One particular sentence stands out in this illustration: “Though horse racing is an ordinary affair, when performed by children, our Chinese children are clearly less proficient.” While this appears to be a comparison of the skills of Chinese and Western children, it subtly conveys a sense of admiration for Western education and abilities. By praising the riding skills of Western children, the text exaggerates the accomplishments produced by Western education and places Chinese children in a passive and inferior role, reflecting a self-deprecating attitude. This mode of discourse exemplifies what Habermas refers to as “dominant discourse,” where Western culture, through the exhibition of its superiority in education and technique, creates a discursive advantage. It constructs an image of the West as culturally advanced and technically superior, while China, within this discursive framework, passively accepts this narrative, further reinforcing the dominant status of Western culture.

2. Commonality Discourse

In *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, not only is there dominant discourse, but there also exists a subtler narrative mode that can be referred to as “commonality discourse.” This discourse emphasises that, although Chinese and Western cultures differ in their external forms, they share certain commonalities in essence. For example, the narratives in the pictorial often reconstruct and blend Western culture using Chinese cultural symbols and styles, creating a sense of familiarity. This conveys the message that, despite the differing forms of expression between Chinese and Western cultures, they align on some core values. This blending and reconstruction of cultural symbols not only blurs the boundaries between Chinese and Western cultures but also reduces the sense of alienation caused by cultural differences. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 3, the background of “Western Opera” states: “The pentatonic scale and twelve-tone system are common to both Chinese and Western music.”⁵⁴⁷

In his theory of the public sphere, Habermas notes that an ideal public sphere should serve as a space where dialogue can foster commonality between different cultures. He argues that “Rational discourse involves finding common ground through communication, where differences in form may persist but do not obscure the shared essence of human experiences.” This perspective helps us understand the commonality discourse in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, where Western culture is reconstructed through Chinese painting or narrative, yet the ideas or core values conveyed show some resonance with Chinese culture. This discourse mode not only dissolves the differences in form between Chinese and Western cultures but also provides Chinese readers with a familiar cultural landscape through the blending and

⁵⁴⁷ *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, (1889) . Wu Collection, pp. 40.

reconstruction of these elements, making Western culture appear more accessible. An example of this is the large guqin featured in "Western Opera" and the depiction of various Western instruments as hybrids of Chinese and Western musical instruments.

2.1 Farewell Kiss

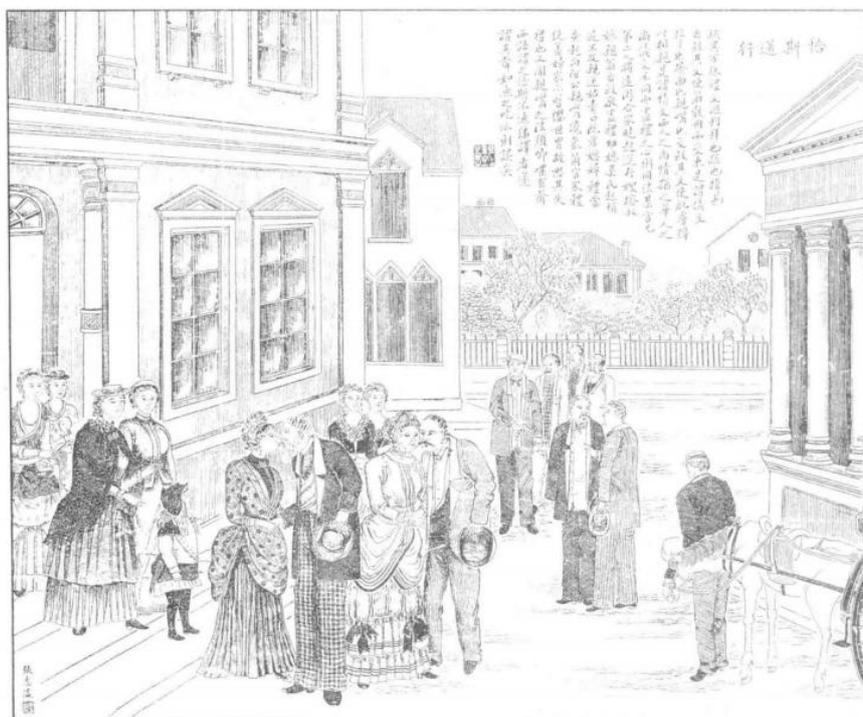


Figure 5-4, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wu Collection, pp. 66 (1889)

The illustration “Farewell Kiss” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* contrasts Western farewell etiquette with traditional Chinese rituals. The accompanying text first notes, “The customs of different regions are distinct, and the rituals vary greatly,” clearly pointing out the differences between Chinese and Western etiquette. It then describes Western farewell gestures, such as handshakes, face wiping, and kissing, highlighting the stark contrast between these Western practices and the traditional Chinese bowing and greeting rituals. Particularly in its explanation of the “kiss,” the act of kissing is portrayed as an indispensable part of Western culture, emphasising the importance Westerners place on “emotional expression,” contrasting with the Chinese focus on “ritual form,” thus illustrating the significant differences in the forms of etiquette between East and West.

Although there are notable differences in the forms of Chinese and Western etiquette, the pictorial, through the phrase “Westerners value ‘emotion’ as the Chinese value ‘ritual’; though the forms differ, the intention to show respect is the same,” underscores the commonality in the core values of the two cultures’ rituals. This narrative approach not only highlights the surface-level differences in etiquette but also explains that the emotions conveyed by Western rituals and the formal respect embodied in Chinese rituals share the same essence. By emphasising the commonality between Chinese and Western cultures in this way, the pictorial reduces the sense of alienation caused by cultural differences, providing Chinese readers with

a more familiar framework within which they can understand and accept Western forms of etiquette. This commonality-based narrative helps Western culture appear less foreign, fostering a sense of affinity and recognition.

3. Superiority Discourse

In the Sino-Western cultural exchanges depicted in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, “superiority discourse” is a narrative mode resembling “Sinocentrism.” Unlike “dominant discourse,” which highlights the leadership of Western culture, and “commonality discourse,” which seeks to find similarities between Chinese and Western cultures, “superiority discourse” focuses on expressing China’s strong sense of cultural identity when confronting Western culture. This is particularly evident in the depiction of Westerners learning or imitating Chinese customs—often fictionalised “news”—and conveyed in a tone of pride. This attitude reflects not only a rejection of foreign culture but also a sense of superiority over it. Habermas noted that in cultural exchange, “the asymmetry in dialogue arises not only from the control of discourse power, but also from one party’s adherence to the superiority of its own culture; this sense of superiority is often accompanied by a rejection of the other culture.”⁵⁴⁸ This desire to maintain a “China-centred” worldview reveals, in part, the self-deception and psychological escapism of certain groups in China during the latter half of the 19th century, a response to the threat and challenge posed by Western imperialism in military, economic, political, and cultural spheres.

3.1 Melodious Vernacular Song



Figure 5-5, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Chou Collection, pp. 54 (1888)

⁵⁴⁸ Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1. Beacon Press. pp.29.

The 1888 illustration “Melodious Vernacular Song” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* narrates the story of a woman from Fengyang who, along with her family, survived by performing the Chinese folk singing art of Da Lianxiang (打连厢) to beg for food. The story’s protagonist is a woman from Fengyang who, accompanied by her sister-in-law and younger sister, had travelled to Germany with her husband. After her husband’s death, they were left without financial support, sinking into poverty and hardship. Fortunately, the woman had learned the vernacular art of Da Lianxiang in her youth, so the family turned to singing as a means of survival. One day, the wife of a German official happened to overhear their singing, and, surprised by its beauty, invited them to sit, surrounded by a circle of female companions. The three women’s harmonious voices impressed the audience, who applauded and praised them, generously giving them money. Upon hearing of the woman’s difficult situation, the official’s wife, moved with compassion, gave them one hundred gold coins to help them return home and bury her husband, concluding the story with a fortunate twist of fate.

In this story, Da Lianxiang, a form of Chinese vernacular street performance typically associated with the livelihoods of beggars, is transformed in the German setting into an art form appreciated by a high-ranking official’s wife and rewarded with significant financial support. This plotline illustrates a form of “superiority discourse” in the pictorial’s narrative—through the admiration and material generosity of the Western elite towards this Chinese folk art, an underlying sense of Chinese cultural superiority is conveyed. The pictorial turns what is normally regarded as a lowly art into a “masterpiece,” not only as a celebration of traditional Chinese art but also as an expression of cultural pride, suggesting that even the performance of beggars could win over a Western audience. This narrative style reveals both a reliance on and admiration for Western society while simultaneously reinforcing Sino-centric superiority through the emphasis on the value of Chinese vernacular culture.

3.2 Revering Confucianism from Afar

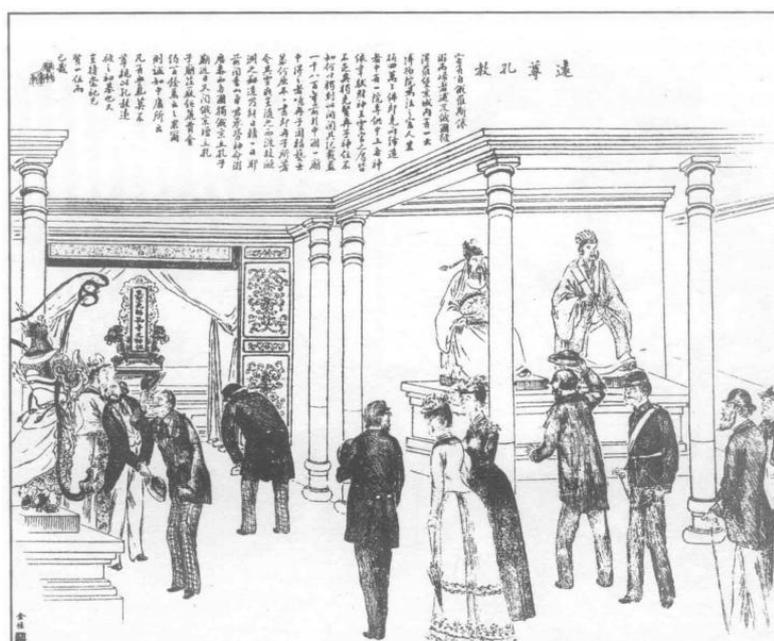


Figure 5-6, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wen Collection, pp. 63 (1896)

The illustration “Revering Confucianism from Afar” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* depicts a story of a traveller from Russia who, upon returning to his homeland, recounts an experience he had in St. Petersburg. The text mentions that the city boasts a large museum funded by a wealthy French benefactor, which houses a courtyard dedicated to Chinese deities, displaying statues of Wei Tuo (韦驮), the God of Wealth (财神), and others. However, what astonished the narrator most was the inclusion of a shrine dedicated to Ran Zi (冉子), a disciple of Confucius. The traveller believed that Ran Zi was not only a renowned Confucian scholar but also the author of *The Elements*, implying that Ran Zi’s spirit might have journeyed westward with the shrine, contributing to Europe’s increasing creativity and technological advancements. The text further notes that there is a Confucian temple in the Russian capital, and recently, a more magnificent temple was constructed to further demonstrate the reverence for Confucius in Europe.

This illustration highlights two key points. First, the misattribution of Ran Zi as the author of *The Elements* is an evident error, as it is well known that the work was written by the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid. However, this mistake is used to suggest the widespread influence of ancient Chinese culture, even linking Europe’s scientific progress to Confucian thought—a clear exaggeration and distortion of China’s cultural impact. Secondly, the depiction of Russia establishing Confucian temples and holding rituals to honour Confucius is portrayed as a sign of respect and recognition for Chinese culture. This narrative reflects the typical features of “superiority discourse,” as it exaggerates Western admiration and imitation of Chinese culture, portraying China as a cultural centre of the world and reinforcing the sense of cultural pride in late Qing China, despite this recognition often being based on misunderstandings or fabrications.

3.3 Western Women Binding Feet



Figure 5-7, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Shen Collection, pp. 75 (1890)

The illustration “Western Women Binding Feet” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* details the origins of the Chinese foot-binding custom and references an alleged similar practice in Western nations. The article opens by recounting the story of Liu Guanniang, a palace concubine of Li Houzhu (ruler of the Southern Tang, 961–975), who wrapped her feet in silk, which is said to be the origin of the foot-binding tradition among Chinese women. Over the centuries, this custom became increasingly popular, with women eager to imitate it. The pictorial then claims that women in Cuba were reported to have a comparable habit—although their foot-binding was not as extreme as in China, they wore narrow shoes from childhood to prevent foot growth, seeking slender feet. This description seeks to highlight that while Western foot aesthetics differ from Chinese foot-binding, both cultures shared a similar aesthetic preference for small feet, thus stressing the commonality of “fashion.”

Yet, the portrayal of Western women binding their feet is clearly a fabrication by the illustrator. While foot-binding was viewed as a standard of beauty during the Qing dynasty, it was in fact a practice that severely harmed women’s health, leading to chronic pain and disability. This harmful custom should not be idealised or legitimised, yet the article not only defends foot-binding through historical anecdotes but also fabricates the idea that Cuban women embraced a similar “fashion” for small feet, in an attempt to confer international legitimacy on the practice. This narrative not only obscures the genuine dangers of foot-binding but also attempts to elevate its cultural status by falsely attributing similar customs to the West—this misguided sense of cultural superiority verges on distortion.

4. Echoes Through Time: The Guqin in the Confluence of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange

This section will centre on an 1888 *Dianshizhai Pictorial* illustration depicting the anecdote of a Chinese scholar performing the guqin in London. The pictorial offers not only a portrayal of Sino-Western musical cultural exchange but also exemplifies the convergence of three narrative modes: “superiority discourse,” “commonality discourse,” and “dominant discourse.” Through this musical episode, the pictorial captures a moment of cultural interaction across time, particularly showcasing the encounter between traditional Chinese music and Western society. While previous chapters have thoroughly examined multiple concepts of cultural exchange, this section delves deeper into the unique role of music as a medium for cross-cultural transmission, focusing on the guqin as it traverses cultural boundaries, and highlighting its special value in Sino-Western cultural dialogue.

4.1 Visual Analysis



Figure 5-8, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Chou Collection, pp. 78 (1888)

On the right side of the image, a Chinese scholar sits alone by a window, dressed in a long robe of Qing dynasty style, with an expression of concentration and calmness. The partially drawn curtain adds a serene atmosphere to the scene. In front of him lies a guqin, and with his gaze lowered, his hands lightly brush the strings as if he is playing an ancient melody imbued

with deep meaning.

In stark contrast, on the left side of the image, several Western gentlemen and ladies are gathered around a long table, upon which rests another guqin. Placed on the strings of this instrument are intricate origami figures of insects, butterflies, and fish, which move gently with the subtle vibrations of the strings, as if they have been brought to life. This fascinating sight captivates the audience's attention. Among the Western spectators, several gentlemen are dressed in formal attire, wearing top hats, and they observe the scene with a mixture of curiosity and fascination. They lean forward slightly, their eyes fixed on the paper creations as they shift with the movement of the strings, their faces lit with astonishment. One gentleman, standing by the table, frowns slightly, seemingly contemplating the principles behind this curious phenomenon, while another has his mouth slightly agape, his expression one of disbelief, as though the spectacle has left him in awe. Meanwhile, next to the gentlemen, a few elegantly dressed Western ladies stand. Their attire is grand and dignified, and though they wear faint smiles, their eyes reveal a touch of surprise and wonder.

The scene brims with vibrant contrasts: on one side, the Chinese scholar is immersed in his own musical world, while on the other, the Western spectators are enthralled by the enchanting movement of the paper figures, attentively observing this novel performance. The juxtaposition of stillness and movement, East and West, internal contemplation and external fascination, subtly portrays the interaction between these two cultures as they encounter one another.

4.2 Caption Analysis

The text accompanying the illustration narrates the entire story: Wu Xunzai, a renowned scholar from Luoyang, was known for his skill in poetry and the guqin, and enjoyed travelling widely. Recently, he arrived in London and stayed with a Western host. Upon seeing the guqin hanging on the wall, several Westerners requested that Wu play a piece for them, but Wu Xunzai declined. The Westerners insisted, to which Wu responded: "It's not that I am unwilling, but the environment here lacks any trace of my homeland, Qing China. When I first arrived, I attempted to play, but when my fingers touched the strings, the sound was muddled and unclear, so I haven't played for three days." Upon hearing this, the Westerners sneered, seemingly suspecting that Wu was using the poor environment as an excuse for lacking skill. In the end, Wu agreed to play *High Mountains* (高山), but before he had finished, he noticed that the Westerners were already yawning, as though about to fall asleep. Smiling, Wu stood up and said: "Don't feel drowsy, I'll show you something else instead." He then tuned two guqins, placed one outside the room, and decorated its strings with colourful paper cutouts of various insects and fish. After closing the door, Wu began to play inside. Suddenly, the ornaments on the guqin outside started to move slowly, and the onlookers applauded in amazement. The applause was so loud and disruptive that Wu could no longer continue playing, so he stopped and went outside, saying: "You are all watching the guqin but don't understand how to listen to it." Someone remarked: "This trick is marvellous. Why not use it to make money by performing for a living? You could even become rich." Wu Xunzai

smiled and nodded in response. The next day, he packed his belongings and left. According to Shen Kuo's account in *Dream Pool Essays* (梦溪笔谈), this phenomenon of resonance is actually not miraculous at all; Wu was merely using this method to amuse the Westerners.

This relatively unsuccessful anecdote of Sino-Western musical "exchange" is rich in meaning. It encompasses not only the representative concept of "cultural exchange" found in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* but also serves as a reflection of the continuity and pragmatism of China's approach to external cultural interactions. In this section, a detailed, step-by-step analysis will be conducted.

4.3 Background: The Barrier in the First Exchange

The first sentence in the pictorial's narrative succinctly introduces the protagonist, Wu Xunzai, describing him as a renowned scholar from Luoyang, skilled in poetry and the guqin, and fond of travelling. First, it is important to note that Luoyang is one of China's most famous ancient capitals, known as the "Ancient Capital of Thirteen Dynasties".⁵⁴⁹ As a historic cultural and political centre, Luoyang accumulated a profound cultural tradition and historical depth. Although it was no longer the political centre during the Qing dynasty, it retained its significance as a major cultural hub. Therefore, being described as a "名士" (notable scholar) from Luoyang implies that Wu not only inherited a long-standing cultural tradition but also possessed substantial knowledge and refinement. Even the name "Wu Xunzai" is imbued with the spirit of an ancient scholar, evoking a traditional literati's aura from the name itself. The character "逊" (Xùn) often signifies humility and modesty. Scholars typically placed great emphasis on moral cultivation, advocating for humility in their conduct. This humility was not merely an attitude toward others but a highly esteemed virtue in ancient Confucian culture. For example, the Confucian classic *Book of Rites* states, "夫礼者,必本于谦" (The foundation of propriety is humility)⁵⁵⁰, emphasising that the core of ritual is modesty and reverence, one of the key principles of a gentleman's behaviour. Similarly, in *Doctrine of the Mean*, Confucius says, "君子之道,譬如行远必自迩,譬如登高必自卑" (The path of a gentleman is like a long journey, which begins with small steps; it is like climbing a great height, which starts from a low place)⁵⁵¹, once again stressing that a gentleman's self-cultivation begins with humility. The use of the character "逊" in Wu's name thus hints at his adherence to humility as a way of life, in line with the conduct of a true scholar. The term "斋" refers to a scholar's study, and it was common for ancient scholars to refer to themselves with names like "兰亭斋" (Lanting Zhai) or "竹溪斋" (Zhuxi Zhai), reflecting a reclusive, leisurely lifestyle (similar to the meaning of "Zhai" in *Dianshizhai*). In this way, the brief background introduction subtly lays the groundwork for the story, setting the tone for what is to come.

The story then unfolds with Wu Xunzai's stay in London, sharing accommodation with Westerners. The original text recounts that several Westerners, noticing the guqin hanging on

⁵⁴⁹ Historical dynasties that established their capitals in Luoyang include the Xia, Shang, Western Zhou, Eastern Zhou, Eastern Han, Cao Wei, Western Jin, Northern Wei, Sui, Tang (including Wu Zhou), Later Liang, Later Tang, and Later Jin.

⁵⁵⁰ Wang, E. (2007). *The Compilation of the Book of Rites*. Zhonghua Book Company. pp.11.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, pp.25.

his wall, requested Wu to play a piece for them, but he declined. However, when they persisted, Wu explained: "It's not that I am unwilling, but this environment lacks any trace of Qing China. When I first arrived, I tried playing, but the moment my fingers touched the strings, the tone was muddled and unclear, so I haven't played for three days." This unexpected cultural encounter began with the Westerners' curiosity about Chinese music. However, the true "cultural exchange" did not commence when the sound of Wu's guqin began to resonate, but rather from the moment he offered his explanation for declining to play.

Two key aspects stand out: the "qin hanging on the wall" and the "absence of Qing China's atmosphere." To interpret these points, one must first understand the relationship between the 琴 (qin)⁵⁵² and the 士 (scholar). In ancient Chinese philosophical thought, especially in pre-Qin literature, one of the most important functions of music was moral instruction, rather than pure entertainment. For instance, the Confucian text *Book of Rites · Record of Music* discusses the ethical and moral value of music, where the importance of the qin as an instrument extends beyond mere enjoyment. "乐者，通伦理者也。……琴瑟之声，所以养心也"⁵⁵³ (The sounds of the qin and se are meant to nourish the heart, guiding a gentleman toward inner harmony and moral cultivation.) Music's essence lies in its role in education and moral development, rather than being a form of entertainment. Additionally, "君子乐得其道，小人乐得其欲"⁵⁵⁴ suggests that a gentleman finds joy in moral cultivation through music, while a petty person seeks only material enjoyment, underscoring the spiritual role of music (including the qin) in the moral life of a scholar.

Although the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* places greater emphasis on the spirit of freedom and nature, the qin is also considered a means of self-cultivation. In *Zhuangzi · Tiandao (The Way of Heaven)*, it states: "The sage manages his body as a musician handles the qin and se, everything is harmoniously tuned."⁵⁵⁵ This illustrates that playing the qin is not merely an expression of music but a way to harmonise one's inner disposition and achieve harmony with the external world. Daoism holds that the process by which a sage cultivates his mind and body is akin to a skilled musician playing the qin and se, adjusting all aspects of life to create a harmonious and gentle state of being. Therefore, when analysing the actions and behaviour of Wu Xunzai, "the notable scholar from Luoyang", it is crucial to place them within the context of the relationship between the qin and the scholar, so as to grasp the deeper cultural meanings embedded within.

For a *Shi* (scholar), self-cultivation forms the foundation of becoming a *junzi* (gentleman), and the qin is not only seen as one of the tools for this self-cultivation, but also as a symbol of a scholar's status and taste. The phrase "士无故不撤琴瑟" (A scholar, without due reason, does not remove the qin and se)⁵⁵⁶ represents a fundamental requirement for self-cultivation,

⁵⁵² Qin and guqin refer to the same instrument, but the distinction lies in the context of usage. In ancient contexts, the term "qin" is used, while in modern contexts, "guqin" is preferred, with "gu" signifying "ancient."

⁵⁵³ Wang, E. (2007). *The Compilation of the Book of Rites*. Zhonghua Book Company. pp.12.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.35.

⁵⁵⁵ Ye, Shuxian. (2020). *A Cultural Analysis of Zhuangzi*. Shaanxi People's Publishing House. pp.31.

⁵⁵⁶ Wang, E. (2007). *The Compilation of the Book of Rites*. Zhonghua Book Company. pp.11.

explaining why Wu carried such a large instrument on his journey across great distances.⁵⁵⁷ Usually, when not in use, the guqin is not placed flat on a table, but hung on a wall. This practice is mainly to protect and preserve the structure of the guqin. The top panel of the guqin is made from a single piece of wood, and if it is laid flat for long periods, especially in environments with fluctuating humidity and temperature, it is prone to developing a “sagging” phenomenon, where the middle of the guqin dips, affecting both its sound and appearance.⁵⁵⁸ Hanging the instrument reduces this risk and helps maintain its structural integrity. Moreover, hanging the guqin prevents the instrument from being exposed to dust or other pollutants, contributing to its long-term preservation.⁵⁵⁹ This traditional practice not only preserves the instrument but also adds a practical element of protection. Additionally, such descriptive details create a familiar context for Chinese readers, particularly intellectuals.

Secondly, Wu mentions that “this environment lacks any trace of Qing China’s atmosphere.” On one hand, he is referring to the difference between his surroundings in London and the cultural ambiance of China. For Wu, “Qing China’s atmosphere” represents a pure and refined cultural environment, an essential part of traditional Chinese scholar culture. On the other hand, changes in temperature and humidity significantly affect the tone quality of musical instruments, and this appears to be the case here. Wu notes that when he first arrived at his London residence, he attempted to play the guqin but found the sound muddy and unclear. For Wu, neither the spiritual “atmosphere” of the cultural environment nor the physical “atmosphere” needed for sound propagation was suitable for playing the guqin. Therefore, his reference to “Qing China’s atmosphere” can be understood as the absence of cultural resonance and spiritual harmony, which he believed affected the guqin’s purity and expressiveness. Hence, he offered this explanation when he declined to play for his Western friends.

Yet, Wu’s refusal and explanation provoked misunderstanding and even scorn from his Western friends. The original text notes, “Upon hearing this, the Westerners sneered, seemingly suspecting that Wu was making an excuse for his lack of musical skill.” The Westerners were unable to understand the importance of the guqin to Wu, which reflects the cultural differences between the East and West in their approach to music and instruments. Wu’s choice not to play demonstrated his reverence and respect for the guqin, along with his sensitivity to the external environment and his commitment to preserving his inner spiritual realm. In this act of maintaining his principles, Wu experienced for the first time the immense cultural gap between East and West.

4.4 The Second Attempt at Exchange: Highest Courtesy and Disappointing Frustration

⁵⁵⁷ The guqin is typically about 3 chi (Chinese feet) 6 cun (Chinese inches) and 5 fen (tenths) long, corresponding to the 365 days of the year. In modern measurements, it is approximately 120 cm in length, with a width of 20 to 25 cm, and a thickness of 5 to 10 cm.

⁵⁵⁸ Zhou, L. & Wang, C. (2011). Introduction to the Essentials of Guqin Preservation and Restoration. *Chinese Cultural Heritage Science Research*, (2), 69-70.

⁵⁵⁹ When hanging a guqin, special hooks and wooden blocks fixed to the wall are typically used to ensure it is securely suspended, reducing the risk of potential damage to the instrument.

In the spirit of friendly exchange, Wu ultimately played the guqin for the Westerners. It is worth noting that, among the many guqin pieces, Wu chose to perform *High Mountains* (Gao Shan), a choice laden with symbolic significance. *High Mountains* and *Flowing Water* (Liu Shui) hold an esteemed place in Chinese guqin culture; these are not pieces to be casually performed in ordinary settings but carry profound cultural symbolism—representing the pursuit of a Zhi Yin (for a detailed discussion on Zhi Yin, see Chapter 3). By choosing *High Mountains* as the bridge between himself and his Western audience, Wu was, in fact, offering them his most sincere courtesy and expectation, hoping to establish a spiritual resonance through the piece. The earliest known notation for *High Mountains* appears in the Ming dynasty work *Shenqi Mipu* (1425), compiled by Zhu Quan.⁵⁶⁰ The piece uses the metaphor of towering mountains to convey the lofty and virtuous character of a junzi (gentleman), with the five notes of the guqin evoking the overlapping ridges and majestic peaks. The melody is ancient and far-reaching, its tone warm and peaceful, with simplicity in sound but breadth in meaning, and a natural flow of spirit. *Shenqi Mipu* mentions that *High Mountains* and *Flowing Water* were originally a single composition, later evolving into two independent pieces, reflecting the philosophical concepts that “The benevolent delight in mountains” and “The wise delight in water.”⁵⁶¹ The tune of *High Mountains* is serene and elegant, expressing the grandeur of majestic peaks and the beauty of the ridges, conveying a deep appreciation for and praise of the natural landscape. The piece holds a highly esteemed position in the repertoire of guqin music and is regarded as one of great aesthetic value.

Regarding the auditory qualities of the guqin, there are distinct aesthetic principles. The Ming dynasty qin master Leng Qian summarised these in detail in his work *Qinshu Daquan*⁵⁶², describing what is known as the “Nine Virtues of Sound.” These virtues are: **uniqueness** (referring to the distinctive sound produced by light, aged wood), **antiquity** (a sound imbued with an ancient and subtle metallic resonance), **clarity** (a clear, bright sound with strong penetration), **purity** (a pure tone without any extraneous noise), **richness** (a resonant sound with lingering overtones), **roundness** (a full, rounded tone), **crispness** (particularly in the production of harmonics), **uniformity** (even tonal quality across all seven strings), and **complexity** (a richer, more layered sound emerging as the guqin is played over time). These “Nine Virtues” are key criteria in the making and appreciation of the guqin, reflecting its aesthetic pursuit of tonal beauty. These qualities are especially prominent in the piece *Gao Shan*, where the sound is rounded, clear, and filled with a serene atmosphere, creating an experience as though the listener is standing on a high mountain, surrounded by the vastness and tranquillity of nature. Additionally, as shown in Figure 5-9, the guqin’s notation system, known as jianzipu (simplified character notation), differs fundamentally from the Western five-line staff notation. This system uses simplified Chinese characters to indicate finger positions and playing techniques, marking a significant difference in both concept and

⁵⁶⁰ Yu, H. (1994). The Tuning Methods of Guqin Pieces in *Shenqi Mipu*. Huangzhong: *Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*, (1), 7.

⁵⁶¹ National Centre for the Performing Arts. (2012). *High Mountains and Flowing Water: The Art of the Guqin*. Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press. pp.9.

⁵⁶² Xu, J. (1989). Jiang Keqian and *Qinshu Daquan*. *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute: Music and Performance Edition*, (4), 1

amazement. To them, this physical phenomenon seemed more captivating than the music itself. Their enthusiastic cheers grew so loud that “Wu could no longer continue playing.”

After two failed attempts at cultural exchange, Wu Xunzai realised that music alone could not resonate with the Western audience. He then decided to perform a visual display using the principle of resonance, as described in *Dream Pool Essays*. This decision was not merely a tactical shift, but rather it reflected a certain cultural attitude. The change in strategy subtly revealed some of Wu’s stereotypes about Westerners, namely that they favoured “novel and trivial skills.” Prior to the mid-19th century, the Chinese attitude towards Western objects and technology was often ambivalent. On one hand, there was admiration for Western technological advancements, but more often, Western objects were seen as “novel and trivial skills” (奇技淫巧) lacking in moral or spiritual value. This perception significantly shaped the views of Chinese elites and intellectuals toward Western culture.⁵⁶³

This highlights a key feature of the history of Chinese music development: the philosophy of valuing “spiritual essence over material objects” (重道轻器). Chinese scholars traditionally prioritised the spiritual and moral messages conveyed by music, while matters of standardisation, preservation, or documentation of instruments themselves received far less attention.⁵⁶⁴ As previously discussed in Chinese philosophy, the value of music lies not only in its form but also in the moral cultivation and spiritual pursuits it embodies. This view saw significant evolution with the reforms of the New Culture Movement at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, along with the decline of the literati class and the rise of China's first democratic revolution.⁵⁶⁵

4.6 The Fourth and Final Failure of the Exchange

As the cheers and clamour made it impossible for him to continue, Wu Xunzai stepped out of the room and said to the Western audience, “You all know how to watch the qin, but you don’t know how to listen to it.” On the surface, this remark was a criticism of their lack of musical understanding, but it revealed Wu’s deep disappointment with the entire exchange. In his view, the qin should have been a medium for conveying deep emotions and spiritual realms through sound, but in this exchange, it had been reduced to a mere object of spectacle. This transformation left Wu feeling disheartened. However, what truly offended him was the response of his Western friends. One of them said, “This trick is marvellous—why don’t you use it to make money performing? You could get rich this way.” While this suggestion may have been well-intentioned or practical from a Western perspective, for Wu, a scholar of the guqin, it was a profound insult to his artistic pursuits. The idea of “making a profit from performance” reflects a utilitarian view sharply opposed to the Chinese literati’s pure pursuit of art and morality. To Wu, this was not just a misunderstanding of his guqin skills but a

⁵⁶³ An, R., & Wang, Y. (2013). The Myth of "Things"—Western Objects in Late Qing Novels. *Art and Technology*, 26(10), 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Zhao, Y. (1995). An Exploration of Zhu Zaiyu's Se Notation and Related Issues. *Huangzhong: Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*, (1), 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Chu, N. (2020). An Analysis of the "National Music Improvement Society" and Social History in the 1920s and 1930s. *Northern Music*, (24), 3.

denigration of his identity as a scholar. This misunderstanding and cultural divide brought the dramatic conflict of the story to its peak.

Faced with such an offence, Wu did not respond with anger but instead remained silent, nodding and smiling, preserving the demeanour and self-restraint of a gentleman. However, this reaction also indicated that he had grown weary of the cultural exchange. The next day, Wu packed his belongings and left the residence, signifying his complete withdrawal from the exchange. From the Westerners' inability to understand why he refused to play the guqin, to their failure to appreciate the depth of *High Mountains*, to their focus on the visual effects of resonance, and finally to their suggestion that he “perform for profit,” Wu faced four moments of offence, all of which were rooted in the fundamental differences in how Chinese and Western cultures understand and express art.

Through the four detailed layers of analysis above, we see that Wu Xunzai's attempts at cultural exchange appeared to shift from failure to success on the surface, but in truth, genuine cultural exchange never took place. The Westerners' admiration for the visual spectacle masked a deeper misunderstanding of the true nature of music. This superficial success concealed a profound failure in cultural comprehension. Wu's departure symbolised the conclusion of the exchange and highlighted the vast gulf between Chinese and Western cultures in their spiritual pursuits and artistic values.

In fact, this report from *Dianshizhai Pictorial* reads like a fable, revealing one of the most fundamental divides in the history of Sino-Western cultural exchange: the self-centred lack of understanding of the other's cultural context. Had either Wu Xunzai or his Western friends made some effort to bridge this gap, the entire story could have unfolded differently. Imagine if, when Wu explained why he had not played the guqin for three days, the Western audience had asked, “Why does the absence of Qing China's atmosphere prevent you from playing?” This cultural exchange might have transformed into a lesson in which Wu explained the deeper spiritual aspects of guqin culture. Likewise, Wu could have set aside his lofty ambitions and chosen to perform a more accessible piece such as *Drunken Ecstasy* or *Wild Geese Descend on a Sandbank*—both more listener-friendly—and perhaps incorporated poetic chanting into the performance. There are many ways to present the art of the guqin, and perhaps the Western audience would then have focused more on the cultural essence of the instrument, making the exchange more effective. But in this story, Wu Xunzai and his Western friends, representing Chinese and Western cultures, are like a couple in a quarrel—each hoping the other will understand and satisfy their own needs, yet neither willing to set aside their arrogance to truly listen and understand what the other desires.

4.7 The Ritual of Zhiyin: From Wu Xunzai to Xi Jinping's Guqin Diplomacy

From the late 19th century, where Wu Xunzai lived, to the early 21st century, Sino-Western cultural exchanges have spanned almost a century and a half. China is no longer merely a passive cultural exhibitor on the global stage, and the West's attitude toward China has also proactively changed. What remains unchanged, however, is the guqin, serving as a bridge and symbol of cultural communication, even witnessing close interactions between heads of state

on both diplomatic and personal levels.

On 7 April 2023, during French President Emmanuel Macron’s visit to China, a special cultural experience took place in the Baiyun Hall of Songyuan in Guangzhou. During a break amidst their busy schedules, President Xi Jinping arranged a brief moment, inviting Macron to listen to a short performance on the guqin. This was not a formal concert, but a unique cultural gesture, a private communication through music. In the tranquil hall, Macron listened as the guqin’s flowing melody seemed to immerse him in a Chinese landscape painting. When the music ended, Macron curiously asked, “What is the name of this piece?” Xi Jinping responded, “Liu Shui—*Flowing Water*. It’s *High Mountains, Flowing Water*, an ancient guqin piece that has echoed for a thousand years. The piece expresses the idea of zhiyin—a deep connection of understanding between individuals. Only a true zhiyin can truly appreciate the essence of this music.” Macron, deeply moved by the music and its cultural background, said, “I would like to write down the name of this piece.” Xi Jinping replied gladly, “Of course,” and turned to the translator, saying, “Include the title, and perhaps you could make a copy of the score for him if we have one.”⁵⁶⁶

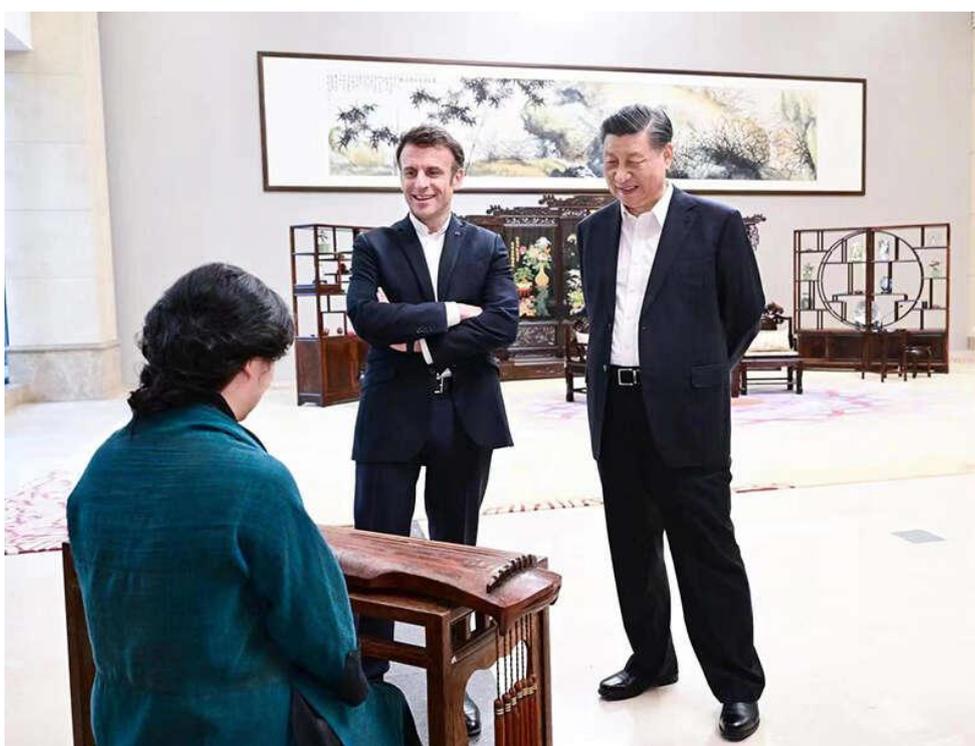


Figure 5-10: 2023 Meeting Between Chinese and French Leaders in Guangzhou⁵⁶⁷

This brief performance was not merely a cultural interlude but represented a gesture of great respect towards Macron. Xi Jinping chose *Flowing Water* instead of *High Mountains*, likely considering its more melodic and fluid nature, making it easier for a Western audience to

⁵⁶⁶ Internet Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zc6qvID3KH0>

⁵⁶⁷ Photo by Chen Teng, Liu Jing jing

https://news.cyol.com/gb/articles/2024-01/05/content_gGleoQcne.html

appreciate. On a symbolic level, it also conveyed the precious concept of zhiyin—a deep bond of mutual understanding found in ancient Chinese culture. Through this performance, Xi Jinping expressed both friendliness and warmth in cultural exchange and underscored the importance he places on Sino-French diplomatic relations.

Notably, the guqin used for this performance, “Jiuxiao Huanpei,”(九霄环佩) is far from an ordinary instrument. It was crafted during the Kaiyuan era of the Tang dynasty, in 756 CE, by Lei Wei, a renowned qin maker from the Lei family. As a royal ceremonial instrument, it witnessed the splendour of the Tang dynasty and, after 1,267 years, remains perfectly preserved, with no damage or repairs. The name “Jiuxiao Huanpei” evokes a sense of transcendence, with “Jiuxiao” symbolising the highest level of heaven in Chinese culture (also known as the “ninth heaven”), while “Huanpei” refers to the clear, melodious sound of ancient jade ornaments. This guqin not only represents the pinnacle of ancient Chinese craftsmanship but is also a treasured cultural relic, symbolising its profound cultural and historical significance.

Looking back at Wu Xunzai in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* over a century ago, we see how his highest cultural gesture, conveyed through the guqin to his Western friends, failed to achieve its intended effect due to a lack of mutual understanding. In Wu Xunzai’s story, cultural exchange remained superficial because of the self-centred perspectives and the lack of awareness of each other’s cultures. In contrast, the cultural interaction between Xi Jinping and Macron shares similar core elements of cultural expression. Xi Jinping, much like Wu Xunzai, used the precious national treasure “Jiuxiao Huanpei” to perform *Flowing Water*, symbolically expressing his high regard for Macron. At the same time, Macron’s keen interest in the piece, and his proactive inquiry about its name and score, revealed his openness to Chinese culture. This mutual engagement demonstrated not only the personal charm of both leaders in diplomatic settings but also a deeper level of understanding achieved through cultural exchange.

From Wu Xunzai to Xi Jinping, despite their different identities and eras, their shared pursuit in cultural exchange remains: to convey the essence of Chinese culture through the symbol of the guqin and seek resonance between East and West. Just as Wu Xunzai hoped to express the noble spirit of Chinese scholars through *High Mountains*, Xi Jinping communicated the zhiyin sentiment between China and France through *Flowing Water*. What sets modern cultural exchange apart is a greater openness and mutual understanding, turning communication into a two-way dialogue rather than a one-sided presentation. It is also notable that during Xi’s conversation with Macron, he slightly altered the common phrase “*High Mountains and Flowing Water* seek zhiyin,” changing the verb “seek” (觅) to “hope” (盼), emphasising his expectation and desire for Sino-French friendship.

4.8 The Dance of Zhiyin: Sino-French Cultural Dialogue on the Pyrenees

A year later, in May 2024, Xi Jinping, at the special invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron, travelled to the Col du Tourmalet in the Pyrenees for a meeting. This arrangement

not only carried deep personal significance for Macron but also conveyed profound diplomatic symbolism. The Pyrenees hold an important place in Macron’s childhood, being his “second home.” By choosing this personally meaningful location for the meeting, Macron demonstrated the importance he places on Sino-French relations and expressed his friendship and respect for Xi Jinping. The majestic mountain symbolised the close cooperation between the two nations on the global stage, while its tranquil presence created a natural and intimate setting for dialogue between the two leaders.



Figure 5-11 The leaders and their spouses watched folk dancers at the Tourmalet Pass in the Pyrenees mountains.⁵⁶⁸

During the meeting, Macron arranged a special performance of the traditional shepherd’s dance from southern France. This dance, originating from the Pyrenees region, reflects the simplicity and joy of rural French life. The lively steps and melodic tunes transported the audience back to the French countryside, allowing them to experience the harmony between people and nature. Through this traditional folk art, Macron showcased the diverse cultural charm of France, while also creating a more relaxed bridge for cultural exchange between the two leaders. This was a romantic cultural dialogue between China and France—while the East resonated with the thousand-year-old guqin piece *Flowing Water*, the West responded with an exuberant shepherd’s dance amidst the majestic snow-capped mountains. The cultures of China and France echoed each other, a warm reply to the mutual invitation of zhiyin.

In addition to the rich cultural interaction, the visit resulted in the signing of several

⁵⁶⁸ Photo by Aurelien Morissard

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/07/world/europe/macron-xi-china-france.html>

substantive cooperation agreements between China and France, covering key areas such as aviation, nuclear energy, and sustainable development. These agreements not only reinforced the foundation of economic and technological cooperation between the two countries but also highlighted the importance of Sino-French relations on the global stage. This visit marked a breakthrough in Sino-French cooperation following the freeze of the EU-China Investment Agreement on 20 May 2021. These two meetings were undoubtedly the pinnacle of this process, and the outcomes in various fields of cooperation set a model for future global partnerships.

From Wu Xunzai's frustrated cultural exchange in London to the interaction between Xi Jinping and Macron, the forms and substance of East-West cultural exchanges have undergone a remarkable transformation. In the late 19th century, Wu Xunzai, through the guqin, sought to convey the essence of Chinese culture to the West, yet the differences in cultural understanding left this exchange far short of its intended outcome. Today, however, on the slopes of the Pyrenees, the shepherd's dance and the resonant notes of *Flowing Water* from the ancient "Jiuxiao Huanpei" guqin create a timeless cultural connection. Through this powerful symbol, the two heads of state reached a deeper and more profound cultural resonance, a dialogue that transcends time and distance.

Given that no historical records exist for the "renowned scholar of Luoyang," Wu Xunzai, I have frequently questioned the authenticity of this tale. Observing the editorial choices of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* over its fifteen-year history, it becomes apparent that, as time progressed (perhaps with Major granting more editorial freedom), the volume of factual news reporting and the precision in content curation gradually gave way to a more sensational style. In particular, the later years saw a yearly increase in stories of the supernatural, making it difficult to continue classifying the pictorial as a "current affairs" publication.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, substantial evidence suggests that many reports on foreign affairs were largely "creations" by the illustrators, based on gossip or inspired by European travel diaries. However, if Wu Xunzai's story was indeed a fabrication by the illustrators, does this render the preceding analysis empty? Quite the opposite—Wu Xunzai's story is a quintessential reflection of the 19th-century intellectual class's attitude towards cultural exchange with the West. Whether it's the near-perfect junzi figure of Wu Xunzai, his use of tricks to gain Western applause, or his remark that Westerners "know how to look at the guqin but not how to listen," and the suggestion that he should make money from performing, all point to the common psychological projection of Chinese literati onto Westerners. Ultimately, this illustrates the intellectual class's fading illusion of Sinocentrism during that period.

In this chapter, through the analysis of the various narratives of Sino-Western cultural exchange in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, we have witnessed the complex attitudes that Chinese culture displayed when facing the Western world at the end of the 19th century. From the passive reception and admiration in the "dominant discourse" to the efforts to seek common ground in the "equal discourse," and finally to the display of confidence and centrality in the "superiority discourse," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was not only a cultural chronicle of Chinese

⁵⁶⁹ Wang Juan. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University), pp. 181-183.

society at the time but also a diverse platform for the interaction between China and the West. In this long and intricate weave of cultures, the sound of the guqin has echoed across time, linking the souls of East and West. While future exchanges between China and the West may continue to experience moments of collision and fusion, like the lingering resonance of the guqin that reverberates through the vastness of the world, these interactions will continue to compose new chapters, leading East and West towards deeper understanding and greater harmony through their mutual listening.

Conclusion

In a letter dated 4 December 1903 to Franz Boas, Berthold Laufer reflected on his experience transporting artefacts from a Chinese temple. Due to the size of the crates being too large to pass through the temple's exit, he suggested dismantling a small section of the wall to transport the items, with the intention of paying to have the wall repaired afterward. Reflecting on this event, he wrote:

"In December, on a cold night, I stood at the gap in the wall, battered by a Mongolian dust storm, overseeing the loading of the crates, when it suddenly occurred to me that this gap was, in fact, a great symbol. If I could break down a wall to collect artefacts, perhaps I could also break down other 'walls' here and elsewhere... How about tearing down the thick walls of ignorance, cultural arrogance, and racial prejudice? In China, there are walls everywhere—every house, every courtyard, and there are walls around hearts and minds. When will these walls be dismantled? And when will the barriers separating the East and West finally collapse?

Europe, a land of crime, devoid of conscience and morals, influences humanity with its pitiful beliefs. When will China build walls of prejudice to defend against this unfortunate nation? In fact, I believe this is not the last wall I will break. Perhaps there is still hope for a better understanding between these two very different worlds."⁵⁷⁰

This thesis, through the lens of cultural exchange in music, echoes Laufer's metaphor of the "walls" in its analysis of the pictorial narratives in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Here, some attempt to dismantle walls, while others strive to build or reinforce decaying ones. However, the significance of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* goes far beyond this. When it first appeared in 1884, it was at the forefront of fashion, leading the trends in popular culture within the media landscape of the late Qing period. Throughout its 15 years of publication, it served as a witness and chronicler of social change in late Qing society. Today, it continues to present fascinating and previously neglected aspects of China's music history and intellectual thought from over a century ago, offering a wealth of content that remains as captivating as ever.

From the images in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, we "hear" the differences in power dynamics inside and outside the Shanghai concessions. Coupled with the recordings from Laufer's collection, we hear the lament of the late Qing courtesans, revealing the tragic exploitation beneath their glamorous appearances. Through *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* depictions of the "West," we observe how Chinese people of the time interpreted and disseminated the concept of "hearing the West." In comparison to Western records of Chinese music prior to the 19th

⁵⁷⁰ *Anthology of Wax Cylinder Recordings from the Late Qing Empire: The Berthold Laufer Collection*, letter book, pp. 154-155, APS file number: aps-1901_1902_1903.

century, we clearly see that in constructing their own “world,” China and the West were not fundamentally different. Ultimately, we see the continuity and commonality in the Chinese approach to cultural exchange.

By focusing on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and the recordings of Berthold Laufer, this thesis reveals a largely overlooked episode in the music history of late 19th-century China. It highlights the broader implications of Sino-Western cultural exchange, offering insights into the complex interactions between music, culture, and social transformation during the late Qing period, and emphasises the lasting impact of these cross-cultural dynamics on the narrative of music history.

As this PhD thesis reaches completion, its inherent incompleteness has become apparent—a limitation often faced in academic works. Due to constraints in both word count and time, I have not been able to fully pursue all the topics I intended. This leaves multiple possibilities for further research. As the “bird’s-eye view” in Chapter One indicates, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* covers much more than just Sino-Western musical and cultural exchange. This study has yet to delve into the forms of exchange between China and East Asian or Southeast Asian nations during the late Qing period, particularly between China and Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the attitudes towards cultural exchange in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and those of other East and Southeast Asian nations could highlight important similarities and differences, offering useful insights for contemporary cultural research.

One further regret in this thesis is the limited space available to delve into Berthold Laufer’s cultural philosophy and epistemology. Much of my research has centred on analysing the lyric booklet in Laufer’s collection, but there is considerable potential for exploration in a separate volume of his letters. Through these letters, we could gain deeper insights into Laufer’s inner life, and by drawing on external historical sources, we might reconstruct more details of his travels in China. This could even be turned into a biographical work, similar to Robert Bickers’ *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*, which focuses on the British policeman Richard Maurice Tinkler.⁵⁷¹ With more imagination and daring, it might even be possible to adapt it into a screenplay or stage play for production.

As a result, this thesis, *Hearing the Twilight of an Empire: A Soundscape Study of Dianshizhai Pictorial and Late 19th Century Sino-Western Cultural Exchanges, 1884-1898*, does not mark the end of a project but rather the beginning of a series of new ones. It brings forth the “unconventional” historical materials positioned at the crossroads of Sino-Western exchanges, akin to the appeal of the “meta-picture,” enabling these sources to “reproduce” their own voices. This method allows the music embedded within the images to “reveal” and “understand” its own history and essence.

⁵⁷¹ Bickers, R. A. (2003). *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*. Columbia University Press

Bibliography

- A Ying. (1958). *Brief History of Ming and Qing Literary Journals*. Classical Literature Publishing House.
- Adrian A. Bennett. (1983). *Missionary Journalist in China: Young J. Allen and His Magazines, (1868-1883)*. University of Georgia Press.
- Alpers, S. (1983). *Interpretation without representation, or, the viewing of Las Meninas*. Representations.
- An, R., & Wang, Y. (2013). The Myth of "Things"—Western Objects in Late Qing Novels. *Art and Technology*.
- Ban Chisheng. (1891). *A Complete Guide of Waywardness Touring Shanghai*.
- Bell, J. (2014). *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Berger, R. W. (2012). The devil, the violin, and Paganini: The myth of the violin as Satan's Instrument. *Religion and the Arts*.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Bickers, R. (1997). *Ordering Shanghai*. English Historical Review.
- Bickers, R. (2003). *Empire Made me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*. Allen Lane.
- Bickers, R. A., & Wasserstrom, J. N. (1995). Shanghai's "Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted" sign: legend, history, and contemporary symbol. *The China Quarterly*.
- Birdsall, C. (2021). *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boxer, C. R. (Ed.). (2017). *South China in the Sixteenth Century (1550-1575): Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, OP, Fr. Martin de Rada, OESA*. Routledge.
- Boynton, S., & Reilly, D. J. (Eds.). (2015). *Resounding Images: Medieval Intersections of Art, Music, and Sound*. Brepols Publishers.
- Brown, J. (1978). *On the meaning of Las Meninas*. Collected Writings on Velázquez.
- Bull, M., Back, L., & Howes, D. (Eds.). (2015). *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Burney, C., & Scholes, P. A. (1959). *An eighteenth-century musical tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands*, being Dr. Charles Burney's account of his musical experiences.
- Cameron, M. E. (1931). *The Reform Movement in China 1898-1912*. Stanford University Press.
- Cannadine, D. (2012). The context, performance, and meaning of ritual: The British monarchy and the 'invention of tradition', c. 1820–1977. In *The Invention of Tradition*.

- Cambridge University Press.
- Central Conservatory of Music. (1957). *Reference Pictures for the History of Chinese Music*. Music Publishing House.
- Chai Junwei. (2024). "The Value and Research Issues of the Laufer Wax Cylinders—A Critical Review of 'Anthology of Ethnic Music Wax Cylinders (Late Qing)'". *Music Culture Research*.
- Chen, H. W. (1994). Exploring the mysteries of Dianshizhai Pictorial. *Journal of Editing Studies*.
- Chen, Pingyuan. (2000). *Introduction to Selected Works of Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Guiyang: Guizhou Education Press.
- Chen, Pingyuan. *Introduction to The Introduction of Western Learning in the Eyes of Late Qing People*. Guiyang: Guizhou Education Press, 2000.
- Chinese Medical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 1927).
- Cohn, B. S. (2012). Representing Authority in Victorian India. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crary, J. (1988). *Techniques of the Observer*. October.
- De Duve, T. (2005). *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Du Halde, J. B. (1739). *The General History of China: Containing a Geographical, Historical, Chronological, Political and Physical Description of the Empire of China, Chinese-Tartary, Corea, and Thibet*.
- Dong Ming. (2023). "Analysis and Classification of Vernacular Songs in the Early Chinese Recordings of the 'Laufer Collection'". *Music Culture Research*.
Editorial Committee of Anthology of Quyi Music: Beijing Volume, China ISBN Center.
- Feld, S. (2012). *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Duke University Press.
- Feaster, Patrick. (2022). *Berthold Laufer and the Phonograph*. Music Culture Research.
- Foucault, M. (1971). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Pantheon Books.
- Gasparo da Cruz. (1625). *Tractado em que se cõtam muito por estêso as cousas da China*. London: Printed by William Stansby.
- Ge Boxi. (1988). "Huan Ying Pictorial" Study. *Journalism and Communication Studies*.
- Geng Shenglian & Yu Yudai. (1996). *Anthology of Vernacular Songs from China, Beijing Volume*.

- Gerson, J. J. (1966). *Horatio Nelson Lay: His Role in British Relations With China 1849-1865*. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (United Kingdom).
- Gong, Hongyu. (2008). *Missionaries and Chinese Music: The Case of William Soothill*. Huangzhong - Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music.
- Gong, H. (2017). *Musical Events in Shanghai: A Study of Western Musicians and Musical Activities after the Opening of Shanghai (1843-1910)*. Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press.
- Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of worldmaking*. Hackett Publishing.
- Gramsci, A. (2020). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Routledge.
- Guo Yinu. (2021). Further Exploration of "Shanghai Huqin" in the "Berthold Laufer Collection". *Music Culture Research*.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. MIT Press.
- Hamann, B. E. (2010). *The mirrors of Las Meninas: cochineal, silver, and clay*. *The Art Bulletin*, 92(1-2).
- Han, Guohuang. (1981). *Western Perspectives on Chinese Music. In From West to East: Collected Essays on Chinese Music*. Taipei: China Times Publishing.
- Harrison, F. L. (1985). *Observation, Elucidation, Utilization: Western Attitudes to Eastern Musics, ca. 1600-ca. 1830*.
- Henriot, C. (2001). *Prostitution and sexuality in Shanghai: A social history, 1849-1949*. Cambridge University Press.
- Herbert, T., & Barlow, H. (2013). *Music & the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Herman, D. (2009). *Narrative ways of worldmaking. Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*.
- Hershatter, G. (1989). *The Hierarchy of Shanghai Prostitution, 1870-1949*. University of California Press.
- Hershkoff, H. (2005). *The Dick Whittington Story: Theories of Poor Relief, Social Ambition, and Possibilities for Class Transformation*. Tex. Wesleyan L. Rev.
- Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (2012). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hsia, F. C. (2024). Out of Habit: Jesuits in Flux. From Rome to Beijing: Sacred Spaces in *Dialogue*, 17.
- Irvine, T. (2020). *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770-1839*. University of Chicago Press.
- Jiang Wenjun. (2011). *History of Modern Shanghai Employees' Life*. Shanghai Ci Shu Publishing House.

- Jin Qiao. (2020). Astonishing Two-String Legends—An Analysis of Huqin Performances in the "Berthold Laufer Collection". *Chinese Music*.
- J Nieuhof, J. (1972). *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperour of China*. John Macock.
- Juan González de Mendoza. (1588). *The Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China, and the Situation Thereof: Together with the Great Riches, Huge Citties, Politike Government, and Rare Inventions in the Same*. Translated from Spanish by R. Parke. London: E. White.
- Kahn, H. (1993). *Pictures that speak: The history preceding the formation of mass culture in Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In H. Kahn, Random thoughts on historical studies: Three academic lectures. Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.
- Kang Suzhen (1988). *My Life as a Prostitute*. Hebei People's Publishing House.
- Kang, Wuwei (Harold Kahn). (1993). *A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: The History Before the Formation of Mass Culture in Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In Kang, Wuwei, Reflections on History: Three Academic Lectures. Taiwan: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.
- Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1.
- Ladds, C. (2016). China and treaty-port imperialism. *The Encyclopedia of Empire*.
- Lam, C. W. (2013). *The Idea of Chinese Music in Europe Up to the Year 1800*. Central Conservatory of Music Press.
- Leung, Y.-s. (1990). *The Shanghai Taotai: Linkage man in a changing society, 1843-1890*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Li, Shiyang. (2013). A Study on the Historical Significance of the Political Orientation of Music Education in the Late Qing and Early Republican Periods. *Modern Education Science. Higher Education Research*.
- Li Zehou. (1987). *Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun—Reflections on May Fourth, Part Three*. Fujian Forum: Humanities and Social Sciences Edition.
- Lin, Qinghua. (2014). *The Journey of Chinese Music to the West*. Central Conservatory of Music Press.
- Lynda C. Johnson. (1987). *The Decline of Soochow and Rise of Shanghai*.
- Ma Guangxia. (2012). Research on the Work of the Methodist Church in China (1848-1939). (Doctoral dissertation, Shandong University).
- Mao Xianglin. (1985). Mo yu lu 墨餘錄 (Records of leftover ink). *Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe*.
- Marx, K. (1977). *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, ed. and transl.* Joseph O'Malley. Cambridge.
- McCarthy, M. (2022). *Citizen of London: Richard Whittington-The Boy Who Would Be Mayor*.

Hurst Publishers.

Meelberg, V. (2009). Sounds like a story: Narrative traveling from literature to music and beyond. *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research*.

Merriam, A. P. (1969). Ethnomusicology revisited. *Ethnomusicology*.

Mitchell, W. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (1995). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press.

Mundy, P. (1914). *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*. Hakluyt society.

National Centre for the Performing Arts. (2012). *High Mountains and Flowing Water: The Art of the Guqin*. Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press.

Nettl, B. (2005). *The study of ethnomusicology: Thirty-one issues and concepts*. University of Illinois Press.

Nieuhof, J. L'ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine, ou Grand Cam de Tartarie, faite par les srs. Pierre de Goyer, & Jacob de Keyser. Le tout recueilli par le Mr. Jean Nieuhoff. mis en François, orné, & assorti de mille belles particularitez tant morales que politiques, par Jean le Carpentier. pour Jacob de Meurs, marchand libraire & graveur de la ville d'Amsterdam.

Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Brill Archive.

Pancer, N. (2017). The silencing of the world: Early medieval soundscapes and a new aural culture. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales-English Edition*.

Patrick Feaster. (2022). Berthold Laufer and the Phonograph. *Music Culture Research*.

Qian, R. K. (1986). Two Centuries of Miscommunication: The 'Chinese Melody' in Weber and Hindemith's Works. *Music Art: Journal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music*.

Qian, R. K. (1992). The History and Current State of Sino-French Musical and Cultural Exchanges. *People's Music*.

Qian, Renkang. (2001). *A Study on the Origins of School Songs*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.

Qi, X. (2003). *Oral history analysis: American missionaries in modern Chinese history*. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Qi Wenyuan. (2002). *History of Chinese Music*. Gansu People's Publishing House.

Qin Xu. (1998). *History of Chinese Music*. Culture and Art Publishing House.

Ranger, T. (2012). *The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa*. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

Rowe, W. T. (1984). *Hankow: Commerce and society in a Chinese city, 1796-1889*. Stanford University Press.

- Ryan, M.-L. (2003). *Cognitive maps and the construction of narrative space*. In D. Herman (Ed.), *Narrative theory and the cognitive sciences*. Stanford University Press.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Semedo, A. (1969). *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China: Wherein All the Particular Provinces are Accurately Described: as Also the Dispositions, Manners, Learning, Lawes, Militia, Government, and Religion of the People. Together with the Traffick and Commodities of that Countrey*. E. Tyler
- Skinner, G. W., & Baker, H. D. (1977). *The city in late imperial China*. Stanford University Press.
- Sun Yusheng. (1939). *The Life of Prostitutes*. Shanghai: Chunming Bookstore.
- Umberger, E. (1995). *Velázquez and Naturalism II: Interpreting Las Meninas*. RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics.
- Wagner, R. G. (2001). *Entering the global imagination: Shanghai's Dianshizhai Pictorial*. China Scholarship, (Special Issue).
- Wagner, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Joining the global public: word, image, and city in early Chinese newspapers, 1870-1910*. Suny Press.
- Wagner, R. G. (1995). The Shenbao in crisis: The international environment and the conflict between Guo Songtao and the Shenbao. *Late Imperial China*.
- Waite, G. (1986). Lenin in Las Meninas: An Essay in Historical-Materialist Vision. *History and Theory*, 25(3).
- Wang, B. (2012). Geopolitics, Moral Reform, and Poetic Internationalism: Liang Qichao's The Future of New China. *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*.
- Wang, E. (2007). *The Compilation of the Book of Rites*. Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang Guangqi. (2016). *History of Chinese Music*. China Culture and History Press.
- Wang, J. (2008). *Western Imaginations in Dianshizhai Pictorial* (Doctoral dissertation, Peking University).
- Wang, Liaoweng. (1922). *Sixty Years of Shanghai's Flower World History*. Shanghai: Shixin Shuju.
- Wang, Tao. (1985). Manyou Suilu 漫遊隨錄 (The record of my wandering). In Wang Xiqi (Ed.), *Xiao fang hu zhai Yudi Congchao [小方壺齋輿地叢鈔]* (Collection of geographical works from the Xiaofanghu studio), vol. 62. Hangzhou: Hongzhou Guji Shudian.
- Wei Xiaoshi. (2022). *The Treasures of Laufer: From Collection to Publication*. Music Culture Research.
- Wolf, E. R. (1982). *Europe and the People without History*. University of California Press.
- Wright, D. (1996). John Fryer and the Shanghai polytechnic: Making space for science in nineteenth-century China. *The British Journal for the History of Science*.

- Xiao Mei. (2022). The Ontology of Sound Archives. *Huangzhong: Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*.
- Xiao Mei & Ling Jiashui. (2021). Historical Echoes in Laufer's "Wax Cylinders". *Music Culture Research*.
- Xiao Xinghua. (1995). *History of Chinese Music*. Wenjin Publishing House.
- Xu, J. (1989). Jiang Keqian and Qinshu Daquan. *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute: Music and Performance Edition*.
- Xiong, Yuezhi. (1994). *The Introduction of Western Learning and Late Qing Society*. Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Yang Jiezeng & He Wan'nan (Eds.). (1988). *The History of Prostitution Reform in Shanghai*, Shanghai Joint Publishing Company.
- Yang, Lianfen. (2003). *From the Late Qing to the May Fourth: The Emergence of Modernity in Chinese Literature*. Peking University Press.
- Ye Bohe. (2019). *History of Chinese Music (Volume One)*. Bashu Publishing House.
- Yeh, C. V. (2006). *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*. University of Washington Press.
- Yu, H. (1994). The Tuning Methods of Guqin Pieces in Shenqi Mipu. *Huangzhong: Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*.
- Yu Wei and Amos Wong (1949). A Study of 500 Prostitutes in Shanghai. *International Journal of Sexology*.
- Yue, Lisong. (2013). *A Study of Late Qing Erotica and Beijing-Shanghai Culture (Series of Research in Literature, History, and Philosophy)*. Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Yule, H. (1866). *Cathay and the way thither: being a collection of medieval notices of China*. Hakluyt Society.
- Zang Yibing. (2006). *History of Chinese Music (Revised Edition)*. Wuhan University Press.
- Zhang, Cuilan. (2005). Examination of Yangqin Historical Materials in "Qingbai Leichao." *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute (Music and Performance Edition)*.
- Zhang, Qiang, Qu, Zhe, & Qu, Yanbin. (2009). The significance of social life history in newspaper illustrations since the late Qing dynasty. *Library Theory and Practice*, (12).
- Zhang, Shibin. (1975). *A Draft History of Chinese Music*. Union Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Zhang, Wei, & Yan, Jieqiong. (2020). The Social History of Late Qing Shanghai: Urban Style in Xiaoxiaochang New Year Pictures. *Shanghai Scientific and Technological Literature Publishing House*.
- Zhang Xuan. (2021). A Century of Listening—Musicological Research on the Shanghai Opera Cylinder Recordings in the "Laufer Collection". *Music Culture Research*.
- Zhao, J. H. (1983). *The Modern Chinese Newspaper Industry*. Wenhai Press.

Zhao, Y. (1995). An Exploration of Zhu Zaiyu's Se Notation and Related Issues. *Huangzhong: Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music*.

Zheng, Dahua. (2005). The Intellectual History of the Late Qing Dynasty. *Hunan Normal University Press*.

Zheng, W. (1958). *Selected contemporary tunes from Dianmenzhai pictorial*. Beijing: China Classical Art Press.

Zheng, X. Y., Li, F. H., & Hu, S. Y. (2007). *Memoirs of an Empire: Late Qing Observations by The New York Times*. Contemporary China Press.