

## GUEST EDITOR'S PREFACE: SPECIAL SECTION ON MUSIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Founded in 1981, the ICTM Study Group for Music Archaeology enjoyed a very prolific period during the 1980s and 1990s. After a series of successful conferences between 1982 and 1996 (Cambridge, UK 1982; Stockholm 1984; Hannover 1986; St. Germain-en-Laye 1990; Liège 1992; Istanbul 1993; Jerusalem 1994–95; Limassol, Cyprus 1996), Ellen Hickmann founded the International Study Group on Music Archaeology (ISGMA) with biennial conferences held in Michaelstein and Berlin since 1998. ICTM activities in the field were discontinued until 2003 when Anthony Seeger and Julia Sanchez revived the ICTM Study Group for Music Archaeology. Three conferences have been held so far (Los Angeles 2003; Wilmington, North Carolina 2006; New York 2009). The idea of including a special section on past music cultures in the present *Yearbook for Traditional Music* was suggested to me by Stephen Wild, ICTM Secretary General, during the World Conference in Vienna (2007) and was further supported by Don Niles, the *Yearbook's* general editor. From numerous proposals, six were selected for expansion as articles, reviewed by specialists in their respective music archaeological fields, and prepared for publication in collaboration with me and the general editor. The papers can be seen as case studies for the variety of music archaeological research, which also help us understand contemporary processes affecting music.

The special section in the present volume comprises one introductory paper on method and theory in music archaeological research (Both) and five papers on the musical traditions of different cultural areas and times: the Near East, with a focus on c. 1800–1200 BCE (Mirelman); China, c. 1570 BCE–907 CE (Furniss); Western Europe, c. 1150–1500 CE (Kolltveit); Southeast Asia, c. 800–1700 CE (Nicolas); and Mesoamerica, c. 100–250 CE (Barber et al.). In my paper on method and theory, I refer to the applicability of ethnomusicological approaches to the study of past music cultures. While the particular musical structures of the past are irrevocably lost, valuable information is present to study the history of musical instruments (some of which are still played today) and the sociocultural contexts of a once-performed music. In many cases, especially when literate cultures are studied, detailed information on the place of musicians in society and the meanings of musical traditions can be obtained.

Insights into the organization of the remarkably rich music cultures flourishing in the ancient Near East and China are given in this volume by Mirelman and Furniss, respectively. Mirelman summarizes the state of research on the social history of musicians in the Near East during the second millennium BCE, where information is basically obtained from texts written in cuneiform script on preserved clay tablets. Specifically abundant is the material from the city of Mari in contemporary Syria and from the Hittite capital Hattusa (Boğazköy) in Turkey. Furniss stresses the social history of “informal” musicians in China from the Shang (c. 1570–1070 BCE) to the Tang periods (618–907 CE), reviewing written sources and archaeological finds dealing with performers of entertainment and popular music, rather than the formal music of state, *yayue* (refined music).

Despite many differences in details, Mesopotamia and ancient China share remarkably intriguing parallels regarding aspects of the sociocultural organization of their respective music cultures. In Mesopotamia, musicians were exchanged as diplomatic gifts or taken as booty in military campaigns. Similar practices existed in China, where musicians and dancers were offered as gifts from one state to another during the Zhou dynasty, while foreign musicians were captured as prisoners in borderland battles in Han times and given as tribute by Central Asian rulers to Chinese emperors during the Tang period. In Mesopotamia, female musicians were presented to kings, and their possession was a symbol of prestige. Likewise, Chinese elites owned orchestras of female musicians, which were signs of wealth and status. Finally, in both cultures institutional offices of high-ranking musicians existed. In Mesopotamia these officials, called *nar* or *gala*, were connected to the palace and the temples, and looked after the manufacture of musical instruments, among other duties. There also existed chief musicians who had high status within the palace and were in charge of teaching groups such as the young women of the royal harem. In ancient China, the *taiyue ling* (Grand Director of Music) was responsible for providing *yayue* music and dance for state sacrifices and other ceremonies, and also for supervising the training of music masters. As Mirelman points out, the Mesopotamian texts tell us nothing about music outside the official royal or cultic contexts; the same generally applies to ancient texts from China and other cultures. Cases like these reveal the fragmented information that can be obtained from written sources, as frequently only a narrow view focused on the elites is related. However, historical Chinese sources at least indicate the existence of music played outside of the capital. Accounts such as those of the *qin* master, who decided to leave behind courtly life and play his instrument in the countryside, point in this direction.

Two papers in the present volume discuss the movement of past musical traditions and sound characteristics (if not musical styles) in relation to the trade of musical instruments: medieval jew's harps in Europe (Kolltveit) and gongs, bells, and cymbals from shipwrecks in Southeast Asia (Nicolas). In discussing archaeological jew's harps of medieval Western Europe, Kolltveit demonstrates how difficult interpretation can be when a sample of music-related finds without much additional source material is present. A distribution map of the finds shows clusters in the Alps, especially Switzerland, on both sides of the English Channel, and in southern Scandinavia, which might be related to medieval production centres and trade routes of these instruments along the Rhine and around the Baltic Sea, including the London–Lübeck–Novgorod Hanseatic route. Kolltveit stresses two intimately related questions, *how* were the instruments distributed and *who* were their players? The finds show movements of people and musical styles over great distances. Movements of production centres are also possible, but so far not enough information is present to draw precise conclusions. Merchants, possibly organized in guilds, are among the distributors identified. Among the possible players (and, in cases where instruments were lost, also occasional distributors), Kolltveit identifies actors, dancers, musicians, jugglers, and other entertainers, who travelled from town to town, but pilgrims could also be considered in this group. Finds in monasteries and castles also indicate use by monks and soldiers. Jew's harps must have

been extremely popular, as the number of finds indicates, but the details remain unclear, as most iconographic and written information comes from post-medieval times. Among the reasons as to why and how the instrument became widely distributed over a short period of time, Kolltveit identifies the relatively standardized mass manufacture and commercial revolution of that time, and, on the level of musical aesthetics, the continuous drone sound of the instrument, a feature it had in common with the bagpipe, the hurdy-gurdy, and also the shawm. On the question how jew's harps came to medieval Europe, Kolltveit suggests an introduction from Central Asia via contemporary Russia, but the existence of jew's harps made of perishable materials in European antiquity and the possibility of organological polygenesis cannot be excluded.

From shipwrecks in the Southeast Asian seas, Nicolas discusses finds of gongs, bells, and cymbals, which were among the items of intensive maritime trade from the ninth to seventeenth century between cultural centres of contemporary China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Borneo, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and India, including a greater trade network linking the region with the Middle East and East Africa. In this case, archaeological information provides detailed information on the origin and the destination of the shipwrecks and their respective trading goods, and thus the directions that flat gongs, bells, and cymbals took during the ninth to thirteenth century, and bossed gongs took during the thirteenth to seventeenth century. Earlier finds of Vietnamese Dong Son bronze drums reported from Indonesia and Malaysia indicate that these trade routes have existed for a long time. The major production centres of gongs, bells, and cymbals were located in China and Vietnam, as well as in regional centres, possibly in the Philippines, Borneo, Java, and Thailand (in some cases specific regions and sites can be identified). It is also likely that coastal centres were not the only destinations of such instruments in the region, but also inland communities, including temple sites. Not much is known about the use of the finds, but most likely they were used at courts, in temple worship, and for village feasts and rituals. At least one find with a dated inscription on a flat gong in Muara Jambi, Sumatra, indicates a use in war (or in a warrior cult). This is a good example of the combination of the find of a musical instrument and a written source on the instrument containing information relating to its function and meaning (other examples are bells in Mesopotamia and lyres in ancient Egypt; among ethnographical examples are Tibetan instruments with inscriptions and instruments of the Islamic tradition). Other examples of the combination of sound artefact and written source are the names of makers (or receivers) marked on instruments, such as is reported from the tenth-century flat gongs of the Tanjung Simpang find off the shores of northern Borneo.

Both medieval jew's harps and Southeast Asian gongs were the subject of intensive inland and offshore trade, indicating the great popularity of these instruments and their sound characteristics, and possibly also of their respective musical styles (especially when related to religious practice, such as in Southeast Asia). The wide distribution and time range of the finds also indicate a great variety of uses, although often not much precise information on particular sociocultural aspects is present. In these cases ethnographic parallels could help, such as in a comparison of archaeological Southeast Asian gong finds with the contemporary use of com-

parable instruments in the Philippines, Indonesia, China, and Vietnam, as indicated by Nicolas. Further insight is provided through archaeometallurgical analysis, indicating that the proportion between metallurgical components has been maintained in instrument manufacture until today. However, the regional differences in contemporary performance practices and contexts reveal the difficulties that direct historical approaches face, even when strong cultural continuities are present (see the ethnoarchaeology section of my introductory paper in this volume).

Alan Merriam suggested that on the basis of music-related finds, migrations and intercultural contacts of the past could be studied precisely (Merriam 1964:297), and both medieval jew's harp finds and Southeast Asian gongs demonstrate that the transmission of musical instruments and music styles through intracultural and cross-cultural relations in the past can also be followed. Information on musical interaction is also revealed through written sources, as Mesopotamian and ancient Chinese documents reveal (see the articles in this volume by Mirelman and Furniss, respectively). Examples of the spread of musical knowledge and ideas provided in the present volume are the trade routes linking the Near East and the Mediterranean with Central, South, and East Asia (basically the Silk Road and the maritime routes), Hanseatic trade routes (linking medieval centres of the North and Baltic seas, including centres at navigable rivers, such as the Rhine and the Thames), and East–Southeast Asian maritime trade routes.

In the concluding paper of the music archaeology section, Barber, Sánchez, and Olvera show the extent that music archaeological interpretation can take when the particular source material is significant and when careful interpretation using all available information is carried out by a group of specialists (see the methodology section of my introductory paper in this volume). In the case of a pre-Columbian bone flute produced from a deer femur excavated in Yugüe, a site near the Pacific coast of Oaxaca, Mexico, the authors discuss the archaeological find context (the grave of a fifteen- to seventeen-year-old boy of the local elite, most probably the flute player, dating from the late Terminal Formative Period, c. 100–250 CE), the conservation of the instrument (requiring expert skill because of its fragmented state of preservation), its organology (applying experimental archaeology to verify the type of mouthpiece and acoustic mechanism), and iconography (an incised design depicting a skeletal male figure facing towards the bell, with one of the fingerholes of the flute incorporated into the image as an eye opening for the figure's skull). The information is compared with Mixtec codex depictions of flower-flutes, providing additional hints on the possible acoustic mechanism of the discussed flute, ethnohistorical data on Aztec flower-flutes and their socioreligious context, and ethnographic analogies. Thus the instrument is placed in a broader cultural tradition of shared musical functions and meanings in Mesoamerica, in which ritual sounds were (and are) perceived as the voices of numinous beings.

Reference cited

Merriam, Alan P.

1964 *The Anthropology of Music*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

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