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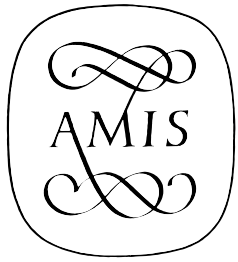

Dating Old *Huqin:* New Research on Examples of pre-1949 Instruments in Three Major British Collections*

Colin Huehns

This paper examines all the pre-1949[1] examples of the Chinese *huqin* in three major British museum collections and discusses both the extent to which this examination informs our knowledge of the history of these instruments and also how far we can use this information to date other old *huqin*. It is divided into four parts: the first describes the main modern members of this family in order to provide a convenient yardstick against which to measure the older instruments examined here; the second offers the alternative paradigm of a typical pre-1949 *erhu;* the third discusses in turn all the *huqin* held in the three major British collections; and the fourth offers some conclusions.

The Modern Huqin *Family*

Huqin is a generic term for the principal family of Chinese bowed stringed instruments. Their unique distinguishing feature is that the bow hair is inserted between the strings, which are therefore stroked with both the inner and outer faces of the hair. A diagram of the modern *erhu*, nowadays the most widely played member of the family, is given in figure 1. Figure 2 shows the author playing a modern *erhu*.

In written Chinese, one character matches each syllable. The two characters that form the word "*huqin*," those representing "*hu*" and "*qin*" respectively, mean "Western barbarian" and "musical instrument."[2]

*The author would like to thank the museum curators concerned, Dr. Arnold Myers at the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Dr. Hélène La Rue at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, and Dr. Margaret Birley at the Horniman Museum, for allowing me access to the instruments in these collections, and also for their industry in supplying me with a wealth of interesting background material.

1. 1949 is used as the watershed here because it is the year the Communist Party came to power in mainland China.

2. The glossary at the end of the article gives the Chinese characters for Chinese words used in this text.

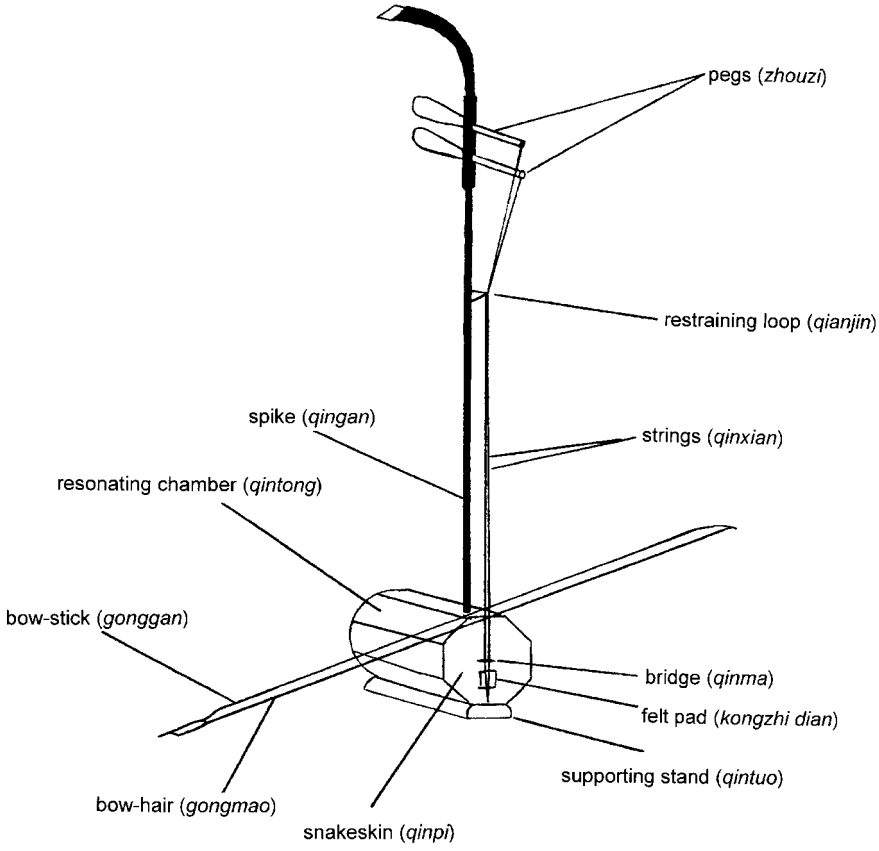

Figure 1. Diagram of the modern *erhu*.

Thus, "*huqin*" means "musical instrument(s) of the Western barbarians." This suggests a Central Asian origin for instruments of this family.[3] Since 1949 the term "*huqin*" has been used only to denote the family of bowed stringed instruments whose members are outlined here.[4] The character for the "*hu*" of "*huqin*" is also the second in almost all the names of different

3. Other than this etymological information, evidence for a Central Asian origin for *huqin* is extremely scarce, which means that this suggestion must be treated with due caution.

4. Previously, this term simply meant any instrument deemed to have originated from the "Western barbarians" and also included plucked *huqin*. The etymological origin of the word "*huqin*" is a complex issue which is outside the scope of this paper.

Figure 2. The author playing the modern *erhu*.

huqin—for example *erhu*, *gaohu*, *zhonghu*, *banhu*, *jinghu*, and *sihu*—and defines these instruments as members of this family.

Briefly, *huqin* are constructed from a small soundbox—usually cylindrical—over which at one end either a snakeskin or a wooden plate has been fixed. A spike passes through this soundbox and extends vertically upwards. Two or more tuning pegs, depending on the number of strings, are inserted into the upper end of this spike. The strings normally run from these pegs through a restraining loop or *qianjin*, then over a small bridge placed on the snakeskin or wooden plate, and are attached to the lower end of the spike as it emerges from the soundbox at the base of the instrument. Most *huqin* are held vertically on the left hip and bowed horizontally with a bow whose stick is made from bamboo.

Nowadays, there are perhaps forty different variants of *huqin* played in different parts of China. In addition, instruments of this family are also found among the indigenous peoples of Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and southeast Asia, regions where the influence of Chinese culture has always been strong. The principal members of the modern *huqin* family are the *erhu*, *gaohu*, *zhonghu*, *banhu* (two types), *jinghu*, and *sihu*, and these instruments will now be discussed individually in more detail.

***Erhu, gaohu,* and *zhonghu*.** In China today, by far the main member of the *huqin* family is the snakeskin-fronted *erhu*. In Chinese, here, "*er*" means "two," hence "*erhu*" means a "two-stringed instrument of the *huqin* family." Previously considered a minor member of the family, it rose to preeminence after the Communists took power in 1949 and is now often considered to be the representative Chinese traditional instrument. Modern siblings to the *erhu* are the *gaohu* and *zhonghu*, instruments which are also snakeskin-fronted. *Erhu* strings are normally tuned to d′ and a′, the same as the middle two strings on the violin.[5] *Gaohu* strings are usually tuned a fourth or fifth higher than this, making it the soprano member of the family (here, "*gao*" means "high"); *zhonghu* strings are usually tuned a fourth or fifth lower, making it the alto ("*zhong*" means "middle"). Nowadays there are no regularly-used tenor or bass members. Larger experimental snakeskin-fronted *huqin* such as the *dadihu* ("*dadi*" means "big bass") or *gehu* ("*ge*" means "revolutionary") were invented in the period following 1949, but their snakeskin membranes, stretched over relatively large areas, tend to go slack easily, making these instruments much less effective than their Western equivalents (cello and double bass) as sound-producing apparatuses. As a result they have largely fallen into disuse, and lower voices in ensemble textures are almost always taken by Western instruments.

As one would expect, the main difference in construction between the *erhu*, *gaohu*, and *zhonghu* is their size: the body of the *gaohu* is slightly smaller than that of the *erhu*, and that of the *zhonghu* is marginally larger; but these variations are only slight. String thicknesses on these instruments correspond roughly to those of equivalent violin strings.[6] A further

5. For all *huqin*, tunings can vary according to different repertories, ensemble contexts, and each individual player's personal taste. Tunings given here are those which are most common.

6. Modern *huqin* strings are usually made from different gauges of metal wire, either wound or unwound. See also table 1 below for a comparison of old and modern *huqin* strings.

difference is that of repertory: the *gaohu* is connected with the music of South China, and the *zhonghu* with the indigenous Mongol music of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia (a part of modern China). The modern *gaohu*, *erhu*, and *zhonghu* illustrated in figure 3 are all representative instruments from my own collection, made in Lü Jiehua's workshop in Beijing and bought in 1996 through my *erhu* teacher at the Xi'an Music Conservatoire, Jin Wei.

Banhu. Cousins to the *erhu* are the *banhu*, which differ from *erhu*, *gaohu*, and *zhonghu* simply because they employ a wooden soundboard instead of a snakeskin membrane (here, "*ban*" means "board of wood"), which makes for a less mellow, sharper, and more penetrating sound. In addition, the orthodox modern *banhu* soundbox is not normally made from wood, as it is with the *erhu*, *gaohu*, and *zhonghu*, but rather from a hollowed gourd or coconut shell onto which the wooden face has been fixed; thus, the *banhu* soundbox is usually spherical in shape, not cylindrical. In order to produce the *banhu*'s typically brighter sound, its bow stick is usually made from thicker bamboo than those of the snakeskin members of the *huqin* family. Its pegs are normally inserted laterally on the right side of the instrument, pointing sideways towards the player's face; by contrast, *erhu*, *gaohu*, *zhonghu*, *jinghu*, and *sihu* pegs all point backwards parallel to the cylindrical soundbox. On *banhu* this difference in peg direction causes the string angle relative to the spike to be altered, thus making the restraining loop or *qianjin* redundant; it is normally replaced with a small wooden nut over which the strings pass.

Nowadays there are two main types of *banhu:* mid- and high-voiced. The latter is tuned a fourth or fifth higher than the former, though tunings vary according to repertory and context; however, both instruments are still "soprano" instruments operating in the treble-clef range. For students learning an instrument of the *huqin* family, the *banhu* has largely been superseded by the *erhu* as the instrument of choice. At present, *banhu* are restricted primarily to acting as accompanying instruments for various types of local opera, for example the *Qinqiang* opera style of Xi'an; nonetheless, there is still a substantial solo repertoire for the instrument. The two *banhu* shown in figure 4 are also representative modern instruments from my own collection made in the Lü Jiehua workshop.

Jinghu. The *jinghu* is a special member of the *huqin* family that is used almost exclusively as an accompanying instrument for Beijing opera. The

Figure 3. Side views of (from left to right) my modern *gaohu*, *erhu*, and *zhonghu*, made in the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing.

"*jing*" of "*jinghu*" is the same as that of "Beijing" and means "capital city" or, here, "the style of opera in Beijing, the capital city"; hence "*jinghu*" means the "*hu* used for accompanying Beijing opera." It is the smallest member of the family, a "soprano" instrument, and employs a snakeskin membrane. Its body is a hollowed bamboo tube, as is its spike. Because it is small and can be easily controlled by the left hand, it is normally played balanced on the thigh rather than wedged on the hip bone. The instrument shown in figure 5 is from my own collection and was made in Beijing but not in the Lü Jiehua workshop; instead, it was bought in a shop in Xi'an.

Sihu. One of the most interesting members of the *erhu* family is the four-stringed *sihu*, which normally has a snakeskin membrane. The name

Figure 4. Front views of (from left to right) my modern mid- and high-voiced *banhu*, made in the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing.

"*sihu*" derives from the word "*si*," which, here, means "four." The strings are tuned from outer (left) to inner (right) string respectively a′–d′–a′–d′. The bow is equipped with two sheaves of bow hair, one inserted between the outer pair of strings and the other between the inner pair. The result is that with the two inner faces of the bow hair, the two A strings are always sounded simultaneously in unison; alternatively, with the outer faces both D strings are always played together. As these unisons are inevitably always slightly out of tune—stopping both simultaneously-sounding strings to identical pitches is almost impossible—the result is (intentionally) a curiously sharp and edged timbre. Once widespread

Figure 5. Side view of my modern *jinghu*, from a Beijing workshop.

across China, the *sihu* is now comparatively rare and is almost exclusively an instrument of the Mongol "national minority" of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia. It is also played in (Outer) Mongolia, though there it is also rare. It is used to perform a fully-developed solo repertory as well as the gamut of Mongol folk melodies. The modern *sihu* depicted below in figures 16 and 28 is a representative instrument made in the workshop of Duan Tingjun in Hohhot, capital of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia.

Other *huqin*. In addition to the *huqin* thus far described, there are also various regional types, for example *leihu* from Tianjin and *zhuihu* from Zhengzhou in Henan province, both of which are larger, snakeskin-fronted members of the family.[7] Some regional operas use their own variants, for example in the *Wanwanqiang* opera of Shaanxi province, where a type of *banhu* known as the *erxianzi*[8] is found in the accompanying ensemble. Modern experimental *huqin* include the snakeskin-fronted, three-stringed *sanhu* ("*san*" means "three"). In addition there are numerous variants played by the "national minorities" of China, as well as others played in Japan, Korea, and southeast Asia.

Comparison of the Early and Modern Erhu

Elsewhere, I have proposed the concept of an "early music" *erhu* based on a comparison between two instruments—one modern and the other pre-1949—in my own collection, both of which I regularly use when teaching and performing.[9] The modern *erhu* is the one illustrated above in figures 2 and 3, and below in figures 6, 7, and 9; the early instrument —shown in figures 6–9—was sold to me in 1999 by my *erhu* teacher, Jin Wei, while I was visiting Xi'an. Concrete evidence as to its provenance is completely lacking. The *erhu* itself underwent a series of reforms in the 1920s and 1930s largely as a result of the efforts of the *erhu* pedagogue and composer Liu Tianhua (1895–1932), a process which has continued since 1949. My early *erhu* is certainly a representative instrument of the pre-1949, unreformed type, but how much older it is than that and where it came from is a matter for speculation, to be discussed in more detail below.

The main differences between the two instruments are summarized in table 1. Most of these stem from a desire to transform the *erhu* from its Qing dynasty (1644–1911) role as the instrument of the dispossessed—the rural poor, beggars, singsong girls, and theatrical troupes—into a modern solo instrument capable of producing a more robust sound suit-

7. The etymology of the words "*leihu*" and "*zhuihu*" is obscure and outside the scope of this paper; nonetheless, both are types of "*hu*."

8. The "*er*" of "*erxianzi*" is the same as that of "*erhu*"; the "*xian*" means "string[ed]"; the "*zi*" is a diminutive suffix commonly used in modern Chinese. Thus, in totality, "*erxianzi*" means "a little two-stringed fiddle."

9. Colin Huehns, "The 'Early Music' *Erhu*," *The Galpin Society Journal* 54 (2001): 56–61.

Table 1. Comparison between the modern and early *erhu*.

Modern *erhu*	Early *erhu*
Metal strings	Silk strings
Metal peg mechanism	Wooden pegs (no mechanism)
Uncarved head	Carved dragon head
Precision-tooled spike	Slightly bent spike
Larger, octagonal soundbox, carved from one piece of wood	Smaller, circular soundbox made from several strips of wood arranged longitudinally and joined together by wooden slivers
None (rosin applied before playing)	Rosin smeared on the pathway of the bow across the body of the instrument
Wooden tube inserted inside the soundbox to increase the volume produced by the instrument	None
Only the rim of the rear of the soundbox is latticed	Wooden lattice covering the back of the soundbox
Wooden stand attached to base of the instrument	None
Bow has violin-like frog with adjuster at heel	None
A clip on the frog is used for unfastening the bow-hair	None
Virtually straight bow-stick; perhaps even slightly concave towards the point	Convex bow-stick, especially at the point (the "early" *huqin* shape)
Bow uses thick, flattened sheaf of horsehair suitable for metal strings	Bow uses thin, rounded sheaf of horsehair suitable for silk strings (silk strings snap when too much pressure is applied)

able for the modern concert hall and concerto repertory. The most important impetus for this transformation has been political: the Communists had as their power base precisely those dispossessed rural poor who had constituted the main body of *huqin* players prior to 1949, and on coming to power they wanted "their" instrument to reflect their newfound cultural and political virility.

Figure 6. Front views of my early and modern *erhu;* the latter (from the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing) is on the left. The provenance of the early instrument is a matter for conjecture; it was bought in Xi'an from Jin Wei in 1999.

Sadly, although *huqin* have a history in China of at least nine hundred years, as can be verified by depictions in the visual arts, the oldest specimens in the three collections examined here date from no earlier than the late eighteenth century, and most date from the nineteenth century. However, as will be discussed below, these may well be the earliest examples still in existence today. While there are certainly examples of *huqin*

Figure 7. Back views of the soundboxes of both instruments; my modern *erhu* is on the left.

surviving in China itself which appear to be old, without concrete evidence to guarantee their age—a situation virtually inconceivable until the twentieth century—these instruments are less reliable as evidence. In any case, because the modern *erhu* is very much a post-1949 phenomenon, instruments made prior to this date would not normally be still in use. My discreet inquiries in China did not produce any examples of pre-1949 instruments except the one I now own, and Jin Wei, who sold it to me, said that it was the only example of such an instrument he had ever encountered in his entire forty years as an *erhu* player. This is probably what one would expect. Prior to 1949, *huqin* were not valued: they were the disposable junk of the poor, the tools of the trade of the beggar class and of opera performers, to be discarded when no longer required. This situation is completely different from that pertaining to most other Chinese traditional instruments, those more normally associated with the gentry and with scholarly and courtly circles, fine specimens of which

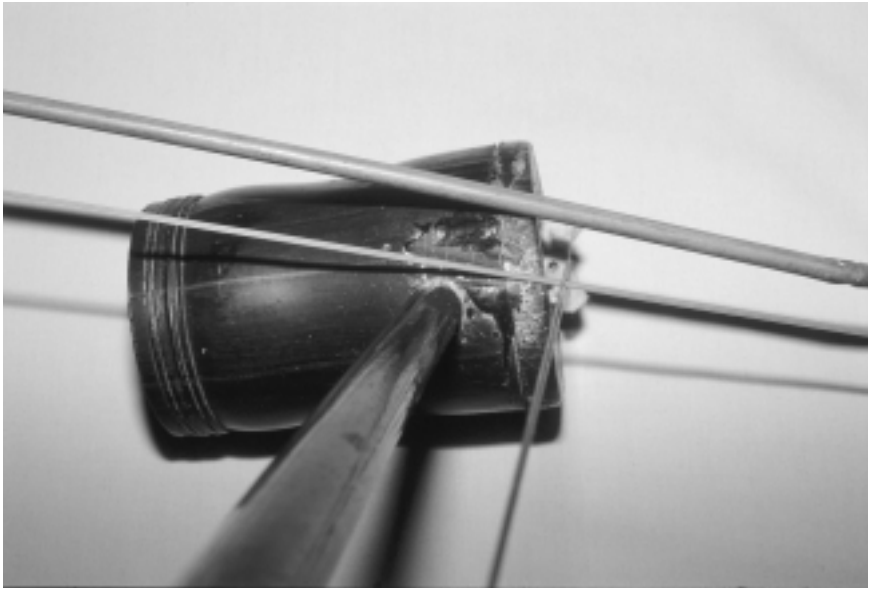

Figure 8. A player's view down the spike of my early *erhu*.

—for example the plucked zithers *qin* and *se*—have been unearthed from tombs as early as the fifth century B.C.[10]

While depictions of *huqin* in the visual arts and early photographs, as well as moving image footage of them being used in performance, are important to understanding their history, a full discussion of these lies outside the scope of the present article.[11] One such source is particularly

10. Examples of such instruments are described in Jenny So, ed., *Music in the Age of Confucius* (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: published by the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery [distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle and London], 2000).

11. Depictions of instruments of the *huqin* family are reproduced and/or discussed in Jonathan Stock, "A Historical Account of the Chinese Two-Stringed Fiddle *Erhu*," *The Galpin Society Journal* 46 (1993): 83–113; Colin Huehns, "Depictions of *Huqin* in the *Dianshizhai*," *Journal of Asian History* 36 (2002), in press; Liu Ling, ed., *A History of Chinese Music in Pictures* (*Zhongguo Yinyueshi Tujian*) (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House [Renmin Yinyue Chubanshe], 1988). Many early photographs are collected in Tuo Xiaotang, ed., *Old Customs of China* (*Zhongguo Jiusu*) (Beijing: Chinese Bookshop [Zhongguo Shudian], 1997).

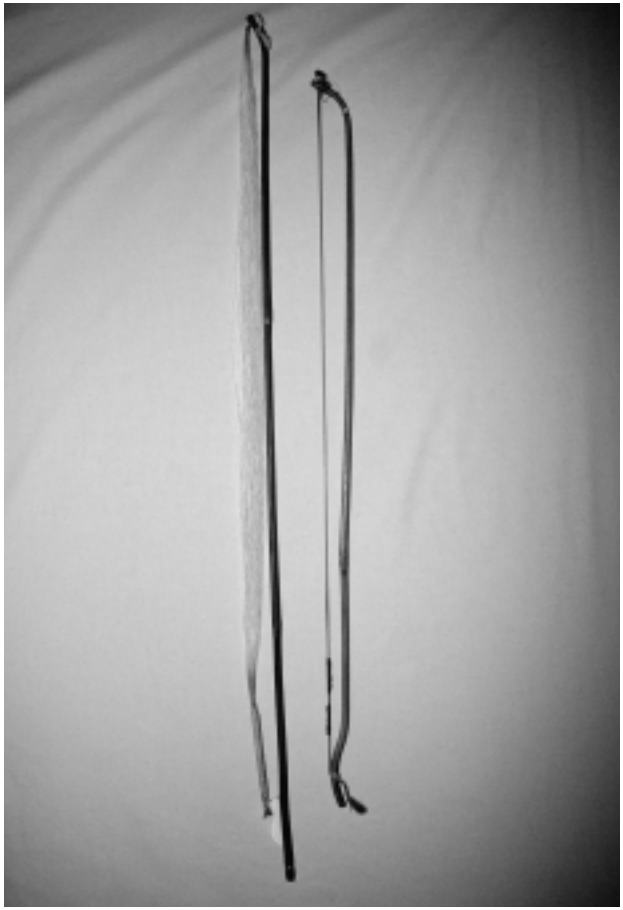

Figure 9. My early and modern *erhu* bows compared; the latter is on the left.

important, however: a 1908 article by Arthur C. Moule[12] provides an accurate and comprehensive account supported by thirteen plates of the principal instrument types in China at the time. Plates X and XI from this article are reproduced here as figures 10 and 11 because they offer as good a guide as any to contemporary practices in making *huqin*.

12. Arthur C. Moule, "A List of the musical and other sound-producing Instruments of the Chinese," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 39 (entire issue, 1908), reprinted with an introduction by Harrison Ryker as *A List of the musical and other sound-producing Instruments of the Chinese* (Buren, The Netherlands: Frits Knuf Publishers, 1989).

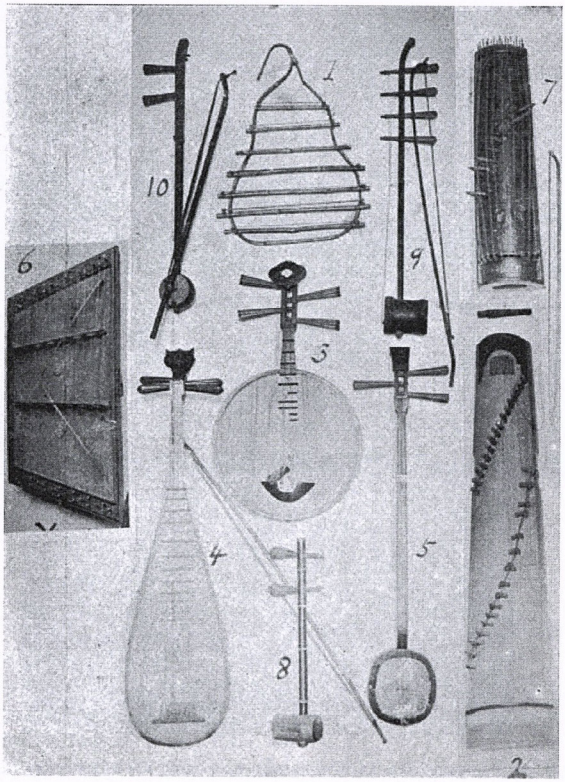

FIGURE 10. Chinese musical instruments as depicted in plate X of Arthur C. Moule, "A List of the musical and other sound-producing Instruments of the Chinese," published as the 1908 issue of the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.* (By permission of the British Library. OIOC.15234.b.6)

Figure 10 includes examples of the contemporary *jinghu, sihu,* and high-voiced *banhu,* respectively numbered 8, 9, and 10, and described as coming "probably from south China." Although the names given in the "explanation" to this plate vary from the modern names for these instruments, they are clearly recognizable for what they are. Figure 11 includes a *jinghu, erhu,* and mid-voiced *banhu,* respectively numbered 4, 5, and 6,

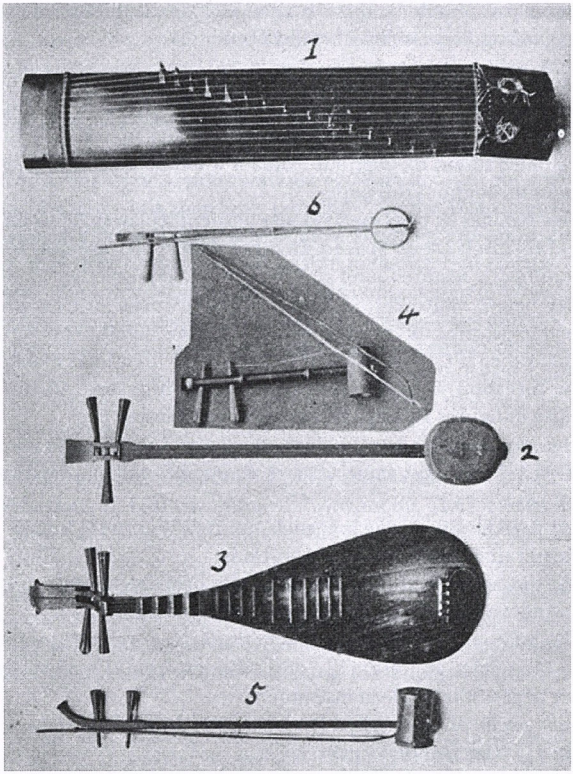

FIGURE 11. Ibid., plate XI. (By permission of the British Library.)

said to come "from Hangchow" (Hangzhou in the modern *pinyin* transliteration). Again, their names as given in the explanation are different from what they would be today.[13]

13. These discrepancies are not important and need not delay us here; what is considerably more interesting is what the photographs show of contemporary practices in instrument making. Suffice to say that the nomenclature for *huqin*—as with much of the modern Chinese language—has settled into its modern pattern only in the period after 1949. The etymology of the various old names for members of this family is extremely complex—different in each pre-1949 text (of which there are many)—and thus beyond the scope of this paper.

Several points should be born in mind here as the discussion develops below regarding *huqin* in British collections:

- Figure 10 shows a *sihu* (no. 9) identified as coming "probably from South China." Today this instrument is considered to be almost exclusively indigenous to Inner Mongolia. The notion that the *sihu* was once found throughout China is a theme that will recur many times throughout this paper.
- This *sihu* has its pegs inserted at a perpendicular angle to the spike and relatively widely spaced. In other words, they are not "inwardly pointing," a feature found at its most marked on the Horniman *sihu* (see below, figure 28). "Inwardly pointing" pegs—a term invented here to describe this phenomenon—are considered to point towards each other if they are angled in such a way that lines extended in the direction in which they point would intersect. All the other *huqin* in figures 10 and 11 have inwardly pointing pegs.
- The *sihu* bow stick has the marked, elegant "early" *huqin* shape of a convex curve most acute towards the point, most tapered towards the heel.
- As it is today, the *banhu* bow stick, no. 10 in figure 10, is thicker and shorter than those of the *sihu* and *erhu*.
- The *jinghu* bow, no. 8 in figure 10, is probably inauthentic—it is simply too long—and can be safely disregarded.
- The bulbous pegs on this instrument, such as are commonly found on old *jinghu*, are distinctive and different from the normally thinner pegs of the modern instrument.
- Both *jinghu* photographed here (no. 8 in figure 10 and no. 4 in figure 11) have bamboo spikes.
- The *erhu* and *banhu* in figure 11 (nos. 5 and 6) are similar to the equivalent modern instruments. However, the placement of the bows of these instruments in the photographs makes it impossible to determine whether these bows have the "early" shape or not.

Huqin represent nearly a third (five out of sixteen) of the instruments photographed in figures 10 and 11. These two plates are the only ones out of a total of thirteen accompanying Moule's article that consist of photographs of stringed instruments; the other plates, which are either photographs of wind and percussion instruments or line drawings of specific instruments, need not concern us here. Certainly, five out of sixteen suggests that *huqin* were relatively widespread among stringed instruments at the time. Even relative to Chinese instruments in general as

included by Moule it is still a high proportion. Similarly, *huqin* constitute a major part of the holdings of Chinese instruments of any sort in all three collections examined below, as is also true for the other European museums I have visited. All this would indicate that *huqin* were relatively common. However, contemporary (late eighteenth- to early twentieth-century) depictions of instruments in the Chinese visual arts tell a completely different story: representations of *huqin* account for only a tiny fraction of these—less than one percent.[14] As the instruments of the rural poor, the beggar class, disreputable singsong girls, and theatrical troupes, they were simply not fashionable to depict; rich patrons did not want to see the lowly *huqin* on the art they commissioned. What is more, and perhaps because of their humble status, *huqin* were also not part of the contemporary rhetoric of symbols which convention dictated could be employed in the visual arts. But *huqin* survive in large numbers in European collections, and this is evidence enough that they must have been relatively common and widespread.

The three museums on which I will focus are the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments (EUCHMI), the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, and the Horniman Museum in London.[15] These three collections are particularly important because they are, by and large, well-documented; most importantly, there is usually a museum acquisition date to provide proof of the minimum age of an instrument.[16] As far as possible, I will account for how the *huqin* in these collections were acquired as well as discussing the physical characteristics of

14. This statistic is based on a search for depictions of *huqin* in the visual arts that has been as wide as possible. For example, I have examined every old illustrated Chinese printed book in the British Library (of which there are many, some containing several hundred illustrations) as well as numerous volumes in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the University Library in Cambridge. My searches both in archives and in books have also included porcelain, jade, ivory, lacquerwork, watercolors, "thousand Buddha" cave murals, and lithographed periodicals. I estimate that for every pre-1949 representation I find, I need to search through several thousand illustrations. So far, I have collected reproductions of around two hundred depictions and old photographs.

15. EUCHMI is a small museum devoted entirely to musical instruments. The Pitt Rivers and Horniman Museums, on the other hand, are major collections of ethnographic artifacts.

16. There are also important collections of old (nineteenth-century) *huqin,* some of which I have examined, not only in the U.K. but also in the U.S., Germany, Spain, France, Holland, and elsewhere. Because many of these collections are much less well-documented than those discussed in this paper, they will be mentioned only in passing, although the results obtained so far from examining them fully support the conclusions presented here.

the instruments themselves.[17] Using the data acquired from examining the instruments from these three collections, I believe that I can now suggest tentative dates of manufacture for any pre-1949 instrument of the *huqin* family, whether it is currently in a European museum, in China, or elsewhere. In order to show how this might be done, the evidence accumulated in this paper will be used at the end to suggest a date of manufacture for my early *erhu*.

The instruments in Edinburgh are discussed first, as they are, for the most part, the oldest—possibly dating from as early as the late eighteenth century. The collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum spans the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and is examined next. The one *huqin* in the Horniman Museum is an extraordinary and possibly unique instrument and is therefore discussed last.

Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments

This museum has a total of five complete *huqin* in its collection that can definitively be dated before 1949 (museum acquisition numbers are given in parentheses after each item): an *erhu*/*gaohu* (439),[18] a mid-voiced *banhu* (435/1), a high-voiced *banhu* (434), a *sihu* (438), and a *jinghu* (441).[19]

These instruments are probably the oldest examples of *huqin* in the British collections examined here, and may well be the oldest surviving in the world (this latter issue is examined below). Although they are not decorated, they are all well-crafted and, by and large, functional players' instruments. Even some of the (presumably) original silk strings still remain on them. They would appear to have first come into the collection in 1858, probably purchased by the founder of EUCHMI, John Donald-

17. In the interests of conservation, the museum curators of these three collections all requested that their instruments not be played. This means that the discussion here can only make suppositions as to what these instruments would have sounded like.

18. The evolution of the *erhu* and *gaohu* as separate entities is one that emerged during the twentieth century. Earlier instruments of this type, normally with smaller soundboxes than the modern *erhu*, can thus be regarded as either *gaohu* or *erhu*.

19. In addition to these five instruments, there are also three other *huqin* in the Edinburgh collection: two *jinghu* (436 and 1253) and an *erhu* (1252). These are not included in the discussion here because they are clearly of a much later vintage and are in a poor state of repair with many parts missing. They are also recent additions to the collection and of uncertain provenance: no. 436 is a loaned item, while nos. 1252 and 1253 were purchased in 1983.

son, who was Professor of Music from 1845 to 1865. His financial transactions survive and include the following three entries:[20]

- Chinese *kin*, purchased by Professor John Donaldson for the Music Classroom, University of Edinburgh, from T. Nisbet, 11 Hanover Street, 25 March 1858 at a sale for 5/-.
- Chinese *kin* purchased by Professor John Donaldson for the Music Classroom, University of Edinburgh, from T. Nisbet, 11 Hanover Street, 25 March 1858 at a sale for 6/-.
- 2 Chinese musical instruments purchased by Professor John Donaldson for the Music Classroom, University of Edinburgh, from Thomas Glen, 2 North Bank Street, 12 May 1858 for 6/-.[21]

How these "*kin*" found their way into the hands of Glen and Nisbet, and why Donaldson bought them, remains a mystery. The main thrust of Donaldson's research involved experiments in the field of musical acoustics, and he collected a large number of scientific instruments related to this endeavor.[22] Perhaps the Chinese instruments and the numerous other non-Western instruments he acquired for the collection were connected with this research, or he may have collected them out of curiosity. As there are other Chinese instruments in addition to *huqin* in the Edinburgh collection, we cannot be certain that the three entries given above refer to *huqin*. The *guqin* (plucked zither), for example, is an instrument perhaps more suited to research into acoustics. Nonetheless, they certainly point towards an intent to include Chinese instruments in

20. Details of these entries were provided to me by Dr. Arnold Myers, Director and Curator of EUCHMI. They are to be found in Donaldson's financial transactions recorded in Edinburgh University Library Special Collections DA46 (Faculty of Music and Reid Trust), Box 11 (Music Classroom accounts).

21. "*Kin*" is an alternative and now obsolete transliteration of the Chinese word (or character) "*qin*" of "*huqin*" meaning "musical instrument." The "Music Classroom" is now the Reid Concert Hall and the adjacent musical instrument museum. These buildings were built by Donaldson for lectures and demonstrations. Nisbet was an auctioneer probably dealing in material acquired from house clearance sales. Thomas Glen was a bagpipe-maker and dealer in musical instruments. His account book survives but does not contain any reference to the sale or purchase of Chinese instruments. (I am indebted to Dr. Myers for all this information.)

22. This aspect of Donaldson's work is discussed in Christopher D. S. Field, "A Musical Apparatus of somewhat Complex and Intricate Mechanism," *Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies* 24 (2000): 6–51; and Christopher D. S. Field, "John Donaldson and the Teaching of Acoustics at the University of Edinburgh in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Institute of Acoustics* 19/5 (1997): bk. 2, pp. 509–520.

a new collection of musical instruments. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that most, if not all, of the five *huqin* found today in EUCHMI were acquired during Donaldson's tenure as Professor. But there is also evidence to suggest that four of these instruments date from an even earlier period—from the late eighteenth century—as will be examined in more detail below.[23]

The extraordinary feature of this collection is that these five instruments almost exactly comprise one each of the main *huqin* types used in modern performance and are thus, in fact, a set.[24] Moreover, the five EUCHMI *huqin* belong to exactly the same instrument types as the six included by Moule in figures 10 and 11. All this suggests that the Edinburgh collection was probably assembled deliberately to represent the main types of *huqin*, an unsurprising notion considering the scientific bent of Donaldson's mind. It also indicates that the main members of the modern *huqin* clan are the same as pertained in the mid-nineteenth century.

Banhu. The similarity in height and overall size between the EUCHMI high-voiced *banhu* and my own modern instrument of the same type is startling (see figures 12 and 13); differences between them are minor. The most important of these concerns their bows: that of the museum's instrument has a pronounced "early" shape and is also substantially shorter than its modern counterpart. Indeed, all the bows of the Edinburgh instruments have the same "early" profile; and as these are the earliest *huqin* I have had the opportunity to examine, the tentative conclusion can be suggested that the shape of *huqin* bows has, in general, gradually flattened over the past two centuries. This notion is confirmed by the bows of the instruments in the Pitt Rivers Museum discussed below and also by those in other European collections as well as by depic-

23. Plate XLVI of A. J. Hipkins, *Musical Instruments, Rare and Unique* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1888), clearly depicts the EUCHMI *sihu*. Five "Chinese fiddles" comprised exhibit 485 in the *Special Exhibition of Ancient Musical Instruments* at the Science and Art Museum, South Kensington, 1872, lent, according to page 43 of the Exhibition Catalogue (London, 1872), by Professor Oakeley, Edinburgh University. All this confirms the existence of five *huqin* in the Edinburgh collection by the 1870s.

24. I say "almost exactly" because whereas today we would expect to have examples of three different instruments—a *gaohu*, *erhu*, and *zhonghu*—here there is only one, the *erhu*/*gaohu*, hereafter called an *erhu*. This in itself develops and confirms the notion that the distinctions between these three types represent a much more recent stage in *huqin* evolution.

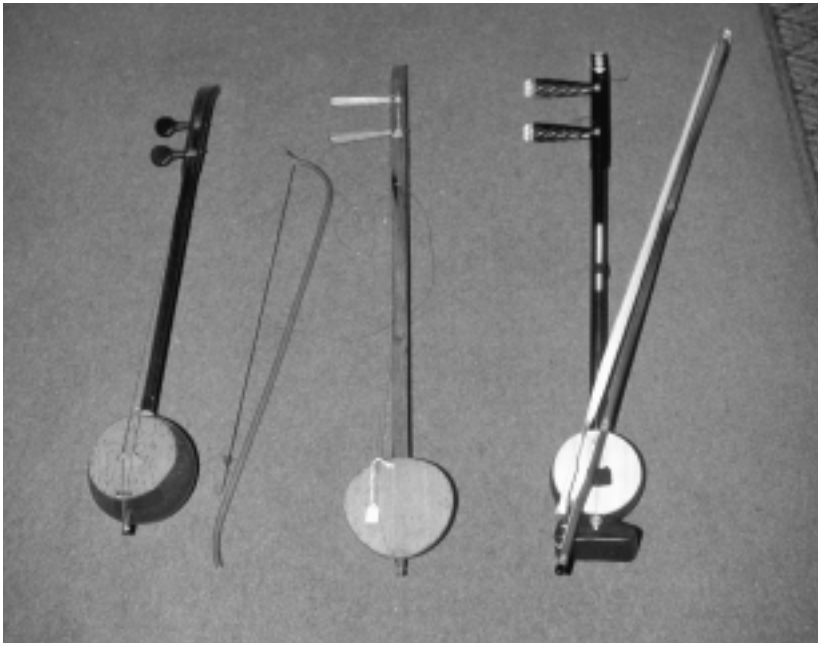

Figure 12. Front views of (from left to right) the mid- and high-voiced EUCHMI *banhu* 435/1 and 434) and my high-voiced *banhu*, made in the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing.

tions in the visual arts. As the bow on my early *erhu* is considerably flatter that those of the EUCHMI instruments, this suggests that it was made in a much later period than they were.

The aperture at the rear of the Edinburgh high-voiced *banhu* is smaller than that on the corresponding modern instrument. The latter also has a wooden block acting as a stand affixed to the base of the soundbox, a feature absent on the EUCHMI instrument (and indeed on all the *huqin* from the three collections examined here and also my early *erhu*). The pegs of the museum's high-voiced *banhu* are inwardly pointing, as they are on all the instruments in this collection except the mid-voiced *banhu*, in contrast to the pegs on my instruments, all of which —both modern and early—are perpendicular to the stem. This suggests that insertion of pegs at right angles to the spike is a later evolution in *huqin* design. It also places the manufacture of my early *erhu* after the introduction of this innovation.

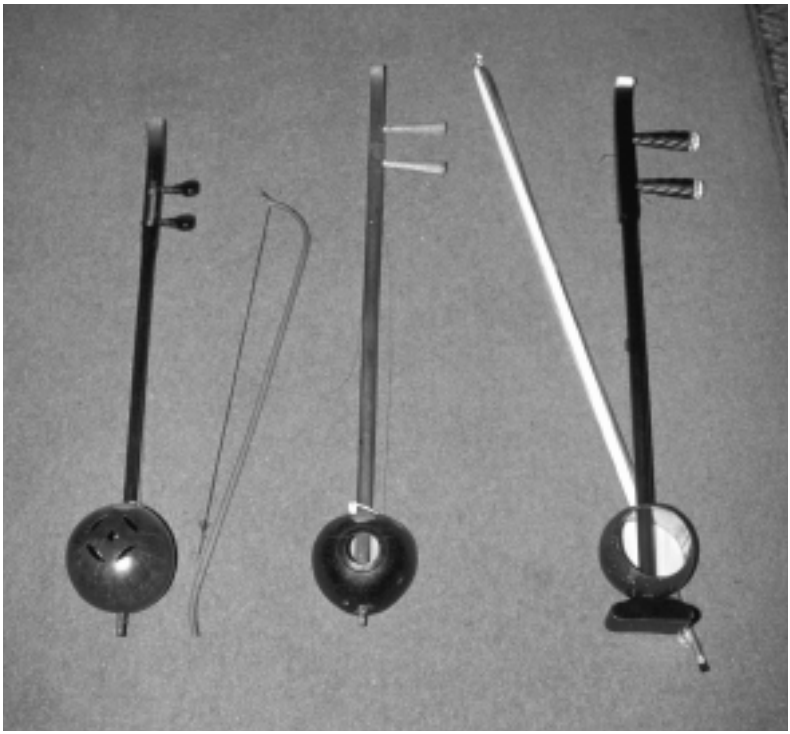

Figure 13. Rear views of the instruments in figure 12.

The EUCHMI mid-voiced *banhu* is the exception to this pattern in having two violin-type pegs (probably inauthentic), which, together with other evidence also discussed below, suggests that it may be a later addition to the collection. The bridge surviving with this instrument is comparatively large and has two small feet, in contrast to the design of modern *huqin* bridges (on whatever instrument) which are much smaller and usually have only one large and well-spread foot.[25] I believe that the

25. Modern snakeskin instruments (with the exception of the *sihu*) usually have a wooden bridge with one well-spread foot and a hole in the center. On a minority of modern instruments the hole is extended with a cut downwards to separate the one foot into two feet. Modern *banhu* bridges (also made of wood) almost invariably have only one foot, itself narrower than that of the snakeskin instruments; they also have no hole. The modern *sihu* bridge is of split cane with one wide foot (players cut their own bridges).

Edinburgh bridge is not authentic, because bridges with two small feet presuppose a soundpost/bassbar arrangement and this instrument, like all *huqin*, possesses neither. Modern *banhu* bridges are normally placed much higher on the face of the soundbox than is the case on this instrument, whose placement of the bridge in the center is probably inauthentic. On the other hand, the "nut" over which the strings pass at the base of the soundbox face is probably original. The rear of the soundbox has only five soundholes: four eyes around a central hole. This compares with the much more complex carvings of a dragon surrounded by clouds on my modern instrument (see figure 14). Both soundboxes, however, are made out of the same type of coconut shell or gourd, worked smooth and then carved appropriately. Alone of all the old *banhu* examined in this paper, the EUCHMI high-voiced *banhu* posseses, stuck to its spike, the wooden block equivalent of the *qianjin* over which the strings pass.

The woods used for the Edinburgh instruments are not easy to identify. Modern *huqin* use heavy, usually close-grained, dark-colored tropical hardwoods and are varnished. Three types of woods are used: "*hong*" ("red"), "*wu*" ("black"), and padouk. Broadly speaking, *erhu* made from padouk tend to be the most expensive, those of *wu* wood are of the middle grade, and those of *hong* wood the cheapest. My modern *erhu* and *sihu* (see figures 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9 above, and figures 16, 17, and 28 below) are made from padouk, my modern *zhonghu* and *banhu* from *hong* wood (padouk is not normally used in the manufacture of *banhu*), and my *gaohu* from *wu* wood. On all these modern *huqin*, varnish is applied so thickly that the grain of the wood can only just be perceived.

By comparison, with the exception of the mid-voiced *banhu*, the EUCHMI instruments are mostly made from light-colored, open-grained, oak-like woods, and appear only to have been sealed with oil or very lightly varnished. They are all much lighter to hold than their modern equivalents. These would appear to be design features and not just the result of using the types of wood most conveniently available. Lighter instruments presuppose fewer left-hand position changes, as only a heavy instrument is sufficiently stable for frequent position changes to be successfully accomplished. Modern *erhu* technique, with its constant changes in position, was an innovation of Liu Tianhua and others in the 1920s and 1930s, and heavier, reformed *erhu* date from after this period. My early *erhu* is of the lighter kind, closer to the Edinburgh instruments in weight and "feel" when held, suggesting that it predates the Liu Tianhua reforms.

Figure 14. Rear view of my modern mid-voiced *banhu*, an instrument made in the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing.

In terms of wood type, aside from the gourd or coconut shell resonating chamber most of the rest of the EUCHMI mid-voiced *banhu* is made from *hong* wood, once more suggesting that it is a subsequent addition to the set. My early *erhu* has been varnished, indicating that it is of a still later date. If we examine the tips (finials) of the Edinburgh instruments, we find that all except the mid-voiced *banhu* employ the same tip, colored the same lighter shade than the rest of the instrument—still more proof that these four belong to a set.

The woods used for the faces of the soundboxes of the EUCHMI *banhu* are different from those used for the rest of the instrument, as is also the case with my two *banhu*. The faces of the Edinburgh instruments

are, according to the catalog entry, of a lightly-colored *tung* wood, which appears to have been lightly oiled (possibly by a museum conservator), unlike the faces of my instruments, which are completely untreated, though they are also made from a light-colored, close-grained wood completely different from the dark-colored *hong* wood used for the other parts of the instrument.

Unlike any other *huqin* bows in the three British collections examined here, most of the EUCHMI bows employ a metal clasp around which the bow hair is clipped—in other words a proto-heel (see figure 15). This makes removing the bow hair from the stick and placing it between the strings extremely convenient. This proto-heel is thus clearly not a modern invention, and, by implication, not necessarily a design feature borrowed from the violin.[26] This clasp is not present on the EUCHMI *sihu* bow; presumably it has disappeared over time.[27]

***Erhu* and *sihu*.** The EUCHMI *erhu* and *sihu* (figures 16–18) are essentially identical except for the number of pegs they possess and were clearly made by the same workshop. Nowadays, as already discussed above, *erhu* and *sihu* are discrete entities, played by different ethnic groups (Han and Mongol respectively), performing different repertories, and made in different locations. Evidently this was not so when the Edinburgh instruments were made.

Both have the smaller, cylindrical soundbox with a circular face typical of the early *erhu;* this soundbox is identical in size on both instruments, and in each case has been precision-tooled with a lathe from a single piece of wood and then painted or stained black. In the rear, on both instruments, there is a crude grill (see figure 18) instead of the attractive

26. This is the most probable explanation, even though there is much documentary evidence available to indicate that Western instruments had been brought to China by seventeenth and eighteenth century Jesuits.

27. Here, as is often the case, there is no guarantee that a bow was made at the same time as the instrument with which it is paired. However, because *huqin* bow hair is inserted between the strings, there is often an intrinsically closer relationship of bow to instrument than there is with, for example, members of the violin family, even if, as with most the instruments examined here, the strings have long since broken. Certainly the stylistic features of the EUCHMI bows strongly suggest that they are the original ones belonging to the instruments in the collection; furthermore, there is no reason to doubt that bow and instrument are from the same original source, and every reason to expect that a bow made later by a museum curator would be extremely unlikely to match quite so closely the bow curves evinced by contemporary depictions of *huqin*.

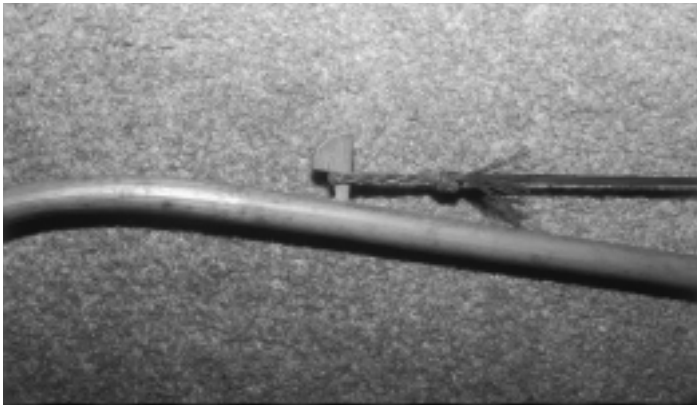

Figure 15. The bow-clasp at the heel of the EUCHMI *banhu* bow (435/2).

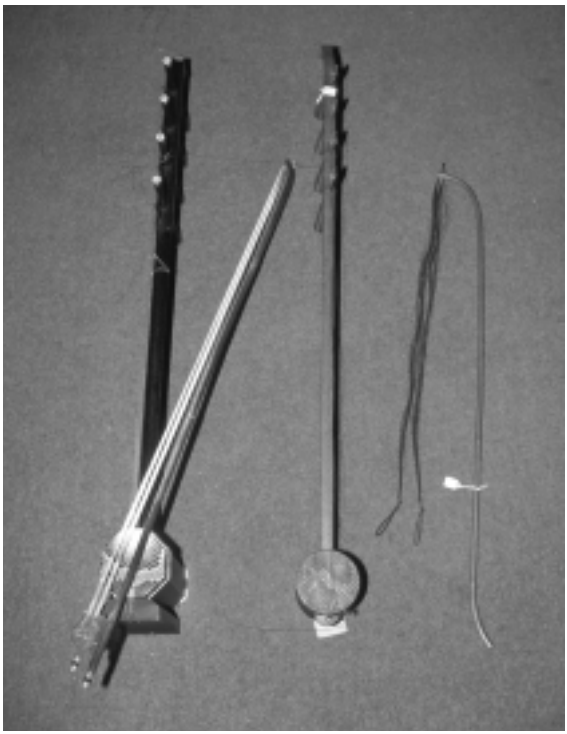

Figure 16. Front views of (from left to right) my modern *sihu* (made in the workshop of Duan Tingjun in Hohhot in Inner Mongolia) and the EUCHMI *sihu* (438).

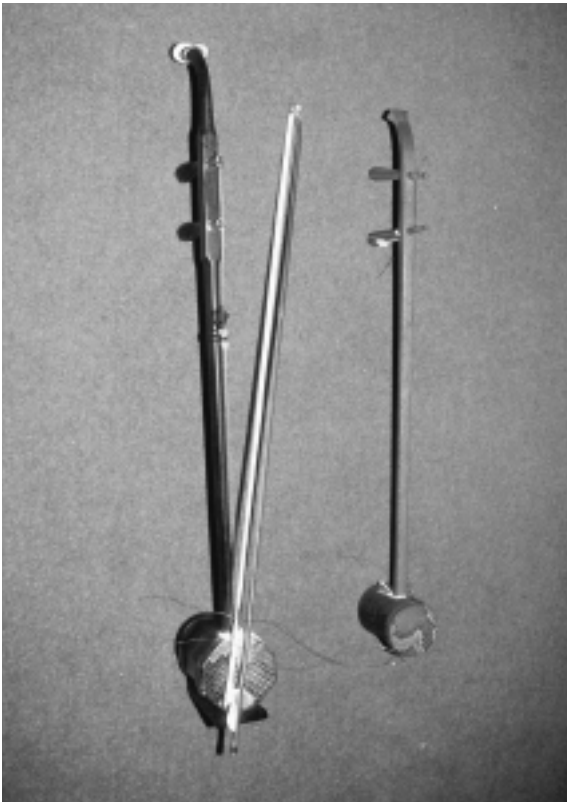

Figure 17. Front views of (from left to right) my modern *erhu* (made in the workshop of Lü Jiehua in Beijing) and the EUCHMI *erhu* (439).

wooden lattice structure of my early *erhu* (see above, figure 7). Because the shrinkage rates of the soundbox and grill are different, this has resulted in the *sihu* (but not the *erhu*) soundbox cracking, and this instrument is now completely unplayable. It is the only one of the EUCHMI *huqin* which is in such a condition—all the others look as if they could be played.

Jinghu. The EUCHMI *jinghu*, like modern specimens, has a bamboo soundbox, but unlike them its spike is made of wood instead of the bamboo normal today (see figure 19). It has the same convex "early" bow and inwardly pointing pegs, which, like those of the high-voiced *banhu*,

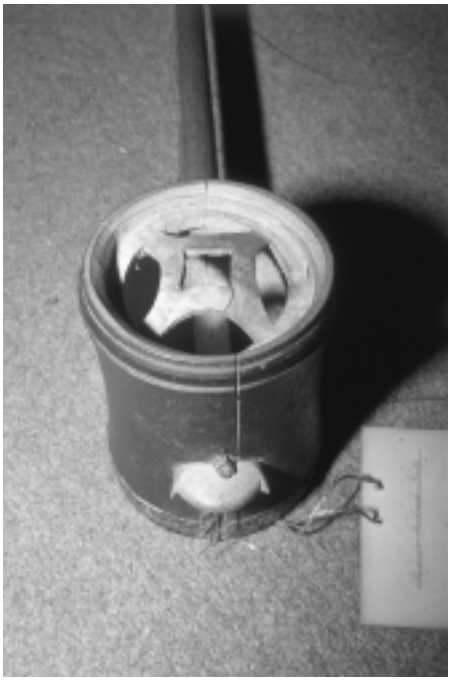

Figure 18. Close-up of the rear of the soundbox of the EUCHMI *sihu* (438).

were made by slicing along the pegs, unlike those of the EUCHMI *erhu* and *sihu,* which were made by cutting grooves along the length of the peg. This is proof, if any more were needed, that the instruments of the Edinburgh collection—four of them at least—were manufactured together and constitute a set.

On the *jinghu* bow, a single piece of string replaces the typically thin and rounded sheaf of horsehair that is found on the bow of my early *erhu* (see above, figure 9) and also on the EUCHMI *erhu, banhu,* and *sihu*[28] bows. We may never know whether this string was part of the original equipment of this *jinghu,* which is much older than my early *erhu,* but if it was (and there is no reason why it was not), this would indicate that the use of horsehair was not universal at the time these instruments were made, and that it may only have become more widespread as a later de-

28. The *sihu* bow has two sheaves. Only one bow survives for use with either of the *banhu,* presumably the high-voiced *banhu,* as indicated by its pronounced "early" shape.

velopment, perhaps from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Interestingly, in this context, the caption to the very first depiction of an instrument of the *huqin* family, included in a musical treatise (*Yue Shu*) by Chen Yang written in Kaifeng in 1101, says that [instead of horsehair] bamboo "strips" are inserted between the strings and stroke them.[29] There are to this day various bows used for South and Southeast Asian instruments that also use strips of bamboo for this purpose. Unfortunately, we have too little evidence from the period preceding the nineteenth century—either in the visual arts or of actual surviving instruments—to press further the conclusion that the universal use of horsehair in China to stroke the strings was a later development, but this notion may well have some substance. Although horsehair is an ideal material for this function, as it is pliant and "absorbs" rosin easily, it may also have been expensive and difficult to obtain, particularly for the dispossessed rural poor and beggar class normally associated with *huqin*.

Possible late eighteenth-century provenance. The EUCHMI *sihu* has a small paper label stuck on it just inside the rear rim of the soundbox bearing the words "*tay woocum*" written in ink. A similar label with the words "*ee woocum*" is found in the same place in the EUCHMI *erhu*. These names bear no relation to any of the Mandarin[30] Chinese names I have ever encountered for instruments of this family, and at first I disregarded them as a distracting red herring. Then, a reviewer for this Journal kindly pointed out that "*tay woocum*" was a plausible Cantonese romanization for the *pinyin* "*da huqin*," "*da*" meaning "big"; "*ee*" is probably

29. The relevant page of this treatise is reproduced in Ling, ed., *A History of Chinese Music in Pictures*, 125.

30. There are many different forms of modern Chinese. Unless otherwise indicated, the Chinese words used in this paper are in the standard modern Chinese of the People's Republic of China known as "*putonghua*" (which translates as "normal speech"), a modified version of the pre-1949 Beijing dialect. In English, "*putonghua*" is usually referred to as "Mandarin" Chinese. The word "Mandarin" is a romanization of the Mandarin phrase "*Man da ren*," which means "an important official of the Manzu ruling class." In Imperial China of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) the language used among this elite was "Mandarin," itself also a precursor of the modern *putonghua*. "Cantonese" is the English term for a regional form of Chinese—probably the most important of these—spoken in the city of Canton (now usually known as Guangzhou) and the surrounding area (including Hong Kong), which is usually unintelligible to Mandarin speakers such as myself. Although Mandarin and Cantonese are almost identical in grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of language structure, their pronunciation of the same characters is usually completely different. In other words, the same written Chinese can normally be read either in Mandarin or Cantonese in two entirely different ways.

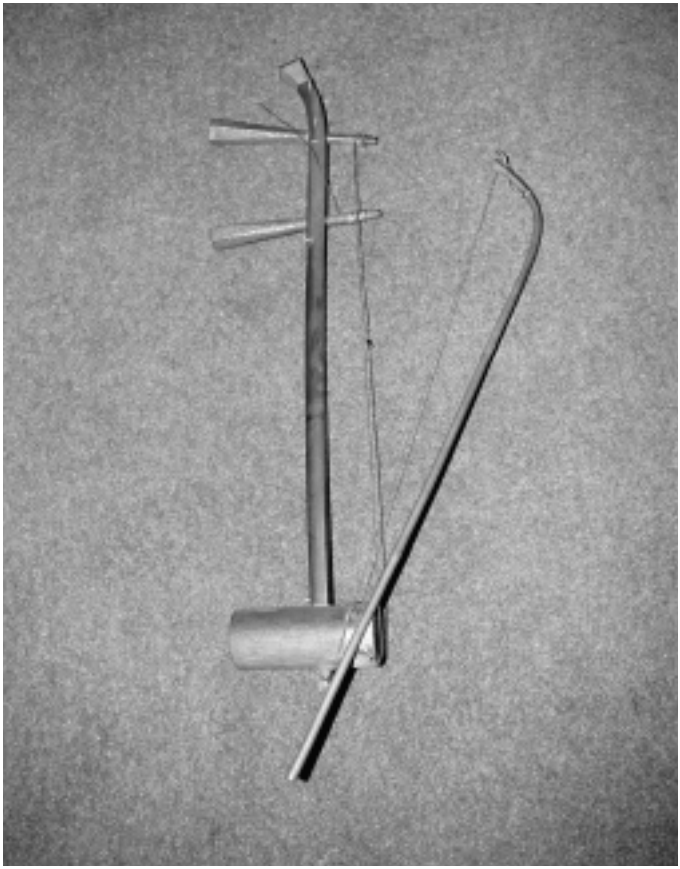

Figure 19. The EUCHMI *jinghu* (441).

Cantonese for the *pinyin* "*er*" of "*erhu*" meaning "two." A number of native Cantonese speakers whom I consulted confirmed this to be the case. None of the modern Cantonese dictionaries I consulted employed this romanization for these words, a transliteration which must then be obsolete, or more probably idiosyncratic to this particular concordance. But before learning this, on examining a drawing covering the whole of folios 12v and 13r in British Library manuscript add. 33931 (the upper half of folio 13r is reproduced here in figure 20), I had already noticed an interesting coincidence in connection with this terminology which may yet shed light on the provenance of the EUCHMI instruments.

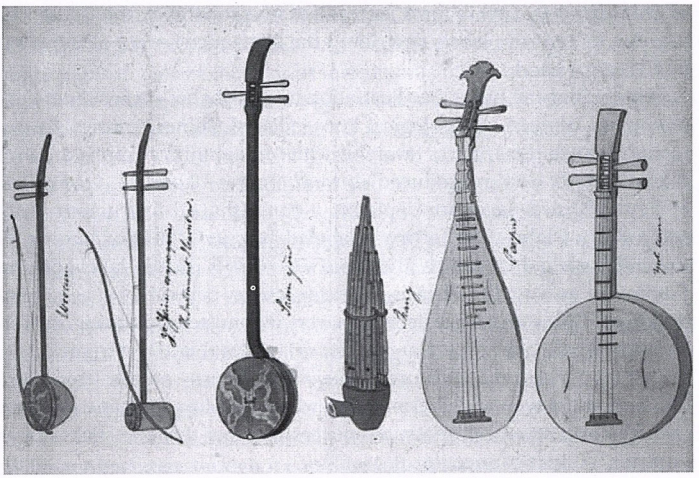

FIGURE 20. British Library manuscript add. 33931, folio 13r, top half. Drawings probably by an unnamed Chinese artist and labeled by William Alexander. (By permission of the British Library.)

Add. 33931 is a collection of drawings and watercolors by William Alexander, Thomas and William Daniell, John Barrow, and others depicting aspects of China and Chinese life. William Alexander was an official artist on the first British Embassy to China in 1792–1794; John Barrow was private secretary to the Earl of Macartney, the first Ambassador. The majority of the paintings and drawings in this manuscript have clear provenance connected with the first British Embassy; however, the drawing on folios 12r and 13v, unlike most of the several dozen in this manuscript, is not signed, and thus the artist who drew it cannot be established with certainty. But as the proportions of the instruments are all accurately reproduced, and there are Chinese characters drawn correctly, fluently, and elegantly on the large bell[31] depicted on the left face

31. The characters in question are a well-known four-character phrase *guo tai min an* which roughly translates as "(when) the realm is secure (as Mount Tai), (then) the people are (will be) at peace." This is a suitable epithet to carve onto a large bell, the chief apparatus for marking the hours of the day in an old Chinese city, and a fixture which represents the solidity and permanence of the ruling dynasty.

of this drawing (not shown here), in all probability the artist was Chinese, even if the labels describing the instruments were all supplied by a Western hand.

It is certainly an attractive illustration and probably encapsulates contemporary Western organological knowledge of Chinese musical instruments. As such it compares favorably with Moule's photographs of more than a century later, reproduced above in figures 10 and 11. On the left of figure 20 two *huqin* are depicted, a *banhu*-shaped instrument (left) and a *gaohu* (right). The former is labeled "*woocum*" (but not "*tay*" or "*ee woocum*"), spelled in exactly the same way as it is on the labels on the Edinburgh instruments. This is an extraordinary coincidence, as romanizations of Chinese of all dialects were very inconsistent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Concordances such as this are extremely rare in contemporary nomenclature of *huqin* in Western sources (this is the only one of its type and the only one which employs Cantonese I have ever found in several dozen such sources), so that this one sticks out as implying a direct connection.

Further examination of this drawing confirmed that the *JAMIS* reviewer was correct about the meaning of "*tay woocum.*" There are conclusive concordances with other occurrences elsewhere in this manuscript of the syllables "*tay*" and "*cum*" meaning "*da*" and "*qin*" respectively: for example, the four-stringed plucked instrument known in *pinyin* as a "*yueqin*" is named here as a "*yue cum*"; although the *banhu* here is not labeled as "*tay,*" on the left face of this drawing (not reproduced here) a "large" bell and a "large" drum are so labeled. This "*cum*" of "*yue cum*" is the only other occurrence of this syllable on this drawing. Confusingly, the *guqin* depicted on the left face is not labeled in Cantonese "*cum*" as one might expect, but rather is named in Mandarin "*Ching,*" presumably an alternative version of "*qin.*" However, this tallies with the notion of *guqin* being an instrument of the ruling class for whom Mandarin was the lingua franca, and Cantonese being the language of the proletariat for whom *huqin* and *yueqin* were representative instruments. Unfortunately, the label for the *gaohu* next to the *banhu* named "*woocum*" is not completely legible, but is perhaps "*ye-Yeine* or *yee yuni*" (the words "or *yee yuni*" have been crossed through). However, the phrase "The Instrument I learnt on" (in English) is clearly legible next to this, which adds an interesting perspective on the extent to which whoever labeled these instruments was prepared to go in order to understand Chinese music.

On page 315 of his book *Travels in China*, published in London in 1804, John Barrow tells us that "An English gentleman in Canton took some pains to collect the various instruments of the country [China], of which the annexed plate is a representation, but his catalogue is not complete."[32] The "annexed plate" is an engraving virtually identical to folios 12r and 13v of add. 33931, but with one crucial difference: the Chinese names have been omitted and are replaced by English names, with the two *huqin* both being described as "two-stringed violins."

Assuming that the drawing in add. 33931 precedes the engraving and not vice-versa (which is by far the most logical interpretation), this would date it to before 1804, presumably to the period 1792–1794, when John Barrow and William Alexander were in China with the Earl of Macartney's expedition. Presumably also, this drawing was made in Canton of the instruments kept by the "English gentleman," labeled, then taken back to London where it was used as the blueprint for the engraving in *Travels in China*. The labels are undoubtedly written by a Western hand, probably William Alexander, though it could be John Barrow.[33]

With all this in mind, there are only three likely explanations for the concordance of "*woocum*" on the labels of the EUCHMI instruments and on the drawing in add. 33931: either both were named from a common contemporary source (perhaps a dictionary); or the Edinburgh instruments were labeled "*tay* [or *"ee"*] *woocum*" based on an identification made using the drawing in add. 33931; or the drawing depicts instruments labeled "*tay* [or *"ee"*] *woocum*" and was annotated accordingly (and somewhere along the line the "*tay*" and *"ee"* were lost). The first explanation seems unlikely, since after investigating all the contemporaneous

32. John Barrow, *Travels in China* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804), 315 (the plate depicting the musical instruments is inserted between pages 314 and 315).

33. Other folios in add. 33931 are described and signed by William Alexander and John Barrow. The British library also possesses several large volumes that contain the complete original watercolors (of which there are many hundreds) painted and annotated by William Alexander while with the First British Embassy to China (classmarks: OIOC.WD.959–961). These sketches also contain two depictions of *huqin*, one by William Alexander that is the first definite representation of *huqin* by a Western artist (OIOC.WD.961.168), and one labeled by William Alexander as "drawn by a native of China" (OIOC.WD.959.65). The *huqin* in the first example is painted with considerably less accuracy than those in add. 33931, thus confirming the likelihood that the more faithful drawings in this manuscript are by a Chinese hand. While important to a discussion of the history of *huqin*, a full account of the depictions in OIOC.WD.959–961 is beyond the scope of this paper.

dictionaries of Chinese into a Western language in the British Library (and there are quite a few) I failed to find a romanization of Chinese characters consistent with "*tay*" or "*ee woocum*." The second hypothesis seems even less plausible: the manuscript would have to have been easily available for consultation, an extremely unlikely scenario compared with the likelihood of using Barrow's engraving instead, the result of which would have been labeling the instruments "two-stringed violins." (Barrow died in 1848 at the age of eighty-four; add. 33931 was inherited by his son, also named John Barrow, who presented all thirty-seven folios of it to the British Museum on November 3, 1890.)[34]

This leaves the third explanation as the most plausible. Perhaps the Chinese artist was asked to name the instruments he had drawn, which, as an artisan, he did partly in his native Cantonese rather than the Mandarin of the foreign Manzu ruling class. As *huqin* were the instruments of the social class to which he belonged, for "*huqin*" he used the word "*woocum*," and this word was written down on the drawing in the same spelling as on the instruments. This is a neat theory that does fit all the facts, although it also still presents many unresolved problems.[35] But if true, it means that the EUCHMI *huqin* (with the probable exception of the mid-voiced *banhu*) are the very ones which the "English gentleman in Canton" had in his collection. John Barrow, passing through Canton, would have had them drawn, and then had this drawing annotated according to the labels on the instruments. Subsequently, these instruments somehow found their way into the hands of Glen and Nesbit, and later still were bought by Donaldson. All this would mean that these four

34. The first folio of add. 33931 bears the following inscription: "This collection of Original Drawings made by Alexander: and by Mr. Barrow (afterward Sir John Barrow Bart.) and Capn Parish RA [Royal Artillery] is to be sent to the British Museum at my death. [signed] John Barrow, 25th February 1857 [then below is added] Presented 3rd November 1890. [signed] John Barrow."

35. Why are both *huqin* drawn with snakeskin faces when the one on the left is in shape a *banhu* and the one on the right a *gaohu*? Are there any other concordances between the labels on add. 33931 and labels stuck on other instruments? Why is the *banhu* depicted without a *qianjin* or without the block which usually replaces the *qianjin* on the modern version of this instrument? (This block is clearly visible on Moule's two photographs of *banhu* in figures 10 and 11, though is absent on all the examples of this instrument in the three British collections examined here, with the exception of the EUCHMI high-voiced *banhu*.) Why are the bridges on both instruments clearly depicted with two small feet when this design is unsuitable to the basic *huqin* acoustical function? Why are there no proto-heels on the bows depicted such as are found on those in the Edinburgh collection? It is, at best, a tenuous link.

EUCHMI *huqin* are at least older than 1792, which may make them the oldest *huqin* in existence in the world today for whose age there is any documentary proof.[36]

Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

The eleven instruments in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford that are definitely Chinese *huqin* are listed in table 2 below, together with their museum accession numbers.[37] I have also numbered and labeled the instruments myself (*gaohu* I, *gaohu* II, and so on) to facilitate distinguishing them in the following discussion. Thanks to the excellent documentation at the museum, it is possible to determine the provenance for each instrument much more precisely than is the case with the *huqin* of the other two collections examined in this paper. Photographs of some of the Oxford instruments are reproduced in figures 21–25.

Unlike the Edinburgh instruments, which with one exception are unified in style and of a similar provenance, the Oxford instruments are made in a variety of styles and come from different sources and decades. Notably, there is no *erhu* in the collection, just the two *gaohu;* there is also a *sihu,* again not from Inner Mongolia, and two *banhu* of different sorts. The total of six *jinghu* may reflect that these instruments are the smallest of the *huqin* family, and thus the easiest for a foreign visitor to carry home. In table 2 these instruments are listed in the order they were accessioned by the Pitt Rivers Museum (the first four digits of the catalog

36. Three instruments of the *huqin* family in the Museum of the Decorative Arts in Madrid (museum nos. 24663, 24664, and 24668[A + B]) may have a provenance even older than the EUCHMI instruments; they are said to have come into Spain in the late eighteenth century. While the documentation to substantiate this is far from watertight, and is something I intend to look into more closely in the future, it is worth noting here that the one bow that survives with these three instruments is of extremely pronounced "early" shape, more so than even the bows of the EUCHMI instruments. All this confirms yet again that the flattening of the typical *huqin* bow has been a gradual process over two centuries which, in the end, has produced the slightly concave bow commonly in use today. (I am grateful to Dr. Arnold Myers at EUCHMI for introducing me to these Spanish instruments; pictures of them and details as to their provenance are to be found in Cristina Bordas Ibáñez, *Instrumentos Musicales en Colecciones Españolas* [Madrid: Museos de Titularidad Estatal. Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1999], 1:168–169.)

37. There are also one or two instruments in the Pitt Rivers Museum, possibly cousins of Chinese *huqin,* whose style and provenance clearly indicate that they are of a non-Chinese origin, which are not included here as the link is considered too tenuous.

Table 2. *Huqin* in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

Instrument	Acquisition number	Provenance according to museum catalog
banhu (I)	1884.113.37	Catalog card entry: "bought in a Joss house, Canton, 1859"
gaohu (I)	1884.113.38.1–2	Probably the HMS *Challenger* expedition 1872–1876*
jinghu (I)	1886.1.388.1	Comes from the Ramsden Collection which was purchased by the University of Oxford in 1878; transferred to the Pitt Rivers Museum (via the Museum of Natural History and the Ashmolean) by 1885
sihu	1891.50.43 [1–2]	Purchased from J. S. Noldwritt in 1891; the catalog entry simply records that this instrument comes from China
jinghu (II)	1896.62.182 [1–2]	Bought from R. T. Turley Esq. in 1896; originally collected in Mukden in Manchuria (now modern Shenyang in Liaoning province in China)
banhu (II)	1906.26.1 [1–2]	Bought from Robert Shelford in 1906
jinghu (III)	1909.32.29 [1–2]	Bought from Miss E. C. Bell in 1909, who collected the specimen while in China and Japan 1908–1909
jinghu (IV)	1938.34.613	Bought by Henry Balfour in 1905; bequeathed to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1939
jinghu (V)	1938.34.614	Bought by Henry Balfour in 1905 from the Taphouse collection; bequeathed to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1939
jinghu (VI)	1938.34.615	Bequeathed by Henry Balfour to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1939
gaohu (II)	1938.34.619	Bought by Henry Balfour from the Chittenden collection in 1907; bequeathed to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1939

*The 48-volume report of this important geographic, scientific, and oceanographic research expedition (Thomas Henry Tizard, *Narrative Cruise of HMS Challenger; with a general account of the scientific results of the expedition* [London: John Murray, 1885–]) appears to contain no record of collecting musical instruments.

Figure 21. The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, *jinghu* (V) (1938.36.614).

number indicate the year of accession); all date from the last half of the nineteenth century or first few years of the twentieth.

Collected from a variety of sources, the Oxford instruments show correspondingly different characteristics. Except for the *sihu*, *jinghu* (II), and *jinghu* (III), all have, at least to some extent, the bulbous pegs often found on early members of the *huqin* family noted above in the context of the *jinghu* in figure 10 (though none of the Edinburgh instruments exhibited this characteristic). The *sihu*, *jinghu* (II), and *jinghu* (III) all have sliced pegs like the EUCHMI high-voiced *banhu* and *jinghu;* in the case of the Oxford *sihu*, this slicing is particularly crude. With the exception of *jinghu* (II) and (III), where the pegs are perpendicular to the spike, all other surviving pegs in this collection point inwards. This, together with the evidence of photographs (see above, figures 10 and 11) and in the visual arts, suggests that inwardly-pointed pegs as a method of

Figure 22. The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, *banhu* (I) (1884.113.37).

manufacture died out around 1900, or perhaps a little later, thus suggesting a date subsequent to this for the manufacture of my early *erhu* (which has pegs perpendicular to the spike).

Jinghu (IV), (V), and (VI) are virtually identical (for *jinghu* (V) see figure 21), even having the same label stuck on all three by the shop that produced them. It reads (in translation): "This instrument was made by the long-established 'golden listening' shop. We do not have any subsidiary branches. If other shops should dare to produce counterfeits of our products, then they are thieves, brigands, tarts, and whores!"[38] *Gaohu* (II) also has a label (from a different shop and less aggressive in

38. See the glossary at the end of this paper for the original Chinese of this label.

Figure 23. Rear view of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, *banhu* (II) (1906.26.1 [1–2]).

tone) simply extolling the virtues of the instrument and the shop where it was made. In the late nineteenth-century satirical lithographed pictorial magazine *Dianshizhai*, published in Shanghai,[39] we have a picture of just what such an instrument shop might have looked like (figure 26, at the far right of the picture). Instruments can be seen hanging up; there is a *sheng* (a Chinese type of mouth organ with pipes) depicted on the shop sign, and a *huqin* player is playing in the doorway to the shop, perhaps to attract customers or perhaps for his own amusement. All this bespeaks a culture of musical instrument manufacture that has already established itself to a sophisticated extent.[40]

39. The numbering of *Dianshizhai* issues is an extremely problematic question and outside the scope of this paper. It began publication in 1884 and continued for several years. This depiction apparently belongs to the first few years of the *Dianshizhai*'s publication.

40. The sign above the shop in fig. 26 reads "suppliers of a complete range of musical instruments for all sorts of ensembles—drums, *sheng*, flutes, and the like"; the shop sign depicting the *sheng* reads "Phoenix Music." The main caption translates as follows: "Unbridled Passions. Nowadays, if you cannot, like Li Yehou [an ancient master of

Figure 24. The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, *sihu* (1891.50.43 [1–2]).

Figure 25. The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, *gaohu* (II) (1938.34.619).

martial arts], walk along the top of a wall or screen, or cannot, like Yang Ziyun [another martial arts master], leap over high buildings, and yet you still want to wrap yourself in dalliance in the land of soft warmth, sweetness, and love, then, not to put too fine a point on it, this has always been extremely difficult! A gentleman from Suzhou was much taken with enjoying sweet pleasures and pretty promises of this sort with a tailor's wife. One day, on seeing that her husband had gone out on an errand, the lovers took advantage of this wonderful opportunity to go up arm-in-arm into the bedroom and whisper innumerable sweet nothings into each others' ears. However, her husband suddenly came back. Our gentleman, at a complete loss as to what to do, all in a flap, hurriedly hid himself on the window-ledge outside the window. But, because he trod too heavily on the guttering, the window-ledge broke, and he fell. However, a strip of material from his clothes had caught fast. Like a horse attached to a carriage, he dangled in mid-air, and could neither climb up nor come down. A clamour and uproar arose as the onlookers who had gathered from all around shouted together: some commented, sarcastically, that the unfortunate lover was acting out a part in the play *The Three Get Hung;* but, for the most part, they made a chorus of boos, wolf-whistles, jeers, and catcalls; and said that the lover was simply completely mad, nothing more than a madman's mad servant, in fact!"

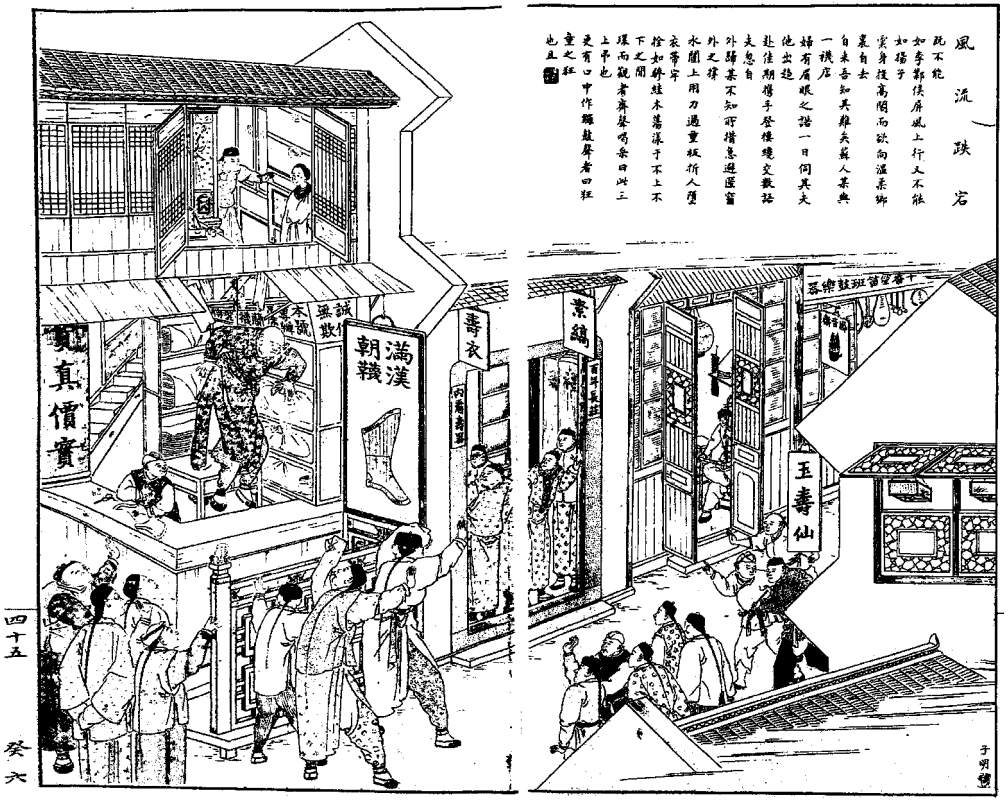

Figure 26. *Unbridled Passions.* Musical instrument shop as depicted in Shanghai's lithographed periodical *Dianshizhai*. (British Library: OIOC.15298.e.1)

Like several of the Edinburgh *huqin*, some of the Oxford instruments have a few globules of rosin stuck to the top of the soundbox, for example *banhu* (I) and *jinghu* (IV) and (V). This is also found on my early *erhu* (above, figure 8), though never on modern instruments, and is thus clearly a common feature of early *huqin*. When playing, the bow rubs these globules and is thus automatically "rosined."

The bows in the Oxford collection are all cruder and less well-finished than those in the Edinburgh collection. They fall into two categories according to the shape of the arc their bamboo stick describes. Some, like that of the *sihu*, are evenly arched at both ends, while others, for example that of *jinghu* (II), follow more closely the "early" shape, though less markedly than the bows belonging to the Edinburgh instruments. All this confirms that the bows of early *huqin* became gradually less arched during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Measured against this trend, a probable date of manufacture for my early *erhu* bow of around 1900 can be suggested.[41] The bows of the Oxford instruments all share the characteristic thin and rounded sheaf of horsehair of the early *huqin* style.

The two *banhu* are among the most interesting instruments in the Oxford collection. *Banhu* (I) (see figure 22; a mid-voiced *banhu*) has a gourd soundbox with a design of soundholes cut into the rear of it almost identical to that of the Edinburgh mid-voiced *banhu* (see above, figure 13), a pattern very different from that of my modern mid-voiced *banhu* (see above, figure 14). This common feature between the Edinburgh and Oxford mid-voiced *banhu* cannot be a coincidence. Either these two instruments are of similar provenance, or else there was much more standardization of *banhu* manufacture in the late nineteenth century than one might at first have expected. Both of these explanations reinforce the conclusion that the mid-voiced *banhu* is a later addition to the Edinburgh collection.

Banhu (II) (see figure 23) is of a novel design not encountered elsewhere in the three collections examined here, having a resonating chamber made entirely of wood rather than gourd or coconut shell. In addition, a wooden back-plate of a similar shape to the plate of the

41. The caveat that the bow now belonging to this instrument may not be original must be given again here. But there is no reason to suppose that it is not, since the arc its bow stick describes, and the thin, rounded sheaf of its hair both tally with what one would expect of a bow stick made at about this time.

Edinburgh *sihu* and *erhu* (see above, figure 18) has been inserted. Two instruments of a design similar to the Oxford *banhu* (II) are held in the collection of the Museum of Musical Instruments in Munich, suggesting that this was once a common design, though it has since fallen into disuse. The characters "Tian Youzhong," which may be the maker's name, are written on the side of the Oxford *banhu* (II).

The Oxford *sihu* (see figure 24) is also of a design that we have not yet encountered. Like my modern *sihu* shown in figures 16 and 28, its soundbox is octagonal. Unlike my modern instrument, however, which has a soundbox made from eight plates joined together longitudinally to make an octagonal cylinder, here the soundbox is carved all from one piece of wood. The octagonal shape evinces itself only on the outside of the soundbox; the inside is circular. On the front of this instrument is found what may be the only surviving original bridge of any of the pre-1949 instruments examined in this paper. It is a small, simple wooden affair with only one foot and should be positioned in the center of the snakeskin. It is described as "restored" in the museum catalog entry. Whether it is a restored original or a replacement is difficult to ascertain, but with its single foot and small size it is at least plausibly authentic in size and shape, as well as being similar in both aspects to the modern *sihu* bridge, even though it is wooden whereas the modern version is made from split cane.

Although a little larger than a modern instrument, the body and spike of the Oxford *jinghu* (I), the earliest in the collection, most closely resemble those of the modern instrument: both components are made from bamboo. The spike of *jinghu* (III) is also of bamboo, though that of *jinghu* (II) is wooden. The spikes of *jinghu* (IV), (V), and (VI), which all come from the same shop, are likewise all made from wood, as is the spike of the Edinburgh *jinghu*. However, all these *jinghu* still possess this instrument's defining feature: the bamboo soundbox. The level of finish and workmanship on *jinghu* (IV), (V), and (VI) is surprisingly modern, even more so than that on my early *erhu*. Their varnish feels recent, and the workmanship on them gives the impression that these instruments were mass-produced in factory conditions, as is already suggested by the labels still surviving on them. These instruments all date from around 1900, which strongly suggests that my early *erhu* (which is also varnished) also dates from the same period.

Gaohu (I) was unavailable when I examined these instruments, but *Gaohu* (II), which I did examine, is also an extremely interesting instru-

ment. With its small soundbox and elegant spike, it resembles closely the type of instrument sometimes depicted in the so-called "export" albums of Chinese watercolors painted for and sold to nineteenth-century Western visitors to China; an example of just such a representation, painted in Canton between 1850 and 1870, is reproduced in figure 27.[42] Nonetheless, there are differences. The depicted instrument would appear to have a bamboo soundbox like that of a *jinghu*, though it is too large to be considered an example of this instrument type. By comparison, the soundbox of Oxford's *gaohu* (II) is of a darker wood, probably *hong* wood. Also like the *jinghu*, the shape of the soundbox of the instrument depicted in figure 27 is cylindrical, with the same size circular face or hole at either end. By comparison, the cylinder of the *gaohu* (II) soundbox is markedly flared; in other words, it has a much smaller circular face at the end where the snakeskin has been attached as compared with the rear end. This flared shape is similar to that of my modern *gaohu* (above, figure 3), but my instrument is not flared to anything like such a marked extent. Flared soundboxes are not normally found on modern *erhu* or *zhonghu*, which tend, on the contrary, to taper slightly from front face to rear. Like the modern *gaohu*, *erhu*, and *zhonghu* (but not my early *erhu*), the soundbox of the Oxford *gaohu* (II) is made from one piece of wood, and has no lattice inserted into the rear (perhaps it has been lost), thus allowing the sound to ring out freely.

Simple *qianjin* (the restraining loops which gather the strings below the pegs on their way down the instrument towards the bridge; see figure 1)—just a thread or two—survive on some of the instruments in the Oxford collection, for example *jinghu* (III), (V), and (VI). No *qianjin* as such survive on the instruments in the Horniman and Edinburgh museums. As one would expect, the *qianjin* that survive on the Oxford instruments are all simple affairs, just metal wire and thread; nothing has changed in this respect to this day.

Where original strings survive on the Oxford instruments, they are mostly of woven silk. The exception is *jinghu* (IV), which has a string made of metal wire. If this string is original—and there is no reason to believe that it is not—then this would push back the invention of metal

42. By comparison with the other ladies depicted in this set of watercolors, this musician is the only one without bound feet, a fact which would tally with the notion that *huqin* were the instruments of the unwashed proletariat. A lady of higher social status (unless she was of Manzu race)—prostitute or otherwise and one playing a more high-class instrument—would have had bound feet.

FIGURE 27. A lady, presumably of the "entertainment" industry, playing an instrument of the *huqin* family; from a set of watercolors all depicting ladies playing different Chinese traditional instruments. (By permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Far Eastern Department: 9168:3.)

wire strings used on instruments of the *huqin* family to a much earlier date—at least 1905—than has ever been previously thought; the use of metal strings on *huqin* is usually regarded as a post-1949 innovation. I find the use of metal for some early *huqin* strings—whether or not the result of influence from the West—an unsurprising discovery, given their many advantages: they are much longer-lasting, easier to tune, give a louder volume, and keep their pitch longer.

Horniman Museum, London

The Horniman Museum has only one pre-1949 *huqin:* a *sihu*, no. 1975.510 (see figures 28–30). The catalog entry for this extraordinary instrument reads "*sihu*, with bow, nineteenth century. Wood, carved and lacquered. The instrument with carved finial representing the poet Li Po (A.D. 701–762), drunk and supported by his attendants."

The level and complexity of the ornamentation on this instrument far exceeds that on any other Chinese instrument of any sort that I have ever encountered. It may simply have been a decorative piece, not a player's instrument. This notion is suggested by the excessive level of decoration of the piece in general and is confirmed by its spike, which, like the rest of the instrument, is heavily adorned with carved motifs. Normal playing of a *sihu*, or any instrument of the *huqin* family for that matter, requires the left hand to slide up and down freely along the spike; clearly, this would be impossible here as the hand would be torn by the complex carvings.

Why such an excessive level of decoration? This is not an easy question to answer. Instruments with a similarly high degree of ornamentation are occasionally found in Western culture, and likewise, decorating instruments for its own sake sometimes also occurs in China. However, as discussed above, instruments of the *huqin* family were normally associated with the rural poor or some of the more disreputable classes in society, whereas this level of decoration suggests a patron from the aristocracy or gentry. Such a client, if he had commissioned a decorated instrument, would normally have wanted it to be a *guqin* (plucked zither)[43] because this instrument is the one most normally associated (in the visual arts and in literature) with the first of the four Confucian attributes

43. Like *huqin*, *guqin* are usually unadorned, allowing their elegant shape and its acoustical properties their full aesthetic impact. Even if decorated, I know of no example even close to as ornate as the Horniman *sihu*.

Figure 28. My modern *sihu* (made in the workshop of Duan Tingjun in Hohhot in Inner Mongolia) and the Horniman *sihu* (1975.510) compared; the latter instrument is nearer the camera.

of a gentleman, that is, playing a musical instrument (*qin*).[44] My instinct is that although this *sihu* is now a single item in a collection, once it was part of a set of different instruments all ornamented in a similar manner. There is some evidence to suggest this may be correct: the Belle Skinner Collection of Old Musical Instruments (now at Yale University) contains a two-stringed Chinese bowed stringed instrument with strikingly similar decoration, which is identified as "eighteenth century" in the 1933 catalog.[45]

But why was a four-stringed *sihu* chosen as the subject for such excessive decoration, instead of another member of the *huqin* family? This is also difficult to explain. Nowadays, the *sihu* is almost exclusively confined to the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia. But the record in the

44. The remaining three attributes are playing chess (*qi*), calligraphy (*shu*), and painting (*hua*).

45. William Skinner, *The Belle Skinner Collection of Old Musical Instruments, Holyoke, Massachusetts: A Descriptive Catalogue* ([n.p.], 1933), 154, 162 (no. 77). The instrument's accession number at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments is 4500.1960.

Figure 29. The carved tip of the Horniman *sihu* (1975.510).

visual arts is that, prior to 1949, in pictures coming from all parts of China, the *sihu* is depicted at least as often as either the *erhu* or *jinghu*. Likewise, the *sihu* is nearly as common as any other member of the *huqin* family in the collections examined here. All this strongly suggests that the *sihu* was once much more widespread across China and much more regularly played than it is today. Unfortunately, the Horniman Museum records do not include information as to where in China this *sihu* originated, or more precise details as to when in the nineteenth century it entered the collection.

Figure 30. Rear view of the soundbox of the Horniman *sihu* (1975.510).

Despite its high level of decoration, it is safe to assume that, in overall design, this instrument is the standard contemporary model. This is confirmed by comparing it with the *sihu* in the Edinburgh and Oxford collections (see above, figures 16 and 24 respectively). Like these instruments, the Horniman *sihu* has the much smaller soundbox typical of early snakeskin-fronted *huqin*. Here it is a hexagonal cylinder, whereas that of the Edinburgh instrument is circular and that in Oxford octagonal, as is my modern instrument. These differences are not important: modern *erhu* and *sihu* can both be made with either circular, octagonal, or hexagonal faces;[46] on old snakeskin-fronted *huqin*—for example my early *erhu*—circular faces are most common. All the *sihu* examined in this paper are snakeskin-fronted.

46. Modern *erhu* with hexagonal faces tend to be made by *huqin* workshops in Suzhou; those with octagonal faces, like the example from the workshop of Lü Jiehua depicted in figures 2, 3, 6, 7, and 17, are recognizable by their octagonal faces as having been made in Beijing.

The most striking difference in design between the modern and the Horniman *sihu* concerns the angle of the pegs in relation to the spike. On the modern instrument, the four pegs are comparatively widely spaced and perpendicular to the spike. This allows for adjusters used for fine tuning to be inserted between the pegs. On the Horniman *sihu,* the pegs are sharply inwardly pointing, the most extreme in this respect of any instrument examined in this paper. Why they are so arranged is difficult to explain, but it is a common feature that has been seen on the other examples of old *sihu* (see figures 16 and 24) and other *huqin* discussed above.

The Horniman *sihu* bow does not have the elegant "early" shape. It is significantly shorter than the modern bow, and there is a considerable "carriage" between stick and hair produced by high and deep construction at both point and heel. The sheaves of horsehair—black to match the gothic coloring of the instrument—are, as with most early *huqin,* narrow and rounded. They have never been rosined, suggesting that this bow has never been used; there is no rosin dust caked on the instrument either, which perhaps was never intended to be played. The strings are made of gut or possibly silk and likewise appear never to have been played, though they may not be the original strings. The bridge and *qianjin* are missing.

The instrument is lacquered black with carvings picked out in gold and red. The backgrounds to the carvings on the side panels of the soundbox are dark green. Overall, the effect is rather macabre. Although the museum card records that one of the figures decorating the tip (finial) of the spike (see figure 29) is the eighth-century poet Li Po (in the modern *pinyin* romanization: Li Bai) supported by attendants, there is no explanation as to whether this description is an educated guess, romantic fancy, or done on the basis of solid evidence. Certainly Li Bai was renowned for his prodigious consumption of alcohol, and the four figures on the finial definitely appear to be staggering about in an advanced state of inebriation, which makes this a reasonable inference made by someone familiar with Chinese literature and lore, if nothing more. Li Bai and his friends are incised into a separate piece of wood inserted into the spike. This differs from normal procedure on *huqin* whereby dragon heads—such as those on my *zhonghu* (see figure 3) or early *erhu* (see figure 6)—are always carved from the same piece of wood as the spike and are therefore simply extensions of it.

Three other human figures decorate the rear of the soundbox (see figure 30); the pegs are decorated with flowers and foliage, and the spike with flying creatures (bats?) and more foliage; the sides of the soundbox are adorned by pictures of animals, one on each of the five panels other than the base, which is undecorated. The animals depicted are probably cat, dog, phoenix, goat, and cow. The bow is decorated with golden foliage at either end, and a bird perches among the leaves at the point.

Conclusions

In a general sense, the early *huqin* examined here differ most importantly from modern instruments in having a radically different aesthetic impact. These latter are more heavily built, designed to be played with a degree of athleticism, and constructed to project their sound outwards. In other words, they are built for the concert stage, a concerto repertory, and to reflect political courage and cultural strength: they are the instruments of the resurgent masses resplendent in mastery. On the other hand, early *huqin* are lighter to hold, much more delicate and fragile, need to be played with more tenderness and care, and the aesthetic to which they belong is much more detached, introverted, private, and personal, if also often beguilingly sensual: they are the instruments of the singsong girls (see figure 27), or of the artisan entertaining himself (figure 26). This important conclusion reflects other trends in Chinese history and culture: whereas in the nineteenth century remnants of "old" Imperial China were tottering under the twin pressures of a wilting feudal society and aggressive Western colonialist incursion, and solace was to be found only in the sensuous and bawdy or the cathartic and contemplative, now "new" China aspires to be a vibrant but disciplined superpower equipped to dominate.

The bewildering variety of different older *huqin* types seen here has been replaced by a regularized family of instruments each devoted to a different role. The delicate woven silk strings whose remnants adorn the pegs of old *huqin* have been replaced by metal wire, a process which, as we can see from the Oxford *jinghu* (IV), was already underway by 1905. Pegs that previously were often clumsy and bulbous have been replaced by finely-tooled ones often fitted with internal screw threads for precise and secure tuning. Irregularly inwardly-pointing pegs have been superseded by pegs inserted at a rigorous and disciplined perpendicular. The

small soundboxes of old *huqin*, covered at the rear by a delicate lattice, have been expanded and made more robust, the lattice removed, and a wooden tube inserted to increase the volume of the sound produced. Rosin is no longer smeared on the pathway of the bow across the soundbox, and a wooden stand is now attached to the base of the instrument in order to allow the sound to ring free. A violin-type frog with adjuster at the heel of the bow has been introduced; the elegant swirling curve of the early bow has disappeared; the hair sheaf has increased in number of strands and been flattened by special sheaths.

However, many motifs remain: the dragon head of my early *erhu* (see figure 6) is also found on my modern *zhonghu* (see figure 3). The upright spike of early *huqin* is no less well-tooled on the Edinburgh instruments than on its modern counterparts, although its backward curve at the tip is more flowing and elegant on many early instruments, and the spikes of many old *jinghu* are more often made with wood than the bamboo that is normal today. Both old and new soundboxes are normally made from just one piece of wood.[47] The Edinburgh bows even presage the introduction of the violin-type bow heel with their small proto-heel.

My early *erhu* stands about midway in this process, and on stylistic grounds it can be dated to between 1900 and 1905. Its varnish is similar to that of the Oxford *jinghu* (IV), (V), and (VI), which suggests a date similar to these instruments. Moreover, its pegs are already no longer bulbous or inwardly pointing, thus suggesting 1900 as the earliest possible date for its creation. However, it still has a fully-latticed rear to the soundbox, a spike that is not tooled with precision, and rosin smeared on the top of the soundbox, characteristics suggesting not only that it both belongs to an era well before the first reforms to *huqin* design of the 1920s and 1930s, but also that it was not factory made, as witness the lovely carved dragon head. Taken together, these factors suggest 1905 as a reasonable latest possible date for the crafting of this instrument. All this is confirmed by the bow, which, with its narrow, rounded sheaf of

47. However, the material used is not necessarily always wood: the Museum of Mankind in London has a *sihu* from (Outer) Mongolia collected in 1910 (no. 1963, AS12.1a + 1b) whose soundbox is, intriguingly, made from hollowed animal horn, the only example of such an instrument I have been able to find. With the "*hu*" of "*huqin*" meaning "Western barbarian" as well as "instrument of the *huqin* family," the assumption has always been that *huqin* were originally a cultural import from Central Asia even though additional evidence to support this proposition is hard to come by. This instrument, which is temporarily unavailable for examination, may well shed light on this issue.

hair, is geared to playing the older silk strings. On a continuum from the highly-arched late eighteenth-century bows to the flat or slightly concave bows of the early twenty-first century, the gentle convex arc of this bow also points to the period 1900–1905 as most likely for its manufacture.

During the last hundred or more years China has changed out of all recognition: on the one hand, concrete pill-boxes of modern Chinese housing development have bulldozed and buried an older architectural heritage; on the other hand, the language has emerged reformed and rejuvenated from the dark days of the last Emperor, when the long-obsolete classical Chinese was still the only medium for literary expression. So too with *huqin:* innovative instrument design has produced new and versatile instruments with rich repertories capable of mastery of a wide range of expression; but the *huqin* world as it existed before the reforms initiated in the 1920s has largely been demolished and superseded. However, outside China and immune from its convulsions, the instruments in the collections examined here offer a window onto that older world. We should treasure them.

Glossary of Chinese Characters for Chinese Words used

Simplified characters only are given.

Shop label: 金听老馆
并无店支
别店假冒
男盗女娼

ban 板
banhu 板胡
Chen Yang 陈[illegible]
da 大
dadi 大低
dadihu 大低胡
Dianshizhai 点石斋
Duan Tingjun 段廷俊
er 二
erhu 二胡
erxianzi 二弦子
gao 高
gaohu 高胡
ge 革
gehu 革胡
gonggan 弓杆
gongmao 弓毛
guo tai min an 国泰民安
guqin 古琴
hong 红
hu 胡
hua 画
huqin 胡琴
jing 京
jinghu 京胡
Jin Wei 金伟
kongzhi dian 控制垫
leihu 累胡
Li Bai 李白
Liu Ling 刘玲
Liu Tianhua 刘天华
Li Yehou 李邺候
Lü Jiehua 吕捷华
Man da ren 满大人
Manzu 满族
putonghua 普通话
qi 棋
qianjin 千斤
qinqiang 秦腔
qin 琴
qingan 琴杆
qinma 琴马
qinpi 琴皮
qintong 琴筒
qintuo 琴托
qinxian 琴弦
Renmin Yinyue Chubanshe 人民音乐出版社
san 三
sanhu 三胡
se 瑟
sheng 笙

shu 书
si 四
sihu 四胡
Tian Youzhong 天由衷
Tuo Xiaotang 拓晓堂
Wanwanqiang 碗碗腔
wu 乌
xian 弦
Yang Ziyun 扬子云
yueqin 月琴
Yue Shu 乐书
zhong 中
Zhongguo Jiusu 中国旧俗
Zhongguo Shudian 中国书店
Zhongguo Yinyue Tujian 中国音乐图鉴
zhonghu 中胡
zhouzi 轴子
zhuihu 坠胡
zi 子