

REAL CAMELS, UNREAL MONKEYS, AND MAN MADE SOUND: AN ELABORATION ON THE CONTEXT OF CURIOSITY

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Abstract

This exploration of how a specific environment shapes research is to remind ourselves of some core tasks of academic thinking. I am an academician. Academicians are given space, time, and often material support to do what they are meant to do. On the one hand, it is surely a shame how academicians are often devalued by non-academic decisions and bureaucratic actions even in the most developed and supposedly civilized societies. On the other hand, as it is challenging to become an academician, many of us may think that the material support has already been earned just by being an academician thus not showing much commitment to engage with further research activities. This is a fruitless approach, a dead end. Support in whatever shape is always a credit given based on trust and hope into one's own intrinsic capacity for curiosity. It is not usually given through an official institution or awarding body. I think, no authority or religious belief can ever completely eradicate a sense of adventurous curiosity among people all over the world. Surely, only a few dare to satisfy it. Therefore, despite the real dimensions of supportive behavior practiced in institutions, universities, or families, the credit given in advance is in any case an investment in the betterment of life, in the creation of knowledge or of tools to gain knowledge, that facilitate understanding even of some seemingly useless matters and their potential application. Notwithstanding analyzing some patterns of contemporary research idealism (Cacioppo et al, 1996), the story is about some very simple observations on the fringe of a journey into the center of the Asian continent, into a city that is in each direction more than 5000 km from the sea: Urumqi and its surroundings. The journey took place 10 years ago and with this time distance and the experiences of later encounters, some humble questions can be raised

that will help to individualise and also broaden a historical understanding of communications between man and beast. I start with my report.

Keywords: curiosity, ecomusicology, knowledge management, Central Asia, Xinjiang.

Resumo

Esta investigação de como um ambiente específico molda a pesquisa serve para lembrar-nos de algumas tarefas básicas do pensamento acadêmico. Sou uma acadêmica. Os acadêmicos recebem espaço, tempo e, muitas vezes, suporte material para fazer o que eles devem fazer. Por um lado, certamente é uma pena que os acadêmicos sejam muitas vezes desvalorizados por decisões não-acadêmicas e ações burocráticas, mesmo nas sociedades mais desenvolvidas e, supostamente, civilizadas. Por outro lado, como é um desafio tornar-se um acadêmico, muitos de nós pode pensar que a ajuda material é merecida apenas por ser um acadêmico, não mostrando muito compromisso em participar de atividades de pesquisa adicionais. Esta é uma abordagem infrutífera, um beco sem saída. A ajuda em qualquer forma é sempre um crédito dado com base na confiança e esperança na própria capacidade intrínseca de ser curioso. E essa capacidade não é obtida por meio de uma instituição oficial ou de financiamento. Eu acredito que nenhuma autoridade ou crença religiosa pode erradicar completamente a sensação de curiosidade aventureira entre pessoas de todo o mundo. Certamente, apenas alguns se atrevem a satisfazê-la. Portanto, apesar das dimensões reais do apoio praticado por instituições, universidades ou famílias, o crédito antecipado é, em qualquer caso, um investimento no melhoramento da vida, na criação de conhecimento ou de ferramentas para obter conhecimento, que facilitem a compreensão mesmo de algumas questões aparentemente inúteis e sua potencial aplicação. Apesar de analisar alguns padrões de idealismo da pesquisa contemporânea (Cacioppo et al, 1996), a história é sobre algumas observações muito simples à margem de uma viagem ao centro do continente asiático, em uma cidade que é, em cada direção, mais de 5000 km do mar: Urumqi e seus arredores. A viagem ocorreu há 10 anos e,

com essa distância temporal e as experiências de encontros posteriores, algumas questões humildes podem ajudar a individualizar e também ampliar uma compreensão histórica das comunicações entre homens e animais. Eu começo com meu relatório.

Palavras-chave: curiosidade, ecomusicologia, gestão do conhecimento, Ásia Central, Xinjiang.

Report 1

Urumqi, China. A sunny day in September 2006. I could not smell anything at all. The air was so clean and dry that my lips were getting chapped after I inhaled a few times without having covered my face. All other kinds of prevention failed. The odorless air was a new and strange experience that seemed to be useful in an odd way. In a European zoological garden, one could smell a camel enclosure from far away. Not so in Urumqi. Only standing right in front of this ship of the desert and looking into its eyes can one become aware of its presence. The eyes into which I have looked at the central market of Urumqi were big, round and not entirely black. They gave me an impression of honesty. The beast was already aged, not very tall, and of a sublime calmness.

Every day, I guess, it has to carry a lot of curious people. Among them wildly jumping or crying children, overtly anxious ladies or very heavy gentlemen. That may have contributed to its serenity. Its fur was strong and firm. Finally, it was really relaxing to sit on its natural saddle and ride up and down the main road for a while. It felt as if all the stress of the journey suddenly dropped from my shoulders. How would it be to sit on a camel for a long ride through the desert or the mountains? Alone the thoughts of missing comfort and body pain brought back the stress. I got down then and buried my hands in the camel's thick fur. It suddenly looked at me as though it wanted to chat

a bit. I whispered a thank you in its right ear and went off. My colleagues were waiting for me.



Fig. 1: Bactrian camel, painting by Anne Kerber (by courtesy).

Later I was told that in desert and steppe communities people love their camels above everything, however, in a completely different way from those infatuated Europeans like me. Camels are essential and close to the people's lives. Therefore, they are personified as being mostly of a cheerful character, having special physical and mental skills, being from time to time emotional or stubborn. No camel is like the other. The people around Urumqi, Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Mongols, Tartars, and others, have sharply

differentiating ideas about and experiences with camels and people, skills that are very helpful in their daily social practice.

Immediate Reflection and Early Analysis

While in Europe camels are at best known for nice warm home slippers made of camel hair or antistatic brushes used for optical tools, camels are a far more essential part of the world in the innermost area of Asia. From the viewpoint of the grassland and the desert inhabitants, next to camels, sheep and horses are the most significant animals. Only recently, large style pig farming is slowly introduced in some places to serve the non-Muslim people traveling through and settling nearby. However, some pig farming was always there as well as people who traded them, also centuries ago, similarly to all the other living beings around the desert.

Actually, the mixture of different people living in that area over a long period of time, their migration and spread, were an important precondition to enabling the transregional trade and exchange of ideas that were so significant to the flourishing of the societies along the silk-road.

Millward (2003) who wrote in the rather politically motivated Silk Road Newsletter about Xinjiang's recent history, recounts interesting arguments that are supposedly advanced by local cultural officers in support of independently evolved developments which were merely initiated by cultural exchange along the Silk Road. There are researchers who emphasize the pre-islamic period (Imin 1981), others emphasize that most of the exchange essentials such as the Arab lute had its origin in Kucha (Zhou Jinbao 1987) and some important treatises or scholars are of local origin. All these speculations might be interesting though leading to simple fallacies.

One of them is the nationalist track of elevating the value of independence from historical influences and the integration in a larger and self-regarded higher developed nation which is modern China. Other ways of thinking emphasize static achievements that can be taken as a justification of national boundaries.

But this paper is not meant to be about the ethnic composition of the area or the political tug-of-war about cultural assets that are most likely not rooted in the consciousness of the wider population (Information Office of the State Council 2003). Farmers and cattle dealers of the steppe are little interested in cultural controversies organized by those people far away, in cities they have never seen, in offices they cannot imagine.

Their value system is different and only slowly adapting to the new world of virtual realities. To most of the people I met and talked to, the presence of diverse ethnic groups, travelers, traders, or officers was not disturbing at all. It actually made them feel comfortable.

Living among diverse groups of people seemingly safeguards one's own existence as being part of the exchange pool, necessary due to special skills, welcome due to compatibility. Religious exclusiveness did not play a big role in acknowledging each other's social potential. That draws mainly on political construction, something that is suggested and is unheard of among steppe and desert inhabitants.

The ink painting of a Han Chinese showing a musician playing the horse head fiddle called *khuur* tells another far more real story. The painter's house with the tiny shop in the ground floor was built after 1980 but it already looked older than the old houses situated along the Beijing Avenue in Urumqi. Ink paintings in this style are local productions of trained Han Chinese artists as many Han Chinese settled in Urumqi over the last decades. Han-Chinese were always part

of the local population and despite many opinions politically favored by European democracies, Howell and Fan emphasize, on the basis of strong evidence, that there is until today a “heterogeneity of Urumqi’s labor market”, based on “the role of economic reforms that motivate migration within and to Xinjiang, and the complexity of Han-minority inequality.” (Howell and Fan 2011, 119). That means that Han-Chinese are definitely a minority that faces discrimination compared to Uyghurs coming from the countryside.

Some painters among the Han-Chinese specialized in ink paintings which are favorites among the tourists showing up in Urumqi. However, black ink painting is not an emblematic Han-Chinese art. It spread all over Asia and was most sophisticatedly cultivated in Japan. Today, it is a world phenomenon. The type of painting I have seen in Urumqi is actually a variation of the black ink painting technique described as Japanese *sumi-e* (Thompson 1960). In some paintings, the artist makes use of some water color additions. An ink painting of a camel by Anne Kerber, a German amateur painter, is created using the *sumi-e* technique in its purity. Without knowing, she portraits exactly the camel I met on the market in Urumqi. Actually, the recognition of the camel in Anne Kerber’s painting and the strong resonance of my memory motivated me to investigate into the deeper relationship between man and beast from a musicological perspective.

However, the topic of the horse head fiddle painting in the Beijing Avenue of Xinjiang’s capital reminded me of another art work, a documentary on a weeping camel that I had watched a few months earlier.¹ Musicians who play the horse head fiddle may have existed at the latest since the Western Qin Dynasty when the territory was under the Khitan and the Mongols. Both got in contact with Turk people in different ways and with different intensity through wartime or

1 Davaa, Byambasuren & Luigi Falorni. The Story of the Weeping Camel. Released 6 September, 2003. Mongolkina.

peaceful trade. Nowadays, the Khitan are forgotten people, nomads, who were actually responsible for the term “China” that comes from Cathay, derived from Kitai, another name for the Khitan people (Howorth 1881; Biliik 2007). Though the Uyghur authorities of the western areas tried to play them off against the Han-Chinese conquerors and finally took side of the winners, they seemingly valued the cultural achievements of the Khitan (ibid). A good example delivers the Li-Sun-rebellion (696–697) as convincingly analyzed by Weiers (1998). As Mongols, Khitan people and Uyghurs were culturally interwoven over a long period of time through war, trade, and production, it is still difficult to decide whether the horse head fiddle with its two strings tuned at intervals either a fourth or a fifth was invented by only one of the people. Most probably it is a cultural object used among all people that settled north of the Han-Chinese.

In this area lived different people, but more importantly, there lived just a small number of each of them. The territory was quite empty as the living conditions were difficult and the small communities made up of some families were dispersed over a large region. Having an instrument like the horse head fiddle seems to be rather an astonishing fact as it is a sophisticated art object made of rare material. Producing or purchasing a musical instrument of such a quality must have been motivated by more than pure entertainment needs. Though playing music, singing, storytelling, chanting, and acting might be in the scope of any community life, the question among the people of the steppe along the fringes of the desert is the constitution of the audience.



Fig. 2: Painting of a horse head fiddle player. In the original painting, the belt, face, fingers, and the hatband are slightly colored. Artist anonymous. Photo by the author (with courtesy of the artist).

The documentary mentioned suggested an answer. Technically criticized from various directions, however, looking at the very essentials of the plot, this documentary is itself documenting people who observed similar changes in approaching the meaning of music making and the importance of the horse head fiddle. It is about the symbiotic way of life among the nomads and animals in the steppe. Watching the documentary I realized what people from this region may dearly miss in other societies: the communicative bond with animals as beings of importance. This communicative bond includes all kinds of expressive activities, music as a special type of sound included. Anything that cannot be articulated by speech, gestures or the exchange of objects could find another channel like through

specific sound. So it does in this documentary. The symbiosis between feeling beings is born out of the natural emptiness and the mutual dependency in life. Finally it sums up to a shared culture where imagined boundaries between man and beast blur.

Personal Relatedness

Just recently, I could experience a special attraction to the imagined mind of a camel while traveling on its back through a part of a small desert along the Saudi-Qatar border. The only breathing, walking, feeling creature so far that could help me in case of need might have been that camel. It bears the heat, the wind, the mercilessly bright sun, and yet, it is obviously more cooling sitting on its back than slowly walking in its short shadow and being separated from it. Camels probably understand their and our way of life and the very points of connectedness. So do the people in Northern Xinjiang. They understand their and the camels' way of life. The strictness of separating animals' and men's environmental habits often observed in other regional contexts is an ideological construction imposed through many cultural means such as religious beliefs, public categorization, or teaching patterns. The absence of this construction in the steppe along the desert could mean that there apply other cultural perspectives. Space and time are shared with all creatures of immediate importance. Animals are not mere resources for food or transportation, they are beings with their own character, their own history, and their own spiritual belongings. This is not to confuse with Baldick's proposal on the connection between shamanism and animals in Central Asia (Baldick 2012, 92-125). An interesting report by Chuluunbaatar (2017) based on long term fieldwork in Mongolia underscores the intense relationship between beings in the context of

spirituality taking the construction of drums as an example and avoiding the ethnic categorization and ahistorical thinking of Baldick's approach. The discussion of intra-environmental taxonomies from the perspective of individual spirituality should be subject of further studies on musical ideas (Chow and Jähnichen 2016). I suppose that among all communities of similar environmental conditions, sharing cultures between man and animal differ. But the various ways of sharing cannot yet be differentiated clearly as there exist only few serious investigations about this matter and the necessity of zoo-psychological imagination. Within a shared culture features exist that can only be created by man, however, it does not mean that it can't be addressed to an animal. Musical expressions are such a feature that are crucial for communicating content that cannot be expressed with other means. The acoustic emptiness surrounding all beings, the absence of man-made sound over longer periods of time, and the dominance of geophony, amplifies the importance of music as a special sound tremendously.

Later Analysis

One scene of the documentary situated in the Mongolian steppe not far from Xinjiang and quite similar to it, I would say the core scene, is of special importance to the topic. A young camel colt starves because the mother camel does not allow him to drink after having given birth under very painful conditions. The herder's family worries and sends for a musician with a horse head fiddle. Together with him, the herder's wife sings in front of all family members, camels included, a song thus calming the mother camel down, consoling her and finally convincing her to give up her resistance against her own colt. The mother camel weeps quietly while the young colt starts to drink. This scene shows that the crisis in the community is over and

everyone is satisfied. The authenticity of this scene was often doubted, the audio arrangement was criticized, and the actors pitied by film professionals and documentarists (IMDb 2008). The two film students from Munich who conducted the project, Byambasuren Davaa and Luigi Falorni², were possibly not yet experienced enough to authentically arrange authenticity as expected. However, the scene took place, it was a real situation and the way how the problem is solved has a traditional background in all its details. Especially, the music played and the song are as they were memorized at the time of the film production.

Figure 3 shows the outline of the beginning song later accompanied by the horse head fiddle. Typically, there are short phrases, text-like melodic ideas separated by rests at the end of each line. The only word sung is “hoor”, the Mongolian term for camel. The text is just to carry the melody and seems to have no relation to the individual event nor to the animal. However, the melody alone indicates the meaning accompanied by the approach to the camel as shown in the documentary. Acted or not, the singer stands very close to the addressee, patting the mother camel’s fur and singing in a way that the camel must feel the vibrations. The singer’s high pitched voice flows with steadiness in volume and intensity and the rests are not indicative of the end of the song thus still promising another line to come. The purpose of the song is not to convey a story or a mere feeling, it is to get engaged with the environment, the animal’s behavior, the expression of determination in solving the problem, and the awareness of being in a state of urgency. The singer, the fiddler, and the broad audience is completely conscious of the process to be conducted. Everyone seems to know that the song will not stop until the goal is reached. The horse head fiddle adds a deep resonating

2 Both are trained film directors from HFF München, born in 1971 in Ulaanbaatar and in Florence respectively.

sound to the high pitched melody. The tuning process prior to the singing took place involving the mother camel in a way that the sound of the fiddle will be able to trigger a change in mood as the camel might be well familiar with the voice of the herder's wife, but the horse head fiddle has a special low pitched continuous nasal sound that is far different from all other sounds the camel ever experienced. First, the singer starts to comfort the camel, then, after four lines, the horse head fiddle comes in and tries to reach out by following the singer and extending the vibrations. The method might have only been established through many generations' experience. A good fiddler must know how to work on his part. A good singer also knows well how to elaborate the phrases and to move closer using specific tactile techniques both physically and mentally. Finally, the problem will have to be solved. And it was. The camel colt got its milk, the mother felt strengthened after her traumatizing birth-giving and overcame her aggression. The sound produced by the mother camel corresponded well to the fiddler's part and the screaming of the camel colt topped the high pitched singing. The entire sound of the four different sources was only understandable when embedded into the noise of wind, moving grass, whispering, and steps of people and animals on the sandy ground. Could it ever have happened in a dark windless stable or a hall flagged with marble tiles? No.

vocal

lute →

Fig. 3: Transcription of the beginning of the process. The singer starts with 4 lines followed by khuur accompaniment (as extracted from the documentary).

The knowledge captured through the musical and communicative skills demonstrated by the humans towards the animal is of high value. This knowledge seems to be lost if conditions change. For many supposedly civilized parts of the world this

knowledge is forgotten or did never exist. Taking this as only one small example out of so many that can't be detected due to missing opportunities, there must be a large number of details either unknown or forgotten to the contemporary observer. Therefore, a shift in approaching events has to be made that includes the entire situation and the consciousness that any event can be the last of its kind. Saying this, I want to extend my own awareness of not leaving any detailed observation to later times or following researchers. Though all things change and all things will once happen for a last time, the knowledge of those things must not be ignored through carelessness.

Looking into my reports of observations that took place 10 years back, I could see clearly which point I missed. As I was strongly educated in doing fieldwork observations with a distanced and rational approach to anyone involved, mainly to avoid the slightest smell of bias or attachment, I forgot that cultural bias was actually the driving force during my observations. This fact became even more manifest in dealing with communication between human and animal in the steppe. One might be distanced from a person, but how can one be in a distance from an animal if there is no possibility of feedback from the animal's side?

A recent paper by Jeff Todd Titon (2015) tries to convince that the category 'co-presence' in addition to 'presence' that can be announced in a non-metaphorical way through any type of sound is key to what he calls community. At no point does he reduce this type of communication to human beings alone. However, the definition of this sound community is then caught in a state of indifference. Interesting is his brave integration of animals' sound presence into the discussion. He writes about animals that "With awareness they are present to each other, that is, co-present, as in the familiar act of a bird singing to mark territory, attract a mate, alarm its neighbors, threaten

a potential rival, or keep the flock together. Community is one of the key concepts of ecosystem ecology; it refers to the interactions among populations of different species inhabiting a given area.” (Titon 2015, 13). Many other investigations are conducted in the field of sound producing animals since Günter Tembrock (1918-2011) founded the famous Tierstimmenarchiv at Humboldt University in Berlin in 1951, yet the communication between human and animal that considers the wider ecosystem as a precondition is rarely seen (Tembrock 1956, 1996). Another idea that crossed my mind about the school-like notes I had taken 10 years ago had to do with the fact that these ecosystems may change rapidly and possibly more surprisingly than assumed. How could these changes affect communication patterns among any beings in a way that this specific knowledge does not completely disappear? Also, I thought, could it be that this knowledge is of use in times when through whatever conditions the way of herding and livestock breeding is or has to be revived? What, if anything that was known in the past has to be known again, or has to be known as useful in a modified way?

This type of questions is surely connected to the environment that I experienced and that I was reminded of after I experienced another type of desert, another type of dealing with animals in an anthropophobic environment that requires a special knowledge of communication.

Report 2 and Early Analysis

However, rather less dramatic encounters of human-made music were not far from the inspiring land- and soundscape around Urumqi. One example is the so called eagle dance, a performance item with the status of an intangible national heritage claimed by the

Tajik minority, however, present among other people as well. There exist hundreds of different versions, more or less sophisticated choreographies and all kinds of 'pure' and 'innovative' accompaniments. The dance I observed was outstanding in its choreography as it required a speeding up of movements ending on a sudden stop. This did not apply to the musical accompaniment that seemed rather formal and simple or that became formal and simple after being down-leveled for this type of dance shows. I observed:

Two drummers sat relaxed together accompanying an oboe player. The pair of drums in front of them were conical in shape and different in height, one tuned to a pitch lower to the other. They were both struck with a pair of beaters in an alternating manner. Having these conditions, a number of interesting rhythmic combinations could have been executed. But the aim was obviously to be very steady and even in beating the drums one by one. This metric steadiness actually caused the strong impression of speeded up dance patterns. One musically interesting structure appeared when the melodic lines in the repetitive parts consisted of only three units so that drumming patterns concluded on different drums of each line. Through this structure, the dance music developed a striking depth and complexity. The drumming so far appeared to be the simple thing that wrapped the complicated meaning.

The image displays a musical score for an eagle dance excerpt. It consists of eight systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody in the treble clef staff is written with eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together. The bass clef staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. In several measures of the bass staff, specific rhythmic patterns are highlighted with rectangular boxes: some are white and others are black, indicating alternating drum patterns. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Fig. 4: Transcribed excerpt of the eagle dance observed on stage of the Xinjiang Folk Arts Festival, 2005. The alternating drums are marked white and black.

Now, ten years later this rather simple type of dancing that actually communicates through metaphorical movements another relationship to an animal, might be completely changed. The all-knowing internet could not provide any example of it but countless examples of 'developed' dances with complex symphonic and digital arrangements. The striking structure of melodic lines and alternating drum patterns disappeared in thin air. Extending this thought back into the history, what were the patterns before the drum pairs and the oboe were played? Which performance features were replaced by the sophisticated simplicity I still observed in the year 2005?

Was it too simple, too wild, or too retarded? How can improvement be measured and who am I to ask such unholy questions? Again, the cultural bias forces me to observe, to compare, and to distrust my own understanding of innovation. Looking back, the tragic moment of watching a disappearing process that evolved in many different local shapes over centuries becomes apparent. How could I have been so blind? On second thought, I think, that exactly now, in the moment I write these words, somewhere else something is done for the last time, a skill dies out, or an experience is forgotten. No academician is ever able to stop this, to rescue the knowledge buried in deeds and acts of cultural behavior, shared by different people or by humans and animals. Therefore, the way of embracing self-processed advancement by exploring the traces of forgotten knowledge has to change from sorrow to informed education embracing growing choices. The long habit of separating music education with all selective impositions from cultural knowledge embedded in an existing and changing environment is worth reassessing.

Eagles might have been seen on the sky over Jaohe and Gaochang, two cities at the northern fringes of the Silk Road that had

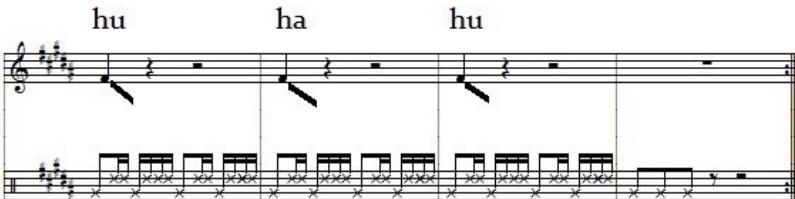
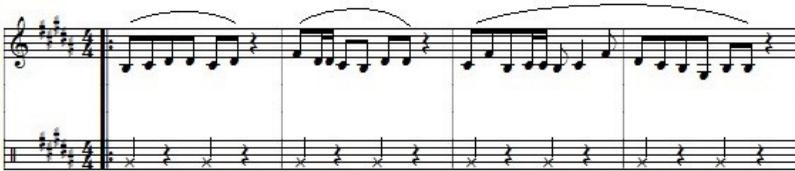
their high time in the 7th century and now, they attract a lot of adventurous tourists. The houses were once built with clay bricks, but the sharp wind had blown off the joint gaps and the buildings collapsed looking like huge termite hills in the relentless heat. In the past, these cities were centers of culture and power. How did these cities sound when there was life in it? Why can people reconstruct a building of the past but not the sound of the past? I think, this could be an important task for future ecomusicologists. The main problem would then be to find out, which past has to be reconstructed as sound in its temporary existence is hard to be thought of something permanent. The discontinuity of presence and absence is still an unthinkable idea in dealing with the sounding past. Titon (2015) reviews Derrida (2013) regarding historical time consciousness and the position of sound sensitivity leading to similar questions. Philosophical studies about these matters could provide surprising insights.

In a third thought I assume that sound is as much as a building permanently existing and permanently changing. Functions of buildings, aesthetic concepts, value hierarchies, shapes, structures, orders change all the time, in buildings as well as in associated soundscapes. Ecomusicology may prove at least a part of it, I dare to hope.

Report 3 and Immediate Reflection

While the relationship between humans and animals is musically communicated in different ways, the relationship between humans of supposedly different 'development levels' is another issue to look at.

The same festival that provided the archaic eagle dance staged a dance of the Xibe³ people who were exhibited in a zoological manner as being 'very wild'. As wild dancers, they were accompanied by a rather humble song with some simple drum rhythms. The song was played back from a tape. All Xibe dancers who were 'enriched' by Han Chinese professional dancers rehearsed the dance with the same music thus avoiding choreographic conflicts.



3 Also Xianbei, a minority deriving from northern people that invaded the area during the Liao-Dynasty. They speak a Manchurian-Tungusic language.

Fig. 5: Transcribed outlines of the Wild Dance of the Xibe as presented during the Festival of Xinjiang Folk Arts and Music in 2006.

The music from the tape was replayed in an unbelievable volume blowing off the front rows of the audience. The show must have been many times rehearsed. How could this have been missed? Was it on purpose or accident? Is wild mainly perceived as loud? The dancers sang along the replayed music. They had microphones mounted to their costumes. Their voices were forcibly sounding rough and drunkard-like. This must have been on purpose. Obviously, the wilds must be like that. With more time, I see that my own cultural bias reflects cultural bias of those others. How can this pattern of observation change in an effective way? How can informed education take place if the information gained has to pass a culturally biased process? This question has to be left open for now.

No Report yet a Short Later Analysis

One last animal story has to be told. The story is about small figurines representing monkeys holding a lute. The figurines follow the tradition of representing an animal as an alien, a stranger, at its best as a non-human. Xinjiang was never populated by any monkey species, neither in the Junggar nor in the Tarim Basin (Wu 1947; Barnes and Hudson 1998, 87). What can be easily overlooked is that lutes of this type were also not present in the region before the Silk Road connected distant cultures to each other. The 'Journey to the West' actually reflects on legends and beliefs that were shared by a number of people in southern Xinjiang. The monkey king Sun Wukong parallels Hanuman of the Ramayana story. The famous story came into being right at the time when these small figurines were probably produced, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This was also the time, when this lute type that is characterized by a cross-bar to which the strings

are directly attached thus replacing the bridge of earlier known spike lutes found its way into the region. Indian and Tibetan traces of worshipping cultures brought these figurines to places where they were found, which is the area around Hetian (also Hotan, Heitian, Hetan). It shares borders with present day Jammu and Kashmir, and Tibet, thus covering some small routes leading to and from Hindustani core areas. The geography of these finds seems to be important. But conclusions cannot be drawn in a reliable and direct way. The finds dating back into the production time might have been distributed farther in the East, where they were even more astonishing and valuable. They could have been lost or destroyed over the centuries as they were not buried under the ground while traveling or being openly exhibited. In the area of the finds they might have been less exotic as travelers and traders were familiar with the legends, the lutes, and the monkeys. The small figurines might have been the idea of clever businessmen promoting the Hanuman story in the shape of the 'Journey to the West'. It could be that they were brought along through the strong development of the Manichaeism (Lieu 1992) spreading from Persia that influenced belief systems all over Asia. However, nobody can surely explain the deeper meaning of the figurines. Unbelievable. Strange. I am still culturally biased. And I will always be.

Nevertheless, the figurines seem to be functionally related to the ink painting of the horse head fiddler. In both cases more than one people, more than one culture, and definitely more than one individual contributed to its existence. The cultural process represented in its manifestations cannot be owned by any nation or any ethnic group. Methodically, academic research in this field should try to further loosen ideological limitations and better allow acknowledgement of individual and cultural bias that helps to develop an effective curiosity in us.



Fig. 6: The two figurines were found in lotkan, oasis Hotian (Heitian), Xinjiang, 2nd -3rd century, exhibited in the Hermitage of St. Petersburg.

Historical methods as these stories show may not be limited to dealing with assured historical facts. Dealing with history also means dealing with the bias of all those biased researchers who just at this moment are bending over the historical treatises, artifacts, or printouts of pixelated internet pictures showing unauthorized maps and figurines. In short, all that will be history keeping historical research busy. What stays is curiosity. Eternally.

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