

COMPLETION REPORT

Independent Researcher
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【Subject of Research Project】

日本、ヨーロッパ、中国の三項関係における20世紀の音楽理論と作曲の流動性

Generously supported by the Sumitomo Foundation for two years (2023–25), the Hong Kong-based project aims to critically assess the global turn in humanities – in particular musicology – and experiments with non-linear historiographical strategies regarding aesthetics, interpretation, music theory and music composition between Europe and East Asia. Building on the joint efforts between East Asian and Western researchers with an emphasis on post-European historical thinking, the investigator establishes an original musicological focal point: ‘China-Europe-Japan triangle’. Based on this multilateral framework, field trips were made with the assistance of the following host institutions: State Institute for Music Research (Germany), International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Japan) and Oxford University’s Faculty of Music (United Kingdom). Collected research data includes phonograph record of music and speech from China and Japan (Ethnological Museum of Berlin), manuscripts belonged to a sinologist and an early comparative musicologist (Berlin State Library), official documents about studies and activities of Chinese and Japanese music students (university archives), a German music lexicon in a series of editions (SIM Library), published European music scores with thematic association with Japan (Nichibunken Library), Japanese folksongs with shamisen accompaniment in staff notation (National Diet Library) and video of contemporary folk music (Gion Festival).

The research project’s potential impact encompasses the following aspects:

- The triangular conceptual model challenges ‘East-West’ dichotomous thinking and reframes separate bilateral dynamics of encounter as a multi-directional network. Contrary to prevailing tendencies to ‘provincialise’ Europe by downplaying or even evading Eurocentric viewpoints, the proposed research approach decentres European schools of thought by rendering Europe neither as a starting point nor a destination, but as one of the many ‘stations’ and a unique angle into intra-Asian spheres of knowledge co-production. Through Europe the centrepiece of the ‘China-Europe-Japan triangle’, Sino-Japanese musical interaction, entanglement and transformation are expected to acquire new and richer definitions.
- A bottom-up approach to the study of history of science and education recalibrates the intellectual weights between European music teachers and their East Asian students. Presumably the receiver in pedagogy, the latter often served as the former’s informant of ethnic musical systems. A precise understanding of the exchanges requires an investigation of the students’ prior knowledge and sheds light on distinguished as well as ordinary musicians’ formative period both in East Asia and Europe.
- A comprehensive account of twentieth-century music hinges on the exploration of microtonality, hemitonicism and spectralism. Distinct from recent research on the timbral characteristics of *guqin* (the Chinese instrument of the literati), which relies on a largely prescriptive system of notation, the timbre-

centric approach adopted in a thread of this project draws on a descriptive system pertinent to percussion ensemble that embodies the desired sound effects, Chinese dialects (including Cantonese) and orality of musical traditions in conjunction with oft-elevated cultures of writing and publishing. Potential Japanese equivalents of such practice still await investigation.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

John Lam Chun-fai. *Music, Modernity and Mobility: Historiographical Strategies based on the 'China-Europe-Japan Triangle'*. Paper presented at SIM-Forschungskolloquium (Curt-Sachs-Saal, Musikinstrumenten-Museum, State Institute for Music Research, Berlin) on 4th July 2023.

John Lam Chun-fai. *Music, Modernity and Mobility: Historiographical Strategies based on the 'China-Europe-Japan Triangle'*. Paper presented at Global Asian Studies Lecture Series 3 (virtual presentation, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo) on 24th September 2023.

John Lam Chun-fai. *Musico-Poetics in Cross-Cultural Perspective: The 'China-Europe-Japan' Triangle*. Paper presented at the Oxford Seminar in Music Theory & Analysis: New Voices in Musico-Poetics (virtual presentation, Faculty of Music, University of Oxford) on 11th March 2025.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)