



Music in the Age of Confucius

Jenny F. So

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Chinese archaeologists digging in central China in 1977 unexpectedly uncovered two of the earliest and most extensive surviving groups of musical instruments in the entire ancient world, dating from nearly 2500 years ago. Since these percussion, string, and wind instruments were in near-pristine condition-some still playable, others inscribed with musicological information-they provided hitherto unimagined possibilities for the study of music and the history of musical instruments in ancient China. Presented here are the insights of six specialists who describe these instruments' sophisticated tuning systems, techniques of manufacture, and inscriptions revealing their musical and non-musical significance in ancient Chinese society. It has become apparent that different types of music coexisted in Bronze Age China (2000-500 B.C.) for state rituals as well as for private entertainment. The authors place this evidence in the context of recent archaeological discoveries and reassess it in light of classical history and the literature on Chinese music. The three main families of instruments are also examined in detail in individual chapters.

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