



De Missione : the Vihuela and the Tenshō Embassy

Franklin Lei, *vihuela*

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I.

Fantasia VIII

Luis Milán (c.1500-c.1561)

Villancico (anon. Portuguese): *Falai mina amor*

Tiento IV

II.

Fantasia (Libro ii, no.2)

Miguel de Fuenllana (c.1525-c.1585)

Madrigal (Jacob Arcadelt): *Il bianco e dolce cigno*

III.

Diferencias sobre ‘*Conde Claros*’

Luys de Narváez (c.1505-1549)

Baxa de contrapunto

Chanson (Josquin des Prez): *Mille regres* (‘*La canción del emperador*’)

IV.

Ricercar 84 – Fantasia 40 – Fantasia 30 – Ricercar 16

Francesco Canova da Milano (1497-1543)

Tochata – Ricercar 34, ‘*La compagna*’

V.

Diferencias sobre ‘*Guárdame las vcas*’ (both sets)

Luys de Narváez

Fantasia V

Luis Milán

Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Luduvico

Alonso Mudarra (c.1510-1580)

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6-course *vihuela de mano* after iconographical sources by Daniel Larson, Duluth, Minnesota, 1997

On 15 August 1549 a Portuguese ship carrying Francisco Xavier reached Kagoshima in Japan, after a violent storm. The ship had to jettison most of its cargo, but Xavier managed to save a “monochord” which he presented to the local *daimyō*. Suggestions for its identity range from spinet harpsichord and clavichord to musical clock. The vihuela is also a strong contender, not just because its compact size might have saved it from being tossed overboard, but it is equally capable of demonstrating the church modes and polyphony.

By 1580 the Jesuits had set up over 200 churches in Japan, each with a primary school. There were also 2 *séminarios*, and later a St. Paul's College, precursor of the institution in Macau. From the start Western music was an integral part of the Jesuit mission. The first Masses, documented 3 years after Xavier landed, were sung rather than said, as there was not yet a common language between the Jesuits and their Japanese converts. This situation improved rapidly, and by the 1560s not only were choirs organized at many churches to sing in Latin, and the singing had progressed from monophonic Gregorian chants to polyphonic motets, but *viola* (i.e the plucked vihuela or *vihuela de mano*) was used to accompany Masses on Sundays and feast days, while the *vihuela de arco* - vihuela played with a bow – performed this function on Saturdays. The Jesuit priests, mostly Portuguese with a minority of Spaniards and Italians, noticed Western music was drawing the Japanese to churches, be they converts or not. The fact that they quickly set up an educational system, from primary education centered on a Japanese equivalent of the Medieval *trivium*, through the *séminarios* all the way to the *colegio*, means the advanced subjects were the *quadrivium* - music, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy. In that respect, Matteo Ricci had great accomplishments with the last 3 subjects in China, but music was the single shining achievement of the Jesuits in Japan.

By 1582 Alessandro Valignano, the Jesuit “Visitor” based in Macau with jurisdiction over East Asia, concocted a plan to choose 4 outstanding examples of Jesuit education in Japan, who were also relatives of important *daimyōs*, to embark on a 6-year voyage to visit the Pope and Phillip II of Spain. Valignano intended this group - which historians now call *The Tenshō Embassy* (天正の使節) - as a “living letter” from himself to the Pope, to prove the success of the Japan mission and to solicit more funding. Valignano had desperately wanted this to be a low keyed affair, but of course it became the media event of the late sixteenth century, with coverage as far north as Germany. It was remembered in European writings as recent as the 1720s.

What interests us is the vast documentation on this event, from the 4 young Japanese participants – Mancio Itō, Miguel Chijiwa, Martinho Hara, and Julião Nakaura - who were instructed to keep detailed journals, to a flurry of reports and correspondence from the Jesuits, even from bystanders such as the cartographer Urbano Monte, who sketched the sole surviving likeness of the boys in Milan. Signor Monte tells us “the boys have learned our musical instruments and they practice in private.” From the senior cleric of the Japan mission, Lourenço Mexia, who was present when the boys reached Macau in 1583, and again in 1588-90 when they returned from Europe, we know that the Tenshō Embassy gave a public performance in Macau on 6 January 1589 during their nearly 2 years’ layover there, when they played lute (i.e. *vihuela*), harp, keyboard and rebec. We also know they practiced regularly during the lengthy voyages, and gave well attended public performances in Europe. At Évora Cathedral, Mancio and Miguel performed twice on the only extant triple-manual organ in Portugal. At Vila Viçosa, seat of the Duke of Braganza, they played vihuela and keyboard, then sang to the accompaniment of the same.



Portrait of Mancio Ito (excerpt) dated 1585, by Jacopo Tintoretto (1519-1594), completed by his son Domenico. Rediscovered in March 2014 by the *Fondazione Trivulzio*, Milan. Grateful acknowledgements to Professor Anna Kwong, Center for the Arts, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

The Tenshō Embassy was the only group that received personal audience from Phillip II, then king of both Spain and Portugal with all their global colonies, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉), the *daimyō* who unified Japan. Phillip's most beloved queen, Isabel de Valois, was patron of the blind *vihuelista* Miguel de Fuenllana. Phillip's father, Charles V, had the great Luys de Narváez at his court. Hideyoshi of course knew nothing of Western music, yet both he and his former lord Oda Nobunaga (織田信長) were fascinated by Western musical instruments. On 22 February 1591, the Tenshō Embassy entered Miyako (Kyoto) and performed for Hideyoshi on the same 4 instruments documented in Macau. Hideyoshi asked for 3 encores, and wanted a demonstration on the vihuela de arco as well. It has been suggested that the vihuela music played for Hideyoshi was Narváez's arrangement of Josquin's *Mille regres*, a very popular *chanson* throughout Europe and one which Narváez nicknamed *canción del emperador*, since it was the favorite of Charles V. An implied association with Europe's most powerful monarch must have favorably stroked Hideyoshi's ego.

Yet some modern historians have interpreted Hideyoshi as schizophrenic, for a year later he marched his force into Korea in the so-called *Imjin War* that lasted until his death in 1598, leaving two-third of Korea's arable land in devastation. He also began murdering Christians in 1597, a policy the succeeding Tokugawa Shogunate continued with an expulsion order of all Jesuits in 1614. Of the 4 boys, Martinho Hara went into exile to Macau with his companion Constantin Dourado from the Tenshō Embassy days. Both were accomplished musicians and had taught music in the Kyushu Jesuit school upon their return from Europe. Perhaps they continued to do so at the new St Paul's College of Macau, founded in 1594-96 by Alessandro Valignano. Fathers Hara, Dourado, and Valignano were buried in front of the altar at the college church, survived today only by its beautiful façade, an UNESCO World Heritage site and the spiritual symbol of Macau.

The vihuela and the lute

While the Renaissance lute was the most played instrument of the sixteenth century, with over 2000 works from Tudor England alone, the vihuela was actually better known globally, thanks to the newly discovered maritime routes. It was reportedly played in Central America just a few years after Columbus' arrival, and as we have seen, by 1590 it was played all over Japan and on the South China shores at Macau. The Renaissance lute transitioned from plectrum playing to what we now call "fingerstyle" in the second half of the fifteenth century, with a similar change in vihuela playing. We think the vihuela originated from Naples. Naples and Aragon intermittently shared the same crown, and when Spain was unified in the mid-fifteenth century under the duo monarchy of Ferdinand of Castille and Isabella of Aragon, the vihuela became its national instrument.

Luis Milán's anthology, *El Maestro* (1536), represents perhaps the last of the Aragon style. Its musical notation works on the same principle as Neapolitan tablature, both being an upside down version of the otherwise universal Italian tablature. Milán was most famous in Valencia as a courtier who performed *romances*, the sung epic poems that would last for hours, accompanying himself and interspersing his delivery with improvisations on the vihuela.

Luys de Narváez was a preeminent *vihuelista* known for his *diferencias*, which are in fact history's first variations on a theme. Unlike Milán, Narváez already wrote in an international style that drew heavily on Flemish counterpoints. The *Baxa de contrapunto* is his rendition of the popular French *basse dance*.

Miguel de Fuenllana has been considered the greatest of the *vihuelistas*. Blind from birth, Fuenllana wrote his fantasies in an abstract sound world, as if the music was spun by touching the strings, even if contrapuntal part-writing was strictly observed. He served Isabel de Valois alongside her Flemish musicians, and it is possible that from these colleagues he made the beautiful arrangement of another

sixteenth century hit (and still a hit in today's early music concerts), the song of the dying swan: *Il bianco e dolce cigno*.

Alonso Mudarra was a canon at Seville Cathedral. He seems to have been a “one-shot” composer with his fantasy “in imitation of the harp in the manner of Luduvico,” especially its ingeniously multimetered, polyrhythmic climax that no other lutenist or guitarist has since been able to imitate.

Francesco Canova da Milano, the only Italian on our program, was lutenists to 4 popes. Considered the greatest lute player of his time, he was called *Il Divino* together with his fellow Milanese Michelangelo. Among masterworks for the lute, Francesco's were the only ones specifically shared by both lute and vihuela, when they were published in Naples, for “*viola o vero lauto*” (vihuela or lute.)

Instrumentation of the Tenshō Embassy

The lute, the harpsichord or chamber organ, and the harp were part of the continuo group in the rising genre of Baroque opera. These instruments were also used, alone or in combination, to accompany sung Masses by mid-sixteenth century, in Europe and in Japan. How does the rebec fit in? This outdated Medieval instrument might have been brought to Japan for the general fascination with sound made by a bow – the Japanese did not have an equivalent of the Chinese *erhu* in their *gagaku*. Another possibility is suggested by the tombstone of Conrad Paumann (c.1410-1473) at Munich's Frauenkirche, which shows the instruments played by Europe's most famous multi-instrumentalist of the 15th century as lute, portative organ, harp, recorder and *rebec*. Paumann is credited with inventing German lute tablature, which implies he wrote history's first (polyphonic) lute solos. His highly successful visits in 1470 to Milan, Mantua and Naples could have far ranging influences on the teaching and practice of that instrumental group.

The vihuela, Renaissance lute, and modern 6-string guitar

The vihuela was tuned exactly as the Renaissance lute. Strings are paired as *courses*, with the 5th and 6th courses on both lute and vihuela consisting of a fundamental bass and its octave. Current research indicates that the 4th course of a vihuela is tuned in unison while that of the 6-course lute is again the fundamental plus its octave. With a smaller soundboard and less volume in its resonance cavity, the vihuela lags the lute in volume and depth. Its response is however quicker, with more directivity and transparency due to its flat back, as emphasized by Tinctoris (*De inventiones*, Naples ca.1481-83.)

As stated by Miguel de Fuenllana in his anthology *Orphenica Lyra* (1554), and Juan Bermudo in his book *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (1555), a vihuela with its outer (top and bottom) courses removed was a *guitarra*. By 1580 the bottom course was restored, and the resulting 5-course *guitarra barroca* retained that form until mid-eighteenth century, when a sixth bass course was added. But by then players were tired of double stringing and the instrument transitioned into 6 single strings, and the modern guitar as we know it was born. Coincidentally, this new instrument was made popular by luthiers in Naples in the 1790s, about 3 centuries after the conjectured birth of the Spanish vihuela in the same place.

Portuguese vihuela music and instruments

No Portuguese vihuela music has survived. We know, however, that a large part of the vihuela song repertory, the *villancico*, was musically and linguistically shared between Spain and Portugal. Milán's *Falai mina amor* is one such Portuguese villancico. As sixteenth-century Jesuits always commenced their voyage from Europe to Asia at Lisbon, purchasing a vihuela before boarding would have been logical and convenient. In fact, vihuela scholar John Griffiths has unearthed a document, *Do Regimento dos Violeiros* (Lisbon,1572) with detailed information on the services and professional standards of the

vihuela makers. By the time of the Tenshō Embassy, Lisbon was known for the quality of its vihuelas, exemplified by the instruments of Belchior Diaz, its most famous *violeiro*. To this day, the vihuela-shaped Spanish guitar is called *violão* in Portugal and Brazil, with the name *guitarra* reserved for the Portuguese guitar, a metal-strung folk instrument with a different shape and history. In Malaysia, the Phillipines and many parts of Indonesia the name “biola” refers to the violin, whose introduction is credited to the Portuguese in the 17th century. The most concrete footprint of the classical vihuela in Asia seems to be in Macau, where in addition to the aforementioned Jesuit records we also find surviving 16th and 17th century churches with acoustics highly sympathetic to this delicate instrument. In November 2014 I had the opportunity to play the vihuela in the Guia Chapel (1637) and the *Igreja de Santo Agostinho*, where part of the original 1591 structure survives. Both spaces amplify the vihuela acoustically, making it effortless to play.

Suggestions for further reading

Printed resources:

David Waterhouse: *Southern Barbarian music in Japan*: pages [351]-377 in *Portugal e o mundo: o encontro de culturas na música = Portugal and the world: the encounter of cultures in music* / Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, coordinator/editor. Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1997. (ISBN 972201353x, bilingual edition)

The Japanese mission to Europe, 1582-1590: the journey of four samurai boys through Portugal, Spain and Italy / Michael Cooper. Folkstone: Global Oriental, 2005. (ISBN 1901903389)

De missione legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam curiam. English. Japanese travellers in sixteenth-century Europe : a dialogue concerning the mission of the Japanese ambassadors to the Roman Curia (1590) / edited and annotated with an introduction by Derek Massarella ; translated by J.F. Moran. Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate ; London : For the Hakluyt Society, 2012 (ISBN 190814503X)

The Southern Barbarians: the first Europeans in Japan / edited by Michael Cooper. Tokyo, Palo Alto: Kodansha International [1971] (ISBN 0870111388)

A vision betrayed : the Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742 / Andrew C. Ross. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, c. 1994. (ISBN 0883449919)

Luis Milán on sixteenth-century performance practice / Luis Gásser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996 (ISBN 0253210186)

The lute in its historical reality / Mimmo Peruffo. [Milan?]: Tg Book, 2012 (no ISBN)

Online resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40bgbiYIZE8> My performance of Narváez, Milán and Mudarra taped on 21 November 2014 at the *Igreja de São José* in Macau. Although it was built in 1758, the acoustics still has that beneficial reverberation which amplifies the lone vihuela and lets it fill this immense space.

<http://www.vihuelademano.com/index.html> Luthier Alexander Batov's (Lewes, UK) website, with several interesting articles and many beautiful photographs of how far historical copying can be carried.

<http://www.lutesandguitars.co.uk/htm/cat12.htm> Luthiers Barber & Harris of London provide pictures of the Cité de la Musique E.0748 vihuela, an anonymous instrument in the “fluted back” style of Belchior Diaz, the preeminent Lisbon violeiro contemporary with the visit of the Tenshō Embassy.

Franklin Lei 黎宗岐

Franklin Lei grew up in Hong Kong. He studied engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, followed by postgraduate work at the University of California at Davis. His avocation the guitar led him to consider a conservatory education. Subsequently Franklin received his training on both Renaissance and Baroque lutes from their greatest pioneers in the 20th century – Michael Schäffer of Cologne’s Musikhochschule Rheinland, Eugen Müller Dombois and Hopkinson Smith of Switzerland’s Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

Thereafter he performed on 4 continents for more than 2 decades, at events such as Tage Alter Musik Regensburg, Maulbronner Klosterkonzerte, Melbourne Autumn Music Festival, and the Berkeley Festival. He recorded CDs for the Marco Polo, Naxos and Stradivarius labels, in addition to broadcasts for Bavarian Radio, South German Radio, Radio Television Hong Kong, BRT Brussels, and NPR in Washington DC. During 1986-1994, he was lute instructor at the Music Department of Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In 2004 Franklin accepted a position with the University Library at Berkeley, and retired from concert tours. Then in 2013, an invitation to perform at his alma mater of King’s College in Hong Kong rekindled Franklin’s musical career. He toured Hong Kong in November of 2013, 2014 and 2015. He has also performed at every biennial Berkeley Festival Fringe since 2004, under the auspices of Trinity Chamber Concerts.

Franklin’s most challenging and satisfying research project to date - on the proliferation of Western music in 16th century Japan and Macau – was the theme of his vihuela touring program of November 2014. In both 2014 and 2015 Franklin was invited to have his performances videotaped at Macau’s *Igreja de São José*, a Baroque church from 1758 and an UNESCO World Heritage site. These performances on vihuela (2014) and on nineteenth century guitar (2015) are available on YouTube. Tonight’s performance will be repeated on November 15th at the Institut für Musikwissenschaft, Innsbruck University, followed by a roundtable on East-West musical encounter with the ethnomusicologists of Innsbruck.



6-course vihuela de mano in g' by Daniel Larson, 1997