

The “16+1” Silk Road Echoes of The Imperial Bells of China: The Confucius Metaphor of Bianzhong Sounds

Frosina Vitkovska^{1,*}, Laijin Shen¹

Department of Law & Humanities and Social Sciences, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China

** corresponding author*

Keywords: “16+1”, Silk Road, Imperial Bells of China, Confucius

Abstract: *Bianzhong or The Imperial Bells of China* is the unique major discovery in the world; is a crystallization of the highest height of the ancient wisdom of the Chinese people and the best embodiment of the pride of the Chinese nation; is the best presentation of the nucleus of the Chinese culture - the culture of *Jingchu*, the cradle of all the spiritual and material treasures inherited in the process of the long history of development of Hubei province. 2013 the reanimation button for the longest route on the earth - *The Silk Route* pressed by the president Xi haven't brought only the rejuvenation of China and its nation, but the rejuvenation of the whole world; the release of “*The Dream of China*” has turned the course of the world to a new chapter of the history of mankind; “*The Stories of China*” has met with the new stages for telling and retelling itself, for delivering the message of the silk, and for showcasing the scene behind the wisdom hidden in the trails left by *The Ancient Silk Road*. By giving apply of the mediums that the world is given by the galloping developments in this new stage of the mankind history, the “16+1” Mechanism and the “16+1” Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Centre are offering a page for *Bianzhong's* display in the book of the bilateral collaboration between China and CEECs where the inscriptions of its bells will be kept alive and its echoing will give the pleasure to the CEECs audience to listen to the voice of the silk and feel the truth of its testament left by our predecessors for keeping the world bounded with peace, harmony, prosperity, win-win cooperation, mutual understanding, multi-field exchanges, growing together in all the meanings – the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds, that will become one of “*The Dream of China*” realisation fragments of its glorious charm that will be worth of being reminisce right there from the shared future of Hubei and CEECs.

1. Introduction

“A museum is a huge school.” “Cultural relics carry forward splendid civilization, inherit the history and culture, and maintain the national spirit” [3] of a nation and a country. “We should attach great importance to the study of history, let cultural relics speak and tell people the wisdom of history, inspire our national pride and confidence, and strengthen the confidence and

determination of all the people to rejuvenate China and realize the Chinese dream”[3] for a joined world of peace and harmony, mutual understanding, win-win cooperation, multi-field exchanges, growing together in all the meanings in a world of shared future of mankind, peace and prosperity – the testament of the road of the silk. By taking advantage of the “era of new progress, push forward the transformation of the creative and innovative development of the Chinese civilisation, activate its vitality; leaping over the time and space beyond the country, full of the eternal charm carry on the value of the cultural spirit; let the collections of the cultural relics in the museums that are displaying the heritage of our vast land and the words written in the ancient books come to life; let the Chinese civilisation with the colourful civilisations created by the people from the other countries provide the right spiritual guidance and powerful spiritual motivation for the mankind”.[3] *Bianzhong* or *The Imperial Bells of China* is the unique major discovery in the world; is a crystallization of the highest height of the ancient wisdom of the Chinese people and the best embodiment of the pride of the Chinese nation; is the best presentation of the nucleus of the Chinese culture - the culture of *Jingchu* – “the cradle of all the spiritual and material treasures inherited in the process of the long history of development of Hubei province”[5]; occupying the frontier place in the history of human culture, music, science and technology nowadays *Bianzhong* is the ambassador for enhancing the friendship between China and the world and for promoting cultural exchange; it displays the *Jingchu culture* “age long history, abundant connotation, unique local characteristics and the huge potential for economic and cultural exploitation”.[5]

2013 “the reanimation button for the longest route on the earth - *The Silk Route* pressed by the president Xi haven’t brought only the rejuvenation of China and its nation, but the rejuvenation of the whole world”[5]; the release of “*The Dream of China*” has turned the course of the world to a new chapter of the history of mankind; “*The Stories of China*” has met with the new stages for telling and retelling itself, for delivering the message of the silk, and for showcasing the scene behind the wisdom hidden in the trails left by *The Ancient Silk Road* that “opened a new window for friendly exchanges between countries, wrote a new chapter for the human progress and development and accumulated the silk road spirit featuring peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit and win-win results that remains a precious heritage of the human civilization”.[3]

The “16+1” *Mechanism* and the “16+1” *Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Centre* established in its frame in Macedonia, the platforms that come out of *The One Belt One Road Initiative* (hereinafter *BRI*) for cooperation of China with the sixteen Central and Eastern Europe countries (hereinafter *CEECs*) has become the main path bridging the culture of China with the diversity of beauty of the cultures of those sixteen counties of Europe; the main door for *Jingchu culture* stepping out its “*Walk Out*” walks for sowing the seeds of *Jingchu* as Hubei’s “*Image of China*” and its “*Visit Card*” to the world all along the routes of the silk across the *CEECs*; has become the main frequency for listening the mesmerizing echoing of the *Imperial Bells of China* and feeling “*The spirit for forging ahead with hard work and self-improvement, The spirit for being enterprising and innovative, The spirit for embracing everything that is useful and The spirit for advocating armed and loving patriotism for the motherland*”[5] as the main spiritual characteristics of *Jingchu* that “are lying down on the base of *BRI* and are being the main stream for driving on the world along the new path of the mankind history”[6]; and the screen for *Bianzhong*’s display of “*The First Bronze Smelting and Casting in the history of mankind, The First Silk Embroidery Weavings, The First Wood-bamboo Lacquer Works, The Chu Art and Music, The Laozi and Zhuangzi philosophy, Qu Yuan’s Literature*”[5]of the culture “rooted back deeper than three thousand years in the history”, “named by the *State of Chu* and the *Chu* people”, “at first a local culture that was rising in the *Han River* region from *West Zhou Dynasty* (1066 – 256 BC) to *Spring and Autumn Period* (770 – 476 BC)”[5], after on “the *Chu* people” that “have developed in a

distinctive local southern multicomponent culture in the *Jiangnan* region” “that has reached the peak of the culture development in the history of the human civilization”[5] and is being the firmest foundation of the road of the silk.

By giving apply of the mediums that the world is given by the galloping developments in this new stage of the mankind history, the “16+1” *Mechanism* and the “16+1” *Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Centre* are offering a page for *Bianzhong*’s display in the book of the bilateral collaboration between China and CEECs where the inscriptions of its bells will be kept alive and its echoing will give the pleasure to the CEECs audience to listen to the voice of the silk and feel the truth of its testament left by our predecessors for keeping the world bounded with peace, harmony, prosperity that “will become one of “*The Dream of China*” realisation fragments of its glorious charm that will be worth of being reminisce right there from the shared future of Hubei and CEECs”[6] that will trigger the flourishing of their “win-win cooperation, mutual understanding, multi-field exchanges, growing together in all the meanings”[6]; “will play a leading role for the upgrading of Hubei’s international image and its international influence in those countries and for increasing their economic level to a higher pedestal of expanded development”[5] in that joined world that our forefathers were dreaming of.

2. “*The Story of The Imperial Bells of China*”

Since being unearthed, found intact in May 1978 in Suizhou, Hubei province, crowned as “*an unique treasure among the world wonders*” and “*The Eighth Wonder of the Ancient World*”, after more than 2400 years of underground sleep, reflecting its glorious beauty on the daylight, the *Zenghou Yi’s Bianzhong* or as it is worldwide known the *Imperial Bells of China*, kept in the Hubei Provincial Museum is the best witness of the wisdom of the Chinese people and their great achievements in bronze casting, music science and technology, holding the story of a man that was contemporary of *Confucius*, known to history only as the *Marquis Yi of Zeng* - one of the minor states under control of the major *State of Chu* (1042 – 223 BC) in the *Warring States Period* (475–221 BC), now part of the present-day Hubei province. He past away in 433 BC and was laid to rest in his four-room tomb stocked with his most prized possessions of approximately 15000 cultural relics including gold dishes, jade jewellery, lacquered suitcases, musical instruments, bronze weapons, 13 sacrificed young women, a dog and most famously, sent by *King Hui* of the *State of Chu* to the *Marquis Yi of Zeng* for his perpetual use, an enormous set of 65 various sized, with weights range from 4.2 to 203.6 kg, manifesting the diversity of the bells, oblate in shape, bronze chime-bells that each of them can produce two notes and a complete scale of 12 notes to the octave is available with a musical range very close to that of the piano, which sounds unlike the western bells fade away quickly; inscribed by 3700 words and embossments delicately inlaid in gold documenting the surprisingly sophisticated music theory for ancient orchestras over 2000 years ago; weighing 4t; with height of 3.5m; long 9m; mounted on a lacquered wooden frame arranged in an L shaped configuration in three tiers into a single musical instrument that likely required five people to be played; visually impressing the viewer not only with its grandeur but with its refinement and complexity.

Nothing is known about *Marquis* or his *State of Zeng*, the *Bianzhong* buried with him is the biggest, finest and the most complete set of chime-bells; the earliest instrument in the world that could play the all twelve half tones; a perfect combination of technology, science and music yet to be discovered. “It is extremely rare in the world cultural history to find such exquisite musical instruments of over 2000 years ago, and the chimes can still be played with a beautiful timber and wide range after being buried for so many years. It is the embodiment of our great achievement in bronze casting”, the “proficiency in music science and the wisdom” [9] of the Chinese people.

“Chinese chime-bell, one of the greatest inventions in Chinese history, is an ancient musical instrument that is well tuned and carefully crafted. Once the symbol of authority and rank, Chinese chime-bell was a luxurious installation in palace or ceremony, entertaining the nobles with the elegant sounds and pleasing appearance. Dated back to around fifth century BC, Chinese chime-bells show not only the craftsmanship of Chinese civilization, but also the music knowledge of the past.”[2] “The bells are so well preserved that the music they can still make is not believed to be appreciably diminished from the time they were interred.”[8] “Study of the bells and other instruments uncovered in the fifth century BC tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng promises a contribution to the fields of history of science, technology, and culture of such magnitude that it should command the attention of experts in many fields around the world.”[7]

After its excavation the original *Bianzhong* was very strictly preserved and only sounded for three times. August 1st, 1978 musicians from the *Ministry of Culture of Peoples' Republic of China* have arrived in Suizhou to carefully examine the sound of the all 65 bells, at a hall of a local artillery division, after 2400 years of silence *Bianzhong* has sent the world its eternal romantic sound for the first time. The second time was in 1984 for the celebration of the 35th anniversary of new China, and in 1997 for the celebration of the return of Hong Kong to China after 100 years of British rule for the third time. However, for *Jiang Guiying*, head of a performing troupe, *Bianzhong* represents more than scientific wonder, and she felt that keeping it in the museum is like a second entombment; she dreamed of allowing it to speak again in their own way, to hear the music that Confucius might have heard and 1983 her dream resulted in a carefully constructed reproduction - a spectacular re-creation of the ancient culture in music, song and dance. Since then the two replicas are touring the world and are being an active envoy of cultural exchange on the road of the silk.

3. The Silk Road Echoes of The Imperial Bells of China

“After the Chinese president Xi Jinping at the *18th National Congress* emphasized the importance of the self-confidence in the culture as a country's and a nation's soul and its importance as an essential, deep, lasting strength and the core for imprinting a new chapter of the national renaissance for the development of a country and its nation brighter future, *Hubei Provincial Government* and the *Hubei Provincial Department of Culture* have implemented various measures and included different approaches for boosting the *Jingchu culture* “*Walk Out*” walks along the *Silk Road* as its “*Image of China*” and its “*Visit Card*” to the world.” [6] The glory and the romantic charm of *Jingchu culture* has become one of the main objectives of the various project overtaken and conducted by the expert and scholars engaged in the *BRI* “devoted to the carrying on the message of the *Silk Road*” [6]. In the frame of the platform “*Jingchu Culture Walk Out*” the *Imperial Bells of China* has got the role of main diplomatic bridge between China and the world for spreading the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds for a harmonious society; as the core of his teachings as the writer and expert on modern China, *Isobel Hilton* has mentioned in her works - “*Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without*”; “*that men could best be governed by virtue, by benevolence, by righteousness, and if the leader exemplified those virtues, then so would his people*”.

After its first time echoing beyond China in 1989 heard by the audience in North America the *Imperial Bells of China* has been echoing the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds in Japan, Britain, Germany, France and 57 more other countries and regions; by its charm captivating the audiences around the world. January 2016 the *Imperial Bells of China* has made their first “*Journey of Civilization and Harmony*” to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran during the president Xi's visits to those countries and for the first time has landed on the Africa continent by not only conveying the development vitality of China today, but also bringing the wisdom of the 5000 years of Chinese

civilization – the soul of the road of the silk. After on in May 2016 the *Imperial Bells of China* has left its first echoes of the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds for the ideal society in the Australian land; by reflecting the diversity but also the harmony that's being created when each different bell is perfectly tuned and played in its proper sequence, where everyone in their allotted place is making music with their fellows. As a part of the cultural events “*Experience China*”, July 2017 the *Imperial Bells of China* shipping for the first time overseas via *China – Europe Wuhan Railway* unveiled in Berlin at the *G20 Summit* the glorious charm and beauty of *Jingchu*.

On the “*Jingchu Culture Silk Road Journey*” *Hubei Provincial Museum Chime Bells Orchestra*, *Wuhan Chime Bells Youth College Orchestra* and *Hubei Opera and Dance Theatre* devotion to sowing the enduring charm of *Bianzhong* across the world has made significant contributions in the mutual cultural understanding and have brought the foreign audience closer to the Chinese civilization; by giving *Bianzhong* stages for telling “*The Stories of China*” has brought “*The Dream of China*” closer to its realization in a joined world of shared future in peace, harmony, prosperity – the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds.

4. The “16+1” Echoes of *The Imperial Bells of China*

On the path of the silk *Strengthening the Cultural and People-to-people Bonds* was one of the main objectives of the *Twelve Measures* that China 2012 at the *1st Summit of China and Central and Eastern Europe Countries* put forward for promoting the friendly cooperation with the CEECs, that in the past five years have deepen their friendly and cooperative relations; have conducted close exchanges and cooperation at the top level in partly affairs, science, technology culture, that resulted in plenty of fruitful achievements in the bilateral relations between both; “has tightened the China - CEECs relationship bindings of the silk, remained since the very roots bridging the time and the distance in between the very far East and very far West lasting and unbreakable just like the silk in its nature – the strongest and untearable thread. Culture has been seen as the unique and the rightest language for keeping on the dialogue between China and CEECs ongoing and the main medium for carrying on the echoing of the message of the silk for a united world of peace and harmony, prosperity, flourishing and upgrading in all the fields, mutual growing in all the meanings in a world of shared future and mutual celebration of the win-win relationship”. [6]

Following the *Confucius* metaphor of *Bianzhong* sounds for a harmonious society – “*as a consequence of virtuous individuals working together in a complementary way*”, the “*16+1 Mechanism*” that come out of the *BRI* for cooperation of China with the sixteen Central and Eastern Europe countries “with the joint efforts of the 17 participants annually have been announced guidelines for cooperation and have been built platforms for exchanges in the fields of economy, trade, investment, education, agriculture, transportation, tourism, science and technology, health, think tanks, local cooperation, youth and has offered itself for being the main stage for welcoming the culture of China with the diversity of the culture beauty of these sixteen countries of Central and Eastern Europe” [6]; has become “the main tools that have provided a pleasant climate for the blossoms of the buds of *Jingchu* in CEECs and the main medium for telling “*The Stories of China*” – the message of the silk and the main force for carrying on its power for keeping the world in a unity of harmony and peace beyond the time and the distance” [6]; has offered *The Imperial Bells of China* the “*16+1 Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Centre*” established in its frame in Macedonia for being its main screen for putting on display its everlasting charm and has given the audience of these sixteen countries of Europe the honour for admiring the beauty of the highest technological achievement in metallurgy in the history of mankind; for listening the contemporary music of the *Confucius* time of the earliest unique music instrument that could play the all twelve

half tones; and for witnessing the wisdom of the advanced science development of the ancient Chinese civilization.

2018 marks the 6th birthday of the “16+1” Mechanism. In spite of its five years of its youth has revealed new opportunities for sub-regional win-win cooperation and has been displaying different directions and ways for building the shared future of China and CEECs. In its very youth *Bianzhong* has gained a new dimension for showing and sharing the glory of Hubei’s culture in which land have been cultivated the very roots of the culture of China where 1978 has come back to life its story and right since then has begun the revealing of the wisdom engraved in “*The Stories of China*”.

By giving apply of the “16+1” Mechanism and the “16+1” Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Centre as the main stages for welcoming the Chinese culture and the diversified beauty of the cultures of those sixteen CEECs; for multiplying the *Jingchu culture* “Walk Out” walks trails; for admiring *Bianzhong* gorgeousness and feeling the pleasure of the everlasting joy that its echoes are leaving behind; is promised the continuous pace of the ongoing dialogue between China and CEECs.

Along the world’s walks on the road of the silk “we need to build international capacity, innovate the way of external publicity and strengthen the construction of the discourse system; we need to create new concepts, new categories and new expressions that integrate China with the foreign countries and tell The Stories of China”. [3] “It is necessary to strengthen the protection and utilization of cultural relics, strengthen historical research and inheritance, so that the excellent Chinese traditional culture will be kept alive”. [3] “We should not only be satisfied with appreciating their artistic expression of the people's life in the past, but also let the underlying spirit come alive” [3] - has proposed president Xi in his comments on international communication and on the protection of the cultural relics. By preserving well and protecting the tangible and intangible heritage left as a testament to us from our predecessors, and by giving apply of the new technologies for creating different digital forms and mediums for their showcasing to the world *Jingchu culture* has made its firsts walk “Walk Out” walks , accompanied by the *Bianzhong* echoes has taken the spirit of the *Confucius* metaphor of its sounds to CEECs and has “let the world measure it by the measure of its value and its self-confidence”. [5]

In the pace of “the technological and scientific galloping development the all human in the world have become not only connected by nature, but by the technology as well which now days has decreased the time of walking *The Silk Road* and has increased the speed of the China - CEECs culture dance”. [5] *Bianzhong* has been given a play as an important support in the bilateral collaboration between Hubei and CEECs and has taken the leading role for the upgrading if their economic level to a higher pedestal of expanded development; its continuously echoes of telling “*The Stories of China*” all the way from the very far China to the very far CEECs has continued its creation of one of the most beautiful fragments of “*The Dream of China*” realization which reminiscing will be giving the same pleasure of harmony and peace right there from the shared future of Hubei and CEECs on the celebration of their win-win cooperation.

5. Conclusion

“*The Ancient Silk Road* opened a new window for friendly exchanges between countries, wrote a new chapter for the human progress and development and accumulated The Silk Road spirit featuring peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit and win-win results that remains a precious heritage of the human civilization.” [3]

Jingchu culture is the nucleus of the Chinese culture; is the “*Image of China*” and it’s “*Visit Card*” to the world; is the spiritual power of Hubei province that “is playing a leading role in the

rejuvenation of China and the renaissance of the Chinese nation and the future of its people; it has left timeless trails to the world that have continued echoing all along the road of the silk up today and right in the future, causing the world to see the true value of the China's voice right there in its roots".[6]

Enhancing the *Bianzhong* echoes "Walk Out" to CEECs will give a birth to a better and flourishing multi-field exchange and cooperation between Hubei and the sixteen countries of Central and Eastern Europe; "will give a play as an important support in the collaboration between Hubei and CEECs and will play a leading role for the upgrading of China's international image and its international influence in those countries and for increasing their economic level to a higher pedestal of expanded development"[5]; will be narrating "The Stories of China"; by sowing the seeds of *Jingchu* culture will become one of the "The Dream of China" realisation fragments on the Hubei - CEECs road of peace, harmony, prosperity, opening up, innovation – the *Confucius* metaphor of *Bianzhong* sounds.

References

- [1] China – CEEC Think Tanks Network <http://16plus1-thinktank.com/index.html>
- [2] Chh-wei, W., Chih-fang, H., *An Innovative Way to Implement Chinese Chime-bell Sound Synthesis*
- [3] Database of President XI Jinping Series of Important Speeches <http://jhsjk.people.cn/>
- [4] Frosina, V., Lai-jin, S., (2018) *From The Old Silk Road to The New Silk Road Era: Promoting of Chinese Culture in Republic of Macedonia, ISCCD2018*
- [5] Frosina, V., Lai-jin, S., (2018) "16+1" Showcase of Jingchu Culture Self-confidence, ESSAEME2018
- [6] Frosina, V., Lai-jin, S., (2018) *The Role of "16+1" Jingchu Culture "Walk Out" Walks: The Case of Macedonia, ICEMAESS2018*
- [7] Kenneth, J., (1987) *Comment on the Bronze Chime Bells of the Marquis of Zeng: Babylonian Biophysics in Ancient China. De Woskin University of Michigan J. Social Biol. Struct., 329-341*
- [8] Michael, L., Nicolette, S., Stanley, S., (2011) *In Search of the Ancient Harmonizing Power of Musüic: The Chinese Connection*
- [9] Yu-qian, J., Shu-xiang, R., Shan, T., Zhi-gang, S., (2011) *Progress and Civilization in Ancient China, BCAS Vol. 25 No. 1*