

Music of the World

Chordophones: Asian Zithers

The **Se** 古瑟 was very important in Chinese history dating back as far as 771 BC. As legend goes, the Se was created by Fuxi, a mythological hero. Se was an instrument reserved for rituals and offerings. The strings were made of silk.

<https://io9.gizmodo.com/an-ancient-musical-instrument-has-been-discovered-in-ch-1678205750>

The Chinese **Zheng** or **Guzheng** 箏 is zither that has 21, 25 or 26 strings and was derived from the Se. The Gusheng is a plucked instrument using either by fingers or use of a plectra (or pick) or combination.



For more than 2,500 years this Chinese instrument has been in existence. It uses the pentatonic scale. The oldest specimen is dated around 475-221 BC and by the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) when it was the most popularly played instrument. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujzMHLac404>

The **Gayageum** is a Korean zither, originally having twelve strings



but more recent versions having 18 to 25 strings. The bridges are movable for tuning.

There is no real standard for tuning, but

there are variable patterns that are generally used and the key center

is usually G, C or Bb. It is the most popular of Korean instruments, being played for court music, accompanying dance or song. *Sanjo*, which means “scattered melodies” evolved in the 19th century using the **Gayageum** sometimes includes improvised music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l07AsF8U4B8>



The Japanese **Koto** (箏) is derived from the Zheng. The national instrument of Japan, the Koto was first introduced around the 7th or 8th century for the wealthy to use for court music. It has 12-25 strings and bridges and has undergone many changes throughout the years. The parts of the Koto have dragon names traditionally. Here is *Sakura* (Cherry Blossoms):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDTp_YQizqE



The Mongolian **Yatga** varies in size but is similar to the Guzheng. One end is on the floor and the other is on the lap while the player uses the right hand to pluck the strings and the left hand to place pressure on the strings and also play the bass notes.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nL1uTlhR1w>