

## FROM THE SANXIAN TO MUSIC OF CHINA by Hei-Tung Chan

### What is the *sanxian*?

- \* *sanxian* 三弦 = “three” + “string”
- \* a Chinese three-stringed long neck fretless plucked lute
- \* its root can be traced back to 2000 years ago
- \* generally believed it was invented during the construction of the Great Wall
- \* from a paddle drum to a string instrument
- \* famous for its accompanying role in traditional narrative singing performances



### Types of the *sanxian*:

- \* *xiao sanxian* (small *sanxian*) and *da sanxian* (large *sanxian*)
- \* the small *sanxian* is common in the southern China, whereas the large model is prevalent in the north

### Listening examples:

- \* *Shibaban* 十八板 (Eighteen Beats)—*sanxian* solo  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-kSc4ivsvY>
- \* *Heitu ge* 黑土歌 (Song of the Black Earth)—*sanxian*, narrative singing and Chinese orchestra  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRYdsxRI0Hw>

