Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), who served the last Ming and the first two Qing emperors, might be the best witness to the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. He had this to say about the young Kangxi emperor (born in 1654 and became emperor in 1662):

Ce jeune prince, infatigable au travail, d’un esprit curieux, d’une intelligence prompte et solide, avait un penchant décidé pour les sciences. Pendant plus de cinq mois, il appela journellement le Père dans l’intérieur du palais; il l’y retenait la journée presque entière, pour recevoir de lui de leçons de mathématiques et surtout d’astronomie.2

Where he left off, the Jesuit chronicles Notices Biographiques et Bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de L’Ancienne Mission de Chine continued:

Il voulut que le P. Verbiest lui expliquât les six premiers livres d’Euclide traduits par le P. Ricci, et les autres ouvrages traduits en chinois par les Jésuites sur l’astronomie et les sciences exactes; afin de faciliter ses relations avec le savant missionnaire, il lui donna un de ses serviteurs pour que le Père apprit le tartare mandchou. Il se fit même donner des leçons de philosophie et de musique.3

Whether it was due to the purposeful guidance of Verbiest or the curious nature of the young prince himself, Kangxi asked the Jesuits many questions regarding European science and took lessons from them. Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) wrote much on this, as did Jonathan Spence.4 Mainland scholars have recently found Kangxi’s writing on mathematics, entitled “Essence of Mathematics”, and the special desk and calculation tools he used.5 Kangxi was also interested in music, which would lead to the introduction of European compositions and instruments, and the compilation of the Qing encyclopaedia of
music.\(^6\) Knowing that Kangxi liked music, Verbiest spoke of the talent of Philippus Maria Grimaldi (1639–1712) and Thomas Pereyra (1645–1708), who soon joined him in the Qing court upon Kangxi’s invitation. Verbiest was persuasive and Kangxi was pleased, as Jean Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743) remembered:

> In the year 1679 he (Kangxi) sent for P. Grimaldi and P. Pereira to play upon an Organ and the Harpsichord that had formerly presented him; he liked our European Airs, and seemed to take great Pleasure in them; then ordered his Musicians to play a Chinese Air upon their instrument, and played likewise himself in a very graceful manner.

> P. Pereira took his Pocket-book and pricked down all the Tune while the Musicians were playing, and when they had made an end repeated it without missing one Note, which the Emperor could scarcely believe his surprise was so great. He bestowed great Encomiums upon the Justness, Harmony, and Facility of the European Musick; but he admired above all, that the Father had learnt in so short a time an Air which had been so troublesome to him and his Musicians, and that by the Assistance of Characters he could recollect it at any time with Pleasure.

> To be more certain of this he put him to the Trial several times, and sung several different Airs, which the Father took down in his Book, and repeated exactly with the greatest Justness: It must be owned, cried the Emperor, the European Musick is incomparable; and this Father (speaking of P. Pereira) has not his Equal in all of the Empire.\(^7\)

The Jesuits were very proud of this episode, and this story is retold in several places in their chronicle.\(^8\) Pereyra was a gifted musician and could play Chinese music after hearing it just once, a feat which may be unsurprising to musicians themselves then and now, but which amazed Kangxi, who also heard the difference in notation. He was so enthralled that he established an institution where Chinese scholars and Manchu princes could learn from the Jesuits, and commissioned *Lu Lu Zhengyi* [律吕正义] or *The True Doctrines of Music*, a comprehensive work on music theory, instruments and practice, compiled by Pereyra and his successor Don Pedrini.\(^9\) The instrument Pereyra played was called a *clavecin*, which Jean-Baptiste Du Halde translated

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