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- A Han period storyteller's script
- Ynagzhou storyteller Ma Wei
- Late-imperial songs about overseas migration
- Song cycles of lake Tai (Jiangsu)
- Suzhou Ping-tan on radio
- Scripts for Laoting narrative drum singing
- Baojuan, recitation of precious scrolls

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Editor:

Frank Kouwenhoven

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Front cover: Yangzhou storyteller Ma Wei, performing 'Wu Song slays the Tiger'.
(Photo: Frank Kouwenhoven).

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From the Editor

A lifelong fascination with storytelling

'We don't know how to preserve old art forms. Some art forms preserve themselves, some don't. It has always been like that. Some things continue, some things die. So many, many things *do* die.' The words are spoken softly, in a blend of mild regret and quiet resignation. I am interviewing the Danish scholar of Chinese language and literature, Vibeke Børdahl, in the wooden house she occupies with her Norwegian husband Per on a hillside in Høvik just outside Oslo. We are sitting opposite one another in a study packed with books and photos. It's April 2018, we're experiencing what has been called Norway's severest winter in many years.

The dark sets in early and makes it virtually impossible for me to continue filming. The landscape outdoors is covered in snow. Fir trees, gardens, meadows, rooftops of wooden houses, everything disappears under a thick white layer or is crusted with icicles. The outside walls of the house are painted bright red, but the dusk obscures the colours, except for the yellow of brightly lit windows and lamp posts.

We're discussing Chinese storytelling, a rich and ancient realm of art, now ailing but still surviving with difficulty in many parts of the People's Republic. Vibeke: 'I wanted to find out: *what* is storytelling? Are these performers learning some books by heart? *What* is it exactly they are doing? How can I do research on this art, and find out what kind of language they are using, and how they build up their performances?'

It is partly through my acquaintance with Vibeke Børdahl that I began to take an interest in Chinese storytelling myself, and eventually did some marginal research on it. Chinese anthologies list up to some 600 different genres of storytelling which exist, or existed at one time, in the People's Republic. At some point in 2017, with the help of a research student (Zhu Tengjiao from Shanghai) I did a count of all those genres, and drew up an extended table, indicating specific names and locations. It is hard to know for some of these genres whether they still exist or are mere names from the past. In other cases, we know that they are on-going traditions, but exactly in what shape is not always clear. And exploring even one single genre can be a task for a lifetime. Indeed, Vibeke has spent much of her life studying storytelling and oral literature in China, with a specific focus on traditions in Yangzhou, and her work is on-going today. Getting on in age, she can no longer do the sort of extensive fieldwork that she used to undertake, but her archives of recordings, films and written remains of Yangzhou storytelling are inexhaustible. For her it is mainly a matter of priority how to spend the years left ...

Her books on Yangzhou Storytelling and on oral literature in China have earned her a devoted international readership, and her on-going productivity is truly prolific. At present she is completing a translation into Danish of the monumental late-16th century novel *Jin Ping Mei*, a kaleidoscopic tale about a merchant-military man and his family clan during the last decades of the Song Dynasty. The work is notorious for its bold sexual imagery and depictions of domestic intrigue, small-town decadence and corruption, but Vibeke strikes a note of caution: 'I believe people have a tendency to overemphasize and maybe even misinterpret the erotic aspects of the book. Danish media all shouted out about the 'dirty sex' in *Jin Ping Mei* when the first volumes came out. This was probably in a misplaced effort to help the sales of the book. But the content is so rich and diverse, and the erotic passages are part of the general probing into life in all its holes and corners. No stone is left untouched. Apart from that, I also think it is important to understand the erotic descriptions as part of



Vibeke Børdahl

the beauty of the novel, infusing the novel with a lust for life and a playfulness balanced against the hardships and right out evilness that is unveiled throughout society.’

The subject matter of the *Jin Ping Mei* (named after three main bondmaid-concubines who feature prominently in the novel) is so sensitive that its distribution was prohibited several times in China, and until recently it was viewed as *neibu* material, meaning that only limited numbers of readers in Communist China had access to full versions of it. At present it is, however, accessible in original full-length form in China on the internet. The book is an extraordinarily detailed and imaginative evocation of the life of a wealthy family in medieval times, and a veritable compendium of poems, operatic songs, descriptions of small-town trade, small-town gossip, exchanges between wives, mistresses and servants, and more. In some ways one might even call it a blueprint of Chinese culture throughout the ages, for there are striking similarities with certain characteristics of life, social behaviour and politics in modern Chinese society. So far, six sturdy volumes have appeared in Vibeke’s Danish translation, with four more to follow.¹

A translation project like this could easily be a person’s occupation for a lifetime, but Vibeke is undertaking a good deal more. In 2017, together with her colleague and friend Liangyan Ge, [* see his article in this volume] she produced a 742-page annotated English translation of ‘Western Han’, a storyteller’s script from the late Qing period. This was followed in 2019 by a version in English only (496 pp) of the same text, intended to make the story more accessible for the general reader.²

‘Now I just plod on, trying to finish my few pages a day’, says Vibeke about her on-going work on *Jin Ping Mei*. Certain episodes and many of the elements in the book also turn up in other epic tales, and in certain genres of Chinese oral performance. For example, the beginning of *Jin Ping Mei* is a spin-off from another classical novel, *Water Margin*. Essentially, the entire territory of narrative art and classical tales in China can be viewed as a continuum, where certain tales or isolated episodes travel from one novel or one region to the next, or from one genre to another. The same can be said about oral performances versus printed sources and literature: certain episodes or even overall structures of classical novels either started life or found pendants in oral narration.

Vibeke's Danish translation of *Jin Ping Mei* emphasizes the presence of 'the eternal storyteller' in the novel by printing in capital letters all the phrases in the story which appear to present an oral narrator's direct comments. 'I see my work of translation also as a way of doing research', says Vibeke, 'of testing certain ideas about the nature of the story. If there is time and energy left, I might write something about this after I finish the translation.'

She has done research and published numerous writings on Chinese storytelling, but she has also organized international meetings, inviting storytellers from China to share their views and art with scholars and students. The first time I remember her doing that was in Copenhagen in 1996. I attended the event and was deeply moved by the contributions of senior master narrators like Wang Xiaotang, Li Xintang and others, famous masters of the Wang-school of Yangzhou storytelling, inheriting the art of the legendary Wang Shaotang. They offered masterly and unforgettable performances of their age-old repertoires. There was also room for some splendid mockery of scholars' petty 'learned' comments about such things as performers' gestures or verbal twists! These artists evidently did not have their eyes in their pockets, and could observe scholars with the same explorative gusto as the scholars observed them!

Bringing artists and researchers together in one space sounds like an obvious thing to do, but is less common in academic circles than one might think. However, it is the model followed also at CHIME conferences, where we have always aimed at bringing together theoreticians, fieldworkers, practicing artists and aficionados, in the hope of reaching out to one another, and breaking new ground in the realms of music and musical understanding. So perhaps it was not such a big step to take up the challenge and to ponder the idea of a CHIME meeting specifically devoted to storytelling.

Nearly all the papers on storytelling and storysinging in this volume of the CHIME journal were initially presented at a special workshop organized jointly by Vibeke Børdahl and myself in Venice in October 2014. It was announced as a CHIME workshop, but with very generous financial and logistic support from the Cini Foundation, Venice University and other organizations.³ We managed to bring together eight performers and some twenty scholars from China, USA, Europe, Australia and elsewhere in what became a wonderful series of encounters.

The performances in Venice ranged from *nanyin* (classical southern love ballads) to *Suzhou tanci* (storytelling and -singing from Suzhou), from spoken and sung forms of Yangzhou storytelling to narrative music played instrumentally on



Gao Bowen and Liu Jinhua in concert at the Auditorium Santa Margherita.

guqin (classical seven-stringed zither). The academic papers presented went a good deal beyond that, covering a wider-ranging spectrum of historical or contemporary oral narrative genres. It was a wonderful event, helped very much by the congenial venue – the San Giorgio Monastery, on a little island not far from San Marco's Square – and by the good vibrations between all those who participated. The content of this volume gives a good indication of what was being offered. The great

performances, too, kept everyone alert and happy. Virtually no one could escape feeling impressed by the delicate quasi-meditative *nanyin* ballads sung and played by Cai Yayi. For contrast, there were vivid, country-and-western-like narrative ballads from Suzhou and Yangzhou with plucked strings as accompaniment, fine performances by Shen Zhifeng, Gao Bowen and Lu Jinhua. These were more folksy in character, but with many subtle twists. Then we had masterful spoken tales by senior



French storyteller Abbi Patrix in dialogue with Chinese nanyin performer Cai Yayi.

storyteller Ren Dekun and his younger colleague Ma Wei from Yangzhou, evocative even for people who could not follow along with the Chinese dialect (which I'm sure included many of us!).

One evening we presented a programme at the Auditorium Santa Margherita in the centre of Venice. There was no subtitling, and very little explanation for each item, but a few hundred Italians were listening spellbound a whole evening to stories told mostly in local Chinese dialect! It speaks for the qualities of the performers that they managed to reach out to the audience, though it must have felt mainly like 'music'

for those who came to listen. The energetic Ma Wei's contribution provoked frequent laughter. He is now considered by many to be 'the last of Mohicans' among Yangzhou storytellers. I interviewed him for the present issue of the CHIME Journal, as I became quite a fan of his performances (but who hasn't?). Other fine artists in Venice included qin player Dai Xiaolian from Shanghai, who added another dimensions by playing instrumental pieces inspired by Chinese tales, and – as an intriguing counterpoint – the French storyteller Abbi Patrix, who did some splendid acts in English. I am not sure what sort of impression Abbi made on his Chinese colleagues, but when he proposed to do a little joint project he found nanyin performer Cai Yayi more than ready to join him. Their collective improvisation found its way onto the stage of Santa Margherita and was very well received by the Venetians.

During a different moment in the conference, Abbi's tale (beautifully supported with hand-held drum) about his career and development as a storyteller in the Paris of the revolutionary late 1960s did not fail to impress all who attended it, and gave ample food for comparison with the backgrounds of Chinese

storytellers. He pointed at the classical sources that have survived of great storytelling traditions in the West, from Homer to the Edda, from the Bible to the Nibelungenlied and beyond. These sources mostly refer to oral performances that are long dead, so it was a fascinating discovery for Abbi Patrix that a country like China still fostered living, on-going traditions of oral performance, with close ties to China's classical literature. He said that he himself had been compelled to build his own repertoire of tales and his own career largely from a void, by inventing his own stories, style and idiom, since there was nothing much in terms of existing, living performances to go on. Abbi Patrix became one of the pioneers of a revival in storytelling in Western Europe. And now he was here in Venice, at

the invitation of Vibeke, to meet with major representants of oral narrative art from a very different part of the globe... However, it was not really his first encounter. On an earlier occasion Vibeke had already taken him along on one field trip to Yangzhou, and he had loved it.

Abbi Patrix's art emerged from a world of political turmoil, spontaneous speeches in theatres and public spaces in the Paris in the late 1960s. It was a revolutionary era, when people suddenly felt no



Audience at the storytelling and -singing events in Venice.

need for conventional entertainment anymore, and climbed onto stages and platforms to give out calls for action! This discovery, of a new kind of spontaneous stage 'art', that was not pre-scripted, not based on theatrical or musical conventions, but which came straight from the heart, inspired Patrix to become a storyteller. He strove for the very same capacities that gifted speakers at political rallies tend to demonstrate: powerful immediacy, intense contact with the audience, constant reference to things that directly matter to the listeners! One might be telling an old and familiar tale, perhaps something relating to strange and remote places, but in one way or another, the audience will need to feel involved, to get a sense that what they hear is actually about *them*, *about us*, *about ourselves*.

I had to think again of the wonderful mockery on the part of Li Xintang and his colleagues in Copenhagen, back in 1996, when (in *Yangzhou pinghua* style) they poked fun at the schoolish dry theoretical attitudes of the scholars who were present. They possessed that wonderful gift to provoke the audience and to connect with them, no less than Abbi Patrix demonstrates it today. But this talent also lives on, I believe, in the powerful 'presence' of such later performers as Ren Dekun and Ma Wei, in their special alertness and sense of timing, their abilities to crack profound jokes and to keep their audiences spellbound.

Sadly, I feel that these aspects are losing ground in many other present-day performances in the People's Republic: there is a great deal of petrification, now that storytelling has become an 'official' occupation, mostly developed on the basis of institutional professional training in art academies. It may have increased the number of trainees, but it has failed to reach new audiences or to stop the gradual decline of the art. I suspect that the institutes, though founded with the best of intentions, have contributed in no small degree to the decline of storytelling, rather than its sustenance. They have facilitated the implementation of censorship and control, particularly since the 1950s. There have been numerous measures and tendencies to abridge, rewrite, change and reduce repertoires, to

throw away stories which were considered vulgar or anti-Communist, and to standardize the entire field, to put it under state control and strict supervision to the point where it might become hard for artists to develop their own individual voices. Some artists have refused to comply, and some have spent time in jail or decided to leave China. Sadly, this is a little documented part of history.⁴

Storytellers of the past – during certain more relaxed periods – and certainly as late as in the 1920s and 30s – would have been able to take more risks, to make frequent bawdy jokes and direct references to politics and to public figures. Some of them were so popular and so successful that they constantly attracted full houses, earned loads of money and became local superstars, not unlike major pop stars today. A number of storytellers in Suzhou managed to buy a house with the earnings of a mere single month of performing. They wove vulgar jokes or political mockery into their tales and triggered considerable enthusiasm from their listeners.

Vibeke, during the interview in wintertime Høvik: ‘Well, there was always a dialogue between history and present times. In the way they were telling their stories there would always be references to the present. You needed to keep the humour in, you needed to maintain the direct contact with what was going on in your own society.’ But she is skeptical about the causes often given for the decline of storytelling in China, although she was able to witness many of the changes at first hand, in the years since she started her explorations in Yangzhou in 1986:

‘I don’t think political control has anything much to do with it. Society is changing, and the art is becoming something for elderly people. The young don’t see the point of listening to it anymore. But why? Ultimately, I think nobody can give you the answer. The Yangzhou storytellers themselves have been speculating about the decline of public interest for their art, they have already been discussing this for a long time. Nobody knows why it has gone this way, nobody knows. It used to be the daily entertainment of a great many people – children, youngsters, grown-ups of any age – but things have changed. Work conditions and time for leisure are different, and there are so many new avenues for entertainment, radio, TV, computers, mobiles. Maybe storytelling in China is turning into some kind of festival business, which it wasn’t before. And there are so many factors. At some point storytellers began to be heard on radio, and later television. They were very much appreciated on radio. But the media always influence the art. I don’t know where the idea comes from, but on television items must never be “boring”, “longish”. So, if you get storytelling on screen, the stories are never allowed to be longer than twenty minutes, that’s already considered lo-o-ong! But traditional storytelling used to be for two or three hours every day! The ability of the audience to listen and concentrate is different, so it seems. And this, of course, is also connected to the difference between a truly oral – face-to-face – performance, created on the spot, unique and never to be repeated again in the same form, and a recorded performance, forever fixed in the medium.’

Vibeke grew up in Ribe in South-Western Jutland, a picture-postcard place known as ‘the oldest town in Denmark’ (it was established in the early eighth century). Her father was a teacher of geography and natural sciences and an explorer who made extended trips as a botanist to Afghanistan. He was away for months and years, in 1947-49 for two years. Upon his return the family home would always entertain many guests who shared his interests in Afghanistan and Asia at large. Vibeke’s mother, a very good pianist, had no wish to follow a career in this field, but opted instead to become a teacher and use music in her work with children. The house was always full of music.

As a teenager, Vibeke sometimes acted as her father’s ‘secretary’: ‘I was reading aloud in English for him so he could type out his things without having to look at his manuscripts. I liked to do this, but at the same time I realized that I did not want to follow in his track. She explains, laughing: ‘I had a wonderful childhood, I loved my parents very much. But I knew very early that I wanted to *live a man’s life*, not a woman’s. Perhaps I wouldn’t have been able to formulate it like this at that time. But I had no wish to do all the things that women were supposed to do. Like many girls of my generation, I read all the children’s books about *boys*, and identified with the heroes of Mark Twain, Jules Verne,

Kipling and Jack London.’

In middle school she acquired solid knowledge of the ancient languages, ‘Greek, Latin, and all that’, and she loved it, but she was not clear how to take life further from there. In 1963, as a young girl, she went off to Germany to work as a caretaker of children at a Rudolf Steiner School, and then after six months moved on to Paris to work as *an au pair*. She studied some French, and then, one day, she noticed an advertisement on the wall of one of the corridors of Sorbonne University.

‘I saw, at Sorbonne, it was possible to... My! They were having CHINESE here! I saw their advertisement, and I was startled! I immediately wrote about it to my father. But at the very same time I received a letter from him, in which he told me that there was a new institute in Copenhagen where one could study Chinese! I had never thought of studying Chinese, but now, both of us arrived at this idea at the same time! Our letters had crossed, and it shows how close we were. It simply seemed to be a kind of ordained fate!’

Vibeke had not wanted to go on with Greek and Latin: ‘The idea of spending my life in libraries with dead languages did not appeal to me. But Chinese, a language even more distant and different than Greek and Latin, was another matter because it would be alive, and it would give access to an enormous culture.’

She embarked on the study of Chinese in 1964. She spent time studying in France with many famous professors of sinology and linguistics, but first in Copenhagen, where Søren Egerod had founded the University’s East Asian Institute in 1959. Egerod had followed in the footsteps of the great Bernhard Karlgren (1898-1978), the founding father of Chinese studies as a scholarly discipline in Scandinavia. Sadly, the Cultural Revolution in China made it virtually impossible for Westerners to travel to China for a number of years, but in 1972, after she finished her studies, Vibeke was able to join a group of Norwegians of the China Friendship Association on a trip to the People’s Republic. It led from Hong Kong to Liaoning. ‘It was a marvelous journey. We saw how peasants were living in the countryside, we visited factories, children’s gardens, schools...Of course, everything we saw was selected by the authorities as examples of well-functioning units. People we met were telling us that the Cultural Revolution was over, and that they had benefited so much from it. Perhaps it didn’t sound quite trustworthy. But what I got from that trip was that a lot of old culture in China still happened to be very much alive. Many things I had previously come across only in novels or short stories suddenly appeared in front of my eyes!’

During her study she had discovered linguistics as a field of particular interest. She focused on dialect studies and while in Paris she encountered a Chinese restaurant worker who spoke the Yangzhou dialect. She began to visit him every afternoon, studied his Yangzhou dialect, and eventually wrote her ‘big thesis’ – the rough equivalent of what later became a PhD – about the historical situation of the Yangzhou dialect, the sound system of the Yangzhou dialect vis-a-vis the old sound systems that could be reconstructed for ancient Chinese.

‘For Karlgren and Egerod, linguistic studies were the essence of sinology, and I had always been attracted most by the linguistic aspects. So, I became a disciple of the Karlgren ‘school’. As it turned out, there were not many who followed in their tracks at that time.’ Next, she got a position as an Assistant Professor of Chinese at the University of Aarhus. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of ‘revolutionary’ fervour not only in China but also in Europe: ‘The 68-movement came to my institute just when I started there. And the idea to study the phonology of a certain Chinese dialect now did no longer seem the right thing to do. One had a tendency to blame oneself as an ‘eccentric’ or even ‘feudal’ personality if one had such interests. Among my other interests were literature (I published several anthologies of Chinese short stories in the early 1970s), and so I turned to modern Chinese literature and literary theory and published a big anthology of Marxist literary theory in China.’

‘That’s still a far cry from Chinese storytelling?’ I commented to Vibeke’s tale, as we were sipping our tea in the now practically dark room.

She replied that, back then, she had slowly discovered that this particular work left her cold and tired, and exhausted both her body and soul. 'In that same period I discovered a different realm of literature that *did* catch my passion: I found that when I read the old literature from the novels of the Ming and Qing period and other kinds of classical literature it made me feel so happy! So then, as a next project, I compiled a little volume about the great Chinese novels to present to the Nordic readership. While I was working on that volume, selecting one or two chapters for translation from each of the most famous novels, I found out that there was always a storyteller's voice in those novels. This set me onto a very different trail of investigation. I found out that Yangzhou had a rich tradition of storytelling. I thought it had to be a thing of the past, something that had died out a long ago. For during all those years that I had been occupied with Chinese studies, I had never heard anybody talk about storytellers there! But then, in 1986, I travelled to Yangzhou for a brief visit, initially with the aim to investigate local jokes, since I thought jokes might be the only left-over from the oral arts of former times. But storytelling was still at the back of my mind, of course, and then I actually met with a storyteller, almost immediately when I got there! So, then I realized that they were *still* there, there was an on-going performance tradition in Yangzhou... in *my* dialect!'

The storyteller whom she had met, the popular Li Xintang, sent her a tape with the tale of *Wu Song defeating the Tiger*. 'So, my first study was a tale on a tape. I had never seen him perform it. He had performed only some very short jokes when I met him.'

The tape was the beginning of Vibeke's lifelong passion and fascination with Yangzhou storytelling. She was able to return to Yangzhou in 1989 for three months, to study the art more systematically. 'I did not study it because I thought that it might disappear. I just studied it because it was there and it was so wonderfully alive. In the beginning storytelling took place in a big storytellers' house in Yangzhou. A big theatre, and full of people! It has become smaller and smaller through the years, but it was a big theatre at that time. And the Yangzhou storytellers were really telling their tales for everybody, on a regular basis. And it cost so little, one or two *fen* (cents) only, to enter, and you'd bring your own tea leaves, and they'd pour you hot water, that was actually what you'd pay these few fen for, just to have hot water and drink your own tea. Nobody was dressed up, people were coming in their daily clothes, which were nothing fancy at that time.'

'And I wanted to find out: what is storytelling? I started with the tale of "Wu Song and the Tiger" – not yet realizing that for storytellers in the *Water Margin* tradition this episode is really their ABC – and then my project aimed at getting as many storytellers as possible to tell this same story, so that I could make comparisons. I also wanted to have other, different stories, so that my material could be compared with other stories, and how *they* were told. Some storytellers would tell episodes from *The Journey to the West*, others from *The Three Kingdoms*, or from *The Water Margin*... these were the three major stories, connected to the three most important 'storytelling schools' in Yangzhou.' [*A school of storytelling does not point to a building, but to a hereditary art, orally transmitted from master to disciple through centuries and boasting a specific style.] What became decisive for my studies were the friendships I established with not only storytellers, but also local scholars from Yangzhou who shared this interest, in particular Chen Wulou and Fei Li who gave me unstintingly of their knowledge and time.'

"Wu Song and the Tiger", although it is not the first episode in *Water Margin*, is always the story with which Yangzhou storytellers begin to learn the oral *Water Margin* repertoire, when they start on it as children or as youngsters. So, whenever I asked a new storyteller to tell it, I found that the beginning of the story would be amazingly similar, but after some minutes, they would begin to diverge. The disciples learned the beginning part by heart from their teacher, so there the formulaic part would be very tight. Once they got further into the story, you would get what is actually their art, which is the ability to tell a story on the spot. Not to *recite* something. To *create* something. But creation based on a lot of practice and imitation of oral performance.'

Vibeke has published her findings in a number of eminently readable and meticulously documented

books. What started off as a new passion became a lifetime occupation. The Venice workshop was a step along the way. I feel proud to be able to present the current collection of papers from that event as a special issue of the CHIME journal.

It is now five years since we came together on the island of San Giorgio. But this volume, too, is nothing more but another step, hopefully leading up to new projects.

This issue of CHIME is happily dedicated to the work and person of Vibeke Børdahl, who is such an inspiring scholar and heartwarming personality, and a friend to so many of us. The volume contains a further little vignette about Vibeke written by Lucie Olivova, who has cooperated a lot with her, and who shares her great interest in Yangzhou. Together they decided to establish a network of scholars working on different aspects of Yangzhou. This became the ‘Yangzhou Club’, a productive platform that triggered various conferences and resulted in several fine books, which are currently re-published in Chinese by the famous old Yangzhou publishing house, Quangling shushe.

And, to end on yet another productive note: academics never stop making plans. Several of the people who met in Venice are now brooding on plans to organize a follow-up meeting on the subject of Storytellers and Storytelling. All we need is a place as beautiful as Venice, and a new line-up of inspired masters and researchers to carry on the torch!

Frank Kouwenhoven

¹ For a review, see page 203 of this volume of CHIME.

² This version, illuminated with fine artwork, is appearing under the title *Han Xin's Challenge*, published (like its predecessor) by the NIAS Press in Copenhagen.

³ I got this impression from my interviews with many senior performers and researchers of Suzhou Tanci, including such distinguished scholars as Tang Lixin and Peng Benle (Shanghai). See also Stephanie J. Webster-Cheng – *Composing, Revising, and Performing Suzhou Ballads: A Study of Political Control and Artistic Freedom in Tanci, 1949-1964*, PhD diss., University of Pittsburg, 2008.

⁴ It took place under the auspices of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, CHIME, the University Ca'Foscari in Venice (Department of Asian and African Mediterranean Studies) and the Confucius Institute at Venice University. We set up a wonderful cooperation with our Italian colleagues Giovanni Giuriati, Nicoletta Pesaro, Sabrina Marengo and Chiara Picardi, without whose help the meeting could never have materialized.

My friend Vibeke

Lucie Olivová

(Chinese Seminar at Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

When Vibeke Børdahl had her seventieth birthday, I was asked to write a medallion about her. It is a pleasure and a commitment, too. I hope I will not overly confuse facts, for most of the things I will write about are based on my memory.

We first met in Autumn 1992, where else but in Yangzhou. Vibeke was based at Yangzhou University, carrying out a project on storytelling. I was based in Nanjing, and came over to Yangzhou libraries in search of some old books. It must have been somewhere on the campus that we met. I do not remember exactly. Yangzhou University did not take on foreigners at that time, with a few exceptions. She was one. There also was a couple of native English lecturers, disguised missionaries, in fact. And a technician from Siemens, a brilliant young man with no knowledge of Chinese. We had our lunches together in the canteen, at the table reserved for foreigners. What I do remember is that Vibeke generously offered that I could stay with her in her room, which was too spacy for one person. The next day, she took me to a performance of *pinghua*, we had a dish of the famous local dumplings, and we visited Chen Wulou, a scholar in the field of storytelling, to whom, she said, she was greatly indebted, a tiny, lively elderly man – as he seemed to me then.

Vibeke is Danish in origin. She lives in Høvik, a small woody place near Oslo, as she married a Norwegian and raised her family there. She studied sinology in France, with André Lévy among others. At first, she specialized in the Yangzhou dialect, and thereby got on to the topic of storytelling. It so happened that we kept meeting. At the EACS conference in 1994, briefly. In Taipei, the Center of Chinese Studies, in 1997. Together we went to Hsin-chu and called on Boris Riftin, another scholar whom she greatly admired. I knew Riftin from his visits to Prague. He was a folklorist, and lectured on the Romance of the Three Kingdoms at Ch'ing Hua University at that time. A month later, Vibeke asked me to join her for a trip to Tainan. It was on Guanyin's birthday, and at the Kaiyuan Monastery, splendid celebrations and feasts took place. Accidentally, the festival coincided with my birthday, too. I always think of that happening as of an omen of things to come.

Vibeke was interested in the chapter on Yangzhou storytelling from my dissertation. She read an abstract in English, and invited me to present it at a conference at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) at Copenhagen, in 1996. She organized the conference and notably invited five storytellers from Yangzhou to perform. This was an enormous task. They were elderly men, all of them for their first time abroad, and they came with their caprices and mutual professional rivalry. An ordinary person might have invited two at the most, but Vibeke invited no less

Vibeke Børdahl with her guest, dr. Hrdličková, in Oslo 2013. (Photo: Per E. Børdahl.)



five, and turned it into a success! She made it, although she had plenty of other things to take care of as well during the conference. It was amazing. She eventually also edited the proceedings of that conference, a volume published by Curzon, and dedicated to Chen Wulou and B. Riftin. She was infinitely patient when she guided me through my manuscript, my first scholarly article of an international scope, which needed a lot of advice and corrections. It was at this point that she became my guru, and that is how I have regarded her since.

We met again in Prague in 1999, at the CHIME conference. I think it was there that we first planned a conference in Yangzhou. But it was her idea, in the first place. As much as she had the courage to bring a group of storytellers to Copenhagen, she did not hesitate to organize a conference about Yangzhou in the town proper. She was very strong in her commitment, whereas I was doubtful. Be that as it may, the funding had been gained and the conference did take place. We addressed scholars 'from the four regions' and most of them came. The programme was conceived as 'tasting Yangzhou', each topical panel took place at an appropriate surroundings: papers on performing arts in a once private garden theatre, papers about books in the printing workshops, etc., the participants enjoyed famous local dishes in various restaurants, pleasure boats carried them to the Levelled Mountain, they met with local scholars, visited museums, and of course there were the performances by storytellers. To arrange all of this would have been impossible without the help of local people, such as Ms. Huang Yin from the university, and others.

Above all, there was Vibeke's strong motivation and energy, her decisions to take a giant stride and her vigour and ability to make it all happen. This is the point that has to be made about her character – she herself regards her attitude as being stubborn. A handful of her books came out in the following years, in English, in Chinese, in Danish, all on the topic of Yangzhou storytelling, with lengthy transcripts of the recorded texts and insightful theoretical essays. In my view, storytelling is not a mass entertainment anymore. Many feared that it would die out. Vibeke has managed to lift Yangzhou storytelling up from the bier and recover it. It seems that she contributed more to its recovery than the locals did, who perhaps did not have favourable conditions for the task. Vibeke has been awarded many prizes in China for her contribution to the research on storytelling, and rightfully so.

On a personal note, she is fond of music. She plays cello within a quartet of musical friends every week. This is what keeps me going, as she told me. Is this the secret formula, then? Besides, she is quite a social person, too. Some years back, in January, I visited her in Ribe. It is a charming medieval town in Denmark, with a stupendous Gothic church dominating the encircling narrow streets. In one such street, she showed me the house No 23 where she grew up. She took me and a Taiwanese colleague to the local middle school (Gymnasium), and showed us the natural sciences artefacts, collected by her dearly remembered father. A teacher of reputation, he had stayed in Afghanistan, and published several writings about that country. Her mother Margot was a distinguished old lady, fluent both in English and at the piano. On one evening, she played a Schubert's Impromptu. 'As a teenager', Vibeke once told me, 'I did not go through the generational conflict with my parents, and so I always remained a child'.

I am looking at a photograph as I write these lines. It was taken two years ago, on a summer morning in Høvik. Vibeke and her guest, dr. Hrdličková, enjoy their breakfast on a terrace, talking about storytelling – or perhaps about something else? (See photo p. 11).

[written October 2015, revised November 2018]

A STORYTELLERS' SCRIPT IN THE Yangzhou Tradition of WESTERN HAN

Vibeke Børdahl

(NIAS, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen)

The city of Yangzhou, situated at the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangzi River, was formerly a city of great cultural and commercial importance, featuring, amongst many other assets, a rich intellectual milieu and proud traditions of storytelling. A number of performers of these genres are still active in Yangzhou today, and they pass on their art from master to disciple primarily by oral training. Written scripts tend to play a secondary role, but can provide major insights in the transmission and development of repertoire. This paper discusses the transmission and formal characteristics of one specific script, roughly dated to late Qing, ca. 1880-1910, but with roots dating much further back. The author purchased it from the family of Dai Buzhang (1925-2003), a highly esteemed Yangzhou storyteller whom she also had occasion to meet and to record in person during the final years of his life.

Yangzhou storytelling, *Yangzhou pinghua* 揚州評話, is an age-old oral tradition of prose-storytelling with roots as far back as the time of the famous professional performer of *pinghua* 評話, Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1592-1674), who came from and was mainly active in the area of the Lower Yangzi, where this genre has traditionally had its foothold¹. Among storytellers of the 20th century, there was a consensus that the oral education from master to disciple was the basic training, called 'transmitting by mouth and teaching from the heart', *kouchuan xin shou* 口傳心授². Written scripts, *jiaoben* 腳本, were a family secret, not to be revealed to colleagues, and often not discussed even between master and disciple. In the recent period, from the 1990s, some storytellers were open about the fact that some of their ancestors wrote scripts, kept them as a kind of guarantee and left them to following generations.³

In the following, I want to discuss the transmission and formal characteristics of a storytellers' script from Yangzhou, roughly dated to late Qing, ca. 1880-1910. This untitled script of 330 pages, bound in five volumes, contains the handwritten version of the repertoire of WESTERN HAN, XI HAN 西漢, one of the semi-historical cycles of Yangzhou storytelling with a long history of oral transmission⁵. In Chinese storytelling as such the theme goes back to the Song dynasty and is mentioned in sources from the Yuan dynasty as 'Telling about Han Xin', *Shuo Han Xin* 說韓信⁶. In Yangzhou storytelling, we find the theme of WESTERN HAN in five generations of unbroken oral transmission since the first half of the 19th century. Some sources also claim that Liu Jingting already had this theme among his repertoires in the first half of the seventeenth century⁷.

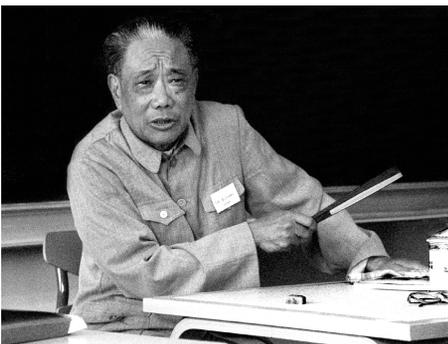
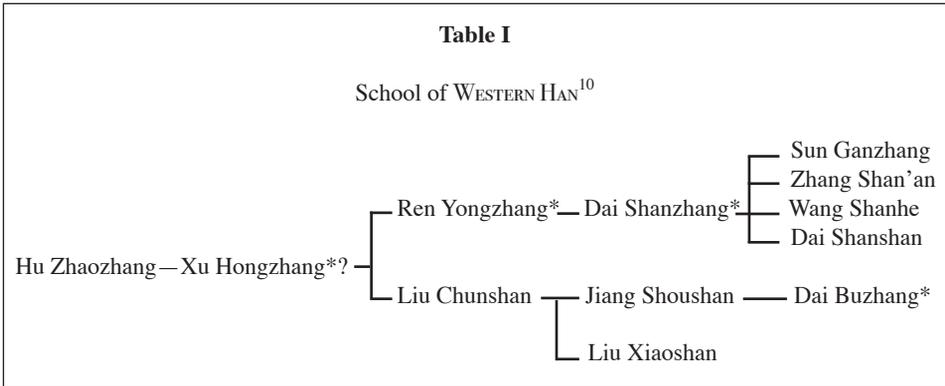
Transmission of the script

When I had occasion to see this script for the first time in 2000, it belonged to Dai Buzhang 戴步章 (1925-2003), a highly esteemed master of Yangzhou storytelling (Fig. 1). Dai Buzhang's father, Dai Shanzhang 戴善章 (1880-1938), and most of his uncles and brothers were all storytellers, and they

specialized in several of the large traditional repertoires and had studied not only with members of the family, but also with other masters.

The worn pages of the script were crammed with characters in stylish calligraphy as well as corrections and notes filled in between the lines. According to Dai Buzhang, the script could only be tentatively dated ca. 1880-1910, since it had been handed down through several generations, but not within the same family. The manuscript was attributed variously to his father's teacher, the storyteller Ren Yongzhang 任永章 (Late Qing–Republic, fl.), and to the teacher of this teacher, Xu Hongzhang 許鴻章 (1847-1905). Ren Yongzhang belonged to the third generation of Yangzhou storytellers of WESTERN HAN and Xu Hongzhang to the second generation after the so-called founder Hu Zhaozhang 胡兆章 (ca.1850, fl.)⁸. The home-maid binding of the script contained newspaper pages that were datable to 1912. Ren Yongzhang did not have a son, and therefore he bestowed the script on his best disciple, Dai Shanzhang. At some point it had been in the possession of the renowned storyteller Fan Zizhang 樊紫章 (1848-1968).⁹

In his childhood, Dai Buzhang often listened to his father's performances of this saga. After his father's death in 1938, Dai Buzhang studied WESTERN HAN with another master of this repertoire, Jiang Shoushan 江壽山 (1888-1961), but before he started this period of study, he – as he told me – read through the script as a preparation. He had no difficulty in reading the text, because he was already very familiar with the contents. He used the script for memorization of the poems; otherwise, he had little use for it. Nevertheless, he pointed out that he himself had made quite a few annotations in the margins of the script, emendations and amplifications.



The storyteller Dai Buzhang.
(Photo by Jette Ross, 1996, Copenhagen.)

Dai Buzhang performed this saga during a period in the 1940s and early 1950s. Then he lost interest in it and changed to other repertoires, and so he forgot all the poems. When performing episodes from the WESTERN HAN repertoire, he would not be able to remember the poems, so he would just leave them out, he said. In 2003 he gave a performance of a small episode from the repertoire that corresponded to a passage photographed from the script.¹¹

This script was kept in the family, more for the sake of honouring the ancestors than for its practical use, I was told. Dai Buzhang, however, on this and later occasions seemingly treated his 'family treasure' with utter nonchalance, banging the dusty and torn

volumes onto the table with a loud crash, and telling me several times over that these old things were no use. This comment should, however, in my opinion, by no means be taken at face value. Dai Buzhang belonged to a school of particularly jocular storytelling, and his character and behaviour seemed completely saturated with a deep sense of humour. I would rather tend to explain the fact that I was allowed not only to see, but also to have the script photographed, as a sign of his unusual generosity. His attitude of 'neglect' and 'ridicule' towards the script, could very well be a way of expressing, albeit with a smile, his deep anxiety for the future of the art of his forefathers.

The WESTERN HAN script and the storyteller's manner

In the Chinese novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties the style of the 'storyteller's manner' is most obvious. This 'simulacrum of storytelling' is generally defined as:

- 1) Textual subdivision into 'sessions' (*hui* 回)
- 2) Alternation of prose and verse
- 3) Narrator type
- 4) Narrator's comment and simulated dialogue with the audience
- 5) Storyteller's stock phrases (*taoyu* 套語):
 - a) A fixed set of pre-verse markers
 - b) A fixed set of transitional meta-narrative phrases
 - c) A more or less fixed set of simulated questions

There has been a long-standing discussion about the status of the 'manner'. Was it a reflection of the oral storyteller's habits taken over by the genre of the novel, or was it a literary form created explicitly for the novel as a 'false' imitation of oral style?¹² This question will perhaps never find a solution. However, the style of true storyteller's scripts has never been part of the discussion. Do they reflect the 'storyteller's manner'? And if so, in what respects? In the following, we shall take a closer look at a true script of Chinese storytelling. WESTERN HAN script of the Dai family is a traditional script, which was in use as such through several generations in Yangzhou.

Authorship and collectively created art

Most of the traditional oral repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling cannot be referred to an author. They have been transmitted for several hundred years from master to disciple, and it is not possible to find the ultimate source. The oral tradition is in a continuously changing state. Nobody knows exactly how the previous masters would tell the story. What was left out and what was added in subsequent storytellers' performances? Who has the right to the spoken word? It is not possible to speak of 'authorship' in the usual sense. When Liu Jingting is called 'the father of storytelling' in China, this only means that he was famous and had followers. However, it is obvious that he did not 'create' his repertoires. He lived in a milieu of storytelling, learned his art from others, told traditional stories, just like those who came before and after him. That he had particular skills as a performer seems without doubt, although not all of his chroniclers liked him.¹³

The fact that many oral repertoires are shared not only within various genres of performance, but also with written genres such as novel and short story, does not automatically mean that the 'authorship' of these stories goes to the authors/editors of the written genres. We know that many of the traditional novels, such as *Water Margin* and *Three Kingdoms*, had background in earlier storytelling. The relationship between the written and the oral genres is highly intricate, and for the written/printed editions, authorship and editorship are difficult to distinguish. Even though there do exist examples of storytelling repertoires that clearly started with one well-known performer as the oral 'author', his stamp of authorship will generally soon be watered out, as his disciples continue the oral tradition, adding, subtracting, changing the story according to their memory and skills.

Some of the oral repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling have literary counterparts in the form of

printed novels, usually anonymous. These novels carry some characteristics from storytelling, but they can hardly be considered faithful “recordings” of oral storytelling. They are based on storytelling, but their language and layout are designed with a view to a reading audience.¹⁴ These printed novels may or may not have had a previous life as storytellers’ scripts, but we have no sources about this. In their present form, they belong to the genre of novels, printed and circulated for the reading public, not for the use of storytellers.

The text of our present investigation is a different kind of text: A unique manuscript that was never printed and, as far as we know, never copied by hand. The storytellers who owned it kept it as a secret ‘capital’ and handed it down to their best disciples during four or five generations. It is not completely clear who wrote it originally:

- 1) Was it a storyteller, who wrote it for his own use and for his disciples?
- 2) Was it a literary man in the circles of the storytellers, who wrote it for his storyteller friend(s) to serve as script for the performers?
- 3) Was it written with a view to publication as a literary piece for reading?
- 4) Was it written in a completely different way?

I think we can rule out 3) and 4). There is nothing in the transmission of the script that would point to these possibilities. 1) This situation is the most likely setting for the creating of the script. Moreover, it is what Dai Buzhang told me as his opinion. 2) This possibility cannot be ruled out at present. However, if we take 1) or 2) as the most probable settings for the writing of the script, other questions arise:

- a) Was the writer of the script dependent on oral transmission for penning down the story? Did he write it from his memory of having heard it, or from having studied the repertoire with a teacher?
- b) Did he write it based on some history book(s) he had at hand? Was it, therefore meant, not as a reflection of oral storytelling, but as a ‘guide’ for oral performance?
- c) Was it written on the basis of both methods, i.e. from remembrance of oral performance, but also with basis in popular history books and other written materials?

Although we can rest assured that this script served as a genuine script for several generations of active storytellers of the WESTERN HAN or XI HAN repertoire, we must bear in mind that such scripts had perhaps rather limited usage. The storytellers of the generation born ca 1915-1940, mostly declared that scripts meant very little to them.¹⁵ The oral teaching from master to disciple meant everything. Families who owned such handwritten materials, kept them as a sign of prestige. Dai Buzhang was, however, a witness that he ‘read through’ the whole script before beginning to study the repertoire with his new teacher. He also used the script for memorizing verses. The condition of the script itself points to much wear and tear. The script has not been safeguarded and left unused during the more than a hundred years of its existence.

As a genuine script for storytellers who were educated according to the good old rules of Yangzhou storytelling during the first half of the twentieth century, it is therefore interesting to find out how the ‘storyteller’s manner’ — if any — is manifested in this document.

Textual subdivision

The handwritten manuscript of the XI HAN script is arranged in five volumes of paper notebooks, bound in newspaper. The first and last pages of the volumes are so worn that one cannot see how the various volumes of the script started, and we do not even have the title of the script, if there was any. On the newspaper binding, each volume is numbered and variously called ‘booklet’ (*ben* 本), ‘volume’ (*ce* 冊) or ‘scroll’ (*juan* 卷), ‘book’ (*shu* 書). In the text of the script, there is no mention of ‘storytelling session’ (*yi chang shu* 一場書, *yi tian shu* 一天書), ‘return, session, chapter’ (*hui* 回) or the like. The division into *ben*, *ce*, *juan* or *shu* seems to be according to the amount of pages of each notebook, and



Cover for the third volume of the Xi HAN script. Scanning

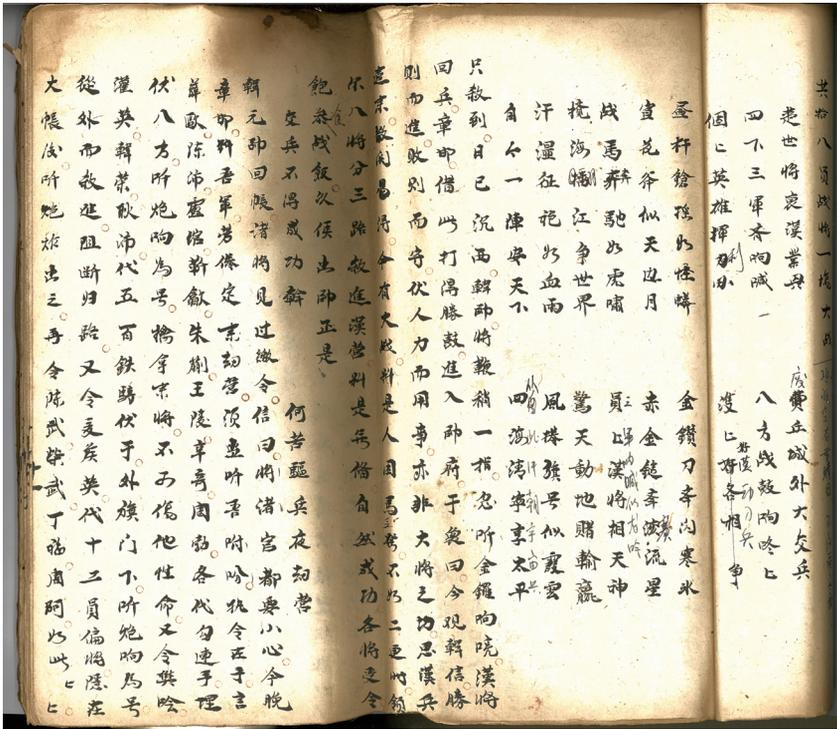
has apparently nothing to do with the division into storyteller's sessions.

However, on the cover one finds sloppy notation about the contents of the volume (not in the original hand of the script).¹⁶ Maybe the writer of the script tried to fill in major units of content into each notebook. This, however, seems to have little to do with the 'storyteller's manner' of dividing a text into *hui* (returns, sessions, chapters) corresponding roughly to the content of one performance in the storyteller's house. As for textual subdivision, I would therefore conclude, preliminarily, that there is no trace of the oral habits of performance units in the script. Likewise, there is no trace of the novelistic 'storyteller's manner' in the way the script is organized into sections.

Alternation of prose and verse

Alternation of prose and verse, one of the important aspects of the 'manner', is decidedly typical of the script. Poems (*shi* 詩) and other kinds of poetry and serious statements (*biao* 表) are inserted regularly into the prose, or one might say that the prose is inserted between the poetry. Poetry is often introduced by markers and stock phrases, as we shall see below.

Many of the poems describe the scenery of military ceremonies or battles. Poems and other set pieces such as memorandums, letters, etc., are indented in the manuscript, and obviously, such set pieces serve a major function in the whole script.



Prose and poetry in the Xi HAN script. Scanning.

Narrator type and style

From the narrative aspect, the script contains short third-person summaries of action and description (covered narrator) and dialogue in direct speech. The narrative portions are written in a highly detached and abrupt literary style (*wenyan* 文言) and personal pronouns are evaded. The dialogue passages take up large portions of the space. The speech of the characters is also coined in stern literary style, but the speakers express themselves directly (not covered) and use the pronouns 'I, me' (*wo* 我 (186), *wu* 吾 (198)) and 'you' (*ni* 你 (15), *er* 尔 (189)).¹⁷

The language is generally characterized by a terse, simple literary style, including a number of grammatical markers, pronouns and other vocabulary typical of literary Chinese: *zhi* 之 (2043), *he* 何 (651), *wu* 無 (472), *wei* 未 (258), *bi* 畢 (175), *yi* 矣 (171), *nai* 奈 (47). The language imitates the style of early historical works, not only in the selection of tag word for 'he said' (*yue* 曰), and in pronouns of address between the king and his generals (*qing* 卿, *bixia* 陛下, *jun* 君, *chen* 臣), but also in the monosyllabic staccato rhythm of most phrases and sentences. Four- and six-syllable expressions are dominant. Even if some of the sentences are also possible in Modern Standard Chinese and some compounds (*zhunbei* 準備 (2), *duiwu* 隊伍 (9)) are from modern usage, there are exceedingly few features of modern vernacular.

As for expressions coined according to Yangzhou dialect (Y.D.) grammar, there are only a few single instances to be considered: Y.D. 'go home' (*jiaqu* 家去) (1) (Modern Standard Chinese (MSC): *huijia* 回家); Y.D. 'look at' (*yi wang* 一望) (5) (MSC: *yi kan* 一看); Y.D. 'cannot' (*bu de* 不得) (high frequency) (MSC: *bu neng* 不能).¹⁸ More research is necessary to determine how far these few

occurrences can be taken as dialectal in the present script, since some expressions that are dialectal if compared to MSC, are much less so, if seen in a *wenyan* flavoured context. For example, in present-day Y.D. 'today' is *jinri* 今日 or *jinge* 今個 (MSC: *jintian* 今天). In *wenyan*, however, *jinri* 今日, is highly frequent. Therefore, this expression cannot be categorized as dialectal in the context of a text in *wenyan* style.

The handwriting of the script is characterized by a relatively high frequency of so-called 'vulgar characters' (*su zi* 俗字) or 'wrong characters' (*cuo zi* 錯字), and many are homonymic loans.¹⁹ Sometimes the homonymic loans point to influence of the Y.D. pronunciation. Further study is necessary to determine the spread of such cases in the text of the script. The unauthorized forms of characters in the script are indicators of the general habit of simplification of characters in handwriting at the time. The loan characters are symptoms of writing based on oral performance rather than on copying from written works.²⁰

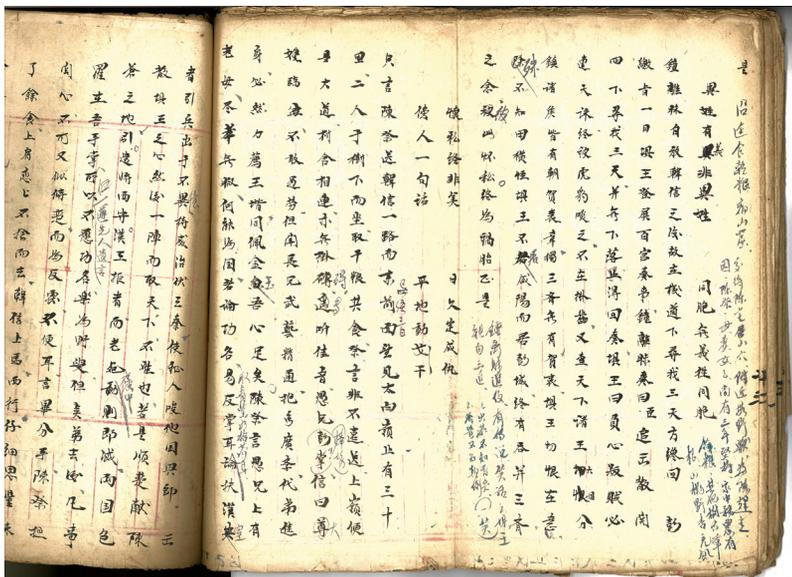
Narrator's comment and simulated conversation with the audience

As for the question of narrator's comment and simulated conversation with the audience, we have so far only found a couple of examples in the text, which might indicate this kind of comment. The first example is from a note at the right edge of page 1-26 of the script:

(Here one should) explain how the Chen family is living in the mountain cave and ...

交待陈宅居山穴，附近口野獸，為陈趕走。因陈祭母妻女子尚有三年堅持，家中務農，有餘糧，其他樹口草根，山桃，野杏充飢。

This comment, written as an addition, i.e. a note in the margin of the text, could hardly be anything else than a reminder to the storyteller-performer or his disciple while using the script for preparation of performance. It is not a 'simulated conversation' with the audience.²¹



Page 1-26 of the Xi HAN script. A note at the right edge.



Page 3-02 of the Xi HAN script. A note from the padding on the cover of the third volume.

From a note on the padding of the cover for the third volume of the script (page 3-02):

After that, (one should) perform how Zhang Liang convinced all the feudal lords of the various states to oppose Chu.

拉回头交待张良说说各国诸侯叛楚

This comment, too, written on the cover of the volume, must be understood as a note for the storyteller-performer, not as something to be explained to the audience. Both examples belong to the inserted comments, written in another hand. Therefore, they can hardly be considered to belong to the script in its original state. It is obvious that one must distinguish between the original hand of the script and the commentator.

Storyteller's stock phrases

Storyteller's stock phrases can be found already in the early 'folk books' or 'plain tales' (pinghua 平話) of the Yuan period (1279-1368). Among these early fixed phrases, we find several that are also used in the present WESTERN HAN or XI HAN script. With a few exceptions, those found in the present script were used also in the genre of the early novel (zhanghui xiaoshuo 章回小說):²²

a) Pre-verse markers found in plain tale, novel and XI HAN script: 'indeed' (zheng shi 正是)(107)²³; 'there is a poem that testifies to this' (you shi wei zheng 有詩為証) (57); 'behold' (dan jian 但見) (9); 'the poem says' (shi yue 詩曰) (1); pre-verse markers found in plain tale and XI HAN script: 'how did it look?' (zen jian de 怎見得) (36); '... a stanza as follows' (...yishou ...一首) (4).²⁴

b) Transitional meta-narrative formulas found in plain tale, novel and XI HAN script: 'just look' (zhi

jian 只見) (45); 'we shall not speak more of this' (*bu ti* 不提/題) (7); 'meanwhile, let's tell' (*qie shuo* 且說) (3).²⁵ Both in the plain tales and in the novel we find the formula 'let us just tell' (*zhi shuo* 只說), but this form is not found in the XI HAN script. Here we find, however, a very similar formula: 'let us now relate' (*zhi yan* 只言) (19). This wording seems to convey the literary style (*wenyan* 文言) that flavours the script throughout.

c) Simulated question formulas and storyteller's asides: 'how did it look?' (*zen jiande* 怎見得) (36); 'let me explain' (*jiaodai* 交待) (2). The formula 'how did it look' has two functions, both as a pre-verse marker and as a storyteller's simulated question to his audience. The form occurs in the plain tales, but not in the novels that are scrutinized here. 'Let me explain' is found sometimes in modern Yangzhou storytelling, especially in the edited book versions of Yangzhou storytelling, but does not have counterparts in the plain tale or novel. In the XI HAN script, *zen jiande* is used as pre-verse marker, but it does not seem to have the function of 'simulated question to the audience'. The expression *jiaodai* is only found twice in the script and both times in added comment, serving as reminders to the performer, not 'simulated conversation' with the audience.

In the script, we find a regular use of four pre-verse markers, reminiscent of the style of the plain tale and the novel. Transitional meta-narrative formulas are sparingly used, and only a few from the usual set of formulas in the novel occur. 'Storyteller's simulated questions or conversations with the audience' are absent.

Conclusion

From the above preliminary investigation of the XI HAN script, I think one can draw some tentative conclusions.

1) The script does not pretend to be a 'reproduction' of actual performance. It has no imitation of sessions in the storyteller's house. It only records in a short and terse style the happenings of the story, inserting the dialogues, verse and set pieces that belong to the saga.

2) The alternation of prose and verse is clearly reflected in the script. We may suspect from oral performance tradition that the prose portions were meant to be performed at much greater length, while the verse must be learned by heart.²⁶ It is not unlikely that dialogue, verse and set pieces were the *raison d'être* for the script. Some scripts had only verse and set pieces.²⁷ The present script as well as the scripts with only verse and set pieces do not mirror oral performance, but serve as *aide-mémoire* to performance.

3) The narrator of the written script is totally imperceptible (covered third person narrator). This phenomenon is closely connected to the kind of language used in the script, the simple *wenyan* style of history writing. The writer of the script apparently is not interested in reproducing the actual spoken style of storytelling. The fixed portions, such as imposing dialogue, poetry, statements, etc., as far as we can test from modern performance, *do* reflect the actually spoken words-in-performance, but there is little reason to think that the storytellers would also narrate the saga in the *wenyan* style of the script. It is more likely that the compressed style of narration was a kind of short hand, as well as a habit of written style. This was *not* a reflection of the actual oral storyteller's linguistic habits, and it was certainly at a distance from the 'manner' of the novel, too.

4) In contrast to the 'manner' of the novel, the XI HAN script does not in any way pretend to mirror storyteller's communication directly with the audience. This feature is totally absent from the script. The few examples of 'explaining' (*jiaodai*) are found, not in the hand of the original script writer, but in a couple of notes added by a later hand, in order to remind the *performer*, not the *audience*, of

certain portions to tell more in detail.

5) The usage of ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’ (*taoyu*) in the script is particularly intriguing. Were the stock phrases part of the linguistic idiom of ‘history writing’ in simple *wenyan*, adding a few of the most general stock phrases in order to demarcate verse and transitions in the text? Verse and set pieces are marked by indentation, so that the formulas are somehow superfluous. Were the *taoyu* mainly part of a *written tradition of recording oral repertoires*? They could have had very little to do with the actual oral habits of the performers of XI HAN. We know that storytellers of Yangzhou storytelling in the late twentieth century hardly used such *taoyu* during performance. Occasionally, there might occur a single instance, but these expressions were in general not part of the Yangzhou storytellers’ idiom of performance. Obviously, the writer of the script was giving his text a ‘finish’ of storytelling (‘the storyteller’s manner’) by using these *taoyu*, but we cannot so far know exactly what the relationship was between these expressions in the written script and the tradition of performance during the late Qing, when the original script was written down.

After reading the WESTERN HAN script, one has the impression that the later ‘hand’ seems to have had closer ties to storytelling than the original writer does. The language of the original scriptwriter is coined in literary Chinese (*wenyan*), often in an exceptionally terse and staccato variant of *wenyan*. This characteristic seems to point to the function of the text as aide-mémoire, furnishing only the barest narrative of the plot, providing ‘catchwords’ for performance, but not serving its reader the pleasure of reading for enjoyment. Moreover, the storyteller in performance was expected to elaborate on the contents of each episode, something the performance by Dai Buzhang in 2003 gives ample evidence about.²⁸ One might at times wonder if the original script is less than ‘intelligible’ because of being written in a sloppy way by someone who did not always understand what he was writing. Was the person who wrote the script basing himself on knowledge of the oral tradition? Is the script a kind of shorthand version ‘written as remembered’ from the oral performance tradition? The homophonic characters point to this situation. Alternatively, could the scriber be copying from written sources, such as other storyteller’s scripts that would also contain such loan characters? Maybe the scriber was copying from another manuscript that was difficult to read. Could he depend on printed works, such as popular historical texts? This question will be elucidated in the following chapter.

Notes

¹ Cf. BREUER 2013: 66-98.

² The primary status of oral transmission and the ancillary status of scripts in Yangzhou storytelling are also characteristic of many other of the orally transmitted genres of China, cf. IGUCHI 2003: 94-112, see also the introduction to the paper by Junko Iguchi in this volume.

³ About the usage of scripts in Chinese storytelling in general and in Yangzhou storytelling in particular, cf. BØRDAHL 2005 and BØRDAHL 2009.

⁴ After the CHIME conference in Venice 2014, this script has been published in a facsimile edition, cf. BØRDAHL AND GE 2017. The present text was last revised in June 2018.

⁵ Oral repertoires of storytelling, *shuoshu* 說書 [telling texts/telling books], are in Chinese called *shu* 書 [books/texts] or *shumu* 書目 [items of books/texts]. Oral repertoires are in this article written in small capitals, in order to distinguish them from book titles, written in *italics* as usual.

⁶ Cf. CHEN Ruheng 1962: 61. Works of the popular written tradition of Western Han are discussed in Liangyan Ge’s article in the present volume, “Han Xin Kills His Benefactor: The Evolution of an Episode from the Popular Western Han Narrative Tradition”.

⁷In Yangzhou storytelling, we find this theme as a school of storytelling since the first half of the nineteenth century, cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 283, 350. Some sources also claim that already Liu Jingting had this theme on his repertoire in the first half of the seventeenth century, cf. WEI Ren and WEI Minghua 1985: 15.

⁸Works on the history of Yangzhou storytelling present the lineages of storytellers arranged like family trees, often with a single storyteller at the beginning, cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 344-353. It should, however, be kept in mind that although storytelling was often a family business, the relationship between master and disciples was mostly based on an arrangement for teaching disciples outside the family. Therefore, there is in general no biological 'hereditary' relationship. Many famous masters had a handful of disciples. Moreover, many young storytellers would learn from several masters. The tidy pictures of storytelling 'trees' of lineage are therefore a kind of conventional 'fiction' about the development of certain 'schools of storytelling'. Since the historical sources on storytellers' lives are few and scattered, there is a tendency to arrange each 'school' with only one storyteller at the beginning and honor his family by naming the school with their family name. Even though this corresponds to a certain reality in the relationship between the storytellers of a certain age, it might give a wrong impression about 'authorship' for the repertoire. The repertoires are usually much older than the 'first' storytellers of a 'school' are. This is evident from the lists of individual storytellers and their repertoires; cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 318-338.

⁹It is not clear if the script was owned by Fan Zizhang before it was given to Dai Shanzhang, or if this happened already before it was handed down to Ren Yongzhang. In the latter case, this would indicate that the script was older and probably authored by Xu Hongzhang.

¹⁰Storytellers who have owned the script on Western Han, according to the memory of the Dai family, are marked with an asterisk *. The table is according to *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 350. Information about the storytellers, *ibid.* pp. 283, 292, 288, 321; cf also BØRDAHL and ROSS 2002, Life stories.

¹¹The performance was recorded on 24 October 2003, in the home of Dai Buzhang in Biluochun Street in the old storytellers' quarter in Yangzhou. The corresponding passage from the script has been treated in several articles and a book; cf. BØRDAHL 2005, 2009 and 2013, Chapter 9. My friend, the late Jette Ross (1938-2001), photographed part of the script in Yangzhou, 2000. In 2003, the author was able to buy the script from the family of Dai Buzhang with a view to research. The whole script was scanned in 2004 and a copy donated to the family. In 2013, Liangyan Ge and the author together started a new research project concerning this material. In cooperation with a doctoral student of history, Wang Yalong, the whole script was transcribed into computer characters. Therefore, the material is now in searchable form, cf. BØRDAHL AND GE 2017.

¹²See IDEMA 1974: 23, 70; HANAN 1981: 20. See also BØRDAHL 2013, Chapters 2 and 5.

¹³Cf. BREUER 2013: 70-71, 75-78; see also the article by Rüdiger Breuer in the present volume.

¹⁴Examples of these so-called "storytelling" novels are: *The Legend of the Braggart (Feituo quanzhuan 飞驼全传, 1817)* and *Clear Wind Sluice (Qingfengzha, 清风闸, 1819)*, cf. the article by Wang Huarong in the present volume. See also WAN 2015: 189-202.

¹⁵See CHEN Wulou 1962, 1994

¹⁶For example, at the beginning of the third volume, (page 3-01), one finds a padding with some notation in sloppy writing (not the original hand) about the contents: This book has altogether 43 pages, more than twice the length of Book I and Book II each. It starts from the "Expedition against the three territories of Qi". III (volume three) Overt repair of the plank path. Secret maneuver via the path of Chen Cang ... (此书共四十三页 此二两册 双倍多 由伐三齐 叁 明修棧道 暗渡陈倉 ...)

¹⁷The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of occurrences of the expression in the entire XI HAN script of 330 pages.

¹⁸Cf. BØRDAHL 1996: 103-128.

¹⁹This phenomenon is discussed in BØRDAHL 2013: 239-240.

²⁰See GE Liangyan 2001: 112.

²¹Cf. the article by Liangyan Ge in the present volume.

²²For the present investigation, I shall take three early editions of the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 and the earliest edition of *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 as representative of the early Ming novel; cf. BØRDAHL 2013, Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

²³Most of the expressions are fairly equally distributed over the five volumes of the whole manuscript. But *zen jiande* occurs, with one exception, only in the third and fifth volume.

²⁴See Børdahl 2013: 36, 43, and 124. The expression ‘it was really’ (*que shi* 卻是), sometimes used as pre-verse marker in the plain tales, seems to be used occasionally also in this function in the XI HAN script, but this needs further study of the script. The use of ‘...a stanza as follows’ reminds more of the style of the plain tales, where this formula has many variations, all ending with ‘...a stanza as follows’, cf. BØRDAHL 2013:36.

²⁵See BØRDAHL 2013: 125. ‘We shall not speak more of this’ (*bu ti*) is in the XI HAN script sometimes followed by the pre-verse marker, ‘indeed’ (*zheng shi*).

²⁶See BØRDAHL 2005, 2009, 2013: 240-243.

²⁷Dai Buzhang owned some scripts of this type, which Jette Ross photographed in 2000.

²⁸Cf. BØRDAHL 2005: 250-259.

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Han Xin Kills His Benefactor: The Evolution of an Episode from the Popular Western Han Narrative Tradition

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The recently discovered storyteller's script in Yangzhou pinghua 揚州評話 about the founding of the Western Han dynasty (Xi Han 西漢 206-8 BCE) will almost certainly offer new information about Chinese popular literature and the interplay between orality and writing. As "history telling" has been a continuous and enduring tradition of popular narrative in China for several centuries, particularly in the forms of pinghua 平話 and pinghua 評話, my article speculates on the position of this particular script in that long tradition. This article focuses on the episode of Han Xin's murder of his benefactor—a woodcutter who kindly introduces Han Xin to his family and guides Han through the secret path to the state of Han—and compares it with its counterparts in four popular Western Han narratives in print, all published during the Wanli era (1573-1619) of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). By doing so, this study offers some clues to the intriguing question on the genesis of this storyteller's script and the relationship between the oral and textual cultures.

A Chinese text from a popular narrative tradition is usually informed by the interplay between oral culture¹ and textual culture. A case in point is the untitled script once owned by the professional Yangzhou pinghua storyteller Dai Buzhang 戴步章 (1925-2003) (henceforward the "Dai Script"). It is about the contention between Liu Bang 劉邦 and Xiang Yu 項羽 for the throne during the final years of the Qin dynasty (BCE 221–206), ending with Xiang Yu's defeat and suicide by the river of Wujiang. What could have been the sources for the Dai Script? Among the five extant pinghua 平話 texts dated to the fourteenth century there is the one titled *Qian Han shu pinghua xuji* 前漢書平話續集,² which starts with the aftermath of Xiang Yu's death. Obviously, the word *xuji* 續集 (sequel) suggests that there had once been a popular narrative of *Qian Han shu pinghua*, which most likely ended with Xiang Yu's death. So it is highly possible that the Dai Script covers exactly the same historical period as the non-extant *Qian Han shu pinghua*. Given the fact that there is a series of popular narrative texts on Western Han (BCE 206 – 22) dated in the late Ming, what place does the Dai Script occupy in the popular Western Han narrative tradition? More specifically, in what ways can the Dai Script be considered an inheritor of the popular Western Han cycles of the late imperial times?

Four popular narratives on the Western Han appeared during the late Ming period, with their earliest known prints all dated in the Wanli 萬曆 era (1573-1619): 1) *Jingben tongsu yanyi Quan Han zhizhuan* 京本通俗演義全漢志傳, with its earliest known print dated 1588. Its Western Han part titled *Xi Han zhizhuan* 西漢志傳, or at least a significant portion of it,³ was compiled by Xiong Zhonggu 熊鐘谷, another name for Xiong Damu 熊大木 (1506-78). It will henceforward be referred to as the "Xiong Narrative." 2) *Quanxiang anjian yanyi Dong Xi Han zhizhuan* 全像按鑑演義東西漢志傳, compiled by Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 (fl. 1596) and annotated by Zhong Bojing 鍾伯敬 (1574-1624). Although its earliest known version published by Santaiguan 三台館 of Jianyang during the Wanli

era is not extant, it has a later replica published by Baohualou 寶華樓. The work will henceforward be referred to as the “Yu Narrative.” 3) *Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhuanzhi* 兩漢開國中興傳誌 by an anonymous writer, published by Xiqingtang 西清堂 of Jianyang in 1605. Henceforward it will be referred to as the “*Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative.” 4) *Xi Han tongsu yanyi* 西漢通俗演義 by Zhen Wei 甄偉 (fl. 1573). Its earliest extant edition is dated 1612, published by Dayetang 大葉堂 in Nanjing. Henceforward it will be referred to as the “Zhen Narrative.”

The dates of the earliest known prints do not automatically establish a time order for these narratives, simply because we cannot preclude the possibility that any of them could be predated by an earlier textual exemplar that is no longer extant or remains unknown. The relationship between the Xiong Narrative and the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative, for instance, could be much more complex than the two dates of 1588 and 1605 would suggest. In the meantime, however, we seem to have reason to consider the Zhen Narrative the latest of the four works, not so much because of the date of 1612 as because Zhen Wei makes it clear in his preface that his writing of the work was motivated by his dissatisfaction with one or more earlier Western Han narratives.⁵ Since it is impossible for us to establish a time order conclusively among the Xiong, Yu, and *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narratives, we may simply group them together as the works between the fourteenth-century *pinghua* texts and the Zhen Narrative. How did the popular Western Han narrative tradition evolve from its fourteenth-century precursors to the Zhen Narrative, and eventually to the Dai Script?

Obviously there is no space here for a global comparison of these Western Han narratives. However, a comparison of the different treatments of certain episodes may give us a glimpse into the evolution of this popular narrative tradition. One such episode is Han Xin’s ungrateful killing of the person who has shown him the secret path to the Han city of Nanzheng. This episode is completely absent from the histories such as *Shi ji* 史記 or *Qian Han shu* 前漢書, and is therefore very likely a product of popular imagination in “history telling.” Of course the comparison is intended to be illustrative, as the result of the comparison may or may not be consistent with comparisons of other corresponding components of the narratives. However, it should offer interesting information about the interplay between writing and popular orality that may have served as the driving force for the textual evolution of this particular episode. What follows are the different versions of the same episode from the four Wanli narratives as well as the Dai Script.

Xiong Narrative:

Before he reached the path of planks, he suddenly saw an old man. Han Xin asked: “Do you know the Path of Chen Cang, sir?” The old man responded: “Are you Han Xin?” “Yes,” Han Xin answered. The old man led Han Xin to enter the opening of the Path of Chen Cang. After they walked for about a dozen miles, there was a large rock. Han Xin got on the rock, looked around, and thought about the plan to kill Zhang Han in the future. Using the tip of his sword he carved a poem on the rock, which said:

*Passing this rock on his way,
Han Xin is to become a commander in the west.
Returning to the east someday,
Here he is to kill the Qin-Chu general Zhang Han.*

Han Xin asked the old man, “How far is Nanzheng from here?” The old man answered, “About two hundred and fifty miles.” Han Xin was afraid the old man would leak the information of his whereabouts. The old man said: “Apply your sword to my head.” Han Xin killed the old man, who fell to the ground with no bleeding from the slash. Han Xin was startled, as the body turned out to be a plaster figure with no blood. Han Xin sighed, “I killed a Daoist by mistake!”⁶

Yu Narrative:

Han Xin had his travel documents checked and verified at all the passes along the way. Now he reached a crossroads. He thought that if he took the main road the pursuers might catch up with him, and he had

no idea how to get to the ferry of Chen Cang. As he was hesitant, he suddenly saw an old man down the slope. He went over and asked: "Which road leads to Chen Cang?" The old man led him to the opening of the Path of Chen Cang, saying: "It's about two hundred and fifty miles from here to Nanzheng." Han Xin bowed to thank him. Afraid the old man could leak the information of his whereabouts, Han Xin pulled out his sword to kill him. The man turned out to have no blood, and Han Xin was very remorseful.⁷

Kaiguo zhongxing Narrative:

While Han Xin was walking he suddenly saw an old man, and he asked, "Do you know how to get to Chen Cang, sir?" The old man asked: "Are you Han Xin?" "Yes," Han Xin answered. The old man led Han Xin to the opening of the Path of Chen Cang. They walked for a dozen of miles and there was a large rock. Han Xin stepped on the rock, and looked around before he got down. Using the tip of his sword, he carved a poem on the rock, which said:

*Passing this rock on his way,
Han Xin is to become a commander in the west.
Returning to the east someday,
Here he is to kill the Qin-Chu general Zhang Han.*

After that, he asked the old man, "How far is Nanzheng from here?" The old man answered, "About two hundred and fifty miles." Han Xin was angry at his craftiness and wanted to kill him. The old man said: "Slash my head with your sword." With his sword, Han Xin killed the old man, who fell to the ground. There was no blood from the slash, as the body turned out to be a plaster figure. Han Xin was startled and sighed, "I killed this Daoist by mistake!"⁸

Zhen Narrative:

Han Xin could not gallop here and had to hold the reins tight and move forward slowly. "Where is the road that leads to the ferry of Chen Cang?" While he was hesitant, there came a woodcutter from the other side of the slope. Han Xin asked: "Woodcutter, which road leads to the Path of Chen Cang?" The woodcutter put down the bundles of firewood from his shoulder and pointed to the mountain path with his finger: "From here you cross this ridge, and there is a small pine grove. Pass that grove, and it will be Pebble Rapids with a stone bridge. After crossing the bridge you will reach Emei Ridge. The path on the ridge is very rugged, and you will have to dismount your horse and move on foot. Only after that can you reach Taibai Ridge, and there are households at the foot of the ridge. After you have your meal there you will pass Lone Cloud Mountain and Two Foot Mountain, and you will cross Black Water River and Chill Brook before you finally arrive in Nanzheng. You should not travel at night, general, because there are tigers." After the woodcutter talked about the mountain path, Han Xin verified it with the map and found them perfectly consistent with each other. He bowed to thank the woodcutter, and mounted his horse to move forward. The woodcutter reloaded the bundles of firewood on his shoulder and was about to walk down the slope. Han Xin thought: 'Zhang Han knows I killed his soldiers and he definitely will chase me along this road. My horse is exhausted, and he will certainly catch me. I'd better kill the woodcutter, so that if the Chu troops arrive they will only go to the path of planks and nobody will know this road.' Han Xin turned his horse around and asked the woodcutter to stop. The woodcutter thought Han Xin had more questions. He turned around and was about to ask Han Xin, when Han Xin grabbed his hair and killed him with a slash of the sword. Han Xin pulled the dead body to a col, where he covered it with earth. After that he knelt down to kowtow and prayed, "It is not that I'm a wicked man; I truly didn't have an alternative! When I have a piece of land in the future, I will definitely come to bury you properly in return for your virtues." So saying, Han Xin shed tears before he mounted his horse to continue to move westward.

After killing the woodcutter, Han Xin got over the mountain ridge, passed the pine grove, and crossed Pebble Rapids. One day, he descended Taibai Ridge. At the foot of the mountain there was a tavern. Han Xin dismounted the horse and walked in, and asked the waiter to bring mountain delicacies and locally brewed wine. After drinking a few cups, he started to think of the woodcutter in spite of himself: 'I was pursued by Chu troops and was compelled to kill him. It was not because I was an ingrate!' So he composed a song, and borrowed ink and a writing brush to inscribe the lines on the white wall:

*The mountain trail was hard to trudge,
 It was steep and rugged beyond descriptions.
 Vines and weeds sealed the mountain range,
 Dark valleys concealed demons and apparitions.
 On top of the mountain I could touch heaven,
 Turns of the trail left me in complete exhaustion.
 Nobody was there to point out the right direction,
 I was stranded all by myself in bitter frustration.
 Suddenly there showed up the woodcutter,
 Who provided me with food and accommodation.
 I stopped my horse in front of the mountain,
 And I told him the West Shu was my destination.
 The woodcutter walked me to the broad road,
 Which was consistent with the map's indication.
 A man of loyalty and righteousness he truly was,
 I was determined to reward him for the benefaction.
 But I was afraid my pursuers of Chu would arrive,
 And I would be captured and locked up in prison.
 By killing you I removed the last trace of my escape,
 Please do not hold me in your bitter accusation.
 I left you with the firewood in the mountains,
 So that I would become the ruler's assistant.
 As I one day become the commander of ten thousand,
 My friend, you can be sure you didn't die in vain.
 Your innocent life you lost to my blade,
 From my sorrowful heart I for you prayed.
 Your kindness I will find a way to repay,
 Your children I will promote to better grade.
 The bright autumn moon above on the blue sky—
 It is you looking down at me in my imagination.⁹*

Dai Script:

... Suddenly he heard a loud crash. It turned out to be a woodcutter. Han Xin stepped forward and inquired, "Mister, do you know how I can get to Taibai Ridge and Nanzheng?" The woodcutter answered, "General, you came all the way from the east by yourself and you must not be an ordinary man. But it's indeed hard to find the right path in the mountains. Why don't you wait for me to bundle up the firewood and come with me to my cottage so that we can talk it over?" Han Xin thanked him and went along. Indeed:

*The woodcutter showed his righteousness on first meeting,
 He wanted to be sure that the officer was not up to deception.*

On the map it was said that there was a road for [xx] days, and who would have known that there were neither people nor villages on the road for [xx] days. So the two of them turned around the side of the mountain and crossed a brook. After crossing Chen Cang Bridge, they walked another mile or so before they arrived at the woodcutter's home. It was a cave surrounded by fences and covered by grasses. Within the cave, however, Han Xin found it to be decently finished. The woodcutter laid down his firewood, took over the rein from Han Xin and fastened it to the fence. Once inside, he saluted Han Xin, and asked: "What's your honorable name, General? Since you have come along this secret path, are you on your way to join the Han?" Han Xin answered: "I'm a native of Huaiyin, and my name is Wei Yan. I was going to visit my relatives in Hanzhong but lost my way. I was an officer in the Chu for three years, during which time my words were never heeded. Now Overlord has lost people's support, which goes to Liu instead. My name is Han Xin. I am endowed with some talent and a sage informed me of this secret path. That's why I am here. I will be grateful if you can help me, Mister."

Hearing that, the woodcutter apologized, "I'm afraid I didn't pay you due respect, General. The path

was built by my ancestors, and that's why it is named the Ancient Path of Chen Cang. My name is Chen Ji. Since King Zhao used Shu as a destination of exiles, this path has been left in oblivion for over a hundred years. You must be well acquainted to the principles of heaven and earth, General. Once you join King of Han, you will become a pillar for the empire. Let me inform my old mother so that I can walk with you for part of the way tomorrow. Otherwise, even someone like you might be frightened by the many beasts and snakes in the mountains." Han Xin was taken aback, "Since you have an old mother, please ask her to come out so that I can pay my respect." The old mother, whose maiden name was Xie, showed up and said: "The distinguished guest has arrived, and the mountains and rivers here are graced. I heard that you are heading west for the interest of the empire. This old woman will be glad to let her son send you off tomorrow morning." Han Xin bowed deeply, saying: "I'm on my way to join Han for saving the people and eliminating the tyrant. You're a truly worthy mother. If you can let your son walk with me for some distance tomorrow, I will have the opportunity to become a prominent figure, and that will bring wealth and rank to you and your family as well." Woman Xie smiled, "We just follow the will of Heaven and save the people, and we're not thinking of wealth and rank." With that, she prepared the meal. Han Xin proposed to Chen Ji, "I'm truly touched by this great favor from your family. If we do not become sworn brothers, how can I burden you with the trouble of sending me off?" As they asked about each other's age, Chen Ji was older than Han Xin. After they made the pledge, Han Xin went to see Chen Ji's wife, whose maiden name was Xin, and their seven-year-old daughter Spring Girl. Many years later, Han Xin was to die because of the words of this girl, who would become then a maid in Not-Midnight-Yet Palace. Old Woman Xie said, "Taibai Bridge is over one hundred and thirty miles away from here, and it takes five days to get there. Daughter-in-law, hurry to prepare some food, so that General Han can leave early tomorrow." Han Xin and Chen Ji chatted for some time before they went to bed separately. The next morning they bid farewell, and Woman Xin said to her husband: "I'll be due to give birth soon. After you walk Brother Han to Taibai Ridge, make sure you'll return as soon as possible and don't make me anxious at home." Chen Ji nodded. So they hit the road. Chen Ji carried the food, tracking the path and avoiding tigers and leopards and expelling snakes and lizards. Later we will talk about Han Xin's unspeakable betrayal and treachery.

So Han Xin and Chen Ji got on their way, eating the food they brought along and stayed in caves at night. The audience should be informed that the Chen family lived in the cave. Chen Ji had expelled the beasts away from the neighborhood. The family had grain reserves for Chen Ji's mother, wife, and children to survive three more years, with the supplements of wild fruit, tree barks, and grass roots. Indeed:

*With righteousness, people of different families become one family,
With no loyalty people of one family split into different families.*

Having let Han Xin go, Zhongli Mei pretended to search near the opening of the plank path for three more days before he finally went back to report to Overlord. He memorialized, "I chased Han Xin all the way to the other side of San Pass, and searched that area for three days, but didn't find any traces of him." Overlord responded, "That ungrateful traitor is doomed. We don't need to worry, and he will be devoured by tigers and leopards in the mountains." Overlord was informed of the receipts of congratulatory letters on the move of the capital from all feudal lords, except those of Qi. He was resentful. Tian Heng, the ruler of Qi, suspected that Xiang Yu's move from Xianyang to Pengcheng was for the purpose of ultimately annexing the land of Qi. The mutual animosity eventually was to result in a disaster. About Zhongli Mei's pursuit of Han Xin, there is a joke. It is said that Overlord led the pursuit three times in person. Indeed:

*Not desirable to cherish an ulterior purpose,
Eventually it would lead to hostility.
Just one word from a third party
It could result in bloody slaughter.*

Now let's go back to Chen Ji and Han Xin. The two had walked for three days, and they could now see Taibai Ridge ahead, only about ten miles away. So they took a break under a tree and started eating. Chen Ji said, "It's not that I am unwilling to walk with you further, but once you get on the ridge it will be all broad road ahead of you. It's densely populated and there is no danger the rest of the way. I'll be

waiting for the good tidings from you, Brother.” Han Xin said, “Sister-in-law is due for child birth, and I don’t dare to keep you any longer, Brother. But I know you are skilled in martial arts and learned in classics. Once I get promoted in ranks, I will certainly recommend you to King of Han. I will be glad if we can enjoy wealth and prestige together.” “I have an old mother at home. I have to be a filial son first before I can serve the country. As for wealth and prestige, to have them it’s as easy as turning my palm, but they are things as insignificant as mustard seeds. To assist Han, there are some solid measures for you to consider, Brother. First, one may launch a surprise attack to subjugate the Three Territories of Qin; then secretly send envoys to persuade the feudal lords to revolt, which would help distract Xiang Yu’s attention. In that case it would become easy to conquer the entire empire. On the other hand, one could assist Chu by offering the land of Chen Cang to Overlord. In that situation King of Han would become besieged in Baozhong and would be eliminated if he comes out. I hold the fates of both sides in my hand, but following the instructions from my ancestors, I’m happy to live in seclusion and not interested in ranks and fame. When you arrive in the land of Han, Brother, I hope you will be consistent and never switch your allegiance again as you did when you were with Chu.” Reluctantly, Chen Ji started to return, carrying the remainder of the food on his shoulder. Having mounted the horse to continue his journey to the west, Han Xin thought, ‘What he said is full of insights! He is a remarkable strategist, and a man of passion and dedication. If he meets another friend, would he tell him about me? If he wants to become an official in the future, most likely he will join Chu. Who doesn’t like wealth and rank? After the old lady’s death, he will definitely think of becoming an official, and possibly make trouble for me. Why don’t I kill him today?’ There is a poem that testifies to this:

*Years later Han Xin was to lose his life in Not-Midnight-Yet Palace,
He complained against Liu Bang the Han emperor as being an ingrate.
Withered tree leaves were fluttering in the bleak autumn wind,
In mourning of the woodcutter who had died in Chen Cang.*

By the cliff there was a “life-saving pit,” a pit dug by hunters to evade the attack from a tiger or leopard. Who would have thought that it would become a “life-ending pit” for Chen Ji? When Han Xin was near the pit, he dropped his whip and turned around, shouting: “Come back, please, Brother! I dropped my whip.” Chen Ji hastened back, saying: “Don’t bother to dismount, Brother. I’ll pick it up for you.” Chen Ji put down the bag from his shoulder, and reached over the edge of the pit for the whip. At this moment Han Xin quietly unsheathed his sword and killed Chen Ji cold-bloodedly on the roadside. Indeed:

*Han Xin ran for his life like an arrow off the bow-string,
Chen Ji’s selfless help saved him from the Yellow Spring.
By ruthlessly murdering his own benefactor
A terrible disaster Han Xin to himself would bring.*

Han Xin dismounted, laid Chen Ji’s body on the bottom of the pit and covered it with earth. He then offered the remainder of the food to Chen Ji’s soul, crying: “It’s not that I’m a treacherous man, but my future in Han is too important to be spoiled. I had no choice but kill you, Brother, and I promise to do my best to repay your favor when I become prominent in rank.” So saying, he made a mark by the pit, picked up his whip, and mounted his horse to continue his journey. There is a poem that testifies to this:

*The Chu defector trudged his way to the west,
From the woodcutter he received help the best.
The host walked him a long way to Baozhong,
Only a bow and two fake tears from the guest.*

That night, Chen Ji’s wife Woman Xin felt pains in her belly. Chen’s mother leaned against the door frame anxiously expecting her son’s return. Under the dim moonlight, she saw her son walking home unsteadily with blood dripping from his open chest. The mother asked: “What happened to you, son? Where is Mr. Han?” The son gave no answer, and went directly into his room. Woman Xin gave birth to a son that night. Chilly winds were blowing, and the old mother knew her sight of the son was ominous, perhaps a sign that he had lost his life to a tiger. The son was given the name Wangfu, or “longing for

father,” and no one in the family knew when that longing would end. Indeed:

*To help a friend he separated from family, permanently,
For thousands of years the bitter grievances would remain.*

Han Xin was sad after his murder of the woodcutter. He walked another ten miles or so and got on Taibai Ridge. It was getting dark, gusty winds were blowing and wild beasts were howling around. Han Xin didn't dare to walk down the ridge. In the distance there seemed to be flashing lights. He walked closer, and saw an old Daoist priest cooking in a temple. Han Xin bowed, saying, "I'm on my way to visit relatives in Hanzhong, but lost my way tonight. Would you be so nice as to let me stay here for the night, Master?" The old man replied, "Since you are going to the place of King of Han, you can stay for the night. Please have some of my coarse food if you're hungry." After the meal, the old priest asked: "What's your honorable name, General?" Han Xin answered, "My name is Wei Yan, and I'm from Huanyin. I've been an officer in Chu, and am on my way to visit my relatives." Han Xin then asked for the old priest's name. The priest answered, "I'm White Fruit Master, and I've been practicing Daoist cultivation here. In a few days I will go to the east to visit my junior fellow Daoist student Fan Zeng. If you have a message for your family I'd be happy to be your messenger." Han Xin answered, "Thanks, but my family has declined, and I don't have any messages." After that he thought, 'If he mentions me to Fan Zeng, I will be dead.' Han Xin asked again: "Since the plank path on the cliffs was burned down, there is no path to the east. I'm relatively young, and it was so hard for me to come this far. How can you go to the east at your advanced age, Master?" The priest responded, "I heard there is an ancient path of Chen Cang." Hearing that, Han Xin thought, 'If I don't kill this old man, the secret of the Cave of Chen Cang will be leaked.' A moment later, the old Daoist started practicing meditation, when Han Xin killed him with his sword. There is a poem that testifies to this:

*Don't blame Han Xin for his treachery,
The immortal asked for the catastrophe.
When the hand lifted and the blade fell,
The head was already apart from the body.*

A few days later, when the Daoist's friends (who should be hunters) came to the temple, they found the old man dead. The morning after the murder, Han Xin changed his blood-stained clothes and went down the ridge. He crossed Black Water River, and arrived in Chilly Brook Town at dusk. It was a bustling town, and on the east side of the street there was an inn with a sign that said "Lodging for men and horses." At the entrance of the inn stood a boy, who was perhaps eleven or twelve years old. Upon seeing Han Xin, the boy said, "Why don't you take your lodging here, Sir." Han Xin dismounted, and the boy announced loudly, "A gentleman from the east." Han Xin was taken to his suite. After he took a short rest, food was brought to the study room, and Han Xin was delighted to notice that the décor of the room was quite exquisite. After a few cups of wine, he started to think of Chen Ji's death and felt deeply remorseful. As there were an ink stone and a writing brush available, he was seized with a sudden impulse and started to inscribe a poem on the wall:

*The mountain trail was hard to trudge,
It was steep and rugged beyond descriptions.
Vines and weeds sealed the mountain range,
Dark valleys concealed demons and apparitions.
On top of the mountain, I could touch heaven,
Turns of the trail left me in complete exhaustion.
Nobody was there to point out the right direction,
I was stranded all by myself in bitter frustration.
Suddenly there showed up the woodcutter,
Who provided me with food and accommodation.
I stopped my horse in front of the mountain,
And I told him the West Shu was my destination.
The woodcutter walked me to the broad road,*

Which was consistent with the map's indication.
 A man of loyalty and righteousness he truly was,
 I was determined to reward him for the benefaction.
 [1-030] But I was afraid my pursuers of Chu would arrive,
 And I would be captured and locked up in prison.
 By killing you, I removed the last trace of my escape,
 Please do not hold me in your bitter accusation.
 I left you with the firewood in the mountains,
 So that I would become the ruler's assistant.
 As I one day become the commander of ten thousand,
 My friend, you can be sure you did not die in vain.
 Your innocent life you lost to my blade,
 From my sorrowful heart I for you prayed.
 Your kindness I will find a way to repay,
 Your children I will promote to better grade.
 The bright autumn moon above on the blue sky—
 It is you looking down at me in my imagination.¹⁰

As we can see, the Xiong and Kaiguo zhongxing Narratives, despite some verbal variations, follow an almost identical plotline: Han Xin loses his way on road to join the Han forces—An old man shows him the hidden path—Han Xin carves a poem on the rock with the tip of his sword—Han Xin kills the old man with his sword for fear he would tell others of his whereabouts—The old man turns out to be a Daoist wizard, shedding no blood from the slash—Han Xin afterward regrets the killing. The Yu narrative is somewhat simpler, lacking the incident of carving the poem on the rock. The rest of the sequence, however, is not very different from the other two. This similarity in the narrative sequence might be due to the mutual influence among these narratives and/or to the influence from shared textual sources, possibly Qian Han shu pinghua—if it was available at the time.¹¹

In the Zhen Narrative the episode is significantly different. It is considerably longer, amplified with many more details, including several place-names. The most notable change is that the person Han Xin meets and kills on the road is not an “old man” as in the Xiong, Yu, and *Kaiguo zhongxing* narratives but a “woodcutter” (*qiaofu*). Additionally, Han Xin not only expresses his remorse on the spot of the killing but also writes a long poem on the wall of the inn in mourning of the victim. Given the facts that Zhen Wei was contemporaneous with Yu Xiangdou and Zhong Bojing and that the earliest known edition of the Zhen Narrative was only seven years later than that of the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative, the changes in the Zhen Narrative become even more noteworthy. What was the source for Zhen Wei's new version of this particular episode? It seems reasonable to surmise that, while the Xiong, Yu, and Kaiguo zhongxing Narratives relied heavily on textual transmission, Zhen Wei chose to enrich his version with information from the ongoing popular Western Han story cycles.

This hypothesis that Han Xin's killing of the woodcutter was not invented by Zhen Wei himself but taken from popular storytelling tradition seems corroborated by a passage in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) story “Nao yinsi Sima Mao duanyu” 鬧陰司司馬貌斷獄, collected in *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (also known as *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言). In the story, the fortuneteller Xu Fu explains to Sima Mao, the temporary Yama or king of the underworld, that Han Xin's death at the hand of Empress Lü was a retribution for Han's ungrateful killing of “two woodcutters” on his way to join Liu Bang's forces:

“When Han Xin was defecting from Chu to Han, he lost his way on the road. Fortunately he met two woodcutters, who pointed out a path, which led him to Nanzheng. Han Xin was afraid that, once the pursuers sent by the King of Chu arrived, the woodcutters would divulge his whereabouts. So he unsheathed his sword, turned back, and killed both of them. Even though the woodcutters were no important people, they were Han Xin's benefactors. In the heavenly principles, the punishment for ingratitude is

the most severe of all."¹²

Gujin xiaoshuo, first published in 1621, was the earliest of Feng Menglong's three anthologies of short stories. While Feng himself authored only a small number of the stories in the other two anthologies, he wrote nineteen of the forty stories in *Gujin xiaoshuo* personally.¹³ According to Patrick Hanan, "Nao yinsi" is one of the nineteen, and as a newly composed story it shows few stylistic features from earlier historical periods, which marks it as different from those stories adapted from earlier textual sources.¹⁴ That suggests that the passage above is less likely to be based on an earlier textual prototype than a source in the contemporary popular culture. That the passage features two woodcutters as opposed to only one in the Zhen Narrative by no means weakens that conjecture, as it is perfectly consistent with the morphology in popular orality characterized by a dialectic relationship between the uniform and the multiform.

In comparison with its counterpart in the Zhen Narrative, the woodcutter story in the Dai Script is not only several times longer but also much more convoluted. Obviously, the killing of the road-pointing old Daoist in the Xiong, Yu, and *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narratives evolved into two separate incidents in the Dai Script, killing of the road-pointing woodcutter and of the food-offering old Daoist. The incident about the old Daoist is absent from the Zhen Narrative; so is the part about Han Xin's visit to and brief stay with the woodcutter's family. On another account, the Dai Script is different from all other Xi Han narratives. In the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative, a woman named Qingyuan 青遠, wife of one of Han Xin's servants, informs against Han Xin about his conspiracy with the rebellious general Chen Xi 陳豨, which leads to Han Xin's execution by Empress Lü. Obviously, that account is inherited from the fourteenth-century text *Qian Han shu pinghua xuji*.¹⁶ In the Xiong, Yu, and Zhen Narratives, the informer is not the woman Qingyuan but a male servant named Xie Gongzhu 謝公著.¹⁷ In the Dai Script, however, it is suggested that Chen Ji's daughter Chunnü 春女, a seven-year-old girl when her father is killed by Han Xin, will become a palace woman years later and be responsible for Han Xin's death, fulfilling his karma of retribution. Since this varies from the account of Han Xin's execution in *Qian Han shu pinghua xuji*, it is almost certain that the narrative of Han Xin's murder of his benefactor in the Dai Script is significantly different from its counterpart in the non-extant *Qian Han shu pinghua*.

Despite the differences, however, the episode of Han Xin's ungrateful killing in the Dai Script clearly has a closer kinship to the corresponding part in the Zhen Narrative than that in any of the other popular Western Han texts. Among other things, the poem that Han Xin writes on the wall of his inn room in the Dai Script is a verbatim replica of that in the Zhen Narrative. As we know, homophonic substitutes are usually very common in Chinese texts that emerged from an oral tradition. The complete absence of homophonic variations in the two occurrences of this lengthy poem might suggest a possibility of textual, rather than oral, transmission. Based on what we know about the dating of the Zhen Narrative and the Dai Script, it might seem viable to assume that the script could have been textually derived, at least in part, from the Zhen Narrative.

That assumption, however, has a significant difficulty. The long poem that Han Xin writes on the wall of the inn room contains these lines toward the end:

*Your innocent life you lost to my blade,
From my sorrowful heart I for you prayed.
Your kindness I will find a way to repay,
Your children I will promote to better grade.*

The last line appears to be a misfit in the Zhen Narrative, because nowhere in the narrative can one find any mentions of Chen Ji's family or children. It would be unimaginable that Zhen Wei should have composed this line if he indeed was the *writer* of his version of the Chen Ji story. On the other

hand, the line fits nicely with the Dai Script, where Han Xin stays briefly with Chen Ji's family, is acquainted to Chen's mother, wife, and daughter, and is told that Chen's wife is expecting another child soon. It could suggest that the versions of the woodcutter story in the Zhen Narrative and Dai Script may have both drawn on a source in proximity to the oral tradition, an unknown Source X. From Source X the Zhen Narrative inherited much of the story, including Han Xin's poem on the wall of the inn, but dropped the part on Han Xin's visit to Chen Ji's home, resulting in the discrepancy in that stretch of verse. Given the fact that the earliest known edition of the Zhen Narrative is dated only slightly later than those of the Xiong, Yu, and *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narratives, this hypothesis has an interesting implication. While the accounts of Han Xin's ungrateful killing in the Xiong, Yu, and *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narratives more or less follow the textual model in the fourteenth-century *pinghua*, the living Western Han narrative tradition might have by then outlived its fourteenth-century precursor and moved away from it considerably. Between the Zhen Narrative and the Dai Script, it is in the latter that the storyline of Han Xin's killing of his benefactor in Source X is better preserved in its entirety. Representing a later stage of the evolution, the Dai Script might to some extent be textually derived from the Zhen Narrative, but it could also be considered an inheritor of the unknown Source X, which perhaps represented a tradition in close association with the ongoing popular Western Han story cycles.

Notes

¹Vibeke Børdahl, *Wu Song Fights the Tiger: The Interaction of Oral and Written Traditions in the Chinese Novel, Drama and Storytelling* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2013), p. 10; Vibeke Børdahl and Margaret B. Wan, Eds., *The Interplay of the Oral and the Written in Chinese Popular Literature* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2010), pp. 1-7.

²The five *pinghua* texts are: *Xinkan quanxiang pinghua Wuwang fa Zhou shu* 新刊全像平話武王伐紂書, *Xinkan quanxiang pinghua Yue Yi tu Qi qi guo chunqiu houji* 新刊全像平話樂毅圖齊七國春秋後記, *Xinkan quanxiang Qin bing liu guo pinghua* 新刊全像秦併六國平話, *Xinkan quanxiang pinghua Qian Han shu xuji* 新刊全像平話前漢書續集, and *Zhizhi xinkan quanxiang pinghua Sanguo zhi* 至治新刊全像平話三國志. Only *Pinghua Sanguo zhi* is explicitly dated in the Zhizhi period (1321-23), as we can see from the titles, but since all five texts appear in the same format and were published by the same firm in Jian'an 建安, it is reasonable to assume that they were printed approximately at the same time.

³*Xi Han zhizhuan* does not feature a consistent narrative style throughout, which prompts some scholars to hypothesize the involvement of other writers in addition to Xiong Damu at different stages of its evolution. See, for instance, Ōtsuka Hidetaka 大塚秀高, "Quan Han zhizhuan, Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhuanzhi yanjiu xulun" <全漢志傳><兩漢開國中興傳志>研究緒論, *Jiujiang xueyuan xuebao* 九江學院學報, 2011.3:30. Wang Yangang 汪燕崗 suggests that the early part of *Xi Han zhizhuan* is most likely a revised version of Xiong Damu's work. The rest of it, according to Wang, could be from two different authors. See Wang Yangang, "Quan Han zhizhuan yu Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhizhuan de chengshu" <全漢志傳>與<兩漢開國中興傳志>的成書, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 2007.3:204.

⁴There is no general consensus on the priority between these two narratives. Wang Yangang, for instance, insists that the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative represents an expansion and elaboration of the Xiong Narrative. See Wang, *Quan Han zhizhuan yu Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhizhuan de chengshu*, 194. Cheng Yizhong 程毅中, however, holds the opposite view, as he believes that the Xiong Narrative might represent an expansion of the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative, which could be the earlier text despite the relatively late date of its earliest known edition. See Cheng Yizhong, "Cong Qian Han shu pinghua dao Dong Xi Han yanyi" 從<前漢書平話>到<東西漢演義>, in his *Mingdai xiaoshuo congkao* 明代小說叢稿 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), p. 63. Still another view is that there is no hereditary relationship between the Xiong Narrative and the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative, which are "brothers," both owing much to *Qian Han shu pinghua xuji*. See Li Yiya 李宜涯, "Yuan Ming Jianyang liang Han jiangshi xiaoshuo bijiao" 元明建陽兩漢講史小說比較, *Danjiang renwen shehui xuekan* 淡江人文社會學刊, 23: 70.

⁵The 1612 edition of *Xi Han tongsu yanyi* features a preface by Zhen Wei himself, which contains this passage: “I wrote this popular narrative not because I wanted to transmit it afar or pass it down to posterity. The reason was actually simple. When I was staying idle at home, I incidentally read some works on the Western Han, and found them to be confusing and vulgarly worded at places and not presenting the Western Han story properly. I therefore took it upon myself to slightly elaborate the details and amplify the meanings with further historical facts. The following year, the work was completed.” See *Xi Han yanyi*, p. 1. Zhen Wei refers to the earlier Xi Han narratives with the term *Xi Han juan* 西漢卷, it is therefore not clear what work or works he talks about here, but obviously he is not referring to the official histories such as *Shi ji* or *Qian Han shu*.

⁶Xiong Zhonggu, *Xi Han zhizhuan* 西漢志傳, in *Quan Han zhizhuan* 全漢志傳 (2 vols. *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* ed.), 1:63. I omit the original Chinese text because of the limit of space.

⁷Yu Xiangdou, *Quan Han zhizhuan* 全漢志傳 (2 vols. *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* ed.), 1:119.

⁸Anonymous, *Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhuanzhi* 兩漢開國中興傳誌 (*Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* ed.), p. 86.

⁹Zhen Wei, *Xi Han tongsu yanyi* 西漢通俗演義 (Beijing: Huaxia Chubanshe, 2012), p. 104.

¹⁰Dai Script (unpublished), 1-024 to 1-030.

¹¹Even though nobody can prove it, many modern scholars seem to take the availability of *Qian Han shu pinghua* in the late Ming for granted. Ji Dejun 紀德君, for instance, believes that the Xiong Narrative not only has inherited many materials from *Qian Han shu pinghua xuji* as demonstrated by textual comparisons, but also must have reserved much of the content of *Qian han shu pinghua* as well. See Ji Dejun, “20 shiji Song Yuan pinghua de faxian yu yanjiu” 20 世紀宋元平話的發現與研究, *Guangzhou Shiyuan xuebao* 廣州師院學報 21.10:9. In his “Quan Han zhizhuan, Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhuanzhi yanjiu xulun,” Otsuka Hidetaka also suggests that it is possible that the *Kaiguo zhongxing* Narrative was “based on *Qian Han shu pinghua*, its sequel, and *Hou Han shu pinghua* 後漢書平話, which were still available then.” See *Jiujiang xueyuan xuebao*, 2011.3:31.

¹²Feng Menglong, *Yushi mingyan* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1992), pp. 300-301.

¹³Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 104.

¹⁴Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 44 and p. 85.

¹⁵Anonymous, *Liang Han kaiguo zhongxing zhuanzhi*, p. 252.

¹⁶See *Song Yuan pinghua ji* 宋元平話集 (annotated, Ding Xigen 丁錫根. 2 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji

¹⁷See Xiong Zhonggu, *Xi Han zhizhuan*, 1:190; Yu Xiangdou, *Quan Han zhizhuan*, 1:310; Zhen Wei, *Xi Han tongsu yanyi*, p.

MA WEI, MASTER OF YANGZHOU STORYTELLING:

‘You’re always “seeking truth”, all your life’

Frank Kouwenhoven, with Tan Shzr Ee

(CHIME Foundation, Leiden / Royal Holloway, University of London)

Yangzhou pinghua 揚州評話 is an age-old oral tradition of prose-storytelling with roots as far back as the time of the famous professional performer of pinghua, Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1592-1674). The Lower Yangzi River is regarded as the cradle of this genre, and one of its best-known performers today is the brilliant and vivid Ma Wēi (马伟), a native of the city of Yangzhou. He is considered by many to be ‘the last of Mobicans’ of the genre. A remarkable personality with piercing eyes and stern looks, Ma Wei is a star performer of famous classical tales such as ‘Wu Song beats the Tiger’, but is also a daily guest on Yangzhou TV, where he tells modern stories. His charisma comes across in all his performances, live or mediated, traditional or new. In this interview, he speaks of his training and his practical experiences as a Yangzhou storytelling master, notably about the many changes he has witnessed in the genre, and about his own unshakeable principles as an artist: ‘You want to be ‘real’ on stage, so you have to be ‘real’... I am perpetually going to Jingyang Ridge for the very first time; for me, it’s always the first time I see the tiger!’ And, controversially: ‘Women can’t perform Yangzhou pinghua. They are unable to deal with it.’

There’s a slight drizzle in Yangzhou as we walk along the city’s bustling narrow alleys, past various bridges and canals towards a local venue for storytelling. Ma Wei, aged 38 at the time of this interview, leads the way for us, holding up his umbrella. He has studied *Yangzhou pinghua* from 1995 onwards, with famous masters like Dai Buzhang, Ren Dekun, Hui Zhaolong and others, and is now widely considered one of the genre’s finest living performers. We are following him, equipped with notebooks and cameras. And I am here with ethnomusicologist Tan Shzr Ee from London, who – being far more fluent in Chinese than me – has kindly volunteered to assist me during the interview.

The master storyteller himself, though only in his late 30s, and looking quite energetic and young for someone born in 1980, is well-known in this place. People left and right in the streets greet him elaborately, clearly showing respect. He nods back kindly all the time, but seems a bit reluctant to stop and to strike up conversations. As he confides to us a little while later: ‘When I’m not performing or teaching, I prefer just to sit in my office, reading the books on my shelves, writing my scripts, quietly drinking my tea... That is sufficient for me. I do not want to have elaborate exchange with too many people about the things I’m doing.’

Ma Wei is of middle-size height, and wears a casual outfit – white shirt, dark-blue jacket – which might make him resemble almost any man in the street. But his piercing dark eyes and rather stern looks set him apart: a man with a busy agenda, much occupied with his myriad tasks as an artist, teacher, and daily TV-presenter. There’s a no-nonsense attitude about him. He talks fast, nearly always

demonstrating clear-cut convictions. Such as: ‘We should not loose track of the past, but we cannot rely on tradition alone.’ He is willing to grant us ample time for an interview in his office. But first he would like to take us to some of the local storytelling venues, and to show us a bit of his native town.



Yangzhou storyteller Ma Wei in action.

A rainshower briefly creates a lull in the busy traffic on Dongguan street, as Ma Wei and his wife take a stroll in Yangzhou.



Storytelling sites in Yangzhou

Present-day Yangzhou is an industrial, market and tourist centre with some 4.5 million inhabitants. Little remains of the traditional storytelling houses which once dotted this city. Only some decades ago a special hall for storytelling, the Great Enlightenment Storytelling Hall (大光明书场 *Da guang-ming shuchang*), drew full houses on a daily basis, but in the 1990s the numbers of visitors gradually dwindled, until there was no basis left to maintain the venue. Performers of narrative genres have considerable difficulty now to sustain a presence in the rapidly changed environment of modern media and youth culture which dominate public life in China today. Many former storytellers have already changed their profession. Younger artists who still do occasional performances are often forced to earn their main income with other jobs. There's no money to speak of in telling stories on stage.

For centuries, the distinguished predecessors of Ma Wei in the art of storytelling counted as one of the major attractions of Yangzhou. But they have become icons of a bygone era, a part of the city's cultural legend, like so many famous painters and poets of former centuries. Among artists still active today, Ma Wei is a notable exception in that he still earns his living full-time as a storyteller and teacher in this realm. There is something about him of a rock in the surf, a man firmly holding on to a sacred mission. His position as one of the finest presenters of an age-old tradition is uncontested, but he is also acutely aware of the need to adapt the art of storytelling to modern demands, without compromising artistic quality and integrity.

There are still local aficionados of the genre who continue to cherish and support *Yangzhou ping-hua*. Performances even continue on an almost daily basis, albeit with much smaller audiences than before, now mostly elderly people, and the storytelling takes place in a much more limited number of spaces than in the past. Nine venues in town still offer storytellers a platform to display their talents. Most of these venues are either community centres, in which other social activities also take place, or restaurants. In a bid to give the genre a new boost and to revitalize storytelling in the cultural life of Yangzhou, some local restaurant owners have begun to set up small stages for *pinghua* and other performances. Eating obviously remains the main occupation in such places; storytelling, if it takes place, serves as a side-entertainment. But it's good to have these stages, as one way for Yangzhou

Ma Wei inspects the imperial splendour at 'Winter Glory Garden'.
The stage is used for local operas and for storytelling.



pinghua to attract potential new audiences, local people as well as any visiting tourists. Near the city's main shopping street *Dōngguān jiē* (東關街), there is one grander attempt underway to revive a traditional style theatre and entertainment hall which can be used for storytelling, the *Dōngróngyuán* (冬菜園, 'Winter Glory Garden'). The building, a former salt-merchant residence, has been re-designed and equipped with stone carvings, statues, and a number of museum-like displays, such as an imperial-style sedan chair exhibited in the front courtyard. The famous writer Shen Congwen's mother-in-law Lu Ying once lived here, and the building was declared a cultural relic liable for preservation in 1962. Its main hall features a large wooden stage with balustrades, lavishly painted panels, and a backdrop adorned with calligraphies. Traditional operas, storytelling performances as well as public ceremonies of various kinds are now organized here, though it remains to be seen if the venue will be economically viable, especially in the long run. We briefly peep in: empty chairs and exquisitely carved tables here are waiting for the next round of visitors.

But right now, if we wish to hear storytelling, it seems advisable to visit one of the more modest-sized restaurants which still regularly feature *Yangzhou pinghua*. The best-known one is called 皮包水 *Píbāo shuǐ*, 'Bag of Water' on Dongguan street, which is where we are heading next. We can already spot its bright-coloured outdoor lanterns from afar...

Historical Yangzhou

Also bordering on the main street are the town's traditional gardens, with their artificial rocks and miniature waterfalls, a reported 'must' for any visiting traveller. A well-renovated town gate at the far end of the street towers above all the other buildings, a majestic reminder of Ming and early Qing times, when huge piles of merchandise were still unloaded at the town's busy local harbour and pier nearby, night and day. At that time, traders' families, poets, artists, scholars, musicians, courtesans, fine gardens, and eccentric painters still determined Yangzhou's economic and artistic heart-throb.

A bit further out, folk songs are sung for tourists who charter pleasure boats on Slender West Lake (瘦西湖 *Shòu Xīhú*). Much of the boat singing on the lake is a re-invented tradition, the people who steer the boats have been instructed to sing these songs to heighten *couleur locale*. Luckily, the singers are not as tacky as the actors in historical costumes who sometimes cross the same lake in fancy 'historical' boats. Some boats carry loudspeakers which emit popified versions of 'court music'. The silk-clad lords and ladies on board presumably impersonate ancient Chinese court officials. Photogenic, for sure, but also a bit silly.

The sophisticated Yangzhou of imperial times cannot be brought back to life again, but echoes of

Boatsmen on the pleasure boats on Slender West Lake entertain their passengers with local folk songs.



the past reverberate everywhere, in spite of massive destruction and repeated government calls for 'progress' and innovation. Sure, the town's suburbs have got their share of skyscrapers, like every sizeable city in China, but Yangzhou has not forgotten its one-time role as one of China's wealthiest, most sophisticated cities. It still lies beautifully poised on the north bank of the Yangtze River, surrounded by little lakes, with one of those lakes – Slender West Lake – verging directly on central areas of the town. The romantic bridges, exquisite gardens and fine traditional architecture are still (or again) there. Reconstructed historical buildings with their old-style bricks and grey tiles serve as further reminders of

the proud and stately past. The main shopping street, Dongguan jie, is 1,122 metres long. It is fairly narrow, with throngs of people strolling past open facades and shop windows. We make only slow progress because we frequently need to jump aside to make room for traffickers on scooters who zig-zag their way through the crowd. There's the usual ambiance of urban noise – music glaring from loudspeakers, mopeds hooting, bicycle bells ringing, shop owners advertizing their famous local food stuffs and tourist products in loud voices. The entire street is a massive display of nostalgia; the low rooftops of the one-storey houses are adorned with red lanterns, a pretty sight, and the road is paved with regal stone slates. The arts and crafts shops alongside the road will sell anything looking antique or precious, from traditional paintings to pottery to inkstones and jewelery, evoking the immense riches of a real or imagined past.

Life in this city in central Jiangsu has not always been so beautiful or romantic. Societal transitions, here as elsewhere in China, have often been abrupt, brutal and violent. A war-torn ruin after the Qing conquest and the Taiping rebellion, Yangzhou had to face further decline in the course of the twentieth century, due to such dramatic periods as the (second) Sino-Japanese war and the Communist revolution. Trade gradually shifted to seaports and railways, the city losing its former status as a leading economic centre. Modern times witnessed a rapid expansion and modernization of the town, with a thermal power station being constructed in 1994.

In the wake of all these developments, traditional culture has evidently suffered, though it survives in pockets, and sometimes hovers audibly over the town's renovated old bridges and canals. There is still traditional opera in Yangzhou, there are temple ceremonies, and literary circles, where writers are invited to recite their poems and prose tales. There's also an upsurge of interest in *guqin*, the classical seven-stringed zither, which is much promoted, especially by the present city's most famous player, Mr. Mǎ Wéihéng (马维衡), a friend of Ma Wei. The man has turned his home into a truly impressive

The 'Bag of Water' restaurant, with billboard advertizing storytelling.



private qin museum and music school, worth a visit just as much as any of the town's more official museums and memorial sites.

Then, last but not least, there is also the *Yangzhou Quyi Tuan* (扬州曲艺团), the local Storytelling Troupe, training students and organizing performances in the remaining venues for the genre. It was at the local Drama School that Ma Wei completed his own training as a formally acknowledged student in the late 1990s, after which he took on a job as a performer in the *Quyi Tuan*.

'It's a pity that you two have come at such an unfortunate time', he says. 'Most of the artists of our Storytelling Troupe have just gone off to Shaanxi for a big celebration on the occasion of the 19th National Party Congress! There are more than twenty of us over there at the moment. Otherwise you would have been able to see them perform here this very afternoon.' Mainly for our sake, and as an attractive alternative, Ma Wei has invited some of his own private students to come to the 'Bag of



Storytelling at the 'Bag of Water' restaurant. The performer is seated behind a table, equipped with a fan and a small stick ('talk stopper', 止語 *zhǐyǔ*) to beat on the table.

Water' restaurant for an informal gig and an evening meal. He hopes it will enable us to taste some of the splendours of Yangzhou traditional culture after all.

When we arrive at 皮包水 *Pí bāo shuǐ* it's already evening. Personnel of the restaurant are posting in shiny red jackets and black caps in front of the entrance to welcome us. 'Bag of Water' may sound like a strange name for a restaurant. It refers to the widespread Yangzhouese habit of taking one's morning tea and breakfast in a restaurant together with family members. Many people in Yangzhou do this on a regular basis, and some of them drink lots of tea on such occasions, filling their bellies like 'water bags' – hence the name.

We have actually had that experience earlier during the day: in the morning, at Ma Wei's invitation, we have risen at 6:00 AM to gather for a round of *pībāo shuǐ* with him, his wife and several colleagues at a nearby tea house. The place turned out to be already surprisingly crowded by 7:00 AM. We devoured a rather sturdy breakfast of meat and vegetable dumplings, steamed buns filled with pork and other food, essentially enough to satisfy a giant's appetite! We gulped it all down with the help of local tea, green and clear in blue and white porcelain cups. Indeed, it made our bellies swell up like water bags. Two hours later most people had left to start on their daily work routine. One might say that this is a bit of a local Yangzhou wisdom: to begin your day with with some relaxed eating and socializing before embarking on life's more demanding tasks.

Ma Wei asks us whether we liked the experience. Yes, we did, although it much reduced our speed of work afterwards! The full local expression for this typical Yangzhou habit is that people will 早



Ma Wei and his spouse at breakfast: getting ready for a busy day.

上皮包水, 晚上水包皮 (*zǎoshang pībāo shuǐ, wǎnshàng shuǐ bāopí*), i.e. in the morning they fill their bellies with water, in the evening they 'enter a water bubble' (visit a bathhouse; the city is also famous for its public bathhouses).

So this is what the name of the storytelling restaurant on Dongguan street refers to. The elderly gentleman who owns the 'Bag of Water' is an ardent fan of the art. He has turned his place into one of the best known venues for the genre, by erecting a permanent stage in the back of his restaurant, and by ardently promoting the performances. A wooden balustrade encloses a small platform with a table and a microphone, well-lit with spotlights. The restaurant boss advertises the regular evening shows on big billboards in front of his venue, showing numerous photos of the artists who have come to perform. Included on the billboards are some pictures of a visit paid by TV-presenter Michael Wood



Storytelling aficionados enjoying a pibāo shuǐ breakfast.
On the right: storyteller Ren Dekun.

and his team for the BBC documentary film series ‘The Story of China’ in 2014. That BBC series briefly features Ma Wei himself, in an excerpt from a classical tale which he tells at the *Pibāo shuǐ* restaurant.

But most visitors here, as we can’t help noticing, appear far more interested in the food than in any live performances on stage. The customers munch and chat happily away and pay only fleeting attention (or none at all) to the storytellers who have come to perform. This evening, we witness three young men, private students of Ma Wei, who offer short excerpts of traditional tales in turn. They do so with admirable gusto and flair, with microphones and loudspeakers turned up to maximum levels of loudness,

but – to be honest – they cannot match the power and punch of Ma Wei’s own performances.

I have first seen Ma Wei himself at work a few years ago during a CHIME Conference in Venice in 2014, which was devoted entirely to the theme of storytelling. On that occasion, Ma was among a group of artists from China invited to perform at the Fondazione Cini, the well-known cultural and academic centre located on the island of San Giorgio, at a stone’s throw from the San Marco square. Ma Wei also performed elsewhere in Venice, in the Santa Margherita theatre, which was filled to the brim with Italians and foreign tourists. Most of his audiences in Venice were not capable of understanding his Chinese, and we had not arranged subtitling for him on stage. But in spite of this absence of translation, Ma Wei’s performance in Yangzhou dialect made a strong impression on his listeners and even provoked frequent laughter. It illustrates the extent of his showmanship and charisma.

I’ve become an ardent fan of his performances ever since. I have watched Ma Wei many times on the internet, and also on some other live occasions. But even this formidable storyteller, a genuine master of the genre, at one time set out on his artistic path with very hesitant steps, and with unclear prospects in so far as his future was concerned. He almost ended up becoming an electrician... Luckily for us, and for everyone taken by the punch and passion of Chinese storytelling, he never gave up his artistic dreams.

His main teacher Dai Buzhang

In Ma Wei’s spacious private office we interview him against a lavish backdrop of bookshelves. There are loads of classical novels here, texts from the Sui and Tang dynasties, tales like the famous *Water Margin*’ (*Shuǐhǔ:huàn* 水浒传), but the shelves also carry portraits of teachers, and numerous prizes and awards which he got for his artistic achievements.

Ma Wei begins by saying that normally there would be storytelling shows in Yangzhou every afternoon. But he admits that – also apart from the temporary absence of other performers because of the Party congress – the storytelling scene in Yangzhou today is not as vibrant today as it used to be in the past. We find ourselves talking about the decline of the art, although one can signal positive developments as well. Ma Wei’s own life story may be said to reflect some of both sides of the medal – the decline, as well as the renewal.

He tells about the impact his grandfather had on him as a child, in getting him interested in *Yangzhou pinghua* in the first place, and how he came to meet his initial and most important teacher, Dài Bùzhāng 戴步章. It all looked very enticing at the beginning. The young Ma Wei jumped with great fervour at the opportunities which were offered to him. But things soon became difficult, more so than he had



Books, paintings and photos adorn the study of storyteller Ma Wei; (on the left: F.Kouwenhoven).

anticipated. Master Dai turned out to be a great inspiration and influence, but he ran into a conflict with his young pupil when Ma Wei grew just a little too keen to become a professional in this field.

Ma Wei: ‘This was during the 1990s, when the art of storytelling did not seem to offer a viable future to young people any more.’ Dai Buzhang, the near-legendary old master of the genre, was willing to teach his art to youngsters like Ma, but only as a pastime, no longer as a step-up to any professional career. Dai did not want to be responsible for children failing to get jobs that would bring them hard cash and security in life. Such goals seemed incompatible with the profession of Yangzhou pinghua artists at that time.

‘For a start, it was not him but my maternal grandfather who got me interested in the genre. He was a professional listener, you might say, who loved going to storytelling houses. When I was very young, I lived with him, and whenever he went out to listen to storytelling, I would join my grandfather. I had this habit from childhood onwards. And then there was my father who was a fiddle player in Yangzhou local opera. So we also heard him play at home. We had opera singers coming to our home to sing opera arias every week. So I got this kind of influence from very early on. But I was not interested in Yangzhou opera. I did not like it. Fortunately, my father never tried to force it on me. Instead he asked me what I liked. I said storytelling! Of course, as a fiddle player, he knew lots of senior artists in Yangzhou. So eventually he took me to see the master storyteller Dài Bùzhāng 戴步章. That was how it began.’

Ma Wei, just 13 years old, was attending middle school at that time. ‘I was only free in weekends, so then I would ride a bicycle to the old gentleman’s home to study there. Dai Buzhang was a very important person to me, one of the most respected people in my life. I still remember what it was

like when I came to his house for the first time. We lived in the east of the city, and he lived in the city centre. I rode there on my bike all the way, it was snowing that day...'

'He lived in an old neighbourhood, in a traditional style home. I pushed the door open and went in, and found the old gentleman sitting reading a book. He was wearing a long woollen gown. I went over to him and introduced myself. I had brought a letter of introduction which someone had written. Dai Buzhong took it, and looked kindly at me. Once he understood what I'd come for, he began to talk animatedly with me. And soon I found myself taking lessons from him and learning stories.'

'Right until the day he died, he would never accept one penny as a payment from me. He never even accepted a meal from me as remuneration. His idea was that I was simply too young to pay anything. Dai was completely selfless in his teaching of me. He knew that I had no money.'

'There was this one thing, though, which made my path look rather different from that of other professional performers. Dai Buzhang never regarded me as a formal apprentice, he did not make me kowtow to him, he was never bent on teaching me in order to make me become a professional. Our relationship was that between a teacher and a student, not between a 'master' and a 'disciple'. He didn't want to turn me into a paid artist.'

Notwithstanding this difference in aims, Ma Wei felt tremendous respect for Dai Buzhang and continued to study with him for several years. Then, one day, he said that – in spite of his teacher's reservations – he aspired to enter a Drama School. 'I was 16 at that time. So basically I told him that I wished to become a professional storyteller. Dai Buzhang turned towards me, and said no, he made it clear that he was firmly against it.'

'You see, the year was 1996. China's traditional cultural market was rapidly declining. The Chinese economy wasn't going well, we had big unemployment. At that time Dai Buzhang believed that the art of storytelling was practically finished. He thought, like so many people did, that it was practically over, you couldn't earn a living with it any more. He loved me a great deal, he showed great concern for me and my future, so he didn't want me to take any wrong decision. His own son and grandson had also not studied the art. He said that if I wished, I could still study it with him as an amateur, he was happy to continue his teaching, he would still teach me for free. "But don't make it your profession", he warned, "you won't be able to feed yourself!" Essentially, Dai Buzhang had suffered various shocks during the Cultural Revolution, and this made him fairly pessimistic about the future of the art.'

'He feared that the Yangzhou Storytelling Troupe might not last for another five years. Everyone was thinking like that at that time, it was not just his own opinion. He said I ought to learn some craft, for example electrician, truck driver or cab driver. "You can still do your storytelling as an amateur, for your own fun, and then earn your living with something more practical", he said. "A good practical skill is worth more than a thousand acres of good land".'

Learning for electrician

But Ma Wei reasoned that he had developed some good skills already in the realm of storytelling, something which really inspired him; wouldn't it be a waste not to invest it in a professional career?

'This was the first time in three years that I had a disagreement with the great master! For the rest I completely obeyed and admired him. But on this point we clashed. Naturally, he only disagreed with me because he wished me well. He was a very knowledgeable person, and also a very wise man. He helped me a lot to develop my own outlook on life and my understanding of art. I really need to say that the most important knowledge I possess, including my basic knowledge of storytelling, all comes from him.'

No matter how his teacher as well as his father argued against him, Ma Wei remained adamant about the idea of registering at the drama school. In the end he simply went over there to list up as a student. To his disappointment the school's teachers were not prepared to accept him.

'The point was: at that time no one else wanted to study storytelling! "Why study *that*?", everyone said. There was simply no way to make money with it, no future! So the drama school still taught a

‘I told them I couldn’t sing!
“Well, then play the fiddle,
like your father.”’

class, I had no appetite to learn opera, and I felt really sad that they no longer offered professional courses in storytelling. My father then asked me what I was planning to do next. I said I didn’t really know. He said, “Let’s arrange for you to attend a course for electricians.”

By the time Ma Wei graduated from middle school at the age of 17, he had studied Yangzhou Storytelling for four years with Dai Buzhong. He had started off with stories from the Sui and Tang Dynasties, such as ‘*Sui ta*’, which Dai Buzhong essentially made him learn by heart.

‘I spent a lot of time reading and internalizing those stories. Another thing I got from Dai Buzhong was profound knowledge about the art of storytelling, the heritage of Wang Shaotang (王少堂) and all those other old masters. Thirdly, there was his guidance on my outlook on life. In retrospect, I felt that my relation with Dai Buzhong carried more weight than the relations I was to have with any of my later teachers.’

It was with great reluctance that he took up the study for electrician and stopped visiting Master Dai. He was rational enough to accept the inevitable: he had to arrange an affordable future for himself.

‘There was just no way around it. People do not always manage to do the things they love, right? Many youngsters in the United States would probably love to be president of the United States, but it doesn’t mean they can.’

Ma Wei started training for electrician, but followed this path during less than a full year. The reason was that, one day, he was suddenly contacted by Hui Zhaolong (惠兆龍), a professional storyteller and at that time examiner at the Drama School. ‘He remembered me, and gave me a phone call. He asked whether I was still willing to learn storytelling. I said yes, I was, and he said “Good, come to our Storytelling Troupe, we will let you do a solo exam!” I went, and I passed the exam under Hui’s and Ren Dekun’s supervision. So then I entered the drama school. I was a bit perplexed, I must say!’ It was the beginning of a new chapter, that would eventually culminate in his admission to the professional storytelling troupe.

‘I began to learn the ‘Water Margin’ (Shuǐhǔzhuàn 水滸傳) with Hui Zhaolong. This included tales about the hero Wu Song (Wǔ Sōng 武松). At that time I was no longer learning Tang period stories.’ He read and learned various books by heart. ‘For example this one’ [*he takes a volume from one of the shelves*]. ‘This contains

broad range of culture and arts, but they were no longer taking any recruits for their storytelling class. Instead they advised me to do an entrance exam for their opera class. “You can join our drama class”, they said, “we have whole group of students for it.” I told them I couldn’t sing! “Well, then play the fiddle, like your father.”’ ‘I told my father at home that I didn’t want to take that

Ma Wei: ‘We always need to be a bit smarter than our audience.’



the story which I did a part of in Venice, ‘Wu Song beats the tiger’ (武松打虎 Wǔsōng dǎ hǔ). The sequence I told in Venice lasted some twenty minutes, roughly it went from here’ [*he points at one page of the book*] ‘to there’ [*points at the next page*]. ‘This book has a total of 1.4 million words, and you would need to learn it all by heart. Of course you also needed to listen to your master a lot, what we call ‘oral transmission’, the way traditional masters used to train their apprentices, face to face. And it was never a matter of reproducing every word from a book literally; it never is, you can change things. But by and large you have to internalise complete stories, entire books, large trunks of text.’

In this respect he was following in the footsteps of his predecessors and colleagues who had become professionals in the trade. His teachers eventually let him test his performance skills in practice, in theatres in Shanghai and elsewhere. This, too, was a formal part of the training. But in many ways Ma Wei’s path to artistry would evolve differently from that of any of his colleagues and successors.

Lacking broader skills

Ma Wei: ‘Yes, I would say that my situation was rather special... The actors now active in our troupe were all educated at the Arts and Culture School (*Wénhuà Yìshù Xuéxiào* 文化艺术学校). They all studied there at some point. The same thing is true for the current members of the Suzhou Storytelling Troupe (苏州评弹班 *Sūzhōu Píngtán Bān*). All of those people, too, obtained all-round diplomas. I am the only one who never went to such a school. That is to say, I never received such wide-ranging education. I was only trained by Dai Buzhang, and afterwards by Hui Zhaolong, by Li Xintang (Li Xìntáng 李信堂) and other storytelling teachers, and always individually, face to face.’

At this point we ask him: ***‘But isn’t that exactly how traditional masters were trained in the past? It probably allowed you to perform in a truly traditional way, and perhaps even to reach further and deeper?’***

Ma Wei: ‘Yes. Perhaps you can go a bit deeper, but it’s lacking in breadth.’ (*Smiling.*) ‘I can’t really say whether it is less good or better. In any event I feel I’m lacking certain skills. Children who study at culture and arts schools learn to tell stories, but also to sing narrative ballads, to play the *pipa*, to play three-stringed banjo and so on, their training is fairly comprehensive, which is a good thing. As for me, since I only learned storytelling from those old teachers, it’s the only thing which I’m currently capable of. I’m the only one in our troupe who can do just one kind of thing. That is my current limitation.’

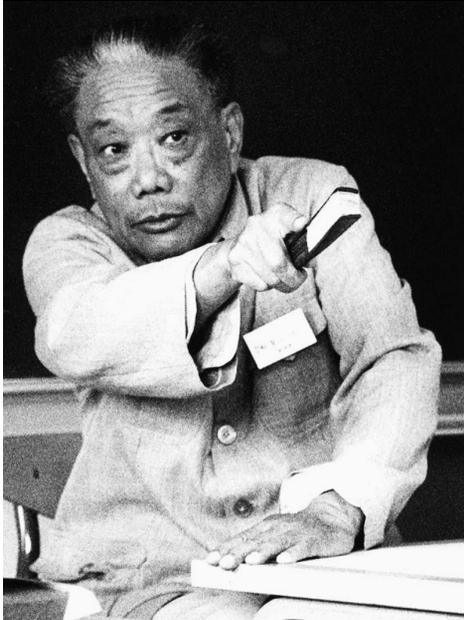
He may feel this to be a disadvantage also because the times have changed: the entire field of professional stage performance has altered enormously. People make very different kinds of demands on storytellers today, compared to former times. A conscientious artist like Ma Wei may feel more pressure to be inventive, and to accommodate his shows to the expectations of younger audiences. He will come back to this topic later on during our conversation, also in connection with his appearances on Chinese television. But perhaps intellectual broadening is also something that simply fits his personal ambitions: he has developed an interest in paintings, he has begun to learn calligraphy (‘I am practicing and playing with it every day, haha!’) and he still spends a lot of time reading books. Education is never finished. And the exclusive training he has taken with storytellers has not only resulted in ‘limitations’. His years with Dai Buzhang in particular have even turned out to be a goldmine of sorts. Dai Buzhang continued to keep an eye on him during his later career, right until the first years of the present century. (Dai died in 2003.)

‘When I joined the troupe and began to work professionally, the old man was still around. And although he was initially opposed to me going there, he was eventually quite happy about it. Every time after I had performed in a place, I had to pay him a visit when I was back in town. Then he would ask me what the show had been like, whether it had been difficult, and I would tell him all about it.’

After Ma Wei entered the Quyi troupe, he had a total of five teachers to coach him in the art of storytelling. Rèn Dékūn (任德坤) was among them. ‘I studied with Ren Dekun for half a year, and

I would say that, in our troupe, he was arguably the best teacher in the realm of basic techniques. Afterwards I became Hui Zhaolong's apprentice and began to study complete stories with him, for actual performance.'

But it was Dai Buzhong who would forever remain his most important teacher. It was perhaps Dai who, more than any of the others, taught him the 'inner secrets' of the art: just how to bring alive and to re-enact stories. When Shzr-Ee Tan, at one point during the interview, asks Ma Wei whether he



Dai Buzhang (1925-2003), Ma Wei's most influential teacher. [Photo: Jette Ross.]



Hui Zhaolong (1945-2011), with whom Ma Wei studied parts of the 'Water Margin'. [Photo courtesy V.Bördahl.]

feels he is "playing a role" when performing stories on stage, he makes ample reference to his initial teacher in his reply. The keyword in the process of performing on stage, so far as his main teacher is concerned, is the act of 'seeking truth'.

From real to fake to real

Ma Wei: 'Dai Buzhang distinguished three phases in the act of storytelling. The first phase is 'real'. I am 'real'. If you study a story, and prepare to play-act it on stage, you need to switch from 'real' to 'fake'. The next phase, once you happen to tell the story really well, is that you will revert from 'fake' back to 'real' again. So you are going from real to fake, then from fake back to real, and that's where it ends. That is the process. Teacher Dai called this 'seeking the truth' (求真 *qiú zhēn*). All his life, he was seeking truth. Of course there will always be an element of fake involved, for without it you can never become real. You are always "seeking truth", all your life.'

'Regardless of the qualities of an actor, the venue or the training method, what I believe matters most is that you manage to be 'true' on stage, only then will it be right. So whether I am performing in Venice, or in the Pi bao shui restaurant here in Yangzhou, or somewhere outdoors, for any guy in the street, I will take it seriously. I will always perform with an earnest heart, and make sure to convey that to the listeners. that's how it is, I'm not performing merely for the sake of performing!'

So would you make distinctions between different audiences? The response that storytelling triggers will obviously vary in different places? To think of an extreme case: it would be very different for, say, an audience in Venice, who can't understand the Yangzhou dialect, from people who go to performances here in Yangzhou?



Ma Wei in action. 'Without fake you cannot become real.'

Ma Wei: 'There are two levels at which one can answer that question. One level is what I just said, about going from real to fake and back to real... That process always remains in place. But in terms of technique, there will be changes of course, depending on whom I am performing for. I have been operating in so many different contexts... I performed for Jiang Zemin' [a well-known politician, ed.], 'for audiences in Venice, for storytelling experts... Obviously my way of presenting will not be the same in all those cases, there are likely to be differences in approach. So that happens on one level. But on another level you might say I'm still doing the same thing. No matter for who I am performing, I will always be striving for "truth".'

'If the audience are all foreigners, fine, then I will perform in a slower, traditional way... [He demonstrates a phrase, articulating the words very clearly and in slow tempo, ed.] 'If they're all people from Yangzhou, the speed changes.' [He demonstrates the same phrase, now spoken faster, in a firmer rhythm, ed.] 'So yes, my technique changes. But for the rest the urge to be 'real' on my part doesn't change, the essence of the whole thing remains the same. That's all I can say about it. Whether it's really unchanged or not, who knows?' (He laughs) .

Does it all come down to a style of narration, or would you say there is room for more elaborate play-acting, too. Do certain movements or stage actions also enter your performance? And would the work you do on TV, when telling modern stories, also affect the way you tell your traditional stories on stage?

'If your performance on the stage manages to be "true", your actual life, most likely, will also be like this.'

'Yes, that's possible. It may influence the process of 'seeking truth' that we just talked about. I remember something Vibeke Børdahl said that was very much to the point: before I enter the stage to tell a story, I myself need to be certain that it's a really good story. I should even think that I'm the most capable person in the world to tell it! So, before I get onto the stage, I must believe in myself. I'm not in any hurry, if the story is a good

one, I am not in any rush to get it out quickly, but I must ascertain that I'm telling it in the right way. Now, that is 'seeking truth'. From this truth-seeking point of view, if your performance on the stage manages to be 'true'... your actual life, most likely, will also be like this.'

Is this also your way to keep your storytelling 'fresh'? After all, you're performing well-known classical tales for much of the time. It must be quite hard to retain in them a sense of freshness?

Ma Wei: 'It's what I already said: you need to believe that your story is very good, that you're going to tell it in a good way. And indeed, I should treat every story as if it is the first time I'm telling it. A second point is that our performing skills are not like the skills of script writers. I am not just

reproducing some written script. If that were the case, might feel I'm repeating the same thing over and over. Instead, I will ask myself: today, in the process of telling this story, could there be new perspectives, new feelings, new things which I can bring to the audience? This basically what our old master storytellers were so very good at. And that's what being an artist is all about. And it's what I am sometimes missing in today's performances: nowadays, many people perform art as a mere technology. They look upon it as mere work, and tend to appropriate it for their own private purposes. They don't love the art, they just love getting some opportunities, so they do things mechanically. But as an artist you have to keep reflecting on the materials you work with. There needs to be constant renewal in your experience of a tale. Indeed, I feel I am perpetually going to Jingyang Ridge for the very first time, for me it's always the first time when I see the tiger!

‘Many people got very depressed, it was not just storytellers who suffered. Other art forms faced the same problems.’

The impact of his later teachers

For Ma Wei, it was a lucky draw to be invited to study storytelling at the Drama school after all. But this was still in the 1990s, it remained a difficult period for storytelling, with the Chinese economy not doing well.

‘Around 1993, everyone was either out of a job or too busy making money in order to survive. So there were not many people left with enough time to listen to storytellers! Our venues in Yangzhou and elsewhere were selling tickets for just two yuan, but even at such a cheap price they couldn't get rid of the tickets! Many people got very depressed, it was not just storytellers who suffered. Other art forms faced the same problems. All art troupes were struggling, there was simply no money. When I joined the troupe around 1998, they couldn't even pay us our salaries, they were cutting down our wages.’

It was under this ominous cloud that Ma Wei started on his path towards professional artistry. He

Ren Dekun, one of Ma Wei's teachers, taught that storytelling had to be done 'in an active and clean way'.



also had to adjust to his new teachers. With Ren Dekun he took lessons for just six months, but he learned a number of important things from him.

‘In the past, with Dai Buzhang, I had only studied in weekends, and his requirements in professional terms were fairly relaxed. “Just perform”, then it would be roughly OK. That was how I had started to learn the genre, as an amateur! But now I was entering a professional troupe, and Ren Dekun was far more strict, more professional, he demanded an active posture on my part. He wanted me to... (*here Ma Wei straightens his back, raises one arm, and demonstrates an active, authoritative posture*) ...do like this. This was one thing I found very inspiring in him: you needed to do your storytelling in an active and straightforward way, very clean. He gave me good advice on what stories to tell, and last but not least, he taught me how to teach.’

‘Teacher Ren was a very decent person, very upright, usually also very kind. He never put on any airs. He was strict but not harsh in his teaching. And there’s one other point which has made me respect him. He is now in his 70-ies, and you still see him teach for two hours at our school every day. In that way, too, he sets an example. I know he is not teaching for the purpose of earning money. Our school here in town has been demolished, they have built a new place for us far out in the countryside. So now Ren Dekun has to travel quite far every day to get there, it’s quite an effort, given his age, but he does it. He does it for the sake of supporting the inheritance of our art. I find that truly admirable and inspiring. I hope to be doing a similar thing once I’ll be reaching his age!’

During his apprentice years, Ma’s most important teacher after Dai Buzhong was Huì Zhàolóng (惠兆龍), with whom he started training in 1999. Ma felt great respect for him, and studied episodes from the “Water Margin” such as *Wu Song*, *Shi Xiu* and *Lu Junyi* under his guidance, but the very strict and serious attitudes of his mentor also intimidated him, and gave him a sense of pressure.

‘He generally talked to me a bit more than the others did, but his way of teaching me was perhaps somewhat strange. He never smiled at me. He didn’t laugh with me. He was certainly good to me, really good, but he always had this serious attitude, and I couldn’t help feeling it! He was a very strict teacher. For example, if I had to arrive on bicycle at his home at 14:30, I wouldn’t dare to be even a minute late! One time my bicycle hit a stone on the road, it inflated my tire, the wheel suddenly looked like a dumpling. The bike was broken, so I had to get off and park it right there. Then I ran over to his home, arriving too late, of course. He wouldn’t teach me that day, he did not even open his door for me. “Since you’re too late, come back tomorrow.” Well, he didn’t scold me. Just told me to come back the next day.’

‘One day before he died,
he said: “You are not bad.”
This was probably the first
and only time he praised me.’

‘Nevertheless, with my apprentices, I probably prefer my teacher Hui Zhaolong’s method. I mean, relatively strict. But one strange thing that intimidated me was that he never praised me. From the beginning of my

apprenticeship right until his death, during this whole period – and we spent ten years together – he never offered me any praise! I was his only student, and his sternness certainly gave me some kind of pressure to learn things well, but the process of learning was also painful for me. We kept this going for ten years, right until the time of his death. One day before he died – he was lying in his bed in the hospital – he spoke just two sentences to me. He said: “You are not bad.” This was probably the first and only time he praised me. Really! And then he said, “The art of Yangzhou storytelling, after four hundred years, has been passed on to you; I have passed it on to you, and you will pass it on in turn.”

This was the final message which Ma Wei received from his master Hui Zhaolong.

‘He had nothing else to say to me. Actually, the teachers and students in our Troupe usually don’t talk, it’s very strange... They rarely chat together. And no, we normally don’t drink tea together. There’s no talking, just doing performances. If we sit down, it’s to discuss briefly how a performance

went, and then we'll just leave. We would say something like "Let's hear 'Wu Song beats the tiger'." Or: "So this-and-that wasn't perhaps quite right. Change it..." But then it would be time for the next class. Then you'd just leave again. There's truly a lot of pressure in this realm!

He waves away any suggestion that storytellers would talk less in order to spare their voices. No, one also doesn't need to eat lots of honey to keep one's vocal chords in a good condition. 'I just need to make sure not to catch a cold, that's all. After all, we're not singing. Of course, if I have long and intensive new performances ahead, I will take good care, make sure not to get too tired, and go to bed early.'

A new era? Changes in storytelling

Economically and culturally things began to look upward again in China in the early years of the new century. It was at the time that Ma Wei was making his first regular appearances on stage as a professional storyteller.

Ma Wei: 'The economy improved a lot. And it's still getting better. Now you can see that quite a few people are attaching importance to art again. At present people like me can afford to buy paintings. And audiences have enough money again to go and listen to storytellers. The status of artists, generally speaking, has grown. In this year's enrollment for our storytelling courses, we had more than one hundred children who signed up, really a gratifying number! Of course, the vast majority were pushed by their moms and dads to join the course, but why did those parents choose this? They believe that letting their children study storytelling may contribute to their future, so they urge them to do it.'

The fact is a positive one, but it shows that, within a few decades, the landscape of traditional storytelling has changed beyond recognition. The situation of children learning *Yangzhou pinghua* in a school is evidently a splendid way to generate new sympathy and understanding for the local tradition, but it is also a far cry from the established, time-tested pattern of transmission of this art as a family heritage, usually inherited from father to son, in a face-to-face learning situation of master and pupil.

Ma Wei: 'That tradition of passing on skills to one's family's descendants was finished already by the 1950s, by that time it was gone. But we're now starting it all over again, you might say. With the present generation you can gradually see artists' families shaping up again, that is a present-day development. For example, Bao Wei's son, he sings narrative ballads, so there you might see an artists' family taking shape again. But what we had in the past, that long line of performers of the celebrated Wang family: Wang Yutang (王玉堂), Wang Shaotang (王少堂), Wang Xiaotang (王篠堂), Wang Litang (王麗堂), that line came to an end with Wang Litang...'

It's not merely modes of transmission that changed. Criteria for appreciation, performance styles, repertoires, settings for performance, almost everything in the world of *Yangzhou pinghua* has taken on new aspects. Ma Wei: 'In former times artists usually operated as individual entrepreneurs. They earned their money by telling stories, and supported their families that way. Today everything's organized in groups under government supervision. Like the Suzhou Storytelling Troupe (*Suzhou pingtan tuan* 苏州评弹团) or the Yangzhou Storytelling Troupe (*Yangzhou quyi tuan* 扬州曲艺团), and these groups pay their members fixed salaries. That's yet another change. Our government also provides a variety of small subsidies and allowances.'

Current ticket selling policies may be viewed as problematic. In the old days, the quality of individual performers created a certain demand: the best artists would be secured of popularity and full houses. Today, the income of performers no longer depends on such individual achievements; even if artists make little effort and do not get many listeners, they will still be paid the same salaries. Not a good stimulus for the arts, perhaps... The restaurants with stages for storytelling often don't charge any admission fees at all. They get their income from the diners. Ma Wei emphasizes that the government is generally supportive, and that they're willing to invest some money in Yangzhou storytelling.

There are still numerous other changes. Traditional artists in the past might stick to just one story.



Ma Wei: 'The basic spirit of the art has not been affected by innovation.'

Ma Wei: 'That's something we can no longer get away with today! If we do only one story we cannot satisfy the needs of contemporary audiences. We need more innovation and constant surprises to keep people entertained. We basically say that we always need to be a bit smarter than our audience.'

He admits that the vast majority of the listeners today are elderly people. 'That is partly related to our time tables. We usually have our daily performance at two o'clock every afternoon. At that time young people simply go to school or to their work, so we will reasonably get only elderly people. But yes, we're planning some evening shows now as well, for example at the *Dongrongyuan*, the 'Winter Glory Garden', which we just visited. There we will be doing a performance that starts at 8:00 PM in the evening. We may expect to see more young people there, also because we're selling the tickets via mobile phone, via WeChat, so we don't actually hand out material tickets (as

we do otherwise), meaning that we won't reach some of the older viewers.'

Other factors of change include the speed of telling stories and the duration of telling any full tale. In the past a single story could take up many weeks or even several months (meaning that listeners would return to a storytelling house on a frequent basis to listen to follow-up episodes). The rhythm and tempo of performances would generally be slow.

Ma Wei: 'Traditional Yangzhou storytellers might roughly speak 180 words per minute – [*he demonstrates how this sounded*] – as you can still hear on old recordings, but today's performers may speak 240 even 260 words per minute – [*again he demonstrates how it sounds*] – so the speed, and also the rhythm of performances, has been accelerating. People nowadays, especially young people, won't accept it if you're going very slowly. The basic spirit of the performances has not been affected, though. I feel that that has remained the same.'

He adds that the tempo changes and the shortening of stories were a gradual process. 'We were actually discussing that matter last night. We feel we're now facing a serious, very important problem. Today's listeners do no longer muster the patience to savour a story's climax. What we call *guanzi* 关子, the 'climax'. For example, you reach the point where a sword is lifted, and it may be used to kill or not! You would like to hold the suspense of that moment and slowly resolve it. But audiences don't have the patience for such things any more. They want you to give them a complete story with a clear attitude, with one or two ideas in the course of twenty minutes, or half an hour, or perhaps one hour. And they'll be happy to pay you for that, and to show their appreciation. In the past it was different: the longer you drew out a tale, the more words you used, the more your audience would admire and enjoy it. That was what the art of performance was really about!'

'You would like to hold the suspense of that moment and slowly resolve it. But audiences don't have the patience for such things any more.'

Nevertheless, he is fine with many of the changes, and he is ready and happy to contribute to innovation of his art. He says he doesn't like the notion of Yangzhou storytelling as a kind of 'living fossil' (活化石 *huóhuàshí*), a term sometimes used by people who may not have too much affinity with the genre. 'On this point I share the same view as Vibeke Børdahl. Fossils are fixed and unalterable; Yangzhou storytelling is a dynamic art, it never stays the same. It is precisely because of that, because of its dynamic character, that this art has been passed down to new generations.'

Experiments, TV shows, and reservations about female storytellers

So he likes to experiment, and that can take on many different forms. 'It's evident that you can't get people today – certainly not young people – to come and listen to an episode every day. But they may come to your performance once a week. Or perhaps they prefer to skip it one week, and to come back the next. In one project I have been trying to anticipate on this in a series of performances I did at the Beijing Xuannan Library, last month. I told a different story every week, but I connected it to the story of the week before, and would also link it up with one still to come, after yet another week, creating a sort of continuity. So the overall idea was a series of separate tales which might also be perceived as one long book. Of course I had to see how this would work out. I think it functioned well.'

Have you ever tried to insert modern terms or elements into traditional stories? For example, when Wu Song beats the tiger, could you imagine making reference to things like WeChat, or the online payment platform Alipay (zhīfùbǎo)?

Ma Wei: 'Oh yes, yes I sometimes do that. But I don't do it a lot. Personally, I don't like to burden a traditional tale with too many new things. You might just destroy it. Just like you wouldn't do it with an old house. Because that's how I feel about it. Your tale is a kind of house. It is solid, it comes in this form, it has been transmitted to you by old masters. So you will respect it. If you wish to add something, you can write a new paragraph, in theory you can do to it what you like. But if what the old masters gave to you is changed beyond recognition...' [*shaking his head*] 'I mean, this has come to you across four hundred years, so I feel that you're responsible for protecting and maintaining it, so you have to be very prudent about this, your changes should be very well thought out.'

He is adamant about preserving the main ingredients and characteristics of classical tales. 'If I thought that Wu Song should *not* kill Ximen Qing [a misbehaving protagonist, ed.], I could not simply present that as a different viewpoint on stage. That would be wrong. The story needs to remain the same, on stage or off stage.'

This is not to say that Ma Wei never takes any playful liberties. He feels constantly challenged to seek new ways of expanding his artistry. He has been writing his own original scripts, new tales or adaptations of old existing ones, such as 'Five tigers fighting Kang Guohua' (*Wǔ hǔ dàzhàn Kāng Guóhuá* 五虎大战康国华), and *Guanglingsan* (廣陵散), a classical murder story which he has presented on stage in a joint performance with his qin (classical zither) playing friend Mǎ Wéihéng (马维衡). The outcome was new and surprising, with storyteller and musician supplementing each other fantastically. Ma Weiheng played excerpts of the major classical qin piece *Guanglingsan*, but also snippets from other, shorter pieces such as *Jiū kuáng* (酒狂 'The drunkard') and *Shénrén chāng* (神人暢, 'Song of a celestial'), cleverly inserted at suitable moments in the tale. It earned the two performers standing ovations on various occasions. Other new tales that Ma Wei created include *Jīndū qì'ān* ('A Strange Case in the Capital'), *Guóhuá* ('National Language') and *Míngchāo nàxièshì* ('It Happened during the Ming Dynasty'). He is fine to combine such new stories with traditional classical tales in a

'One should not lose track of the traditional repertoire. But we cannot rely on tradition alone.'

single evening performance. He has joined the annual festival of storytelling and -singing in Jiangsu Province (Jiāngsūshěng qǔyì jié 江苏省曲艺节) many times, and his art has already earned him an impressive number of prizes.

Ma Wei: 'I feel I ought to attempt all sorts of things. It's good to create stories in cooperation with friends. Of course one should not lose track of the traditional repertoire. But we cannot rely on tradition alone. We have to be careful about our inheritance but we should also innovate the repertoire.'

He has his clear limits in terms of what he thinks is proper in the realm of *Yangzhou pinghua*, especially when it comes to the traditional repertoire. All his teachers happened to be men, but the vast majority of students at the Drama School today are girls. Ma Wei says he is not in favour of women telling stories, he adds that the Danish scholar of *Yangzhou pinghua* Vibeke Børdahl has the same opinion on this matter: 'Female voices simply don't sound good. No, don't laugh! I mean it! You

'A woman can't do this. If she tries, she won't get it right: "Aaah! Aaah!"'

see, it all has to do with technique. A man can speak softly if required' (*he demonstrates this, whispering in a low voice*). 'I can do it. But a woman's voice can't reach that low.' (*He now repeats the same sample line, produced in a higher voice.*) 'She can't go down, nor can she raise her voice very much. So the pitch level is one problem. Secondly, the average story will feature half a dozen characters, who all need to be portrayed.

That's quite a number of people. They all require their own voices. A sound like for example... "yiwai!" (*He screams.*) 'A woman can't do this. If she tries, she won't get it right: "Aaah! Aaah!"' (*He imitates the way he imagines a female performer would produce this.*) 'Women cannot expand their voices (膨力 *pénglì*) in this way, they cannot get the tension (张力 *zhānglì*) right, their voices are relatively narrow (比较窄 *bǐjiào zhǎi*), their tones are gorgeous (她的音色华丽一些 *tā de yīnsè huá lì yī xiē*), so women can sing quite well, but for speaking they are really less suited. They'd find it hard to create clear vocal distinctions between half a dozen different characters, so they can't give proper shape to the narrative.'

'One fatal aspect of Chinese tales is that most of them are dominated by male characters: Zhuge Liang, Cao Cao, and Lu Su, for example. So if you get those three men talking, in a male performer's version ...' (*He speaks a few lines by way of demonstration.*) '...you can clearly differentiate between the various roles. But a woman who tries to portray three different men would find that much more difficult, and for the audience it would be less clear.'

He says he feels the same about *Suzhou pinghua* (storytelling from Suzhou). 'If women want to perform a narrative well, they would need to spend a lot more energy on it, and overcome many more difficulties than men. There are certain aspects in performance which they are really unable to deal with. To give yet another example of that, let's imagine a moment of action...' (*He spreads his arms, raises his hands, makes an imaginary object tumble down from the sky, claps his hands, imitates explosive sounds and wildly waves his arms.*) 'If women have to perform something like that... You see, Chinese women on stage are expected to be receptive, beautiful (要收, 要唯美 *yào shōu, yào wéiměi*). Men, by contrast, are unrestrained. So there are discrepancies between the logic of women and that of storytelling...'

But clearly, given the number of female students of storytelling, the trend will clearly be an increase of women performing? Ma Wei: 'We just face the fact that there are many women studying the genre now. We can do nothing about it. And it's not that I wish to discriminate against women. I'm not doing that. Women are better singers. They are somewhat better in learning storysinging. Most performers of *Yangzhou pinghua* in the past were men, but we do hear of female performers as well. We have had them in history, we have them today, and we will have them in the future. The current head of



Ma Wei during a performance.

our Quyi troupe, Jiāng Qìnglín, happens to be a woman, and she does the ‘Three Kingdoms’, and is good at it. But artistically speaking I still feel that it is not the most appropriate choice for this genre.

So how about Kunqu or Peking Opera?

Ma Wei: ‘That’s another thing altogether! That’s singing. Men can sing, women also sing well, particularly in *Suzhou tanci*!’

We are bit taken aback by Ma Wei’s strong convictions concerning female storytellers. How to understand his views in the light of *Yangzhou tanci*, a genre that involves singing and lute playing, but also long sequences of speech, and many of its performers are women? But Ma Wei is generally open-minded, and very willing to explore new avenues. This is also evident in his daily appearances on Yangzhou television, where he tells decidedly modern stories. How does he do it? Are these performances improvised, or do the producers arrange stories that they would like him to tell?

Ma Wei: ‘The program is called ‘Today’s Life’ (*Jinri shenghuo* 今日生活). I tell lots of stories. It lasts one hour, so I can discuss lot of topics, all concerning things that happen in daily life in Yangzhou today. You can see it on Yangzhou TV if you turn on your screen at 6:00 o’clock. Ask anyone in Yangzhou about it, they all know this programme. We have some 1.2 million people watching the shows every evening. There’s flexibility in the way I present the topics, but on average some sixty per cent of the content is fixed.’

Sounds like fun! So, you might for example find yourself talking about a new shop that has just opened, or some car accident?

Ma Wei: ‘Yes, that could be a topic. People who drive a car after having drunk, drunken drivers...’

So there would generally be something of a moral message in it?

‘That’s right. The stories in the TV programme need to refer to things that actually happened, and I follow them up with some comment, with some reflection on attitudes. The idea is to give the audi-

ence something to think about. That's what the TV station wants me to do.' He adds that the stories of traditional *Yangzhou pinghua* 'were just stories'. 'Whether your listeners reflected on them or not was basically not relevant. But the idea now is that we need to start making room for this kind of reflection also in our traditional performances.'

So what do lovers of Yangzhou Storytelling think of your programme?

He slowly repeats our question and then falls silent, as if it has caught him unaware. After a while, he says: 'They are probably more eager to listen to traditional stories, they would prefer to attend a live performance where we can interact, face to face, and they would more appreciate the kind of stories you find on these bookshelves, the traditional ones... They wouldn't care so much about stories of what happened in Yangzhou today, I suppose. To be honest, I haven't received any feedback from them. I don't really know what they think. That is the truth. Maybe they like it, maybe they don't.'

Can the traditional Yangzhou pinghua tales sometimes be heard on TV as well?

'TV stations are not likely to give you so much time to tell traditional stories. They have produced some videos all-right, to preserve material, but you certainly won't find traditional *Yangzhou pinghua* broadcast every day.' He admits that Suzhou TV is generally doing a better job in this respect than Yangzhou TV, with regular broadcasts of traditional performances of Suzhou *ping-tan* (storysinging and -telling).

Taking on 'students' or 'apprentices'?

The future of *Yangzhou pinghua* is anyone's guess. His former teacher Ren Dekun is quite firm about Ma Wei now being one of the last remaining great cultural holders of a rapidly dwindling classical tradition. Ma Wei still believes in meaningful innovation, he still has a great many students. But he call them students (*xuesheng*), not apprentices (*tudi*). He does not have any 'apprentice' at this moment. 'Since it is not the same thing. We are cautious about taking on 'apprentices', because in China you don't want an apprenticeship to be an empty formula. Once you've kowtowed to your mentor, you will need to build up a genuine mentor-disciple relationship, something that will last for your entire life. So let's be cautious about referring to 'apprentices'. If it is 'students' you teach, this is simply about transferring some knowledge, it's about learning from one another in a much more open situation. You will chat a bit with the students like friends, you will teach them a bit, it's all more relaxed.'

'We are cautious about taking on 'apprentices', because in China you don't want an apprenticeship to be an empty formula.'

'In the classes I'm teaching, I have some students who learn it as amateurs, and others who ask for a genuine 'master'. But I have gradually come to appreciate my own teacher Dai Buzhang's opinion: if a student lacks the capacity to become a professional actor, you shouldn't take him on as your apprentice. Becoming a professional actor is a very hard task! Many students might just lack the courage and perseverance for it, so, once again, we need to be very careful with the whole notion of apprenticeship.'

People in art often still express great pride in stemming from a specific line of artistic ancestors. So will you let your son learn the trade when he reaches the proper age?

'That depends on whether he likes it or not. If he likes it, and feels that it suits him, I won't object. But if he says that he doesn't like it, I won't force him to change his mind. I don't expect him to become an exact copy of me. If he'd prefer to study Yangzhou opera, I would let him study that, then I wouldn't make him study storytelling!'

PRESERVATION AND DISTORTION

Recording, Editing and Publishing Yangzhou Storytelling¹

Wang Huarong

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As an oral and performing art, Yangzhou storytelling (Yangzhou pinghua, 扬州评话) has been transmitted by word of mouth through successive generations. This mode of transmission has determined its spread in time and scope. Some traditional repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling such as “Yangzhou Talk” (Yangzhou hua, 《扬州话》), “Diagram of Good and Evil” (Shan’etu, 《善恶图》) and “Diagram of Five Beauties” Wumeitu, 《五美图》), which used to be performed in the storyteller’s houses during the Qing period, have disappeared a long time ago.²

How can one strengthen the dissemination and reception of oral arts? Traditionally, the most likely method for preserving oral art was to write the repertoires down and publish them as books, thus breaking through the limitations of time and space. But this was only done to a very limited extent. Moreover, it is important to understand, that once an oral art is committed to paper, it is not truly ‘oral’ anymore: it changes into a written text; this text is often not a faithful reproduction of an oral performance, but a modified version, with its own style and content.³ Until the founding of New China in 1949, only few recorded texts or printed books of Yangzhou storytelling repertoires existed. After that time there were comprehensive attempts to collect oral narrative repertoires with the aim of publishing them. But the published texts deviated in many ways from what had been available in the oral performances, and we must assume that the same was true for texts which survived in written form from earlier periods. This article will examine in detail the changes that were implemented in printed versions of Yangzhou Storytelling from the 1950s onwards, and will examine also the motives for those changes. But we will start off with a brief general survey of attempts to preserve Yangzhou narratives in written form, from early times til the present.

I. A brief historical survey

As early as the Song and Yuan Dynasties, some ancient Chinese storytelling repertoires were printed as books, which were named ‘folk books’ (*pinghua* 平话) or *huaben* (话本). In the Qing Dynasty, some Yangzhou storytelling repertoires were printed as novels, such as *The Legend of the Braggart* (*Feituo quanzhuan*, 《飞蹄全传》) and *Clear Wind Sluice* (*Qingfengzha*, 《清风闸》). However, it is doubtful that these publications reflected the reality of storytelling faithfully. There are some differences in the publication of Chinese storytelling between the earlier and the modern period. In the past, booksellers printed books of storytellers’ repertoires mostly for the purpose of entertainment and making profit. For the selection and revision of storytelling as published after 1949, the political ideology plays a fundamental role.

In traditional Chinese society, storytelling used to be a very common and popular public recreational

activity. However, Chinese intellectuals formerly often treated folk literature with disdain, because they thought it was crude and boorish. The rulers sometimes even banned performing storytelling, if they felt the regime was threatened by the style and contents of such performances.

“Many youngsters among the people do not work in decent professions, but travel around in towns and hamlets, performing storytelling and story-singing (*cihua*, 词话), and acting various kinds of drama, which leads to lascivious behavior. Both are forbidden.”⁴
(诸民间子弟，不务生业，辄于城市坊镇演唱词话，教习杂戏，聚众淫谑，并禁治之。)

In the Qing Dynasty, the government high-handedly implemented its cultural policy. A large number of books were banned and destroyed, some of which were associated with storytelling, such as *Clear Wind Sluice*, *Green Peony* (*Lü mudan*, 《绿牡丹》)⁵ and *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*, 《水浒传》). In the early 20th century, some intellectuals changed their mind about folk literature and planned to use storytelling and other folk arts to educate and enlighten people. In fact, in former times, storytelling already had a function in educating people morally and telling them how to behave.⁶

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, a “literary revolution” took place, and in this movement folk literature or popular literature was thought to be able to play an important role in ideological remolding and promoting social change. In December 1913, Lu Xun (鲁迅1881-1936) issued an article entitled “Opinion on How to Promote the Arts” (*Ni bobu meishu yijian shu* 《拟播布美术意见书》) in the *Monthly Magazine of the Department for Compilation, Ministry of Education* (*Jiaoyubu bianzuanchu yuekan* 《教育部编纂处月刊》). In the article Lu Xun took the initiative, “to establish a National Academy of Arts and Letters to collect songs, slang and proverbs, legends, fairy tales etc. throughout the country; to understand their meaning, analyze their features, develop them, and use them to assist education.”⁷ Influenced by the suggestion of Lu Xun, Peking University in the 1920s established the Ballad Research Council, which opened up the trend of studying and publishing Chinese folk literature and arts in modern time. From the point of view of Lu Xun, one of the goals of studying and publishing was to educate people through folk literature, which was different from entertainment for people. However, at that time few storytelling repertoires had been collected or published. For one reason, the length of most storytelling texts is huge. Another reason was that storytelling was very popular at that time, so people did not worry about its existence.

The recording, editing and publishing of Yangzhou Storytelling started mainly in the early days of New China. It is worth noting that the Chinese Communist Party’s Policy on literature and art before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China had great instructional significance for the collection and edition of Yangzhou Storytelling as well as other folk literatures and arts. “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” (*Zai Yan’an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua* 《在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话》) by Mao Zedong was an important manifestation of the Chinese Communist Party’s policy on literature and art, which was reported in 1942, and had an important influence on literary and artistic policies after the founding of New China. It is pointed out in the Talks that “our aim is to ensure that revolutionary literature and art follow the correct path of development and provide better help to other revolutionary work in facilitating the overthrow of our national enemy and the accomplishment of the task of national liberation”.⁸ The “Talks” were an integrated part of the political struggle — literature and art was considered a powerful weapon in spreading political ideas and educating the public, with little concern about the development of these arts in their own right.

On the one hand, the “Talks” inherited the traditional concept that literature and art should educate the public. On the other hand, Mao Zedong promoted the keyword “remoulding”: “We should take over the rich legacy and the good traditions in literature and art that have been handed down from past ages in China and foreign countries, but the aim must still be to serve the people. Nor do we refuse to utilize the literary and artistic forms of the past, but in our hands these old forms, remoulded and infused



Contemporary storytelling at the Pibao Shui Teahouse/Restaurant in Yangzhou.

with new content, also become something revolutionary in the service of the people.”⁹ The keyword “remoulding” played an important role in the collection and publication of folk literature and art.

Literary and artistic policies after the founding of New China continued and developed the ideas of the “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art”. Both before and after 1949, there was a strong movement for reforming the Chinese drama. The Ministry of Culture held a national drama conference in 1950 with the aim of studying how to reform the Chinese opera. Actors of opera and artistes of the performed narrative arts (*quyi* 曲艺) participated in the meeting. The conference concluded by drawing up the “Proposals to the Ministry of Culture on the Improvement of the Drama” (*Guanyu xiqu gaijin gongzuo xiang zhongyang wenhuabu de jianyi* 《关于戏曲改进工作向中央文化部的建议》). On this basis, the Government Affair Council of the Central People’s Government issued “Instructions Concerning the Implementation of the Drama Reform” (*Guanyu xiqu gaige gongzuo de zhishi* 《关于戏曲改革工作的指示》) in 1951:

“Currently the drama reform work should primarily examine and approve the most widespread popular traditional drama repertoires. Those with undesirable content or bad performance methods need appropriate modification. The seriously poisonous ideological content must be eliminated. Concerning the performance methods, we must remove the performances that are brutal, blood curdling, lascivious, insulting to the nation and anti-nationalist. . . . When modifying the traditional repertoires, we should be careful not to violate the truth of history and the edifying effect.”¹⁰

From this document, we know the basic ideas of the drama reform and the principles of modification. The “Instructions” gave also directions to collect, record, print and publish traditional or new opera and *quyi* repertoires on a large scale. This was the historical background for the work of collecting, recording and editing drama and *quyi* repertoires from all over the country, including Yangzhou. In this

process *Chen Yun's Talks and Communications about Pinghua and Tanci* (*Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin* 《陈云同志关于评弹的谈话和通信》) had important significance.

“By mobilizing artists for creating the new and revising the old, we can strengthen the political and ideological leadership. In the revising the old work, the process of critically absorbing is also the process of educating artists. Through creating the new and revising the old, we can solve the problems in three areas: The first is to meet the needs of large audiences; the second is to remould the artist's thought; the third is to improve the ideology and artistry of storytelling repertoires.”¹¹

Its guiding ideology was consistent with the “Instructions”, but its specific target was storytelling. The collection and publication of Yangzhou storytelling began in the 1950s. During the Second Literature and Art Workers National Congress in 1953, Zhou Enlai pointed out that the storytelling of Wang Shaotang (王少堂 1889-1968) was a precious cultural heritage and should be rescued.¹² According to Premier Zhou's directive, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Jiangsu Province invited Wang Shaotang to perform his repertoire from the “Wang School of Water Margin” (*Wangpai Shuihu* 王派水浒) in Nanjing. The Bureau of Culture of Nanjing Municipality used radio equipment to record the full repertoire. Subsequently, they handed over to Yangzhou Municipality the text in transcription from the recording of Wang Shaotang's performance. In order to study and publish Yangzhou storytelling, a research group on Yangzhou storytelling was set up, while some government officials assumed a leading position in the group.¹³ Besides the “Wang School of Water Margin”, other Yangzhou storytelling repertoires such as “Three Kingdoms” (*Sanguo* 《三国》), “Journey to the West” (*Xiyou Ji* 《西游记》), and “Clear Wind Sluice” were also recorded and published. During the Cultural Revolution, the recording, editing and publishing of storytelling repertoires were interrupted. Not until the 1980s was the work recommenced. Government departments played a very important role in the recording, editing, and publishing of Yangzhou storytelling.¹⁴ Traditional repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling are usually very long, and the government departments were able to gather the necessary work force, material and financial resources. Another important factor was that many storytellers were unwilling to show their scripts to others: storytellers make a living from their storytelling, and many were afraid that colleagues might “steal” their scripts or repertoires, and compete with them, which would probably affect their income. Only with intervention from the government could these storytellers be convinced to reveal their repertoires to the public. It soon became obvious that the government's intervention and guidance left a trail of official mainstream ideology in the works recorded and edited in this way.

II. The editing and publishing of Yangzhou storytelling from the 1950s onwards

In the beginning, despite the presence of a guiding ideology, different ideas existed among the researchers on how to edit the materials. There seemed to be three main options: 1) accurate recording of the spoken performance; 2) careful edition or revision of the original oral materials; 3) free creation by the editors on the basis of the oral materials. Initially, Wang Shaotang and a few of the researchers believed that the repertoires of the “Wang School of Water Margin” inherited from several generations of storytellers were already perfect, so researchers only needed to record the words of the repertoires and stick to the versions of texts as they were produced in performance. But this option soon came to be criticized,¹⁵ and no storytelling publications appeared which merely attempted to accurately record performers' words. The two other views on how to edit were exemplified in a number of corresponding publications. The second option (careful revision) became the dominant one. What principles did this revision of Yangzhou storytelling repertoires rely on?

The first principle was to revise or delete from traditional materials any undesirable or negative content. In most revisers' opinions, traditional repertoires were inherited from the old society, and might retain traces of ‘bad things’ from the old days, inevitably mixed with a lot of ‘feudal dross’ and

permeated with the ‘poor taste’ of the general public.¹⁶ So it would be necessary to revise or delete some portions of texts which failed to meet modern requirements. ‘Discarding the dross and selecting the essence’ was a guiding principle for the Chinese Communist Party’s attitudes towards traditional culture. Chen Yun gave specific instructions about the revision of traditional repertoires:

“The first group of storytelling repertoires are the traditional repertoires, also known as the old repertoires (*laoshu* 老书). In this kind of repertoires, the essence and the dross coexist together; some have more dross, some less.”¹⁷ “The edition of traditional repertoires can be divided into two steps. The first is to delete the worst.”¹⁸

“Get rid of the bad portion, and retain the essence and harmless portion; while some portions can be adapted or rewritten.”¹⁹

The work of revision was affected by the social ideology of that period, embodied in the following two slogans :

- a. Oppose the vilifying of heroes, insulting of peasants, and glorifying of landlords!
- b. Oppose feudalist superstition and vulgar content!

About slogan a (Oppose the vilifying of heroes, insulting of peasants, and glorifying of landlords)

The standard theory during the early days of New China was that the main contradiction in feudal society was the class contradiction between the landlord class and the peasant class; the latter was viewed as the oppressed and exploited class, and as an important part of the worker-peasant alliance, it ought not to be insulted or ridiculed. Proletarian Literature and art was expected to serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers; therefore, any passages mocking the peasant class would need to be deleted. For example, in the “Wu Song” repertoire, the storyteller described one squire’s servant (who stemmed from the countryside) as ridiculous and idiotic. The editor would consider this an insult to the working people, so such a passage had to be deleted.²⁰

Heroes had to be depicted as noble and positive. Any description vilifying a hero must be removed. For example, when a storyteller described the appearance of a female character called Sun Erniang, there was originally the following prose-poem (*fu-zan* 赋赞).

Her face is the color of sand and mud, her hair is in a mess.
 Her eyebrows are painted as scarlet as cinnabar.
 She has two strange eyes, and a mouth of black scorched teeth.
 Her hands look like palm-leaf fans,
 and her feet are as large as two huge pumpkins
 Mrs. Sun from the Zhang family is a beautiful woman,
 But the Ogress has the capacity to ruin states and cities.

面似沙泥发似麻，娥眉淡扫赛朱砂。
 生成两只俊怪眼，长就一嘴黑焦牙。
 玉手尖尖双蒲扇，两只金莲赛南瓜。
 张门孙氏多娇女，倾国倾城母夜叉。

In performance, a farcical prose-poem like this would very likely amuse the audience and trigger their laughter. But the poem was deleted in the revision, because it vilified a female hero of peasant background. Besides, a hero’s political stand needed to be consistent with that of the peasants, meaning that a hero would never hurt a peasant, otherwise it would amount to insulting the peasant class, and destroying the hero’s own noble image. For example, why did Wu Song come to Chai village? According to the storyteller’s performance, this happened because of a drought, during which many poor persons and rogues robbed the shops. Wu Song fought against injustice, but in the process he accidentally killed

one person. On his brother's suggestion, Wu Song went to Chai village in Hebei province after this action to avoid punishment for it. But the editors who needed to prepare a printed version of this story, felt that the poor belonged to the oppressed and exploited class, so if Wu Song fought them, that was not right. It was considered a violation of the basic principles and had to be rewritten.²¹

As the antithesis of the peasant class, the landlord class needed to be criticized. In the oral performances from the "Wu Song" repertoire, Ximen Qing's wife, concubines, and children all cried bitterly when their wealthy protector, family father and husband died. But the editors thought that such a portrayal of Ximen Qing, as a man who was mourned by his family, might whitewash him from his evil deeds. Likewise, the head of the Mengzhou prison guard, Kang Wu, was skilled at making money in irregular ways. But storytellers tended to portray him as a guileless, strictly upright and correct fellow. The editors thought that such descriptions would confuse the public and would blur clear-cut social distinctions, and therefore they rewrote such passages.²²

About slogan b). Oppose feudal superstition and vulgar content

Yangzhou storytelling was traditionally closely connected to the citizens of the small townships. The content of storytelling was influenced by their customs and aesthetic taste. The storytellers used to add episodes of a superstitious and/or erotic nature to attract listeners. The original transcript of "Wu Song" had a section called "Wu Da Appears as an Omen" (*Wu Da tuozhao*, 武大托兆), about how Wu Dalang (武大郎) after his death appeared in Wu Song's dream. Wu Dalang in this way gave his brother a detailed account of what had happened to him. This passage was considered superstitious, and the message from Wu Dalang in Wu Song's dream was changed into hearsay from the streets. Many other small details of superstitious customs or beliefs were rewritten or deleted.²³

So-called vulgar content was another important part that required revision. Censorship of this kind had already occurred in earlier periods of Chinese history. During the Daoguang Period of the Qing Dynasty (1838), the "Proclamation about Sujun setting up the Bureau to collect and destroy pornographic books and a list of banned books" (*Sujun she ju shouhui yinshu gongqi bing jin shumu* 《苏郡设局收毁淫书公启并禁书目》) listed 116 kinds of forbidden pornographic books; a large part of them were associated with storysinging (*tanci* 弹词), drumballads (*guci* 鼓词), folk songs (*suqu* 俗曲), opera librettos (*changben* 唱本), drama scripts (*xiwen* 戏文), etc. Some titles were linked to Yangzhou storytelling, for example "Green Peony", and "Clear Wind Sluice".²⁴ According to the reminiscences of the storyteller Wang Xiaotang (王筱堂1918-2000), the adopted son of Wang Shaotang, in old days, storytellers who performed "Peng gong'an" (《彭公案》), "Shi gong'an" (《施公案》), "The Legend of Emperor Qianlong" (*Qianlong zhuan* 《乾隆传》) or "Clear Wind Sluice" usually began their performances with three jokes to please their audience. Most of these jokes were vulgar and pornographic. During the Republican period, storytelling was banned in Jiangsu Province for a certain span of time. At that time, the Party Headquarter of the Chinese Kuomintang in Zhenjiang set up the Repertoire Review Committee for reviewing theatre, opera and *quyi*. The Committee staff attended storytelling performances in various storytellers' houses (*shuchang* 书场) and felt that some of the plots were too vulgar. Therefore, they issued a ban on storytelling all across the province.²⁵ After the founding of New China, the authorities also insisted that any unhealthy content in storytelling would have to be revised. For example, the editors who recorded "Clear Wind Sluice" – which had been listed as banned repertoire several times – revised its content, removing any superstitious and vulgar elements.

As China's new era progressed, people's thinking about sensitive issues changed again. Some of the kind of content formerly pruned or revised in 1950s and 1960s was taken up again in its original form in the 1980s and 1990s. A comparison with Wang Shaotang's edition *Wu Song* (1959) shows that some of the revised or deleted texts in that edition were reinserted in Wang Litang's edition (2005), for example the prose-poems of Sun Erniang, the episode "Wu Da Appears as an Omen", and various other items. At the same time, though, some of the revised passages of the 1959 edition were

accepted by later storytellers and found their way into live performances. For example, the episode in which Wu Song fled from Chai village was first revised to “he was used to fighting against injustice in his hometown; he killed a person by dealing him a blow, and so he fled to Chai village to avoid punishment”; this is the version found in Wang Litang’s performance video from 1998.²⁶ However, in her re-edited publication of 2005, the person killed by Wu Song was again a bully, as in the edited version of Wang Shaotang from the 1950s.

Another important factor that influenced the editing of repertoires was the difference between oral literature and written literature. Generally, the language of oral literature²⁷ is wordy, longwinded and repetitious, while written literature is concise and follows certain norms of written style. Chen Yun said, “something we have heard in *pingtan* may feel good, but if we put it down in a novel, we may find the passage wordy. Wang Shaotang’s “Wu Song” was fine, but when you read the revised book, you may not be able to stomach it, although the number of words of the revised text was less than half of that of the performance. Conversely, if the storytelling is performed according to the novel, you would find it dry and boring. The genres of the novel and of *pingtan* are different arts.”²⁸ Editors tend to follow the style of written literature when they edit oral literature, and printed versions of tales of Yangzhou storytelling are no exception to this. As a consequence, not only the idioms of oral narratives changed, but also their overall form was effected, with editors trying to make it more consistent and more clearly organised. This was in accordance with perceived formal qualities and narratory logic of written novels. In practice it might mean that complete poems or prose-poems were modified or were even deleted from the original oral texts. It could also result in the division in chapters being changed, and chapter titles being altered. And, as already mentioned, there would be changes in the style and idioms of the narratives. Below, all these changes will be examined in more detail with the help of specific examples.

1. Revision/deletion of poems and prose-poems.

The opening poem of the original transcript of “Wu Song” was “Chai Jin accommodates guests in Henghai County. Wu Song fights a tiger on Jingyang Ridge”, which survives in a recorded radio broadcast of Wang Shaotang.²⁹ Furthermore, the storytelling episode “Drinking his fill and beating the Door-God” (*Zuida Jiangmenshen* 醉打蒋门神) included the following two verses: “Shi En reigns again on the Mengzhou road; Second Brother Wu drinks his fill and beats the Door-God” (施恩重霸孟州道，武二醉打蒋门神).³⁰ The two poems are the titles of chapters 23 and 29 in the novel *Water Margin*. Here we can see a direct link between storytelling and a written novel, but in Wang Shaotang’s published edition of 1959, the opening poem was replaced with another poem: “Second Brother Wu, his courage was great, stood up and went straight to Jingyang Ridge; with his clever fist he killed the mountains tiger; since then his great fame has spread over all the world!”³¹ This poem is usually located at the end of the episode of “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” in the storytelling of the “Wang school of Water Margin”, where the storytellers use the poem to praise Wu Song’s behavior.³² The poem of “Drinking his fill and beating the Door-God” was deleted in the revised publication. Perhaps this was done for the sake of creating more unity: only the two chapters mentioned above had this kind of opening poem. The editors may have deleted them to unify the form of the entire book. The opening poem of the first chapter could perhaps be viewed as an introduction to the whole storytelling repertoire. But then, why was it replaced with the poem of “Wu Song fights the tiger”? Maybe because the content of the verse “Chai Jin accommodates guests in Henghai County” was not told in the storytelling repertoire. Then why did Yangzhou storytellers choose the verses “Chai Jin accommodates guests in Henghai County, Wu Song fights a tiger on Jingyang Ridge” as the opening poem? This might be a left-over trace from the inheritance of several generations of storytellers. Quite possibly, all the early storytellers such as Wang Deshan (王德山), Deng Guangdou (邓光斗), Xu Dianzhang (许殿章), Deng Futang (邓复堂), and Song Chengdian (宋承殿) from

the nineteenth century used to tell the “Water Margin” repertoire in its entirety.³³ But later storytellers began to relate the story in increasingly detailed ways, so that it became necessary to divide up the “Water Margin” into several repertoires: “Ten Chapters on Lin Chong and Lu Zhishen” (*Lin Lu shi hui*, 林鲁十回), “Ten Chapters on Wu Song” (*Wu shi hui*, 武十回), “Ten Chapters on Song Jiang” (*Song shi hui*, 宋十回), “Ten Chapters on Shi Xiu” (*Shi shi hui*, 石十回), “Ten Chapters on Lu Junyi” (*Lu shi hui*, 卢十回), etc. We know that “Fighting a tiger on Jingyang Ridge” tends to be called a “hot story” (*re shu* 热书) in the storytellers’ jargon, while “residing in Chai village” is a “cold story” (*leng shu* 冷书). Perhaps in a bid to attract listeners’ attention, storytellers would begin their repertoire with “Fighting a tiger”, while the cold plot of “Residing” was passed over. However, the traditional opening verses were retained by successive generations of storytellers.³⁴

In addition to the opening poems, storytelling repertoires included lots of other poems and prose-poems, but many of them were deleted in the revised publications. For example, the first time Ximen Qing (西门庆) meets Pan Jinlian (潘金莲), the storytellers used to perform two prose-poems in which they praised each other,³⁵ but these were later deleted. Some people complained that lots of the prose-poems happened to be (too) similar to those of other storytelling genres, but of course this phenomenon is precisely one of the characteristics of storytelling as oral literature. Poems and prose-poems were not sung in storytelling, but recited in a way that would bring out certain musical features. Deleting these poems or prose-poems weakened the oral characteristics of storytelling as it was published in book-form.

2. Revision of chapters and chapter titles.

If we take *Clear Wind Sluice* as an example, there was a major change of the contents in the editing process. First, the homicide case (the death of Xiaogu’s father) which was narrated in some detail in the old novel *Qingfengzha* (1819), was told quickly by the storyteller of the recent oral tradition, Yu Youchun, and in the modern book edition Pi Wu’s story became the main content. At the end of the whole story, the editors deleted the two traditional stories “Baogong settle the lawsuit” (*Baogong duan’an* 包公断案) and “Mrs. Qiang wanders to four doors” (*Qiangshi you simen* 强氏游四门), rewrote the story “Xiaogu redresses an injustice” (*Xiaogu mingyuan* 孝姑鸣冤) which simply mentioned the plot of solving the crime, and added a new story “The magistrate sells letters of confession” (*Xianguan mai jie* 县官卖结) as the end. After the editing, the story began with Pi Wu and ended with Pi Wu, so *Clear Wind Sluice* was renamed *Hothead Pi Wu* (*Pi Wu lazi* 《皮五辣子》).³⁶

The edited book version, *Wu Song*, based on the dictated version of Wang Shaotang’s “Ten Chapters on Wu Song” (*Wu shi hui*) had some changes of chapter titles. *Wu Song* was formerly called “Wu shi hui”, because it could be divided into ten large chapters. Every large chapter could be divided into several smaller chapters. In the editing process, several large chapter titles were revised, as shown in the following table:

Original dictated script	Edited publication
Blood Spattering Mandarin Duck Mansion (血溅鸳鸯楼)	Killing in the General’s Hall at Night (夜杀都监府)
Hanged and Beaten in White Tiger Town (吊打白虎镇)	Hanged and Beaten at White Tiger Mountain (吊打白虎山)
Stealing Two Dragons Mountain (盗取二龙山)	Seizing Two Dragons Mountain by stratagem (智取二龙山)

In the original dictated script, the smaller sections of the large chapters had no subtitles. In the published book, the editors used some of the large chapter titles as subtitles for small chapters according

to traditional style, and added some new subtitles.

Large chapter title	New subtitles after editing
Taking shelter at Crossways Rise (十字坡打店)	The Ogress sells poisoned wine (母夜叉卖药酒) Taking shelter at Crossways Rise (十字坡打店)
Arriving at night on Centipede Hill (夜走蜈蚣岭)	Arriving at night on Centipede Hill (夜走蜈蚣岭) Rescuing Wu Jinding (搭救武金定)
Hanged and Beaten in White Tiger Town (吊打白虎镇)	Beating Kong Liang in a fit of anger (怒打孔亮) Hanged and Beaten in White Tiger Mountain (吊打白虎山) Song Jiang thinks out a ruse to solve the enmity (宋江设计解冤仇)
Stealing Two Dragons Mountain (盗取二龙山)	Producing misunderstanding by talking about the old days (叙旧生误会) Working out the scheme of the fake letter (定计造假信) Entering Baozhu Temple (深入宝珠寺) Seizing Two Dragons Mountain by stratagem (智取二龙山)

Obviously, revising or adding titles and subtitles was meant to unify the style of the written book, but it undermined the characteristics of the original oral performance.

3. Polishing and modifying the text.

Oral language is relatively free and repetitious, while written language is generally more concise and standardized. Contraction of longwinded “tedious” portions and the use of standard language were considered necessary in the editing work. Oral performances of Yangzhou storytelling are speckled with Yangzhou dialect expressions. For the convenience of readers in other regions, a considerable part of the dialect vocabulary and grammatical forms was revised.³⁷ The postscript of *Selections of Yangzhou Storytelling* (*Yangzhou pinghua xuan* 《扬州评话选》) summarized the principles for revision: “According to the different situation of the repertoires, different revising methods were taken. Some basically good repertoires only needed minor corrections and language improvement. As for works with illogical sections, it was necessary to add or delete some portions. Some storytelling repertoires

that included contents not closely related to the theme, vague characters, inconsistency of the plot development, had to be discussed and rewritten by the editors and the storytellers together. For the convenience of reading, each chapter needed to have a head and a tail.”³⁸ From this statement, we realize that the editors did their work with the reading public in mind, and with what they thought were the needs and requirements of a reading public.

III. An evaluation

How should we evaluate the collection, revision and publishing of Yangzhou storytelling after the founding of New China?

On the one hand, the benefits of this work were obvious and undeniable. Firstly, through the published works, people of different regions and even of different times could find opportunities to learn to know and enjoy Yangzhou storytelling. Before the time when this repertoire began to be printed and promoted more generously in the 1950s and 1960s, the impact of written collections of traditional narratives had been quite small and limited mainly to Yangzhou, Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Shanghai and northern Jiangsu. Much of the Yangzhou dialect used by the storytellers in performance was retained in those older publications, making them unsuitable for wider distribution. By contrast, the books of Yangzhou storytelling edited and published from the 1950s onwards retained much less Yangzhou dialectal language, turning most of the texts into standard Chinese. These standardized books obviously reached much wider audiences than the local oral performances did. Yangzhou storytelling in book form easily found its way to other parts of China.

Secondly, the recording and publishing work saved some repertoires of Yangzhou Storytelling from getting completely lost. Formerly, recording technology did not yet exist, or was still insufficiently developed, so that the only way to preserve storytellers’ oral repertoires was by capturing them in manuscripts or in printed books. Via such sources, later generations could at least arrive at some understanding of the original form of Yangzhou storytelling. At the same time, these printed repertoires could also serve as scripts (*jiaoben* 脚本) and as practical tools for later generations of storytellers. Today the profession of storytelling is rapidly declining, so that the act of recording and preserving storytelling repertoires has acquired an even greater significance.

Thirdly, the work of recording, editing and publishing stimulated the development of academic research on Yangzhou storytelling. The editors of Yangzhou storytelling were the first group of researchers in this field, including such people as Sun Longfu (孙龙父 1917-1979) and Chen Wulou (陈午楼 1923-1998). They did not only record and edit the repertoires, but also published articles on Yangzhou storytelling. At the same time, other researchers, too, began to pay attention to Yangzhou storytelling. Their studies were based on the edited and printed books,³⁹ because it was easier for them to get hold of the books than to travel to Yangzhou and listen to oral performances. In 1990, part of the research articles were published in *Collected articles on the Wang School of “Water Margin”* (*Wangpai “Shuihu” Pinglunji* 《王派水浒评论集》). In other words, the work of recording, editing and publishing to some extent made Yangzhou storytelling enter the modern academic field. Such were the benefits of this work.

On the other hand, the editing and publishing of Yangzhou storytelling repertoires was hardly a flawless undertaking. As we already mentioned above, the social political ideology and the supposed habits and expectations of the readership greatly affected the editors’ principles and the ultimate outcome of their work. In the process of revision, some of the characteristics of storytelling as oral literature were undermined. As a consequence, the edited publications of storytelling did not reflect the storytellers’ oral performances in a scientific way. In the 1980s and 1990s the Danish scholar Vibeke Børdahl began to carry out field investigations in Yangzhou. She listened to storytelling, and recorded many performances wholesale with a tape-recorder and/or video camera. Based on these first-hand materials, she conducted detailed research on the oral and dialectal aspects of Yangzhou storytelling.⁴⁰

It is understandable that some modifications will be necessary in almost any printed version of

an oral narrative, in order to make the book version more accessible for a general readership. But if researchers want to investigate the actual, on-the-spot manifestation of oral literature, such editions are not trustworthy. The original storytelling performance reflects many different kinds of social phenomena, people's psychology, and folk customs from the old days. Many such elements were rewritten or deleted in the printed books. This method of publication is not conducive to the study of history, sociology, folklore, linguistics and other disciplines, because it is not first-hand. What the reader gets are processed second-hand materials. In the early 1990s, a number of Yangzhou storytelling repertoires were published in re-edited books that retained more of the original language from the oral performances, but they still featured a certain amount of repair, deletion or rewriting. These books certainly reflected the oral versions more truthfully than the earlier publications, but they still could not be considered as fully satisfactory representations of real oral literature. After all, oral performance is always in a state of change, whereas recordings and published versions make it solidify, and each repertoire will be preserved in only one specific textual version. Once again, for academic research on the overall characteristics or salient details of storytelling this kind of material can only be viewed as secondary.

So, while it is true that the work of recording and editing Yangzhou Storytelling did stimulate and develop research on storytelling, in most cases the research was affected and biased due to the structure of the printed books. Many researchers analysed Yangzhou storytelling as if it were written literature;⁴¹ based on printed books, they studied Yangzhou storytelling following the academic paradigm and conceptual framework of written literature. Generally, they tended to ignore the oral performance characteristics of Yangzhou storytelling. The early research was certainly not without its merits, but the perpetuation of its limited scope obviously involved risks of academic stagnation or misrepresentation: In the concept of Yangzhou storytelling as written literature the oral art is seen as a kind of 'servant' of written literature. In other words, the independent position of Yangzhou storytelling as an oral art, and of its repertoire as oral literature, threatened to be underestimated or even overlooked altogether.

How can we record and edit Yangzhou storytelling in a truly scholarly way? The view of Zhong Jingwen (钟敬文1903-2002) is highly revelatory. In his article "The Issue of Fidelity in Recording and Revising Stories – written with a view to the work *«Reference Materials to the Recording and Revision of Folk Tales and Legends»* (*Guanyu gushi jilu zhengli de zhongshixing wenti: xiezai «minjian gushi, chuanshuo jilu, zhengli cankao cailiao de qianmian»* 《关于故事记录整理的忠实性问题——写在〈民间故事、传说记录、整理参考材料〉的前面》), Mr. Zhong pointed out that researchers, general readers and writers of folk tales and legends all have their own requirements when it comes to dealing with folk narratives. They will all approach these materials in very different ways, with different aims, and differently motivated. As for the issue of recording and publishing, several different attitudes and practices must be taken into account: "Folk tales and legends, as research material for the humanities, must be faithfully recorded in accordance with people's oral expression, and without any change of the original form; (of course, it must go through a certain process of scholarly editing). Even when the original oral storytelling has some incomplete form or contains obvious errors of contents, we should not high-handedly delete or change such 'errors'. It is best to leave such passages as they are, so that later researchers may have a chance to decide whether to discard or retain the original words."⁴² Mr. Zhong didn't say explicitly what kind of method of scholarly editing he had in mind. But according to his view, the recording of folk tales and legends still required a certain amount of such editing, meaning that published editions, even if they observed Mr Zhong's principles, could still not qualify as first-hand materials. Whatever methodical path scholars decide to take, it is evident that they don't need to limit themselves to pertaining written versions of oral performances: they can and probably should use advanced electronic recording methods, such as video recording to get fuller access to the nature of oral repertoires, and they should also attend 'live' performances, because certainly not everything that happens in an oral performance can be captured by electronic media!

Written records are the oldest recording form of oral literature. It requires a certain amount of professional technique on the part of the person who carries out the work. As the speed of speech is

much faster than writing, the recording person (the script-writer) should master a shorthand writing system or some other method to facilitate fast recording, otherwise the recorded text will be missing out some of the content of the oral version. But even if the script-writer has a perfect shorthand technique, the written version will still inevitably be incomplete, because it only records words. “In oral literature it is not just artistic language that plays a huge role. Also music, singing, dancing and the living environment where the oral literature is performed are highly important”.⁴³ Performance of Yangzhou storytelling includes “mouth, hand, body, step, and look” (*kou, shou, shen, bu, shen* 口、手、身、步、神). “Mouth” means the storyteller’s spoken language during performance, while “hand, body, step, and look” refer to the storyteller’s movements and facial expressions. Non-verbal features of a performance are generally lost in a written record. And when it comes to the words of the “mouth”, storytellers tend to pay attention to voice, intonation, stress, pause, and many other aspects of verbal execution, and most of these features, too, are evidently lost in a written record. The late Qing scholar Yu Yue (俞樾 1821-1907) in his work *Collected Notes from the Tea Aroma Room* (*Chaxiang shi congchao* 《茶香室丛钞》) said that he was disappointed after reading the novel *Clear Wind Sluice*. He asked, “maybe the oral fascination is not reflected in writing”.⁴⁴ Yu Yue’s words make it clear that also in the period in which he lived people could have an awareness of storytelling being an oral performance art, quite different from written literature, and that oral performance recorded with pen and ink must necessarily remain an incomplete record. The sound recordings of later times are obviously in many ways an improvement over the written record; they can record the storytellers’ spoken language and voice quality, etc. However, a sound recording also has its limitations, because it does not capture the storytellers’ bodily movements and facial expressions. Among the current technologies, video recording is clearly the best method.

Since the 1990s, many TV stations have been inviting storytellers to perform their art on TV, and have recorded a large number of repertoires, some of which were subsequently made available commercially, such as the video of “Wang Litang’s Art of Storytelling” (*Wang Litang pinghua yishu* 王丽堂评话艺术). Compared with the performances in the storytellers’ house, the performances on TV are often pruned, because television broadcast time is limited. In addition, the producers’ personal inclinations and the customary censorship of broadcasts and television programmes will limit the storytellers’ freedom. They cannot perform on TV just like they would do in the storytellers’ house. In the project *Four Masters of Chinese Storytelling – Full-Length Repertoires of Yangzhou Storytelling on Video* (*Yangzhou pinghua sijia yiren quanshu biaoyan luxiang* 扬州评话四家艺人全书表演录像) conducted and edited by Vibeke Børdahl, Fei Li and Huang Ying, four storytellers of the elder generation had their full repertoires recorded on video. This work has much value, since the video recordings provide a trustworthy original text for researchers. However, the collection of videos is not so easily accessible. Copies of the collection (360 hours in total) are available in the libraries of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., the Academia Sinica, Taipei, and the Danish Folklore Archives, Copenhagen. But because of copyright, the videos cannot be copied without explicit agreement with the storytellers.

There are some aspects about video recording that we need to pay attention to. Firstly, not only the performance of the storytellers but also the reaction of the audience and the circumstances of performance need to be registered and described, because they are likely to influence the storyteller’s performance. Second, since every performance is different, researchers should ideally record many different performances of a certain repertoire: the same storyteller telling the same episode several times, or different storytellers telling the same episode,⁴⁵ in order to allow for analysis of the differences between various versions of the same ‘episode’ or ‘story’.

Notes

¹ I am indebted to Vibeke Børdahl and Frank Kouwenhoven for discussing this paper with me in detail and revising the English language. An earlier version of this paper in English was published in *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* 《文艺理论研究》 (Vol.4, 2017, 119-132).

² Yangzhou quyizhi扬州曲艺志. Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House, 1993, p.110.

³ Vibeke Børdahl, Yangzhou pinghua tantao扬州评话探讨[The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling]. People's Literature Publishing House, 2006, p.55.

⁴ (Ming Dynasty) Song Lian 宋濂, Wang Yi 王祎, *Yuanshi* 元史[*History of Yuan Dynasty*], Volume 105, Criminal Annals, the 53rd, criminal law 4. Zhonghua Book Company, 1976, p2685

⁵ In the nineteen years of Qianlong, Water Margin was banned. In the seventh years of Tongzhi, Ding Richang(丁日昌1823 – 1882), the Governor (Xunfu 巡抚) of Jiangsu, banned a number of books which were thought to be illicit songs and works of fiction, including Water Margin, Clear Wind Sluice, Green Peony. (Wang Liqi王利器, Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao 元明清三代禁毁小说戏曲史料 [Historical Materials on the Banning of Fiction and Plays during the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties]. Shanghai Classics Publishing House, p44. p143. p145.)

⁶ For example, in the Song Yuan folk books “Killing Cui Ning by Mistake”(Cuozhan Cui Ning, 《错斩崔宁》), the storyteller or author gave explanations in the opening poem and talked with his listeners or readers in order to educate people. (Jingben tongsu xiaoshuo 京本通俗小说, Shanghai guji chubanshe. pp.69-87.) This function is still retained in modern Chinese storytelling. For example, when Wang Shaotang performed “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” from his repertoire of “Wu Song”(《武松》), he advised people to drink wine only sparingly.

⁷ Lu Xun鲁迅, Jiwaiji shiyi bubian 集外集拾遗补编. People's Literature Publishing House, 1993, p. 44.

⁸ Mao Zedong xuanji 毛泽东选集 [Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1964, pp.849-880. The translation is from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm

⁹ Mao Zedong xuanji 毛泽东选集 [Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1964, pp.849-880. The translation is from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm

¹⁰ “Government Administration Council’s Instructions Concerning the Implementation of the Drama Reform”, *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* 建国以来重要文献选编. Volume 2, Central Party Literature Press, 1992, p.251.

¹¹ *Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin* 陈云同志关于评弹的谈话和通信. Beijing: Zhongguo quyiyi chubanshe, 1983, p.3.

¹² “Xiao Yiwu” 萧亦五, Local History of Hubei Province: Records of Personages 湖北省志人物志稿. Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1989, p. 1023.

¹³ Li Zhaoqun 李兆群, “Wangpai shuihu chushu ji” 王派水浒出书记, Boluan fanzheng, Jiangsu juan 拨乱反正江苏卷. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1998, pp. 356-357.

¹⁴ The intervention and leadership role of the Party and government was vast, not only in the recording and editing of Yangzhou storytelling, but also in other folk literatures. Chuangshiji 创世纪. People's Literature Publishing House, 1962, p.94.

¹⁵ Wang Shaotang said that his ideological understanding had enhanced after liberation, and he knew that traditional repertoires should be revised to serve socialism. Wang Shaotang 王少堂, ‘Zhengli Yangzhou pinghua “Wu Song” de jingyan’ 整理扬州评话《武松》的经验, *Wenyi bao* 文艺报. 1960, No.15-16: 81-83.

¹⁶ Wang Shaotang, *Song Jiang* 宋江, Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1986, Epilogue by the editors, p.1437.

- ¹⁷Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin. p.1
- ¹⁸Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin. p.3.
- ¹⁹Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin. p.10.
- ²⁰Wang Shaotang, *Wu Song* 武松. Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1959, Postscript by the editors, p.1118.
- ²¹Wang Shaotang, *Wu Song* 武松. Postscript by the editors, p.1118.
- ²²Wang Shaotang, *Wu Song* 武松. Postscript by the editors, p.1118.
- ²³Wang Shaotang, *Wu Song* 武松. Postscript by the editors, pp.1118-1119.
- ²⁴Ding Shumei 丁淑梅, *Qingdai jinhui xiqu shiliao biannian* 清代禁毁戏曲史料编年. Sichuan University Press, 2010, pp. 191-194.
- ²⁵Wang Xiaotang 王筱堂, “My storytelling activities in Zhenjiang” 我在镇江书坛的活动, *Zhenjiang wenshi ziliao* 镇江文史资料. Volumes 17, 1990, pp. 130-131.
- ²⁶Research Database on Chinese Storytelling, <http://www.shuoshu.org/researchdatabase/pap.asp?id=66>
- ²⁷Vibeke Børdahl has talked about this question in her paper entitled “Oral and Written Aspects of Chinese Storytelling: on the Wang School of Water Margin in Yangzhou pinghua” 中国说书艺术的口头性与文体性：说扬州评话的王派“水浒”；her analysis focused on Wang Shaotang’s tape recording of “Wu Song fighting Tiger” and the same story plot part in Wang Shaotang edition *Wu Song. Mianxiang 21shiji de minzu minjian wenhua* 面向21世纪的民族民间文化 [China’s National Folk Cultures Facing the 21 Century]. Nanningshi shehui kexueyuan chuban: 393-400)
- ²⁸Chen Yun tongzhi guanyu pingtan de tanhua he tongxin. pp. 58-59.
- ²⁹Cf. Vibeke Børdahl, *Yangzhou pinghua tantao* 扬州评话探讨 [The oral tradition of Yangzhou storytelling]. People’s Literature Publishing House, 2006, p.281-293, p. 505. See also Vibeke Børdahl, ‘The Storyteller’s Manner in Chinese Storytelling’, *Asian folklore Studies*, Vol. 62-1, pp.65-112.
- ³⁰Wang Shaotang, *Wu Song* 武松. Postscript by the editors, p.1112.
- ³¹Cf. Vibeke Børdahl, ‘The Storyteller’s Manner in Chinese Storytelling’, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 62-1, pp.65-112. The translation is from Vibeke Børdahl, *Chinese Storytellers: Life and Art in the Yangzhou Tradition*, Cheng&Tsui Company, p.239.
- ³²See the various storytellers’ versions of this episode in Vibeke Børdahl, *Yangzhou pinghua tantao* 扬州评话探讨 [The oral tradition of Yangzhou storytelling]. People’s Literature Publishing House, 2006.
- ³³*Yangzhou quyuan zhi*. p. 109.
- ³⁴Vibeke Børdahl, *Yangzhou pinghua tantao*. pp.215-216. pp.232-233.
- ³⁵Wang Shaotang’s edited version in 1959 has no prose-poems about Ximen Qing and Pan Jinlian when they first met, but in Wang Litang’s re-edited publication of 2005 the two prose-poems were resumed.
- ³⁶Yu Youchun 余又春, *Pi Wu lazi* 皮五辣子. Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1985, p.518.
- ³⁷Vibeke Børdahl’s article “The Voice of Wang Shaotang in Yangzhou Storytelling” pointed out: “the editors seek to remove dialectal vocabulary that is considered too specialized and generally give the texts a language washing

in the direction of Modern Standard Chinese, so that dialect grammar will not disturb the readers... They also remove what is considered redundant or faulty, and rewrite the spoken texts in order to obtain the kind of narrative logic expected by a reading public." *CHINOPERL Papers* No.25 (2004), the Conference on Chinese Oral and Performing Literature, INC.

³⁸ *Yangzhou pinghua xuan*, Vol. II, 扬州评话选 (第二集). Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982, p. 386.

³⁹ Vibeke Børdahl's article "The Voice of Wang Shaotang in Yangzhou Storytelling" points out this phenomenon: Not only Chinese researchers, but also most overseas scholars studied only the edited and printed versions.

⁴⁰ Vibeke Børdahl's studies of Yangzhou storytelling were based exclusively on first-hand materials from her field investigations 1986-2003. *Yangzhou pinghua tantao*, pp. 55-58.

⁴¹ Liu Zongdi talked about the problem of folk literature: Oral literature is first changed into written text, and then studied as written literature, which leads to the loss of independence of the folklore literary discipline. Liu Zongdi 刘宗迪, "Cong shumian fanshi dao koutou fanshi: lun minjian wenyixue de fanshi zhuanhuan yu xueke duli" 从书面范式到口头范式:论民间文学的范式转换与学科独立, *Minzu wenxue yanjiu* 民族文学研究. 2004, No.2: 57-64.

⁴² Zhong Jingwen 钟敬文, *Zhong Jingwen minjian wenyixue wenxuan* 钟敬文民间文学文选. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010, p. 107.

⁴³ (The Soviet Union) I.O.M. Sokolov (I.O.M. COKOJOB, 梭柯洛夫), *What is Oral Literature*. Writers Publishing House, 1959, p. 80.

⁴⁴ Yu Yue 俞樾, *Chaxiang shi congchao* 茶香室丛钞, Volume 17. The version of Chunzai Tang, 25th Year of Guangxu (1900).

⁴⁵ Cf. how the episode "Wu Song Fights the Tiger" is recorded and analyzed in Vibeke Børdahl, *The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling*, Copenhagen, Curzon Press, 1996. See also 易德波, *Yangzhou pinghua tantao* 扬州评话探讨. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006.

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GOING ABROAD IN VERSE:

Hakka and Minnanese Songs and Ballads about Overseas Migration (guofange 過番歌) from Late-Imperial and Early Republican China

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Ever since the sixteenth century people of the Hakka and other ethnic communities in Southeastern China have migrated in great numbers, both on the Chinese mainland and overseas, mostly in the hope of escaping poverty and seeking their fortune elsewhere. Migration of this kind, which greatly increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, is amply reflected in the region's popular literature, in local dialects such as Hakka, Minnanese (Hokkien), Chaozhou, Cantonese and Hainanese. Popular songs and ballads dealing with migration are collectively known as guofange 過番歌. Many of these songs tend to be short, but this paper focuses in particular on two longer Minnanese ballads entitled Guo fan ge, which appeared in print in the early years of the twentieth century, and their Hakka counterparts.

Perhaps because of my training as a high school student in the Classics, reading Homer and Ovid, I have always remained fascinated by epic poetry and verse narrative. Chinese traditional popular literature is very rich in texts of this kind, and these have come to occupy more and more of my time in recent years. This also has resulted in a number of publications, organized by topic or genre. One of these is an English-language anthology of traditional Hakka popular literature, titled *Passion, Poverty and Travel: Traditional Hakka Songs and Ballads* (2015). This volume includes both short songs and long ballads, not only from the Mainland but also from Taiwan. I should perhaps stress at the very beginning that I do not speak Hakka or any other Southeastern Chinese dialects that will be mentioned in this talk, and that for my work I rely on published materials and the glosses that have been helpfully provided by the editors of such texts. One of the themes that recur with great frequency in these Hakka songs and ballads is poverty. For literati the hope to escape from destitution was focused on the examination system.¹ Many ballads recount in detail the humiliations destitute students have to suffer during their days of poverty, and the revenge they take on their enemies once they have passed the metropolitan exams. My selection in *Passion, Poverty and Travel* includes several examples of this type of tales. But whereas the literati looked inward and traveled to the capital, the common people looked outward and hoped to improve their fortune by migration. Ever since the sixteenth century Hakkas have migrated in great numbers, both on the Chinese mainland and overseas—first to Taiwan, and later to the Southern Oceans, that is the many principalities, open spaces, and colonial empires of continental and insular Southeast Asia. While the numbers for migration to Southeast Asia were limited for the first half of the Qing dynasty, the number of migrants (not only Hakka!) greatly increased in the second part of the nineteenth century when the infamous coolie trade took off.² In view of the growing importance of overseas migration and emigration in the late nineteenth century to various communities of Southeast China, it will come as no surprise that migration and emigration

are also reflected in popular literature in the local dialects such as Hakka, Minnanese (Hokkien), Chaozhou, Cantonese and Hainanese.³ The collective designation for this thematic genre of songs is *guofange* 過番歌. Recently Professor Soo Khin Wah (Su Qinghua 蘇慶華) of the University of Malaysia (retired) has produced a comparative study of the genre in each of these five dialects. Most of the materials he discusses are short lyrical songs, sung in a female voice.⁴ A young wife (or lover) either expresses her anxiety caused by her husband's (or lover's) decision to leave and urges him to stay at home with her, or expresses her longings for the absent husband and lover, gives voice to her hope for his speedy return, and betrays her worries about his fidelity. There are also songs in a male voice in which the migrant, suffering exploitation far from home, longs for his family and village. Both the Fujian and Guangdong volumes of the *Zhongguo geyao jicheng* 中國歌謠集成 contain a fair sample of this type of songs.⁵

I

If one checks for *guofange* in China Academic Journals or another on-line database of academic periodicals, however, one will likely not be directed to articles on these short songs (apart from the articles by Professor Su of course), but to articles on two long Minnanese poems entitled *Guofan ge*.⁶ It is these long Minnanese *Guofan ge* and their Hakka counterparts that will be the subject of my paper. But before I can turn to the Hakka ballads, I will first have to say something about the two Minnanese works. One of these Minnanese songs consists of over 340 seven-syllable lines; the other runs to over 700 lines. The first is known in printings of the early years of the twentieth century;⁷ the second poem is best known from recordings of oral performances in the second part of the twentieth century, but is also known in earlier printed editions of 1909 and 1916 from Xiamen and of 1932/1933 from Taizhong (in two volumes).⁸ The protagonist in the shorter poem hails from Nan'an on the Xixi River west of Quanzhou, while the protagonist in the longer poem hails from Anxi,⁹ also on the Xixi river, to the west of Nan'an and straight north of Xiamen.¹⁰ Both protagonists have migrated to Singapore and after encountering various hardships have eventually returned home, and now advise their fellow townsmen not to travel abroad if they don't have to.

Despite the difference in the length, the structure of these two poems, as has been noted by previous scholars, is very similar. They both start with a description of the poverty that leads to the decision to seek one's fortune elsewhere. This is followed by a scene in which the migrant takes his leave from his relatives. This scene is then continued by a description of the trip from one's hometown to the seaport, where one embarks after having located a suitable ship. The hardships of the trip by sea are detailed at length. Once one arrives in Singapore one is overwhelmed by the sights. The encounter with other ethnic groups and another language cause surprise. But once the initial bewilderment has subsided, it becomes very clear that it is not easy to find a good job. In their descriptions of their work experiences the two poems part ways. Our migrant from Nan'an eventually makes some money as a shop assistant, but spends it on prostitutes and attracts a venereal disease. Once he has been cured, he opens his own shop, and as soon as he has scraped together a little capital, he sells his shop and goes home. In the longer poem our protagonist from Anxi learns the hard way that the only kind of job he can find in Singapore is loading and unloading rice and coal. When he hopes to have better luck in Penang, he attracts "boat poison" (*chuandu* 船毒)¹¹ while traveling there. Once he has recovered from his illness, he is able to return to China with the help of friends and relatives.¹² Both poems converge in their ending, in which the authors warn their audience not to seek their fortune abroad.

Alongside these two long Minnanese ballads entitled *Guofan ge*, we also have a third Minnanese poem with a very similar title, but much shorter. Even though in this case the protagonist travels as far as Rangoon and Mandalay, the poem, titled *Guo fanbang ge* 過番邦歌 (Migrating to foreign lands) only counts 64 lines. Liu Denghan, the scholar who published this poem in 1993 provides the following background information:

In Changtai we collected a *Guo fanbang ge*. We were told that this had been recited and

edited by an old man of 79 by the name of Lu Fuzai 盧富仔. Because of circumstances this Lu Fuzai had in his youth traveled abroad all the way to Birma to make a living. But because he failed to find a career, he had eventually come home, begging his way.¹³

If the poem was collected in 1990 or thereabouts, Lu Fuzai may well have tried his luck overseas in the early years of the Great Depression. His poem exhibits, despite its short compass, still many of the same elements as we found in the longer ballads. In this case we start from Xiamen, proceed to Hong Kong which is described in some detail, and move on to Singapore, Penang, Rangoon and Mandalay. Foreign languages are repeatedly cited as an obstacle, and work is hard to find—when it is found, it doesn't come with any salary. Whereas other poems have long sections on the hardship of parting, this protagonist is constantly thinking of his parents, and eventually decides to go home. And again, the poem ends with a warning:

Earlier I'd thought that by moving to foreign parts
I'd earn the money to save my parents once back--
I had no clue how hard it is to make money there,
So now I decided to take my leave and go home.
Living abroad I had suffered for more than a year,
My hands were all empty, I didn't have a thing!
On the boat I worked as a sailor for my ticket,
And I had to beg all my way, suffering greatly.
I left for foreign parts and suffered miserably,
Now I compose this foreign song as a warning.
Going abroad I experienced thousands of pains—
Those who have been there know the hardships!¹⁴

The two long Minnanese *Guofan ge* have by now occasioned a considerable body of scholarship in the People's Republic, on Taiwan, and in Singapore. The texts have been edited and annotated, their background has been explained, and much ink has been spilled on the question to which extent the authors were able to break with traditional values that urged one to stay at home and take care of one's parents, or whether perhaps the hidden message of the authors was that successful migration required a network of relatives and fellow townsmen. My comments on these Minnanese songs are only possible because of this international scholarship. If I hope to make a small contribution to this body of scholarship, it is in the following three aspects. I would like to draw attention to a Hakka ballad that is very similar in topic, length and structure to the two Minnanese *Guofan ge* above. Secondly, I would argue that these long ballads on the hardships of migration to Singapore and beyond derive from the earlier ballads that lay out the hardships of migrating to Taiwan. Thirdly I would like to have a look at the ballads that portray cases of successful migration, to see how they are related to ballads that urge one not to journey overseas.

II

None of the publications on the Minnanese long ballads about overseas migration I have seen so far makes any reference to the very comparable long Hakka ballad, simply entitled *Guofan*. This long poem was reprinted by Luo Xianglin 羅香林 in 1936 in his *Lingdong zhi feng* 嶺東之風 (Airs from Guangdong), a collection of over 500 Hakka mountain songs, children's songs, and miscellaneous songs and ballads.¹⁵ This ballad has the same structure as the two poems briefly discussed above. Poverty results in the decision to go abroad. The painful parting is followed by the trip downriver to the harbor town. The miserable ocean journey is followed by arrival in Singapore with its many kinds of foreigners and foreign language. The work in the tin mines is back-breaking, and once the

migrant finally receives his pay, he quickly spends the money on prostitutes, and as a result attracts a venereal disease. While he suffers away from home, his relatives long for his return. How much better off would he have been if he would have stayed at home with his parents and his wife and made a modest living by tilling the fields!

There are some notable differences with the Minnanese songs, but those deal not with the structure but with the content. Whereas the Minnanese travelers depart from Xiamen, the Hakka travelers for the Southern Oceans depart from Swatow. All these songs provide considerable detail on the travel route in China, which is of course specific to the point of departure and the port where the migrants embark. While the confrontation with Singapore is very similar for the Minnanese and the Hakka migrants, the Minnanese migrants tend to stay in the city, whereas the typical destination for the Hakka migrants of the second part of the nineteenth century was the tin mines in Malaysia or on Banka.¹⁶ The Hakka ballad therefore describes at length the physical hardship of tin mining—even though some modest forms of mechanization made their appearance in the late nineteenth century, most of the work involved required backbreaking labor. The attrition rate for tin miners was very high, and few of them survived if they did not flee. Once they received their pay, they were easily enticed to spend their money in conspicuous consumption, on gambling and on hanging out with prostitutes, to suffer the typical consequences.

Once you have a certain amount of ready cash,
 Friends and brothers will all come up to you.
 Your friends will get together to enjoy gambling;
 Your brothers will invite you to have a smoke.
 They will all ask you to go into town with them,
 So loafing about you stroll through the streets.
 On your head you are wearing a nice Dutch hat,
 On your fingers you sport a ring made of gold.
 In your hand you hold a fan which you wave,
 While you smoke a cigar from the Philippines.
 Now they say: "Let's go into that restaurant!"
 Next they say: "Let's go and have a good time."
 Once you have come to the red-light district,
 The prostitutes want you to stay for the night.
 They not only have iced candy and melon seeds,
 But they also serve fine tea and a pipe of opium.
 When the two of you talk in private on a couch,
 She'll talk of a karmic bond from an earlier life.
 When talking as friends in her room, having fun,
 She resembles a fairy from Peach Blossom Fount.
 When at eleven o'clock you lay down to sleep,
 It's like a bridal room with flowers and candles
 Naked flesh of two bodies making rain and clouds:
 As if a mortal fellow encountered a celestial fairy.
 That one night as husband and wife is quickly done;
 The money you pay her is five or six silver dollars.
 At that time they all say that one night is worth it,
 But later realize it was hard to make that money.
 How many poor people act as if they were wealthy,
 While not knowing their family has been wiped out?
 Because your family was so poor, you went abroad,

But now you have money you don't return to China.
 In your whoring you may attract a venereal disease,
 And in the end you have to pawn all your clothes.
 Your sores and boils will never get any better,
 And on top of that you're plagued by jaundice.
 You cannot even move three steps outdoors,
 And you cry out repeatedly—truly how pitiable!
 When you have wine and meat, friends are many;
 Who dares to visit you when you are in dire straits?
 When day after day you are unable to do any work,
 Your work badge is removed--you're kicked outside.
 Each and everyone says it is great to go into town;
 There is not a single friend who gives good advice.
 But once you have spent all the money you had,
 You will have to beg for food from door to door.¹⁷

One reason for the relative neglect of the long Hakka ballad by the scholars working on the Minnanese ballads may be the closed nature of the scholarly communities that deals with dialect literatures. Scholars who publish on Minnanese literature are not necessarily interested in Hakka literature and vice versa.¹⁸ The other problem may be the relative neglect from which Luo Xianglin's *Dongling zhi feng* has suffered. The manuscript was completed in 1928, but the book was published only in 1936 in Shanghai, on the eve of the Anti-Japanese War, and Worldcat allows us to see that only a handful of academic libraries worldwide hold a copy of the original edition. The text was reprinted on Taiwan in 1974, in an edition that is held by a handful of libraries in the US and Europe. It was also reprinted in Shanghai in the 1990s in one of the huge reprint projects of those years, but Worldcat again suggests that only a few Chinese university libraries hold a copy of that version. As a scholar who had left the PRC after 1949 and taught in Hong Kong, Luo Xianglin will have been persona non grata for many years in the PRC, and if scholars had access to his book it will not have helped that his selection of Hakka mountain songs did not necessarily conform to the concept that the cultural authorities in the PRC had conceived of the genre. Hu Xizhang, a well-published Meizhou-based scholar of Hakka mountain songs, informs us in an article published in 2007 that he only read Luo's *Lingdong zhi feng* in 2006, when a friend provided him with a manuscript copy.¹⁹

III

The structural similarity of the Hakka *Guofan* poem and the Minnanese *Guofan ge* alongside differences in content that reflect the individual experiences of migrants and the different patterns in migrations of Minnanese and Hakka migrants suggest that these songs do not necessarily borrow from each other, but share a common matrix that was widely available in Southeast China, at least in the communities that spoke either Hakka or Minnanese. If we look further afield we very soon discover that such a common matrix is provided by a ballad entitled *Quanren moguo Tai ge* 勸人莫過台歌 (A song urging people not to move to Taiwan).²⁰ This Minnanese ballad probably dates from the eighteenth century, but it was widely reprinted in later times too. It reflects a period when migration to Taiwan was still subjected to various restrictions and prohibitions.²¹ In the age of the modern nation state, migration to Taiwan may well seem a quite different activity from leaving China and migrating to Southeast Asia, but to the Minnanese and Hakka men and women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who traveled to Taiwan to make their fortune there, that difference may not have been that obvious. In both cases one left one's hometown and had to travel overseas to unknown lands, where one not only had to deal with fellow Chinese but also most likely with local natives. This contact with Taiwanese natives impacted the Hakka even more than the Minnanese, as the Hakka

tended to settle in the hilly terrain between the coastal plains (inhabited by the Minnanese) and the inland mountains (inhabited by the Taiwan's original inhabitants).

Written in lines of four-syllable verse the ballad *Quanren moguo Tai ge* gives an account of the mishaps of the typical migrant. Despite all warning he sells his remaining property in order to have money for his trip, and takes his leave from his wife despite all her protestations. He makes the difficult trip by sea, and is robbed on arrival in Taiwan. When he finally finds a job in a sugar refinery, he has to wait for a year before he is paid, and once he is paid, he spends this money on carousing with prostitutes. When his money is spent, he is kicked out by the prostitute and turns to crime, but when he is found out, he is thrown out of the village and is left in the wilds to die of a terrible disease, while his relatives back home are still waiting for his return. The poem ends with the advice to stay with one's family, so one can make a modest but happy living by tilling the fields.

With the growing interest in all things Minnanese on Taiwan during the last few decades, this song has repeatedly been edited and studied, but it is usually discussed in isolation. From the summary of its contents it should be clear, however, that the sequence of events shows a close structural similarity to the sequence of episodes in the Hakka and Minnanese *Guofan ge*, but this similarity is rarely or ever pointed out.²² As long as internal migration and international emigration are seen as two quite different phenomena it is of course not obvious to seek the model for *Guofan ge* in a ballad that urges people not to migrate to Taiwan. It is perhaps less surprising to find that the Minnanese *Quanren moguo Tai ge* also served as the structural model for a long Hakka poem bemoaning the hardships and disappointments when migrating from the Hakka homeland to Taiwan, even if that too is rarely or ever pointed out. The poem in question is a long anonymous poem in 352 seven-syllable lines that had been preserved as a manuscript in Xinzhu and since its publication in 1983 has been known as *Du Tai beige* 渡台悲歌 (A sad song about migrating to Taiwan).²³ This poem may never have appeared in print and may not have enjoyed the circulation printed ballads did, but it is an interesting text nevertheless. It is also a text that is rather difficult to date as the situation that is described in some respects reflect conditions of the late eighteenth century and in other respects of the late nineteenth century—even the earliest years of the Japanese administration have been suggested as a possible date.²⁴ Since the first discovery of *Du Tai beige* more manuscripts have come to light. One of these is incomplete,²⁵ but the other extends the song to almost four hundred lines.²⁶ This makes of course for a poem of considerable length, but it may go too far to characterize this ballad as “the Odyssey of the Hakka migration to Taiwan” as has been done.

In contrast to the other ballads, *Du Tai beige* starts out with a dire warning: Taiwan is a Gate of Ghosts where people go to die, and it follows that ghastly intro with a vignette of head-hunting Taiwanese natives drinking wine from the skull of one of their victims. This is followed by a strong condemnation of the snakeheads who entice people to leave their village in order to seek their fortune in Taiwan:

The various crafts and trades there are unprofitable;
 Making money, as they say, is as hard as eating shit.
 But snake-heads²⁷ will tell you that Taiwan is great;
 That making money there is just like drawing water.
 Their talk may be as glib as that of a go-between,
 But, friends, you cannot believe their words at all!
 Everywhere they talk people into going to Taiwan,
 Their only thought is skimming the ones they lead.
 Of a thousand snakeheads none has a good death;
 May their corpses be cut up, their bones pulverized.²⁷

These people who are convinced by the snakeheads sell their fields and the family graves and then

travel from Jiayingzhou (Meizhou) to Chaozhou, where they wait for the boats that will ferry them across, and as they are waiting for a favorable wind, they are skimmed of their money by the snakeheads. Once they have sailed to Taiwan, they are not allowed to disembark before they have paid off all their debts to the snakeheads. But whereas in the (probably later) ballads of emigration to the Southern Oceans Singapore makes quite an impression on travelers on first arrival, the beautiful cities on Taiwan in the stories of the snakeheads turn out to be a collection of thatched sheds, “just like the outhouses at home.” When eventually the migrant has found employment as a farm laborer, he soon finds out that working conditions and food are much worse than on the mainland. The farms on Taiwan practice double cropping, and the only food the laborers receive is sweet potatoes: “Even oxen in China have an easier time,” complains our poet. The author of *Du Tai beige* goes into great detail in describing the primitive conditions of life on Taiwan: “Like beasts, people here lack all common decency,” he states. High and low treat each other as equals, no respect is shown for scholarship, and even actors are addressed as “sir” (one suspects that the author of this ballad tried to survive as a teacher). Everybody goes barefoot, even children in school and guests at wedding banquets. The author also hints at all kinds of sexual improprieties. To his utter disgust married women are at liberty to take lovers, and freely use that opportunity too. Once the migrant has made some cash he is likely to spend it on these prostitutes, and as long as he is young and strong he may perhaps be able make enough money, but when he gets older and has no cash, he will be shown the door. And when the poor migrant attracts a fatal disease he will lack the money to pay for a doctor and will be left to die all alone. Even abandoning farming for collecting forest produce or joining a local militia would not be a solution, as the earning would hardly be more but the chances of an early death at the hands of the head-hunting tribes would only increase:

The wages for one day’s work are only a hundred,²⁹
 So people are eagerly willing to risk their one life.
 They collect rattan for sale, they serve as braves,³⁰
 And take their own head into the wild mountains.
 When they run into raw natives who fire their guns,
 They immediately die there in those dense forests.
 The natives run over and then cut off their heads,
 So they leave for the shades as headless ghosts.
 It doesn’t matter whether they are men or women,
 Each year ten thousands enter these mountains.³¹

And so, as we are used to see in ballads of this type, in the final stanzas of his work, the author returns to his old hometown, if only in his mind, lamenting that he will never be able to make enough money to make the trip:

Each year the letters from home are urgent like fire;
 My desire to go back each time is just like an arrow.
 If my father and mother die of hunger and of cold,
 It would all be useless if I would make my millions.
 But then it is exceedingly difficult to make money;
 One never sees one who made a fortune go back.
 People want to make at least three or five hundred,³²
 But even after yet another year, they all stay put.
 If they go home and say that Taiwan is wonderful,
 It’s the lies of a go-between, of a common whore!
 I advise you, my uncles and brothers and in-laws,

Never be persuaded to make the trip to Taiwan.
 If there are ever any young men who want to go,
 Beat them to death, abandon them in the wilds!
 Every sentence in my letter is based on hard facts,
 And there is not a single line that's an empty lie.³³

IV

The Minnanese and Hakka ballads on migration to the Southern Oceans and their earlier models on migration to Taiwan all offer a very negative view of the migration experience.³⁴ The second Hakka ballad I have introduced also contains angry denunciations of the lies of the snakeheads who promise mountains of gold at the end of the rainbow. But the snakeheads could point to remittances sent home by successful migrants. Even a more convincing argument in favor of migration must have been the stories of migrants who had left without a shirt on their back but returned as millionaires loaded with gold and silver. *Passion, Poverty and Travel* contains a bamboo clapper song adaptation of the Hakka folktale “Three Pounds Dog on New Year’s Eve, Third Elder Uncle on New Year’s Day,” which tells the story of an elderly man who is so poor he is reduced to begging and even is accused of being a thief, suffering all kinds of humiliations from his fellow-villagers. But late at night on New Year’s Eve his son who had left to make his fortune in Southeast Asia returns with boxes filled with silver dollars. When on New Year’s Day the old man and his son go to the lineage temple they are first refused entrance as “scumbags,” and when they enter nevertheless they do not place three plates of meat on the altar to the ancestors (there was no time to buy meat on New Year’s Day) but three bowls filled with silver dollars. And when someone points out that the altar table is wobbly, the old man props up the short leg with some more dollars. In this way his status changes overnight from despised Three Pound Dog to revered Third Elder Uncle.³⁵ This folktale may have quite some history,³⁶ and the story enjoys considerably popularity these days in the shape of a Hakka mountain song opera (*shangeju* 山歌劇), but the ballad, at least in the version at my disposal, was only composed in the 1980s, even though one young scholar has discussed it as a centuries-old embodiment of the Hakka spirit.³⁷

While the tale of “Three Pound Dog on New Year’s Eve, Third Elder Uncle on New Year’s Day” features a migrant who has made a fortune overseas, it does not tell us at all how he made his fortune. On the Minnanese side we do have some ballads that detail the successful career of migrants to Taiwan. One such story is *Zhou Cheng guo Taiwan* 周成過台灣 (Zhou Cheng migrates to Taiwan), in which a story of commercial success is combined with a gruesome family tragedy. The second part of the story probably is set in the second part of the nineteenth century when huge fortunes were made in the export of tea. The story is first mentioned in the very final years of the Qing dynasty, and was first performed in 1911, in Taipei in Japanese as a *shingeki* 新戲 (followed also by performances in Minnanese). The first version of the ballad probably dates from the following decade. The story of Zhou Cheng starts out as another ballad warning against migration. Zhou Cheng wants to move to Taiwan despite the protestations of his father and his wife because of the excellent business opportunities. But once he has moved to Taiwan he spends his business capital on a prostitute, and once he has no penny left, he is unceremoniously kicked out of her establishment. Desperate, Zhou Cheng is about to commit suicide, but then meets another lost soul also about to commit suicide, and after some discussion they decide to go into business together, the money to be provided by Zhou Cheng’s partner. Their tea-trading firm soon flourishes and Zhou Cheng is able to redeem his prostitute lover from the bordello and lives with her as husband and wife. But now the story borrows its plot from the many stories about students who upon passing the metropolitan examinations marry a high-born young lady and refuse to recognize their wives when she comes to the capital. When Zhou Cheng’s pregnant wife makes the trip from the mainland to Taiwan and appears in his shop, he murders her. But haunted by her ghost he goes mad and kills his lover by slow-slicing, after which he commits

suicide.³⁸ But even though this story shows a migrant who is successful as a businessman, the ballad as such can hardly be read as an advertisement for migration or emigration. If the story of Zhou Cheng remained popular over the years and was repeatedly made into a movie, it must have had much to do with the gruesome scene of the mad Zhou Cheng slow-slicing his lover, and in view of fascination of foreigners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with *lingchi* 凌遲 one wonders whether this detail might not have been added in the Taipei Japanese play.³⁹

The successful protagonist of a traditional Chinese ballad only rarely makes his or her career in business; he or she does so in the examination hall or on the battlefield. In *Gan Guobao guo Taiwan* 甘國寶過台灣 the hero makes his career on the battlefield. Gan Guobao is a young man from a well-established Fuzhou family who fails his examinations, takes to gambling, and ends up as a pauper. When he reforms and want to restart his life in Taiwan, his rich relatives refuse to lend him any money. Once in Taiwan he makes a career in the army by fighting the natives, and upon his return to Fuzhou he is further promoted. But he is also accused of treason and collusion with traitors, and only saved by the intervention of the emperor's mother, who turns out to be his aunt.⁴⁰ Gan Guobao (1709-1776) grew up in Fuzhou, but had already a long career in the army behind him before he was appointed as commander of Taiwan in 1759, and would go on to serve the empire on its Burmese borders and elsewhere.⁴¹ The episode of the successful migrant who upon return to China is accused of collusion with the enemy may well contain an echo of the fate of Minnanese businessman Chen Yi 陳儀 who had served as a lieutenant of the Chinese in Batavia and who on his return in 1749 to his homeland, was robbed of his wealth and banished to the northwestern border regions on the accusation of collaboration with the enemy.⁴² This case reverberated widely throughout Southeast China and the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, and was still remembered at the end of the nineteenth century. After he had served as Chinese consul-general in Singapore, Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905) provided for instance the following summary of the case in his long poem *Fanke pian* 番客篇 (Overseas merchants):

Once there was a merchant from Dutch territories
Who came home with hundreds of sacks and bags.
When those who greedily glared liked hungry tigers
Failed to grasp these with their stretched-out hands,
He was falsely accused of collusion with the enemy
And publicly condemned as the worst villain of all.⁴³

The case of the unfortunate Chen Yi may also very well have served as one of the sources of inspiration for *Luoqun ji* 羅裙記 (The Tale of the Gauze Skirt), one of the titles in the repertoire of the guwen 古文 performers from the Hakka-speaking parts of Southern Jiangxi.⁴⁴ In this tale the student Zhang Yifei 張逸飛 goes abroad to pursue his studies and so impresses the local king that the latter gives him his daughter in marriage. But when the couple returns to China, the young bride is abducted and Zhang thrown into the water as soon as their boat docks in Canton harbor—as in the case of Gan Guobao, of course, the story ends happily because the couple is eventually reunited after many adventures.⁴⁵ It will be no accident that the story of “Three Pound Dog on New Year's Eve, Third Elder Uncle on New Year's day” describes in detail how Three Pound Dog and his son make a show of spreading their good fortune throughout the community.

So far I have not found the Chinese text of a Hakka ballad on a successful migrant. Somewhere between 1885 and 1893 someone in Kuala Lumpur composed a ballad on the career of Yap Ah Loy 葉亞來 (1837-1885), a Hakka from Huizhou who had made his fortune in Malaysia. Yap Ah Loy had fled China because of dire poverty, and as a migrant he seemed destined to become a failure. He was dismissed as a shop clerk, fell ill as tin miner, and gambled the money away that friends and relatives had collected to pay for his return trip. But being well-trained in martial arts, he then became a body

guard of one of the local Chinese strongmen, made his first money as a pig trader, and next moved into tin-mining (and the related service industries), but this time as an investor and protector. In the Selangor Wars of the late 1860s and early 1870s he led the Chinese miners in pitched battles against the Malays, and he ended his life as the kapitan of Kuala Lumpur. He is said to have rebuilt the city three times after devastating fires, and died on the eve of a return visit to China.⁴⁶ We know this ballad only from an English translation that was published in 1893 in *The Selangor Journal*. The ballad's title is there transcribed as *Yap Loi chat shin yin ngi*. The translator (who only signs his name as "C.K.") mentions that some lines that might be offensive to the Yap family had been removed from the copy put at his disposal, but only the opening lines would appear to be missing from the translation.⁴⁷ The ballad has been read as rather critical of Yap Ah Loy, and it has been suggested (by Carstens) that the author of the ballad may have belonged to the Minnanese (Hokkien) community in Kuala Lumpur rather the Hakka community,⁴⁸ but I'm afraid that it will be difficult to reach a conclusion as long as the Chinese original does not resurface. So far my attempts to locate a copy—if it still exists—have not been successful. Who knows the whereabouts of the missing Chinese epic on Yap Ah Loy? The original ballad may only have counted a few hundred lines, but in later retellings it could easily have gained in detail and bulk.

V

Chinese popular literature of late-imperial and early-republican times is very rich but still has not attracted the scholarly attention it deserves. The popular traditions of dialect literature deserve to be studied not only because they are part of this rich body of literature, but also because they deal with topics which in mainstream popular literature are rarely if ever discussed. The songs and ballads from Southeast China on migration and emigration are a fine example. Despite their formulaic quality, these texts make for fascinating reading and well deserve translation in their own right.

Then there is of course the documentary value of these texts. Much has been written on Chinese migration and emigration of late-imperial times, but most of that scholarship is based on writings about (and by) successful migrants and emigrants, and it is hard to know how migration and emigration were experienced by those who traveled overseas to seek a better life—and only too often were disappointed. If these songs and ballads are not the spontaneous expression by these migrants and emigrants of their emotions, they did provide them with familiar language and imagery to understand their own experiences and to voice them. The long ballads that were the focus of this paper must have been written by persons with considerable literacy, but literacy was not that uncommon in Southeast China among the male population in late-imperial times.⁴⁹ But even if these ballads were written by schoolmasters or other people with a higher degree of literacy than the common run of coolies, these ballads were still memorized and recited by many migrants and emigrants, and by many of those who stayed behind or returned.

Appendix

Migrating to Foreign Parts

Now in Xiamen the siren has resounded three times,
 The steamboat starts to move--the anchor is raised.
 Leaving home: thousands of miles off to foreign parts,
 Hoping to earn foreign money to support my family.
 After a full day and more we arrive in Hong Kong;
 The thoroughfares, I see, are crowded with traffic.
 Men and women, old and young fill the main streets,
 And the overwhelming majority of them are Chinese.
 Hong Kong is on all four sides surrounded by the sea,

The steep cliffs in the water seem to float upward.
On the island Western buildings rise in tens of layers,
And then there are many-storied houses and pavilions.
Since ancient times Hong Kong belonged to China—
A beautiful peony flower out in the Southern Ocean!
But alas, it was ceded to the British for government
By that rotten Qing dynasty that was way too stupid.
Once past Hong Kong one comes to the open sea:
I think of my dear father and mother back at home.
The boundless wide ocean is without any borders—
I have no idea when I will be able to go back home.
The steamboat arrives on its route in Annam country,
Where I see the hustle and bustle of the busy harbor.
Since ancient times Annam has been a good neighbor,
But at present it belongs to the people of France.
Once past Annam we arrive in Singapore city;
Once past Singapore we arrive on Penang Island.
I cannot speak a word of that foreign language;
Without understanding the language, you're out.
After some time the steamboat is in Rangoon;
When I see these foreigners, I'm quite bewildered.
Among them there is not one whom I do know,
And I resemble a dumb person who can't speak.
So I left Rangoon and traveled on to Mandalay,⁵⁰
And this was the first time for me to ride a train.
The carriage was filled by a crowd of people;
Of all they said I couldn't understand a word!
Overcome by worries I couldn't swallow a bite;
I collapsed there in the carriage--all was a blur.
Thinking of my parents, I felt pierced by knives,
And the tears that fell down I swallowed as food.
I stepped down from the train on arrival in Mandalay,
And by carefully asking the road I found my uncle.
When I had found my uncle, I was truly overjoyed;
He introduced me to a cake shop to work there.
Working at that restaurant I had never time off,
And each day they provided me with three meals.
But I never received even a single penny as salary:
Carrying water in a basket—all effort was in vain.
Frustrated in Mandalay I returned to Rangoon,
And once there I became a worker in a cloth shop.
But I likewise never earned one penny of salary,
And longing for my parents I really felt very sad.
Earlier I'd thought that by moving to foreign parts
I'd earn the money to save my parents once back--
I had no clue how hard it is to make money there,
So now I decided to take my leave and go home.
Living abroad I had suffered for more than a year,
My hands were all empty, I didn't have a thing!

On the boat I worked as a sailor for my ticket,
 And I had to beg all my way, suffering greatly.
 I left for foreign parts and suffered miserably,
 Now I compose this foreign song as a warning.
 Going abroad I experienced thousands of pains—
 Those who have been there know the hardships!

Liu Denghan 1993, 31-32.

Notes

Unnumbered Note

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¹For a discussion of the importance of the examination system to the Hakka elite in improving their status, see Puk 2009.

²For general surveys of Chinese emigration, see for instance Pan 1991; Pan 1999; Kuhn 2008; and Wang 2003.

³Songs reflecting the overseas migration from Southeast China are briefly contrasted to songs reflecting the migration from Northeastern China into Manchuria and from northern Shanxi and Shaanxi into Inner Mongolia in Tian Tao 2004.

⁴While the persona in such songs might be female, the songs often were sung by men.

⁵The first scholar to draw attentions to these songs was Zhong Jingwen 1924. Also see Zhao Jiaxin 1936. Soo Khin Wah' articles on the relevant materials in Hakka, Minnanhua, Hainanhua, Caozhouhua and Cantonese (Su Qinghua 2012a; Su Qinghua 2012b; Su Qinghua 2013a, Su Qinghua 2013b, Su Qinghua 2014a) have been collected in Su Qinghua 2014b. Also see Lin Chaohong and Lin Lunlun 2014. Extensive selections of this type of songs are included in *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Fujian juan* 2007, 451-500 and *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Guangdong juan* 2007. The distribution of these songs on Malaysia is briefly discussed in Wang Jingyi 2005: 46-47. Western-language scholarship has focused on the texts emanating from Cantonese migrants to the US. Mark H. Lai a.o. 1991 has gathered the poems inscribed on the walls of the quarantine barracks on Angel Island where during the first half of the twentieth century Chinese immigrants were often detained for months if not longer, but these poems often are written in the format of classical quatrains or eight-line regulated poems. Marlon K. Hom 1987 offers an extensive selection of Cantonese poems published in two collections in 1911 and 1915 in San Francisco, but these poems, while drawing on popular idiom, would appear to have been produced by local educated men as literary games. But in the introduction pp. 38-47 Hom also includes a selection of popular songs collected in Taishan (Toisan) in the 1920s, culled from Chen Yuanzhu, *Taishan geyao ji* (1929). Hom 1987 (pp. 47-50) also includes an excerpt of a "wooden-fish song" entitled *Jinshanpo zitan* 金山婆自嘆, as "Lament of a Gold Mountain Wife." The Taishan (Toisan) farmer Ng Seung Chi (1910-2002), who grew in Taishan and migrated by way of Hong Kong to New York at the age of 69 in 1979 carried his wooden-fish songs with him. The repertoire he continued to perform in New York included several items on various aspects of migration, and included two items composed by Ng on his own experiences (Zheng 1992; Yung and Yung 2014). Yung and Yung, pp. 28-34 provide both the Chinese text and a translation of *Jinshan lun* 金山論 (The story of Gold Mountain) which describes the hardships of Chinese goldminers in the US in the second part of the nineteenth century.

⁶See Liu Denghan 1991; Liu Denghan 1993; Liu Denghan 2002; Liu Denghan 2005; Liu Denghan 2014; Ke Rongsan 2013. Annotated editions of these two long Minnanese ballads are provided in Zhou Changji and Zhou Qinghai 2003, 403-455; annotated editions of the longer of these two can also be found in Lin Huadong 2006 and Zheng Bingshan 2007. One can hear a performance of the longer version by Ke Changyuan 柯長源 on www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnMvxxrRbfA. In the edition of the longer of these two Minnanese ballads included in *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Fujian juan* 2007, 485-497 the language is very much "normalized." The difference in

length between the two texts is mostly due to the fact that the longer version greatly develops the opening sections in which the protagonist informs his parents of his decision to go abroad and in which he says goodbye to his wife. Lin Chaohong and Lin Lunlun are not aware of the long Hakka *guofange* and treat such long songs as phenomenon that is only found in Minnanese *guofange*.

⁷Wang Jingyi 2005: 46 notes the Xiamen publishers who printed this ballad also had branches in Singapore, and suggests that migrants might buy the ballad while waiting for their ship's departure in Xiamen and learn the ballad by heart during their sea journey to Singapore. The popularity of (Cantonese) songsbooks among Cantonese laborers in Peru was noted as early as 1871 by the *Zhongwai xinwen qiribao* 中外新聞七日報 of Dec. 2 (information provided by Elizabeth Sinn).

⁸Ke Rongsan 2013: 189.

⁹One also encounters the transcription Anqi.

¹⁰In Chinese scholarship the shorter version is therefore called the “Nan’an version” (Nan’an ben 南安本), while the longer version is designated as the “Anxi version” (*Anxi ben* 安溪本).

¹¹“Boat poison” would appear to be a general reference to the combination of infectious diseases that were caused by the unhygienic conditions on board of many of the ships engaged in the coolie trade.

¹²The author of the long version is in some versions identified as “Zhong Jin from Shantan” (Shantan Zhong Jin 善壇鍾金). In Liu Denghan 2017, the author describes his 1989 visit, in the company of Denis Lombard and Claudine Salmon, to the home of the Zhong Jin’s grandson in Shantan.

¹³Liu Denghan 1993, 31.

¹⁴Liu Denghan 1993, 32. A complete translation of this poem is provided in the Appendix. Whereas the earlier ballads describe the presence of Westerners in Singapore and elsewhere without any comments, Lu Fuzai shows himself a good patriot in deploring the cession of Hong Kong to the British by the “rotten Qing dynasty.”

¹⁵Luo Xianglin 1936, 268-280. In his final note to *Guofan* Luo remarks “This song has most likely been written by a local literatus, but because it is very popular and identical in characteristics to other mountain songs I have included it in this collection” (p. 280).

¹⁶On the techniques of tin-mining in Southeast Asia, the organization of labor, and working conditions, see Somers Heidhues 1992.

¹⁷Luo Xianglin 1936, 276-278. For a complete English translation of this text, see Idema 2015, 339-347.

¹⁸This general statement does not apply to students of Hakka literature on Taiwan, who tend to be well informed about the studies of Minnanese literature.

¹⁹Hu Xizhang 2007, 48. Hu Xizhang 2013: 320-325 reprints *Guofan* but without Luo Xianglin’s final note.

²⁰This point was already made by Huang Jufang in her 2007 dissertation, which discusses both Hakka *guofange* in the context of the Minnanese materials.

²¹The original woodblock edition of this song is reproduced in Wu Shouli 2006, 163-165, who provides a critical edition on pp. 151-153. A reproduction of the original text and a transcription are also provided in Du Jianfang 2008, 165-168. Annotated editions have been provided by Li Xianzhang 1982; Wang Yude 1993, 203-215; Huang Jinglian 2001, 55-65. I have published a complete English translation as Anonymous 2013.

²²A rare exception is Ke Rongsan 2013, who also draws attention to the parallels with *Du Tai beige* to be discussed below. These parallels are also discussed by Huang Jufang 2007.

²³Huang Rongluo 1990.

²⁴For a full translation see Idema 2015, 321-335.

²⁵Chen Jianming 1996; Zeng 2003.

²⁶For a collated edition of the poem on the basis of these three manuscripts and extensive annotations, see Huang Jufang 2007 and Huang Jufang 2014, 179-258.

²⁷“Snakehead” is of course a modern term. But the Chinese expression used here refers to those entrepreneurs who made their money by talking Chinese men into migrating to Taiwan and organizing their transportation and employment. As is made clear in this text, many migrants remained in debt to these entrepreneurs for many years.

²⁸Huang Rongluo 1990, 25.

²⁹A hundred coppers.

³⁰In order to collect rattan they will have to enter the mountain forests that are the terrain of the “raw” natives. “Braves” refers to locally hired militia.

³¹Huang Rongluo 1990, 40-41.

³²In this case the reference will be to dollars.

³³Huang Rongluo 1990, 41-42.

³⁴From other regions we also have texts warning against the dangers of migrations that have a different structure. *Zhongguo geyao jicheng: Fujian juan* 2007, 474-479 provides (the shortened text of) a ballad titled *Xia xifan* 下西番 from Shouning (recorded in 1997) that is organized by the months of the year, which is a very common organizational device in popular ballads. This ballad is briefly discussed by Liu Denghan 2005, 16. It deals with the emigration of more than 800 Fujian men (including hundreds from Fuan) in 1901 to Réunion, a group emigration organized through the local representatives of the Catholic Church (information provided by Prof. Zhang Xianqing; on this group emigration also see Yu Jianhua 1991, 68; Chen Hansheng 1984, 264; Lin Quan 2003; Zhu Feng 2008, 100-101). When in 1902 letters arrived from Réunion about the poor treatment the migrants received, riots broke out in Fuzhou. The emphasis in this ballad is very much on the ordeals of the travel by boat and the many people who die during the crossing. The ballad also gives expression to the complaints of the migrants about the food and the housing upon arrival. The final section is given over to the complaint of one of the widows back home.

Liu Denghan 2015: 16 is under the impression that the ballad describes a case of emigration to the USA (a mistake that is repeated by several later scholars) and mentions the work as yet another example of a ballad dealing with migration to the United States like the Cantonese ballad *Huagong suhen* 華工訴恨 (The coolie’s complaint), which is reprinted in A Ying 1960, 678-681. In this ballad the opening scene of a tearful parting is followed by an extended description of the hardships of the long cross-ocean journey. The description of quarantine procedures is abruptly followed by a diatribe against restrictive American admission procedures. This ballad, however, is not a popular work. It was written by Zheng Daoyi 鄭道一 (using his pseudonym Rengjiu 仍舊, 1880-1906). Zheng was active as a journalist in Canton and Hong Kong in support of Sun Yatsen. The poems left by Chinese immigrants interned on Angel Island tend to be short poems in classical genres (Lai 1991). The Za Library in Beijing holds a short Cantonese text titled *Guli huaixuan* 故里懷旋 (Longing for home); this anonymous work of the late Qing mentions the same dangers that threaten the migrant worker as the *Guofange* but does not provide the detailed narrative we find in texts of that genre (a copy of *Guli huaixuan* was kindly made available by Mr. Gao Xiaosong, the director of the Za Library).

A ballad from Yunnan about the Chinese migration across the mountain passes to Burma is written in ten-syllable lines. It does not follow a narrative pattern but is organized as a moral tract, starting with a long section on the duties of filial piety and going through a long list of sins a migrant may commit while in Burma (opium-smoking and drinking, idleness and whoring, marrying a Burmese wife, wasteful spending on fashionable clothes, not buying suitable presents for those who stayed behind on one’s return; adopting fashionable practices in weddings etc.) The text ends by warning the women who stayed behind against extravagant expenditures. For the text of

this ballad see Xu Qiufang and Wang Dasan 2005, 73-113. For a discussion of this text see Giersch 2014, 62-69.

³⁵Hu Xizhang 2010, 510-516.

³⁶For an early version see Li Mingpan 1929.

³⁷Liao Wen 2013.

³⁸For a summary of this Minnanese ballad see Eberhard 1972, 26. From Puxian 蒲仙 we have a long ballad entitled *Jin Gua guo Taiwan* 金瓜過台灣, which tells a story that for the first part is very similar to that of *Zhou Cheng guo Taiwan*. Jin Gua is a rich young man from Zhangzhou who is dispatched to Taiwan to set up business there, but he falls in love with a prostitute. When after a few months he has spent all his money, he is kicked out by her and contemplates suicide. Reduced to poverty, he survives as a baker. When a new magistrate arrives who takes stern measures against prostitution, Jin appeals to him, accusing his former girlfriend of rapacity. With the help of the magistrate he is able to reclaim part of his money, and starts a business. When he has made enough money, he sends for his wife and son on the mainland. When they arrive on Taiwan, he apologizes to them. His virtuous wife does not blame him for his behavior, and even sees to it that her husband's former girlfriend is well taken care off. For the text of this ballad, see *Fujiansheng Xianyoushi faxing suqu changben* 福建省仙遊市發行俗曲唱本, a website maintained by Wang Shunlong 王順隆. The story is set in the 1860s and 1870s, but the date of the ballad's composition is not known.

³⁹Brook, Bourgan and Blue 2014, 1-34; 152-202, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 1-34, "The Execution of Wang Weiqin," and pp. 152-202.

⁴⁰For a summary of this Minnanese ballad see Eberhard 1972, 58-60.

⁴¹Gan Guobao hailed from Gutian. His family later moved to Fuzhou. In 1723 he became a military jinshi and from that time served in the imperial guard. Starting from 1738 he served in a long sequence of posts, including two terms as Regional Commander for Taiwan from 1759 to 1765. When he died he held the rank of Provincial Military Commander for the Land Forces of the Green Standards for Fujian. His administration during his terms in Taiwan is highly praised. Guo also enjoyed a reputation as a painter of tigers.

⁴²Ng 1991.

⁴³Huang Zunxian 1981, 632.

⁴⁴*Guwen* is a local genre of Hakka ballad storytelling from Southern Jiangxi.

⁴⁵Huang Yuying and Yuan Dawei 2008, 172. This story should be distinguished from a quite popular play of the same title, which has a completely different plot.

⁴⁶The classic study on the life and career of Yap Ah Loy is Middlebrook 1953. Also see Carstens 2005.

⁴⁷C.K. 1893. The translation and its headnote are reprinted in Gullick 2007, 527-530 (in this reprint the translation of the ballad starts in the middle of the second paragraph with the line "Yap Ah Loi in his early days got into trouble.") It is also reprinted in Idema 2015, 431-435.

⁴⁸Carstens 2005, 42.

⁴⁹On the literacy of first-generation migrants see for instance Yun 2008, 60; 72. During the 1873 international inquiry (headed by Chen Lanbin 陳蘭彬 [1816-1895]) into the living condition of indentured coolies on Cuba, 1,176 Chinese men gave oral testimony; at the same time the committee collected 85 written depositions, signed singly or collectively by a total of 1165 men. Depending on the educational level, the style of these statements could vary widely, but these submissions were all in prose. This also applied to texts Yun discusses in her chapter "The Verse Petition: 'Thousands of Words are Under the Sweep of our Brushes'" (pp. 87-104), which turn

out to be prose writings embellished with literary flourishes. The composition by Ren Shizhen 任世貞 that Yun translates on pp. 95-98 is not written in four-syllable verse but in highly formal prose. The only poem included among the written statements submitted to the committee is a poem in five-syllable lines by Li Chengxun 李承訓, a former school teacher (a translation is provided by Yun on pp. 102-103; the Chinese text is reproduced on p. 104). For the Chinese text of the statement by Ren, see Chen Hansheng 1985, Vol. 2, 674-675. The exceptional nature of the text is stressed by the introductory phrase “a fine manuscript of *A Brief Account of Moving Overseas*” (*shanxie Guofan shilitie* 繕寫過番事略) which is lacking from the translation in Yun 2008.

⁵⁰The Chinese text writes Hongying 紅營 (Red Barracks), which is an old Chinese designation for Mandalay.

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AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

Wu Weiye, ‘Narrative Poem on Two Masters
from Chu’ (*Chu liang sheng xing*)

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The professional storyteller Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1592?–1674/75?) and the storysinger Su Kunsheng 蘇崑生 (1605?–1679?) were active during the years of the Manchu invasion and gradual conquest of China. Whereas Liu Jingting’s activities are well documented in contemporary sources and he has been the subject of several scholarly studies, source material is generally much less available and coherent for Su Kunsheng.

Despite their different personal backgrounds and specializations, the two performers were united by a common persuasion and interests. They were both sought after by members of a network of ‘remnant officials’ (yimin 遺民) who had chosen to cooperate with the new dynasty. Motivations for such contacts on the part of these literati were complex but generally included feelings of nostalgia, which they cultivated and exchanged by collectively attending Liu Jingting’s and Su Kunsheng’s performances. These scholars also composed poetry and prose pieces which they dedicated to the two performers.

One of these poems, written by Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–1672), was apparently very well received by contemporaries and subsequently included in several early-Qing anthologies. It gives evidence of Liu Jingting’s and Su Kunsheng’s lives and activities before and after the fall of the Ming, including their time as guests-in-residence in the camp of Ming general Zuo Liangyu 左良玉 (1599–1645). The poem and its preface illustrate the extent to which both performers were involved in the political and military clashes of their time and how they dealt with their disappointment and disillusionment over the loss of their country. The text also hints at Wu Weiye’s motivations in writing and dedicating poems and prose pieces to performing artists and is thus an important contemporary source for gauging the mentality of Chinese intellectuals in times of political change.

For many centuries, Chinese literati have been fascinated by professional performers – story-tellers, singers, actors – and have immortalized them in literary texts. We find them described in poetry and as figures in musical drama, particularly in pieces that are concerned with the chaotic periods of transition from one dynasty to the other. Several *chuanqi* 傳奇 plays from the early Qing period, for instance, feature performing artists both in minor roles—e.g. in Li Yu’s 李玉 (c. 1590—c. 1660) *Roster of the Pure and Loyal* (*Qingzhong pu* 清忠譜, c. 1640s) and Hong Sheng’s 洪升 (1645–1704) *Palace of Everlasting Life* (*Changsheng dian* 長生殿, 1688), as well as in major roles, e.g. in Kong Shangren’s 孔尚任 (1648–1718) *Peach Blossom Fan* (*Taohua shan* 桃花扇, 1699) – and include scenes of story-telling, story-singing, and other performative acts. In all three plays, the performance artists were modelled on individuals active during the Tang (*Changsheng dian*) and the late Ming and early Qing periods (*Qingzhong pu*, *Taohua shan*), respectively. Two of these performers, Li Guinian 李

龜年 (698?–768?) and Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1592?–1674/75?), are relatively well known, while most of the others are only sparsely documented. In the plays, the performing artists are intricately tied to questions of national integrity during a time of traumatic events. In several instances, their stories and songs – ostensibly mere entertainment, but at times filled with unsettling and darkly foreboding detail – serve as counterfoils to historic events that disturb the state of seeming tranquillity. They highlight political decay or give voice to the subliminal sentiment of characters and circumstances.

Many eminent literati of the Ming–Qing transition period, including several former Ming officials like Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664) and Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳 (1616–1673), wrote appraisal poetry on performers. One of the major functions of such texts, if not the most important function *per se*, was to present a projection space for feelings of nostalgia and regret and thus enable the authors to come to terms with their own state-of-mind and conscience. In many of these poems, the musicians, storytellers, or singers are presented as if they were the guardians of historical memory – a literary topos prevalent in much of the poetry of the transition period. The trope itself, however, is much older and can be found in prototypes such as Du Fu’s 杜甫 (712–770) famous quatrain ‘Encountering Li Guinian in Jiangnan’ (*Jiangnan feng Li Guinian* 江南逢李龜年, 770):

岐王宅裏尋常見 崔九堂前幾度聞
正是江南好風景 落花時節又逢君

I always used to see you at Prince Qi’s mansion,
heard you how many times at Lord Cui’s home?
Now when the scenery is finest here south of the Yangzi,
that we should meet once more just as blossoms are falling!¹

Li Guinian, the artist already mentioned above as an important figure in the play by Hong Sheng, was a very successful and wealthy singer who performed at the court of emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756). Like many others, he had to leave the capital city of Chang’an 長安 and flee south to Jiangnan, i.e. the area immediately south of the lower reaches of the Yangzi River, during the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion (755–763), where he stayed for several years. The poem was written in late autumn 770, just a few weeks or perhaps two or three months before Du Fu’s death. Both men were old now, and the poet – already in poor health for several years – must have sensed that his vitality was finally dwindling. The melancholic last line of the poem also conveys a longing for a bygone glorious era (Hawkes 1967: 211). It is this tradition of nostalgic remembrance and coming-to-terms with one’s own self that authors of later periods, like Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–1672), continued and referred to. This paper considers one of his texts, the ‘Narrative Poem on Two Masters from Chu’ (*Chu liang sheng xing* 楚兩生行), which is devoted to the storyteller Liu Jingting and the singer Su Kunsheng 蘇崑生 (1605?–1679?).

The author

Wu Weiye was a major poet and writer of the Ming and Qing periods, with more than one thousand of his poems still extant. Hailing from Taicang 太倉, near Taizhou 泰州 in modern Jiangsu 江蘇 Province, he received his *jìnshì* 進士 degree with honours in 1631. He ranked first place in the metropolitan examination, second place in the imperial examination, then became a compiler in the Hanlin Academy (翰林) and rose through the ranks up to *Nanjing Guozǐ Jian sīyè* 國子監司業 (tutor in the Imperial Academy in Nanjing) in 1639. When the Manchu conquest of China interrupted his promising career and impelled him to choose between loyal refusal and cooperation with the new powers, Wu Weiye opted for the first and even tried to commit suicide but was prevented from doing so by his relatives. He worked for the Southern Ming court in Nanjing for a short time but withdrew and lived

a life in seclusion. Manchu officials and his family exerted increasing pressure on him to accept an administrative position within the new government, to which he yielded in 1653. After serving first as a *Mishu Yuan shijiang* 秘書院侍講 (expositor-in-waiting in the Secretariat Academy) and then, from 1656 onwards, as *Guozi Jian jiju* 國子監祭酒 (rector of the Imperial Academy) in Beijing, he was allowed to resign one year later, when his step-mother died.

As Wai-ye Li has observed, “[m]usicians, singers, performers, entertainers, and courtesans inspired some of the most important works in Wu’s corpus” (Li 2006: 136–7). Examples include the storyteller Liu Jingting, singers Su Kunsheng 蘇崑生 (1605?–1679?) and Wang Zijia 王紫稼 (1625–1656), *pipa* 琵琶 players, the singer and *qin* 琴 player Bian Yujing 卞玉京 (c. 1623–1665), and the famous courtesan Kou Baimen 寇白門 (1624–after 1645). Wu Weiye maintained a close personal relationship with these people, who were his acquaintances, friends or paramours (Bian Yujing). He and others also considered them strong symbols of a past that was irrevocably lost but worth remembering.

Liu Jingting and Su Kunsheng

Liu Jingting, a gifted teller of *pinghua* 評話 stories, hailed from Taizhou in Jiangsu, not far from Yangzhou 揚州. Originally named Cao Yongchang 曹永昌 (zi Kuining 葵寧, later Fengchun 逢春 or Yuchun 遇春), he had learned storytelling at the age of 18. Wu Weiye wrote several pieces on and for Liu Jingting, including a ‘Biography’ (*Liu Jingting zhuan* 柳敬亭傳) and a ‘Eulogy’ (*Liu Jingting zan* 柳敬亭贊).²

In the preface to his ‘Narrative poem on Two Masters from Chu’, Wu Weiye mentions that Liu Jingting and Su Kunsheng were former “retainers” or “hangers-on” (*xingshe zhongke* 幸舍重客) of general Zuo Liangyu 左良玉 (1599–1645), the most powerful Ming general of the time, and had stayed at his camp.³ This is also a central theme in literary pieces by other authors.

When Zuo died in 1645, Liu’s life became increasingly difficult. In 1656, he secured an appointment with Ma Fengzhi 馬逢知, the provincial commander (*tidu* 提督) of Suzhou 蘇州, Songjiang 松江 and Changzhou 常州, whom he had already known.⁴ Liu stayed at Ma’s camp for four years until 1660. According to the sources, Ma Fengzhi did not treat Liu Jingting with the same respect as Zuo Liangyu and saw in him little more than an ordinary, albeit gifted, storyteller. This resulted in great dissatisfaction and frustration on Liu’s part.⁵ However, as it turned out later and is reflected in the poem, the professional distance between the two also had its good point, for in 1660, the court grew suspicious of Ma and ordered him to come to Beijing under a pretext. Here he was arrested, tried and executed the following year. Since Liu Jingting was only seen as an insignificant storyteller and not as Ma’s “political advisor” (a function he had when he was still with general Zuo), he was not treated as a co-conspirator and therefore not prosecuted.

Already Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), political reformist and editor of *Taohua shan*, deplored that much less material is available on Su Kunsheng than on Liu Jingting (Liang 1936, 20: 47). Nonetheless, there is enough detail to put Wu Weiye’s poem in context. Su Kunsheng hailed from Gushi 固始 in today’s Henan 河南 Province. Perhaps his name was merely his artist’s name, since it can be translated as “the *Kunqu* master from Suzhou” (*Su[zhou] Kun[qu] 昆曲 sheng*) – even though not a native of Suzhou, he was active in the area for most of his life. Su Kunsheng was a superior “southern tunes” (*nanqu* 南曲) singer who specialized in *qingchang* 清唱, i.e. singing selections from operas detached from the actual play and without stage make-up. We do not know when Su Kunsheng left his home town to go to Jiangnan and learn the art, but it was probably at a young age during the late Wanli 萬曆 (1572–1620) or early Tianqi 天啓 periods (1620–1627). During the Chongzhen 崇禎 years (1627–1644), he was already famous in Nanjing and was touring in and around Wuxi 無錫, Suzhou and Taicang. Wu Weiye devoted several texts to Su Kunsheng, among them four ‘Improvised Rhymes’ (*Kouzhan zeng Su Kunsheng* 口占贈蘇崑生).⁶

Like Liu Jingting, Su Kunsheng was not only an artist, but was also involved in political activities. As mentioned earlier, he became a guest-in-residence (*qingke* 清客) of General Zuo Liangyu in the

autumn of 1643. When Zuo died two years later, Su felt devastated, mourned the general bitterly, shaved his head, and became a monk at Jiuhua Shan 九華山, as we learn from the poem.⁷ Yet in 1652, he was apparently discontented with life in seclusion, left the mountain and went to the Huizhou 徽州 region in southernmost Anhui where he came to know a certain Wang Ruqian 汪汝謙 (Wang Ranming 汪然明, 1577–1655), a resident of Hangzhou and former Ming official and loyalist (*yimin* 遺民, “remnant officials”) with a fondness for *Kunqu*.⁸ Just a few years later, in 1655, this patron also died, and Su Kunsheng was on the road again. In Suzhou, he was able to participate in the annual Tiger Hill (Huqiu Shan 虎丘山) singers’ meeting (*quhui* 曲會) on Mid-Autumn, as mentioned by Wu Weiye in his preface. Not long after, Su went to Taicang, Wu Weiye’s home town, and lived there in a Buddhist temple. The ‘Narrative Poem on Two Masters from Chu’ was written during this time in late 1660 or early 1661.

Some years later, in about 1667, Su Kunsheng again roamed the country in search of a patron. Wu Weiye recommended him to the Ming loyalist Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611–1693) in the hope that the latter, owing to his name, position, financial means and penchant for the arts, might want to retain him. This however did not work out, and Su Kunsheng eventually ended up in Nanjing where he earned a living as a singer engaged for private festive occasions. In about 1674, the aged performer finally came to a Chan 禪 temple on Hui Shan 惠山 near Wuxi, where he lived for another five years and died in 1679.

Apart from Wu Weiye, there are at least 26 other authors from the period of transition who have written poems on Su Kunsheng (He 2004: 582), including such eminent literati as You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704), Wu Qi 吳綺 (1619–1694), Chen Weisong 陳維崧 (1625–1682), and Qin Songling 秦松齡 (1637–1714).

The Poem and its Preface

In *Taohua shan*, the two performers share a strong concern for national affairs, and act out of a sense of justice and in order to preserve their moral integrity. Even more so than Liu Jingting, Su Kunsheng is shown to have distinct feelings of loyalty towards Zuo Liangyu. While Liu Jingting is presented as a humorous and always optimistic character, Su Kunsheng behaves in a more serene and unaffected fashion. Accordingly, in the play, Liu is given a *chou* 丑 (clown) role, whereas Su Kunsheng is a *jing* 淨 (painted face) role. In his preface to the earlier poem, Wu Weiye also hints at this difference in character.

After a short explanation of the poem’s title and some biographical details of both performers, the preface focuses on Su Kunsheng, addressing his unsatisfactory life following the death of Zuo Liangyu and presenting a salient anecdote that serves to illustrate Su Kunsheng’s supreme expertise. In the concluding part, Wu Weiye mentions Liu Jingting again, expresses his anxiety over the storyteller’s current situation and relief at Liu’s lucky escape from the Ma Fengzhi affair. He then briefly describes how Su Kunsheng had approached him and requested a poem in order to be made known and remembered by posterity. In the last sentence of the preface, Wu Weiye makes it clear that his poem is also intended for Liu Jingting.

The following poem is clearly structured by changing rimes: verse lines 1 and 2 (*-eng*) concern both performers, while lines 3–6 (*-ao*) are devoted to Liu Jingting. Lines 7–19 (changing rimes: *-ang*, *-eng*, *-in*, *-ən*) form the poem’s core section and refer solely to Su Kunsheng. In lines 20 and 21 (*-ou*), Wu Weiye returns to Liu Jingting, and the concluding lines 22–24 (rime continued) are directed at both Su Kunsheng and Liu Jingting.⁹

The poetry of Wu Weiye and that of many of his contemporaries abounds with classical allusions and contemporary references, requiring extensive annotations. It shall be treated here as a historical source, where detail can be important. For this reason I have aimed for a translation that could be termed “semantic”, rather than “communicative” (Newmark 1988). The shortcomings of the translation should not mislead the reader over the literary qualities of the original poem.

楚兩生行並序

蔡州蘇崑生、維揚柳敬亭，其地皆楚分也，而又客於楚。左寧南駐武昌，柳以談、蘇以歌為幸舍重客。寧南沒於九江舟中，百萬眾皆奔潰。柳已先期東下。蘇生痛哭，削髮入九華山，久之出從武林汪然明；然明亡，之吳中。吳中以善歌名海內，然不過啾緩柔曼為新聲。蘇生則於陰陽抗墜，分判比度，如崑刀之切玉，叩之栗然，非時世所為工也。嘗遇虎邱廣場大集，生睨其旁，笑曰：「某郎以某字不合律。」有識之者曰：「彼儉楚乃竊言是非。」思有以挫之，問請一發聲，不覺屈服。顧少年耳[剽]日久，終不肯輕自貶下，就蘇生問所長。生亦落落難合，到海濱，寓吾里蕭寺風雪中。以余與柳生有雅故，為立小傳，援之以請曰：「吾浪跡三十年，為通侯所知。今失路憔悴，而來過此，惟願公一言，與柳生並傳足矣。」柳生近客於雲間帥，識其必敗，苦無以自脫，浮湛敖弄，在軍政一無所關，其禍也幸以免。蘇生將渡江，余作『楚兩生行』送之，以之寓柳生，俾知余與蘇生游，且為柳生危之也。

	黃鵠磯頭楚兩生	征南上客擅縱橫
	將軍已沒時世換	絕調空隨流水聲
	一生拄頰高談妙	君卿唇舌淳于笑
5	痛哭長因感舊恩	詼嘲尚足陪年少
	途窮重走伏波軍	短衣縛袴非吾好
	抵掌聊分幕府金	褰裳自把江村釣
	一生嚼徵與含商	笑殺江南古調亡
	洗出元音傾老輩	疊成妍唱待君王
10	一絲縈曳珠盤轉	半黍分明玉尺量
	最是大堤西去曲	累人腸斷杜當陽
	憶昔將軍正全盛	江樓高會誇名勝
	生來索酒便長歌	中天明月軍聲靜
	將軍聽罷據胡牀	撫髀百戰今衰病
15	一朝身死豎降旛	貔貅散盡無橫陣
	祁連高塚泣西風	射堂賓客嗟蓬鬢
	羈棲孤館伴斜曛	野哭天邊幾處聞
	草滿獨尋江令宅	花開閒弔杜秋墳
	鷓鴣弦屢換尊前舞	鼉鼓誰開江上軍
20	楚客祇憐歸未得	吳兒肯道不如君
	我念邗江頭白叟	滑稽倖免君知否
	失路徒貽妻子憂	脫身莫落諸侯手
	坎壈繇來為盛名	見君寥落思君友
	老去年來消息稀	寄爾新詩同一首
	隱語藏名代客嘲	姑蘇臺畔東風柳

Narrative Poem on Two Masters from Chu, with Preface¹⁰
(Preface)

The [native] places of Su Kunsheng, Caizhou,¹¹ and Liu Jingting, Weiyang,¹² both belonged to [the ancient kingdom of] Chu,¹³ and [both men] also lived as guests in Chu, away from home. When [general] Zuo Ningnan was stationed in Wuchang,¹⁴ [the two served him as] important guests-in-residence of high rank,¹⁵ Liu as a conversationalist and Su as a singer. When Ningnan perished on a boat near Jiujiang,¹⁶ his massive army completely collapsed and took flight.

Liu had already gone east on an earlier occasion.¹⁷ Master Su wept bitterly, shaved his head and entered [a Buddhist monastery on] Mount Jiuhua. After a long time, he left and followed Wang Ranming from Wulin.¹⁸ When Ranming died, he went to Wuzhong.¹⁹ Wuzhong was famous throughout the country for its excellent singing, but [the performances] were [too] placid and smooth [so that the songs sounded like] ditties. Master Su then introduced contrastive pitch changes in the melodies²⁰ and created a clear-cut tonal phrasing, like a Kunwu knife cutting through jade,²¹ [as well as] a robust rhythmic pattern. Such finesse other people of his time were not able to achieve.

Once he came across a large assembly on the open space near Tiger Hill (close by Suzhou).²² The Master, having listened covertly from the side, said laughingly: “You, young man, are out of tune on such and such a syllable.” A connoisseur remarked: “This dolt from Chu is secretly passing judgment,” thinking that he would humiliate him with this, but by intervening and just uttering one word, he had unwittingly brought about his own defeat. The young man, however, had acquired his skill over a long time by merely listening [to his fellow-performers] and was after all not willing to lower himself and humbly follow Master Su to ask for his strong points.

The Master was rather unsociable and hard to get along with. He went to the sea coast, where he resided in a Buddhist temple in my village (Taicang) during storms and snow.

He and I and Master Liu are old friends. I had written a biographical sketch of [Liu Jingting],²³ so [Su Kunsheng] asked me, referring to it: “I have roamed about for thirty years and was an acquaintance of the marquis (Zuo Liangyu). Now my ambitions have been thwarted and I have become haggard [from grief], but having come here, I only beg for one line from you, [so my name might be] passed on adequately [to future generations] together with that of Master Liu.”

Not long ago, Master Liu was a guest-in-residence with the commander-in-chief of Yunjian (Ma Fengzhi),²⁴ and when he learned that [the latter] was doomed, he was troubled [with thoughts] that he might not be able to extricate himself. [But as he had always] drifted with the tide and poked fun [at everyone and everything], he was not connected whatsoever with military and political affairs and was luckily able to avoid [Ma Fengzhi’s] fate.

When Master Su was about to cross the Yangzi, I composed [this] ‘Narrative Poem on Two Masters from Chu’ for him as a parting gift. I [also] sent it to Master Liu, so that he knew that I associated with Master Su, and furthermore as cautionary words for Master Liu.

(Poem)

Two Masters from Chu on Yellow Swan Rock (on the River Yangtze in Wuchang),²⁵
 High-ranking guests of [the General] Conquering the South, excellent advisors.²⁶
 The general has perished, times and generations have changed,
 Matchless tunes vainly follow the sound of the flowing waters.²⁷
 One master (Liu Jingting), supporting his cheek,²⁸ gives wonderful lectures,
 Eloquent like [Lou] Junqing,²⁹ and laughing like Chunyu [Kun].³⁰
 Cherishing past favours [from Zuo Liangyu], he has been crying his heart out for long,³¹
 While his humour and banter still suffice to accompany the young of age.
 5 Caught up in a hopeless situation, he sought refuge with the Fubo General (Ma Fengzhi),³²
 But military garb and puttees are not what he favoured,³³
 [Once more] he claps his hands [in animated performance],³⁴ having shared out the gold
 from the commander’s headquarters,³⁵ and
 Lifting his lower garment,³⁶ is [now again] holding a fishhook in a village on the Yangzi.³⁷
 The other master (Su Kunsheng), chewing *zhi* tones and sucking *shang* tones,³⁸
 Is overwhelmed with [despairing] laughter that the ancient southern tunes have died.
 Fashioning pure sounds, he commands the admiration of an older generation,

- He [used to] sing beautiful refrain songs to entertain his lord.
 [His tunes are like] silken threads, coiling and untangling, [like] pearls [falling on a] plate,³⁹
 [They are like] granules, [their length] as precise as if measured with a jade ruler.⁴⁰
- 10 His best is the Western Tune 'Dadi',
 Which makes people feel heartbroken about Du [Yu], [Marquis of] Dangyang.⁴¹
 He recalls the past, when the general (Zuo Liangyu) was just in full bloom and
 Gave a magnificent banquet in the [Yellow Crane] Tower on the River, singing the
 praise of that famous spot.
 The master [too] attended and, to the *ci* tune 'Suojiu',⁴² casually performed a long song.⁴³
 A bright moon up in the sky — and the army was perfectly still.⁴⁴
 The general, having listened, positioned himself in a foldable chair,⁴⁵
 Patted his thighs,⁴⁶ [thinking of the] hundreds of battles [he had fought] and how he was
 now [feeling] sick and feeble.
 One day, [after Zuo Liangyu] had died, flags of surrender were put up,⁴⁷
 His brave warriors were completely dispersed — no more was there a battle line.⁴⁸
- 15 At the burial mound, tall as the Qilian Mountains,⁴⁹ [Su Kunsheng] wept in the western
 wind,
 A [former] guest at the archery hall,⁵⁰ he moaned with dishevelled temple hair.
 [Now he is] a transient sojourner away from home, detained in a lonely mansion, a
 companion to the slanting rays of the setting sun,⁵¹
 Cries can be heard here and there in the countryside [from here to] the horizon.⁵²
 [Through] grass luxuriant, he found his way alone to the residence of Director Jiang.⁵³
 [When] the flowers were blooming, he mused unhurriedly over the grave of Du Qiu.⁵⁴
 [Once more, tunes played on] guitars⁵⁵ alternate again and again [during banquets] for
 dances in front of wine cups,
 [But] who will set a river-army in motion with alligator-skin drums?⁵⁶
 The guest from Chu only feels sorry that he cannot go back,
 [How would] the lad from Wu have been willing to say that he was unequal to you?⁵⁷
- 20 I miss the white-haired old man from the Han Canal (Yangzhou),⁵⁸
 Who, owing to his amusing performances, was able to escape by luck, you know?⁵⁹
 His ambitions unfulfilled, he has given his wife and children worries for nothing,
 You got away, [but] do not [again] fall into the hands of [other] feudal lords (regional
 commanders)!
 A great reputation has always meant to suffer adversity,⁶⁰
 I see you (Su Kunsheng) silent, thinking of your friend (Liu Jingting).
 Grown old, news become scarcer year by year,
 So I send you [two] the same new poem.
 May [your] names, hidden in a word puzzle, substitute for [other] guests' laughter:
 Willow (*liu*) in the eastern wind, on the side of Gusu Platform!⁶¹

Notes

¹See *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩, j. 232. Translation by Watson (2002: 160). The Prince of Qi, Li Longfan 李隆範, was a brother of emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (Li Longji 李隆基), Cui (Di) 崔滌 a court official. Both were well-known patrons of the arts.

²For the biography, see *Meicun jiacang gao* 梅村家藏稿, j. 52 (*Wenji* 文集 30: *Zhuan* 傳), vol. 3, pp. 904–907 [fol. 12a–15a]; for the eulogy, *Wu Meicun quanji* 吳梅村全集, j. 53 (*Wenji* 文集 31), ed. Li Xueying 李學穎. 3 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1990, vol. 3, p. 1078.

³Zuo Ningnan, i.e. Zuo Liangyu 左良玉, *zi* Kunshan 崑山 (1599–1645), was born in Linqing 臨清 in today's

Shandong 山東 Province. An important general during the last years of the Ming Dynasty and the short-lived Southern Ming period, Zuo Liangyu was ennobled as Count of Ningnan (Ningnan Bo 寧南伯) in 1644, owing to his success in suppressing peasant revolts, and one year later promoted to the rank of marquis (*hou* 侯). He is regularly addressed by this alias in source texts. See his biography in *Ming shi* 明史, j. 273.

⁴Ma Fengzhi 馬逢知, Liu Jingting's patron from about 1656 to 1660, was originally named Ma Jinbao 馬進寶 before the Manchu conquest. Born in Xi County (Xizhou 隰州; in modern-day Shanxi 山西 Province, comprising the territory of Xixian 隰縣, Puxian 蒲縣 and Daning 大寧), he served under the Ming as regional commander (*fujiang* 副將) of Anqing 安慶 (in today's Anhui 安徽 Province) and as vice-commissioner-in-chief (*dudu tongzhi* 都督同知). Ma and his troops surrendered to the Manchus in 1645. He was subsequently appointed regional commander (*zongbing* 總兵) and invested with several villages and considerable territory. In 1646, he followed the Qing army south and, after the prize of Jinhua 金華, was made regional commander of Jinhua in 1649 and placed in command of the naval and land forces in Taizhou 台州 and Wenzhou 溫州. He defeated the Ming fleet of Ruan Jin 阮進 and Zhang Mingzhen 張名振 and fought off the fleet of Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功), thus enabling the Qing army to occupy Fujian 福建 Province. In 1656, he was stationed in Songjiang to take up command as provincial commander. In the following year, Ma was ordered to change his personal name to Fengzhi ("he who received the ruler's appreciation"). His demise came in 1659, when Koxinga entered the mouth of the Yangtze with a naval force of more than 100,000 soldiers, destroyed Zhenjiang and besieged Nanjing, before he was eventually defeated. Since Ma Fengzhi had entertained contacts with Koxinga and sat by without intervening, he was suspected of plotting treason. He was lured to Beijing under a pretext, thrown into jail, and executed in 1660. See *Qing shi liezhuan* 清史列傳, j. 80, 'Ma Fengzhi zhuan'.

⁵See Yu Huaifeng 余懷 (1995): *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記, in Ye Dehui 叶德輝, Yang Fengbin 楊逢彬 and He Shou-zhong 何守中, eds.: *Shuangmei Ying'an congshu* 雙梅影闇叢書. Haikou: Hainan Guoji Xinwen Chubanshe 海南國際新聞出版社, p. 143: "He went back and forth between the troops and, when Zuo was defeated, further wandered into the midst of the troops under (Manchu) Provincial Military Commander Ma of Songjiang (in Jiangsu). There he felt mentally oppressed and dissatisfied; he was already more than eighty years old" (.....出入兵間。甯南已敗，又遊松江馬提督軍中，鬱鬱不得志，年已八十餘矣; trans. Levy 1966: 91).

⁶See Wu Meicun 吳梅村全集, j. 20 (*Shi houji* 12 詩後集十二), ed. Li Xueying 李學穎. 3 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1990, vol. 2, p. 513-4.

⁷Mount Jiuhua (Jiuhua Shan) is located in Anhui 安徽 Province, southwest of Qingyang 青陽. It was originally named Jiuzi Shan 九子山 for its nine peaks but was renamed Jiuhua Shan by the poet Li Bai 李白 (701–762). See his preface to 'Alternating lines about changing [the name of] Jiuzi Shan to Jiuhua Shan' [*Gai Jiuzi Shan wei Jiuhua Shan lianju* 改九子山為九華山聯句], composed with his friends Gao Ji 高齊 and Wei Quanyu 韋權輿; *Quan Tang shi*, j. 788. Jiuhua Shan is one of the four sacred mountains of Buddhism in China.

⁸Wang Ranming (1577–1655), *ming* Ruqian 汝謙, was a literary celebrity without an official post. He was from the Shezhou 歙州 area (present-day Shexian 歙縣 or Xiuning 休寧 in Anhui Province). An excellent calligrapher and skilled musician as well as a good poet and prose writer, Wang moved to Hangzhou during the early years of the Qing period and surrounded himself with other literati.

⁹Lines 1–2 (both performers): 生 *shēng/shrēng* • 橫 *héng/huāng* • 聲 *shēng/shiēng*; lines 3–6 (Liu Jingting): 妙 *mào/miào* • 笑 *xiào/xiào* • 少 *shào/shiào* • 好 *hào/hào* • 釣 *diào/diào*; lines 7–19 (Su Kunsheng) [changing rime]: 商 *shāng/shiāng* • 亡 *wáng/wáng* • 王 *wáng/wáng* • 量 *liáng/liáng* • 陽 *yáng/yáng* • 盛 *shèng/shèng* • 勝 *shèng/shèng* • 靜 *jìng/jìng* • 病 *bìng/bìng* • 陣 *zhèn/zhèn* • 鬢 *bìn/bìn* • 曛 *xūn/xūn* • 聞 *wén/wén* • 墳 *fén/fén* • 軍 *jūn/jūn* • 君 *jūn/jūn*; lines 20–21 (Liu Jingting): 叟 *sǒu/sǒu* • 否 *fǒu/fǒu* • 憂 *yōu/yōu* • 手 *shǒu/shǒu*; lines 22–24 (both performers) [rime continued]: 友 *yǒu/yǒu* • 首 *shǒu/shǒu* • 柳 *liǔ/liǔ*. Rime words given in standard Chinese pronunciation and in Middle Chinese in the reconstruction by Stimson (1976).

¹⁰The following editions have been consulted:

Li Xueying 李學穎, ed. (1990) *Wu Meicun quanji* 吳梅村全集, j. 10 (*Shi houji* 詩後集 2), Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, vol. 1, pp. 246-8.

Meicun jiacang gao 梅村家藏稿 (1975), j. 10 (Shi houji 詩後集 2: Qiyān gushi 七言古詩). Taipei: Taiwan Xue-sheng Shuju, vol. 1, pp. 215–6 [fol. 1ab].

Qian Zhonglian 钱仲联 (1984) *Mengtiao An zhuanzhu er zhong* 梦苕盦专著二种, section 'Wu Meicun shi bujian' 吴梅村诗补笺. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, pp. 218–9.

Wu Meicun shiji jianzhu 吴梅村诗集笺注 (1959), j. 5 (*Qiyān gushi* 七言古詩), Xianggang: Guangzhi Shuju, pp. 141–4.

Wu shi jilan 吴詩集覽, j. 5xia (*Qiyān gushi* 七言古詩 2b); *Xuxiu Sikū quanshu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1396, pp. 508–11 [fol. 8b–14a]; also in *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要, vol. 287: fol. 5a–8a.

Xu Qiu 徐軌: *Benshi shi* 本事詩, *houji* 後集, j. 8; *Xuxiu Sikū quanshu*, vol. 1699, pp. 322–3 [fol. 19a–21a]; also in Meng Qi 孟啓 et al., comps. (1991) *Benshi shi* 本事詩, *Xu Benshi shi* 續本事詩, *Benshi ci* 本事詞, ed. Li Xueying 李學穎, Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, p. 267.

Ye Junyuan 叶君远, ed. (2000) *Wu Meicun shixuan* 吴梅村诗选, Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, pp. 287–93.

¹¹Caizhou was a prefecture (*zhou* 州), which existed intermittently from 606 to 1293 during the Sui 隋 (581–618), Tang 唐 (618–907) and Song 宋 (960–1279) Dynasties and was located in the area of today's Runan County (汝南縣), Henan Province (河南省). During the Yuan 元 (1279–1368), Ming 明 (1368–1644) and Qing 清 (1644–1911) Dynasties, the area was administered as Runing Prefecture (汝寧府). Su Kunsheng was from Gushi 固始, which belonged to Runing Prefecture, but Wu uses the ancient place name here instead to refer to Su Kunsheng's native place.

¹²Weiyang, today a district of the City of Yangzhou, was originally a prefecture that existed briefly during the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasties and was later renamed Yangzhou Prefecture (揚州府). It continued to exist until 1912. Taizhou 泰州, Liu Jingting's actual birthplace, was under the jurisdiction of this prefecture.

¹³Literally, "were both [within] the dividing line of Chu". Both areas belonged to the territory of the ancient state of Chu during the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.E.).

¹⁴Wuchang is now one of 13 districts of Wuhan 武漢, the capital city of Hubei 湖北 Province. The municipal agglomeration of Wuhan was formed in 1926 by merging Wuchang with the two cities of Hankou 漢口 and Hanyang 漢陽, on the other side of the Yangtze River.

¹⁵"Guests-in-residence", "retainers", "hangers-on", "clients", or simply "guests" (named variously as *ke* 客, *binke* 賓客, *menke* 門客, *sheren* 舍人, *shike* 食客, *qingke* 清客, etc. in source texts) were clients and supporters of influential persons. They offered their patron advice and skills and were in turn given board and lodging. With the Zhou period as its heyday, the tradition continued well into the Ming and Qing Dynasties, when professional scholars were retained by wealthy families. During the Warring States period, "guests-in-residence" were divided into three classes (*shang* 上, *zhong* 中, *xia* 下) according to their rank and importance, as were the guesthouses (舍) in which they resided (*daishe* 代舍, *xingshe* 幸舍, *chuanshe* 傳舍). In *Shiji*, j. 75, 'Biography of Meng Changjun' (*Meng Changjun liezhuan* 孟嘗君列傳), the protagonist is a retainer who first resides in the *chuanshe*, is then allowed to live in the *xingshe* and subsequently in the *daishe* of his host. In later times, terms like *xingshe* were used indiscriminately to denote guesthouses of all kinds.

¹⁶Jiujiang was the name of a prefecture during the Ming, with its seat of government in today's Jiujiang City, Jiangxi 江西 Province. On 19 April 1645, Zuo Liangyu went downstream on a punitive expedition against Ma Shiyong 馬士英 (c. 1591–1646), then minister of war at the Southern Ming court, but died in early May from internal bleeding when he reached Jiujiang, leaving his vast army under the command of his son Zuo Menggeng 左夢庚. See *Ming shi*, j. 273, 'Zuo Liangyu, Gao Jie, Zu Kuan liezhuan' 左良玉, 高傑, 祖寬列傳.

¹⁷According to Wu Weiye's 'Biography of Liu Jingting' (*Liu Jingting zhuan* 柳敬亭傳), Zuo Liangyu, before he

went on the expedition against Ma Shiyong, had sent the storyteller as an envoy to Jin ling 金陵 (i.e. Nanjing 南京), where he talked to the influential adviser and friend of Ma Shiyong, Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼 (c. 1587–1646), in order to move Ruan and Ma to negotiate a peace agreement.

¹⁸Wulin is an old name for the city of Hangzhou. The name was derived from Mount Wulin (Wulin Shan), situated west of the city.

¹⁹Wuzhong 吳中 is now a district of Suzhou 蘇州 (Jiangsu 江蘇 Province), in the eastern part of the city. During the Chunqiu 春秋 period (722–481), it served as the capital of the state of Wu, in whose centre it was located – hence the name (“Middle of Wu”).

²⁰*Kang-zhui* 抗墜: *kang* refers to a style of fine-featured and limpid intonation, where *zhui* means singing in a voice that is low, even heavy.

²¹“Kunwu knives” (崑吾刀) were legendary knives made from steel and forged with the help of a “Kunwu stone” (崑吾石). According to *Hainei shizhou ji* 海內十洲記, entry ‘Fenglin Zhou’ 鳳麟洲, such knives were incomparably sharp and “cut jade as if they were cutting clay” (切玉如切泥). Here it is used as a metaphor for Su Kunsheng’s precise discrimination of tones.

²²Tiger Hill is located northwest of Suzhou.

²³See above, n. 2.

²⁴Yunjian was the ancient name of Songjiang 松江, now a suburban district of Shanghai 上海. In Qing times, it was the seat of the provincial military commander (*tidu* 提督) for the Suzhou, Songjiang, Changshu 常熟 and Zhenjiang 鎮江 circuit, hence the reference as “commander-in-chief of Yunjian”.

²⁵Huanghu Ji 黃鶴磯 (“Yellow Swan Jetty”) is a rock formation just outside the former city walls of Wuchang Prefecture that overlooks and projects into the Yangtze River. According to tradition, an immortal named Wang Zi’an 王子安 once passed by this spot on a yellow swan, hence the name. In 223, the Yellow Crane Pagoda (*Huanghe* Lou 黃鶴樓) was erected on top of the rock and destroyed and rebuilt several times during the course of history. See *Mingshi* 明史, j. 44, ‘Dili zhi’ 地理志 5. The pagoda was rebuilt from 1981 to 1985 in a reconstructed form on adjacent Snake Mountain (She Shan 蛇山), about one kilometre from the original site, which is now built over by the Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge.

²⁶“Great General Conquering the South” (Zhengnan Dajiangjun 征南大將軍) was the honorary title conferred upon the military general Yang Hu 羊祜 (221–278) during the Western Jin 晉 Dynasty (265–316). Here, the title is a clear reference to Zuo Liangyu, who had himself been ennobled with a similar sounding title as “Count”, later “Marquis of Ningnan” (Ningnan hou). Yang Hu was garrisoned in Xiangyang 襄陽, in present-day Hubei 湖北 Province, an area that during the last years of the Ming was also under the control of Zuo Liangyu. Yang Hu was a strong advocate of conquering the rival state of Eastern Wu 吳. See his biography (*Yang Hu zhuan* 羊祜傳) in *Jinshu* 晉書, j. 34.

²⁷That is, after the death of their benefactor, the two performers had nobody who appreciated their art and recognized their value as much as Zuo Liangyu. “Flowing waters” not only refers to the waters of the River Yangtze but is also part of a metaphor and classical reference for a close friend, “high mountains and flowing water” (高山流水), from *Liezi* 列子: “Bo Ya was a good lute-player, and Zhong Ziqi was a good listener. Bo Ya strummed his lute, with his mind on climbing high mountains; and Zhong Ziqi said: ‘Good! Lofty, like Mount Tai!’ When his mind was on flowing waters, Zhong Ziqi said: ‘Good! Boundless, like the Yellow River and the Yangtze!’ Whatever came into Bo Ya’s thoughts, Zhong Ziqi always grasped it” (伯牙善鼓琴，鍾子期善聽。伯牙鼓琴，志在登高山。鍾子期曰：「善哉！峨峨兮若泰山！」志在流水。鍾子期曰：「善哉！洋洋兮若江河！」伯牙所念，鍾子期必得之; *Liezi, Tangwen* 湯問 12; trans. Graham 1990: 109–10; transcription changed to Pinyin).

²⁸“Supporting one’s cheek” (*zhu jia* 拄頰): This is a reference to Liu Jingting’s unperturbed, pensive manner and abilities as a conversationalist, employing a reference to *Shishuo xinyu*: “While [commandant] Chen Kui was

living on the western bank of the Yangtze, all the people in the capital (Jiankang) wanted to go to Niuzhu (across the river) to meet him. Since Chen's reasoning was excellent, people wanted to converse and match wits with him. But Chen would prop up his cheek with his *ruyi* baton and gaze toward Chicken-cage Mountain (Jilong Shan, northwest of Jiankang), and remark with a sigh, 'Sun Ce's (d. 200) ambition and work are not being fulfilled!' And thus no one in the entire company would get to converse with him" (陳林道在岸西，都下諸人共要至牛渚會，陳理既佳，人欲共折。陳以如意拄頰，望雞籠山歎曰：「孫伯符志業不遂。」於是竟坐不得談； *Shishuo xinyu*, j. 13, 'Haoshuang' 豪爽, 11; trans. Mather 2017: 327; transcription changed to Pinyin).

Alternatively – albeit less convincing, since the person making the gesture of “supporting his cheek” is depicted here in a rather negative light as someone careless and negligent of his duties – this might be a reference to another anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu*: “While Wang Huizhi was serving as Huan Chong's aide, Huan said to him, 'You've been in my headquarters a long time now. It's time we got together and put your affairs in order.' / Wang at first made no answer, but merely looked high in the air and pressed his hand-board (*shouban*) against his cheek. Finally he said, 'Ever since morning the Western Hills certainly have had a lively air about them!'" (王子猷作桓車騎參軍。桓謂王曰：「卿在府久，比當相料理。」初不答，直高視，以手版拄頰云：「西山朝來，致有爽氣。」； *Shishuo xinyu*, j. 24, 'Jian'ao' 簡傲, 13; trans. Mather 2017: 428; transcription changed to Pinyin).

²⁹ Junqing 君卿 was the *zi* of Lou Hu 樓護 (fl. 27 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) from Qi 齊, a Former Han 漢 Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) physician, renowned for his eloquence and persuasive power: “In Chang'an there was a saying: 'Gu Ziyun [excels in] pen and official documents, Lou Junqing [eloquently uses his] lips and tongue'" (長安號曰：谷子雲筆削，樓君卿唇舌； *Hanshu* 漢書, j. 92, 'Biography of the knights-errant' [*Youxia liezhuan* 遊俠列傳]).

³⁰ Chunyu Kun 淳于髡, also from Qi, was a jester during the Warring States period with a strong talent for debate and teasing others. He would often admonish the ruler of Qi by using riddles and parables. See *Shiji*, j. 126, 'Biography of the jesters' (*Huaji liezhuan* 滑稽列傳).

³¹ According to Wu Weiye's 'Biography of Liu Jingting', Zuo Liangyu, when he first met the performer, expressed regret at not having known him earlier. He trusted Liu Jingting completely, and since he had himself not enjoyed a formal education, asked him to orally draft and dictate his official correspondence, whereas Liu Jingting had a great number of stock phrases at his command which he would normally use for his oral performances.

³² Fubo Jiangjun 伏波將軍, the “General who Calms the Waves”, was an extraordinary military title conferred upon the general and politician Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 B.C.E.–49 C.E.) during the Later Han period (25–220) for his military achievements in conquering the south. See *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, j. 14, 'Ma Yuan liezhuan' 馬援列傳. Not only did both generals operate in the south, Ma Yuan and Ma Fengzhi also share the same surname.

³³ That is, doing service as a rank-and-file soldier.

³⁴ Liu Jingting is here compared to Su Qin 蘇秦 (380–284 B.C.E.), an influential political strategist and one of the purported original authors of the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策: “[When Su Qin] had an audience with the King of Zhao for debate in [the latter's] magnificent house, he clapped his hands and talked” (見說趙王於華屋之下，抵掌而談； *Zhanguo ce*, 'Qin ce' 秦策 1).

³⁵ This is probably a reference to *Shiji*, j. 97, 'The Biographies of Li Sheng and Lu Jia' (*Li Sheng Lu Jia liezhuan* 酈生陸賈列傳), which describes how Lu Jia, “renowned as a skillful [sic] speaker and rhetorician and [...] one of [Han Emperor] Gaozu's trusted advisers” (名為有口辯士，居左右), was once presented by military commander Zhao Tuo 趙佗 “with a bag of precious objects worth a thousand pieces of gold and in addition gave him a thousand pieces of gold as a going away present” (賜陸生囊中裝直千金，他送亦千金； trans. Watson 1961, 1: 275, 277). Lu later “took the bag of precious objects which he had received when he was an envoy to [Yue], sold the contents for a thousand pieces of gold, and divided the money among his five sons, giving two hundred each, so that they could make a livelihood for themselves” (出所使越得囊中裝賣千金，分其子，子二百金，令為生產； *ibid.*, p. 278).

³⁶ That is, as in wading a stream, e.g. when fishing. The classical reference is to the poem 'Holding up the lower garments' (*Qianchang* 褰裳) from the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經): “If you, Sir, think kindly of me, / I will

hold up my lower garments, and cross the [Zhen]. / If you do not think of me, / Is there no other person <to do so>? / You, foolish, foolish fellow! // If you, Sir, think kindly of me, / I will hold up my lower garment, and cross the Wei. / If you do not think of me, / Is there no other gentleman <to do so>? / You, foolish, foolish fellow!" (子惠思我，褰裳涉澗。子不我思，豈無他人？狂童之狂也且！子惠思我，褰裳涉洧。子不我思，豈無他士？狂童之狂也且；*Shijing*, section *Guofeng* 國風: *Zhengfeng* 鄭風, 87; trans. Legge 1991: 140). Originally, this song is sung by a young woman to her lover on the other side of the stream in order to tease him. In Wu Weiye's poem, it also invokes the affection harboured by Liu Jingting for his former lord.

³⁷The fishhook is a reference to Liu Jingting's former life as a fisherman – a profession Liu Jingting has now allegedly reverted to.

³⁸*Zhi* and *shang* are two tones on the ancient pentatonic scale (*gong* 宮, *shang* 商, *jue* 角, *zhi* 徵, *yu* 羽). The quadrinomial phrase “sucking *shang* and chewing *zhi* [tones]” (*han shang ju zhi* 含商咀徵) – also an idiomatic expression (*chengyu* 成語) – can be found in several classical poems. It was originally coined by Bao Zhao 鮑照 (412?–466?) in the first of his six ‘Songs of White Linen’ (*Baizhu ge* 白紵歌): “[Dancers], sucking *shang* and chewing *zhi* [tones], sing [the Song of] Morning Dew / [While] pearl-[embroidered] shoes swirl and whistle and silk sleeves fly around” (含商咀徵歌露晞，珠履颯逴紉袖飛). As Su Kunsheng is metaphorically “ruminating” the tones of the scale, he is said to be in full control of melodic changes.

³⁹This is a description of the gentle rising and falling of Su Kunsheng's tunes and his exquisitely precise articulation. Cf. the line from Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) ‘Ballad of the *pipa*’ (*Pipa xing* 琵琶行): “The thick strings rattled like pouring rain, / The fine strings whispered like people in intimate conversation. / Rattling and whispering in alternation, / As if pearls large and small were falling on a jade plate” (大絃嘈嘈如急雨，小絃切切如私語。嘈嘈切切錯雜彈，大珠小珠落玉盤).

⁴⁰In Chinese antiquity, weight and length measurements were standardized by using grains of the broomcorn millet (*shu* 黍, *Panicum miliaceum*). The length of a medium-sized grain, about one-tenth of an inch, represented the basic unit (*fen* 分), and a hundred grains equalled one foot (*chi* 尺). When Wu Weiye here speaks hyperbolically of “half a millet corn” (半黍), translated as “granule”, he stresses Su Kunsheng's attention to minute detail.

The “jade ruler” (玉尺) was a tool used to determine the pitch of musical instruments. Again, this is a metaphor for Su Kunsheng's ability to strike the exact note. The classical reference is to an anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu*: “Xun Xu was skilled in the understanding of musical timbres and notes of the scale (*yinsheng*). Contemporary critics claimed that his was an ‘intuitive understanding’ (*anjie*). Accordingly, it was he who tuned the twelve pitch pipes (*lüliu*), and corrected the court music (in 274). Whenever there was a New Year's ceremonial in the palace halls where music was performed, he personally tuned the *gongs* and *shangs* of the instruments so that none were out of tune. / Now Ruan Xian had a superb appreciation of music, and his contemporaries claimed that his was a ‘divine understanding’ (*shenjie*). At each public gathering where music was performed, in his heart he felt it to be out of tune, but since he had never uttered a single word about it directly to Xu, the latter was mentally jealous of him, and had him sent out of the capital (Luoyang) to serve as grand warden of Shiping Commandery (Shaanxi). / Later on there was an old peasant plowing in his field who found a jade foot rule (*chi*) of the Zhou period (trad. 1122–256 B.C.), which then became the standard measure for the whole realm. When Xun tested it against the one he had used himself to determine the pitches of the bells, drums, metal and stone chimes, silk-stringed instruments, and bamboo pipes, he discovered that in all cases his was short by one grain of millet (*shu*), and thereafter he acknowledged the superiority of Ruan's ‘divine knowledge’” (荀勗善解音聲，時論謂之闇解。遂調律呂，正雅樂。每至正會，殿庭作樂，自調宮商，無不諧韻。阮咸妙賞，時謂神解。每公會作樂，而心謂之不調。既無一言直動，意忌之，遂出阮為始平太守。後有一田父耕於野，得周時玉尺，便是天下正尺。荀試以校己所治鐘鼓、金石、絲竹，皆覺短一黍，於是伏阮神識；*Shishuo xinyu*, j. 20, ‘Shujie’ 術解, 1; trans. Mather 2017: 383; transcription changed to Pinyin).

⁴¹*Dadi xiqu qu* 大堤西去曲, or simply “Dadi qu” 大堤曲 (Great Dyke tune), was the name of a Music Bureau (*yuefu* 樂府) song pattern which belonged to the western music of Xiangyang (襄陽樂), in today's Hubei Province. The dyke, after which it was named, was itself also located in Xiangyang District, an area controlled and governed by Zuo Liangyu. Xiangyang was also the military seat of the “General Conquering the South”, Yang Hu, with whom Zuo Liangyu is identified earlier in this poem.

Du Yu 杜預 (222–285) was a famous general of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo 三國, 220–265) and Western Jin periods who was very successful in fighting the state of Eastern Wu (with its capital in Jianye 建業, present-day Nanjing) and – like Yang Hu, who had recommended him – was stationed in Xiangyang. Later, he destroyed Wu and was ennobled as Marquis of Dangyang (當陽侯). Du Yu also governed Anlu Prefecture (安陸府) which was in the western part of today's Hubei Province. Therefore, the tune “Dadi” and the figure of Du Yu both evoke Zuo Liangyu, who was stationed in Wuchang, also in Hubei, and had likewise ambitions to subdue a foe who reigned from far-away Jianye (i.e. Jinling, i.e. Nanjing).

⁴²Literally, “demanding wine”. This is the name of a song lyric (*ci* 詞) pattern of 104 characters, riming to oblique (仄仄) tones.

⁴³*Benshi shi* has *yi* 倚 not *pian* 便. *Yige* 倚歌 is a “song” that is centred (“leaning”) on an object, hence a song that is accompanied by a musical instrument. It can also mean an ancient tune that was accompanied only by drums and flutes but not by strings.

⁴⁴Here, Wu Weiye praises Zuo Liangyu's strict control over his troops. The line is a reference to yet another line in the second poem from Du Fu's 'Going out of the Passes: Second Series' (*Hou chu sai* 後出塞): “Up in the sky a bright moon hanging, the order is strict that the night has to be still and quiet” (中天懸明月，令嚴夜寂寥).

⁴⁵Another equation of Zuo Liangyu with a hero from history who figures prominently in *Shishuo xinyu*: “While Yu Liang was governor of Jing Province, stationed in Wuchang (between 334 and 340), one autumn evening when the air was fresh and the view clear, some assistants and clerks on Yu's staff, Yin Hao, Wang Huzhi, and others, climbed the Southern Tower (Nanlou) for a poetry session. Their songs and melodies were just getting into full swing when they heard within the enclosed passage the sound of clogs making a great clatter. It turned out to be none other than Yu Liang himself, who on the spur of the moment had brought along ten or more of his associates for a walk. The earlier occupants were on the point of getting up and making way for him, but Yu said affably, ‘Gentlemen, stay awhile. The old chap's pleasure in this spot is by no means slight.’ So saying, he sat down on a folding chair (*huzhuang*) and chanted poems and joked with the company. He remained seated throughout, enjoying himself hugely” (庾太尉在武昌，秋夜氣佳景清，使吏殷浩、王胡之之徒登南樓理詠。音調始適，聞函道中有屐聲甚厲，定是庾公。俄而率左右十許人步來，諸賢欲起避之。公徐云：「諸君少住，老子於此處興復不淺！」因便據胡床，與諸人詠讌，竟坐甚得任樂，*Shishuo xinyu*, j. 14, ‘Rongzhi’ 容止, 24; trans. Mather 2017: 336; transcription changed to Pinyin).

⁴⁶A reference to a commentary on the *Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志): “Liu Bei 輪劉備 (161–223, founder of the state of Shu Han 蜀漢) lived in Jing Province (with his relative, warlord Liu Biao 劉表, 142–208) for several years. He was once sitting with Liu Biao and rose to go to the toilet. He noticed that the flesh of his thighs had grown and sobbed unrestrainedly. When he returned to his seat, Liu Biao was surprised and asked him [for the reason]. Liu Bei answered: ‘I used not to leave the saddle, so the flesh of my thighs had all but vanished. Now I am no longer riding, and the flesh of my thighs is growing again. Life is galloping by and old age is about to set in, but [so far] I have achieved nothing, and therefore I am feeling sad’” (備住荊州數年，嘗於表坐起至廁，見髀裏肉生，慨然流涕。還坐，表怪問備，備曰：「吾常身不離鞍，髀肉皆消。今不復騎，髀裏肉生。日月若馳，老將至矣，而功業不建，是以悲耳」); *Sanguo zhi: Shu zhi* 蜀志, j. 2, ‘Biography of the First Sovereign’ [*Xianzhu zhuàn* 先主傳], 10, commentary by Pei Songzhi 裴松之, 372–451, citing the lost *Juchou chunqiu* 九州春秋 by Sima Biao 司馬彪, 238/246–306). This anecdote has been turned into a *chengyu*, “Being surprised that flesh is growing on one's thigh” (*jing rou sheng bi* 驚肉生髀).

In his ‘Biography of Liu Jingting’, Wu Weiye likewise mentions that Zuo Liangyu felt dispirited in his last years, during the time when Liu Jingting acted as his advisor: “[Zuo Liangyu] took out two portraits of himself: one was entitled ‘Painting of Crushing the Bandits (peasant insurgents) in Guanlong’. Zuo looked at his reflection in a mirror and sighed: ‘I was once a valiant fighter in the empire, and now I have become decrepit.’ He pointed to the second painting and said: ‘Having crushed the bandits, I shall go into the mountains as a recluse. This painting is where my will is recorded’ (出所畫己像二，其一『關隴破賊圖』也。覽鏡自照，歎曰：「良玉天下健兒也，而今衰。」指其次曰：「吾破賊後將入山，此圖所以志也」).

⁴⁷After Zuo Liangyu died, his son Zuo Menggeng surrendered to the Manchus. The classical reference here is to a line from Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) poem on 'The Sacred Virtue of the Yuanhe Emperor' (*Yuanhe shengde shi* 元和盛德詩): "Flags of surrender were set up at night" (降幡夜豎). See also the line from the first of Wu Weiye's four 'Improvised Rhymes, for Su Kunsheng' (*Kouzhan zeng Su Kunsheng* 口占贈蘇崑生): "Flags of surrender everywhere, leaving Jiujiang" (一片降旗出九江; *Wu Meicun quanji*, j. 20 [*Shi houji* 12], vol. 2, pp. 513–4).

⁴⁸*Pixiu* 貔貅 was the name of a fabulous beast of prey, used metaphorically for warriors.

⁴⁹When the Western Han grand general Huo Qubing 霍去病 died, he was greatly mourned by emperor Wudi 武帝 (r. 187–140 B.C.): "Huo Qubing died in the sixth year of *yuanshou* [117 B.C.], three years after taking part in the campaign described above. The emperor was deeply grieved and ordered soldiers from the tribes of Xiongnu who had submitted to Han rule to be called to the capital and ranged along the road from Chang'an to Mouling bearing iron weapons. At Mouling (in present-day Gansu 甘肅 Province, southwest of Zhangye 張掖; R.B.) he had a grave mound constructed in the shape of the Qilian Mountains" (驃騎將軍自四年軍後三年，元狩六年而卒。天子悼之，發屬國玄甲軍，陳自長安至茂陵，為冢象祁連山; *Shiji*, j. 111, *liezhuan* 51: 'Biographies of General Wei Qing and the Swift Cavalry General Huo Qubing' [*Wei jiangjun, Piaoqi liezhuan* 衛將軍驃騎列傳]; trans. Watson 1961, 2: 210; transcription changed to Pinyin). The account has been incorporated almost verbatim into the 'Biography of Huo Qubing' (*Huo Qubing zhuan* 霍去病傳) in *Han shu* 漢書, j. 55.

⁵⁰The expression "archery hall", as a place for archery contests and military competitions, refers broadly to a military camp. Hence a "guest at the archery hall" is guest of a commanding officer.

⁵¹This appears to be a reference to Su Kunsheng's attachment to Wang Ranming, mentioned in the preface.

⁵²Cf. the line from Du Fu 杜甫, 'Night at West House' (*Ge ye* 閣夜): "In the countryside weeping rises from a thousand homes who have learned of the fighting, whilst here and there outlandish songs can be heard, sung by some fisherman or woodcutter about his work" (野哭千家聞戰伐，夷歌幾處起漁樵; trans. Hawkes 1967: 184).

⁵³"Director Jiang" (Jiang ling 江令) was the literatus Jiang Zong 江總 (519–594), who served as an official during the Liang 梁 (502–557), Chen 陳 (557–589) and Sui 隋 (581–618) Dynasties. He became director of the Department of State Affairs (*shangshuling* 尚書令) under the last Chen emperor in the 580s, and was thence commonly referred to as "Director Jiang". See *Chen shu* 陳書, j. 27, 'Biography of Jiang Zong' (*Jiang Zong zhuan* 江總傳). According to *Da Ming yitong zhi* 大明一統志, j. 6, the ruins of Jiang Zong's residence were located in the north-east of Shangyuan District in Jiangning Prefecture (江總宅在江寧府上元縣東北), i.e. in the north-eastern part of present-day Nanjing.

⁵⁴Lady Du Qiu (Du Qiu niang 杜秋娘; d. 825?) is the only female poet included in the famous anthology *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (*Tang shi sanbai shou* 唐詩三百首, comp. Sun Zhu 孫洙, 1764). Born in Jinling (Nanjing) and a celebrated beauty, she became a concubine of the military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) of Zhenhai 鎮海 (today a district of Ningbo 寧波, Zhejiang 浙江 Province), Li Qi 李錡, at the age of fifteen. When Li Qi turned against the Tang and was killed in a rebellion around the year 807, Du was "confiscated" and taken into the imperial palace, where she became a favourite of Emperor Xianzong 憲宗. When his successor Muzong 穆宗 acceded to the throne, she became the governess of the crown prince. The prince later received punishment and was expelled from nobility, and Du Qiu was finally able to regain her freedom and return to Jinling. In her last years, old and destitute, she was visited by the poet Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852), who wrote a *shi* poem about their encounter (*Du Qiu niang shi* 杜秋娘詩). Both the residence and her tomb later became famous sights in Nanjing.

The point made here by Wu Weiye appears to be that after the death of Wang Ranming, Su Kunsheng roamed the country again and eventually returned to Nanjing, where he was able to visit places of his memory, which enabled him to reflect upon the past and the transience of things.

The same mood was later also captured by Kong Shangren in the epilogue (Scene 40 extra) to his *Kunqu* opera *Taohua shan*, where the Su Kunsheng character sings an aria entitled 'Lament for the South' (*Ai Jiangnan* 哀江南). It is rightly famous and has also been included in the PRC's language and literature course book, approved by the Ministry of Education for use in high schools. In his aria, the singer describes how he went back to Nan-

jing to sell his firewood after three years in hiding: all the past glories have disappeared or have been deserted or destroyed: the mausoleum of the first Ming emperor (Xiaoling 孝陵), the old imperial palace, the Qinhuai 秦淮 entertainment quarters, Long Bridge (Hongban Changqiao 紅板長橋), and the courtesans' Old Compound (Jiuyuan 舊院).

⁵⁵Literally, "strings [made from the sinews of the] Kun[ji] 鶻雞", a yellow and white crane-like legendary bird. See Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803–863), *Youyang zazhu* 酉陽雜俎, j. 6, section 'Yue' 樂: "The strings of old guitars (*pipa*) were made of Kunji tendons" (古琵琶絃用鶻雞筋). Therefore, *kunxian* 鶻弦 refers to Chinese guitars or to zithers (*qin* 琴).

⁵⁶*Tuo* 鼉, also known in modern vernacular Chinese as *Yangzi e* 揚子鱷, is the Chinese alligator (*Alligator sinensis*). Now critically endangered and confined to the lower reaches of the Yangtze and some of its tributary rivers, it used to be endemic in much of China, its habitat extending as far as Korea. Its skin is strong and durable and can be used for drumheads. Such drums had been in use in China since the Neolithic, for ceremonial purposes as well as in warfare.

⁵⁷This is a reference to the anecdote of Su Kunsheng interfering at a musical performance at Tiger Hill near Suzhou, mentioned in the preface.

⁵⁸The Hanjiang 邗江 (Han River), also known as Han'gou 邗溝 (Han Ditch), was an ancient canal, dug out in 486 B.C.E. in the southern part of today's Yangzhou. It was one of several important canals constructed during the Chunqiu period under king Fuchai 夫差 of Wu 吳 (r. 495–473 B.C.E.) in order to connect the Yellow (Huanghe 黃河), Ji (Jishui 濟水), and Huai (Huaihe 淮河) River systems of the North China Plain with central China's Yangtze River.

⁵⁹Liu Jingting had not been involved in the Ma Fengzhi affair and was not executed like his former employer (see the poem's preface).

⁶⁰This is a reference to Du Fu's poem 'A Song of Painting: To General Cao Ba' (*Danqing yin: Zeng Cao jiangjun Ba* 丹青引·贈曹將軍霸): "However, if one but examines those who have been famous from ancient times to the present, one finds that they were constantly enmeshed in hardships and difficulties" (但看古來盛名下·終日坎壈纏其身; trans. Hawkes 1967: 144).

⁶¹This is a word play on the two performers' family names. Gusu Platform (Gusu Tai 姑蘇臺; also called Xu Tai 胥臺) was erected during the Chunqiu period by the King of Wu 吳, Helü 闔閭 (r. 514-496 B.C.E.) or by his son Fuchai 夫差 (r. 495-473 B.C.E.). The site is on top of Gusu Hill southwest of Suzhou.

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NARRATIVE FORMATION IN ORAL TRADITIONS:

The Song-cycles of Lake Tai

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The lower Yangzi delta region of China has a rich repertoire of storysinging performance. Professional storysinging genres have received considerable scholarly attention but the equally rich tradition of storysinging amongst the common people has been little explored. This study investigates issues of narrative formation in the folk storysinging of the Lake Tai region, with a focus on one popular song-cycle, the story of Wu guniang (Fifth Daughter), whose love affair ended in tragedy. The story can be performed in two types of narrative songs; one quite short and the other much longer. The shorter version offers a highly condensed version of the tale within a poetic matrix of the twelve months of the year. The longer version of over two thousand lines is sung in traditional shange (folk song) format. A comparison between the two types shows the development of a more elaborate narrative framework in the longer form. As discussed here, the latter song type relies on the adaptation of formulaic material common to shange in general, the addition of more characters to the story, the inclusion of variable plot elements, and the considerable enhancement of the dramatic voice of the singer, who enacts different roles as the story advances. However, the narrative drive is strongest at the level of an individual song session and the singer does not seek to provide the audience with a 'complete' or 'finished' rendition of the tale. While the story remains never ending, it is the singer's command of lyrical intensity that delights and moves the listeners.

What does it mean to tell a story in song? How does the story differ when the same songcycle is recorded in writing and reshaped as a work of folk literature? In this contribution to the CHIME Symposium: "Storysinging and storytelling in China", I will investigate narrative formation in the case of a Chinese story related in song.¹ The following questions are of particular interest. What happens to the sense of narrative when an elaborate story-cycle, with many twists and turns, is told entirely in episodic songs in no particular narrative order? Further, what happens when a folklore scholar, trying to preserve a dying art in textual form, attempts to convert these disparate songs into a readable narrative? My focus here is the narrative folk songs (*shange* 山歌) 'discovered' by folklorists in the region of Lake Tai, Jiangsu province, in recent decades.² Before the socialist era (1949), *shange* were sung by mainly illiterate peasants throughout the Yangzi delta in the local language. Literate aficionados and urban publishers adapted *shange* material to form different sorts of manuscript and printed texts.³ Commonly viewed as "immoral" or "subversive" in the late imperial period, and as "feudal" and "backward" in the early socialist period, the *shange* have only gained public visibility in the post-Mao era, when aspects of traditional culture were made the target of serious scholarly investigation by Chinese scholars.⁴

The mid 1980s saw the collection, compilation and publication of numerous examples of traditional *shange* from all over China, together with a multiplicity of other folk forms. This new situation opens

up a range of possibilities for the Chinese and Western scholar. Chinese vernacular literature of the later imperial period is regarded as being greatly indebted to operatic, storytelling and ritual traditions, but the nature of that interaction remains highly speculative. With the publication of scholarly transcripts of folk material elicited from villagers in the 1980s, it is now possible to investigate in much greater detail than before the ongoing interaction between oral and written traditions. In particular, it is now possible to gain a finer appreciation of the process of editing and rewriting that inevitably takes place as one moves from the oral to the written. Study of the original 'text' of an oral tale (at least to the extent that it is accurately recorded in the transcript) also allows one a glimpse into the world of the mostly illiterate rural classes in the pre-contemporary period. In brief, thanks to the strenuous efforts of ethnographers and musicologists in recent decades, we can now understand better what type of story or narrative form held the attention of farming folk as they toiled in the fields, travelled along the water ways of the delta, or rested from the summer's heat.

The stories themselves are well worth examining and translating for their aesthetic quality, both musical and literary. The majority of the song-cycles deal with love affairs considered illicit in the context of late imperial and Republican China. In these stories of secret passion (*siqing* 私情), the love match is deemed to be unsuitable by family elders. Typically the young lovers commence an affair but are not able to get married. Scandal envelops them and the tale ends in tragedy. The protagonists are believed to be real people who came from actual places around the Lake Tai region.

The *shange* discussed here were sung in the pre-contemporary period in water towns, like Luxu, along the shores of Lake Tai and its tributary river and lake systems. The small townships of the Lake Tai region are reminiscent of Venice, with homes tightly hugging the water channels, bridges arching over canals, and boats plying the lakes and rivers. The singers themselves know their songs simply as 'mountain songs' (*shange*), a general term for folk songs found throughout China. However, the longer type of *shange* found in this region are termed by scholars, "long narrative songs sung in Wu language" (吴语长篇叙事歌).⁵ Generally speaking, Chinese *shange* are short lyric forms that are not necessarily narrative in nature. The long *shange* form of the Lake Tai region is a rare example of a narrative folk-song genre amongst populations regarded as belonging to the majority Han ethnicity. For this reason the emergence of the longer form of *shange* in the 1980s was controversial and called for special investigation.⁶ Zheng Tuyou, who interviewed performers of the longer form of *shange*, has put forward a persuasive argument that there were special reasons for the development of long narrative *shange* in particular regions of the Yangzi delta during the late imperial and Republican period (that is, the mid nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries). These included the importance of informal storsinging during long boat journeys, the esteem in which storsingers were held, the prevalence of storsinger masters who could train the next generation, the prevalence of *shange* troupes employed by landlords to entertain farm hands in their labours, and the popularity of singing competitions that tended to favor longer song renditions (Zheng 2005).

In the Yangzi River delta of the twenty-first century it is hard to find *shange* in living transmission. This region, formerly known as Jiangnan, became the richest part of China over the past millennium, as it developed into a major commercial center for sericulture and cotton. Today the region retains its status as one of the richest in China. However, the water-land ecology of the past is fundamentally gone. People in the prosperous provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang do not go down to the paddy fields to sing *shange* as they plant rice seedlings. The only boat singers today are likely to be serving tourists in the refurbished 'water towns' such as Xitang. Those who toil in the fields in the present day are most likely non-Wu speaking outsiders (*waidi ren* 外地人) from the impoverished hinterland.⁷ Meanwhile, the inner provincials are busy working for metallurgy, engineering, chemical and other global corporations, running their own private businesses, or engaging in higher education. One can encounter a few individuals who have been formally designated as the 'transmitters' of Wu songs and who are in receipt of support from the state or local culture bureau. I have been fortunate to interview some 'transmitters', either in their homes or in formal settings such as the Luxu Cultural Centre. Con-

temporary ‘transmitters’ can only sing short *shange*, not the longer narrative form. Occasionally one can find multi-media clips of songs sung by ‘transmitters’ wearing costumes in staged settings (one such example is discussed below). However, the long narrative songs native to this region can only be known today in textual form as recorded, arranged and published in the 1980s and 1990s by Chinese folklorists. In this study of a long narrative form I will be relying on song transcripts produced in the 1980s. For this reason, it is necessary to first address issues of textualization in order to assess the potential value of these scripts to our understanding of the pre-contemporary story-singing tradition.



Luxu, typical water town of the lower Yangtze delta. May 2011. (Photo by A. McLaren)

The Textualisation of Lake Tai *shange* narratives

The scholar with an interest in investigating the Wu language long story-cycles is confronted with four distinctly different groups of transcripts and rewritings. I will discuss each one in turn below.

1. Unprocessed Transcripts (*ziliao* 资料). These comprise songs recorded using audio tapes from villagers who could recall songs learnt in childhood, that is, songs in circulation before the advent of the Cultural Revolution (1966), when singing *shange* was a punishable offence.

These songs by individual singers are recorded in manuscript or mimeographed (*youyin* 油印) formats but otherwise unpublished. I have viewed one example of unprocessed transcripts, specifically, the story discussed here as “Wu guniang” (五姑娘) or “Fifth Daughter”. It was printed as a mimeographed text in 2 volumes.⁸ The transcripts of “Wu guniang” provide dates, names of singers, the names of folklorists and locations for each song item collected. Within the mimeographed text, these song sessions (or indeed, separate songs) are arranged roughly in perceived narrative order as determined by the compiler (folklorist) but are claimed to be complete, without editing and to be an accurate transcription of the song as sung by the singer. Particular efforts were made to transcribe local Wu language expressions using non-orthodox Chinese characters in regional usage. Explanations and glossaries are supplied with the transcription. The compilers do not aim to standardize the vernacular used in the song but rather to use Chinese script to record it.

2 ‘Strung together texts’ (*chuanben* 串本), that is, song segments as sung by the singer(s). These

comprise a selection of song segments which are placed in (perceived) narrative sequence by the compilers, with no revision or added material to link the individual song segments. However, on closer examination, one may well find that some songs in the unprocessed transcripts are excluded (at least this is the case with “Wu guniang”). The choice and ordering of these song segments implies a particular narrative perspective on the part of the compilers, who have to decide what to include, what to exclude and how to order the narrative in a way that makes sense to them. Examples of this sort of song-cycle in *chuanben* form can be found in the lengthy compilation of Gao & Jin (2003).

3. ‘Readable’ texts. These are reworked published texts edited by local folklorists who aim to produce a readable text acceptable to a national readership. Most published texts of Wu language song-cycles belong to this category. The outstanding example is the collection by leading editor, Jiang Bin, of ten long narratives published with illustrations, introductions and annotations (Jiang 1989).

4. Texts authored by “the creative scribe” (in the words of Lauri Honko 2000:8, referring mainly to epic traditions). These are texts elicited, arranged and revised by a literate individual who can sing and compose *ad lib* in that genre, in other words, the author is also a singer and composer. The main example from the Lake Tai region is Zhu Hairong 朱海容 of Wuxi, Dongting region, who took on the role of “creative scribe” for his fellow villagers. The longest narrative *shange* known today have been produced by Zhu.⁹ Honko defines the “creative scribe” as an individual who has “internalized” the oral tradition to the extent that he or she can extemporize in that tradition (Honko 2007:7). The “creative scribe” is by definition literate and thus able to record their own composition in writing. Talented “creative scribes” produce works that combine oral and written registers to arrive at an aesthetically satisfying composition. The classic example is Elias Lönnroth, author of the heralded Finnish epic, “Kalevala”, who possessed “a narrative competence comparable to the oral singers” (Honko 2000:8).

In this study I will draw on unprocessed transcripts (category 1), because this text best represents the actual performance of an individual singer.¹⁰ However, first I will turn to a video version of the short Wu guniang song as performed by Luxu singer, Zhang Juemin 张觉民 in 2013 and included in a DVD made at that time by a Wujiang folk music association. The shorter version presents the kernel of the narrative that one finds elaborated in longer versions. It also illustrates how narrative works in condensed storytelling modes.

The Short version of “Wu guniang” (小五姑娘).

In the short Wu guniang the first line of each stanza presents the number of the month together with the particular flower associated with that time of the year. The flower-name poetic matrix (*huaming shange* 花名山歌) is a traditional form passed down over the centuries.¹¹ Folklorists working in the delta in the early twentieth century came across a parallel story in a song booklet. This version also relied on a twelve month poetic matrix to relate a story about the daughter of a landowning household falling in love with a hired hand.¹² In local legend, the creation of the short Wu guniang song is attributed to the tailor who made the funeral shroud for Fifth Daughter and then told her story as he made his rounds (Wang 2003:183). While this cannot be confirmed, it would have been an easy matter for an accomplished singer to convert the traditional twelve month format into the story of a love scandal about a known individual.

The twelve month patterning allows the singer to tell a ‘complete’ if skeletal story in a highly succinct format. The constant iteration of each successive month of the year in the first line, together with the associated flower, reminds the listener of time passing in not just the annual round but also in a human life span, which begins in the spring of youth and ends in the winter of death. In this way, the twelve month matrix reinforces the narrative drive of the song, propelling it inexorably towards the destined end. Due no doubt to its highly condensed form, the transmission of the “Short Wuguniang” over the generations has tended to be conservative; extant examples reveal a relative lack of diver-

gence.¹³ As in the majority of *shange* about love affairs, the tale begins on a joyful note but builds gradually to a disastrous climax. The first stanza of Zhang Juemin's rendition is presented below:

正月梅花开来一头尖，姚家埭东浜出个相貌堂堂的徐阿天，
徐阿天屋里穷来无饭吃，要到方家浜的杨金大里去做长年。

做长年来话长年，算算工钱勿连牵，
五姑娘夹着眼睛，移出一碗茶来给徐阿天哥哥吃，缺少的铜钿由我们来添。

In the first month the plum flowers begin to bud, from the Yao home on the east bank came a handsome young man called Xu Atian,

Xu Atian came from a family with no food to eat, he came to the home of Yang Jinda on Fangjiabang to work as a hired hand.

"Talking about working as a hired hand, you're not offering me much money!"

Fifth Daughter made eyes at him, and brought out a bowl of tea for him to drink, "If any money is lacking I will make it up".¹⁴

This stanza reflects the characteristic features of *shange* songs in general. The basic song unit is the four line stanza. The standard line is of seven syllables, but padding and extra syllables can be freely added. The singer employs local Wu idiom.¹⁵ In the stanza above, the narrative style slides imperceptibly from third person narrative (the first two lines) to dramatic voice as first Xu Atian and then Fifth Daughter give voice to their thoughts. The listener familiar with this story understands that Atian has come expressly to seek work from Yang Jinda in order to meet up with the comely girl he met on his journey. The stingy Yang offers him a paltry payment. Yang's younger sister, Fifth Daughter, takes a liking to the handsome hired hand and tries to entice him to stay.

The second stanza introduces the female protagonist, as a pretty eighteen year old girl, not yet betrothed.

The third stanza deals with the beginning of the love affair, which takes place under cover of public festivities:

In the third month the peach trees are covered with red,

At the Zhuang family polder people are bustling around hither and thither,

From the east and west banks come men and women, young and old, wearing red and green, parading green and red, all coming to look,

While Wu guniang and Xu Atian pretend to be ill and remain inside.

The fourth to sixth stanzas relate their budding love affair. They engage in secret rendezvous in the rice paddy, Wu guniang favors Atian with food delicacies, and they dally together in the summer's heat. In the seventh stanza, word has got out about the amorous pair: "Men and women were gossiping all the time/ 'Men and women mucking around together, what sort of carry on is this!'" By the eighth month the pair of lovers confess the futility of their affair: "Other people can get married and live together until old/ But we had a secret affair and will not long enjoy good fortune!" In the ninth month, as the oranges mature, Xu Atian decides to grab his belongings and flee. The next month tragedy overtakes Fifth Daughter:

In the tenth month, as the hibiscus buds at the time of 'little spring', Yang Jinda gathered up a knife and a skein of rope,

'If you die by the knife then your blood will gush forth; if you die by the rope then your hair will stand on end'.

*Wu guniang, her hair all disheveled, bare feet dangling down,
Hung herself from the rafters with a skein of rope.*

In the eleventh month, as the plum and narcissus bloom, the relatives gather for her funeral, but Atian fails to arrive. In the twelfth month, as the yellow winter sweet flowers bud, Yang Jinda sets off by boat to buy a fine coffin and colorful shroud. This should complete the annual round. However, if the story is not considered at an end then the singer can always add extra stanzas. In his rendition, Zhang Juemin adds in a thirteenth month, when, he tells us, “not a single flower bloomed”. In this stanza, Xu Atian comes back in disguise as a peddler and circles around the Yang family, looking for an opportunity to steal the spirit tablet of his beloved but dares not cross the threshold. He returns home with nothing to put on his altar, sobbing for his ‘little sister’. This concludes the song.



Zheng Juemin making an improvised song of welcome, restaurant in Luxu, May 2011.

The melodic form and body language of the singer reinforce the emotional intensity of this tragic tale. When performed solo, the singer adopts a mode known as *diluo sheng* 滴落声 (the sound of running water). The first line of each stanza is sung in high falsetto and contains the typical ‘wu-a-hei-hei’ of songs from the Wujiang region.¹⁶ Subsequent lines of the stanza are lower in pitch and more doleful in tenor.

According to Jin Tianlin, in *diluo sheng* the singer imitates the sound of a burst of rain from the sky which once it reaches the eaves turns into a slow and steady drip. This is the preferred song mode employed when weeding the rice paddy.¹⁷ The performance of Zhang Juemin discussed above belongs to this type.¹⁸ The singer takes on the voice and mannerisms of each character. For example, in the DVD video clip, we see Zhang begin with a smiling face as he describes how the young lovers meet and fall in love. His voice and posture changes as he expresses the outrage

of the gossiping community and then the angry demands of Yang Jinda. He concludes on a sorrowful note with the sobs of Xu Atian.

The longer form of “Wu guniang” tells a similar but much more elaborate story comprising two to three thousand lines. The principal singer of the longer tradition in the contemporary period is a woman called Lu Amei 陸阿妹 (1902-1986) who was born in Fenyu xiang region of Jiashan, on the southern banks of Lake Fen in modern day Zhejiang province. Lu Amei claimed that she learned how to sing her version of “Wu guniang” from her father, Sun Huatang 孫華棠, a noted local singer, who in turn learned it from a man called Yang Qichang 楊其昌, who lived during the xianfeng era of the last dynasty (1851-1861).¹⁹

In the early 1980s folklorists visited Lu Amei numerous times over a twelve month period to elicit an ever longer form of the song-cycle. We know from the dates recorded for individual song segments that she did not tell the story in any particular chronological order, although she did begin with one of the most popular segments, the story about how Xu Atian, seeking work, goes to the home of Fifth Daughter. Lu Amei was not literate and spent the latter part of her life as a cleaner in a school in Luxu. However, she was a talented singer who had spent her childhood fully immersed in the *shange* tradition. Her version of “Wu guniang” relates a gripping story, full of colorful pungent language,

comic wit, and rich emotional power. Much of her song-cycle is drawn from familiar short songs known to scholars as *taoshi* (套式) formerly known all over the delta in oral and sometimes written transmission (see Zheng 2005). *Taoshi* material includes dialogic songs of courting couples, for example, matching songs of question and answer as lovers (*duige* 对歌). There are songs about the start of love affairs (*jieshi siqing* 结识私情) of women embroidering handkerchiefs as love pledges (*xiu hanshan* 绣汗衫), secret rendezvous (*sihui* 私会) and strip-tease erotic songs as the lovers bathe together (*rong yutang* 焐浴汤). Other songs present climatic moments in the story, for example, “the evil saosao (sister-in-law) catches the fornicators” or songs of sorrow as the lovers part after their rendezvous (*song lang* 送郎).²⁰ This mode of composition is described by singers as “mixing shange” (*tiao shange* 调山歌, Zheng 2005). In the hands of master-singer, Lu Amei, this familiar material become part of an engrossing and multi-faceted story that she had long reflected on and recreated with a passion in a song of epic length. On examining transcripts of Lu Amei’s rendition, one finds that each separate song session tells a micro-story that ends with a point of climax, leaving the listener agog to know what happened next. In order to illustrate this aspect of her narrative art, I present below her version of the story about how Yang Jinda tries to force Fifth Daughter to commit suicide. In her version of this climatic scene, Lu Amei adopts the ancient song format known as “Song of the Five Watches of the Night” (Tan wu geng 叹五更).²¹ This form comprises lengthy stanzas of ten lines, quite distinct from the standard stanzaic form of four lines found in most *shange*. The Five Watches is another common song matrix, commonly used to describe lovers at night. It was sung in a different melodic form to the typical *shange*.²² However, Lu Amei employs this conventional matrix to dramatize not lovers in amorous dalliance but family seniors enacting brutal punishment. The matrix of the five watches encourages the listener to imagine the saosao beginning her tirade at sunset and concluding it only when the sun rises. We watch the tension build progressively over each watch of the night as the villainous saosao eggs her husband on to a fever-pitch of indignation. Finally, as dawn breaks, Yang Jinda reaches the point where he is determined to do away with his little sister. The opening stanzas offer comic relief, as the hen-pecked husband tries to reason with his harridan wife, but the mood changes rapidly to one of rising anger on his part and desperation on the part of Fifth Daughter. Below are presented the first two stanzas followed by the final stanza.

1

*At the first stroke of the first watch, the moon begins to rise in the east,
The long-tongued saosao determined on her evil plan.
Without opening her mouth, tears poured like yellow bean seeds down her face,
This left her husband perplexed, like a monk unable to feel his bald pate.²³
“Our stores of grain are so full that even the moth-borers can have enough to eat,
Beneath the house we stashed away red-painted boxes of white silver ingots.
The year has three hundred and sixty-five days in all,
We have firewood, rice, oil and salt, every kind of food stuff, we have everything we need.
All the copper keys on strings for the front door of the Yang house right down to the rear door, and all the keys
for the inner chambers and the outer chambers, every single one is in her keeping.
What is it that has made her tears pour out like a broken-down fir-wood basin with water constantly leaking?”*

2

*At the second watch at the second stroke the moon had reached the tips of the trees,
The long-tongued saosao wrinkled her brow and pulled a gloomy face,
She said, “Cold rice, cold congee, I could eat these,
But you’re such a blockhead, such a dunderhead, how can I possibly enjoy what we have?
The white rice in the upper chamber, the silver in the lower chamber, I have no heart to look after these.
The keys for the front door and the back door, for the inner chambers and the outer chambers, I’ve flung them*

somewhere near the bed.”

When Yang Jinda heard his precious wife say this he thought she must be ill.

He said to her, “Shall we get a doctor to come to our house.”

Then the hot-pepper minx ground her teeth and bitted,

“You stupid idiot, who would have thought that our sparrows’ nest is harboring a stinking turtle dove?”

9

When the sixth stroke of the sixth watch²⁴ had finished ringing out,

Yang Jinda’s face was now as crimson as the statues of the ferocious guardian spirits in the Temple to the City Gods,

With one blow he grabbed Fifth Daughter and held her firmly by her three feet of silken tresses,

Just like a hawk in the sky swooping down on a tiny sparrow,

He put this question to her, “Life or death, this choice will be up to you.

If you don’t break off your affair, then you can hide away at midday, but at midnight you’ll have to meet the God of the Underworld.”

Fifth Daughter was heart-broken, her tears poured down,

The long-tongued saosao brought out a knife and a length of rope,

Fifth Daughter saw that poison had entirely filled the heart, lungs and stomach of the brother and saosao.

She said, “My own brother, in cutting bamboo shoots you don’t remove the roots.”

A feature of the longer version is the presence of more characters and a rich dramatic dialogue. The short form does not mention the role of the saosao, who plays a very strong role in the rendition of Lu Amei. Another characteristic of Lu Amei’s songs is that the listener is invariably left hanging, unaware of exactly how the scene will end or what will happen next. For example, it becomes clear from other songs of Lu Amei that Fifth Daughter did not die at this point. In another gripping scene we see Fifth Daughter locked up in isolation in a millstone shed with a noose hanging from the rafters. In another song we watch as her older sister (Fourth Daughter) comes just in time to stop her doing the deed.

From Transcript to Text

In the 1980s Lu Amei and the other singers sang ‘Wu guniang’ in separate sessions. Each song tells its own mini-story and almost all songs end in a climactic moment as in the example given above. However, climatic moments are not necessarily followed through in a later session; seeming inconsistencies and contradictions are not ironed out. Some story lines are opened up but remain unexplored. There is no clear resolution to the song-cycle and many endings seem possible. Given this situation, what happened when this collection of independent song segments was ‘arranged’ by later editors and published for a national readership?

As previously mentioned, my main source for the songs of Lu Amei is a two volume mimeograph booklet (here called *Transcripts*) comprising some 790 stanzas and 3,160 lines). A number of singers are included, but the most of the material was sung by Lu Amei. I have discussed the politics of editing the Wu guniang song-cycle in another study (McLaren & Zhang, 2017). Here I will briefly recapitulate essential details. Zhang Fanglan and two other local folklorists arrived at what is now known as “the first arranged edition” (*diyī zhēnglǐ* 第一整理本). This comprised 431 stanzas, about half the size of the *Transcripts*. It was published in the literary journal, *Zhongshan* in 1982 and in 1984 as a separate booklet by Jiangsu Renmin publishers. “Wu guniang” was one of the very earliest of the long Wuge songs to appear in print and caused a minor sensation in literary circles at that time.²⁵ Some local folklorists felt that this edition departed too far from the original transcripts. In neighboring Zhejiang province, Jiashan scholar Jin Xu produced what is now known as “the second arranged edition” (*zài zhēnglǐ ben* 再整理本) to try to rectify this problem. It was this edition that was

included in the important collection, *Ten Long Folk Narrative Poems from Jiangnan* (Jiang 1989).

When one compares the original *Transcripts* with the later editions one finds major differences. First is the removal of ‘inappropriate’ or ‘inconsistent’ plot lines to form a cohesive story. Later editors deleted material about the promiscuity of the sister-in-law, who is characterized by singers as a *yinfu* (淫婦) or immoral woman, although this judgmental term is never used in the song. This version places more weight on the husband as representative of the patriarchal, feudal system that entraps the young lovers. Editors also deleted a suggestion in the song-cycle that the brother’s wife and Fifth Daughter connive to both have an affair with the hired hand. They further deleted salacious material depicting Fifth Daughter playing a lead role in seducing the hired hand (for example, the scene of the lovers bathing and explicit love-making).

The editors made important additions as well. They added stereotypical material to provide narrative linkage between segments, in the manner of vernacular fiction in the imperial period. Most importantly, they invented an ending to resolve the plot and to punish the evil-doers. Different editors even devised different story endings.

The morality of the key protagonist, Fifth Daughter, was a key dilemma for the editors. It was essential that she be a virtuous figure in spite of the fact that she is engaging in illicit sexual relations. The editors aimed at a consistent ‘message’. They view the story, in line with requirements of the times, as an attack on ‘feudal marriage’ system and “feudal thinking”. As I have argued elsewhere (McLaren & Zhang, 2017), the editors, in their attempts to produce ‘readerly’ texts failed to take into account the sensitivities of the principal singer, Lu Amei. The latter believed that the spirit of Fifth Daughter still lingered along the shores of Lake Fen and that her spirit would be offended if the story of her scandalous life and tragic end was made public. As she told folklorists in April 25th, 1981:

You can never sing to the end of “Fifth Daughter”. . . . If you do wind up singing to the very end then you’ll suffer misfortune.²⁶

Conclusion

What can one learn about the narrative quality of storysinging in the case of “Fifth Daughter”? Lu Amei’s songs delighted her singers with their intensely lyrical nature and dramatic intensity. She could shift seamlessly from third person to first person, taking on one character after another. One could infer that her chief task was to work on the emotions of the listener, not to explain a plot in logical sequence. In any case her listeners were generally very familiar with the story of Fifth Daughter, who was regarded as a real historical figure.

Lu Amei herself had firm opinions about the characters and she could discourse on the story (in prose) at some length when questioned by folklorists. However, she could also occasionally “contradict” herself. For example, over the course of a year of singing sessions, she supplied two types of endings, one where Fifth Daughter died first and Atian went to steal her spirit tablets and one where Atian died first. She did not come up with a story about any punishment for the evil sister-in-law and older brother (in contrast to the contrived endings of the editors). She sang songs as the mood or the context prompted her, not in ‘chronological’ order as perceived by folklore scholars. Nor did she ever seek to present narrative linkages between stanzas or between different songs. In any single song session, the lyrical impulse to fully realize human emotions, ranging from love to hatred, served as her dominant motivation.

‘Literary’ texts are not understood in the same way across cultures.²⁷ Rick Altman observes that in the West narrative is too often seen as synonymous with plot. Western narratives place priority on a unitary story with “a single unbroken plot thread” (2008:3). He prefers instead to foreground the role of “character” rather than plot. He puts forward the idea of “following”, defined as “the reader’s sense of following a character from action to action and scene to scene” (Altman 2008:15). Narratives

can be single (following one character) or multi-focus in nature (following several characters). The famous medieval French epic song, “The Song of Roland”, for example, can be considered a “dual focus” type of narrative, where the story material alternates between the two warring sides to form an alternating pattern (Altman 2008:30, 42). In her singing, Lu Amei too followed different characters, rather than a fixed plot or chronological sequence of events. She mostly followed Fifth Daughter, but sometimes her attention turned to the evil sister-in-law, to Fourth Daughter, or to Xu Atian, the hired hand. Each of these characters are the major focus of a number of song sessions. It probably never occurred to Lu Amei that the voices she gave to these characters belonged to a single finite narrative with a set beginning and end. Quite the contrary, she believed that her font of songs was endless: “I open my hempen bag [of songs] and out pours the waters of Lake Tai” (prologue song). Her village audience, familiar with the tragedies that befell transgressive lovers, needed no detailed explanation to draw the threads together. It is only when we come to the scholars and folklorists of the contemporary era that this song-cycle was seen as somehow deficient and lacking a proper plot. Modern day editors reshaped Lu Amei’s complex and contradictory repertoire into a readable printed text. It is only with the benefit of the original transcripts that one can glimpse the multi-focus open-ended narrative quality of Lu Amei’s “Wu guniang”.

NOTES

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² Most of the song-cycles are between two to three thousand lines in length. The longest one, Hua Baoshan 华抱山, the story of a rebel leader, comprises over 10,000 lines. For studies on the Yangzi delta song-cycles by this author see the List of References.

³ For more information on nineteenth-century manuscripts see McLaren (2010). Printed texts using *shange* material circulated as *shuochangben* 说唱本 and *tanhuang* 滩簧.

⁴ The earliest folklorists to record shange from this region were scholars influenced by the May Fourth modernization movement of the 1920s. These intellectuals rarely went out into the fields to investigate for themselves, preferring to rely on songs collected on their behalf by family and friends (Gu Jiegang et al., republished in Wang 1999). The most important work on the ethnomusicology of delta shange is Antoinet Schimmelpenninck’s *Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers: Shan’ge traditions in southern Jiangsu* (1997). The focus of the latter is on the shorter form of *shange*, although mention is made of longer song-cycles and the singers associated with them. Close to forty long *shange* have now been identified (listed in Zheng 2005:81-84).

⁵ Only one relatively long narrative song from this region was recorded by the early twentieth century folklorists. This is a song of 187 lines called ‘Hong niangzi ben xing Wang’ (红娘子本姓王), sung in the Subei Haimen

region in 1932 (noted in Zheng 2005:32). The pioneering folklorists worked without the benefit of a tape-recorder and appeared largely unaware of the existence of long narrative songs. They concentrated on the songs of children and women, who were their main informants. Perhaps for this reason, they failed to note the existence of longer narratives, which only came to public attention in the 1980s.

⁶ I have discussed this controversy in McLaren and Zhang (2017). It should be noted here that the ethnonym Han is itself problematic. Scholars engaged in the Critical Han project consider the term encompasses a vast number of distinctly different populations. As Thomas S. Mullaney in his Introduction to Critical Han volume has pointed out, the term Han is not so much “a coherent category of identity” as “an umbrella term encompassing a plurality of diverse cultures, languages and ethnicities” (Mullaney 2012:2).

⁷ Schimmelpenninck’s study (1997), based on fieldwork carried out from 1987 to 1992, provides valuable insight into the final years of the delta *shange* as a remnant oral tradition practiced by Wu language speakers. The 2000s saw a large influx of migrant workers from other parts of China into this prosperous region and the growing prevalence of Mandarin as the lingua franca.

⁸ I am very grateful to Zhang Fanglan from Luxu (Jiangsu) for giving me these volumes.

⁹ For discussion of Zhu Hairong’s role see McLaren (2015).

¹⁰ For details of other textual versions see (McLaren and Zhang, 2017).

¹¹ For an early example see Zheng (1976:435-6). For a discussion of the different forms of *huaming shange* see Wang & Zheng 1993:66-69. The same material is reprinted in Gao & Jin but here it is attributed to Wang Wenhua (Gao & Jin 2003:178-181).

¹² See Gu and Wu, “Suzhou changben xulu” in Wang (1999 :697).

¹³ For contemporary examples see Gao & Jin 2003:165-177 also Jin 2009:167-178. The earliest song in these collections dates back to 1954, Jiashan County, Dingzha xiang, see Jin 2009:167-9.

¹⁴ Performed in 2013 and included in the DVD collection *Wujiang fangyan yuyin dianzang* 吴江方言语音典藏 main editor, Shen Weixin 沈卫新, preface dated 2013, published by the Wujiang qu danganju & Wujiang qu fangzhi ban. See accompanying booklet, pp. 21 for this stanza. The script leaves out the numerous ‘padding syllables’ and refrains.

¹⁵ For more detail on the poetic and musical features of *shange* see Schimmelpenninck (1997:108-140).

¹⁶ Schimmelpenninck presents a detailed analysis of this song-type (1997:240-249). She notes its flexibility and variance across space; it is not so much a set tune as a “melodic framework” capable of individual adaptation (1997:248). Elsewhere, she observes other local names for tune types but believes that they all belong to “just one or two melodic patterns” (1997:130).

¹⁷ For this explanation see Jin (2009:11).

¹⁸ See the aforementioned DVD from Wujiang. ‘Xiao Wu guniang’ can also be performed by several singers in melodic forms known as *luoyang ge* 落秧歌 and *datou ge* 大头歌. Each has its own style and is associated with different agricultural work, see Jin (2009:11). Another example of the Wu guniang in 12 month form can be found in the audio CD provided in Schimmelpenninck (1997, Appendix, p. 443).

¹⁹ See Transcripts Vol. 1, p.1. For a fuller biography of Lu Amei see Qian (1997:14-38;147-157).

²⁰ Many of these song segments also found their way into manuscript and printed circulation in the late Qing and early Minguo era. Examples are held in the Fu Ssu-nien Library, Academia Sinica, Taiwan and elsewhere.

²¹ Transcripts, pp.162-166, Song of Lu Amei, April 2 1981. For parallel material see Gao & Jin 2003:262 and

Jiang (1989:210 ff).

²² Schimmelpenninck notes that the *wu geng* type of song had its own melodic form (1997:187, note 96).

²³ To be puzzled.

²⁴ There are only five watches of the night but this does not stop the singer from adding further watches if the story requires it!

²⁵ According to Zhang Fanglan, it took the three men three months to complete the task.

²⁶ Transcripts, p.257.

²⁷ Karin Barber notes that “one of the aims of the anthropology of texts is to open up to view the sheer range of ways in which texts can be constituted and apprehended” (Barber 2007: 13).

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INVISIBLE STORY HOUSE:

Transmission of Suzhou Ping-tan via radio broadcasting in the 20th century

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This article contributes to the increasing body of ethnomusicological research about the transmission of traditional oral performance from a physical performing space to a radio broadcasting platform, taking as an example of the incorporated storytelling and story singing genre Suzhou ping-tan 苏州评弹 that originated in Suzhou city and broadly spread to the lower Yangzi region of China. The daily live ping-tan performances have been played in the special performance venues, shuchang 书场 (literally, 'story house'), of Suzhou city for more than four hundred years. Since the early 20th century, new technological developments have considerably influenced this folk genre: the traditional ping-tan viewing habit has extended to a non-visual radio broadcasting environment, offering the ping-tan followers a new listening experience that is conducted by the radio programme producers. This research investigates distinguishing aspects of the way in which radio broadcasting in Suzhou constructs another public disseminating space beyond the physical story house. Drawing from studies addressing the application of technology within local communities, as well as personal fieldwork data collected between 2011 and 2015, a brief history of local ping-tan programmes of the 20th century, and an illustration of post-1980 ping-tan programme production shall be explored in order to explain how radio broadcasting played an important role in ping-tan dissemination and preservation, and became a remarkable part of this tradition.

Suzhou ping-tan¹, a traditional oral performance integrating pinghua 评话 ('storytelling') and tanci 弹词 ('story singing') has become the representative art of the Suzhou city, which was the capital city of the ancient Wu 吴 state 2500 years ago. Throughout Suzhou's long history, storytelling and story singing traditions have been well-grounded; their popularity was recorded in ancient literature as far back as the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644). However, an indisputable blossoming of the genres began after the prestigious 18th century storyteller Wang Zhoushi 王周士 performed for Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 in the early 1770s.

The performance space, shuchang 书场 (literally, 'story house'), not only functions for ping-tan but also serves as a public teahouse outside of performance times. A traditional story house is composed of a three-tiered stage and dozens of baxian zhuo 八仙桌 ('square desks') surrounded by eight seats – depending on the size of the house. On the stage a ban zhuo 半桌 (literally, a 'half desk' one-half the size of the baxian zhuo) is covered with an embellished table cloth (Fig. 1). The performer – shuoshu xiansheng 说书先生 ('storyteller') – either sits behind the desk, with the long side parallel to the audience to play a solo; or dual performers sit opposite each other on the short ends of the desk, while the long side remains parallel to the audience. Before storytellers mount the stage, they usually warm up backstage, immersed in a preview of the performance. When the alarm

sounds, the *tanci* performer(s) – holding a *sanxian* 三弦 banjo for solo performance, and adding a *pipa* 琵琶 lute for the assistant in a duo performance – sit(s) on the stage, tuning the instrument(s). When everything is ready, they start to sing an averagely ten-minute long *kaipian* 开篇 (‘opening ballad’) to calm the audience and to establish a receptive mood, which draws the attention to the performers and forthcoming story. For the *pinghua* genre, as there is no musical accompaniment to the performance; the storyteller holds nothing on the stage. All the performers are ideally required to approach the stage with a certain disposition, which was recorded in the storyteller Liu Jingting’s (ab. 1587-1670) notes (Wu, 2011: 167):

My teacher Mo Houguang 莫后光 [living in late Ming dynasty] is a gentleman. ... [In his performing theory, he suggests] ‘Once seating (on the stage), then forgetting (everything)’ ... (implying a storyteller should) ‘forget your own business, forget your own appearance, forget that the prestigious and authority people are sitting there, forget the date and the time, forget your name, then you are the thousand years of history, all the smiles and tears is one’.

To notify the audience that the main performance is starting, both *tanci* and *pinghua* performers strike a wood block against the desk. This is followed with a background narrative of the story or with a mini review of the last episode performed the day before. Other available props including a folding fan and a handkerchief may be introduced during the 90-minute performance (with a 10-minute interval midway through). The *tanci* performers also occasionally insert some monologue, dialogue, and narrative in place of singing parts, according to the demands of the plot (Fig.2). Therefore, in a *ping-tan* performance, all parts of the performance are flexibly arranged, but the performers depend on the audience’s unspoken but noticeable reactions coming from their eyes and slight physical and audible responses such as tut-tuting, head-nodding, musical beat-marking and so on to instantly adjust the performance. Accordingly, ‘speech, humor inserting, singing, plucking, and performing’ mark the essential skills for *ping-tan* training, and also the criteria to judge a performance. Nowadays, a complete *changpian* 长篇 (‘long-episode story’) typically consists of two weeks of daily performan-



A view of the *Daru Xiang* 大儒巷 (Daru lane) story house from the stage, Sept. 2015 (Photo: Y. Shi)



Gao Bowen and Lu Jinhua during their *tanci* performance, in September 2015 (Photo: Yinyun Shi)

ces, while in the past, this period could last from one to eight months, or even longer. This protracted delivery is an essential feature of *Suzhou ping-tan*.

Throughout the 20th century, radio broadcast technology contributed to shaping a virtual world for all kinds of music, and particularly influenced the live traditional performances involving both performers and audience members in either positive or passive ways. For instance, the 'live responsive cycle' (Neuman, 1990:70) between performer and audience remains critically an important component within North Indian musical life and performance: the mehfil performance traditionally features a small audience group and has a distinguishing intimate atmosphere, which suffers when performance takes place in an extended *shamiyana* big tent. With a radio performance, performers are required to communicate and conceive the unseen and the unheard audience and mehfil performers particularly struggled to perform well on radio, as the delayed response to radio performances is comprised of newspaper reception written by the music and radio critics and the occasional letters written to the programme (ibid., 78). In the example of Egyptian Qur'an recitation on radio, the reciter's loud and strong voice is not appropriate to the broadcasting environment, rather, the delicate voice with skilful and sensitive registration that positions Qur'an recitation towards a musical interpretation (Castelo-Branco, 1993:1232; Nelson, 2001). Radio broadcast has also benefited young Shona Mbira musicians in Zimbabwe, who learn mbira playing and kudeketera singing by imitating the senior performers' radio appearances and recordings to enrich their own storehouse of this music tradition (Kenney, 2003:175). All these case studies suggest that various levels of transmission have happened when a live performance was presented from its originally physical performing space to a radio broadcasting platform.

Back to the earlier history in Suzhou, before radio broadcasting engaged with the *ping-tan* market, modern technology facilitated a series of changes in the story houses from the late 1880s onwards (McDaniel, 2001:486). The introduction of running water in the story house satisfied both the customers and storytellers in terms of hygiene, so that 'even the tea tasted better'², and the introduction of electricity enabled them to stage an extra performance in the evening (ibid.). These physical improvements preceded the appearance of radio broadcasting in Shanghai in 1925, which would come to add

significant impetus to the ‘sanitizing and standardizing’ of storytellers’ language. These broadcasts reached a large elite audience, and fostered new principles of urban behaviour and manners (ibid., 495).

The influence of advanced technology on global society and its activities has been monumental. Hilmes’ study on American radio broadcasting between 1925 and 1955 suggested that radio should be regarded not only as a technology of ‘wires (collection), transmitters, and electrons, but as a social practice grounded in culture’ (1997:xiii). She endorsed Pierre Bourdieu’s view of the history of broadcasting (Bourdieu, 1993:34), highlighting the cultural ‘field’ of radio’s origin, rather than an origin only lying in a succession of technological developments (Hilmes, 1997: xiii-xiv).

In previous *ping-tan* studies that considered broadcasting, the focus was exclusively on *ping-tan* radio distribution in Shanghai, especially during the first half of the 20th century. Since the adoption of the radio medium in China, commercialisation has become a remarkable feature of broadcasting. Hong Yu (2012) depicted the transmission of *Suzhou ping-tan* via the wireless radio broadcasting platform from the 1920s to 1940s, and demonstrated how *ping-tan* performers used radio for business ventures and commercial advertisements, and how *Suzhou ping-tan* played an important part of the wireless radio world. In Benson’s (1996) research on the *ping-tan* themed programmes airing in Shanghai in the 1930s, he examines how *tanci* was employed to target local customers who had the habit of listening to these performances on radio; and Zhang (2012:55-59) also asserted that the *ping-tan* storytellers also benefited from their engagement with the radio industry. By exploring how *ping-tan* was successfully spread through radio waves in the local community and how ‘the propagandists of consumption were promoting the birth of consumer society’, Benson addressed how this dialogue involved various parties such as enterprise, programme, storytellers, and audience members on ‘radio Shanghai’ (ibid., 75). He further claimed that ‘listeners did not play a passive role in the formation of radio Shanghai’, and ‘its entertainment was ... not necessarily shared together in public’ (ibid., 77-78). In addition, the argument that the airwaves have greatly assisted traditional *ping-tan* performance in general is questionable; some have argued that the media has been a double-edged sword (Zhou Xuewen 2008; Zhao Yingyin, 2009, Hong, Yu, 2010, 2012), reducing engagement in story house live performance even as the art-form has been disseminated more widely (Zhao Yingyin, 2009:27).

Considering Shanghai’s the geographical advantages combined with its economic, political and cultural prominence in the 20th century, the city had the chance to play an indisputable pioneering role in Chinese radio broadcasting history. In Suzhou, generally called ‘the cradle of *ping-tan*’, listening to *ping-tan* programmes on the radio has been considered a somewhat traditional way to enjoy the art, as the medium has profoundly merged with local people’s lifestyles since the first introduction of radio in 1930, according to the *Suzhou Difang Zhi* (‘Suzhou Local Chorography’).³ As information is sparse, fragmentary and derives mainly from non-academic sources, in order to explore *ping-tan* programming in the Suzhou area and its current situation, this article attempts to give a new examination of: the historical development of *ping-tan* programming on the radio in Suzhou before 1981, and the golden era of *ping-tan* radio programmes between 1981 and 2000. It is necessary to explain the reasons behind choosing the years 1981 and 2000 as dividing lines. After ten years of Cultural Revolution, it was not until the economic reforms in 1978 that China started to emerge from the political turbulence that had lingered since the beginning of 20th century, and developments in radio broadcasting were likewise delayed. In 1981, the Suzhou People’s Radio Station upgraded to frequency modulation broadcasting, and at that time, the radio station sought a producer with a professional knowledge of *ping-tan*. I have drawn heavily from my interviews with the *ping-tan* programme producer Hua Jueping 华觉平⁴ to gain first-hand materials from his genuine working experience. Hua Jueping was in charge of the reconstruction work between 1981 and 2000, significantly influencing the current programmes, which have been managed by Zhang Yuhong 张玉红 since 2000.

A historical review: ping-tan radio broadcasting before 1980 in Suzhou

1. From 1930 to 1949

According to the ‘Suzhou Local Chorography’, the first radio station was set up by an amateur Lu Xinsen 陆辛森 in 1930, and there were 18 radio stations in the city before Suzhou was completely emancipated in April 1949. Although the plethora of stations only lasted for several months in 1930 this historical experiment started a new age of radio broadcasting in Suzhou. By August 1931, three more amateur radio stations were delivering ping-tan programmes.

It was not until 1932, when the first private commercial radio station *Jiuda guangbo diantai* 久大广播电台 (‘Suzhou Forever Big Radio Station’) was founded by Li Baolin 李宝麟, that ping-tan programmes began to disseminate through the airwaves. Holding the city’s second radio licence permit from the government, Jiuda radio station broadcast with a mere 15 watts of power, and was designated with the call letters XLIB (changed to a No. 23 permission licence in 1934). The station was initially located in *Wannian qiao* street and maintained its upkeep through advertising income. The establishment of *Jiuda* significantly promoted the radio business, and listening to the radio gradually became popular in Suzhou. *Jiuda* broadcast programmes in Suzhou dialect from 8 am to 10 pm or 11 pm every day. The timetable of the programmes was published in the local newspaper. In addition to ping-tan, the station played phonograph discs of other drama and operatic genres, pop song performances, and broadcast commercial advertising, weather reports, ‘life tips’, and religious content. Furthermore, a collection of ping-tan opening ballads *Yesheng ji* 夜声集 (‘Collection of Evening Sound’) was published on behalf of *Jiuda* radio station. *Jiuda* later moved to the 4th floor of Renmin bazaar (‘People’s bazaar’) and obtained better, more powerful equipment, so that the improved signal projected not only to the local, but also to the surrounding areas. In 1937, the Japanese army occupied *Jiuda* and used it to spread propaganda to counter the idea of resistance against their occupation.

This first influential storyteller-running private commercial radio station *Bailing guangbo diantai* 百灵广播电台 (‘Lark Radio Station’), with the call letters XLIL and XHIC and producing 25 and 75 watts of power, was set up by storyteller Yang Jingchun 杨景春 in autumn of 1932. The broadcasting time was from 7 am to 10 pm with a break in the middle, and the station hired ping-tan storytellers to host programmes in the Suzhou dialect. The ‘Lark’ funded its activity with advertising and Yang Jingchun obtained supports from his father Yang Yuecha 杨月槎 and uncle Yang Xingcha 杨星槎 who were also ping-tan storytellers. In addition to the same types of programme as *Jiuda*, the broadcasting included inviting the local elite to give public speeches, and interviewing entertainment personalities. In addition, the *Bailing kaipian ji* 百灵开篇集 (‘Collection of lark opening ballad singing’) was published on behalf of the radio station, and it was a popular resource with ping-tan listeners.

Suzhou guangbo diantai 苏州广播电台 (‘Suzhou Radio Broadcasting Station’) was set up by Wu Keming 吴克明 in September 1935, with the call letters XLIP and 50 watts of power. It broadcast from 9 am to 10 pm with a short break. The types of programmes were almost the same as on *Jiuda*, but this station specialised in playing western phonograph discs. It issued a two-volume journal *Tiansheng ji* 天声集 (‘Collection of Sky Sounds’), providing information about radio station operation, a programme guide, ping-tan opening ballads, and photographs of the staff. In 1937, due to the Japanese occupation, the station abandoned broadcasting; in 1940, more than 300 phonograph discs and other equipment was taken by the Japanese army.

From 1937 until 1945, all local radio stations came under the control of the Japanese army. Although the types of programmes remained mostly unchanged, including the playing of ping-tan, Japanese language teaching was broadcast as enculturation propaganda, and the Chinese staff was not allowed to intervene in these programme arrangements. In addition, every radio set had to be registered and fees were charged by the receiving department;⁵ any set without a registration could be confiscated.

In August 1945, the second Civil War started. From 1945 to 1949, during the period governed by Wang Jingwei’s regime, radio broadcasting was again utilised as a tool to propagandise the ideology

of the *Guoming Dang* (the Nationalist Party). Although there had been a trend to open radio stations by the various authorities, the government soon announced that only one radio station would be allowed in the city of Suzhou from 1946 onwards. The other seven private radio stations, including *Jiuda*, were forced to close. Although radio stations had strong connections with politics during that period, *ping-tan* programmes continued to be broadcast.

2. From 1949 to 1980

After the national foundation in 1949, the *Suzhou Xinhua guangbo diantai* 苏州新华广播电台 ('Suzhou Xinhua Radio Station') that had been established on 15 May 1949 changed its name to *Suzhou renmin guangbo diantai* 苏州人民广播电台 ('Suzhou People's Radio Station') on 10 August 1949. It became one of 32 radio stations in the country and was soon broadcasting to the public. Later the government banned *ping-tan* broadcasting on 1 June 1962, but it was revived on 1 April 1972.

Another station, the *Suzhou renmin youxian guangbo diantai* 苏州人民有限广播电台 ('Suzhou People's Wired Radio Station') was founded on 1 January 1953. Its range grew quickly after 1958, and it joined the medium wave channels in 1979. During the Cultural Revolution, loudspeakers came on at 6 am to wake people up and played official announcements and music, including *ping-tan*. However, traditional themed stories were forbidden and were placed in the category of 'feudalism, capitalism and revisionism', and the relevant phonograph discs were lost or destroyed during that era. Instead, modern-themed stories of patriotism and love for the party were composed and widely disseminated.

After 1978, the reconstruction of radio broadcasting took place under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (Hamm, 1991:2). A glimpse taken from Hamm's (*ibid.*, 24-26) except from Zuo Fanyang's article (1988) explains the situation. Zuo was the former Chairman of the Shanghai Radio and Television Bureau and subsequently Chairman of the Shanghai Radio and Television Research Institute. He depicts the scene after returning to the radio station in 1979 (*ibid.*, 2):

... the station was in ruins. Studios were destroyed... The past ten years had left only no thingness. Live broadcasting had been prohibited, so that announcers could not hold conversations with the audience. Only pre-recorded programs could be aired. ... We decided that in order to revive interest in radio we should put emphasis on the development of FM. The problem was to find materials for stereo radio programming. ... At that time imported stereos and cassettes were rare. Some young people walked around the city carrying their stereo sets, to show off. One could hear recordings of popular singers from Hong Kong and Taiwan. This phenomenon was the result of the long-time policy of cultural isolation and the dullness of music radio programming. A hunger for music and culture made such people swallow anything that came along. In order to enrich our programs, we had to break the boundaries of city, province and nation, to communicate nationally and internationally.

From Zuo's comment above on the reconstruction of the radio station in Shanghai, it can be seen that, on one hand, there was a tremendous shortage of materials for the radio station to broadcast; on the other hand, audience members longed for greater variety in entertainment. This supply versus demand reality also appeared in Suzhou radio broadcasting. After the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the *ping-tan* programme of AM 1080 was intermittently hosted by the former programme producer Wang Leying 汪乐英. Amongst the three AM channels and the solitary FM channel under the Suzhou Radio Station by early 1980s⁶, AM 1080 took most of *ping-tan* broadcasting schedule. Today, AM 1080 remains the most important platform to play all kinds of *ping-tan* programmes – having retained its popularity among radio listeners in Suzhou and the surrounding provinces and cities for decades.

The golden era: AM 1080 Ping-tan broadcasting from 1980 to 2000 in Suzhou

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping's economic reform was brought in practice, and people's lives became more settled and stable. In order to meet people's increasing demands for entertainment and to revive the regular broadcasting, the ping-tan programme *Guangbo shuchang* 广播书场 ('Broadcasting story house) sought to recruit a specialist to conduct this ping-tan programme in 1980. My interviewee Hua Jueping 华觉平 took this position and became programme producer in 1981, officially starting his radio programme producing work in January 1982. Having formally retired in 2003, his insight is informed by his association with the revival of the *ping-tan* radio broadcasting era from its inception throughout its peak in the 1990s.

Hua Jueping had a profound affinity with *ping-tan* that originated long before he began working for the radio station. He was one of the first students enrolled in the Suzhou Ping-tan School in 1962. As part of a cooperative project between Shanghai Ping-tan Troupe, Suzhou Ping-tan Troupe and Jiangsu Province Ping-tan Troupe, Hua Jueping was allocated in Shanghai in 1963 and became a professional performer there.⁷ In 1981, after working twenty years, he learned of the Suzhou radio programme recruitment and thus began his ping-tan programme producer career, during which he became a witness to how the revival of radio broadcasting benefited *ping-tan* in a mediated way. He was immediately faced with significant challenges including the shortage of materials for broadcast and lack of sponsorship.

1. Storage of broadcasting materials and sponsorship

By the early 1980s, broadcasting *ping-tan* on the radio platform had been practiced for almost fifty years since 1930s when the so-called 'commercial radio station' firstly appeared in Suzhou. Due to the war and revolution, there were only 400 hours of *ping-tan* recording left in stock in 1982, including some pieces of ballad singing and the *zhezi* 折子 ('one-episode stories'). Some of these were copied from Shanghai Radio Station, including 53 episodes of Xu Yunzhi 徐云志 and Wang Ying's 王鹰 *San xiao* 三笑 ('Three smiles'), and 53 episodes of Zhou Yunrui 周云瑞 and Xue Junya's 薛君亚 *Wenwu xiangqiu* 文武香球 ('A sweet ball'). Moreover, 150 episodes of *Yue zhuan* 岳传 ('Yue's legend') performed by Cao Hanchang 曹汉昌 were recorded by the Suzhou Radio Station to assist transcribing work for a project run by the Suzhou Ping-tan Study Institute 苏州评弹研究. Because each *ping-tan* story covered a long period of daily performances, the radio broadcasting had to be in alignment with this feature, which necessitated playing daily instalments. Thus, the limited stock of recordings hardly met the needs of operating a *ping-tan* radio programme.

At the same time, Suzhou Radio Station had a limited budget to extend *ping-tan* recording storage. Although the programme could record the live performances from the story houses and broadcast them, the broadcasting technique and limited equipment constrained the programme for a long time. When Hua Jueping took over the job from Wang Leying, there were only five reel-to-reel tapes for producing programmes: an episode performed in a story house can be split into two sessions on the radio, thus, every day the programme needed two tapes for recording the live performance; one for broadcasting the performance recorded the day before; and one that had already been broadcast needed to be erased. To meet the broadcasting needs with such limited resources, no records were kept permanently. Later, in order to broadcast live performances from two of the largest and best story houses in Suzhou – the *Suzhou shuchang* 苏州书场 ('Suzhou Story House') and the *Kaiming xiuyuan* 开明戏院 ('Kai Ming Theatre') – Hua Jueping requested that the radio station install two cables directly into the story house and the theatre from the radio station, so that their daily performance programmes could be simultaneously broadcast through loudspeakers. A special performance such as a festival gala, could be broadcast simultaneously via loudspeakers and radio. Although the materials were very limited, Hua Jueping tried to broadcast different stories on the wired loudspeaker and the wireless radio, and many audience members chose to listen to them both. The limited budget made it difficult

for the Suzhou Radio Station to compete with the Shanghai Radio Station in inviting storytellers to make recordings. The Suzhou Radio Station only paid the token fee for the *zhuan lu* 专录 ('special recording sessions') performances in the studio, not the *shikuang luyin* 实况录音 ('live recordings') in the story house. For studio recordings, the Suzhou Radio Station paid 5 *yuan* per episode, while in Shanghai the fee was 20 *yuan*.⁸ Considering that both the cities could receive programmes from the other, it was tough to compete locally with the *ping-tan* programmes broadcast in Shanghai; meanwhile, Shanghai programmes had a comparatively larger stock of *ping-tan* recordings, and the Shanghai *ping-tan* Troupe were able to assemble more outstanding *ping-tan* masters at the time. The programme 'Broadcasting story house' in Suzhou operated under very severe circumstances: indeed, even the Suzhou local audience preferred listening to the Shanghai *ping-tan* programmes. All these disadvantages drove Hua Jueping to devise alternative ways of making 'Guangbo shuchang' more self-sufficient.

It was not until Hua Jueping first saw advertisements inserted in the intervals of TV series broadcast by Shanghai television in late 1983 that he was enlightened as to the possibility of doing the same in *ping-tan* radio programmes. Soon, his proposal of introducing advertisement passed. In this way, not only could performers receive more than token fees, but also more blank discs were affordable so that recordings could be kept rather than erased every day. In addition, 20 percent of the advertising fees were allocated to the programme. Since advertising on radio was still in its early stages after the period of political turbulence, in order to gain more sponsorship, Hua Jueping either used his personal relationships, or went to factories and institutes to 'sell' advertising slots in programme intervals. Thanks to the popularity of *ping-tan* among the people, the programme gained more financial support after these efforts.

The Suzhou Radio Station became the fourth in the country to update to the FM stereophonic model on 1 October 1985. The upgraded broadcasting system delivered better receiving quality to the local community, facilitated *ping-tan* and advertisement broadcasting, and benefited storytellers and the programme in a remarkable ways: the token fee was raised to 20 *yuan* to match Shanghai. Later, the *ping-tan* programmes in Shanghai raised their token fee to 30 *yuan*, and Hua Jueping's programme was soon to follow. Furthermore, the storytellers whose live performances were recorded for the radio programme got some token fees as reward. The programme also benefited from a greater budget for phonography discs to store copies of these recordings. The cost of each disc was around 30 to 40 *yuan* – as much as the average monthly salary for some employees – and each disc could record only one episode.

As Shanghai preserved more collections of the great masters than Suzhou did, Hua Jueping took the initiative to exchange existing records with Shanghai Radio Station so that each could make copies of the other's materials. After negotiating with Shanghai Radio Station to gain access to a full story performed by Jiang Yuequan, Suzhou would provide copies of two full stories told by less famous storytellers. If performances were of a similar quality, or were told by the storytellers who were nearly at the same level, the radio stations would carry out a one-to-one exchange of mutual benefit.

By this model of self-sufficiency, the stocks of both live performance recordings and studio recordings of *ping-tan* accumulated over ten years exceeded 4500 hours, and included more than 100 pieces of long-episode storytelling and story singing works. All of this material involved much more than merely pressing a button on a machine to record it and then play it on the programme. Nowadays, these recordings are treated as treasures by *ping-tan* followers. When Hua Jueping shared his experiences with me, he showed his pride in the quality and quantity of the recordings produced under his supervision. Current *ping-tan* programmes still largely rely on these recordings, which have been transferred to digital archive.

2. Storytellers' support of *ping-tan* programmes

After expanding the storage, the next difficulty for Hua Jueping was that the storytellers were wary of

recording the live performance for the radio programme. They were concerned that it might impact their business within the story houses because *ping-tan* storytellers were focused on improving the quality of their storytelling, rather than the quantity. In other words, storytellers usually only specialised in a very limited repertoire, establishing their fame on the bases of one or two stories. For this reason, Hua Jueping had to persuade them that the programming of their live performances actually was of mutual benefit. But for the master storytellers, this was not a problem at all. Hua explained:

For the *ping-tan* masters, it is unnecessary to worry about [the negative influence]. Once I recorded Jiang Yunxian's 蒋云仙 *Tixiao yinyuan* 啼笑姻缘 ('Between tears and smiles') and broadcast it, the audience members' feedback was very positive. They admired in her performance that 'one performer could play so many different roles! How many people exactly tell the story?' Afterwards, when she again came to Suzhou to perform, she achieved more remarkable ticket sales.

Unlike recording the live performance, storytellers held less bias on studio recording. In fact, they were stricter and more serious in this work. Hua Jueping recalled that once the storytellers Yu Hongxian 余红仙 and Shen Shihua 沈世华 from Shanghai Ping-tan Troupe were invited to record the story *Shuang zhu feng* 双珠凤 ('Double pearls phoenix'). During a piece of ballad singing within the story lasting fourteen minutes, but they made a so-called *hua*⁹ 花 (a blemish) in the thirteenth minute. The performers asked to erase the recording and start again. However, the recorder 'national mode 635' used by the programme was not convenient for editing, and technicians would need more than half an hour to splice the tape from the middle. The performers still insisted on re-singing this ballad until they thought it was perfect. In addition to performers' self-discipline in presenting their best work, Hua Jueping was also strict about the recording quality. If one string on one of the instruments was carelessly plucked stronger, or the quality of the sound was rough or raw, he would suggest that the performer record the whole piece of singing again.

Hua Jueping believed that holding a cautious and serious attitude to this work was also important for him to obtain storytellers' respect and support for his work:

You should be diligent in your work. People even take it for granted that recording live performances in a story house is something effortless. But maintaining a good social network with all factors is invaluable. For example, if the *changfang* 场方 ('manager of the story house') told me the forthcoming schedule, and it was precisely what I would like to record, I would visit the performers beforehand to ask their permission to record, even if the performer was not in Suzhou. Well, you know, mobile phones did not exist at that time [he laughed]. You cannot record without the performers' permission. If I contacted just when they just arrived at the story house, it was too urgent and impolite.

Once I heard that the storytellers Cheng Zhenqiu 程振秋 and Shi Yajun 施雅君 would perform in Suzhou after they were to give a performance at the *Luodian* story house 罗店书场 in Baoshan 宝山 district, Shanghai. I took a train and coach to visit them, and I came out with the request face to face, although they did not know me at that time. I introduced myself as a former storyteller and current programme producer. I told them that their performances were popular among the audience, and I would now like to record their performance for broadcasting. Usually, when people recognised that I was also a professional in the *ping-tan* field, they would accept my request.

Another time, when I heard Cao Xiaojun 曹啸君 would perform in a story house

in Suzhou, it was just before he was about to commence a long-episode performance the next day. I hurried to visit him at his elder brother master Cao Hanchang's home (he lived at his brother's house), and discussed my recording plan for broadcasting it. If I had not been active in dealing with these networks of people, we would probably have missed a lot.

To relay the live performance from the story house became the main purpose of *ping-tan* radio programme. Fearing that this might negatively influence potential audiences away from live *ping-tan* performance in the story house, not every storyteller was willing to contribute the performance recording to this broadcasting platform. However, because of the large storage capacity needed to meet the broadcasting requirement, a valuable diachronic archive of live post-1985 *ping-tan* performances in story houses remains and benefits current *ping-tan* programmes, the *ping-tan* followers, and *ping-tan* studies. Yin Dequan 殷德泉, a *ping-tan* expert who later became the television *ping-tan* programme producer, wrote a mini article in 1991 when he was still an amateur. In it he mentioned that some of the *ping-tan* enthusiasts were keen on collecting *ping-tan* recordings, including recordings from the *ping-tan* radio programmes; some people had recorded more than a thousand singing ballads from two hundred storytellers (Yin, 1991:165). He then estimated 'we can imagine there must be some *ping-tan* composers and researchers among these people' (ibid.). Later, Yin dedicated himself to his *ping-tan* career and he only recently retired as a television programme producer in the summer of 2015.¹⁰

3. Design of the programme

Along with the growing size of the collection, Hua Jueping was able to design the 'Broadcasting story house' programme. This involved producing the programmes in various ways, the so-called *huase dang* 花色档 (literary meaning 'variety of designs'), rather than always purely broadcasting long-episode stories in daily instalments.

Influenced by the *Liupai yanchang hui* 流派演唱会 (literally 'Concert of singing schools') form from Shanghai, Hua edited the programme by mixing the story singing ballads with opening ballads that were representative of various singing schools, so that the programmes' content would be enriched. The advantage of this 'broadcasting concert' design – as Hua explained – was that it allowed flexibility to fit the specific requirements of each programme's length. Sometimes, a mini section of storytelling would be added, so that audiences could either listen to the telling or the singing. In addition, with the popularity of *zhongpian* 中篇 ('medium-length') stories that were newly composed within just four or five episodes, Hua Jueping set up another *ping-tan* programme, *Yayun shuhui* 雅韵书会 ('Elegant aroma of story collection'), which specialised in medium-length stories from 2pm to 4:30pm on Saturdays. He explained:

As they were used to listening to long forms of storytelling and singing, audiences would expect something different from radio broadcasting. Broadcasting the medium-length story took some adjustment. Nevertheless, announcing information in advance about the medium-length stories at the end of the Friday programmes was helpful in keeping audiences next to their radios.

In addition, Hua Jueping borrowed the idea of the *Bankuaixing lanmu* 板块栏目 ('Jigsaw programme') from news report to accommodate all the *ping-tan* news and information into several sessions in one programme. This special programme was produced to play once or twice a week to introduce the lore and anecdotes of *ping-tan* and the *ping-tan* field. Another special programme Hua Jueping experimented with was *Yanzhi xiaojie xia ping-tan* 晏芝小姐下评弹 ('Lady Yanzhi steps down [from] the stage of *ping-tan*'). 'Lady Yanzhi' refers to the famous *ping-tan* storyteller Xing Yanzhi 邢晏芝. Hua Jueping invited her to host the programme – mainly to read the draft of Hua Jueping's written text, but in a 'telling' register – to spread knowledge to the audience. This 'knowledge' was not only restricted to the lore of *ping-tan*, but also included stories and anecdotes from history, which were related to the stories

told in *ping-tan*. To ingeniously combine all of these themes with *ping-tan* relevant topics, listeners could supplement their listening to an instalment of a story. Later, this programme changed its name to ‘*Ping-tan shalong*’ (‘*The Ping-tan salon*’), and Hua Jueping took on the roles of both editor and host. In the 1990s, in addition to inviting storytellers as guest hosts, he offered more chances for audience members to engage in the live programme by setting up phone-in features. Sometimes, the programme would also have ‘quiz time’, posing *ping-tan* trivia questions to encourage audience members to become involved. Besides, during festivals, the radio stations in Suzhou, Shanghai and Wuxi joined forces to launch special *ping-tan* concerts. Participating storytellers would sit in the respective three radio studios and communicate and perform over the airwaves, bringing the festival to each of the local audiences.

Hua Jueping gave me an example to introduce the *ping-tan* repertoire *Changsheng dian* 长生殿 (‘Changsheng Palace’) and its singing ballads. The programme began with presenting the historical figures of the Emperor *Tang ming huang* 唐明皇 (Emperor Tang Xuan Zong, whose name is Li Longji 李隆基, reigned from 712-756) and his most famous concubines. Hua suggested that although audiences were acquainted with the love affairs of the emperor, they might not know what exactly happened during his regime and the relevant historical records. Thus, the intention behind recounting these historical affairs was to enhance audience members’ understanding of the lyrics and their meaning. Hua Jueping stressed:

To tell the story behind the *ping-tan* stories’ is my principle in editing this programme. This idea is similar to the *ping-tan* jargon *wai chahua* 外插花, the ‘stuck-in’ content to enrich the telling. As an editor, I should find out the identifiable specialties for producing the programmes. Only playing the storytellers’ performance would be tedious to the audience. Thus, I must look up a lot of material, and watch television documentary programmes to learn more. In terms of the legends and tales, I should find out the possible origins, so that the information is reliable for the audience.

These [items of] ‘knowledge’ are usually exaggerated or omitted in the performance. Some historical facts could be distorted by word of mouth; I should clarify the wrong information and misunderstandings in this programme.

Hua Jueping’s notion of adding ‘stuck-in’ content – producing the special programmes and adding the information that cannot be gleaned from the live performance was appealing to radio listeners. This content was probably the key to the success to the *ping-tan* programme: by offering these extra but attractive pieces of information, on one hand, these special programmes made up for the disadvantage of missing the interconnection between the performer and the audience members that would be present during a live performance. On the other hand, the extra content brought more audience to the programme: the *ping-tan* followers enjoyed a different presentation with the radio broadcast, and if they were not able to attend the live performance, they could rely on the radio broadcast. For those who just encountered *ping-tan* by chance, it was more convenient to enjoy the *ping-tan* programmes that on the radio that contained simplified aspects of *ping-tan* knowledge. In other words, the radio *ping-tan* programme created another extended performance space rooted on – but perhaps extending beyond – the live performances in the story house.

4. Radio listeners’ involvement

My own impression of *ping-tan* radio programme involvement was formed when I was a child. When my grandmother brought me to visit my great-grandmother after lunch during summer holiday, my great-grandmother was sitting on a rattan chair in front of her bungalow, concentrating on listening to the *ping-tan* programme. The black radio set was put on a smaller bamboo-made chair next to

her. Similar scenes could often be found in Suzhou before the city entered high-speed development in the late 1990s. However, not all the listeners passively received whatever the radio programme played to them. 'Becoming stereo friends' was a motto that enabled Hua Jueping and his colleagues to loyally serve their audiences by meeting their expectations and requirements, allowing the 'invisible' audience in front of their radios to engage in communication with the *ping-tan* programme. Allowing audience members to call in and take part in live programmes, and inviting them to write letters was a means of responding to different types of programmes. This practice was inherited from the *ping-tan* programmes played in the early 20th century.

In the programmes that offered audience members the chance to take part, usually the interaction was not simultaneous with the broadcast. Especially in the programmes that played repertoire requested by the audience, producers kept a gap of about three minutes to prepare the requested recording. Hua Jueping told me that when *ping-tan* fans had the chance to speak on the airwaves, they would often give not only their request, but also their opinions on the previous track played, critical comments about the performance, and even suggest a better version of the same repertoire.

In the letters written by the audience members, there were also a great number of demands for a certain version of one repertoire by a particular performer to be broadcast. They often commented on previously broadcast repertoires, expressing their affection and admiration, and only a very small proportion expressed a derision. The programmer would sometimes hand the audience's letters directly to the performers, in order to keep a neutral standpoint and reserve their own judgement.

As well as serving the local Suzhou audience, Hua Jueping treated all his listeners' feedback equally. Hua Jueping shared a vivid memory of an occasion when members of the audience requested a certain performance by the storyteller Huang Yi'an 黄忆庵, who was admired as a '*ping-tan* talent' by the previous Prime Minister Zhou Enlai 周恩来. Huang Yi'an was once invited to record the first half of his well-known self-composed story, *Wen Zhengming* 文征明. Due to his advanced age, the storyteller's performance was not as accomplished as during his career peak. However, after the story was broadcast, the Suzhou Radio Station received a letter signed by more than one hundred audience members from Shanghai that requested that the programme continue to record the remaining episodes of the repertoire, which the programme then agreed to undertake¹¹.

Hua Jueping pursued his principle that only by treating the feedback from the audience seriously would the audience show their loyalty to the programme. *Ping-tan* radio broadcasting requires the audience members' persistent long-term commitment in order to survive. Considering the raw materials out of which *ping-tan* programmes are constructed into dozens of episodes, the programme producers are tasked with much more than merely relaying live performances; in addition, they need to elaborate the most impressive moments to attract new audience members and maintain existing followers. Traditionally, it was almost exclusively the responsibility of the storytellers themselves to maintain the audience's curiosity and thereby sustain the tradition; nowadays, however, with the prevalence and prominence of radio broadcast *ping-tan*, the producers have taken on some of that responsibility. Meanwhile, the producers have taken strenuous measures to ensure that the artform's original performer-audience feedback loop retains its vitality, albeit in a transformed manner; while in the traditional story house the interactions were instantaneous and based on in-the-moment perception and reaction, for the radio performers and listeners, the interactions became protracted and mediated over many hours.

Conclusion

This article reviewed a brief history of the *Suzhou ping-tan* radio programme from its introduction to the radio industry in the 20th century. By taking a focal example of the *ping-tan* programme on channel AM 1080 conducted by programme producer Hua Jueping between 1980 to 2000, I have illustrated how the mediated transformation of traditional oral performance took place from the original physical performing space to an invisible radio broadcast platform. Relaying the live performance

recording was the foundation of the *ping-tan* programme. Serving those who are either interested in receiving more out of the live performance, or who are not able to attend the daily performance remains the essence of this *ping-tan* radio broadcasting. For listeners, the radio platform has built up another public performance space beyond the real story house environment, enabling them to share their receptions with thousands of live customers. Programme producers play a similar role as storytellers, requiring their all efforts to collect the materials, accumulate the *ping-tan* recording archives, and seek novel and elaborate ways to present *ping-tan* on the radio while maintaining a connection with audience member.

The current programme producer Zhang Yuhong¹² admitted that nowadays the *ping-tan* programme still largely relies on the large body of recordings collected after 1985, though most of the original performers have passed away. As Zhang Yuhong explained, thanks to the dazzling performances held in the *ping-tan* radio archive, ‘we are able to listen to the dead people to tell stories in their wonderful performance. It is sad that we are reliant [on the old recordings] but it has been a valuable part of *ping-tan* daily life.’ In other words, the *ping-tan* radio programme has created a fascinating platform to extend from the traditional performance space. Simultaneously, this radio programme has profoundly involved *ping-tan* listening habits in people’s everyday lifestyle, enabling *ping-tan* an achievable open access to more audience members.

This article suggests that the combination of the storytellers’ support, audience members’ loyal following and engagement, and the programme producers’ effort, the *ping-tan* radio praxis has been significant to *ping-tan* dissemination and preservation. By conducting this autonomous broadcasting platform, listening to *ping-tan* radio programmes has perhaps become an indispensable part of this tradition, in terms of the 85-year radio broadcasting history in Suzhou.

Notes

¹The name *Suzhou ping-tan* is a compound word to indicate *pinghua* and *tanci* genres since 1950s and afterwards, most of people recognise *ping-tan* as integrity as the dominant folk ark in Suzhou. In order to identify this composition, although other literatures use *pingtan* (Bender, 2003) as the spelling, I use a hyphen in between to link *ping* (hua) and *tan* (ci).

²From Cao Hanchang’s interview commentary in 1994 within McDaniel’s (2001) article.

³The profile of ‘Suzhou local radio stations before the revolution’, please see online *Suzhou Chorography* resource: <http://www.dfzb.suzhou.gov.cn/zsbl/1662927.htm>, edited by Xu Bin.

⁴Hua Jueping, personal communication, 27 August 2013.

⁵There were four departments subordinate to Suzhou broadcasting radio station during the Japanese occupancy period, the technical department, broadcasting department, general service department, and the receiving department, on purpose for manipulating the news release.

⁶See <http://www.dfzb.suzhou.gov.cn/zsbl/348927.htm>

⁷The Shanghai Ping-tan Troupe was called Shanghai People’s Ping-tan Troupe (*Shanghai renmin ping-tan tuan*) at that time.

⁸Huan Jueping explained that for his position as a programme producer, he earned 50 *yuan* per month, which was considered as a higher subsidy because he previously worked in Shanghai; while for the average salary of this position was around 30–40 *yuan* per month.

⁹To make an error or a vocal blemish during singing is called *kai hua* 开花 (literary ‘flower blossom’) in *ping-tan* jargon.

¹⁰Yin Dequan, personal communication, 7 October 2015

¹¹*Wen Zhengming* is a forty-episode story in its entirety.

¹²Zhang Yuhong, personal communication, 6 September 2013

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AUTHORS OF RURAL CHINESE NARRATIVE ART:

How scripts for *Laoting dagu* (乐亭大鼓) used to be written

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This paper focuses on script writers of the rural narrative genre Laoting dagu in East Hebei. Many traditional performers of narrative genres in rural China work without written texts, unfolding their narratives orally on the basis of existing plots, but in Laoting dagu (tales performed to the accompaniment of drum and three-stringed lute) written scripts and text authors are common. After 1949, the Communist Party encouraged authors to create scripts for folk literature; the governments of rural counties engaged staff for creating fiction, poetry and scripts for the local performing arts, including such genres as Laoting dagu. This paper focuses on the nameless authors of Laoting dagu, most of whom make a living mainly as farmers or as staff of the county's cultural offices. How do they compose their texts, and where do they get their materials from?

To farmers living in the rural area of East Hebei, Jidong (冀东), China, the *Laoting dagu*¹ narrative genre has provided one of the main forms of entertainment for more than 150 years. One night performance of *Laoting dagu* in a rural village consists of *xiaoduan* 小段 (sung short verse) and *dashu* 大書 (extended tale)², of which the overall structure is formed by the shifts between song and narration, extending for three or more hours. In general performers may stay in one village for three nights, and the continuation of the *dashu* story is often narrated in the next village. Today the occasion of the performance of *dashu* has become very rare, yet the performers can narrate *dashu* for a month or more.

Performers of *dashu* generally do not have or use written texts (books or scripts). Traditionally they listened to and memorized some verses of *dashu* and composed and performed almost all their texts using the plots of pre-existing stories. Since the *dashu* genre is very long, the repertoires cannot be memorized word by word. Even for the performance of *xiaoduan* many performers did not use written texts. Before the liberation (1949) many rural performers did not have an opportunity to get an education. Moreover, during the period before the 1970s a number of performers were illiterate. I met some illiterate but splendid performers who had memorized texts of their own repertoires in 1980s. All of them memorized *xiaoduan* but they could not memorize the long tales, *dashu*. *Dashu* repertoires, such as *Yangjiajiang* 杨家将, *Hujiajiang* 呼家将 or *Baogongan* 包公案, are very long tales. A performer will need several weeks or more than one month to complete the telling of one whole story. This means that the performance technique is "composition-in-performance" (Lord 1965). In an earlier paper I have clarified how they improvise the texts of *dashu* during their performances (Iguchi 2003: 100-112). In general, the performers transmitted the *dashu* texts orally.

However, for the *xiaoduan*, especially the modern repertoires *xinshu* 新书, some performers of *Laoting dagu* do in fact rely on scripts or other written texts and there are quite a number of

script-writers native to this district³. Unfortunately, many of their works have never been published or even performed. After the liberation, the Communist Party encouraged authors to create scripts for folk literature and the governments of the rural counties engaged the staff for creating fiction, poetry and scripts of the local performing arts. This paper focuses on those nameless authors, most of whom made a living mainly as farmers or staff of the county's cultural offices, such as *wenlian* 文联 and *wenhuaguan* 文化馆. At the same time they frequently wrote texts for *Laoting dagu*. In order to obtain a clear picture of the writing activities and the works of these rural writers, the author of this article in the late 1980s and again in 2001 conducted fieldwork and visited the writers who lived in Laoting and Luannan counties.

More than ten types of the genre called *dagu* 大鼓 exist in northern China, and all of them involve a performer who sings and narrates a certain kind of story while beating a small drum (*gu* 鼓). *Dagu* can occur in urban areas, such as *Jingyun dagu* 京韵大鼓 and *Meihua dagu* 梅花大鼓, as well as in rural areas, such as *Xihe dagu* 西河大鼓 and *Laoting dagu*. However, due to the different habits of the audience, *dagu* in urban areas generally involve only *xiaoduan*, i.e. performing short pieces and sung verse, while in rural areas *dagu* performances include *dashu*, i.e. extended tales, which are considered more fundamental.

The author first conducted fieldwork in 1988, investigating the activities of *dagu* performers while they toured various villages. Due to China's economic boom, this touring style rapidly disappeared, and the farmer-performers gradually abandoned this inefficient way of earning income. In 2003, the Chinese government introduced an intangible cultural heritage system in order to reinvigorate traditional cultural activities, which gave the *Laoting dagu* a new impetus. The performance was revalued as a tourist attraction, as well as a subject in local school classrooms.

As suggested by its name, *Laoting dagu* was born in Laoting County of Hebei 河北 province. Under the Qing Dynasty, Laoting was a part of the Luanzhou 滦州 administrative division, and the word Luan stems from the name of the river Luanhe 滦河, which flows through Luanzhou and Laoting into the Bohai 渤海 sea. *Laoting dagu* spread throughout the area, which featured relatively better economic conditions than other areas.

Following the liberation of China, *Laoting dagu* evolved into two distinct schools: the *donglu* 东路 (Eastern style) was popular in the original area of Laoting, while the new *xilu* 西路 (Western style) arose in the neighbouring Luannan County. Geographical and linguistic differences between these counties seem to have resulted in the use of different tunes in *donglu* and *xilu*, and the two styles developed and spread separately from each other.

Although these two counties are geographical neighbours, most farmers have felt little need to communicate across their county borders. *Dagu* performers were the exception to this rule, as they kept travelling and performing in both places. However, despite this activity, and due to their traditional historic and geographic isolation, the two counties were hardly closely related. Yet, cultural interaction occasionally existed, and three kinds of performance-based folk performing arts *did* have a mutual development, namely *piyingxi*⁴ 皮影戏 (shadow puppet theatre), *Laoting dagu*, and *pingju* 评剧 (local theatre), which are now often jointly referred to as *Jidong sanzhihua* 冀东三枝花 (The Three Flowers of East Hebei).

1. The narrative performing arts in rural areas

Various forms of narrative arts, or *quyi*, exist in China, and their specific character largely depends on whether they are performed in urban or rural areas.

The different locations where narrative arts are performed, referred to as *shuchang* 书场, come with decisive differences in form. *Shuchang* in urban areas essentially refer to houses, such as *chaguan* 茶馆 or *shuguan* 书馆, where audiences pay a fee to attend a performance. In contrast, *dagu* in rural areas are performed in open spaces on village streets, or in large open spaces outside of villages. As soon as a performer arrives and stands beside a single desk, a *shuchang* can begin. Within this

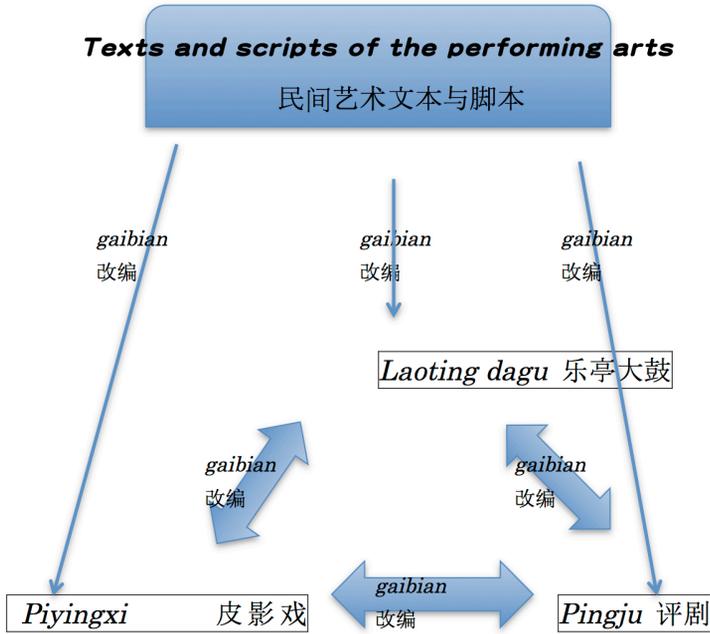


Fig.1 The Three Flowers of East Hebei (*Jidong sanzhihua*) The Three Flowers (or genres), *piyingshi*, *Laoting dagu*, and *pingju* used texts adapted from (*gaibian* 改编) the stories of other genres. *Piyingshi*, *dagu*, and *pingju* thus share common texts and scripts.

tradition, before the spread of the “Reform and Opening-up Policy” of the late 1980s, the village supported the performances while the village administration also made arrangements. However, in recent times it has become more common that a family takes on the sponsorship of this kind of performances, especially when celebrating a family event, such as a childbirth or a jubilee. In any case, the audience can attend and leave freely, without any time constraints.

Regarding the aforementioned differences in length, urban *shuchang*, such as those in Beijing or Tianjin, mainly offer short tales, *xiaoduan*. In contrast, in rural areas, long tales, called *dashu*, constitute the main program, while short pieces are sung as a prelude while the audience gathers and waits for the *dashu*. In rural areas, in particular during the slack season of summer, the nightly performances used to be long. Generally, a performer would sing and tell about four hours every night for one or two weeks, or even for more than a month, and often storytellers would be unable to complete a story during that time. To cover this span of time, a written version – if it did exist – would fill about ten volumes or more⁵. Furthermore, it would be impractical for the performer to follow an original text strictly, as the story had to be adjusted so that it could end at an exciting point every night.

2.Writers of Chinese rural narrative arts

The pedigree of rural intellectuals and writers.

Laoting County flourished under the Qing Dynasty, as it was an important stop for travellers to northeastern China. It is well known that fiefs were given to generals, and also that their families managed the fields belonging to the royal family of Beijing. There were also wealthy businessmen living in the area. In addition, there were intellectuals from rich families, who had successfully passed

the *keju* 科举, or imperial examination, and who received the highest rank of *juren* 举人. There were also many intellectuals who had failed the examinations, but who ran private schools, or *sishu* 私塾, in villages, and some of them traditionally wrote scripts for *piyingxi* and *dagu*.

The folk genre *piyingxi* appeared earlier than *dagu*, and thus had significant impact on the latter. In contrast to *dagu*, *piyingxi* normally requires several participants to operate puppets, while simultaneously performing each role. For this kind of performance the puppeteers used scripts (*yingci* 影词 or *yingjuan* 影卷). These *yingci* were mainly written by local intellectuals, and numerous works can still be found, some of which were published in cities during the era of the Republic of China. These published *yingci* used to be widely read as entertainment literature, and many stories in *dagu* were borrowed from *yingci*. Not only *yingci* but also all three of the performing arts in this region, *piyingxi*, *pingju*, and *dagu*, share common texts and scripts. In many cases, the overlap is the result of mutual exchange via re-creation (*zai chuangzuo* 再创作), transplantation (*yizhi* 移植), and adaptation (*gaibian*) of texts, with every genre presenting narratives in its own forms.

Of the three genres, *piyingxi* has the longest history, and *yingjuan* (shadow-scrolls, scripts) already existed as long ago as the Ming Dynasty. *Piyingxi* has also been called *Luanzhou yingxi* or *Laoting piying*. During the Qing Dynasty, two writers became widely known for three scripts, *Wufenghui* 五锋会, *Erdumei* 二度梅, and *Qingyunjian* 青云剑, all considered classical masterpieces. The two authors were intellectuals who had failed to pass the imperial examinations. Roughly, two hundred *yingjuan* scripts survive from this time.

There was little chance for people in that geographical area to receive modern education. Instead, a traditional style of education existed, where intellectuals who had failed the imperial examinations opened private schools, *sishu*. Authors and writers of *dagu* were usually trained in such old-fashioned schools.

Originally, *pingju* (*pingxi*) was a simple show performed by a single man, locally referred to as *Laozi* 落子⁶. *Laozi* was reformed by Cheng Zhaocai 成兆才 (1874-1929), who was born into a family that suffered from extreme poverty, and lived in a village that now belongs to Luannan county. When he was eighteen, he occasionally went to *sishu* to listen in secret to lectures during his time off from work. In this way he learned to read and write and was introduced to classical novels. Over

the course of his life, he authored 102 scripts, more than half of which are adaptations, and he represents a successful example of those who were educated by teachers who had failed in the imperial examinations.

Cheng wrote the script *Yangsanjie gaozhuang* 杨三姐告状 [The lawsuit of the young woman Yang], which was based on a legal case of murder from 1918.⁷ Cheng wrote the script immediately after hearing the news. It was performed on stage and widely adapted by local theatre and *dagu*. The story became a classic, and has been modified for numerous works, such as movies and TV dramas.

Professional writers living in rural areas are called *xiangtu zuojia* 乡土作家 (village writers). In Chinese, professional writers are referred to differently from nonprofessional writers. The term *zuo**jia* 作家 refers to a professional writer, while nonprofessionals are called *zuo**zhe* 作者, which is usually translated as “author,” and explicitly refers to a writer who is not a professional. In Jidong, as in most areas of China, there are only a few *zuo**jia* or professional writers, and



Fig.2 Yang Sanjie 杨三姐 (r) (Yang Guohua 杨国华, 1902-84) (*Renmin Ribao haiwaiban* Mar.31.2005 URL: <http://luannan.678114.com>)

most writers are *zuozhe*, or authors. Three kinds of *zuozhe* or nonprofessional writers create scripts for folk performing arts. Some write and work as performers or county government officers, while others write only as a hobby. *Zuojia* publish their works, whereas *zuozhe* almost never publish their works, except occasionally in local magazines.

Rural writers of narrative arts, whom the author met at Jidong, can be categorized into the following three types:

Type 1) The literati type: these writers are well versed in classical literature and write extensively. They are either *zuojia*, professional writers, or *zuozhe*, nonprofessional, but today most of them are county government staff.

Characteristically, works of type 1 include folk culture and history of Laoting County.

Type 2) The performer type: these writers are performers who write for their own performances (*zibian ziyan* 自编自演). They are usually good at modification, and mainly write long tales to suit their own needs. They are *zuozhe*, nonprofessional writers. Many writers of this type have not had opportunity to acquire knowledge of the classical literature of type 1 and usually do not intend to create original works.

Type 3) The propaganda type: in contrast to the two types mentioned above, these writers were born after the 1920s, and include both *zuojia* and *zuozhe*. Under the socialist slogan of “*Wenyi de qingqibing*” 文艺的轻骑兵 [Cavalrymen of folk literature], the local government established numerous *quyi* troupes after the 1950s and 1960s. The leaders of the Communist Party were aware that *quyi* was one of the best tools for their political campaigns and for mass education. Many people became writers in order to propagandize war-related messages from the Chinese Communist Party during wartime, as well as policies on various issues since then. This group consists of writers with various careers, such as performers or government staff, and they remain active today.

In order to present a clearer picture of the differences between the three types above, the careers and writing activities of those interviewed are detailed below. (Underline means the writers whom I met in Laoting and Luannan County).

Type 1) Intellectuals from rural villages who are familiar with classical literature.⁸ For example: Mo Yao 墨瑶, Shi Dexin 史德新, Xu Xingxin 徐兴信, and He Zongyu 何宗禹.

Type 2) Writers who arranged texts based on existing stories in both popular literature and regional performing arts. For example: Zhao Enchao 赵恩潮, Liu Zhishan 刘志山, Cao Shengyu 曹胜雨, Jia Changfu 贾昌福, Liu Shuyu 刘书于.

Type 3) Writers of modern works focused on daily life and the Communist Party's political objectives. For example: Gao Rongyuan 高荣远, Li Enke 李恩科, Zhang Xiwu 张习武, Song Hong 宋洪, Chen Liying 陈立颖.

Here I introduce one writer from each of the three types whom I met and interviewed in their office or houses.

Type 1 Mo Yao 墨瑶

Mo Yao (Zhang Jianguo 张建国 b.1942) was born in Laoting County, and is a member of the Chinese Writers Association. He is a professional writer and former president of the county's *wenlian* (Cultural Bureau). He created revisions of classical novels and recorded *pinghua* 评话⁹ tales in written form.

Most of his works were published. His main works are novels, but he has also composed scripts for *quyi*.

Type 2 Zhao Enchao 赵恩潮

Zhao Enchao (b.1942) was born in Luannan County; he was a *dagu* accompanist and staff member at the county cultural center. His mother dearly loved the performing arts, and thus transmitted many stories and texts to him, allowing him to write *dagu* texts from memory. For example, his work *Qingyunjian* is a typical revised work. Zhao Enchao

watched *Laoting yingxi* performances of *Qingyunjian* and committed many phrases to memory. Finally, he wrote a 260,000-word script on the basis of the *yingxi*, which he showed to a *dagu* storyteller. He Jianchun 何建春 (b.1961), and together they began to perform it in the style of *dagu* in the late 1980s. Since then, it has become part of He Jianchun's regular repertoire. Zhao wrote down the text in handwritten notebooks (Fig. 9). However, only his partner can read and perform his works.¹² There is little chance that his scripts can be sung by other singers.

Type 3 Gao Rongyuan 高荣远

Gao Rongyuan (b.1915) was born in Luannan County. His eyesight was poor, so he learned the *dasanxian* in order to be an accompanist. In 1943, he began to write scripts for the anti-Japanese war campaign, in order to protest the serious damage done to his homeland by the Japanese army. He composed many scripts for the campaigns of the Communist Party and the government. Such politically influenced writers composed scripts for the promotion of communist policy, called 'new works' *xinshu*, including *Jihua shengyu* 計畫生育 (Birth control) and *Wanhun jiangli* 晚婚獎勵 (Encouragement for late marriage).

Timeline of Gao Rongyuan's activity:

1943 Gao began to write *xinshu* (i.e. *Huoshao Zhongjiatan* [Burning down Zhongjiatan village] 火燒鐘家灘 and *Yumin fuchou* [Revenge the people] 與民復仇)

1945 Gao began to organize a storytelling group for the Communist Party's campaign and wrote *xinshu* for "land reform" (*Nongmin dafanshen* [Farmers reborn] 農民大翻身 and *Wangu huitou* [A hardhead reforms] 頑固回頭)

1946-49 Gao moved with the troops and performed *xinshu*; he joined the Communist Party.

1950 Gao trained young performers and wrote *xinshu* in Tangshan city; he also taught students in the Central Conservatory, Beijing

1950- Gao arranged the *xinshu* *Linhai Xueyuan* [Tracks in the snowy forest] 林海雪原 for *Laoting dagu*.

He has written many scripts for *Laoting dagu* (more than 4 million words in total) and has had all of his texts reproduced in Braille for blind readers.

3. Conclusion

Obviously, the Chinese tradition of modifying and adapting texts for the performing arts, known as *gaibian* [revision], has had a deep influence not only on the narrative art of *quyi*, but also on the oral transmission of literary texts.

In rural areas, writing a story through the revision of existing works is generally understood as a natural form of creative expression. Audiences do not see anything suspect in a story being adapted by others and presented under a new author's name, since it is retold in the words of the adapter. It is rare to place an author's name on this kind of script, and in many cases it is not clear who did the revision and when. This practice is common throughout the history of Chinese literature, folk art and narrative art, where the most important issue is how to use the story for performance or popular reading. Especially in the district of Jidong, the three kinds of folk art share certain source materials that are



Fig 3. Mo Yao (Zhang Jianguo) in his house (2001). (r, calligraphy of the writer Hao Ran 浩然¹⁰, l, the *quyi* slogan of politician Chen Yun 陈云 written by himself.)



Fig. 4. Membership Card of China Writers Association (Photos 3, 4 and 5 by the author)



Fig. 5. The Office of Laoting County *wenlian* the county branch of China federation of literary and art circles (2001) (Photo by the author)



Fig.6. The writer, Zhao Enchao (r) and his partner, *dagu* singer He Jianchun (2001) (Photo by the author).



Fig. 7. The manuscript, *yingjuan* of *Qingyunjian* (date unknown)

revised for the purpose of each genre. There exist huge repertoires, but truly original work is rather rare. Almost all works are gradually transplanted or revised from other genres of folk art, novels, or dramas. Hence, it is not always easy to know the origin of a story. There are cases in which a story has gone through multiple revisions, both in oral performance traditions and in written adaptations. The same story might have been revised from the old Chinese style *zhanghui xiaoshuo* 章回小说 (novels written in chapters), to certain kinds of Chinese theatre, then to folk art, and so on.

This raises the question whether the talent needed to create an original work is different from that needed to make a revision? As described above, original works of *Laoting dagu* that are not revised on the basis of texts from some other genre are mostly based on true stories. Let us take the case of *Yangsantie gaozhuang* as an example. This story was based on a real murder in a village now located in Luannan County. It tells how a rural girl struggled to bring a lawsuit against her elder sister's husband, seeking justice for her murder. The story gets its dramatic appeal from its depiction of

a young woman overcoming others' doubt about her courage, successfully filing a lawsuit against the much richer family her sister had married into. She eventually won the case, despite her weak social background. This story included components that made it a drama perfectly suited to public taste. The story would probably not have been immediately scripted for the local theatre, *pingxi*, if it had not had the right ingredients, something we find all over the world.

Yangsantie's case was easily scripted, since similar stories of lawsuits already existed, for example in the Beijing Opera's *Susan qijie* 苏三起解. It would not have been very difficult for authors to adapt such stories, which had in turn been revised multiple times already. All it would require was to adapt the existing formulas for new content.

Apparently, it would not make much difference to authors of *dagu* scripts whether they based their work on a *dagu* script such as *Qingyunjian*, which was revised from the script for *piyingxi*, or on the *Yangsantie gaozhuang*, which was created and revised from a true story.

My observations of rural folk art lead me to the conclusion that 'revision' is a form of creativity born and bred by the farming communities. There is a strong appetite for various kinds of stories close to their hearts. This form of artistic expression seems to respond to the needs and resources available to the authors and audiences of *Laoting dagu*.

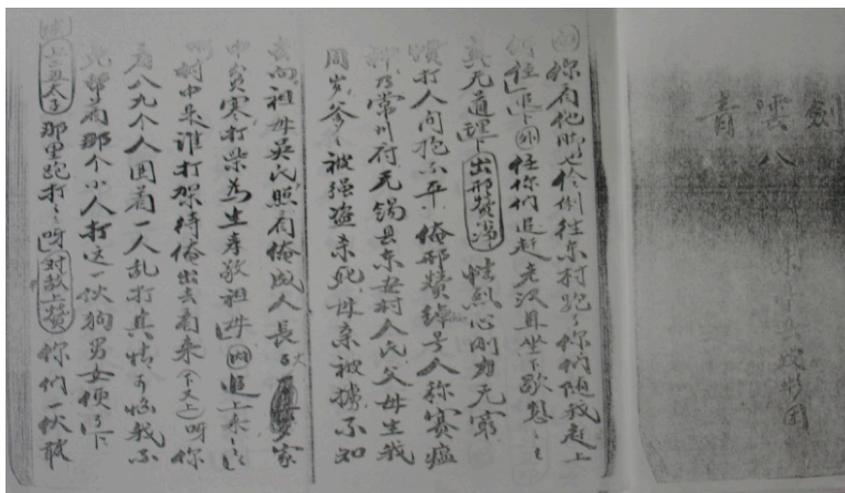
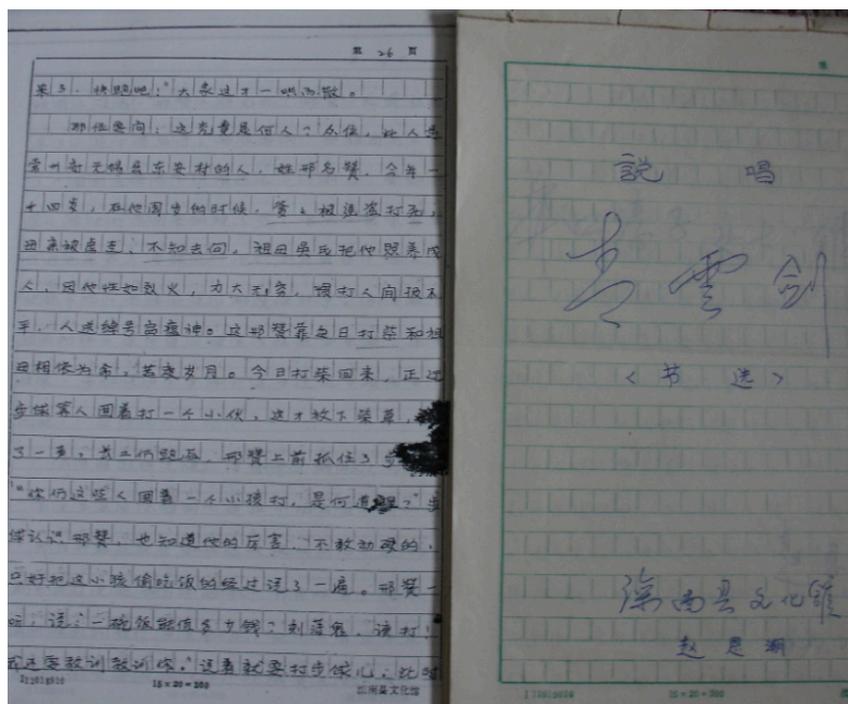


Fig. 8. Yingjuan, *Qingyunjian* photocopy (Photo by the author)



9. The notebook manuscript of *Qingyunjian* written by Zhao Enchao (Photo by the author)



Fig. 10 The Writer (accompanist), Gao Rongyuan with his family (2001, Luannan County)
(Photo by the author).

抗震救灾作品专辑 KANGZHENJIUZAIZUOPINZHUANJI



◎乐亭大鼓

震撼

■张习武（河北唐山）

山城五月和谐安宁，
社会稳定其乐融融，
和风徐徐催人奋进，
书声朗朗响彻天空。

仍然是精力充沛雷厉风行，
深入到地震现场亲临指导，
顾不得余震频频时有发生，
下扶梯疮痍满目瓦砾遍地，

人民利益高于一切，
千方百计确保顺利进行，
只要生还有一线希望，永不言弃，
我们就尽百倍努力，决不会放松。
下一步投入财力恢复重建，
短时间及早实现路电水通，
已备好必要的物资和急需的食品，
陆续发放到你们手中。
志愿者从四面赶来展开援救，
祖国就是大家庭。
我们要把这悲痛化为力量，
及早地摆脱困境实现共赢。”
众乡亲感激涕零泪盈眶，
响起了持久不息热烈的掌声：
“感谢政府感谢党！感谢政府感谢党！”
纷纷致敬异口同声，
温总理一一回应分别握手，
转身身详细询问救灾详情，
他问道居民住所可曾安置，
遇难人数是否弄清，
又叮嘱物品要及时下达到位，
要确保医药充足供应，
再看他步伐稳健奔赴一线，
执话筒呼吸生命一刻也不肯停。
温总理早把生死置之度外，
个人安危脑后扔，
情急中临空一蹶未站稳，
身体倒在废墟坑。

Fig. 11. Modern repertoires in recent years. 《Quyí》 2008.6 *Laoting dagu* 《Zhenhan [Thunderbolt] 震撼》 written by Zhang Xiwu 张习武.

Appendix

1 Repertories of *dashu*, the extended tales of *Laoting dagu*

1) The repertories common to *piyingxi* and *Laoting dagu*

包公案、刘公案、施公案、杨家将、秦英征西、呼家将、青云剑 杨三姐、绿牡丹

2) Other repertories (some of them in common with other *quyi* genres)

大八义、小八义、回杯记、月明楼、双圣旨康熙私访、千里驹、紫金镯、扬州夺印、双镖记、隋唐外史、烈女传、鹦鹉记、双合印、彭公案、回龙传三公案、错断颜查散、破孟州、三省庄、锤打徐州、粉妆楼、拿花蝴蝶、三打天门阵、忘恩负义、曹家将、红风传

2 A part of modern repertoires (Underline means the works written or adapted by Gao Rongyuan)

Dashu

苦菜花、节振国、苏家镇、平原枪声、烈火金刚、儿女风尘记 艳阳天、桐柏英雄、大刀记、连心锁、占地红樱、闪闪的红星

Xiaoduan

与民复仇、郝万青、针锋相对、顽固回头、火烧钟家滩、新十问十答、双恨美、骂汪精卫、自由结婚、送夫参军、保卫和平、劝夫归队、杨母坠楼、骂崔明辅、银环探监、打高大鹏、韩英见娘、十二月开花、朱老巩护钟、地主恢心、董存瑞、徐学惠、开明地主、老贫农、四季生产、白维鹏、劳动英雄、黎明的战歌、送梳子、红梅赞、渔家女、雷锋擒敌、地下苍松、绿宝石、计划生育、二百鸡子、新婚赞、要嫁装、撵子劝夫、夫妻夜话、进城路上、破镜重圆、好村长、桃园会、阖家欢、燕去凤来

3 Modern repertories written in recent years

小两口分家 (2007) 农村新貌 (2008) 震撼 (2008)

香飘瓜圆 (2012) 唱唱咱村的新鲜事 (2012)

活雷锋张子祥, 清官万古传 (2014)

科技铺就幸福路, 乐亭新貌, 滦县新貌, 和谐乐亭展新容, 春运, 文明生态村建设, 等

Notes

¹In China, 341 genres of *quyi* 曲艺 [performed narrative arts], with or without music, have been registered (*Zhongguo dabaik quanshu: quyi xiqu* 1983). *Dagu* is a genre of *quyi* in Northern China; this style of performance is characterized by a *gu* [drum] that the narrator plays while the accompanist plays a stringed instrument, *dasanxian*. It is popular mostly among people in the rural areas of Hebei province. *Laoting dagu* (or *Leting dagu*, in standard Chinese pronunciation) is one particular type originating in Laoting county northeast of Tianjin.

²The term '*dashu*' has different meanings in each narrative genre, e.g. Yangzhou storytellers use this term as a designation of the content of the story (Børdahl 1996: 8 and list of terms appended), but in the northern *dagu* genre, *dashu* only means long (extended) text and it is also called "*wanzihuo* 蔓子活" in this genre.

³We can find the names of the representative authors on the website Zhengxie Tangshan Wenshiwang 政协唐山文史网 (see References); the oldest author is Shi Menglan 史梦兰 (1812~1898). Eight authors of Qing dynasty and thirteen authors of the modern age are recognized as the primary authors of *Laoting dagu*.

⁴*Piyingxi* is also called *Tangshan piyingxi* 唐山皮影戏 in Tangshan city, and the city's troupe often visited cities overseas.

⁵During the Qing dynasty authors of urban areas wrote long tales *guci* 鼓词, consisting of verse and prose, and this kind of written text was brought to the rural areas and adapted to the local genre by the rural performers.

⁶A simple old play called *lianhua luo* 莲花落 spread in this area during Qing dynasty and it was called *Laozi*.

Chen Zhaocai reformed this *Laozi* and established more refined new theatre *pingqiang bangzixi* 平腔梆子戏 in 1915. It is recognized that his troupe *Jingshi xishe* 警世戏社 is the first theatrical company of *pingxi*. So Chen Zhaocai is recognized as the “ancestor” of *pingxi*.

⁷In 1918, a real lawsuit involved a murder in a village now located in Luannan County. A rural young woman struggled to bring this lawsuit against her elder sister’s richer family, into which her sister had married. She was too young, in people’s eyes, to have the courage to begin and succeed in the lawsuit. She eventually won the case despite her weak social background at that time.

⁸During the late Qing and Minguo period there existed writers of type 1. For example, Liu Zitong 刘子桐 (1860-1932), Chen Jichang 陈纪昌, Qi Zhen 齐祯, Gao Keting 高可亭, Gao Shuyao 高述尧, Shi Menglan 史梦兰 (1812-1898), Liu Xiangjiu 刘香久 (1884~1955) and Li Dazhou 李大钊 (professor at Beijing University and co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party, 1889~1927).

⁹*Pinghua* is also called *pingshu* 评书. It originated in *shuohua* 说话 and *jiangshi* 讲史 of Tang and Song dynasties. It became popular after the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty. According to the dialect *pinghua* divided many local genres, *Suzhou pinghua*, *Yangzhou pinghua*, *Fuzhou pinghua* etc. *Pinghua* is performed by the single narrator, who tells (not sings) the traditional repertoire which was based on popular novels such as *Sanguo yanyi* 三国演义.

¹⁰Hao Ran (1932-2008) is the famous writer, who grew up in Tangshan city, Hebei province so Mo Yao knew him very well. Hao Ran published many novels (more than 50) described the rural people and village life. “Write the farmer, write for the farmer” is his creative purpose.

¹¹Chen Yun (1905 –1995) was one of the most influential leaders of the People’s Republic of China during the 1980s and 90s. He was born in Qingpu County, Zhejiang province and he loved *pingtan* 评弹 throughout his life. In 1983 ‘Comrade Chen Yun on *Pingtan* Conversation and Communication’ was published and his slogan ‘*Churen chushu zouzhenglu* (people, scripts, walk right way)’ was spread in *quyi* circles.

¹²On the *gaibian* process and how *Qingyunjian* was revised and performed, see Iguchi 2003: 100-112.

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URL <http://www.tszx.gov.cn/tszxwsw/index.aspx>

PRAYING AT THE XIANGSHAN ALTAR OF WISHES:

Performance of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* in the Greater Suzhou Area

Xiaosu Sun

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Baojuan 寶卷 (*precious scrolls*) recitation is a genre of religious storytelling. Its repertoire includes liturgical texts, stories with Buddhist themes, legends about local deities, and tales of historical figures. Performed at home banquets, funerals, temple festivals, and other communal events, *baojuan* enjoyed immense popularity during the late imperial period and has survived mainly in western Gansu province and rural areas of Wu dialects speaking regions of modern China. The Xiangshan *baojuan* 香山寶卷 (*Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*) tells of the story of Princess Miaoshan 妙善 (*Marvelous Goodness*), a pious princess who, against her father's will, refuses to marry, and later offers her own eyes and hands to prepare a medicine to heal her ailing father—an act of extreme self-sacrifice that transforms Miaoshan into the Thousand-Armed, Thousand-Eyed Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音菩薩 (*Avalokiteśvara* in Sanskrit). It is not only one of the oldest works in the genre, but is also still often recited throughout the Wu dialects speaking area.

So far, scholarly attention to the Xiangshan *baojuan* has centered on the origin and development of the legend of Miaoshan, but performances of this *baojuan*, which remain immensely popular in the greater Suzhou area, have yet to be studied.¹ Although the earliest surviving edition of the Xiangshan *baojuan* dates from 1773, it is believed that this *baojuan* already existed in the 16th century and was widely performed in the Jiangnan area during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).² The following *yuefu* 樂府 poem from the 19th century Suzhou 蘇州 refers to a performance of the Xiangshan *baojuan* in the monastery:

Let's go to listen to a *baojuan* recital!
Let's go to listen to a *baojuan* recital!
Grannies and girls are going to the monastery.
Grannies want to follow the example of King Miaozhang
Girls want to follow the example of the Third Princess (Miaoshan)
Alas,
The Great Chiliocosmos!
Amitabha
They are carrying loads of incenses and candles

聽宣卷
聽宣卷
婆兒女兒上僧院
婆兒要似妙莊王
女兒要似三公主
吁嗟乎
大千世界
阿彌陀!
香兒燭兒一塔拖。³

Performances of the Xiangshan *baojuan* remain immensely popular in southern Jiangsu province, and there are varying styles of recital across its different regions. For example, in the town of Shengpu 勝浦, the *baojuan* recital known as *xuanjuan* 宣卷 (lit. scrolls-proclaiming) is accompanied by a *muyu*

木魚 (percussive wooden-fish) and a *qingzi* 磬子 (small brass chime) together with stringed musical instruments, such as the *erhu* 二胡 (two-stringed bowed fiddle) and *yueqin* 月琴 (four-stringed pluck lute). But in the areas of Zhangjiagang 張家港 and Changshu 常熟, where *baojuan* recital known as *jiangjing* 講經 (lit. scriptures-telling), recital follows the traditional style, and is only accompanied by wooden-fish and chime. This paper—based on the author’s fieldwork conducted over the summers of 2011, 2012 and 2013 in the greater Suzhou area—attempts to contextualize the performance of the *Xiangshan baojuan* by looking at the “Xiangshan Altar of Wishes” rite where this *baojuan* is performed. The paper provides a description of the “Xiangshan Altar of Wishes” rite performed at a house blessing ceremony and it draws special attention to some complimentary episodes, such as “Miaoshan’s Journey to Hell,” and “Praying for Magical Healing Potion,” that performers compose on their own and may insert and develop during remarkably elastic and malleable performances.

The Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite

The Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite, or *Xiangshan wanyuan* 香山完願 in Chinese (lit. fulfilling wishes at Mt. Xiangshan), is a blessing ceremony where the *Xiangshan baojuan* is performed in front of the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes to thank the Bodhisattva Guanyin for her protection and to pray for blessings for the sponsor family (fig.1). The Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite is sponsored by a *zhai zhu* 齋主 (sponsor) who requests the rite to be performed in his/her house so that they and their family members will be beneficiaries of the ceremony. The *Xiangshan tan* 香山壇 (Xiangshan Altar of Wishes) is set up in the main room of the sponsor and his or her family’s residence, facing south. Portraits or figurines of Guanyin and other deities, such as Amitabha Buddha and Mahasthamaprapta, are placed at the altar. A pile of small icons named *zhima* 紙馬 (lit. paper horses) namely, paper gods, are placed in front of the sacred images of deities. A small rice jar is placed next to the queue of paper gods, and a scale, a ruler, and scissors—which symbolize an endless supply of food and clothing, and by extension, wealth and prosperity—are stuck in the rice jar. The altar is also decorated with a mountain and a bridge made of incense sticks (Mt. Xiangshan and Immortal Bridge, respectively), as well as fragrant purses, paper lotus flowers, and paper lotus shoes for Guanyin. The *baojuan* performer(s), known as *jiangjing xiansheng* 讲经先生 (master of *baojuan* recital) sits at a table facing the altar and perform the *baojuan*, using a percussive wooden-fish and a small brass chime (fig.2). A regular *baojuan* performance company is composed of one lead performer, who can be either male or female and who fills the role of cantor; one or two supporting performers who take turns reciting when the lead performer needs to take a break; and a *hefo* 和佛 group, a chorus of no less than eight women who sit around the table, providing the regular responding refrains



Fig. 1 Performing the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite in the sponsor’s residence, Changshu, Jiangsu province.

of *namo amitufofo* or *namo guanshiyin pusa* that punctuate the recital.

As they sing and chant, the chorus members also make the joss money and paper flowers that will be burned at the end of the ceremony. The lead *baojuan* performer has the most crucial role in the performance. Nevertheless, it is a *shiniang* 師娘 (shamans) believed to have the magical power of divination and healing, organizes and acts as administrator of the *baojuan* performing company. The *shiniang* acts as the marshal and officiant of the ceremony, laying out the guidelines for the *baojuan* performers, conducting important rituals, preparing *shutou* 疏頭 (memorials), talismans, and so on. On top of that, the *shiniang* manages the budget and distributes remuneration to each party in the company after the performance.

The basic program of the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite is as follows:

1. Invocation of deities
2. Opening recital: *The Precious Scroll on The Jade Emperor*
3. Recital of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain*
4. Recital of other *baojuan* works, such as *The Precious Scroll on The Kitchen God*.
5. Rites of “Averting Inauspicious Stars” and “Untying the Knots” etc.
6. Dismissal of deities

The Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite is regarded as one of the most popular and efficacious rituals in the greater Suzhou area, and local people believe that its performance promises them good fortune that lasts for three years. Thus many believers routinely have this rite performed in their family homes. Recital of the *Xiangshan baojuan* is the staple of the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite. A standard performance of only the *Xiangshan baojuan* takes no less than six hours. It typically takes a day and night to complete the rite when it is performed in combination with the recital of other *baojuan* works and certain exorcising and blessing rituals, such as “Averting Inauspicious Stars” and “Untying the Knots.” Nowadays, even though the rite has been compressed somewhat due to limitations of time and space, particularly in urban areas, it still takes about twelve hours to carry out.

The most common edition of the *Xiangshan baojuan* employed by local *baojuan* performers these days is not the 1773 edition of full-length *Xiangshan baojuan*, but is instead the *Guanshiyin pusa benxingjing jianji* 觀世音菩薩本行經簡集 (Abbreviated Collection of the Sutra of the Original Life of the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin), hereafter *jianji*.⁴ According to the *baojuan* master Yu Dingjun 餘鼎君 (b. 1943), the 1773 edition was hardly ever performed even back in his father’s times, but favoring the *jianji* edition (1868) has nothing to do with limitations of time. The reason that the *jianji* edition is more frequently selected, Yu says, is that it is suitable for performance. He adds that, unlike the abstruse 1773 edition, the *jianji* edition is concise and straightforward, and its narrative is quick-paced, self-contained, smooth and vivid. Yu believes that its simpler language that is less-jargon-ridden allows it to reach a broader audience, including the illiterate and under-educated.⁵

Upon comparing the two editions, Wilt Idema draws our attention to the fact that the prose, the verse, and the refrain of *nanwu guanshiyin pusa* are clearly distinguished from each other in the *jianji*. Idema concludes that either the editor of the *jianji* edition did a nice editorial cleanup of full-length edition of 1773, or that his editorial work must have been based on a different, better organized full-length edition than that of 1773.⁶ Yu Dingjun confirms that the text of the *jianji* edition is better edited and organized, and therefore preferred by modern *baojuan* performers. My discussion below will demonstrate that, aside from its concise style of language and the more favorable page layout, which Yu and Idema have already pointed out, the fact that the text of the *jianji* edition exhibits a well-designed soundscape and invites improvisation in performance also makes it a performer-friendly script.

Text as Performer-Friendly Script

In the *jianji* edition (1868) there are clearly-marked cues for the arrangement of the aural elements of the performance that facilitate the lead performer’s direction of the chorus who perform without any script. For example, when the first refrain of *nawu guanshiyin pusa* appears next to the last gatha of the prelude, a cue written in smaller characters underneath instructs:

The choir begins from here. When it comes to the name of the Bodhisattva in the text, the ensemble



Fig. 2 Master of *baojuan* recital reciting the Xiangshan *baojuan*, Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province.



Fig. 3 Cue that reads “The choir begins from here. When it comes to the name of the Bodhisattva in the text, the ensemble calls the name of the Bodhisattva once and [the cantor] strikes the ruler once,” *Xiangshan baojuan* (*Guanshiyin pusa benxingjing jianji*, 1868).

calls the name of the Bodhisattva once and [the cantor] strikes the ruler once 此處和佛號起但菩薩名則眾稱念一聲鳴尺一下 (fig. 3).⁷

Similarly, towards the end of the narrative body of the work, a cue written in the text indicates the beginning of the epilogue, which formally belongs to the *shihua* genre:

The choir stops here. [The cantor] strikes the ruler and reads the [following] *gatha* 和佛至止 鳴尺偈云.⁸

The final cue for the choir follows the last refrain of *nanwu guanshiyin pusa*, where it reads:

This *gatha* has 8 lines; the choir prepares to be dismissed 此偈八句 和佛收功.⁹

Also, the first line of the narrative body of the text further instructs the performer—who must capture the various emotions at play in each scene—that “recital of the sutra of the original life [of the Bodhisattva] requires a vivid mimicry of the sounds of suffering, joy, and grief 本行經文 苦樂哀音須要相像.”¹⁰ In other words, the text itself informs the performers of the *baojuan* that vocal modulation is a key element in successfully conveying its combined comic and serious themes.¹¹

Aside from indicators for the arrangement of the human voice, the text also provides performance cues with regard to accompanying instrumentation. When a human voice must be accompanied by the sound of a chime, for example, there appears a cue that reads:

Strike the chime while reciting 擊磬朗誦.¹²

In fact, the rhythm of the chime is not treated as a mere accompaniment, but is considered one of the key elements guiding the entire recital. These soundscape notations reveal that the text of the abbreviated *Xiangshan baojuan* provides the lead performer, who serves in the roles of both cantor and conductor, a musical score that indicates not only which lyrics one must chant or sing, but also how to conduct the ensemble as a whole. Cues for the arrangement of percussive wooden fish and chime, which function to keep time like a conductor’s baton, help the performer to execute the beats and set the tempo.

Besides providing notation to indicate the specifics of vocalization, choral arrangement, instrumentation, and tempo, the abbreviated edition also includes cues that invite improvised interludes. The most salient example in the original text would be:

After reciting the episode of the Princess’ Journey to Hell, further present an episode on her resurrection 宣完公主遊地府 再表還陽一段情.¹³

This cue is followed by a few simple lines that describe how the inhabitants of hell send the princess back to life, before switching abruptly to the next scene. In other words, although the text itself does not amplify on the resurrection theme, it invites the performer to further expound on the subject. In

practice, *baojuan* performers independently compose various kinds of *Huanyang ji* 還陽偈 (Gatha of Resurrection) and carry out a specific ritual while they recite the *gatha*.

Complementary Episodes

While it is easy to identify the formulaic cues for improvisation embedded in the abbreviated *Xiangshan baojuan* (*jianji*), the actual improvised performances that they invite are not entirely bound by their placement in the text. *Baojuan* performers can determine when and where an “improvisation” will occur depending on the situation and individual preferences. That being said, the actual improvisations are also not completely at the whim of personal tastes or random interest. My study reveals that there are a few favorite scenes in the text that almost every performer embellishes with novel episodes of his or her own, for example, *Jin baique* 進白雀 (Lit. Entering the White Sparrow Monastery), *You difu* 遊地府 (Journey through Hell) and *Qiu lingdan* 求靈丹 (Praying for Magical Healing Potion). Among these episodes, some mainly assist in the establishment of interest and maintenance of suspense while other episodes are each accompanied by a particular ritual (fig.3).

The episode of “Entering the White Sparrow Monastery” is performed when the narrative arrives at the moment of Miaoshan’s departure from the capital, at the beginning of her journey to White Sparrow Monastery. The narrator assumes Miaoshan’s perspective, elaborating on each thing that she sees at the monastery. The descriptive passage moves from the general layout of the Monastery to the particulars of the statues in each hall. From a pair of stone lions sitting at the front gate, to the Maitreya Buddha and the Heavenly King Hall, the narrative spares no effort in describing the decor of each hall and each Buddha enshrined therein. When the narrative arrives at the moment when Miaoshan steps into the Grand Buddha Hall and pays homage to the three honored ones, the lead performer chant a rhymed seven syllable passage while leading the sponsors in standing and performing the threefold incense offering ritual. This ritual carried out at the Xiangshan Altar allows the sponsor to pay homage to the Buddha without having to go on a real pilgrimage. The vivid and detailed description of the monastery and its grounds, halls, and statues functions not only as a virtual tour of the premises in the minds of the audience, but also as an introduction to the locale for those who might later make the actual pilgrimage.

The other popular ritual-related episode is named “Praying for Magical Healing Potion.” The episode, which is comprised of a series of particular prayers, is performed at the point in the narrative when the King Miaozhuang dispatches his envoy, General Liu Qin, to retrieve the eyes and hands of the immortal at Mt. Xiangshan. The lead performer reads the prayers aloud, leading the sponsors in standing and praying for a magical healing potion for the sick as well as for good health in general. Burning incense sticks are placed on the lids of small tea cups at the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes during this ritual. When the narrative arrives at the moment when Liu Qin proclaims the imperial edict, “We humbly pray to you, the immortal, for your compassion. Please grant our envoy your magical healing potion which we will bring back to the court,”¹⁴ the lead performer begins to recite a series of prayers. The ritual ends with the sponsors drinking the tea that had been placed at the Xiangshan Altar, presumably as a symbol of imbibing the magical healing potion.

There are also some non-ritual related episodes, such as “Miaoshan’s Journey through Hell,” which

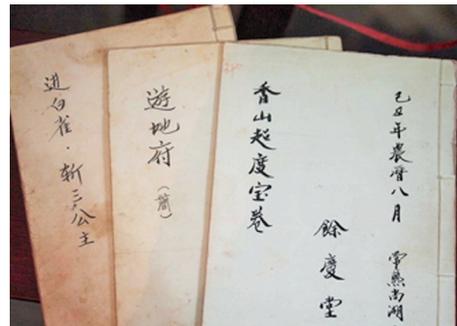


Fig. 4 Scripts of complementary episodes composed by local *baojuan* performers.

mainly assists in the establishment of interest and maintenance of suspense. Despite the fact that scholars identify Miaoshan's journey to the world of the dead in the *Xiangshan baojuan* as the locus of its ritual significance¹⁵, performances of "Journey to Hell" that I observed were not accompanied by any rituals. And the senior performers that I interviewed also confirmed that in the past this episode was solely recited by the seated lead performer. Senior performers recall that this episode was a "prime-time" scene which was performed after dinner. People of the neighborhood would flock into the performance venue to listen to the recital which could take up to two hours to perform. Nowadays, the elaborate "Journey through Hell" episode is rarely performed due to time limits. Like in many other hell-related *baojuan* works, the thrilling descriptions of hell and the punishments at the court of the Ten Kings, etc., are the central themes of the episode. The local manuscripts are unique in terms of the special ways in which they depict the consequences of straying from social norms. For example, a person who does not pay for a bean curd meal eaten at a local famous restaurant ends up in the hell where his intestines are drawn out. Here, the "Journey through Hell," a common formula in *baojuan* literature which is intended to inspire piety, can also serve as a belly-laugh-inducing comedy in which the local dining-and-dashing cheat, the corrupt party cadre, and the adulterous couple in the neighborhood get their punishments.

Concluding Remarks

Modern performances of the *Xiangshan baojuan* in the greater Suzhou area vary depending on the specifics of the occasion and the ritual personnel.¹⁶ Although the opening of the abbreviated *Xiangshan baojuan (jianji)* reveals that the recital was supposed to occur on the 19th day of the second month in celebration of Guanyin's birthday, in practice, the *Xiangshan baojuan* text is used on a number of ritual occasions, such as the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite, the celebration of Guanyin's birthday at the temple, and the pilgrimage to the Upper Tianzhu Temple in Hangzhou.¹⁷ These facts suggest that we need to probe the specifics of *baojuan* usage among different groups of people in different locations.

The recitals of *Xiangshan baojuan* that I observed at the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite bore an extraordinary elasticity. Performers hardly ever repeated themselves, and with each performance, the timing, emphasis, and selection of additional textual episodes put a new spin on the story. Some of the complimentary episodes composed by creative local performers moved the audience to laughter or tears, or shocked them with vivid descriptions of the punishment of sins. Other episodes transformed scenes from the *Xiangshan baojuan*, such as "Entering White Sparrow Monastery" and "Praying for Magical Healing Potion," into substantial ritual acts. These ritual acts invited the audience to actively play a role in the performance. In other words, the audience does not merely listen to a *baojuan* recital. Instead, when listening to the recital of certain episodes, particularly when accompanied with ritual, they reenact the experiences of the characters in the story. In doing so, the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite becomes the locus of a mythological presence and what happens in the story becomes a present reality for the ritual participants. Mircea Eliade suggests that a ritual is a re-enactment of the sacred past. In his view, "every ritual has a divine model, an archetype [...] any human act whatever acquires effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly repeats an act performed at the beginning of time by a god, a hero, or an ancestor[...]"¹⁸ To reenact the myth is to return to the time when the myth took place. In the case of the Xiangshan Altar of Wishes Rite, the cultic reenactment of primordial acts—namely, Miaoshan's death and resurrection, her salvation and reunion with her family, as well as the King's suffering of disease and his recovery—are acts through which cosmic order and harmony are established, and through which the original order, vitality and well-being are restored and increased.

Modern *baojuan* performances surely help us to understand *baojuan* as a performance-oriented genre. Yet one may still wonder to what extent the study of modern performances and manuscripts can inform our understanding of the contexts in which *baojuan* were performed in the Ming-Qing period. In *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, John Miles Foley demonstrates that the traditional referentiality of a dedicated register can be activated during an oral performance, which would enable

audiences educated in distinct cultural contexts to reenter the original performance arena:

[W]ord-power derives from the enabling event of performance and the enabling referent of tradition. Even when performance modulates into transcription or authored text, the empowering use of register and (now rhetorical) entry of the performance arena can lead to some degree of communicative economy, assuming that the audience or reader is sufficiently fluent in that register and able to join the performer or author in that arena.¹⁹

Building on the Parry-Lord Theory, which identifies formulas of an oral performance, Foley seeks to contemplate the way in which formulaic phrases—the building blocks of an oral poem—mean something. Foley believes that formulaic phrases, such as the grey eyes of Athena or a description of funeral rites for fallen heroes, cannot be condemned as cliché, and that they do not merely serve as utilitarian structures and compositional exigencies, as the Parry-Lord Theory proposes. Instead, each phrase with its metonymic meaning functions as an index-point or node in a grand, untextualizable network of traditional associations. Thus, formulae offer efficient ways to establish cultural context, both locally and globally.²⁰ In the recital of the *Xiangshan baojuan*, the reference to the tradition of making/eating a locally known delicacy and to dining-and-dashing at a locally well-known restaurant serves as formulae that allow the performer to fulfill the expectations of the local audience, and meanwhile, to invite the audience to make sense of scenes of condemned sinners in hell.

Also, as we can see from modern performances, the recital of *Xiangshan baojuan* can be used as a blessing ceremony, and the improvising performance tends to shorten the non-ritual related scenes while intensifying the scenes related with seeking for protection and praying for good health rituals. In doing so, the significance of performing a pious story shifts from advocating piety and virtue to seeking blessings, and healing and improvement of well-being in particular, which of course fulfills the expectation of the sponsor family. Also, the “Journey through Hell,” a common formula in *baojuan* literature which is intended to inspire piety, can also serve as a belly-laugh-inducing comedy in which the local eat-and-run thief, the corrupted party cadre, and the adulterous couple in the neighborhood are punished. In other words, the meaning of an oral performance is not ossified when the generic repertoire and the traditional associations are deployed to the present, as an audience’s interpretation as well as a performer’s improvisation is an active meaning-constructing process, during which formulae can be appropriated and generic expectations can be violated and transgressed. Thus, the meaning of an oral performance is not fixed in the written script, but is rather discursively constructed and co-created by both performers and the audience.

Notes

¹See major discussions on the *Xiangshan baojuan* in Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊, “Kenryūban Kōzan hōkan kaisetsu 乾隆版香山寶卷解說,” *Dōkyō kenkyū*, 4 (1971):115-95. Glen Dudbridge. *The Legend of Miaoshan*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 47-56. Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 293-352. Wilt L. Idema, “Evil Parents and Filial Offering: Some Comments on the *Xiangshan baojuan* and Related Texts,” *Studies in Central and East-Asian Religions*, 12.1(2001):1-40. Wilt L. Idema, *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), pp.1-43. Che Xilun 車錫倫, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu 中國寶卷研究*. (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009), pp.109-116. Rostislav Berezkin and Boris Riftin, “The Earliest Known Edition of the *Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain and the Connections Between Precious Scrolls and Buddhist Preaching*,” *T’oung Pao* 99 (2013): 445-499.

²Idema, 2008, p10-11. Che, 2009, p116.

³See in Zhang Yingchang 張應昌 compiled, *Qing shi duo 清詩鐸*, 1960, p903.

⁴Photo-reprint of the *Guanshiyin pusa benxingjing jianji*, namely the abbreviated version of the *Xiangshan baojuan* (1868) in *baojuan chuji* 寶卷初集, Zhang Xishun 張希舜 ed. (Shanxi:Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1994) Vol.26, pp.453-552 and Vol.27, pp. 1-115. See Dutch and English translations of the jianji in W.L. Idema, Wilt L. Idema, *Prinses Miaoshan, en andere Chinese legenden van Guanyin, de bodhisattva van barmhartigheid* [*Princess Miaoshan, and other legend of Guanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion*], Amsterdam: Atlas, 2000; and Wilt L. Idema, *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2008.

⁵Interview and email correspondence with Yu Dingjun.

⁶Idema, 2001, p8-9.

⁷*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, vol.26, p469.

⁸*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, vol. 27, p108.

⁹*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, vol. 27, p114.

¹⁰*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994. vol. 26, p456.

¹¹Idema discusses the different registers of delivery that Miaoshan and other minor characters employ. This can also be considered as an indicator of vocal modulation. See Idema, 2001, p20-21, p29-30.

¹²*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, vol. 27, p115.

¹³*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, Vol. 27. p47.

¹⁴*Xiangshan baojuan* (1868), 1994, vol. 27, p79.

¹⁵Dudbridge, 2004, p110-117.

¹⁶*Baojuan* performers are very much aware of various performing styles shaped by different schools of *baojuan* masters. There are variants among their texts of complementary episodes and the way in which they conduct the ritual routine may also vary.

¹⁷The *baojuan* performers and shiniang people that I have interviewed in the greater Suzhou area told me that they lead pilgrims on the bus in singing short songs and *gathas* on the Miaoshan legend in unison. During the overnight stay at the monastery, or in a nearby inn or hotel—a practice they referred to as *sumiao* 宿廟—they recited the *Xiangshan baojuan* and other *baojuan* throughout the night, or half way through the night, picking the recitation up again in the early morning.

¹⁸Eliade, “Ritual and Myth”, 1996, p198.

¹⁹Foley, 1995, p213.

²⁰Foley, 1995, p6.

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A CROSSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Prosimetrum in Japan?

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Japanese performed narrative genres like kōshiki shōmyō 講式声明 (a Buddhist liturgy), the musical narratives of heike 平家, jōruri 浄瑠璃 and naniwa-bushi 浪花節, and also modern biwa 琵琶 forms are all continuous narratives in sung delivery into which spoken sections may be interpolated. Furthermore, they have all developed a modus operandi of several melody types or musical substyles. They are structured into discrete sections, like paragraphs, each of which features a specific musical substyle. This chapter considers to what extent they are prosimetric, if defined as the alternation of sections of singing and speech. It tracks the balance of prose and verse, and of spoken versus musical delivery in each genre. By examining more closely the nature of the sung musical parts, it attempts to place structural and performance features of these genres in a global context. It concludes that the key difference between Chinese prosimetric narratives and Japanese genres is that in Japan the alternation of prose and poetry cannot be seen as the basic form. Whereas the metric parts in Chinese narratives are lyrical song while the prose parts are spoken delivery, in the Japanese musical narratives the expository narrative sections are in musical delivery, not spoken.

The global context

Prosimetrum combines story-telling and story-singing in one narrative. Prosimetric literature is a prominent form in world oral narrative, as has been demonstrated in the case studies in Harris and Reichl (1997), a comparative survey of prosimetric traditions, and Reichl (2000), which focuses on Turkic and Asian narratives. Japan was included in Harris and Reichl's volume *Prosimetrum* (1997); intriguingly, Helen McCullough's chapter on Japanese verse-prose addressed only written narratives, ignoring issues of performance. This was a missed opportunity to place Japanese performed narratives in a global context. This paper aims to remedy this lack by elucidating both verbal and musical aspects of a selection of Japanese musical narrative genres.¹ I will track the degree of coexistence of prose and verse in the verbal text, and also the balance of spoken versus musical delivery in the musical aspect of the narrative. I am concerned centrally with demonstrating the nature of the sung parts and will attempt to define the manner of sung narrative in Japan.

When story-singing or musically performed narratives in several cultures are compared, at least three structural models can be affirmed: strophic, stichic and prosimetric. As a combination of telling and singing, the sung parts of prosimetric narrative can include strophic and stichic aspects. In the stichic type, the line is the main unit, like the Southern Slav (Balkan) epics (Erdely 1995; 2000). Each line repeats the same melody. The strophic type, found in the Scottish ballad and the Italian *ottava ritmi*, is laid out in an indefinite number of stanzas of the same number of lines and metric pattern. Each verse or stanza has the same melody. The prosimetric type, that combines telling and singing, is

found in many Turkic, Indian and Chinese musical narratives. The sung part of prosimetric narrative can take various forms, including strophic and stichic, or something else.

We can find both strophic and stichic narratives in Japan.² But what about the prosimetric type? The basic form of the narratives I am concerned with in this paper is not the alternation of prose and poetry, nor of spoken and sung delivery. They feature instead continuous narrative in sung delivery into which spoken sections may or may not be interpolated. The balance and combination of sung and spoken delivery, and the use of metric ('poetic') and non-metric ('prose') text, varies between genres.

This paper will introduce a selection of Japanese performed narratives with musical delivery: *kōshiki shōmyō* (a Buddhist liturgy), musical narratives of *heike*, *jōruri* and *naniwa-bushi*, and finally I will touch on modern *biwa* 琵琶 forms. They are definitely not strophic or stichic. If we take the broader definition of prosimetric narrative proposed by Harris and Reichl (1997), we may be able to include these narrative genres under this rubric. They all feature the use of multiple melody types or substyles in the sung narrative, usually one type per section of narrative (see Tokita 2015 for a full study of this type).

Offering a contrastive analysis of the centrally prose genres, *kōshiki* and *heike*, then of *jōruri*, *naniwa-bushi* and modern *biwa*, whose narrative is in poetic metre, I will clarify how the narratives are realized musically, identifying their narrative musical substyles. I argue that the most important characteristic of these genres is the multiple styles of musical delivery for different sections of the narrative, and that this is the basic mode of musical narrative in Japan.

In the seminal research of Parry and Lord (see Lord 1960), the musical element of the South Slavic narratives was not given a lot of attention. Their metric regularity and stichic use of only one basic line-length melody is quite different from the multiple-melody nature of Japanese narratives. Nevertheless, the key element of the Parry-Lord theory is its structural analysis of the verbal narrative in terms of the nature of the phrase-level formula and the formulaic nature of the section-level story element (theme), which has been suggestive for the understanding of formulaic musical expression in the study of Japanese narratives.³

Prosimetric model

Prosimetric narrative is generally understood to mean the alternation of sections of expository prose in spoken delivery, and metric sections in verse with melodic delivery, that is, song. Harris and Reichl (1997) in presenting many cross-cultural case studies argue for a broader, more flexible definition, calling it simply 'the mixture of verse and prose, in particular in narrative' (page 3), while noting that the 'change between narrating in prose and singing in verse is characteristic of a great number of oral prosimetric genres in world literature' (6). However, they continue, the definition of both verse and prose is not so simple when seen cross-culturally: '... all prose in oral narrative is rhythmic, patterned, and poetically structured' (7). Prose is only relevant to written language on the printed page, they argue. This suggests the limitations of the prosimetric model as a universal construct.

The broad and generally accepted definition of the Chinese *shuo* 說 (say) narrative form is the alternation of prose (spoken) sections called *shuo* 說 and verse (sung) sections called *chang* 唱 (Bender 2003; Børdahl 1999). Mair (1997: 365) states the prosimetric form 'is perhaps the single most distinctive feature of popular narrative and drama in China'.

The large quantities of 'transformation texts' (*pianwen* 變文) that were discovered in the Dun Huang caves in the early twentieth century are written prosimetric narratives. Scholars point out that they originated with Buddhist preaching of the early Tang period, whose Indian origins derived from Buddhist sutras featuring explanatory prose interpolated with verses (McLaren 1998:78, Idema 1986). The kernel of the teaching is encapsulated in the verses with their memorable formal features, and is further explained for the listeners in a commentary form. Idema suggests however that some kind of prose-verse alternating style may have pre-existed the introduction of Buddhism in China (Idema 1986:85).

This prosimetric style of oral narrative and preaching led to secular narratives, both oral and written, and also formed the basis for theatrical forms such as so-called Chinese opera (Idema 1986:87; Mair 1997:368-9). Iguchi's study of *liaoting dagu* 樂亭大鼓 (1999) shows that the same prosimetric model applies to that particular contemporary genre. The key difference between the prosimetric Chinese oral and musical narratives and Japanese genres is that in Japan the alternation of prose and poetry cannot be seen as the basic form. The metric parts in Chinese narratives are lyrical song while the prose parts are spoken delivery, whereas in the Japanese musical narratives the expository narrative sections are in musical delivery, not spoken. Some genres are in metric style, and some in non-metrical 'prose' (for want of a better word), but both types are delivered musically. Non-musical delivery is with few exceptions limited to dramatic speech.

Kōshiki shōmyō 講式声明

Kōshiki shōmyō (below simply *kōshiki*) is not strictly speaking a story-telling genre, but a Buddhist liturgy centring on the interpretation of sutras (Guelberg 1999: 29–32). It is a musically delivered preaching or teaching placed at the centre of a service. Performed musically by a solo cantor, it explains and simplifies the import of specific sutras, and encourages personal devotion in the listener.

Since Buddhism and its liturgical music were transmitted to Japan from China, it might be expected that *kōshiki* would be prosimetric, like the Buddhist sutras themselves, and the Chinese *pienwen* texts that expounded Buddhist teaching in an accessible way for a lay audience or readership.⁴ However, *kōshiki* shows significant differences from prosimetrum.

When Buddhism entered Japan from Korea (sixth century) and later from China, all texts of sutras and hymns remained in Chinese and were intoned musically, as transmitted from the continent. This I will call 'normal *shōmyō*'. In parallel with this ritual practice, there was also popular preaching and teaching. Carried out in the vernacular Japanese language, it is explanatory and expository.

As Japanese Buddhism changed from being a state religious form, to become popular first among the elite, and then among the general populace, new texts came to be created in Japanese, and new musical styles of delivery came into being. One of the most significant developments was *kōshiki*. This musical form of preaching and teaching grew in conjunction with the spread of the Pure Land (*Jōdo* 淨土) sect of Buddhism, which preached the terrors of hell, and the possibility of rebirth in the Pure Land by calling on the name of the Amida Buddha. *Kōshiki* appealed to the emotions of the listeners and often used visual and even theatrical elements to reinforce the image of the glories of the Pure Land. *Gagaku* 雅樂 court music was included in some large-scale performances.

Kōshiki is first documented from the tenth century. *Kōshiki* texts are written in Chinese, but are intoned as Japanese prose. *Kōshiki* seems to have reached a high level of musical delivery by the fourteenth century. Whereas Buddhist musical liturgy ('normal *shōmyō*') is almost entirely in Chinese language (approximately pronounced), *kōshiki* developed as a Japanese language liturgy. Its style of musical delivery was also quite distinct from 'normal *shōmyō*'.

Musical-narrative structure of *kōshiki*

Kōshiki is in sung delivery throughout, and like 'normal *shōmyō*' it is unaccompanied, with occasional percussion to demarcate stages in the liturgy. The only spoken delivery is a brief prayer of intercession or transfer of merit (*ekō* 廻向) at the end of the service.

One *kōshiki* consists of a number of large sections or movements (*dan* 段), most commonly three or five; the *kōshiki* proper is preceded by an initial movement called *hyōbyaku* 表白 that provides an explanatory introduction. A movement is further made up of smaller sections (*shōdan* 小段), each marked with a cadential phrase and in some cases by a transitional sub-section of one or two phrases. The length of the sections is highly variable, from a couple to several dozen lines.

Each movement is followed by one or more hymn-like verses of 'normal *shōmyō*' in Chinese, called *kada* (伽陀 Skt. gatha), mostly from a sutra, in lines of five or seven words (characters) as

classical Chinese poetry. Sometimes this is replaced by a simple invocation of the name of the Buddha (*nenbutsu* 念仏). The *kōshiki* is sung by a solo cantor, and the *kada* by a chorus of priests. Textually this is almost prosimetric.

Each small section features just one of three named melody types, ending with a melismatic cadential pattern. The three main melody types are each generated from a different pitch territory: low ('first level' *shojū* 初重), medium ('second level' *nijū* 二重) and high ('third level' *sanjū* 三重). These terms, referring to pitch areas, by extension refer also to the melodic realizations of movement between two or more nuclear tones.⁵ The melodic structure of *kōshiki* is thus based on the sequencing of these named pitch areas or territories, which also represent formulaic melodies.

Shojū and *nijū* are the simplest melodic types, while *sanjū* has more melodic movement and complexity. Its length as a section is also more fixed, tending towards only four phrases.

Shojū and *nijū* feature one and the same melodic pattern for every line of text, which makes both a stichic substyle. Centred on one particular pitch area or territory, they move back and forth between two pitches: a major second in the case of *shojū*, and a fourth in the case of *nijū*. Their highly fluid realization in performance, changing to match the requirements of text and flexible in length, indicates that they are types of delivery rather than fixed melody patterns.

Shojū is the basic style of *kōshiki*, used most frequently and occupying the largest amount of text. Consecutive sections of *shojū* can be accumulated and continue indefinitely without changing substyle. *Nijū* style of delivery also can be assigned to large tracts of text, but is used more sparingly than *shojū*. It is primarily syllabic and each phrase takes a similar melodic contour, consisting of two balanced parts, the second part having a consistent pattern of ornament and melisma, giving a sense of closure at the end of each line. The cadence of *nijū* is the transitional reiterative melody of *chūon* 中音.

Sanjū moves up to the highest pitch register and focuses on the upper pitch of *nijū*. This relatively fixed melodic pattern is applied to passages usually of four lines in poetic metre, so it can be considered as strophic. It tends to emphasize particularly important segments of text which should touch the emotions of the listener. It serves to create the musical and textual climax of a movement. There is plenty of melismatic treatment of the text, and frequent ornamentation. *Sanjū* is never used more than once in a movement. It finishes not with a particular cadential pattern but by returning to *nijū*, where it settles.

Differences between *kōshiki* and 'normal *shōmyō*'

There are several clear differences between 'normal *shōmyō*' Buddhist musical practices derived directly from the continent and the localized Buddhist musical forms such as *kōshiki* that show the influence of local Japanese musical story-telling.

First of all, the language of *kōshiki* is close to vernacular Japanese. The texts are written in Chinese, but in performance they are read as Japanese.⁶ This could be called the 'oralization' of a written text. Most *kōshiki* texts have a known Japanese author, although no composer is attributed to the music. The *kōshiki* has expository and explanatory parts on the one hand, and other parts that appeal to the emotions.

Musically, *kōshiki* is fundamentally different from 'normal *shōmyō*': it shows instead the same basic structural and musical principles as the story-singing genres of *heike* and *jōruri* narrative. 'Normal *shōmyō*' uses the same scales, modes and rhythmic concepts as *gagaku*, both deriving from Chinese musical theory. *Kōshiki* on the other hand is based on Japanese indigenous scales and tonal structure. Instead of the five-tone scale of continental *shōmyō*, it is based on a framework of fourths, and melodic progression through three pitch territories. The associated substyles of *shojū*, *nijū* and *sanjū* are not used in 'normal *shōmyō*', but are unique to *kōshiki*.

Kōshiki might be expected to show influence from Chinese Buddhō-Indian prosimetric narrative. Indeed, the metric verses in Chinese (*kada*) in between sections of prose are 'sung' in typical *shōmyō*

melismatic style. However, the main expository prose narrative is not spoken delivery, but melodically delivered; furthermore, this melodic delivery of the narrative is not straight chant but shows variety and musical development.

Heike 平家 narrative

Heike narrative is the musical recitation of the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari* 平家物語), a chronicle of the battles between the Taira (Heike) and Minamoto (Genji 源氏) clans of 1180–85, and the events leading up to the conflict and its aftermath.

The *Tale* exists as a written chronicle, of which there are a large number of textual articulations, and many recensions of each, resulting in dozens of variant *Heike* texts, varying widely in length, style, language and purpose or focus; for example whether intended only for reading (*yomihon* 読み本 in Chinese), or for performance (*katarihon* 語り本 in Japanese). It is of course also a performance tradition, originally by itinerant blind lute-playing priests, *biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師, first documented as telling stories in the tenth century, well before the Heike-Genji conflict itself. The term *biwa hōshi* naturally suggests a musical recitation, but it is not known exactly what and how they performed then (Hyōdō 2009: 31–36).

The events of the *Tale of the Heike* were written down and chronicled by the warrior houses themselves, by courtiers, priests and others, but at the same time the events and associated lore were circulated orally by story-tellers, including the blind *biwa hōshi*. One comprehensive version was dictated by the head *biwa hōshi*, Akashi Kakuichi 明石覚一 (1300?-1371; Komoda 2008:78), intended to be an authorized version for performance. It is a skilfully edited compendium of material that had passed back and forth between oral and written sources over many years, retaining strong features of oral narrative, but also showing the influence of literary accounts, classical references, and warrior chronicles (Butler 1966). It consists of 200 chapters. Its text is mostly ‘prose’ not verse, though not completely prosaic. It is a mix of historical chronicle, religious tract, and romance.

The printed text of the *Tale* looks like a prose narrative, not a prosimetric text. In performance of course the singer breaks the narrative up into sung phrases or lines, with a melodic contour matching the shape of the text, and further into paragraph-like sections, each delivered with one melodic type and separated by a *biwa* interlude (actually a prelude introducing the next section). The singing is the Japanese style of narrative, prose delivered musically calling on a variety of melody types. Verse does not intervene regularly as a structural element. Some sections deliver homilies reminiscent of *kōshiki* texts, such as the opening about *Gion Shōja*, the first few lines of which are close to 7-5 metre.

The Jetvana Temple bells ring the passing of all things.	Gion shōja no kane no koe shogyō mujō no hibiki ari.
Twinned sal trees, white in full flower declare the great man’s certain fall. ⁷	Shara sōju no hana no iro jōsha hissui no kotowari o arawasu.

Heike narrative was usually performed by one blind male accompanying himself on the *biwa* lute, a member of the professional guild for the blind (*Tōdō-za* 当道座). There has also been a sighted lineage since the twentieth century, stemming from the practice of amateur aficionados among the samurai class in the Edo period, for whom texts with musical notation were created. Furthermore, the epic narrative content flowed into subsequent narrative and dramatic forms (*kōwaka* 幸若, *nō* 能, *bunraku* 文楽, *kabuki* 歌舞伎), and literature, and still finds a place in contemporary popular culture. The musical-narrative structure of *heike* uses seven principal musical substyles, and one style of spoken delivery (see Komoda 2008).

1. *Kudoki* フトキ basic narrative
2. *Shōja* 初重 }

3. *Chūon* 中音 } melodic narrative
4. *Sanjū* 三重 }
5. *Sashikoe* 差し声
6. *Orikoe* 降し声 buddhist, elegiac content
7. *Hiroi* 拾し martial, auspicio
8. *Shirakoe* 白声 spoken delivery

Kudoki is the most extensively used substyle, the ‘basic style’ of *heike*, and appears in all pieces, like the *shojū* of *kōshiki*. It is a simple narrative style that repeats a simple melodic movement between two main tones one fourth apart, with the occasional inclusion of the pitch one semitone above the lower tone. *Kudoki* can be used for an indefinite amount of text, short or long.

Shirakoe is the only spoken delivery in *heike*; it is spoken quietly and rapidly. Even more than *kudoki*, it can dispose of a large amount of text in a short time, but it is used much less frequently. It concludes with a spoken cadence called *hazumi*. It is not used particularly for dramatic speech; it is only another type of narrative delivery. *Sashikoe* functions similarly to *kudoki* and *shirakoe*, but is more melismatic and uses a different scalar structure.

Shojū, *chūon* and *sanjū* are more melodic. They correspond to the three basic substyles of *kōshiki*. As shown above, the melodic structure of *kōshiki* is based on three named pitch areas set in a framework of intervals of a fourth, *shojū* (low), *nijū* (middle), *sanjū* (high); each represents formulaic melodies or substyles. Similarly, *heike* has melodies called *shojū* (first level), *chūon* (middle sound) and *sanjū* (third level), each representing both pitch areas and formulaic melodies.

Shojū is different from the *kōshiki shojū* musically and in function. It occupies a low pitch area, and is melismatic and melodic. It is applied widely. *Chūon* starts in syllabic delivery, then becomes melismatic; it is focussed in the middle pitch area, descending to the lower pitch areas in the last very drawn-out phrases of the section. It often appears in the sequence *shojū-chūon*.

Sanjū appears as a musical climax in many pieces. It is similar to *kōshiki sanjū* in pitch register and in its function as a musical climax with strong melodic development. Though not tied to any particular type of narrative content, about half of the examples in the whole *Heike Mabushi* 平家正節 musically notated text commence by identifying the month and day of the action (Suzuki 2007). Musically, *sanjū* is the most elaborate of the *heike* formulaic melodies, melismatic and at a high pitch register. It is in two parts, separated by a *biwa* interlude, the second part descending to the two adjacent fourths below, finishing with its own quite long cadential pattern, *sanjū kudari* 下し.

Hiroi and *orikoe* are unique in *heike* music as being linked with specific narrative content. *Hiroi* is a forceful, emphatic sort of delivery, mainly syllabic, used for valiant battle scenes or other military-related description. In *Nasu no Yoichi* 那須与一, for describing the armour of the main character. *Orikoe* centres on the alternation between the two tones one fifth apart in the middle of the vocal range, starting with syllabic delivery and ending with more melismatic delivery. It is used for sections with lyrical, romantic or religious narrative content.

Among other melodies, *kamiuta* 上歌 and *shimouta* 下歌 are used for the exchange of 31-syllable *waka* 和歌. poems between characters, as in *Yokobue* 横笛. *Kamiuta* is very similar to *chūon*; *shimouta* uses a lower pitch register. The *waka* can be considered as quotations, textually and musically, distinct from the bulk of *heike* narrative. Other quotations are the occasional *imayō* 今謡 song popular at the time of the story, and read documents or letters.

Over 600 years, *heike* musical narrative increased in complexity and in fixity, to become more expressive and more musical. The authority of the *Tōdō* 当道 guild, which was under license to the military shogunal government, was one factor; as was the creation of *Heike Mabushi* musically notated text for sighted amateurs in 1776 authorized by a high-ranking blind *heike* performer, Ogino Kengyō 荻野檢校. After the *Tōdō* guild was abolished in 1871, the repertoire of the blind shrank dramatically. At present only eight pieces are transmitted by the sole remaining blind performer in

Nagoya. However, performers deriving from the sighted amateur tradition can perform any of the 200 chapters of the *Heike Mabushi*.

Heike musical narrative (formed in the same period as *kōshiki*) is not in poetic metre, but neither could it be called simple prose: it is not prosaic.⁸ In some sections, for example, *sanjū* sections, there is a tendency for the text to be 'poetic', arranged in couplet style after Chinese poetry (*tsuiku* 対句) or in lines approximating 7-5 syllables after Japanese poetry.

The interpolation of waka poems in some chapters does not fulfil the same function as the *kada* in *kōshiki*. They are a stylized means of written communication between the characters, a convention actually practiced in Heian period (794-1185) court culture, and a key feature of the literary tales on Heian literature, as discussed in McCullough (1997). I do not consider this to be evidence of prosimetric literature on the Chinese model, but a practice with its origins in the ancient Japanese chronicles (*Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀) which included many local songs and Shinto prayers (*norito* 祝詞) in the narratives of the gods and the later earthly rulers. I believe that this can be linked not to a continental prosimetric model, but to the pre-Buddhist indigenous tradition of narrative in Japan.

Jōruri 浄瑠璃

Jōruri narrative is tenuously related to the *Tale of the Heike*. It is the name of the (fictional) lover of the warrior hero Yoshitsune as a youth. This fanciful tale began as oral narratives told by groups of women entertainers, formed into a cycle that we know in written versions such as *Jōruri hime junidan sōshi* 浄瑠璃姫十二段草紙 and others. When the tale reached the capital (Kyoto) it was taken up by the *biwa hōshi*, who performed it in the same style as their *heike biwa* narrative. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, *jōruri* became a generic term for a new genre of narrative, with many stories told in the same way. At this time the *shamisen* 三味線 entered Japan and started to replace the *biwa*. This coincided with the partnership between *biwa hōshi* and puppeteers, leading to the creation of puppet narrative (*ningyō jōruri* 人形浄瑠璃) in the seventeenth century. *Jōruri* as we now know it thus developed through this meeting of story-singing and the puppet theatre. Subsequently, there was a separation between narrator and accompanist; the new basic form of *jōruri* was a duo of singer and *shamisen*.

The new genre emerged at the same time as the development of commercial printing using moveable type (introduced by Jesuit missionaries), and *jōruri* and *kōwaka* narratives were grist to the mill of the new print entrepreneurs. This seems to have raised the status of the written narrative text for *jōruri* performers, who reverence their handwritten text at the beginning of performance. The *jōruri* narrators in the new situation were no longer blind, but sighted, and wrote (or adapted from *kōwaka* narratives) their own scripts. *Shamisen* players continued to be blind for the next century or so, perhaps because no musical notations for *shamisen* existed nor were deemed necessary.

The popularity of the *jōruri* puppet drama was such that it threatened the viability of the live kabuki theatre. *Jōruri* started to be incorporated into the live theatre as the accompaniment of dance, but also in the more extreme form of adapting whole puppet dramas for performance in kabuki. Thus there are two roles of *jōruri* in kabuki: the narrative duo on stage delivering the musical third person narrative, and the expanded *jōruri* ensembles also on stage that accompany kabuki dance scenes. This also affected the development of kabuki dance music, particularly the once purely song genre of *nagauta* 長唄.

Jōruri reached its current form of a *shamisen*-accompanied musical narrative called *gidayū-bushi* 義太夫節 for the puppet theatre (*bunraku* 文楽) by the late seventeenth century, and by the eighteenth century for kabuki dance (genres including *tokiwazu-bushi* 常磐津節 and *kiyomoto-bushi* 清元節; less frequent in kabuki are the closely related *itchū-bushi* 一中節 and *shinnai-bushi* 新内節).

Jōruri, like *heike*, delivers narrative musically, but like the *utai* 謡 of *nō* 能 most of the narrative has the metric form of lines of 12 (7-5) syllables. This is surely the influence of the dance-narrative genres of *nō* and *kōwaka mai* 幸若舞 that flourished from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. The

spoken sections of *jōruri* are not narrative, but are the realistic dramatic dialogue of the characters in the story or drama.

Musical-narrative structure

Jōruri is more complex and fluid than *kōshiki* and *heike*. Like *heike*, it is structured in a sequence of short sections (*shōdan* 小段). However, it took on dramatic features required by the context of the puppet theatre. As each piece is one act of a long play, in addition to the basic narrative patterns there are structural patterns that provide clear musical and dramatic signals for the opening or closing of a piece or act of the drama. The extensive dramatic dialogue in spoken delivery realistically portrays the characters in the drama.

The sung narrative of *jōruri* is realized through the liberal use of a wide variety of formulaic musical materials, in the form of narrative substyles and formulaic phrases. The most prominent formulaic phrases are the many cadential patterns for narrative sections.

Looking first at the form of puppet *jōruri*, *gidayū-bushi*, the musical narrative is mostly the third person narratorial voice, but at times can also be a quasi-first-person internal monologue. Dramatic characterization is achieved through varying vocal register and musical styles. Such variety of delivery achieves a shift of point of view from one character to another, or from the narrator to the perspective of a dramatic character. Small sections are created by shifts between formulaic substyles, usually marked by cadential formulas.

The basic musical narrative styles encompass unaccompanied free rhythm styles, rhythmic action-oriented styles with voice and *shamisen* creating a unified rhythm, and more lyrical melodic styles with *shamisen* and voice out of synchronization typical of Edo period chamber music for *koto* 箏 and *shamisen*.

There are also special content-related styles: the introductory section of an act; the confessional plaint expressing pathos (*kudoki* 口説き and related sections); a style for reminiscing on and reporting battles (*monogatari* 物語); and a style called *kotoba nori* 詞乗り for narrating violent or vigorous action, in which both voice and *shamisen* synchronize in a brisk rhythm, but the vocal line is spoken, not sung. Phrase-length basic narrative patterns are mostly unnamed, unless they are quotation patterns, or some structural opening and closing patterns.

Although deriving from the same early *jōruri* as *gidayū-bushi*, the genres of *tokiwazu*, *kiyomoto* and related genres developed in the context of kabuki dance, interacting with the non-narrative *nagauta* dance music. This led to a hybrid narrative-lyric form that was shared by all the kabuki dance music genres. Narrative substyles evolved to fit different structural units of kabuki dance music. The *oki* 置き (introductory section that sets the scene), the *kudoki* (first person confessional narrative, romantic plea) which formed the musical and dance emotional highlight of most pieces, followed by the *odoriji* 踊り地 (interpolated song and dance sections), and finally the *chirashi* チラシ (finale section). Some pieces also have the martial *monogatari*.

Some kabuki *jōruri* pieces remain closer to the narrative-dramatic mode, and call on a wider array of narrative substyles. The basic 'soft' narrative style that forms the basis of the *oki* and *kudoki* sections features reiterative patterns progressing from the middle register, followed by a similar pattern in a slightly higher register, and a further phrase in a higher pitch level, reminiscent of the *kōshiki* progression from low to medium to high pitch register. There is also an urgent rhythmic narrative style for action sequences that formed the basis for the *chirashi* finale section. Free rhythm unaccompanied declamatory narrative reminiscent of *heike* is used for the opening phrases of basic soft narrative sections and parts of other sections. In addition there are special effects substyles that musically underscore passionate, eerie and comic sections of narrative.

It is important to distinguish between sung narrative and song. The 'song' or non-narrative musical parts of *jōruri* are interpolated (quoted) songs, required by the story when they are sung by characters in the narrative. Their music and text are taken from various sources including folksong, popular

songs from the entertainment districts, or quotations of other narrative musical genres, both past and contemporary. The music for these quotation sections imitates the style of the quoted song or genre. This tendency gets stronger with the later forms of *jōruri* in the context of kabuki dance, which used quotation songs for the *odoriji* dance section that became a routine part of the regular dance form in between the emotional pathos of the *kudoki* and the fast, rhythmic finale of the *chirashi*.

Jōruri may be close to the prosimetric model in its alternation of sections of sung and spoken delivery. However, the spoken parts are not narrative, but dramatic dialogue, and the sung narrative, although in poetic metre, is not song as such, but the equivalent of prose third person narrative in the prosimetric model. The interpolated songs are quotations from outside, not integral to but an interruption of the narrative flow.

Naniwa-bushi 浪花節 (or *rōkyoku* 浪曲)

Naniwa-bushi is a narrative genre dating from the late nineteenth century; it enjoyed its greatest popularity with first the proletariat and later also middle classes till 1945.

Naniwa-bushi derived from the quasi-religious narratives called *saimon* 祭文 of itinerant sighted male story-tellers of the Edo period and Meiji period, and the more satirical *chobokure*. At some time in the late Edo period they added shamisen accompaniment to their narrative by a second performer, and developed the content by appropriating texts from the non-musical story-telling *kōdan*. They also took in musical influence from *jōruri*, adopting aspects of its more complex musical structure and some of its formulaic musical materials.

The mature form of *naniwa-bushi* is a duo of singer (*rōkyokushi* 浪曲師) and shamisen player (*kyokushi* 曲師), the latter concealed behind a screen on the stage. Sometimes, additional instruments such as *koto*, piano and guitar were used, and in the postwar period a karaoke version was developed that uses pre-recorded studio orchestra instead of shamisen. Both live shamisen and karaoke versions are heard regularly today.

Naniwa-bushi combines sung narrative in 7-5 syllable metre with sections of spoken delivery that includes both third-person narrative and dramatic dialogue. Like *jōruri*, it uses a number of melodic types or styles (*fushi* 節) for different sections of the sung narrative.

It has a large and still expanding repertoire, including narrative cycles and single episode pieces. Texts were originally cobbled together by the performer, but early in its history specialist authors emerged who contributed to the modern expansion of the repertoire. Texts with no authorial attribution usually originate in *kōdan* narratives. Texts have been anthologized since the 1920s, and commercial records, cassettes and CDs have nearly always included a printed sheet of lyrics. However, the written text is not used in performance, and has an ambiguous status in the learning process. In principle, a student does not use the teacher's text directly, but writes out his own text, often from a recording.

Naniwa-bushi developed in tandem with the growth of modern media, starting with the mass printed media (newspapers and magazines), then the electronic media (recording, radio, film), and now digital media (internet, mp3 files). Unique among the traditional genres is the ubiquitous use of the microphone placed on the table in front of the singer. It amplifies the volume of the voice, but also appears to be an essential prop for singer, as important as his hand-towel, fan and tea cup. The *naniwa-bushi* narrator performs standing, which is also unique among Japan's performed narrative arts. This allows the performer to illustrate the story with a wide repertoire of actions, such as rowing and fighting. The vocal drama is very direct and realistic, appealing to the audience to sympathize with the characters in the drama. Audiences commonly laugh and cry openly.

While texts exist and circulate publicly, there are no musical notations at all, for voice or shamisen. The musical aspect of the narrative is completely subject to oral transmission, and this accounts for the high degree of fluidity in the musical realization of the narrative that can be observed in contemporary performance.

Musical-narrative structure

Naniwa-bushi is made up of alternating sections of spoken and sung narrative, always beginning and ending with sung narrative. The shamisen plays throughout, in a punctuating desultory way in free rhythm sections, and very actively in rhythmic sections. It also plays continuously during the spoken sections (*tanka* 嘆詞), providing atmospheric support corresponding the content of the narrative, much like a film sound track.

The sung sections of narrative feature different substyles, or melody types (*fushi* 節). The names of these *fushi* types function like an oral notation that can be talked about by the performers as they prepare to perform. *Fushi* have a low degree of fixity, and are characterized by fluidity showing much individual variation. There is also regional variation, with two broad styles being recognized: *kantō-bushi* 関東節 (Tokyo region) and *kansai-bushi* 関西節 (Osaka region).

The free rhythm *kikkake* usually forms a unit with the rhythmic *kizami*, and this unit opens every piece, and can be repeated any number of times throughout the piece. The *ukarebushi* 浮かれブシ節 of *kansai-bushi* and the *ainoko* アイノコ *fushi* of *kantō-bushi* are bouncy and energetic, especially *ukarebushi* which is in dotted rhythm. *Urei* 愁い flattens the third by a semi-tone to produce a minor scale effect, and this helps convey pathos. The same is like the *kotoba nori* of *gidayū-bushi*, highly rhythmic with urgently paced *shamisen*, but the vocal part, though in time with the rhythm of the *shamisen*, is in spoken delivery. It is used to depict vigorous or violent action. Extensive sections of the fast-paced ‘major’ key *hayabushi* 速節 come towards the end of a *kansai-bushi* narrative. *Barashi* バラシ is the final phrase or two that slows down, switches to ‘minor’ mode, and free rhythm at the conclusion of the piece.

Following a pentatonic scale without any clear progression from one pitch territory to the next as in *kōshiki*, *heike* and *jōruri*, the main melodic variation derives from the shift from the ‘major’ and ‘minor’ pentatonic tonality. Rhythmic variation is more important.

As the spoken delivery sections consist of both dramatic dialogue and third-person narrative, *naniwa-bushi* is the closest of all the genres considered so far to the prosimetric model.

Modern(*kindai biwa* 近代琵琶)

At the same time as *naniwa-bushi* made its impact in modern Japan, two new genres of *biwa*-accompanied narrative emerged in the late nineteenth century, this time deriving from regional blind male traditions in the Kyushu region: Satsuma *biwa* and Chikuzen *biwa* (see de Ferranti 2008; 2009). Their nationalist narratives gained popularity with conservative upper classes and the growing middle classes before 1945. These *biwa* genres are sometimes taken to be in a direct lineage from the *heike biwa* narrative discussed above, but they actually come via a more circuitous route.

In these modern *biwa* genres, the one sighted performer plays and sings the narrative seated. The narrative takes the 7-5 syllable metric form. Written texts with some musical notations are used in performance, like *jōruri*. Musically, these genres are simpler than both *jōruri* and *naniwa-bushi*; the relatively few musical substyles draw on named phrase-length vocal patterns; phrases are separated with and sometimes overlaid by named *biwa* patterns. Significantly, they show the same basic characteristic as *heike* and *jōruri* of multiple melodies to deliver narrative.

There is almost no musical modulation, and little or no spoken delivery; neither do they regularly incorporate song, so they are not a candidate for prosimetric narrative. It is notable that the *biwa* instrumental interludes are highly developed; inserted between sections of narrative, these interludes can dramatically depict the narrative content.

Conclusion

To summarize the manner of ‘singing the tale’ in Japan, the expository third-person narrative, whether in prose (as in *kōshiki* and *heike*) or in poetic metre (as in *jōruri*, *naniwa-bushi* and the modern *biwa* narratives), is delivered musically, and song is interpolated incidentally, not as a structural device. The

musically delivered narrative draws on a long tradition that has been elaborated over many centuries. In *jōruri* and *naniwa-bushi* the sung narrative adopts the 7-5 syllable metric form, but it functions in a ‘prosaic’ way. Significantly, Japanese nomenclature insists that *uta* 歌 (song) and *katari* 語り (narrative) are different, even though *katari* is musically delivered using various substyles. (The verb applied to the non-musical narrative of *kōdan* is *yomu* 読む, ‘to read’, and for *rakugo* it is *hanasu* 話す, ‘to speak’.)

There is clear continuity of form and content from *heike* to *jōruri*, whereas *naniwa-bushi* and modern *biwa* narratives are not in the same direct lineage. However, while not all formulaic musical material is named, and not all is equally formulaic, all these genres feature multiple styles of delivery (or substyles). The ‘prose’ explanatory, or descriptive parts of the narrative are delivered musically. ‘Song’ is not a key structural element. Interpolated songs are required by the story, not a regular alternation of prose and song.

As for spoken delivery, in *kōshiki* and *heike* it is minimal, rather than a regular alternation. The prominence of spoken delivery increases in *jōruri* as narrative receives the influence of the puppet drama: only dramatic dialogue is spoken delivery, not explanatory narrative. *Naniwa-bushi* includes some spoken delivery narrative and also dramatic dialogue. This presence of spoken narrative is due to the influence of the non-musical *kōdan* narratives. There is very little interpolation of song in *naniwa-bushi*; only the poetic journey sequence (*michiyuki* 道行き) in some pieces might be considered a lyrical song passage. There is almost no spoken delivery in the modern *biwa* narratives.

Based on the above, it is clear that the Japanese narratives presented here do not closely fit the prosimetric model characteristic of Chinese performed narratives. If we take the broader definition of prosimetric narrative as proposed by Harris and Reichl, we might include at least *jōruri* and *naniwa-bushi* under this rubric as they alternate sections of spoken and musicalized delivery. By clarifying how the poetry and prose are realized musically, and identifying all varieties of the sung, that is, the narrative substyles, we have elucidated the nature of Japanese performed narratives with musical delivery. Prosaic narrative story-telling is delivered musically, rather than spoken. Most important is the centrality of multiple styles of delivery, and multiple melodies for different sections of the narrative.

Notes

¹These are distinct from the non-musical story-telling genres of *kōdan* and *rakugo*. On the latter, see Morioka and Sasaki 1990.

²Examples of stichic narrative include the unaccompanied Ainu epic *yukar*, and *Goze uta* 古澤歌 accompanied by *shamisen* 三味線 (see Groemer 2016). The neo-traditional *enka* 演歌 ballad form (see Yano 2003), and much folk-song are examples of strophic narrative.

³It enabled me to show that *kiyomoto-bushi* 清元節, an apparently ‘song’ (*utaimono* 歌い物) genre, was indeed narrative (*katari* 語り物) by virtue not only of its lineage but also its structural affinities with *gidayū-bushi* 義太夫節 and *heike* 平家 narrative. See Tokita 2015.

⁴Bender (2001) presents a case study of contemporary religious prosimetric performance, *jiangjing* 講經 (‘telling scriptures’) in Jiangsu, China.

⁵In *shōmyō* musical theory as a whole, the range of one octave is traditionally called *jū* 重; three are identified (from low to high) as *shōjū*, *nijū* and *sanjū*. However, in *kōshiki*, these are reduced to the interval of one fourth, following Japanese indigenous musical practice.

⁶The texts are written in Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文), but they are glossed with numbers and symbols and grammatical particles so that they can be read as Japanese. This practice is called ‘*yomikudashi*’ (読み下し), or as Kornicki puts it, ‘following the Japanese practice of annotating a Chinese text and when reading mentally converting (translating) it into their own language’ (Kornicki 2008).

⁷Royall Tyler's translation (Tyler 2012: 3).

⁸Partly for this reason, Tyler decided to divide musically delivered parts of the text into lines in his translation (Tyler 2012).

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曲艺伴奏所建构的音乐表述——以北京单弦为例

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论文以北京单弦的伴奏艺术特征为主要研究对象。在人们的惯有认知中，曲艺音乐以唱腔为主，伴奏为辅，但两者其实是相互依存与共生的，业界行话有“三分唱七分随”，不仅形象地指出了唱腔与伴奏的辩证关系，同时也明确地论证了伴奏艺术的地位与功能。本文主要分四部分对伴奏的艺术特征进行研究，分别是：三弦在单弦伴奏中的特征与历史演进、伴奏中的“共性音乐材料”、伴奏与唱腔所构成的横向、纵向关系。

曲艺音乐由唱腔与伴奏两部分共同构成，虽然说以唱腔为主，伴奏为辅，但两者其实是相互制约与共生的，曲艺界有句行话叫“三分唱七分随”，不仅形象地指出了演唱与伴奏的辩证关系，同时也明确地论证了伴奏艺术的地位与功能。因此，曲种伴奏的研究是十分必要并且有深远意义的。

目前，学界对曲艺的研究大多为曲种的个案研究，重点主要集中于唱腔、曲牌、剧目、剧本、表演的地方性特色等，对伴奏的专门研究相对较少，只是散见于曲种个案研究及曲艺整体性研究中的一小部分，并且大多都是对伴奏方法的归类总结，较少有全面深入的理论化分析。因此，本文希望在前人研究的基础之上，对单弦伴奏具体方法内部所展现的伴奏规律、唱伴关系做进一步的学理探讨。

单弦是起源于清乾隆(1736—1795)年间，流行于北京、天津和东北等地的一种说唱曲艺形式，以大三弦为主要伴奏乐器，又有“单弦牌子曲”、“牌子曲”、“八角鼓”、“北京单弦”等多种称谓。

“各个名称都含着不同的意义：……‘单弦’和‘八角鼓’是根据它在演出时，所使用的乐器而得名的。凡一人自弹三弦而自唱者，便叫‘单弦’；两人以上演唱者（有的弹三弦，有的打八角鼓），便叫‘八角鼓’。但是所谓‘八角鼓’，事实上共包括着‘岔曲’、‘快书’、‘牌子曲’三种俗曲，这三种俗曲都是用八角鼓伴奏而演唱的，‘牌子曲’只是其中的一种而已，因为‘牌子曲’在其中占着优势，而且在社会上的影响也较大，所以一般人（尤其是北京以外的地方）便单指‘牌子曲’来代表‘八角鼓’了。”¹

由于其同源性，在称谓的使用上时常会出现通用现象，本文之所以选用“单弦”一名，是因为本文研究论点为曲种的伴奏，而“单弦”是以表演形式（伴奏形式）为根据定名的，更贴切于本文的中心论点。随着曲种的发展，现在“单弦”不仅仅局限为一人自弹自唱的表演，而是泛指一人演唱、一人弹三弦伴奏的“唱伴分离”的表演形式。

需要说明的是，本文研究以传统伴奏方式表演的传统曲目为主，不包括现在创新的加入多种伴奏乐器或者电声、舞美效果的舞台表演形式。

一、三弦在单弦伴奏中的特征与历史演进

（一）、三弦作为弹拨乐器的特征

在人们的惯有认知中，曲艺音乐的伴奏是从属于唱腔、为唱腔服务的，因此在伴奏乐器的选择上必须要音色清雅，配置简练，不能喧闹以至喧宾夺主，吴文科曾说：

“伴奏乐器的采用，不只是一要考虑音乐表现的效果，更要遵循历史传统的制约即配合口语‘说唱’的便利……一方面，不能让伴奏音乐喧宾夺主而遮盖了声乐演唱的主体表达；另一方面，也不能使伴奏乐器从音质到音色到音量，削弱或者破坏人声的口头演唱。”ⁱⁱ

这当然是选择伴奏乐器的一个重要条件，但只是伴奏功能的一方面，伴奏还具有自身存在的重要艺术价值，如与人声融合的音色效果、自身独特的音响空间、弦师展示自身技艺的载

体等，综合这些因素考虑，弹拨乐器是最能和“说唱性”的曲艺相融合的乐器种类，可以将各自的特点充分发挥。

1、点状音色的节奏感

弹拨乐器的形制及演奏技法造就了其特有的颗粒性的点状音色，唐代诗人白居易在《琵琶行》中将这种音色声响生动的描述为“大珠小珠落玉盘”。演员表演时说唱相间、时说时唱、随时停顿，再加上口语化的表达，使得伴奏必须要紧密跟随演员的表演，随时填补空当，弹拨乐器的点状音色最能与曲艺说唱性的唱腔相吻合。在音乐性较强的唱腔中，点状音色可以与人声的拖腔形成音响上的对比，丰富听觉效果。另外，这种类似敲击乐器的点状音色节奏感很强，可以引领演唱者更好的把握节奏、速度。尤其是曲艺伴奏中最常用的三弦，由于其响亮又短促有力的音色，因此具有很强的控制演唱者速度、节奏的能力，即使在器乐合奏中也有此作用，例如江南丝竹中就有“胡琴一条线，笛子打打点，洞箫进又出，琵琶筛筛边，三弦当板压，扬琴一蓬烟”的口诀。

2、随腔入兴

随腔入兴是指弹拨乐器可以随着唱腔的发展随时即兴演奏，这种特点也是由其演奏技法及点状音色所决定的。前文所述，曲艺偏重于口语化的叙事而音乐性相对较弱，常是似说似唱与半说半唱的结合，因此弹拨乐器的点状音色比起弓弦乐器和吹管乐器所擅长的长音来说更容易与之融合。尽管弓弦乐器也可以拉奏快速的短弓，但由于其右手发音点在手腕和小臂，发音距离还是比发音点在指尖的弹拨乐器长；吹管乐器的发音也受到气息的制约，而没有弹拨乐器手指发音可以灵活自如的弹奏。在曲艺的伴奏中，常常需要运用即兴的加花手法来丰富旋律，弹拨乐器在这种加花过程中如果某个音没有配好，可以很快的转入下一音，不会在听觉上造成明显的不和协音响，这为产生支声性的对比提供了可能性。因此，这种“和”的问题更适合于弹拨乐器来展现，而由于乐器发音构造的不同，弓弦乐器和吹管乐器更适于伴奏旋律性较强的音乐形式，如京胡是京剧的主奏乐器，曲笛是昆曲的主奏乐器。

(二)、单弦伴奏艺术的形式演进

单弦是在岔曲的基础上加上若干牌子，经“枣核儿”^{iv}、“腰截儿”^v、“牌子曲”等种种形式演变而成的，其伴奏形式也经历了由简到繁的发展。

岔曲早在清乾隆年间(1736—1795)即已在八旗子弟中出现，后传唱于八旗士兵之中，据清末崇彝《道咸以来朝野杂记》中记载：

“宝小槎者，外火器营人。曾从征西域及大小金川，奏凯归途，自制马上曲，即今八角鼓中所唱之单弦杂排子及岔曲之祖也。其先本曰小槎曲，简称为槎曲，后讹称为岔曲，又曰脆唱，皆相沿之讹也。此皆闻之老年票友所传，当大致不差也。”^{vi}

宝小槎创编岔曲之后，在军中广为传唱，士兵们在赶路、休息时以岔曲寄托思乡之情，由于受条件所限，当时的岔曲并没有乐器伴奏，只是徒手而歌。岔曲随军队回京而传回京城之后，得到了乾隆皇帝的喜爱，命掌仪司研制了伴奏乐器“八角鼓”^{vii}，从此，岔曲就有了固定的伴奏乐器，并因此人们称唱岔曲又为唱八角鼓。可见，单弦岔曲最初是以徒歌形式发展到以打击乐器八角鼓来进行伴奏，体现了曲种伴奏由简到繁的发展规律。

八角鼓原以群唱、对唱为主体，由较多的人齐唱并加独唱，逐渐加入多种乐器伴奏。清光绪年间，有一个负责八角鼓演出的把头叫司瑞轩（别号随缘乐），因与同台演出的其他艺人发生了矛盾，大家因此给他罢演“晒了台”。之后，司瑞轩便将原来多种乐器伴奏、几人分饰角色演唱的八角鼓改为用三弦自弹自唱的演出形式，贴出报来称为“单弦”。此时的伴奏由于受到自弹自唱表演形式的限制，演员表演的重点要放在演唱及表情动作上，因此形式较为简单，大量使用“接尾伴奏”的方法，即唱时不伴奏，唱腔最后接上伴奏继而演奏过门，这样在演唱时才能将全部精力投入到唱腔的处理上。

“清末民初时，全月如对演唱形式进行了改革，将一人自弹自唱，改为二人一人弹一人唱，演唱者由坐而立，配打八角鼓以为伴和；……一时称为‘双头人’”^{viii}，至此，唱伴分离，形成现在单弦最常见的一种演唱形式，也即本文的研究对象。此时，虽然有了专门的弦

师伴奏，但“接尾伴奏”的方法仍然沿袭下来，“过去有些演唱单弦的老艺人，要求伴奏者在其演唱某些曲牌时（除过板外）不要伴奏”^{xiii}，一是由于曲艺有说有唱、即兴性强及不规则的板眼等问题，使得伴奏较为不易，需要弦师与演唱者经过长期的磨合过程才能达到配合默契；二是为了突出唱腔的地位，不使伴奏扰乱了唱腔（后来的实践证明，好的伴奏对唱腔来说是具有丰富、促进作用的）。此外，弦师还肩负着“帮腔”的责任，在伴奏一些带衬字的曲牌，如【太平年】中的“太平年、年太平”、【云苏调】中的“啾呀呀”、【金钱落子】中的“哩落莲花……”时，弦师在演唱者演唱衬字时要自弹自唱，进行帮腔。

随着伴奏艺术的发展，在“接尾伴奏”之后又出现了“随腔伴奏”的形式，即在演唱的同时也进行伴奏。“随腔伴奏”的方法有多种，在后文中会详细论述。

二、伴奏中的“共性音乐材料”

中国传统音乐最突出的特点体现为程式性与非程式性的共存，程式性是指一个曲种在长期历史发展中逐渐固定下来、形成一个套式的稳态内容——如结构、曲牌、旋法、表演动作等。董维松曾说：“程式之所以成为程式，其重要的、甚至是唯一的原因，便在于把规范化了的那些格式在同类型的任何作品中都去加以遵守和运用”^{xiv}。非程式性是相对于程式性而言的，是在固定模式基础之上的即兴变化。李吉提在其《中国音乐结构分析概论》一书中提出“所有的剧种都以自己原有的‘共性音乐材料’为基础组织、加工音乐”，单弦也不例外，例如单弦中的每个曲牌都是一个“共性音乐材料”，单弦的伴奏也因不同的“共性音乐材料”而体现不同的方式。

（一）、曲牌

单弦是曲牌体音乐，在【曲头】、【曲尾】之间加入不同的牌子连套演唱，其曲牌来源主要有：

民歌类：【边关调】、【靠山调】、【湖广调】、【太平年】、【剪靛花】、【罗江怨】等。

其它说唱音乐：【怯快书】、【莲花落】、【子弟书】、【乐亭调】、【秧歌】等。

南北曲：【醉花阴】、【锁南枝】、【石榴花】、【小桃红】、【一江风】等。

地方戏：【柳子腔】、【二黄调】、【四平调】、【高腔】、【垓下歌】等。

由于这些曲牌来源不一，所属宫调也不同，因此连缀演唱时会因宫调不同而产生不便。早期演唱时会在曲牌之间加“过口白”，又叫“夹白”，目的就是清除前一首曲牌留下的印象。后来艺人们逐渐摸索出不同曲牌之间宫调对应的规律，因此在曲牌连缀的方式上也形成了程式性的套路，如单弦常用的曲牌连缀结构为：【曲头】（宫调式）——【数唱】（宫调式）——【太平年】（徵调式）——【南锣北鼓】（宫调式）——【南城调】（宫调式）——【云苏调】（徵调式）——【金钱莲花落】（宫调式）——【怯快书】（宫调式）——【流水板】（宫调式）。徵调式由于是宫调式的上五度调，因此连缀起来比较方便顺畅。另外还有其它方式的连缀结构，但在转调上都比较方便，可以说，“联曲体曲种的曲牌联缀，多是由自由不固定的组合方式向固定的组合方式过渡形成的。”^{xiv}

在曲牌伴奏中，多采用随腔伴奏（按照唱腔旋律进行伴奏）的方法，不同牌子根据其旋律、演唱方式等不同，随腔方法各异，白奉霖将采用随腔伴奏方法的曲牌分为两类^{xv}：

第一类曲牌有：【小桃红】、【万年欢】、【小磨坊】、【斗蛐蛐】、【怯银扭丝】、【跑竹马】、【普天乐】、【满江红】、【朝天子】、【花园赞】、【棒子渣】、【渡银河】、【吴江冷】、【春将逝】、【柳青娘】、【北柳青娘】、【石榴花】、【水仙子】、【俏东风】、【寄生草】、【倒推船】、【玉娥郎】、【休洗红】、【黄鹂调】、【孝顺歌】等。这类曲牌除【黄鹂调】、【孝顺歌】外，其他在结构上都很短小，曲调、板眼较为规律、严谨；演唱时，在每一段曲目中只唱一遍，即改换其他曲牌，所以其伴奏均一气呵成，唱腔间很少加入小过门，唱腔同时也很少用其他伴奏点儿进行垫补，而主要采取随腔伴奏的方法。

第二类曲牌有：【山东落子】、【边关调】、【打新春】、【四板腔】、【乐亭调】、【北银扭丝】、【百忍图】、【军乐歌】、【寻巢燕】、【关东腔】、【对花】、【吹腔】、【纱窗外】、【吴桥落子】、【柳子腔】、【梆子佛】、【砧子旋】、【耍孩儿】、【绣

麒麟》、【剪靛花】、【湖广调】、【叠断桥】、【照九霄】、【鲜花调】等。它们的特点是音乐性较强，可以多次反复使用，但是在反复使用中，曲调、板眼等会发生较大变化，有时还说唱兼用。这类曲牌在伴奏时要根据其曲调、板眼的具体变化对伴奏点儿进行调整，在随腔伴奏的同时可同时采用“接尾伴奏”等方法。

以单弦腰截儿《一叶钓鱼舟》为例：

【曲头】一叶钓鱼舟，苇絮江头，望长空烟云荡漾静悠悠，碧天无际月轮浮。〔过板〕

【南锣儿】沽美酒，且消愁。轻摇桨，荡孤舟，月笼秋水明如昼。

【罗江怨】一行征雁，远下芦洲。水云乡里，载酒来游，江山千古哎呀还，哎呀还，还依旧。

【倒推船】清风明月同长久，且把闲愁一笔勾，红尘世上空争斗。

【曲尾】绿荫深处系孤舟，晚来时芦花岸上〔卧牛〕风儿骤。潇潇细雨秋江冷，隔断那山外的青山楼外楼。

谱例1：【南锣儿】，选自单弦腰截儿《一叶钓鱼舟》，张卫东演唱，白金鑫伴奏，江山记谱

1=G 1/4

唱腔/伴奏 (1̇6̇· | 5 | 5) | 0 2̇ | 1̇6̇ | 3̇ 1̇ | 3̇ 6̇ | 5 (6̇ | 2213 | 55 | 06̇ | 56̇ | 2123 | 55) | 0 2̇ | 1̇6̇ |

沽美酒，且消愁。 轻摇

3 | 5 | (553 | 235) | 0 3̇ | 3̇ 5̇ | 5 | (553 | 235) | 3 5 | 1̇ 5̇ | 1̇ 6̇ | 6̇ 3̇ | (553 | 235 | 6532 |

桨， 荡孤舟， 月笼秋水明如昼

1111 | 2523 | 5653 | 235) |

由谱例1可以看出，【南锣儿】这一曲牌是一句唱腔一句伴奏，唱时不伴、伴时不唱，两者完全交替，没有重合之处。

谱例2：【罗江怨】，选自单弦腰截儿《一叶钓鱼舟》，张卫东演唱，白金鑫伴奏，江山记谱

1=G 2/4 3/4

唱腔 { 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 2̇ 1̇ | 1̇ 2̇ | 0 3̇ | 2̇ 1̇ | 1̇ 6̇ | 6 5 | 0 0 0 | 3̇·5̇ | 1̇ 3̇ | 3̇ 1̇ 5̇ | 6̇·5̇ | 5 3̇ |

一行征雁， 远下芦洲。

三弦 { 06 56 | 223 55 | 06 56 | 2213 55 | 0 6 1̇ | 1̇ 6 6 5 | 555 32 35 | 213 55 | 0 1̇ 5̇ | 6̇·5̇ | 5 3̇ |

{ 0 0 | 5 6̇ | 0 5 2̇ | #4̇·1̇ | 6 5 | 0 0 0 | 6̇·1̇ | 3 5 | 0 1̇ | 6 5 | 6̇·1̇ | 5 3̇ | 21 23 | 5 5 3̇ |

水云乡里， 载酒来游， 江

{ 21 23 | 5̇·5̇ | 6 1̇ | 0 6 1̇ | #4̇·1̇ | 6 5 | 555 32 35 | 2323 55 | 0 1̇ | 6 5 | 6̇·5̇ | 5 3̇ | 21 23 | 5 6 |

{ 5 2 | 5 6 1̇ | 0 1 1 2 | 3̇·5̇ | 2 2 | 0 5 0 5 | 6̇·1̇ | 5 4 | 0 1̇ | 6 1̇ | 5̇·4̇ | 2 | 1 - | - - | 0 0 | 0 0 |

山千古哎是还， 哎是还， 还依旧。

{ 5 2 3 | 5 1 | 0 1 0 1 | 3̇·5̇ | 2 2 | 0 5 0 5 | 6 6 5 4 4 | 0 6 5 6 | 5̇·4̇ | 2 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | 6̇·1̇ | 2 3 | 1 2 | 1 6̇ |

以上是笔者根据所学大过门的演奏记谱的。该过门既具有一定的普遍性又据有鲜明的个性。白老师在教笔者弹奏时是口传心授的，需要同时记旋律音高、节奏、技法，而且岔曲大过门的节奏又比较复杂，这对于学院里习惯按谱演奏的人来说是比较困难的。但这也是传统音乐的活力所在，在基本旋律框架的基础上，可以有自己的变化，因此每位弦师的每遍弹奏都不尽相同。以下是几位弦师所弹奏的大过门，从中可以看出大过门旋律的基本框架（即程式性部分），以及每位弦师的即兴之处。

谱例5：四位弦师演奏的大过门

①、程樹堂演奏，杨荫浏记谱，选自单弦岔曲《反风雨归舟》^{xvii}

1=B 2/4

102 2165 | 12 321 | 015 1 | 3 2 3 6 | 03 603 | 1565 1236 | 1212 3216 | 1613 2361 |
532 1721 | 321 151 | 0215 651 | 232 1 | 151 1 |

②、连德康演奏，杨荫浏记谱，选自单弦岔曲《风雨归舟》^{xviii}

1=E 2/4

012 1565 | 12 321 | 015 1 | 3#2 36 | 0325 6512 | 3653 2376 | 5632 1276 | 5632 5323 |
6156 321 | 253 115 | 212 1565 | 12 321 | 15 51 |

③、白凤严演奏，曹安和记谱，选自单弦岔曲《光荣歌》^{xix}

1=F 2/4 3/4

1·2 156 | 12 321 | 151 03 23 | 602 1561 | 5236 1231 | 615 3212 | 7655 6513 |
2161 55 | 0121 321 | 151 0215 | 61 232 | 122 1 |

④、王富贵演奏，曹安和记谱，选自单弦岔曲《农家乐》^{xx}

1=G 2/4 3/4

01 51 | 102 1565 | 12 221 | 015 1 | 3#2 36 | 5235 612 | 353 2361 | 5232 1236 |
5321 6152 | 317 2132 | 115 223 1565 | 12 221 | 015 1 |

从以上谱例可以看出，岔曲大过门的旋律是建立在 do、re、mi、sol、la 的五声音阶基础上的，常用乐汇有 1565、12 321、015 1 等，在这基础的旋律框架上，具体音高和节奏可以有即兴的变化。谱例5中四位弦师演奏过门的记谱大多为2/4拍记谱，但在实际演奏时节奏是非常复杂多变的，很难用一种节拍连续记录下来，如谱例4。这种节奏上的复杂多变，是由多种原因造成的。首先，曲艺伴奏无定谱以及口传心授的传承模式，使得弦师即使从老师那里学成之初弹奏是一样的，在经过时间的沉淀与自己演奏经验的积累，会发生不同的变化；二是过门在演奏时是弦师独立完成的，不与演唱者或其它乐器合奏，没有板眼和旋律的限制，对弦师来说是相对自由、可即兴发挥、炫技的时机，因此每人甚至每人每次的弹奏都会产生不一样的旋律；三是演唱者手持八角鼓敲击节奏，但不按正式板眼击节，而是磕击双板（2/4节拍打复拍子），这样，板上眼上都击节，就造成了板眼混乱；四是记谱问题，由于中国的民间音乐都具有很强的即兴性，因此较难做到精确的记谱，又因为没有相对规范的记谱系统，因此每位研究者在记录同一段

音乐时也会出现差异。

三、伴奏与唱腔的横向关系——垫补

伴奏与唱腔两个声部之间无外乎有两种关系——横向与纵向，横向之间的关系体现在伴奏与唱腔声部的相互交替、连接，伴奏在这里主要起到“垫补”唱腔的作用。“垫”，就是在唱腔乐句之间、句逗之间有空隙的地方，垫充连接性质的过门或几个音符，使整个乐句更加连贯。“补”是指演唱者在句尾拖腔没有唱满或者省略时，伴奏者要以相应旋律进行补充。因此，“垫补”对于唱腔的完整性起着很大作用。以下具体分析伴奏与唱腔是如何相互进入，相互连接的。

(一)、唱腔进入伴奏

唱腔进入伴奏主要体现在过门的衔接上，即过门演奏后唱腔何时进入（即何时起唱）。过门的演奏是可长可短的，根据演唱者状态、伴奏者自身状态、观众现场反应、表演时间限制等诸多因素来调整。唱腔究竟在何时进入过门，一是靠伴奏者与演唱者长时间配合的默契，伴奏者要能观察、感觉到演唱者在将要起唱前的准备，即便演唱者随时进入过门，伴奏者也要快速反应；二是一些曲调的过门在结束时标志性音型，例如单弦岔曲过门结束时总是落在 $\underline{12\ 321}\underline{015}\ 1$ 的音型上，弹词过门常结束于 $\underline{3235\ 13}$ 上，演唱者听到此音型知道将要起唱了。

在具体起唱的位置上也有多种方式，体现出不同的艺术特色。

1、过门未结束，强拍弱位进

谱例6：单弦岔曲《春宵一刻》，张卫东演唱，白金鑫伴奏，江山记谱

1=A 2/4 3/8

唱腔	0 0 0 2 1 2 1 6 1 1 1 3 1 1 6 5 5 1 6 5 3 2 1 1 3 2 -
	春 宵 一 刻 千 金 难 夺
三弦	(12 321 015 1) 5·1 516 156 516 156 55 5 1 6 3 2·11231 223 2223
	{ - - 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
	{ 2223 2223 2223 2·32 156 12 321 015 1

2、过门未结束，强拍强位进

谱例7：单弦岔曲《风雨归舟》，常澍田演唱，连德康伴奏，杨荫浏记谱^{xxi}

1=E 2/4

唱腔	0 0 0 0 5 i 3 i i 6 5 i i 6 i 3 5 6 5 3 3 #4 3
	解 职 入 深 山， 隐 云 峰， 受 享 清 闲，
三弦	212 1565 12 321 1 5 5 1 5 6 5276 516 553 556 665 55 33#4 333#4 3336
	{ 3 - 3 0)0(
	{ 3336 3336 3363 1565 12 321

3、过门结束，强拍强位进

谱例8：单弦岔曲《风雨归舟》，石慧儒演唱，伴奏不详，江山记谱

1=G 2/4 3/4

唱腔 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 2 2 6 5 1 | 1 6 5 1 | 1 1 3 | 5 6 | 6 6 4 |

解取入深山，隐云峰，受享清

三弦 112 1565 | 12 321 | 015 1 | 516 153 | 516 516 | 151 516 | 153 666 | 616 512 |

3 - | 3 3 4 | 3 - | - - | - - | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 |

闲。

333 5335 | 5335 3335 | 3335 3335 | 3335 3335 | 3335 3335 | 33332 1565 | 12 321 | 015 1 |

造成这种不同进入方式的原因与不同流派演唱风格相关。首先从过门谈起，如今常听到的过门形式是近七十年以来确定下来的。之前的过门，比现在的旋律相对简单，这是历史进程中单弦流入职业圈子中的自然演变，是伴奏从简到繁的必然过程。岔曲过门最后结束的

015 1

三音是唱腔进入的地方，谭凤元讲到岔曲过门时说：“这七个过门，前六个过门，是过门完了，接着就张嘴的，所以必须要注意弦儿。无论大过门、小过门，只要弦子弹出了那个

015 1

|（瞪而匡），在那 10 的后半拍，就要开始张嘴，随着发音儿。”^{xxii} 谭凤元所说是后半拍开始张嘴，从其演唱音响可以证实，谭派是从 1 (do) 结束后的下一拍开始发声，即过门完全结束后在强拍进入。单弦历史上有名的谭、荣、谢、常四大流派，只有常派在演唱时是第一种情况：过门未结束，弱拍进。谱例 6《春宵一刻》演唱者张卫东先生的老师何剑锋是常氏亲传弟子，因此具有常氏风格，开口演唱时的节奏就与其它流派不同。现在职业艺人或票友们大多以第三种方式演唱，即伴奏结束后，唱腔在强拍进入。这种演唱方式在节奏上给人以平稳感，符合听者的心里预期，初学者也便于把握，但较第一种方式缺少了字格与腔格之间灵活巧妙的变化之感。

（二）、伴奏进入唱腔

伴奏进入唱腔主要采用接尾伴奏的方法，即伴奏声部在一句唱腔的结束处加入进来，连接下一句唱腔。单弦中的岔曲伴奏是贯穿始终的，不存在伴奏进入唱腔的问题；在牌子曲的形式中，是否运用接尾伴奏取决于不同曲牌的要求，有全程需要伴奏的曲牌，也有唱时不伴的曲牌，见前文曲牌部分的分析。现举一个【数唱】的例子。

谱例 9：【数唱】，选自单弦《风波亭》，阚泽良演唱，曹宏凯记唱腔谱，江山记伴奏谱

1=F 2/4 3/4

唱腔 $\overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{3} | \overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{3} 6 | \overset{6}{6} \overset{5}{5} 2 | 5 5 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 6 6 | \overset{6}{6} \overset{5}{5} \overset{5}{5} | \overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{3} | \overset{5}{5} \overset{5}{5} \overset{5}{5} |$

岳元 帅抵 御 金兵， 朱仙 镇杀敌 寇 百 万

三弦 516 | 1 0 | 0 0 | 0 1-2 31 | 01 516 | 1-32 11 | 01 516 | 1 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 |

3-5 321 | 3-5 353 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 $\overset{6}{1} \overset{5}{3} | \overset{5}{3} \overset{5}{5} | \overset{5}{5} \overset{5}{3} | 5 5 3 3 | 0 0 | 0 0 |$

有 零。 不料那狡 猾的兀术，

0 0 | 3-6 323 | 01 56 | 1112 321 | 01 516 | 1 0 | 0 0 | 0 1-2 31 | 01 56 | 1-32 11 |

这段【数唱】的伴奏是唱腔与伴奏交替进行，伴奏起到衔接每句唱腔的作用，具体衔接

方法是伴奏最后一拍时唱腔进入，唱腔最后一字时伴奏进入，衔接紧密。

四、伴奏与唱腔的纵向关系——托腔

在唱腔进入伴奏之后，两个声部同时进行，就产生了纵向上的关系。伴奏声部在纵向上对唱腔的作用主要体现在“托腔”上。下面，就对因“托腔”所产生的伴奏与唱腔纵向上的关系进行论述，笔者将其总结为平行和支声两种关系。

(一)、平行关系

平行关系主要是指伴奏声部与唱腔声部同时进行且旋律基本一致。这里的“基本一致”包含几种情况：一是伴奏与唱腔旋律完全或几乎完全相同，笔者将其称为“严格平行”，这种情况较少；二是在旋律框架不变的情况下进行简单的加花；三是因为加花而产生的节奏错位的情况。

1、严格平行

此种情况下，伴奏声部旋律严格地与唱腔旋律平行，起到助强和支持旋律的作用，一般用于需要加以强调的音乐场合。

谱例10：单弦曲牌【倒推船】（节选自谱例3）

1=G 2/4	
① 唱腔	3·5 6i 56 53 2·1 22 05 3 2 1·2 35 0 2 6 1 3·2 1 - 1 -
	(众和“久”)
三弦	3·5 6i 56 53 2·1 22 05 332 112 35 0 2 6 1 3·2 11 11 11 11
② 唱腔	32 1·6 11 03 23 6·5 66 05 32 1 3·2 1 1 - 1 0
	(众和“尘”)
三弦	05 1·6 11 03 23 6·5 66 05 32 1 3·2 11 11 11 11 13
③ 唱腔	5 1 1 2 3 5 2 7 6·1 56 1 2 2 05 32 1 3 2 -
	斗 (众和“斗”)
三弦	5 1 1 2 3 5 2 7 6·1 56 1 2 2 05 32 1 3 2 -

在“久”、“尘”、“斗”三个字的拖腔时，会从之前的一人演唱变成“众和”的形式，由在坐者共同演唱，此时需要强化唱腔的旋律，烘托气氛，因此，三弦伴奏的旋律几乎完全和唱腔相同。通常情况下，伴奏使用严格平行的唱腔旋律性都很强。

2、简单加花（或减花）

“加花”是中国传统音乐中最为常见的旋律发展手法之一。在曲艺音乐中，简单加花（减花）就是在唱腔基本旋律的基础上通过简单的加音、减音、变音等方式取得点缀的效果，同样可以起到强化唱腔旋律的作用，还可以给唱腔旋律以华彩，增强旋律的层次感。加花伴奏通常用在唱腔长音的位置上，如一个四分音符的唱字可以配以十六分音符的快速弹拨伴奏，反之，快速变化的唱腔也可以用减花方式配以单个长音伴奏来支撑。这里所说的简单加花是较后面的复杂加花而言的，两者的区别在于：简单加花中使用的变化音较少，而多以同音反复为主要手法，旋律走向基本不变，因此将其归入“平行关系”；而复杂加花使用的变化音较多，虽是围绕旋律骨干音进行，但具体旋律音高和走向往往不同，在听觉上给人以两条不同旋律的支声效果，因此将其归入“支声关系”。

谱例11:【四板腔】，选自单弦《杜十娘》，荣剑尘演唱，王海门伴奏，文彦记谱^{xxiv}

1=D 4/4

唱腔	6·5 3·5 2 0 656 5·3 2 0 5·1 2 2 3532 7276 2 5 1 6 1 2 0		
李甲	迈步	奔岸把船	上;
三弦	5 5 335 217 212 6 6 553 212 3·217 2 2 2 3532 7276 535 6·161 212 3·217		
	26 276 6·6 5 i6 i·6 56 5 3·2 1 2 0 i 5 6 5·4 3·2 1 1 0		
杜十娘	迎接	站立	身旁。
	22 222 23 i6 55 56 i 5566 532 117 212 05 556 5654 332 161 116		

谱例中这一句唱腔都是采用了加花伴奏的手法，旋律发展的走向一致，但是伴奏通过增加音符显得更为生动，在唱腔的短暂停顿处通过伴奏 212 3·217 连接起来，如“李甲”、“迈步”、“上”三字以2 0两拍结束，而伴奏加花变为 $\underline{535} \underline{6\cdot161} \underline{212} \underline{3\cdot217}$ ，依然强调了2音，同时又使唱腔更加连贯流畅。

3、节奏错位

节奏错位指伴奏声部与唱腔声部的旋律相近，但在节奏上由于时值安排不同引起一些变化，出现长短节奏的交替错位，形成了声部间此起彼伏的状态，可以增加旋律的灵动性。节奏错位通常是由加花而造成的，如增加音、减少音而必然导致的节奏不一致。

谱例12:【剪靛花】，选自单弦《金山寺》，石慧儒演唱，王富贵伴奏，文彦记谱^{xxv}

1=D 2/4

唱腔	5̇ 3̇ 3̇ 2̇ 3̇ 2̇·6̇ i·6̇ i̇ 0 0 3̇ 5̇ 3̇ 2̇·i̇ 6̇ 5̇ i̇·3̇ 2̇·123 545 0i			
白娘他	就未开言，	一声的长	歎	哎，
三弦	2̇5̇ 5̇3̇ 2̇2̇i̇ 2̇i̇2̇ 02̇6̇ i2̇i6̇ i2̇2̇ i562̇ 5 5 0 2̇2̇i̇ i6̇5̇ 3353 2123 545 0i			

从谱例可以看出，这一乐句的唱腔和伴奏几乎都形成了节奏错位，例如“他就”二字，三弦以十六分音符的短音对唱腔的四分音符长音，形成长短、快慢的对比。

(二)、支声关系

曲艺中的伴奏并不是完全简单的唱什么旋律就弹什么旋律，上述平行关系只是伴奏方式中的一部分，还有很多情况下，伴奏所奏旋律与唱腔不同，在刻意或者随意的情况下产生了两声部的支声性。

“支声手法。其特点是两个或几个人在演唱或演奏同一旋律时，将这个旋律在各个声部中作了不同的变化。由于在支声音乐中，所有声部都同时表达同一音乐形象，所以，它实际是在演奏依附于同一基础旋律的不同变体。”^{xxvi}

支声关系的产生有两种情况，一种如上文所说是同一旋律在各声部发展时产生的不同变体，这主要是由于复杂加花造成的；第二种是伴奏声部以一个固定的旋律型进行伴奏而与唱腔的旋律声部配合所产生的。在单弦伴奏中，第二种情况非常常见，也体现了单弦的伴奏风格，即“音型支撑”。

“一些器乐独奏、独唱的伴奏，并不始终跟着主旋律声部托腔，而会在特定段落或场合，改用固定旋律、固定节奏反复伴奏。为此，伴奏声部与独奏独唱声部（还包括不同伴奏乐器之间），也可能形成比较明显的旋律线条对比或和音关系。”^{xxvii}

由于三弦乐器性能的原因，便于奏出同音重复、高低音交替的节奏型，这种以同一节奏型反复弹奏以支撑唱腔的方法在单弦中非常常见，笔者称其为“音型化伴奏”。音型化伴奏

多用于唱腔跺句和长音拖腔时，使得听觉效果既简练清新又有与唱腔不同的变化的趣味。以单弦岔曲中“基本点”的运用为例。

在单弦中，以固定音型重复弹奏的伴奏方式被艺人称为“基本点”或“看家点”，是伴奏岔曲的主要方法。除去过门，三弦伴奏岔曲唱腔的方法是很自由的，大部分乐句是用“基本点”伴奏板眼，音乐性较强的曲调则用随腔伴奏，同时仍可插入“基本点”，但是与之相反的，应该用“基本点”伴奏的乐句因其旋律性较弱而不能使用随腔伴奏的方法。一直用随腔伴奏，会在音乐上显得单调、呆板，而“基本点”运用得当，会产生支声效果，使得音乐形象丰满、自然。

5̣16̣ 1̣5̣1̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ |

5̣16̣ 1̣5̣6̣1̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣1̣ |” 由 do、mi、sol、la 四个音组成，基本形式为

在具体伴奏时也可变化使用。

1、跺句时使用

岔曲分小岔曲、平岔带数、大岔曲、数字曲等形式，都是在小岔曲的基础上加数字句扩充规模而形成的，其中都有“基本点”的运用。

平岔带数是比较常见的 上一行的谱例移到这个空里 一种岔曲形式，曲中使用一次数字句，以数板方式演唱，强调语气节奏。三弦用“基本点上一行的谱例移到这个空里 伴奏，如《茅店鸡声唱》、《闺怨》等。谱例13：单弦平岔带数《茅店鸡声唱》^{xxviii}

2/4

三弦 5̣ 16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣5̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣5̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣5̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ |

唱词 风吹 落叶响， 扑面 晓风凉， 野寺 山僧把 晨钟 撞， 路上 行人踏 银霜，

5̣ 16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣5̣ | 5̣16̣ 1̣5̣3̣ | (0 5̣ 1 5̣ 6̣ | 15̣6̣5̣ 1216̣ | 5̣15̣6̣) 1̣5̣3̣ |

过 小 桥， 抬 头 望 见， 残 星 数 点 难 成 行， 止 不 住 的 乌 鸦 乱 噪 红 日 上，

这是一段“平岔带数”的数板，一直使用“基本点”伴奏，括号内为“基本点”的发展变化。除这样较长的“数板”外，还有一些小岔曲带有一或两三个七字句、五字句，也同样用这一“基本点”伴奏。可以说这是“遇缺即补”的伴奏点，凡没有其他专用伴奏点和随腔伴奏之外，都可以用它来伴奏。

大岔曲使用二至三次数字句，它的数板唱法加强了曲调的音乐性，三弦用“基本点”

3563 5565 3563 55 伴奏，偶尔还穿插着随腔伴奏。

谱例14：单弦岔曲《风雨归舟》，常澍田演唱，连德康伴奏，杨荫浏记谱^{xxix}

1=E 2/4

唱腔 2̣ i 2̣ i 6̣ | 5̣ 6̣ i | 35 6̣ 5̣ | 7̣·6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ | 2̣ 7̣ 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ | 7̣·6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ | 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ |

忽然风雨 骤， 遍野 起云 烟；吧嗒嗒的 冰雹把 山花儿 打， 咕噜噜的 沉雷

三弦 6̣ 6̣ 2̣ 6̣ 3̣ | 5553 56̣ i 5̣ | 3563 55 i | 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ | 2̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 56̣ i 6̣ | 7̣ 6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 5 i 6̣ i |

35 6̣ 5̣ | 2̣ i 6̣ i | 7̣·6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 5̣ i | 7̣·6̣ 7̣ 6̣ 5̣ 3̣ 5̣ | 3 5̣ i | 7̣ 7̣ 2 6̣ |

震 山 川； 风 吹 角 铃 当 啾 啾 的 响， 撒 刺 刺 的 大 雨 似 涌 泉。 山 洼 滴 水

3563 553 | 5563 56̣ i i | 7 6 7 6 56̣ i 6 | 7 6 7 6 3565 | 3563 553 | 55 i 3 3653 |

{	$\overset{3}{i}5$	$\overset{7}{i}6\overset{6}{i}7$		$i56$	5	
	满, 涧下 似深 潭。					
	$\underline{553}$	$\underline{5i65}$		$\underline{3563}$	$\underline{653}$	

2、长音拖腔时使用

演唱者在演唱到句末处常在最后一字拉长腔以抒发情感，此时伴奏会以唱腔落音为主音，以围绕主音进行的固定节奏型为唱腔伴奏。唱腔拖音时，如果伴奏只用某一演奏技法重复演奏同音，会使听者觉得索然无味；而如果伴奏声部过度加花，旋律进行太过繁复，又会干扰演唱者长音的音准稳定性，同时会喧宾夺主，使听众被伴奏旋律吸引而忽略了演唱者拖腔的精彩之处。

谱例15：单弦岔曲《春景》节选

1=F 2/4

①	唱腔	$\overset{3}{i}5$ $\overset{6}{i}6\overset{3}{i}6$ $\overset{5}{i}5$ $\overset{5}{i}5$ · $\overset{6}{i}6$ 2 - 2 -
		米,
	三弦	$\underline{556}$ $\underline{556}$ $\underline{5556}$ $\underline{5556}$ $\underline{5222}$ $\underline{5222}$ $\underline{5222}$ $\underline{5222}$
②	唱腔	$\underline{535}$ $\overset{65}{i}6$ i $\overset{i}{i}5$ 5 - 5 -
		蕊,
	三弦	$\underline{535}$ $\underline{616}$ $\underline{515}$ $\underline{515}$ $\underline{55515}$ $\underline{55515}$ $\underline{55515}$ $\underline{55515}$
③	唱腔	$\underline{i2i2}$ 6 6 - 6 -
		犁
	三弦	$\underline{615}$ $\underline{66616}$ $\underline{66616}$ $\underline{66616}$ $\underline{66616}$ $\underline{66616}$
④	唱腔	$\underline{1205}$ $\underline{3232}$ $\overset{3}{i}1$ 1 - 1 -
		竹
	三弦	$\underline{1224}$ $\underline{3434}$ $\underline{1115}$ $\underline{1115}$ $\underline{1115}$ $\underline{1115}$ $\underline{1115}$

音型化伴奏在单弦中具有重要的作用，笔者总结为以下四点：

a、在表演者演唱似说似唱的唱腔时，三弦伴奏无法随腔演奏旋律音调，以音型化伴奏来衬托唱腔，既方便演唱者即兴发挥，不会把旋律框死，也便于弦师弹奏，不至于强行跟腔而出力不讨好，两者配合起来显得灵活生动而不呆板。

b、在表演者演唱节奏不规整或似说似唱的唱腔时，以固定的音型化伴奏可以稳定唱腔的节奏、速度，使唱腔连贯统一。

c、在长音拖腔上使用音型化伴奏，可以起到华丽的点缀作用，长音与短音对比交错，使整个唱腔具有推动力。

d、音型化的伴奏中常使用调性主音，再加上其不断反复弹奏，因此起到强调调性的作用。

结语

综上所述，本文通过对单弦伴奏艺术的分析，对其伴奏乐器——大三弦的音色特征、单弦伴奏形式演进、伴奏方法、伴奏与唱腔的关系等问题从理论上做了初步阐释。从具体分析得出，伴奏并不是“被动”跟随唱腔演奏同样的旋律，而是在具体音乐中根据需要进行不同的“主动”变化，在长期的实践发展中形成了一套具有程式性与非程式性结合的规律，形成具有自身美学价值的“伴奏艺术”，与唱腔共同架构出完整的曲种艺术风格。唱腔与伴奏在融合时所产生的支声性既有艺人“有意”创造的，也有“无意”或者“随意”形成的，但都体现了伴奏音乐丰富的变化，是伴奏艺术中最为生动的闪光点。

本文虽然是以单弦为例，但基于其代表性以及中国传统音乐所具有的共通性，从中可以一窥我国北方大多数曲种中弹拨乐器伴奏的艺术特色和功能。由此，更进一步对其它曲种进行多视角关注，为曲艺艺术的发展积累更多的学术资源起到一定的作用。

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ⁱ 王秀卿等传谱、于会泳编著，《单弦牌子曲分析》，上海音乐出版社，1958年，P1。

ⁱⁱ 吴文科，《中国曲艺艺术论》，山西教育出版社，2003年1月，P343。

ⁱⁱⁱ 弦师：对弹奏弦乐器者的尊称，本文指专门为单弦演唱进行三弦伴奏的伴奏者。

^{iv} 枣核儿：其曲体是把岔曲的六个乐句，分成前三句【曲头】、后三句【曲尾】两个部分，在两者之间又加进一个较为长大的曲牌，形成两头小中间大的枣核儿形状，因此得名。枣核儿是岔曲在曲调上突破原有曲体，吸收别的曲牌，在音乐上丰富自身而向单弦演变的第一步。

^v 腰截儿：形式与枣核儿相似，但有所发展，在【曲头】、【曲尾】中加入多个曲牌（通常为五个），形成曲牌连缀。

^{vi} 清·崇彝，《道咸以来朝野杂记》，北京古籍出版社，1982年，P105。

^{vii} “八角鼓以蟒皮蒙面，八块板拼成了八个角，寓含了八旗（正黄旗、正红旗、正白旗、正蓝旗、镶黄旗、镶红旗、镶白旗、镶蓝旗）之意。每块板中间安上三个小钹，八块板子共二十四个小钹，意喻满八旗、蒙八旗、汉八旗的二十四固山（满语，汉文译为旗头、旗长，是军阶很高的军事首长）。鼓下垂两个丝绦长穗，意为双岁升平的吉祥词。演唱者属于哪个旗管辖就用哪种颜色的穗子。”——阚泽良，《单弦艺术浅谈》，中国文联出版社，2008年11月，P4。

^{viii} 中国曲艺志全国编辑委员会，《中国曲艺志·北京卷》，中国ISBN中心，P449。

^{ix} 白奉霖，《单弦音乐欣赏漫谈》，人民音乐出版社，1999年，P296。

- ^x 董维松, “民族音乐结构形态中的程式性与非程式性”, 选自《对根的求索》, 上海音乐出版社, 2004年9月, P120。
- ^{xi} 曲牌体是以曲牌为基本单位构成的曲体。分单曲体和联曲体两种组合形式: 用一首曲牌反复变化构成的唱段称“单曲体”; 用若干个不同的曲牌有机地连缀而成的套曲称“联曲体”。联曲体通常由曲头+曲牌(曲牌可多可少, 视内容需要而定)+曲尾组成。
- ^{xii} 中央音乐学院民族音乐研究所, 《单弦牌子曲选集》, 音乐出版社, 1956年, P25。
- ^{xiii} 薛宝琨、鲍震培, 《曲艺杂志》, 上海人民出版社, 1998年10月, P160。
- ^{xiv} 薛宝琨、鲍震培, 《曲艺杂志》, 上海人民出版社, 1998年10月, P160。
- ^{xv} 白奉霖, 《单弦音乐欣赏漫谈》, 人民音乐出版社, 1999年, P296。
- ^{xvi} “让头咬尾巴”: 当开唱时, 仍用过门式的旋律奏下去, 即‘让头’, 使托与唱默契一致后, 再“咬住尾巴”——托与唱的音调基本统一, 再往下进行, 等唱完尾音后, 就随时出过门, 这样循环往复, 托与唱形成了既有分, 又有合的生动局面。——连波, 《弹词音乐初探》, 上海文艺出版社, 1979年9月, P163。
- ^{xvii} 谱例来源: 中央音乐学院民族音乐研究所, 《单弦牌子曲选集》, 音乐出版社, 1956年, P15。
- ^{xviii} 谱例来源: 中央音乐学院民族音乐研究所, 《单弦牌子曲资料集》, 音乐出版社, 1956年, P44。
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- ^{xx} 谱例来源: 中央音乐学院民族音乐研究所, 《单弦牌子曲资料集》, 音乐出版社, 1956年, P50。
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bookreviews

Matt Gillan – *Songs from the Edge of Japan: Music-making in Yaeyama and Okinawa*. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2012, xiii + 220pp, transcriptions, photos, notes, glossaries, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781409424048 (hardback), 9781409424055 (ebook).

Until recently, non-Japanese scholarship in Okinawan Studies was rather sparse. The past three decades, however, have seen monographs published in Western languages on diverse aspects of Okinawan society and culture. Matt Gillan's *Songs from the Edge of Japan: Music-making in Yaeyama and Okinawa* attests to the vitality and expanding scope of Western Okinawan Studies. Gillan's topic is music and identity in the Yaeyama island group—Ishigaki, Taketomi, and Yonaguni—which sits around 400 kilometers southwest of Okinawa Island. Gillan explores this topic in eight thematically organized chapters, which also flow chronologically to give a cohesive picture of the development of modern Yaeyaman musical culture.

In Chapter One, Gillan outlines his research method of participant-observer ethnography, augmented by judicious engagement with the extensive Japanese-language literature. He also introduces the concept of *shima* or *sima*—literally “island,” with the expanded meaning of a particular lived-in place—which he uses to situate Yaeyaman music within a “larger [Japanese] discourse concerning regionality and national identity” (9-10). Gillan became interested in Okinawan music while living in Japan in the mid-1990s, and was particularly drawn to Yaeyaman singers such as Yamazato Yūichi. Upon arriving on Okinawa Island in 2001 for doctoral research, he began taking lessons with Yamazato. He then moved to Ishigaki Island, only to learn that Yamazato had a limited presence in the local traditional music scene. As this was the scene he hoped to research, he decided to study under respected traditionalist Ōsoko Chōyō instead. The norm in Yaeyama is to cultivate a lifelong connection with a single musical lineage, and Gillan's decision to switch lineages could have adversely affected his research (as Gillan observes, some Japanese music scholars decline to participate in the musical cultures they study precisely in order to avoid such risks). Fortunately, however, Gillan was able to maintain a good relationship with his former teachers. A potentially awkward cultural negotiation thus ended up yielding fascinating insight into the “factionalization of lineages” and its impact on musicians' everyday lives—as well as into the potential for tension between the participant-observer ethnomusicologist's identities as a musician and a researcher (14).

Chapter Two introduces the major genres of Yaeyaman traditional music within their historical context. From around 1500 until the 1870s, Yaeyama was dominated by the Okinawa Island-based Ryūkyū Kingdom, which extracted surplus from the peasantry through the mediation of the local gentry. As in agrarian societies throughout East Asia, each class/status group was associated with a distinct musical tradition: the peasantry with unaccompanied work songs (*yunta* or *jiraba*), and the gentry with art songs (*fushiuta*) accompanied on the *sanshin* or three-stringed lute. Gillan provides translations and transcriptions of representative *yunta* and *fushiuta*, which he supplements with detailed analysis of musical and poetic structures and performance conventions. He then dedicates several paragraphs each to the history and structure of the *sanshin*; the Okinawan notation system (*kunkunshi*); and Okinawan and Yaeyaman musical scales.

In Chapter Three, Gillan examines the impact of pre-1945 power dynamics on several areas of Yaeyaman musical culture. One such area is the importance of origins and lineages. The backdrop here is Japan's 1879 annexation of the Ryūkyū Islands, which inaugurated its imperial expansion during the

1880s–1930s and helped spark intense interest in questions of Japanese identity. Japanese scholars were fascinated by the relationship between Ryūkyūan and mainland Japanese languages and cultures. They were particularly drawn to underdeveloped regions like Yaeyama, which appeared to shelter an authentic Japonic culture untainted by modernization. Japanese scholarly interest in matters of genealogy and authenticity influenced Ishigaki-born educator Kishiba Eijun (1885–1972)—the most important figure in the formation of the Yaeyaman musical canon—who traveled the countryside in search of the origins of *yunta* and *fushiuta*. Some of Kishiba’s attributions are questionable, but his research aims and methods have had an “immeasurable effect” on the way traditional music is conceived in Yaeyama (50). Another, more fraught, area of cultural-political negotiation is language use. The same anaemic development policy that enabled Yaeyama to be fetishized as a living anachronism also condemned it to Japan’s socioeconomic periphery. State authorities and local elites promoted the use of “standard Japanese” as a means of integration and social modernization, while suppressing local languages as marks of backwardness. Yaeyaman musicians adapted by fitting Japanese lyrics to Yaeyaman melodies; some even wrote songs promoting assimilation. These negotiations have had lasting effects: the most widely-known example of Yaeyaman music, for example, is still a 1934 version of the song *Asadoya yunta* with Japanese lyrics.

Gillan’s fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters constitute his book’s ethnographic core. Chapter Four describes the use of music throughout the contemporary Yaeyaman ritual calendar, highlights of which include the rice-planting festival *Tanadui* and the ancestor-honouring festival *Sōron*. Rituals take place on the nested levels of village, neighborhood, and family, and music serves to reinforce social cohesion on all three levels. Yaeyaman festivals incorporate not only ritual songs, but also *fushiuta* and other secular genres, which are conceived as entertainment for gods and ancestors as well as living humans. Chapter Five picks up where Chapter Three left off by tracing the establishment of Yaeyama’s two main *fushiuta* lineages by Ōhama Yōnō (1841–1916) and Amuro Sonshi (1848–1899). It then delves into the contentious politics of postwar preservation societies, the practice of claiming songs for particular villages by building “song monuments” (*kahi*), the movement to introduce traditional music into public education, and the role of tourism in sustaining traditional musicians. Chapter Six focuses on the micro-politics of interpretation surrounding a single song, *Tubarāma*, which is the object of an annual singing contest in Ishigaki. Historically, a degree of musical and lyrical improvisation has been “allowed and encouraged” while singing *Tubarāma* (128). Singers like Araki Sakae and Daiku Tetsuhiro have even used it as a vehicle for political commentary. Since the 1970s, however, the consolidation of formal lineages, spread of notation, and institutionalization of singing contests have led to standardization. Some Yaeyamans have gone so far as to accuse the formal lineages and the state with appropriating and asphyxiating the music of the “common people” (*shomin*) (146). However, the dynamism of the *Tubarāma* tradition lives on in an alternative singing festival held the night before the main event, during which improvisation flourishes (147).

In the final two chapters, Gillan connects his findings with broader discourses on Yaeyaman, Okinawan, and Japanese identity. Chapter Seven explores the “interweaving of international, national, and local identities in the production of new Yaeyaman and Okinawan music” (151). During the 1990s, mainland Japanese popular culture saw a burst of enthusiasm for all things Okinawan, including the music of Yaeyaman artists such as singer and sanshin player Ara Yukito (b. 1967); singer and guitarist Hidekatsu (b. 1961); pop and *fushiuta* singer Daiku Tetsuhiro (b. 1948); pop and *fushiuta* singer Ōshima Yasukatsu (b. 1969); singer Nishidomari Shigeaki (b. 1969); and rock-pop band BEGIN (c. 1980s) (152–155). After briefly introducing these artists, Gillan discusses the relationship between the pop and traditional music scenes, Yaeyaman artists’ strategic use of indigenous languages and musical idioms, and Japanese audiences’ tendency to romanticize Okinawa as a “healing island” untainted by the stresses of capitalist modernity (171). Chapter Eight is an afterward which reintroduces the

concept of *shima/sima* or “[native] place” as a theoretical framework for analyzing various aspects of Yaeyaman traditional music, including its role in ritual; its transmission through lineages; its preservation through popular and state initiatives; its stylistic evolution over time; and its influence on popular culture. Gillan closes by situating his findings within “a more general cultural discourse in Japan in recent years concerning cultural and ethnic diversity in the context of the nation” (180).

Songs from the Edge of Japan is based on over a decade of continuous contact with Yaeyaman musicians and scholars, and provides a well-researched and compelling introduction to a uniquely vibrant musical tradition. Gillan’s musical examples are well chosen, and he engages with theoretical and methodological issues without overindulging in disciplinary jargon, thus keeping the book accessible to non-specialists. Several chapters would make good undergraduate reading assignments: the focus in Chapter Two, for instance, is very much on the music itself, and it would work well in a world music survey course, whereas Chapters Three and Seven would work well in a course on East Asian cultural history. Overall, *Songs from the Edge of Japan* is an indispensable contribution to both Ethnomusicology and Asian Studies; it also serves as a fine example of ethnomusicological practice for readers unfamiliar with the discipline.

James Edwards

Noriko Manabe -- *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Protest Music After Fukushima*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. xx + 433 pp, photos, website, notes, bibliography, discography, videography, index. ISBN 978-0-19-933468-1 (hardback, US\$99), 978-0-19-933469-8 (paperback, US\$27.95); also available as an e-book.

The study of music and politics has become increasingly popular during the last few decades within the field of ethnomusicology. Manabe’s work on recent nuclear protest music in Japan can be seen as part of this trend. Nevertheless, her approach – exploring the tension between musicians’ self-expression and political self-censorship in both media and music industry, through ethnography and musical analysis – contributes new perspectives on politically engaged music in Japan.

The title of the book is taken from Gil Scott-Heron’s song from 1970, which was itself released in solidarity with the Black Power movement in the United States. Although Manabe’s book deals with political *protest* – not an all-encompassing *revolution* – its title emphasizes the censorship of contentious political ideas which still takes place in the Japanese media.

In the last five years, Japanese society has encountered several political mass protest movements, of a size and extent not witnessed since the 1970s. Mass demonstrations have been held against a number of state policies implemented in recent years: the Secrecy Law, which prohibits citizens from disseminating secret state information; the reinterpretation of Japan’s pacifist constitution toward collective self-defense; and the Security Bills allowing participation of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces in military attacks abroad. The antinuclear protest movement emerged prior to these abovementioned protests. On 11 March 2011, a severe earthquake and tsunami hit the northeastern part of mainland Japan, leading to the nuclear power plant accident in Fukushima. According to Manabe, ‘the nuclear accident revealed that negative information’ about the nuclear industry and health risks caused by the accident ‘had been kept hidden from the public’ (p. 11) by Tokyo Electric Power Company, as well as by the Japanese government. These events motivated widespread antinuclear protests throughout Japan for several years afterward. Manabe’s work investigates the role of music within this antinuclear movement, mainly involving popular music genres, such as rap, hip-hop, techno and rock music. The book is divided into two sections: ‘The Background’ and ‘Spaces of Protest’. Section one mainly

reflects on the background of nuclear policy in Japan and musicians in the antinuclear protest movement. Though a large proportion of Japan's population supports an antinuclear position, Manabe asserts in chapter 1 that 'a system of restraints' discourages citizens and musicians '[from] speak[ing] out on this and other contentious political issues' (p.5). The primary aim of the book is to find out how these constraints work, and how musicians nevertheless manage to express their political views in spite of the constraints surrounding them. Four spaces where antinuclear music is performed are explored in light of these questions: cyberspace, demonstrations, festivals, and recordings. The discussion draws on theories of media and censorship, music in social movements, and the conceptualization of space.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough account of how the nuclear industry in Japan is intimately linked to the Japanese state, and how the industry has become one of the largest financial supporters of the Japanese media and recording companies. The mass media and music industry's strong self-censorship with regard to nuclear issues is thus explained by their financial dependency on the nuclear industry, as well as by their dependency on the state as a significant information source for the media. Chapter 3 addresses the roles played by musicians in the antinuclear movement, including their motivations and the risks they run.

Section two is the main part of the book, analyzing power structures, opportunities and risks facing musicians in the four spaces outlined above. The analysis shows that the potential anonymity of cyberspace has helped break the silence on antinuclear thoughts (chapter 4). Moreover, because cyberspace is less influenced by censorship, music with political content – mainly performed by independent musicians – has been disseminated more often and more widely here than in the other spaces.

The analysis of demonstrations is the largest chapter in the book (chapter 5). It explores the types of music at demonstrations as well as the changes in performance style which evolved over time at the demonstrations. According to the author, the performances shifted from a presentational style of prepared songs to a participatory style where the audience joined the singer in call-and-response slogans. Furthermore, the demonstrations offer a rather free space for political self-expression, particularly for independent musicians: their music can potentially be more widely disseminated, but simultaneously, the musicians run the risk of being ignored or blacklisted by major-label media or recording companies for performing at political demonstrations. In the latter part of the chapter, the sites of the demonstrations are analyzed in light of urban landscapes and soundscape: Manabe sees a dialectical influence between the sound of the demonstration and the urban landscape, asserting that the 'cityscape changes with the sound', but also that the 'sound of a demonstration changes the city' (p. 261).

Three types of festivals are compared in the chapter on festivals (chapter 6). Two of them – the 'No Nukes' festival and the 'Atomic Café' at Fuji Rock Festival – are interpreted as having antinuclear approaches. The large No Nukes festival was a series of concerts initiated by the acknowledged musician Sakamoto Ryūichi. The Atomic Café, on the other hand, was an antinuclear space within the Fuji Rock Festival, a non-political music festival. At both festivals, 'presentational (antinuclear) arguments in diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames' (p. 319) were given, although the No Nukes festival took the most distinct antinuclear stance. The third festival, 'Project Fukushima', was initiated by the renowned noise musician Ōtomo Yoshihide. The festival's aim was to comfort the local people of Fukushima, without raising any antinuclear critique. Manabe points to the fact that the latter festival was covered by the media to a much greater degree than the other two festivals. According to her, Sakamoto was 'ignored and castigated' by the media and government, while they 'lauded Ōtomo for Project Fukushima' (p. 319). In these ways, the comparison between these festivals illustrates the risks taken by musicians associated with contentious political activism.

With regard to recordings, Manabe reveals an industry with strong constraints on antinuclear views

(chapter 7). Self-censorship towards this taboo issue is clearly present. Musicians within major-label record companies still manage to express themselves politically, but through indirect language: the widespread use of metaphors, metonyms, and mispronunciation of words to create associations with homonyms is analyzed. Nevertheless, Manabe finds that these musicians cannot express themselves as freely as independent musicians who are free to disseminate their music and lyrics on the internet or perform at demonstrations. Thus, musicians at major-label record companies are more likely to create pure entertainment music, rather than music conveying political themes.

Manabe concludes in chapter 8 that independent musicians encounter fewer restrictions than major-label musicians, and that they can more easily perform in all four spaces (p. 354). Further, the use of cyberspace redefines the limits between spaces, both in time and place. Events in real space can be experienced in a different time and/or place, causing wider participation, as well as potentially wider critique. All in all, the author finds that music is a creative force that can express thoughts and emotions that are hard to share verbally (p. 33).

Censorship versus musicians' need for self-expression is a highly relevant topic worldwide, not only in regard to media, music industry, and politics, but also in regard to cultural practices and gender conditions. Wider theoretical parallels can therefore be drawn from Manabe's work. Nevertheless, since the majority of musicians mentioned in the book are men, I found it unfortunate that gender dimensions seem to be missing in the discussions of (self-)censorship – dimensions which seem relevant in the Japanese context.

With the exception of the critical remark above, I find that the book provides a thorough and convincing insight into the world of protest music in Japan. It raises important issues with regard to our current mediated world, and does so in a persuasive way. The work builds on an extensive amount of research drawn from fieldwork materials, academic publications in both the Japanese and English languages, materials from a wide range of online sources, and music recordings related to the study. Moreover, many online references are accessible on a website provided by the publisher, specially designed for the reader of the book. The book is also available as an e-book. Therefore, for the readers too, the use of cyberspace has expanded the participatory opportunities for involving themselves in the book.

All in all, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Protest Music after Fukushima* is a serious, worthwhile academic study and one that will be of great interest both to students of ethnomusicology and popular music studies and to those interested in contemporary issues in Japanese society.

Liv Lande

Shzr Ee Tan – Beyond 'Innocence': Amis Aboriginal Song in Taiwan as an Ecosystem. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, xvi + 296 pp, black and white photographs, tables, musical and video examples, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781409424369 (hard cover, £80).

Shzr Ee Tan bookends her well-written and researched monograph with the now famous lawsuit over the New Age group Enigma's borrowing of a recording of two traditional singers from the Amis ethnic group in eastern Taiwan. Enigma's song, 'Return to Innocence', featured a performance by Difang and his wife, Igay from the 1989 Maison des Cultures du Monde CD *Polyphonies Vocales des Aborigènes de Taiwan*. It makes up the entire vocal line of the chorus of 'Return to Innocence'. While permission had been sought from Maison des Cultures du Monde to use the recording, Difang and Igay were unaware of the matter until the song achieved international fame and they received

no credit for their role in the song's production, even after contacting the recording company. The resulting lawsuit, which was settled out of court in 1999, brought worldwide attention to Taiwan and to issues of musical ownership, in particular as applied to cultures whose music had not previously been conceptualized as having commercial value. For Tan, this event raised the following questions: 'What exactly was Difang singing? How would this song have been sung in his village, outside the recording studio? What were the song's socio-ritual meanings? Was this "authentic" Amis song? Was this representative of aboriginal song culture at large?' (7).

In addressing these questions, Tan chooses to use the biological concept of an ecosystem, as defined by Arthur Tansley and Eugene Odum, to demonstrate how various manifestations of Amis music are interconnected. After a historical review and an examination of scholarship on the Amis, Tan devotes the rest of the book to chapters on modeling Amis song, examining traditional Amis festivals as performed in the present and in the local Catholic Church, observing how performers and audiences interact, and the current Amis popular music scene. These observations and how they apply to the concept of a musical ecosystem are based on ten years of fieldwork in different Amis villages and urban communities in Taiwan, including an extended stay in the village of Fafokod in Taitung county.

Tan uses the second chapter on defining Amis music to set up for the interplay defined through the rest of her monograph. Like many cultures across the globe, the Amis do not have an original word for music. Rather, their term encompassing traditional musical activity is *ladhiw*, a genre of singing. Words covering instruments, art, performance, and broader concepts of music are borrowed from Mandarin and Japanese. *Ladhiw* is, for the most part, a strophic song style that often contains a repeated chorus of vocables. Duple meter, a strong rhythmic drive, and solo introductions are also common features of *ladhiw*. However, Tan asserts that *ladhiw* is more than a kind of 'folk music' because of its integral role in Amis culture. Most Amis view *ladhiw* as a part of life more than a form of art. Indeed, some of the ways that the Amis differentiate *ladhiw* from *yinyue* (the Mandarin term for music) is the contexts in which they occur. *Yinyue* takes place on the stage with backup music and musicians, while *ladhiw* happens spontaneously in the company of friends, against a background of drinking and dancing.

How *ladhiw* and *yinyue* interact in the Amis ecosystem becomes clearer in the third chapter on the different contexts of Amis festivals. Amis festivals occur annually after the summer rice crop is ripe. In examining these festivals, Tan narrows her focus to those directly observed in Fafokod. These festivals (*kiloma'an*) feature ritual thanks to local deities and requests for protection during the coming year. *Ladhiw* has a prominent place in *kiloma'an* when it is combined with mass circle dancing in a practice known as *malikoda*. *Yinyue*, while not seen as a traditional element of *kiloma'an*, is still scheduled throughout the week as a form of entertainment. Catholic masses are also held parallel to the *kiloma'an*. The level of engagement in culturally similar activities during this time depends on whether one is inside or outside the church building. Activities inside the church are more organized and deliberate, while those outside the church are more spontaneous and more closely resemble what takes place at the *kiloma'an*. Despite the differences and variations that occur between what is now included in the festival and how it is represented in different parts of village culture, each manifestation tends to take from the others while simultaneously contributing. *Yinyue* performances during the *kiloma'an* often borrow melodic material from *ladhiw*. The church's preservation of *ladhiw* melodies in the form of written hymns allows those melodies to be recirculated back into the community. In addition to these examples, Tan provides further details on how different manifestations of *ladhiw* and *yinyue* reflect and enforce gender norms and formalization.

The final two chapters of Tan's monograph focus on the development of traditional and contemporary Amis musical styles in the realms of staged performance and the pop culture. Tan transitions to this

focus by addressing the Amis use of the Mandarin word for performance, *biaoyan*. In the Amis context, *biaoyan* is used 'as a concept understood with its full connotations of the stylized and objectified, not only in "art" and "entertainment" but also conversation' (123). Through the variety of performances by Amis groups for Amis audiences, by tourist-oriented Amis troupes for travelers, and by Amis singers for audiences in Great Britain, Tan examines the overlap and exchanges of musical styles, performers, and perspectives that take place. In the final chapter, Tan examines objectification of Amis music as it occurs in various manifestations of Amis popular music. Like the previous examples, the use of popular music by Amis musicians and casual performers represents different layers of interaction between more traditional and modern forms of music.

Tan's illustrations of musical interconnectivity work effectively to present the complex ecosystem of Amis song. Audio and video examples on the accompanying CD allow the reader to have brief glimpses into the musical environment of the Amis, to see the different aspects of Amis singing and how they interact with each other. Tan's inclusion of the work of ethnomusicologists Mark Slobin, Thomas Turino and Jeff Tilton, along with that of anthropologists Anna Tsing and Dru C. Gladney, creates an effective dialogue between a variety of perspectives on social and musical activity. These dialogues, along with the attention paid to other scholars researching Taiwanese and Chinese music, combine with quality of her ethnographic research to make her book a valuable model for others using the concept of the ecosystem to describe musical activity.

John Widman

Anon. – Jin Ping Mei i Vers og Prosa. Første til Sjette Bog, oversættelse og presentation ved Vibeke Børdahl. Forlaget Vandkunsten, København, 2011-2018. Illustrated with Chinese woodcuts. Lists of names and terms. Vol 1, 2011, 248 pp. Vol.2, 2013, 254 pp. Vol.3, 2016, 247 pp. Vol 4, 2017, 282 pp. Vol 5, 2018, 262 pp. Vol.6, 2018, 326 pp.

One of China's all-time greatest novels, the late-16th century epic tale *Jin Ping Mei*, is currently being translated into Danish. Projected as a series of ten volumes, six volumes have appeared since 2011, with four more to follow. This is a monumental project, amounting to an estimated total of some 2,500 pages. *Jin Ping Mei* (named after the three main bondmaid-concubines who feature prominently in the novel) is a kaleidoscopic tale about domestic intrigue, small-town decadence and corruption in the final part of the Song Dynasty. It focuses on the lives of a merchant-military man, his family and circle of friends and acquaintances, and it is especially strong in its depiction of female characters.

The book has been previously translated into English, German, French and other languages, but the current version in Danish is something special: in a vivid and accessible style, it brings out, more than any previous translations, the work's links with oral storytelling. Critics have often praised *Jin Ping Mei* for its surprisingly advanced narrative techniques, certainly by standards of Western literature from the same period. But much of the book's assumed 'modernity' may well resort in affinities with age-old Chinese oral storytelling. The translator, Vibeke Børdahl, is a respected sinologist and an expert of Chinese oral narrative. She has applied her special insights in the performing techniques and repertoires of traditional Yangzhou storytellers when making this translation. She highlights the book's 'oral' qualities and allows for a fresh and appealing (re-)acquaintance with *Jin Ping Mei*.

Fans of epic tales will be happy to indulge in the endless family intrigues, the frequent quarrels and outbursts of jealousy between the women in the novel, as well as the highly charged sexual encounters between the male protagonist and his many female lovers (plus one male one). For readers interested in the actual handwork of narration, there's the bonus of a masterful translation which, for the first time, brings to the fore just how closely tone and language of this novel match the realm of oral storytelling in China. A superb achievement!

Jin Ping Mei was presumably written in the latter half of the 16th century. A manuscript of the first 35 chapters already circulated in the 1590s, and the book was first mentioned in *The Art of Drinking (Shang Sheng)* in 1606, written by

a well-known literati of the time. The first documented full publication of the work dates from 1617, though it may already have been available in an edition of 1610 which has not survived.

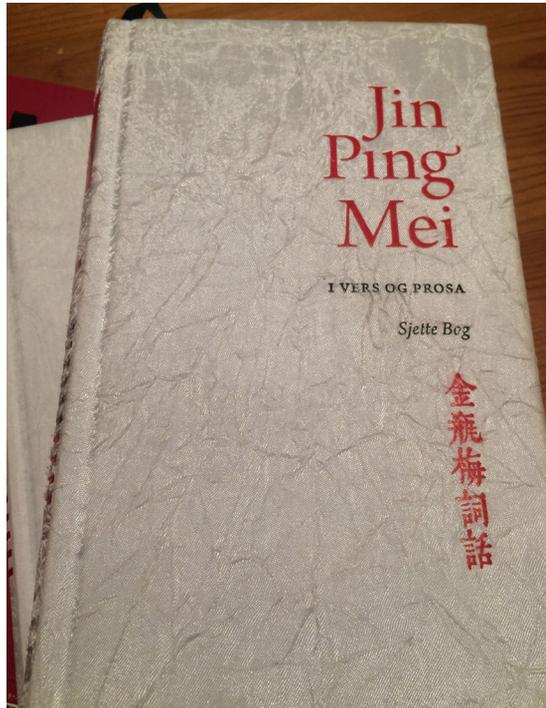
Written by an unknown author, *Jin Ping Mei* soon became one of the country's best-known and best-loved novels, listed in one breath with several other great novels such as 'The Three Kingdoms' (*San guo zhi yanyi*) and the 'Water Margin' (*Shuihu zhuan*). It had a great influence on fiction writing in the next few centuries, not least on Cao Xueqin's famous 18th century novel 'The Dream of the Red Chamber' (*Hong lou meng*), with which it is often compared.

The 20th-century writer Lu Xun rated the book very highly, calling it 'the most famous of the novels of manners'. He interpreted *Jin Ping Mei* as an 'effective condemnation of the entire ruling class'. This is one possible interpretation, though the lower classes are hardly depicted any more favourably in the novel, and one might well argue that the book's overarching theme is a sweeping panorama of 'the crooked timber of humanity' (to quote Immanuel Kant's view on mankind).

The first ten chapters of *Jin Ping Mei* are a spin-off from *Water Margin*, a book which tells about a gang of robbers who roam the moors of Shandong in the 1100s. It concerns a well-known episode about the hero Wu Song who slays a tiger with his bare hands, and then plans to pay a visit to his brother Wu Da. The wife of Wu Da, Pan Jinlian, is maintaining a secret love-affair, and together with her lover she plots to get rid of her husband. It is only after the murder that Wu Song finds out what happened. In the *Water Margin* he avenges the death of his older brother by killing Wu Da's wife and murderer. In *Jin Ping Mei* the tale is given a new twist: Wu Song plans to take revenge, but due to some clever power-scheming on the part of Pan Jinlian's lover, he is sent off to a far-away place before he can undertake any action. This is the beginning of a long chain of events with numerous new and colourful main characters, a superb soap which manages to capture the reader's attention for thousands of pages. It is no longer Wu Song who plays the main role, but Pan Jinlian, and her lover and (soon) new husband Ximen Qing who, as it turns out, is married to a whole string of spouses.

Not every episode in the book connects meaningfully with the novel's overall plot: the sequence of events is sometimes haphazard, with long digressions and elaborate descriptions. But this shouldn't make *Jin Ping Mei* any less attractive. Pan Jinlian, Ximen Qing and many of the story's other characters are depicted as people of flesh and blood, as full-fledged characters who are neither totally 'bad' nor totally 'good', more often a mixture of the two (although Pan and her lover start off as murderers, and do not exactly become more endearing as the story moves on). Yet we manage to care about their fates, and may even feel compassion. This is perhaps the greatest quality of this novel: that it is not monochrome, and manages to paint life in an amazing variety of colours and shades of meaning. For a long time, Ximen Qing and Pan Jinlian seem able to escape any kind of punishment for their dark deeds, but at the end of the tale (not yet published in Danish translation), Ximen Qing will die from an overdose of aphrodisiacs administered by Jinlian in order to keep him aroused. A more fitting end for a reckless, unscrupulous womanizer can hardly be imagined.

Jin Ping Mei has always been notorious for its bold sexual imagery. The book's subject matter was even so sensitive that its distribution was prohibited several times in China. Until recently it was marked as *neibu* ('forbidden'), which implied that only limited numbers of readers in Communist China would be allowed access to full versions of it in print. At present the printed text seems to be available in well-sorted public bookshops, though the internet





in China still offers only censored versions, with most of the sex scenes and vulgar jokes taken out.

The first volumes of translation in Danish have triggered press reviews in Denmark which praise the translator, but sometimes tend to sensationalize the novel's erotic episodes. The frank descriptions of sex are pornographic and full of graphic detail, and there are no less than seventy such episodes in the entire book, but it would do no justice to *Jin Ping Mei* to portray it as 'pornography'. It is a unique and wide-ranging piece of fiction, its gamut running from tragedy to horror, from refined irony to slapstick, from prose to all kinds of poetry, from vulgar and colloquial language to lofty idioms for all sorts of ceremonial occasions.

The book's male protagonist Ximen Qing is a kind of carnal superhero, driven to excess by an insatiable sexual appetite, but we get to hear more about him than just his bedroom secrets. There is ample space in the book for tales about his power scheming – he is a kind of small-town Machiavelli – as well as his dealings with domestic personnel, his contacts with shopkeepers, small-traders, monks, soothsayers, high officials, visitors from outside, and of course with women from different layers of society – whores, nuns, shopkeepers' wives, servant girls, upperclass ladies, and more. In sum, we are offered an epic view of life in imperial times, from the lowest tiers right up to the highest circles. And few other novels in the Chinese literary canon can equal its depths of human psychology.

It is also hard to think of any Western equivalents that combine all the different qualities in this work, from epic grandeur to refined insights in the human mind. The *Jin Ping Mei* is roughly contemporary with Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays, with some admirers claiming that it matches the psychological subtlety of those authors. Furthermore, it demonstrates a wonderful sense of irony and a fascination with the fantastic as one might find in a work like Cervantes' *Don Quichote*. At times it demonstrates the sort of encyclopedic riches displayed in, say, the biographies of Gerolamo Cardano or Benvenuto Cellini. And with its astonishing range of different poetical forms and idioms it matches the lyrical inventiveness of a great work of poetry such as Luis Vaz de Camões' *Os Lusíadas*. All the Western works referred to here were written during the 16th and early 17th century, roughly contemporary with *Jin Ping Mei*, but needless to say, *Jin Ping Mei* is very much a world in its own right.

One might also think of very different kinds of comparisons, for example with some popular long-running Western TV soaps such as *Downton Abbey* (about British aristocracy in the early 20th century) or *Game of Thrones*. The bloodshed and fights in *Jin Ping Mei* are minimal by comparison, the book is hardly 'packed with

action' in the way *Game of Thrones* is, but its sex scenes are arguably superior to those of the American fantasy series, and the power scheming is hardly any less sly or evil. Obviously, *Jin Ping Mei* dates from a very different era and culture. Its relaxed pace and elaborate descriptions of banquets, wealthy clothing, ritual ceremonies etc. may come across as slow or longwinded by comparison. The main points in common with the TV soaps are that the book is highly episodic, teeming with remarkable characters, and that it can boast of a tale full of unexpected twists and turns, featuring humorous as well as highly charged dramatic episodes. *Jin Ping Mei* is also admirably 'well-researched', like some of today's finely crafted TV drama series. The qualification 'well-researched' should go between brackets because the author of *Jin Ping Mei* probably never had any team of professional 'experts' at his disposal to sort out relevant data for him. But he – or was it a she? – must have had rich external resources to rely on: probably no single person can be expected, from personal experience or knowledge, to be able to dish up so many details about so many different aspects of Chinese material culture or aristocratic life – not to speak of the inner life and struggles of his numerous male and (especially) female characters. A lot of what we read in in the book's one hundred chapters may well have its basis in tales initially written or circulated by others. Indeed, one could easily imagine the author to have frequented local storytellers' performances for many years, in order to gather inspiration and ideas!

Few people who read the CHIME journal will have access to the Danish language, but those who don't master it but think of themselves as Chinese music aficionados might have plenty of reason to turn to other translations of *Jin Ping Mei*¹, and might at least want to take note of the special merits of the Danish translation. *Jin Ping Mei* is a major reference source about songs and musical life in imperial times; it offers magnificent insights into music-making in olden times' brothels, temples, aristocratic homes and a broad variety of ceremonial settings. There are admirably detailed descriptions of sacrificial rites, exorcist ceremonies and all kinds of magical rituals which co-involve music. Vibeke Børdahl has gone to great lengths to evoke such events in very vivid language.

The book is a veritable treasure-trove of descriptions of musical instruments, ensemble playing (or singing) and competitive music encounters. It features numerous scenes of poetic recitation and narrative singing. A vast number of song lyrics are quoted in extenso – one could easily derive several volumes of poetry from this material – and there's even a complete opera libretto plus a description of its performance. There are also elaborate episodes about music being played in festivals, funeral rites, birth celebrations and other special moments. *Jin Ping Mei* has always been of great interest to music historians, and should be worthwhile for scholars doing research on any kind of music in China, not just historical genres, for the many links with present-day musical practices will become apparent to every informed musicologist who reads this book.

And then, as I already mentioned, there are the many links with oral Chinese storytelling and -singing, which Vibeke Børdahl has been keen to highlight in her translation. One cannot help but note the persistent presence in *Jin Ping Mei* of an omniscient, surprisingly vocal and opiated storyteller. He will pop up at any moment, for example in the middle of an arbitrary sentence, in-between minor events, or perhaps at the culmination of some dramatic development. His voice is also heard in some of the introductory poems to chapters, and at the end of every chapter, in that eternally repeated formula: '*If you want to know what happens next, join our next round!*' – next round referring here to the next chapter, the next 'round' of narration. There are passages where narrative events and direct speech seem to blend, or where words spoken by one of the characters seem to merge almost imperceptibly with a storyteller's address of an imagined 'audience', or vice versa. For example, in Chapter 8 of the First Book, Pan Jinlian addresses Ximen Qing's male servant Dai'an in a phrase that might come directly from a storyteller's mouth: '*Let me explain this to you with a song to an existing tune that bears witness to this*' (p.182). Overall speaking, Børdahl will not miss a chance to present the entire novel as if it were a kind of spoken performance, though only in so far as fidelity to the original Chinese text allows her to.

Oral and written literature in imperial China often form a continuum, in the sense that many tales, or isolated episodes from tales, travel easily from one region to the next, from one performative genre to another, and from oral representation to written narrative and back. Certain episodes in classical novels may well have started life as oral narration, or – reversely – may have provided basic materials for oral performance. Børdahl's translation emphasizes this mutual exchange, and the 'oral' aspects of *Jin Ping Mei*. This is probably the most notable in her decision to print in capital letters all the statements in the book which seem to come directly from the mouth of some imagined 'oral' narrator. One quickly gets used to those lines in capital letters, phrases like 'IT IS TRUE AS THEY SAY...', or 'THERE IS A POEM ABOUT THIS' or 'IT IS BEING TOLD THAT...' or 'WE WILL NOT GO INTO DETAIL ABOUT THIS.' Previous translators of *Jin Ping Mei* have often omitted such statements, judging them as redundant. But taking out such casual lines clearly alters the basic tone and atmosphere of the book's prose. Børdahl also points at the division of the novel in series of ten 'rounds' (chapters), a feature it shares

in common with some other classical novels, such as the *Water Margin*, but also with the basic structure of long tales in Yangzhou oral storytelling.

Some readers may wish to debate the validity of an approach that emphasizes to such an extent the book's qualities as a (quasi-) 'performable' text. Børdahl has stated that she sees her work of translation also as a way of doing research, of testing certain ideas about the book's narrative techniques. But no matter how we judge this aspect, in the final instance her prose brings to this Danish version of *Jin Ping Mei* a freshness and immediacy that I'm convinced must also be a basic feature of the original Chinese. This is about a good deal more than retaining in place a number of 'storyteller's' phrases. Years of exposure to masters of Yangzhou storytelling – and years of patient translation of their oral repertoires – have put an obvious stamp on Børdahl's prose. Her Danish in *Jin Ping Mei* is crystal clear, it sparkles like consoling music, and I cannot think of a more appealing tone and style to shed new light on this great iconic text.

We know almost nothing about the identity of the narrator in *Jin Ping Mei*. He (or she) is an all-knowing person who never introduces himself. There is no need to assume that he and the actual author of the book – whose name is not known with any certainty – are one and the same person. Clearly both of them – the imagined and the actual narrator – take a common pleasure in storytelling, and possibly share some strong convictions. They seem to be bursting out in joint laughter at hilarious moments. This not to say that the *Jin Ping Mei* is speaking in a single narrator's voice, or promotes a single-minded view about man's vices or virtues. The book is not really that much of a 'moralistic' novel, though it has often been portrayed as such. There's certainly plenty of moral messages along the way, for example cast in the form of 'wise' (or conceited) poems at the beginnings of chapters. But such poems, which also pop up in other parts of the text, are full of contradictions. They don't really seem to add up. Sometimes the narrator appears to be in an angry mood; sometimes the tone is quietly amused and ironical, sometimes it is more detached and philosophical. All this does not, in my view, lead to any integrated 'view'. The continuous chorus of narrator's comments seems to be saying many different things at different moments.

We can nevertheless feel that we are dealing with an author with a mind of his own. There is a sense of empathy with very diverse characters in turn, who are sometimes treated with respect, sometimes with disdain or doubt. Monks and other religious persons are frequently exposed as impostors, as freaks or good-for-nothings, and in such instances the author poses as an atheist. At other times we note a heartfelt resonance with religious rituals and their spiritual meanings, some passages almost sounding like religious pamphlets or sermons. This absence of absolute judgment or any finite moralistic view, this refusal to offer an all-inclusive perspective on 'right' and 'wrong' turns *Jin Ping Mei* into a surprisingly modern novel indeed. It appears to sit well with Nietzsche's *Umwertung aller Werte*, and also with Sartre or Camus. Existentialism and absurdism seem to have forerunners in the Chinese feudal world of four centuries ago, and even a sense of Brechtian estrangement occasionally pops up in *Jin Ping Mei*. In recent decades, feminist commentators have expressed criticism of this book² because most women in it – no matter how strong – tend to be cowed, suppressed and violently humiliated by men. Yet *Jin Ping Mei* neither seems to condemn nor celebrate such behaviour. It shows life in all its shocking rawness. It addresses many contrasting and frightening aspects of human behaviour in feudal times, from envy to hatred, from corruption to extreme violence, on the part of men as well as women, and it may superficially express many 'lessons' to be learned, but ultimately it leaves it to the readers to draw their own conclusions. Of course, the lessons we draw from this book in the 21st century are bound to differ from what readers in former centuries would have taken from it. But what emerges from *Jin Ping Mei* at all times is an epic portrayal of human conflicts, of the confusing nature and endless complexities of human relationships.

Immodest in size, episodic and at times random in the manner of TV-soaps, *Jin Ping Mei* is hardly a 'perfect' work of fiction. Readers will frequently catch the author repeating himself; there's an awful lot of feasting, drinking and pondering going on, and the novel loses perhaps some of its momentum in volumes four to six. Yet you cannot exactly accuse the author of monotony or one-sidedness. The book offers an astonishingly rich composite picture of China and Chinese culture. Descriptions of trade transactions alternate with mystical rituals, operatic shows and prostitute's songs alternate with ghost stories and magic. There is nothing inevitable in the overall course of events (unless it were the fact that most of the book's characters must die in the end), and there is ample room for surprise, an aspect which traditional storytellers would know how to appreciate.

The male protagonist uses a magic potion to get super-erect, and possesses an amazing collection of sex toys, but this will eventually seal his fate. The passages about sex are full of imagination and rich in colourful metaphors, for which the translator has managed to find eloquent Danish alternatives. Admittedly, there is a lot of violent and destructive sex, but – as Børdahl points out in her introductory essay – sex in this book is also portrayed

as a beautiful, soulful, creative and life-inspiring power.

Not everything in the tale is credible, but we should allow for certain things to happen simply for literary effect. Take for example Ximen Qing's closest male friends: they are rowdy and unreliable men who frequently visit brothels, get stone-drunk all the time and undertake all sorts of shadowy and corrupt deals. Yet at certain moments these crude fellows suddenly start reciting Chinese highbrow poetry, with so much erudition that it would have been amazing even if they'd been highly trained academic specialists. At such moments the narrator appears to be parading – tongue-in-cheek – his own special hobbyhorse: presumably he always seems to have hidden reservoirs of splendid songs and poems up his sleeve, and is apparently keen to invent yet another gathering of friends, simply to be able to treat his readers to yet another pile of fine lyrics!

Some of the poetry is obscure or ambiguous, but much of the time we can make perfect sense of it, even though the emotions evoked may not always be directly relatable to modern-day sentiments. Same goes for the events taking place, or the actions undertaken by most of the characters. We understand only too well with what is going on. The monks in the book regularly get stuffed (or make sure to get stuffed) with huge quantities of good food; they are often portrayed as lazy and sex-hungry devils. Readers in touch with the naughty or lazy monks who feature in Chaucer's or Boccaccio's tales will be more than familiar with this. In one magnificent scene towards the end of the first volume, a bunch of Daoists get confused at the sight of a ravishingly beautiful woman (Pan Jinlian). They completely lose track of the ceremonial music they are performing: instead of beating their gongs, drums and cymbals, they start beating on each other's heads. It's pure slapstick, but it occurs in a volume that started off with brutal murder and adultery. It's both the darkest scenes and the most hilarious ones that tend to propel this book to considerable heights. Every possible tone or register of emotional experience is explored. There are scenes of grievous bodily harm, especially directed against women, for example in the dark chapters in which Ximen Qing punishes his new spouse Li Ping'er in the most ghastly ways, after she has attempted (out of pure despair) to find refuge with another man, and has even attempted to take her own life. Ximen Qing, the main male protagonist rarely manages to get much sympathy from the reader. He is too dishonest, too cruel and too calculating for that, and is constantly applying double standards: he cannot grant the sexual freedom that he claims for himself to his wives and his other female lovers; he may even feel that they deserve the death penalty for the sort of behaviour which he has no trouble allowing to himself. Some of the cruelest confrontations between this man and his victims offer a stark contrast with the infinite tenderness found in scenes devoted to Ximen's Qing's baby-son, the child stemming from Ximen's liaison with Li Ping'er. The baby will ultimately die tragically due to deliberate neglect on the part of Pan Jinlian.

In all of this, the author comes across as a surprisingly keen and sharp observer of human conduct in intimate conditions as well as in public life. And I came across many descriptions which reminded me uncannily of human behaviour and politics in contemporary Chinese society. In this respect, too, *Jin Ping Mei* convinces as a remarkably 'modern' kind of novel: at times it could practically serve as a guidebook to present-day Chinese society. Chinese social attitudes – from very civilized to very crude and manipulative, from very formal and distant to plainly pragmatic and polite, acknowledging well-established patterns of hierarchy in society – do not seem to have changed much in the course of four centuries.

But *Jin Ping mei* is more than an astonishingly versatile canvas of Chinese culture. It is an in-depth study of human conflict, with unforgettable characters and with dialogues throbbing with vitality. 'Let that bastard perish of syphilis!', shouts Pan Jinlian at one point, after her lover has disappointed her. She is the most demonic and most tragic female character in the book. Her destructive influence on others, literally resulting in some people's deaths, runs as a major narrative thread throughout the novel, evoking at times the atmosphere of a classical Greek tragedy. Ruthless Ximen Qing and furiously jealous Pan Jinlian have their counterparts in modern reality, and wouldn't look like misfits in an Edward Albee play. The book remains true to life, even in its smallest, most furtive details. The insanely detailed depiction of the wealth of Chinese aristocrats is something you'd come across also in Chinese folk song lyrics. Villagers in rural China love to fabulate in great detail about the (assumed or real) garments and jewellery of the super-rich, as I can tell from my own experience, having collected folk lyrics in China for many years. And just take the ladies who entertain themselves on a swing in chapter 25, boldly exposing their knickers to bystanders: it seems an odd episode, but it addresses a near-universal theme. In 18th century France and Spain, ladies on swings even became the subject of a special genre of erotic folk songs (and a favourite motif of painters, too).³

Vibeke Børdahl has primarily aimed at a vivid, readable translation, not at an academic one, so her Danish version of *Jin Ping Mei* has no elaborate annotation or lengthy appendices. Readers who wish to know more can consult the earlier translations by scholars like Tod Roy and Levy, and a wealth of topical literary studies. To those who can read Danish, I wholeheartedly recommend this book. It's not advisable to read the whole thing non-stop, but

if you read an installment in the series once in a while, it may well be the ideal approach.

The individual volumes of the Danish edition are beautifully produced, with hard covers in white, of hand-made paper, and with black ribbons, and presented in bright-red protective slipcases. Every one of the book's one hundred chapters is illustrated with two delicate woodcuts, reproduced from an early 17th century Chinese edition. The whole series, once completed, will amount to a marvellous treasure, to be cherished in any good public or private library!

Vibeke Børdahl's translation is based on a fascimile edition of the 1617-publication, *Quanben Jin Ping Mei cihua* ('A Complete Edition of Jin Ping Mei in verse and prose'), published by the Taiping shuju in Hong Kong in 1982. For her Danish translation, she acknowledges her indebtedness to the fine annotated French and English translations by André Levy and David Tod Roy, which in turn have greatly profited from an impressive wealth of *Jin Ping Mei* studies by Chinese and Western scholars of literature which have appeared in the course of time. The field is still expanding, with new sociological or literary theories and viewpoints – anything from feminist issues to cultural debates on identity or representation – allowing new generations of students to take constantly new perspectives on what is, arguably, one of the most kaleidoscopic and most monumental narrative texts in all Chinese literature.

Frank Kouwenhoven

Notes

¹ Complete or fairly comprehensive translations of the *Jin Ping Mei* exist in a number of languages. To mention some of the best known ones: in French, *Fleur en Fiole d'Or*, by André Levy (1985). In English, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, by David Tod Roy, Princeton University Press, five volumes, 1993-2013). In German, *Djin Ping Meh*, five volumes, by Otto Kibat and Arthur Kibat, partly published in 1928-32, first issued in complete form only in 1967-83, with several later reprints by publishers such as Ullstein and Diogenes. Another German translation, *Jin Ping Mei* by Hans Conon von der Gabelentz and his sons, was originally produced 1862-69, and later re-issued with revisions and annotation by Martin Gimm, Staatsbibliothek Berlin (2005-2013).

² See e.g. Ding, Naifei – *Obscene Things; Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei*; Duke University Press, Durham / London, 2002.

³ See Maria Jesús Ruiz, José Manuel Fraile Gil & Susana Weich-Shahak – *Al vaivén del Columpio; Fiesta, coplas y ceremonial*. Universidad de Cadiz, 2008, 185 pp, book with CD.

Announcements

The editors of the CHIME Journal encourage readers to submit news about their own research projects and fieldwork trips, announcements of meetings, notices of recent publications, abstracts of papers, theses and dissertations, and news about performance activities, commercial recordings and new compositions in the field of Chinese music. For the announcements below, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Zhu Tengjiao prepared this edition of the Chime Newsletter, with contributions by Shi Yinyun, Helen Rees, Stephen Jones, Xavier Bouvier, Han Mei, Dai Xiaolian and Yang Honlun.

Chime news



22nd CHIME meeting, CCOM Beijing, 19-22 September 2019

China is a country of contrasts. Its many musical traditions represent different, often opposite realms of culture and ways of life. From 19 to 22 September 2019, the 22nd edition of the annual international CHIME meeting aims to investigate these musical contrasts, from as many angles as possible, such as: 'official' musical stage and media concerts pitted against local or underground music events, high-brow ancient court music versus ceremonial state music today, popular music versus elite and 'low' versus 'high' traditions, written versus oral music, composed versus improvised and inherited repertoires, art music as compared to functional music, and so forth.

We look forward to a rich and challenging meeting with concerts, films, over one hundred talks, several performances of Chinese opera, old and new Chinese music (with the ConTempo Ensemble from Beijing and with a host of fine groups and soloists in the realm of traditional music), and a special guest performance by the Beijing Opera Academy. A follow-up meeting of concerts and excursions is envisaged in Lüliang,

Shanxi from 23 to 26 September, hosted by the Jin Opera and Art Academy in Lüliang City in Shanxi Province from 23 to 26 September, with five kinds of local folk and opera music (ranging from shadow puppet theatre to Jin Opera), as well as an excursion to the ancient town of Qikou.

The Organising Committee for the 2019 Meeting consists of Jia Guoping, Song Jin, Tang Qiong, Li Shuqin (based at the Chinese Music Research Institute of CCOM) and Frank Kouwenhoven (at CHIME, The Netherlands).

The Abstract Review Committee consists of Frank Kouwenhoven (CHIME), Barbara Mittler (University of Heidelberg, Germany), Luo Qin (Shanghai Conservatory of Music), Li Shuqin, Song Jin, Zhang Boyu (Central Conservatory, Beijing) and Andreas Steen (Aarhus University, Denmark).

The deadline for submitting papers for the upcoming conference at the Central Conservatory in Beijing has passed, and the meeting may be over by the time this notice in the CHIME Journal appears online! For updates on this event, please check the Conservatory's website (www.ccom.edu.cn) or the CHIME website (www.chimemusic.nl). The languages used in the talks are Chinese and English. (We are encouraging our speakers to bring summaries or translations of their presentations on Powerpoint.)



Chime Archive moves to Heidelberg and to Lisbon

In May 2018, the CHIME Archive moved to Germany. The collection was given a permanent home in one of Europe's most distinguished academic institutions, the new Asian Library at Heidelberg University. The Asian Library (housed in an impressive new building) will be formally inaugurated in the summer of 2019. Meanwhile, it has been decided that the collection of musical instruments of CHIME will find a permanent home in the Scientific and Cultural Museum of Macau

(CCCM) in Lisbon, Portugal. It will be moved there in the course of 2019.

The thousands of books and recordings that were kept in the archive of CHIME in Leiden, The Netherlands were in need of a long-term solution in terms of professional care and sustainance. CHIME, as a small and privately funded foundation, lacked the resources to digitalize vital parts of the collection and to make resources available on the internet. The need arose to find a permanent professional host for what is, surely, the biggest and most diversified collection in Europe of scholarly materials on Chinese music. The newly built Asian Library in Heidelberg turned out to be by far the best option. Thanks to colleagues at the Sinological Institute in Heidelberg funds could be secured to make this collection more publicly available: for a start, 20.000 Euros were earmarked for digitalization, and another 50.000 Euros for digital infrastructure (specialized software); furthermore, plans were made to invest yet another 50.000 Euros in meta-data.

We are extremely pleased to secure the cooperation of the Asian Library in Heidelberg and of CCCM in Lisbon, and we look forward to future exchanges, joint lecture programmes, concerts and presentations.

The office of CHIME remains located in Leiden, The Netherlands as before, but the address will change from Gerecht 1 to Vliet 35, 2311 RD Leiden.

Please note that we will no longer make use of our Postbox address after 2019.

People in music

Composer Tan Dun at Bard College

The Renowned Chinese composer and conductor Tan Dun has been appointed as Dean of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. Tan Dun is expected to guide the Conservatory in fulfilling its mission of teaching young musicians both new music and music history, while deepening the understanding of its connection to history, art and culture, and society. Bard has stepped up its interest in East-West exchanges with the recent founding of a US-China Music Institute. Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, has expressed delight at the appointment of Tan Dun as Dean. Tan was born and raised in southwest China's Hunan Province. He has made his mark on the world's music scene with a creative repertoire spanning the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. Tan Dun will begin his tenure on 1 July, 2019.

Huang Feili (1917-2017)

Chinese conductor Huang Feili 黄飞立, one of the

founders of professional music teaching in Mainland China, and a widely respected teacher of violin, harmony and composition, died at his home in Beijing on 20 February 2017, aged one hundred years. Huang Feili was active for many decades as a Professor at the Central Conservatory of Music. Huang was born in Shanghai in 1917, into a well-to-do family of intellectuals. At the age of ten, he began to learn the violin. In 1941, he graduated from the Department of Biology at Shanghai University, and stayed on there to teach. From 1943 to 1945, he shifted to music, and was active at the Fujian Music College 福建音乐专科学校. In 1948, he travelled to the United States, where he studied composition with Paul Hindemith at the Yale School of Music. After his graduation in 1951 he returned to China and began to teach harmony and polyphonic theory at the Central Conservatory of Music. In 1953, he became the director of the conservatory's Orchestral Instruments Department. He taught violin, chamber and symphonic music. In 1956, he was involved in establishing the Conducting Department of Conservatory and became its first director. During 32 further years, Huang continued to teach at the Central Conservatory, training many excellent conductors, such as Xu Xin 徐新, Tang Jiang 唐江, Zhang Qishun 张启舜, Zhang Jisheng 张济生 and others. He also earned fame as a performer, conducting Chinese productions of Tchaikovsky's opera Yevgény Onégín, Verdi's La traviata and the ballet Swan Lake.

Past Meetings



Brief report on the 21st CHIME meeting, Portugal, 9-13 May 2018, and a conference on musical instruments,

The 21st Chime meeting took place in Portugal, 9-13 May 2018. It was hosted by the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre (CCCM) in Lisbon, with the Ethnomusicology Institute of the New University of Lisbon and the Confucius Institute of the University of Lisbon as partners. A passionate confluence of musical spirits and talents took place in the wonderful ambiance of

coastal Lisbon, and none of this would have materialised without the drive and energy of its main organizer, Enio de Souza of CCCM.

CCCM is a splendid museum and centre of Macau music and culture, located in stately buildings in the Santo Amaro quarter of Lisbon, just a short walk away from the world-famous Monastery of San Jerónimos. In the years leading up to the meeting, CHIME had stepped up its exchanges with Enio and his colleagues in Lisbon during a series of fine small-scale seminars on Chinese music. The time then seemed ripe for a major international gathering.

The 21st CHIME meeting's keynote speakers were Professor Alan Thrasher of the University of British Columbia, and – unfortunately in absentia, his paper was read by Tan Hwee-San – Professor Tian Qing, Director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Research and Protection Centre in Beijing.

Musical contributions to the programme amply reflected the theme of the meeting: Chinese music as cross-culture. There were contributions by zheng player Han Mei and her Red Chamber Ensemble from Canada, pipaist Gao Hong from Minnesota who played duets with Arabian oud player Yair Dalal from Israel, pipa player Xia Yuyan from Beijing and dancer Jiang Shaofeng from Dali (Yunnan) who demonstrated the compatibility of Chinese pipa with American tap dance, Swedish guitarist Johannes Möller, who offered his own virtuoso perspective on Chinese folk tunes arranged or recomposed for guitar, qin player He Yi from Beijing (equally at home in traditional Chinese opera and in the delicate art of guqin songs) and Mongolian horsehead fiddler Qi Burigude. In a final concert they took everyone by surprise by improvising with the entire lot of them, a formidable achievement!

The meeting featured a programme of presentations on a wide range of Chinese topics, from silk road music to classical Chinese film songs, from qupai in silk and bamboo music to Chinese pop and rock, from gender issues in the realm of female pianists, to music on Macau, from *nanguan* ballads (with a surprise performance by Anna Krysztofiak from Poland) to electronic and new instrumental music. The meeting also featured an exhibition on Chinese art, and the European premiere of Helen Rees' fine film documentary *Playing the Flute in Shanghai: The Life and Art of Dai Shuhong* (2017, 86 mins), as well as some shorter documentaries on folk song collecting and archiving at the National Taiwan Normal University.

With guests from China, the United States and other parts of the world, this was yet another excellent edition of CHIME. And

CCCM keeps developing activities in the realm of Chinese music: on 6 and 7 May 2019, there was another small-scale seminar, the 4th in a row, on Chinese

music, devoted this time to Chinese instruments, and intended as a tribute to the huqin. Composer Lam Bunching talked about the use of Chinese fiddles in her compositions. An impressive number of Portugal-based researchers offered contributions, supplemented with guest speakers from France, the Netherlands, the United States and mainland China. The meeting was enriched with a live calligraphy performing act by visual artist Luo Qi, as well as by traditional orchestral sounds from the Cheong Hong Chinese Orchestra (Macau), contributions by bassists Miguel Leira and Zé Eduardo, and experimental dance by Sylvie Chen. Both the CHIME meeting and the smaller seminar were organized in cooperation with CHIME, and with generous support from Fundação Jorge Álvares and other local partners. Over the past five centuries, Portugal has maintained strong diplomatic, cultural and trade relations with China, but Portugal's universities with music departments (there are three of such institutions now) have not paid much attention to Chinese music or musical instruments, nor has this field been tackled in any of the Portuguese music conservatories and academies until recently. Hence the efforts of Enio de Souza and his colleagues at CCCM to make a case for Chinese music by setting up small introductory forums on this topic. They started doing so in 2016, and expect to continue with a fifth meeting in Lisbon next year (2020).



Brief report on the 20th CHIME meeting, Los Angeles, Spring 2017

The 20th International CHIME Conference, on 'Festivals' took place in Los Angeles, USA, between 29 March and 2 April 2017, splendidly organised by Helen Rees, Supeena Insee Adler and their colleagues of the World Music Center of the Department of Ethnomusicology, UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, with generous sponsorship from the UCLA Confucius Institute and a number of other institutions.

The main theme of the conference was 'Chinese and

East Asian music in Festivals', but in acknowledgement of the ongoing Dunhuang project collaboration between UCLA, the UCLA Confucius Institute and the Getty Center, a second theme was performing arts of western China and its neighbours.

The congenial ambiance and fine spring weather of coastal California was a great help, for most of the coffee, tea and lunch breaks could be held outdoors.

Participants were welcomed with the splendid documentary film *Lik Yaot*, by Ito Satoru, and a visit to the World Music Center's collection of Chinese and Southeast Asian instruments. The truly fine programme of 30+ presentations ranged from papers on Vietnamese, Malaysian and Japanese music to a broad array of papers on different Han-Chinese and local minority genres and traditions, including Uyghur Sufi rituals, an exploration of the Taiwanese Paiwan two-nose flute and more. There were keynote presentations by Bell Yung, emeritus professor at the University of Pittsburgh, and Ito Satoru, research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

The programme also featured highly enjoyable workshops on Chinese, Thai and Lao instruments, Thai classical and Uzbek music, and a concert reflecting these genres, including some music from the Middle East. Participating musicians included Professors A.J. Racy and Münir Beken, dizi player Liu Qian, students from the UCLA's Music of China Ensemble and UCSC's Eurasian Ensemble.

The UCLA's Music of China Ensemble was looking forward to celebrating its 60th birthday, and indication of the deep roots Chinese music has put down at UCLA.

There was a generous presence of guests from China and from eight other countries, and the programme listed a substantial participation of students. The meeting was concluded with an outing to the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles. A wonderful edition of CHIME, that very much kept up the 'family' spirit and relaxed atmosphere as well as the high academic standards of these annual meetings.

Report on CHIME Workshop 'Teaching Chinese music' (Hamburg 2016)

Music education in China is a crucial but underrated and problematic topic. With traditional modes of transmission almost disappearing, and institutionalized education primarily relying on (Western-influenced) conservatory style teaching, the question where Chinese music is currently headed increasingly co-dependes on the rapid development of a 'modern' educational context. Many detailed studies have appeared, but a proper overall assessment of the scope and impact of music teaching in China today is long overdue.

A lively discussion workshop of scholars and musicians organized by CHIME and the Confucius Institute of Hamburg University in Hamburg in November 2016 demonstrated that very different and fundamentally conflicting viewpoints currently co-exist on the effectiveness and long-term aims and goals of music teaching in China.

Sure enough, music conservatories, art academies and music departments at universities and experimental schools are the focal point of a great deal of enthusiastic and energetic professional music-making, and aspire to be breeding places for innovation in the realm of traditional music. But China's rigid cultural and social climate puts the brakes on creative artists' individualism, and many traditional music genres evidently resist being lifted to the level of 'stage art'. To complicate matters, the quality of music education at academic institutions in China has seriously suffered from a growing emphasis on commerce and – directly related to this – a dramatic increase of the numbers of students, especially since the 1990s. To put it simply, teaching music has become a profitable business and has transformed the very nature of the education itself: with commercial motives gaining so much importance, the quality of the teaching has declined, also because – with the much bigger numbers of students – there is now less time left to pay attention to individual achievement. The already limited niche for traditional folk music has thus received further blows.

Clearly, the time is over that such a situation appeared to be of no concern to ethnomusicologists. Some 45 scholars and musicians, including a number of ardent fieldworkers in the realm of rural traditional music, met from 17 to 20 November 2016 in Hamburg to present papers and enter debates on this topic; they also looked into aspects of the teaching of Chinese music abroad. Not surprisingly, this forum of modest dimensions enabled participants to exchange viewpoints at greater length, and with more informality than any king-size conference on this topic would allow. The congenial atmosphere of the Confucius Institute – a bit Disneyland-esque at first sight perhaps, but essentially a fine venue with ideally sized rooms – helped a lot to bring down barriers between academics and musicians, Chinese and non-Chinese, and to entamine lively exchange (in English, Chinese, German and a host of other languages!) on the many different, delicate, complex, sometimes even painful aspects which form part of the world of Chinese music teaching today.

Yinyue jiaoyu certainly exists as a separate research discipline in China, and conferences and meetings take place at regular times on this topic, in China as well as in wider Asia. But the emphasis there is often on music teacher training, and much less on bigger cultural questions dealing with the nature of traditional herita-

ge, or having to do with basic stimulation of creativity, or with the inherent clashes between music teaching as a commercial enterprise and as a preparation for either a professional or a personally, spiritually satisfactory way of life. Closely related issues, such as the impact of nationalist ideology and political propaganda, or parental attitudes and expectations were also dealt with at length. A special volume of the Chime Journal will be devoted to presentations given during the Hamburg meeting, and a follow-up event is now being considered in Geneva, most likely a workshop or conference on issues of intercultural or comparative music education. You will find a more elaborate report as well as photos of the Hamburg meeting on the CHIME website (www.chimemusic.nl).

Report on 'Music Performance Research' meeting at CCOM in Beijing

Music studies focusing on performance are a rapidly expanding field of research in China. 'Performance' was the focus of a national symposium held at the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) in Beijing on 9 and 10 April 2016. It was the first of a series of planned annual Symposia on Music Performance Research, aimed at breaking down barriers between music research disciplines and practising musicians. More than 200 artists, music teachers and scholars from different regions (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan) and different backgrounds (e.g. performance, theory, analysis) joined forces in Beijing to advocate new research perspectives and interdisciplinary research methods. The ultimate aim of the symposia will be to arrive at a Chinese domestic music performance theory. The symposium also invited some international scholars to participate in this first gathering. John Link, (Cambridge University) talked on 'Evaluating Chopin: From Performance Studies to Performance', and Robert Winter (University of California, LA) on 'Technology and the Riddles of Western Performance'. In the meeting, Yang Yandi 杨燕迪, Vice President of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, called the rise of audiovisual technology in the 20th century one of the basic developments that has caused musical performance research to flourish as an independent field. Another important formative factor is the emergence (in the West) of the field known as historically informed performance. According to Yang, it strongly influenced the study of early music, notably from the 1950s onwards, but it also triggered a lot of controversy about the fundamental nature of musical performance and aesthetics, and may now do the same in China. Zhou Haihong 周海宏, Vice President of the Central Conservatory of Music, argued that researchers should pay more attention to findings from music psychology

and its implications for the teaching of musical performance. He pleaded for more cooperation and exchange between various related music study disciplines, in order to make musical education more effective.

Some presentations during the Symposium focussed on actual sounds and sound analysis. For example, Yang Jian 杨健 (Nanjing University of the Arts) developed an online analytical tool, *Vmus.net*, which makes a visual quantitative analysis of music fragments. Yang showed curved graphs which document small changes in the speed and intensity of musical performances.

The symposium also aimed at enhancing communication between performing artists and music theorists. The organizers had invited both academics and performers to give lectures. A number of musicians gave concerts as well, which were interspersed with live comments. Conductor Yu Feng 俞峰, President of the Central Conservatory of Music, urged performers to apply academic thinking to their performances, and theorists to pay more attention to practical problems of performance. Zhang Boyu 张伯瑜 (Central Conservatory of Music) spoke about the extensive 'multi-directive' connotations and metaphors of Chinese traditional music making: he argued that a thorough understanding of such performances could be achieved only by addressing them on technical artistic levels as well as in their quality of expressions of culture. Wang Xiaojun 王晓俊 (Nanjing University of the Arts) claimed that the playing techniques of Chinese instruments harbour common cultural memories and ethnic characteristics which, in Wang's view, are a precondition for building national consciousness and realizing musical identity.

Music research

He Luting Chinese Music Advanced Research Institute founded in Shanghai

A new centre for advanced Chinese music research and promotion was established in Shanghai on 9 May 2016. With government funding, the He Luting Chinese Music Advanced Research Institute, based at the Shanghai Conservatory, aims at bringing together composers, scholars and theoreticians of Chinese music to carry out high level research projects as well as creative and promotional projects in the realm of Chinese music. Similar 'research centres' with wideranging objectives were recently set up with government funding elsewhere, for example at the Xi'an Conservatory of Music in Shaanxi province.

In Shanghai, candidates are invited via public advertising to submit project proposals. The academic committee consists of Zhao Jiping 赵季平 (director), associate directors Yang Yandi 杨燕迪, Liang Changyong

廖昌永, Xu Shuya 许舒亚, Wang Rui (王瑞) and Lin Zaiyong (林在勇), the Conservatory's current Director. The latter will also serve as the Centre's Secretary. A recent speech by Lin Zaiyong on the Centre's expected development, was posted on the Conservatory's website (see: www.shcmusic.edu.cn/view_0.aspx?cid=2&id=1455&navindex=0). It appears to suggest that the Centre might well become a veritable 'think-tank' and lever for revisions and improvements in the Conservatory system. After all, the objectives of the Centre are so wide-ranging as to almost coincide with many of the Conservatory's central tasks. The Centre's purpose is not only to establish a new platform in the realm of Chinese music research and promotion, but also to initiate a Chinese contemporary composers and works database, to set in motion specific research platforms in such realms as Intangible Cultural Heritage, Chinese Music Theory, Chinese Musical Performance, and to develop effective policies for talent building.

For the moment, six to eight people will be involved on a part-time basis in running the Centre, which is housed, in makeshift conditions, in the crammed office space currently available at the Shanghai Conservatory.

The Centre has recruited a supporting Advisory Committee, consisting of prominent scholars, composers and musicians from China and abroad. The Centre is named after the former director of the Shanghai Conservatory and well-known music educator and composer He Luting 贺绿汀.

Sounding Islam in China: a multi-sited ethnographic study (SOAS project)

'Sounding Islam in China: a multi-sited ethnographic study' is a research project set in motion at the SOAS China Institute of the University of London, with support from the Leverhulme Trust. The project relies on an AHRC-funded research network established to promote collaboration between Western and Chinese researchers, to disseminate current theoretical approaches to postgraduate students in China, and to preserve an audio-visual record of the diverse religious practices and oral histories of Muslims in China, mediating this material for English-speaking audiences.

Recent decades have seen the increasing global connectedness of Muslims in China, and rapid changes occurring in Islamic beliefs and practices across this large and diverse country. As yet underrepresented in scholarship, rich traditions in Islamic sounds evoke diversity at the core of identity and faith. The scholars involved in the 'Sounding Islam in China' project focus on sounded ritual practices and forms of religious expressive culture, asking such questions as: what do we learn from production, transmission and reception of

Islamic sounds? What do they tell us of transnational flows and local continuity? How does sound help understanding global ideological debates and existential piety, personal acquiescence and collective resistance? One important step was taken during a conference 'Islamic Soundscapes of China' at SOAS in January, 2014. A follow-up meeting on 'Ethnographies of Islam in China' took place at SOAS in 2017.

Sounding Islam in China entails four ethnographic case studies of Islamic soundscapes conducted in Muslim communities in Henan, Ningxia and Xinjiang. For more information on the project, you can check www.soundislamchina.org

Publications

Book publication planned of papers given at 21st Chime, Lisbon

Participants in the 21st CHIME Lisbon Conference (9 and 13 May 2018) interested in having their papers published are kindly requested to submit their contributions to Mr Enio de Sousa at the Macao Scientific and Cultural Center (CCCM) in Lisbon (email: eniojosesouza@gmail.com). CCCM has planned a special book publication with papers from the conference. Please make sure to send your paper before 31 December 2019. The book is scheduled to appear in 2020, and is funded jointly by the organizations that carried the initiative: CCCM, CHIME, the Fundação Jorge Álvares, the Ethnomusicology Institute of the New University of Lisbon; the Confucius Institute from the University of Lisbon and the Confucius Institute from the University of Aveiro.

'Le grain des choses', book of memoirs plus CD of qin music

The Swiss-based sinologist and scholar of guqin music and guqin philosophy Georges Goormaghtigh has issued a book with personal memoirs plus a CD of qin recordings. In *Le grain des choses - Petit musée du qin* Goormaghtigh reminisces about his travels and experiences in China, and pays special homage to his qin teacher, Madame Tsar Teh-yun, a widely esteemed master of the Chinese classical zither *qin*, poet and calligrapher, who passed away at the age of 102. The accompanying CD offers an introduction to the author's own little qin museum, in which he brings alive the seven silk strings of his *qins* every evening. For more on how to order the book, you can check <https://legraindeschoses.com> For a more elaborate discussion of the book, check Patrice Fava's article on: <https://www.questionchine.net/une-vie-pour-le-qin-georges-goormaghtigh-le-bo-ya-des-temps-modernes>



LE GRAIN
DES CHOSES
PETIT MUSÉE DU QIN
古琴小博物館
Georges Goormaghtigh

Book on Chinese shaman instruments

Late last year (2018) saw the publication in Shanghai of the monumental *Drum Language: An Illustrated Guide Book of Chinese Shamanic Instruments*. This lavishly illustrated book is written in Chinese, its official title is 鼓语：中国萨满乐器图释 *Guyu: Zhongguo Shaman Yueqi Tushi*. It is the first book on shamanic instruments ever published in China, a magnum opus resulting from a lifetime research interest on the part of music scholar Liu Guiteng (刘桂腾). Liu has travelled widely in China and has done fieldwork for many years to assemble his unique materials. The 657-page book



has been issued by the Shanghai Music Publishing House 上海音乐出版社 *Shanghai Yinyue Chubanshe*, and it includes more than one thousand photos.

The book can safely be called an academic breakthrough, in the sense that shamanic traditions in China have previously not always received the amount of attention from academic circles which they merited. In her preface to the book, Professor Xiao Mei (another Shanghai-based scholar who did ample research on shamanic traditions in China) praises Liu's study as a pioneer work, a vivid and penetrating life history of Shaman musical instruments, and the product of a prolific, meticulous and unconventional scholar.

The book is in three parts, respectively on 1) shamanic ritual conventions from remote antiquity; 2) shamanic musical instruments and their symbolic meanings, and 3) 'shamanic art in the world'.

In his afterword, Liu Guiteng writes that, during the last ten years of his field studies, he has been investing more time and energy in recording events than in arguing and theorizing on music. He believes that recording is perhaps the more meaningful activity, and he points at the intangible cultural heritage movement which has widely raised people's consciousness for the need to protect and preserve cultures or cultural materials which would otherwise soon vanish.

Comprehensive study on Nanyin (southern Chinese love ballads)

Chen Yanting 陈燕婷; Ancient Music *Nanyin* 古乐南音 *Guyue Nanyin: Culture and Art Publishing House* 文化艺术出版社 *Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe*, 2018, photos, music exs, tables, 247 pp; ISBN-10: 7503965029; ISBN-13: 978-7503965029

In this thoughtful and amply illustrated 247-page introductory book about *Nanyin*, which appeared late last year, the author Chen Yanting displays her deep familiarity with this time-honoured genre of southern Chinese love ballads from Fujian Province. Chen Yanting is a graduate of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, now working as an associate researcher at the Music Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts. She originally stems from Fujian, and she has done extensive fieldwork and built up a formidable knowledge about the different realms, functions and performance settings of professional and amateur versions of *Nanyin*. The delicate genre, first and foremost featuring music for solo voice and a small instrumental ensemble (primarily string instruments and bamboo flute and some small percussion), is often seen as a 'classical' type of Chinese music, on a par with the repertoire for the seven-stringed zither *guqin*, but it has received much less attention in musical scholarship in

China than *guqin* music. Chen Yanting discusses the properties of the music, its historical development and performance contexts, and also looks at the heritage of Nanyin in the contemporary era. The book was funded by the Chinese National Academy of Arts.

Books (in Chinese) by Yu Hui

Yu Hui, professor and the Dean of Yunnan University of College of Arts and Design has edited and published three books in 2017. *Jazz Cosmopolitan: Chinese perspectives of Jazz Music in the Internet Age* has been published by the Zhejiang University Press in February 2017. Furthermore, *The history and Aesthetics of Oriental Music (dongfang yinyue de lishi yu guannian)*, and *The Forms and Genres of Oriental Music (dongfang yinyue de tical yu xingshi)*, both containing selected papers from past conferences of the Oriental Music Society of China, were published by the Anhui Press of Literature and Arts (Anhui Wenyi Chubanshe) in March, 2017. Those who are interested in obtaining courtesy copies of these publications can contact the initiators by sending an email message to musicology.china@gmail.com

Chinatown Opera Theatre in N-America

Nancy Yunhwa Rao – Chinatown Opera Theater in North America. The transformation of Chinese music into American music in the early twentieth century. University of Illinois Press, Urbana-Champaign / Chicago, 2017, 440 pp, bl & wh photographs, music exs, tables.

The Chinatown opera house provided Chinese immigrants with an essential source of entertainment during the pre-World War II era. But its stories of loyalty, obligation, passion, and duty also attracted diverse patrons into Chinese American communities. Drawing on a wealth of new Chinese- and English-language research, Nancy Yunhwa Rao, Professor of Music at Rutgers University, tells the story of iconic theatre companies and the networks and migrations that made Chinese opera a part of North American cultures.

Rao unmask a backstage world of performers, performance, and repertoire and sets readers in the spellbound audiences beyond the footlights. But she also braids a captivating and complex history from elements outside the opera house walls: the impact of government immigration policy; how a theatre influenced a Chinatown's sense of cultural self; the dissemination of Chinese opera music via recording and print materials; and the role of Chinese American business in sustaining theatrical institutions.

The result is a work that strips the veneer of exoticism from Chinese opera, placing it firmly within the

bounds of American music and a profoundly American experience. Bell Yung, coeditor of *Music and Cultural Rights*, called this book 'an extraordinary achievement documenting a unique musical and theatrical genre (...) a must-read for those interested in American music, theater, and social history.' The book can be ordered from the web via www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/35rxb6yr9780252040566.html

Yearbook of New Music in China 2014

An edition of the *Yearbook of New Music in China (中国新音乐年鉴)*, covering the year 2014, has been published by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. This annual book series, edited and compiled by Qian Renping (钱仁平), started in 2009.

It is intended to document, for every separate year, the major concerts, festivals, new compositions and developments in the realm of contemporary music in the People's Republic of China. The *Yearbook*, now somewhat in arrears because the editor's tasks have vastly increased – new music activities have increased manifold in recent years – contains reports, reviews, interviews and lists of factual data. The current edition has 632 pages and includes interviews with Chen Qigang, Zhou Long and Thomas Schäfer, reports on new music activities in music conservatories in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Chengdu, Xinghai and Taipei. The volume also highlights the work and life of composer Luo Zhongrong, and reports on major new music events during 2014, such as the Beijing International Composition Workshop, *Musica Acoustica*, also in Beijing, the 7th New Music Week at the Shanghai Conservatory, an exhibition held to commemorate the 110th birthday anniversary of composer Huangzi, and a concert of works by composer He Xuntian.

Media, websites

China BnF Portal

France recently saw the launch of the China Portal of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, in cooperation with the National Library of China. It is a site in French and in Chinese, with a wealth of writings, pictures (the one of trumpet player shown here stems from the site) and documents on such realms as Chinese philosophy, literature and arts, travels, cultural and political diplomacy and more, in celebration of the longstanding exchanges in these fields between China and France. The site, attractively designed, co-includes contributions relating to Chinese music (notably historical issues)



by Professor François Picard of Sorbonne University. Picard's contribution can be accessed under the music section via <http://heritage.bnf.fr/france-chine/fr/musique-article>; it features text, scores, printed images, recorded sound samples (including fascinating historical snippets) and related documents.

Stephen Jones' weblog on Daoism, music... and jokes

Some years ago, Chinese music scholar and expert of

rural ceremonial music Stephen Jones (formerly based at SOAS London) began a wide-ranging new blog: www.stephenjones.blog which reflects his variegated interests in Daoism, language, performance, classical music, and jokes. A quote from the homepage:

'This site began as an introduction to my work with Li Manshan, his late great father Li Qing, and the amazing household Daoists of Yanggao county in north China. But it's clearly going to expand into my usual crazed ramblings on a variety of more-or-less related topics...' Apart from the Li family Daoists (about whom he wrote a book), other topics include the Hebei ritual associations, reflections on fieldwork, and Western Art Music (Bach, Ravel, Steve's orchestral life...). Stewart Lee, Groucho, Alan Bennett, and Flann O'Brien also make regular appearances. There are generous lashings of jokes, and enticing photos.

CDs, recordings

Historically informed qin performances

CD album 琴韵箫声忆故人 (*Qinyun Xiaosheng Yi Guren*, 'Commemorating Old Friends by Playing Guqin and Xiao'). With 林晨 Lin Chen, qin and 陈忱 Chen Chen, xiao (bamboo flute). Issued by Chinese Book Bureau 中华书局 Zhonghua Shuju, 2018, ISBN 978-7-88775-068-6.



Lin Chen, a player and scholar of the (*gu*-*qin*, China's classical seven-stringed zither, has recently recorded a CD album of pieces for *qin and xiao* (end-blown bamboo flute), co-featuring xiao performer Chen Chen. (The photo shows them playing a duet.) The album, accompanied by a booklet with background essays, aims to take a fresh look at the historically informed performance of *qin* music.

The *qin* is a major emblem of Chinese literati life and music, with a history of nearly three millennia, and a vast store of music notations, some three thousand tablatures amounting to an estimated 650 individual pieces plus many variants, contained in some 150 handbooks. The realization of these scores in practical performance is beset with problems, since the notations include few indications of rhythm or metre, and notated fingerings and playing techniques may also involve some ambiguity in terms of pitches and melodic interpretation. *Qin* players refer to the *dapu* process, the study of these scores and their translation into actual music. However, a great deal of *qin* tradition derives from oral practice, from learning by rote pieces introduced by one's *qin* master(s), and reproducing them by heart as faithfully as possible in line with oral tradition. This certainly goes for the performance of solo *qin* pieces with added bamboo flute, which mostly rely on improvisation and orally established practice.

The present CD features eight tracks of music, including some well-known pieces from the core repertoire for *qin* like *Yi Guren* (Commemorating an Old Friend), *Yangguan san die* (Farewell at Yangguan Pass) and *Pingsha luoyan* (Wild geese descending on a sandbank) but also several less familiar pieces. The album represents the results of the two players' research over the past two years, combining fresh study of scores and writings, *qin* pictoriography, practical experiments with Ming dynasty and other historical period *qin*-zithers, and more.

Lin Chen was born in Shanghai. She began to learn the *guqin* from her father Lin Youren 林友仁 in 1985, and in later years received further tuition from two other fine *qin* masters, Yao Gongbai 姚公白 and Wu Wenguang 吴文光. She went on to study musicology at the China Conservatory of Music 中国音乐学院 and the Chinese National Academy of Arts 中国艺术研究院, and currently works at the Music Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts as an Associate Researcher. She has published extensively on the history of the *guqin*, has carried out studies on 'oral and intangible heritage', and has been active as a *qin* performer, giving concerts in China, the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and elsewhere. With one of China's best-known singers of both traditional and modern stage repertoire, Gong Linna, she recorded a CD with *qin* songs (co-featuring bamboo flute player

Wang Hua).

Xiao player Chen Chen learned the tricks of the trade from the great bamboo flute master 戴树红 Dai Shuhong in Shanghai, and is also a fine maker of bamboo flutes. Additionally, he studied the *qin* with prominent masters like 林友仁 Lin Youren, 吴文光 Wu Wenguang and 成公亮 Cheng Gongliang. He acquired a MSc degree from Ulster University in the UK, and is currently teaching at the Wuxi Professional College of Science and Technology.

New CD album and opera premiere composer Lei Liang

On 24 October last year, *Inheritance*, a new chamber opera by the USA-based Chinese composer Lei Liang, was premiered by AirPower and the UC San Diego Department of Music. It received positive reviews in the media. For videos with background info see <https://vimeo.com/293484165>, <https://vimeo.com/295241240> & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlmqEtSt_WU

Inheritance revolves around the bizarre life of Sarah Winchester, the eccentric widow and heiress to the Winchester rifle fortune. According to popular belief, Winchester imprisoned herself in her labyrinth-like home to seek refuge from the spirits of those killed by the same weapons whose manufacture and sale gave her a life of indescribable wealth. With music by Lei



Liang and a libretto by poet Matt Donovan, *Inheritance* juxtaposes elements of Winchester's biography with contemporary events in a work that explores America's deeply complex relationship with guns. Produced by Susan Narucki, who also sang the title role of Sarah Winchester, the world premiere performances of *Inheritance* were led by conductor Steven Schick with direction by Cara Consilvio and production design by visual artist Ligia Bouton.

A new CD with orchestral and chamber music by Lei Liang was recorded by the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) under the baton of Gil Rose. The album includes the world premiere recording (which took place 21 April at the New England Conservatory) of *A Thousand Mountains, A Million Streams*, and co-features recordings Lei Liang's saxophone concerto, *Xiaoxiang*, a Finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and Five Seasons for pipa and string quartet (2010). The album can be purchased via <https://bmop.org/audio-recordings>

Lei Liang's compositions are published by Schott Music Publishers.

CD album of chamber and electronic music by Wang Ying

Chinese composer Wang Ying (Shanghai/Beijing), recently awarded the Female Artists' Prize of the City of Heidelberg (Germany), is the creator of a collection of chamber and electronic pieces issued this month on CD on the German label Wergo. The album is titled *Tun Tu, chamber music renewed*, and features, amongst others, saxophonist Nikola Lutz, accordionist Teodoro Anzellotti, members of the Ensemble Phoenix Basel, and others. Anzellotti features in the work *Wave in D*, where Wang produces, from extremely limited tonal material, a rich assemblage of differentiated sound colours. In *Tun Tu*, Nikola Lutz on baritone saxophone interacts with electronic sounds to evoke an imaginary sound landscape. In *Coffee & Tea*, Ying Wang reflects on contrasts between the cultures of Asia and Europe, with coffee and tea as metaphors.

Wang Ying, born in Shanghai, began her musical education at the age of four, receiving piano lessons from her father, the composer Wang Xilin. At the Shanghai Conservatory she studied composition with Gang Chen, Daqun Jia and instrumentation with Yang Liqin, completing her BA in 2002, after which she moved to Cologne and went on to study with York Höller, and (from 2008) electronic composition with Michael Beil and composition with Johannes Schöllhorn and Rebecca Saunders. In 2010 she completed an MA in contemporary music in Frankfurt and worked with Helmut Lachenmann. She attended courses at IRCAM in Paris (2011-12) at Darmstadt, in Helsinki and at

Donaueschingen, attending workshops with Beat Furrer, Jukka Tiensuu and Misato Mochizuki, amongst others. Her chamber instrumental works, electronic music and pieces for orchestra are performed widely in China, Europe and the United States, and have won her several prizes and scholarships, and a position as composer-in-residence at the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe in 2010. In 2012 she became the second female composer to win the Biennial Brandenburg Symphony Composition Competition (the first being Chihchun Chi-sun Lee in 2005). The CD album can be ordered on the web from Arkivmusic, Prestoclassical, Amazon and other retailers.

Concert life

Festival 'China Today' celebrated 45 years of Chinese-German relations

A Chinese New Year Concert in the Berlin Philharmonie on 20 February 2017 sparked off the festival *China Heute* ('China Today'), which celebrated 45 years of diplomatic relations between China and Germany with a comprehensive series of concerts, exhibitions, theatre projects and events in the realms of film, dance, architecture and contemporary art. The festival was held nationwide, over many months, and aimed at giving a new boost to Chinese-German cultural exchange, and introducing to German and European audiences a vast range of Chinese cultural realms and activities.

Events included an experimental Peking opera version of Goethe's *Faust* (in Wiesbaden, 15 and 16 May), an exhibition on the Maritime Silk Road (at the Maritime Museum in Hamburg), a concert by the bi-national Berlin-Shanghai Symphonic Orchestra (17 August 2017), a Chinese film festival in Munich, concerts of jazz and classical music from China, and numerous other spectacles. Major artists like Yujia Wang, Lang Lang, Anny Hwang, China's National Ballet, the Suzhou Symphony Orchestra, erhu virtuoso Song Fei and other prominent performers of traditional instruments participated in the *China Heute* events. Important partners in the undertaking include the Internationalen Musikfestspiele Saar, the Internationalen Maifestspiele in Wiesbaden, the music festival Young Euro Classic in Berlin, the Nationaltheater Weimar, the Theater der Welt, the Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, the European Centre for the Arts in Dresden, the Hamburg Ballet, the State Museums in Berlin, the Leipziger Buchmesse, the Academy of Arts in Berlin, to mention only a few. For more information check www.chinaheute45.org and www.musikfestspiele-saar.de

New symphony orchestra founded in Suzhou

The Suzhou Symphony Orchestra (SZSO) was formally established in December 2016. After nearly one year of preparation, the orchestra, the 72nd of its kind in the People's Republic, held its inaugural ceremony on 30 December 2016, and its first concert on 31 December at the Suzhou Culture and Arts Centre Grand Theatre. The inaugural evening was a grand affair, with Chen Xieyang 陈燮阳 conducting Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, as well excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* (to live dance by the Suzhou Ballet Troupe), and concertante works by Sarasate and Saint-Saëns featuring German violinist Anne Sofie Muttter. There was also ample space in the programme for Chinese musical fireworks, such as the exuberant *Ode to the Red Flag* (1965) by Lu Qiming 吕其明, which opened the programme, and the pipa concerto '*Bloom*' by Ma Jiuyue 马久越, with pipa virtuoso Zhao Cong 赵聪. Co-joining the stage on this evening were the China National Symphony Orchestra Chorus, and soloists Li Shuying 李秀英, Dong Fang 董芳, Chi Liming 迟立明 and Shi Heng 施恒, who reached out to the stars in the Beethoven Nine finale.

The programme underpinned the SZSO's major ambitions for the coming years: to become a first-rate orchestra and star attraction of cultural life in Suzhou, to promote artistic excellence, and to highlight unique works of native artists, perhaps in the time-honoured manner of the orchestra's hometown, which boasts a rich artistic life and impressive cultural legacy of already more than two millennia.

The orchestra started recruiting members from March 2016 onwards. Among 546 applicants from all over the world, 63 were selected to form the orchestra's core, roughly half of them from China and adjacent parts of Asia, while a number stem from other countries, such as the United States, Israel, Australia, several European countries, Morocco and Colombia. The orchestra currently has a double wind section, but the aim is to expand it to triple wind in the future.

The SZSO was co-founded by the City of Suzhou and the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP). Its future home – currently still under construction – will be the Jinji Lake Concert Hall, situated within the Suzhou Culture and Arts Centre. Internationally acclaimed acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota leads a team of specialists in building this hall which, when finished in June, is expected to rank among the world's finest state-of-the-art concert venues.

The inaugural season of the SZSO in 2017 encompasses 51 concerts under the stewardship of the orchestra's conductors Chen Xieyang 陈燮阳 and Xu Zhong 许忠. The opening concert of the season, on the 14th

of January, offered a concert performance of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* under the baton of Xu Zhong, with the Bat Shir Choir from Israel and nine singers from Italy, Russia, Israel, Latvia, and China. In addition to the symphonic season there is a chamber music series, an array of festive spectacles, including full-scale productions of ballet and opera, and the first edition of the Suzhou Jinji Lake Piano Competition. Preparations for the orchestra's first international performing tours – in Germany, Italy and Japan in the second half of the year – are currently in full swing. The SZSO will bring high-end classical music to Suzhou citizens also via a series of educational and fringe activities and projects, taking place throughout the season, with titles like 'Music at the SZSO Lounge', 'Music at the SZSO Classroom', 'Music without Borders', etc. The idea of these projects is to bring music still closer to the public, to local schools, to the corporate partners, and especially to communities which may not have easy access to the concert hall. The SZSO will also collaborate with local art institutions, in a bid to forge stronger bonds with Suzhou's local artistic community, thus to enhance the orchestra's long-term prospects for competition in the domestic and international 'markets' of symphonic orchestral playing.

The SZSO is managed by a team of veteran organizers led by the orchestra's General Manager Chen Guangxi-an 陈光宪, assisted by Vice President Zhu Huixin 朱蕙心, and supported by Executive Director Katherine Chu. Music Director Chen Xieyang is one of China's most revered conductors, and so is Principal Conductor Xu Zhong, who is equally well-known as a major piano maestro.

The Suzhou Symphony Orchestra is the latest addition to a long line of 71 predecessors, all registered with the China Symphony Development Foundation. At the beginning of that line stands the influential Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1879, and still active in China today. The SZSO is committed to the task of 'weaving symphonic culture into the fabric of Chinese society', as they put it, and the orchestra aspires to become one of China's finest. It expects to function as a cultural ambassador for Suzhou and as a bridge that contributes to connecting Suzhou and China culturally with the rest of the world.

Bright Sheng's opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* performed in Hong Kong

Following the world premiere of Bright Sheng's opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* in San Francisco, 10-19 September 2016, the same work was presented on 17-18 March 2017 to audiences in Hong Kong, at the Grand Theatre in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre as part of its 45th annual festival. The opera, based on a

classic Chinese novel, with a libretto by the composer and David Henry Hwang, was commissioned by San Francisco Opera and is a co-production with the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Based on one of the quintessential works of world literature, Sheng and Hwang's opera explores the characters at the heart of Chinese author Cao Xueqin's 18th century novel and communicates their story as a vivid musical and theatrical experience.

Director Emeritus David Gockley of the San Francisco Opera followed the career of Chinese-American composer Bright Sheng for several decades, and in 2013 approached him with the request to compose *Dream of the Red Chamber*, preferably 'in a beautifully lyrical style, nostalgic and retaining aspects of a traditional Chinese soundscape.' As Gockley related to the press, 'I'm very pleased to say that he has indeed succeeded in these efforts.'

The libretto was written in English so that it would be readily accessible to non-Chinese speaking audiences, but the performances featured English and Chinese supertitles. A production 'dream team' was assembled to bring Sheng and Hwang's visionary work to life, with playwright and director Stan Lai making his San Francisco Opera debut, and Tim Yip, the Academy-Award winning designer of *Crouching Tiger-Hidden Dragon*, designing the sets and costumes. George Manahan conducted the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus in the American performances.

Adapted from the rich and vast source novel, the opera focuses on the illustrious Jia clan and the love triangle of the Jia's young heir Bao Yu with two very different women: one his spiritual soulmate, Dai Yu, and the other a worldly beauty named Bao Chai. *Dream of the Red Chamber* featured a cast of established and rising Asian singers, including Chinese tenor Yijie Shi and South Korean soprano Pureum Jo as Bao Yu and Dai Yu, the young lovers, and many others. The opera was well-received, both in the USA and in Hong Kong.

Zhao Lin and Zhao Jiping's 'Red Lantern' in New York, 13 April 2017

On Tuesday 13 April 2017, renowned pipa virtuoso Wu Man and the Shanghai Quartet performed the New York premiere of Chinese composer Zhao Lin's 2015 quintet *Red Lantern*, based on music from a classic Chinese film score by the composer's father, Zhao Jiping. The programme, which celebrates contemporary Chinese music, was presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) at the Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio (165 West 65th St., 10th Floor). It also featured pianist Gloria Chien and contemporary works by Chinese composers Bright Sheng, Ye Xiaogang, and Zhou Long.

Wu Man and the Shanghai Quartet, members of which were her former schoolmates at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, have long collaborated in efforts to cultivate a western audience for contemporary and traditional Chinese music. They commissioned *Red Lantern*, a five-movement quintet, from Zhao Lin in 2015 and gave the world premiere performances as part of their 2015–16 North American tour program, 'A Night in Ancient and New China.' They will reprise selections from this program at the Park Avenue Armory on June 20 and 21.

Zhao Lin describes *Red Lantern* as a tribute to his father, the eminent Chinese film composer Zhao Jiping, whose Pipa Concerto No. 2 was written for Wu Man and premiered by her with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2013. Zhao Jiping composed the score for the classic Chinese film *Raise the Red Lantern*, and his son draws upon this music in the recent quintet. Zhao Lin also describes the piece as a tribute to the Chinese musical tradition more generally. Zhao Lin and Zhao Jiping will both be in attendance for Wu Man and the Shanghai Quartet's New York premiere of *Red Lantern*. The other three composers on the program will also be present to hear their works performed.

For more information on the performers, see also wumanpipa.org and shanghaiquartet.com

Multimedia symphonic theatre staged in Xi'an and Shanghai (2016)

Five composers from Shanghai cooperated in creating the multimedia symphonic theatre show '*Pursuing Dreams on the Silk Road*', which premiered in Xi'an on 19 and 20 September 2016. Commissioned by the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, the five-movement work was primarily an evocation – in contemporary music, and in images projected on large screens surrounding the orchestra – of cultural motifs relating to three different routes along the Silk Road (south, middle and north), and celebrating the motto 'world harmony'. The five composers (Zhou Xianglin 周湘林, Ye Guohui 叶国辉, Zhang Xuru 张旭儒, Zhao Guang 赵光 and Yin Mingwu 尹明五) wrote the five movements, prelude, caprice, rhapsody, fantasia and rhapsody, in a contemporary musical style, but incorporating elements or ideas taken from traditional music from Xinjiang, India, Central and West Asia. The projected images were prepared by the Digital Media Institute of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and directed by Dai Xiaorong 代晓蓉. The basic challenge was to provide the audience with a unique multi-sensory experience. The show was performed during the Third Silk Road International Arts Festival in Xi'an, and was repeated in Shanghai. Multimedia concerts are currently becoming more common in China, also in the realm

of avant-garde music (another notable example being Tan Dun's orchestral work *The Map* of 2002).

The project neatly suited the nationwide promotional activities of the Chinese government for elaborate economic, cultural and touristic development of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' (*Sichouzhilu jinjidai*). This concerns the territories of the celebrated ancient trade route(s) between Central Asia, India and China, which have become target areas for economic and cultural development and mutual exchange. As one consequence of the so-called 'one road, one belt' policy, music departments in various conservatories have recently initiated research or performance projects in connection with Silk Road music, with generous sponsoring by the government.

'Pursuing Dreams on the Silk Road' was one of many activities offered during the Silk Road International Arts Festival, itself an outcome of the government's 'Silk Road Economic Belt' policies. The Festival's third edition, held in Xi'an from 7 to 21 September, 2016, consisted of art exhibitions, forums, children's drama shows, poetry readings, as well as some fifty concerts by artists and performers stemming from sixty countries and regions along the Silk Road.

Dusting off tradition: the Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra on tour

The Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra, a band of eleven professional musicians from the China Conservatory in Beijing, toured in the United States in 2017, giving concerts in Boston and Los Angeles. This is not just another 'Chinese orchestra' which habitually plays standard arrangements of 'famous' Chinese folk tunes. The group, founded in 2008 by conductor and artistic leader Liu Shun 刘顺 pursues more ambitious aims. They regard themselves as genuine cultural ambassadors for the cause of Chinese music, attempt to avoid downtrodden paths, and – in the words of their leader Liu Shun – ask themselves pertinent questions such as 'What do we need tradition for? What can tradition offer us today? How can we cultivate it in ways that present-day people can relate to and communicate with?' This, says Liu Shun, is also one of the reasons why the group collaborates with foreign composers, who can help the ensemble to find a new place for that music. 'The point is not to isolate traditional music in its own narrow circle, but to let contemporary artists draw on it.'

The orchestra plays a repertoire that combines pieces of traditional Chinese music with newly composed works. The traditional items consists of modern adaptations of ancient pieces, but also of traditional Peking and Qinqiang opera tunes and regional folk music. The basic idea is to wipe off the dust of such pieces, and to

make them sound fresh and genuine again. The musicians do more than simply reproduce music from written scores, and offer their audiences more than mere tailor-made arrangements in 'conservatory' style. They certainly cooperate with Chinese composers, and do not necessarily shun 'evergreens', but also organize their own fieldwork trips, exchanges with rural musicians, as well as with contemporary composers and traditional musicians abroad.

In these respects the group is fairly unique among Chinese conservatory ensembles. Frequent visits abroad, extensive recording projects, prolonged cooperation with foreign artists, and occasional forays into rural tradition help the orchestra's members to maintain a fresh perspective on their own culture. In the words of conductor Liu Shun: 'I believe that tradition and modernity are not opposed or contrasted to each other. They are rather like days in the life of the same river that encompasses all of us.'

In the past decade *the Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra* recorded five distinctive DVD albums with old and new repertoire, and visited some twenty countries around the world to give concerts. The group toured in the USA also in February last year, and twice attended the Poland Warsaw Autumn International Modern Music Festival as guest performers (in 2015 and 2016). In Poland they started a collaboration with Polish composers, and with the traditional quintet of the ethnomusicologist and early Polish music expert Maria Pomiyanovska. This culminated in a series of joint concerts, the final one taking place on 8 December 2016 in Beijing in the China Conservatory National Concert Hall. It was a mixed Chinese-Polish musical experience that met with warm public acclaim. Pomiyanovska's quintet primarily plays early Polish folk music and works based on reconstructions of 14th and 15th century Polish sources. Invited by Liu Shun and the China Conservatory in Beijing, the Polish group also made a fruitful excursion to southern China to explore local regional Chaozhou music and other traditional genres.

Other cooperations of the FCCO with foreign composers and musicians have included projects with Vladimir Bojansov and Victor Prachack from Russia, Paul Hendry, David Dunn, Jack Body and others from New Zealand, and David Ludwig, William Duckworth and Daniel Walker from the USA. Chinese composers who wrote works for the ensemble include Gao Ping, Gao Weijie, and Ye Xiaogang.

In Liu Shun's view, Chinese culture has been separated from the rest of the world for too long, so that it remains virtually unknown outside China: 'In domestic performances, we now emphasize pioneer compositions for trad instruments. But abroad, our primary aim is to introduce Chinese native folk musical instru-

ments, and to present them both in traditional and in new repertoire.'

Chinese Gamelan Orchestra gave its debut concert in Shanghai

Chinese audiences have had only a very limited exposure to live performances of gamelan music by visiting musicians from Indonesia. On December 27, 2016, the Oriental Instruments Museum of the Shanghai Conservatory presented a concert of Javanese gamelan music performed by the Conservatory's own students and teachers, the first of its kind in Shanghai, and possibly in all of China. The set of instruments was purchased by the Museum in Shanghai from Central Java. The concert became possible after German Ethnomusicologist and scholar of Southeast Asian music Gisa Jähnichen temporarily joined the Conservatory's Research Institute of Ritual Music in China in September 2016 to offer a gamelan performing course for graduate students and teachers. During one semester, the participants in the course made their acquaintance with basic playing techniques and cultural backgrounds of Javanese gamelan, and learned to play some ten traditional pieces. Five of those pieces were played in the concert, to much acclaim of the local audience. Gisa Jähnichen has returned to Germany, but enthusiastic students in Shanghai will probably wish to continue this experience, which earned them such warm applause from spectators in December last year.

Shanghai Qin Association rides the waves

The qin or guqin (the classical seven-stringed Chinese zither, an essentially meditative instrument) is experiencing a remarkable comeback. In recent years, a renewed interest in China's native cultural roots has led to a widespread boom in qin playing. Some purists may regret the qin's modern transformation into an 'ordinary' instrument, arguing that ties with the classical tradition – such as the classical qin master-pupil relationship, or the instrument's rich philosophical connotations – have largely been lost, now that the qin is taught as a 'mere instrument' in conservatories and art institutes.

For modern conservatory students the main challenge of the qin may lie in its technical difficulties, not in any of its associated metaphysical or moral aspirations, but many will actually view this as a liberation. Although the qin cannot match the popularity of the piano or the Chinese 21-stringed zheng zither among the urban middle classes, more young people than ever before are currently learning to pluck a few tones. And for some, indeed, the qin is again becoming 'a way of life', as it was the case for many literati in the old days. One sure sign of the instrument's renewed popularity

was the well-attended annual meeting of the Shanghai Guqin Association, which took place at the Shanghai Conservatory on 19 February, 2017. The Association, established in Shanghai in December, 2013, with Professor Dai Xiaolian 戴晓莲 as its first president, and with Gong Yi 龚一, Lin Youren 林友仁 and Sun Keren 孙克仁 as consultants, currently numbers nearly a hundred members. This is a far cry from the 1980s, when only a handful of people in Shanghai could play the instrument, and concerts of qin music were relatively rare and did not attract major attention.

The Association was founded with the aim of propagating qin music; in the past few years it has been very active organizing concerts, lectures and academic conferences, to growing acclaim from qin fans and the general public. A down-to-earth approach helps a great deal to further the cause of the qin (at one time considered an 'elite' instrument): on 19 February, there was room for performances, but also for practical reports on the association's activities by Dai Xiaolian and Shen Zhengguo, and on membership finance, by Xing Yuan 邢媛. This was pleasantly combined with specialist lectures by Hu Danyue 胡丹越 and Shen Zhengguo 沈正国 on the development of a new type of qin strings (yue sheng 乐圣), and – to round up – a practical demonstration by Li Quan 李全 how to tie the strings in knots and to attach them to the body of the instrument. Composers, from Tan Dun to young generation talents such as Han Wenhe 韩闻赫 are now writing challenging new pieces for the qin, and some players have taken pride in improvising on it, or in collaborating with jazz and rock musicians. In brief, there's more of a future for the qin and its aficionados today than in many previous decades; and this is certainly true for qin fans and members of the lively and active association in Shanghai, still expertly led by Dai Xiaolian.

Shanghai artists produced a Chinese 'musical' about playwright Tang Xianzu

Musicals staged in China are mostly remakes of shows created abroad which have earned success in America or in Europe. Performers of the 'Musical' Department (*Yinyueju xi*) – yes, this actually exists – of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music surprised audiences in Fuzhou (in Jiangxi Province) on 24 September, 2016, and later on in Shanghai (19 November) with a musical based on the life of the celebrated Ming dynasty dramatist, writer and thinker Tang Xianzu 汤显祖.

Tang is best known as the author of the Kun opera play 'Peony Pavilion' (Mu Dan Ting 牡丹亭), and of the related plays Han Dan Ji (邯郸记), Nan Ke Ji (南柯记) and Zi Chai Ji (紫钗记). These four dramas, collectively known as 'Four dreams of Linchuan' (临川四

梦), are viewed as peak creations in the realm of Chinese classical opera. The year 2016 marked the 400th anniversary of the death of Tang Xianzu, which incited the city government of Fuzhou抚州, Tang Xianzu's hometown in Jiangxi, to join forces with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in setting in motion a musical project inspired by Tang Xianzu's life. The idea was a musical in Chinese style which would portray important episodes from Tang Xianzu's life, but would also shift to modern times to show a group of opera school students rehearsing a Kun opera performance of Peony Pavilion. The alternation of scenes set in Ming dynasty China and in modern China might make it easier for present-day audiences to identify with the life and creative challenges which Tang Xianzu faced while working on his 'four dreams'. Scenes from his plays were woven skilfully into the fabric of the musical, a nice way to explore the significance and specific challenges of Kun opera, in the past as well as in the present. The music for the production combines a modern idiom with traditional elements borrowed from Kunqu, but also from Nuo opera傩戏 and Yihuang opera宜黄戏. The production was titled 'Tang Xianzu'. A team from Shanghai provided the words and the music: Lu Jiayun 陆驾云 wrote the story and the screenplay, Lin Zaiyong 林在勇 the lyrics, and these were set to music by composer Xu Jianqiang 徐坚强. Biographical plays about historical figures are fairly common in Chinese theatre, also in the realm of contemporary music. (For example, in 2007 composer Guo Wenjing wrote an opera about the poet Li Bai.) But so far, not many musicals were devoted to such topical matter. The main roles in 'Tang Xianzu' were sung by Wang Bowen王博文 (as the playwright) and Wang Ziting 王梓庭 (as Wu, his wife). The show was well-received, both in Fuzhou and during its reprise in Shanghai.

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