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East Asian Voices: knotty questions

Do performers of ritual music in East Asia address their performances primarily to gods or to mortals? A knotty question with no easy answer. The East Asian notion of gods is blended with – if not identical to – the concept of ancestors, which is a complicating factor. The 'gods and mortals' dichotomy was one of the key topics of 'East Asian Voices,' a meeting organized by the CHIME Foundation in September last year.

More than 90 participants met in De Doelen in Rotterdam from 11 to 14 September 1995 for a series of workshops and paper sessions on vocal folk music and vocal rituals in East Asia. The overall theme was covered in panel discussions, which were illustrated by recitals and practical demonstrations. Nearly every hour of the four-day meeting, live music could be heard wafting from one of the conference rooms. This ran the gamut from Chinese shawm to Vietnamese percussion, from Korean lyrical chant to Chinese folk songs, from Japanese epic ballads, to qin (Chinese zither) music.

In an informal atmosphere, people from a wide variety of disciplines – scholars of folk literature, musicology, anthropology, sinology, but also professional musicians, ritual specialists and theatre performers – shared their experiences and exchanged views on sub-themes like Narrative Singing, Local Opera, Ritual Music, Folk Song, and Recent Traditions. The CHIME Foundation had aimed at introducing as much contrast as possible into every sub-theme. In the session on 'Narrative Singing', there was room for presentations and workshops on music from China, India, Korea, Vietnam and Japan. In the session on Folk Song, the focus varied from Kazakhstan and Mongolia to China and Laos.

Many presentations contained an element of surprise. The singing style of Mongolian singer Uma Chahartugchi – who was present in Rotterdam for a demonstration – was a revelation not only to her unsuspecting listeners but also to experts on Mongolian music, who found her performance very different from the styles they were familiar with from their own fieldwork. Uma Chahartugchi comes from the relatively unknown region of Ordos in Inner Mongolia.

The group songs which the musicologist Zhang Xingrong (Yunnan Art Institute) recorded in villages in southern China was met with similar amazement. The fact that China has a rich tradition of polyphonic singing in minority areas is no longer a secret, but the very complex eight-part singing which Zhang discovered in his native province of Yunnan, with tonal patterns surprisingly close to Japanese music, was a novelty to everyone present at the meeting.

One obvious conclusion of 'East Asian Voices' was that much more fieldwork is needed to chart the numerous local traditions, and that the relationships between vocal repertoires in different countries in East Asia deserve much more joint study.

The 'Gods or Mortals' theme ran as a thread through the entire meeting. Some conclusions drawn during panel discussions would probably apply to any part of East Asia. Professor David Holm (Sydney) signalled a gradual shift in ritual genres like nuoxi (masked theatre in China) and other forms of religious theatre from 'amusement
for the Gods’ to ‘amusement for mortals’, but he added that there was no question of a complete secularization of these genres.

The key element in all musical rituals remains the need to strike some sort of deal with (the spirits of) dead ancestors to secure prosperity and safety for their offspring. Professor Kristofer Schipper (of the Sinology Institute of Leiden University) supported this idea, but expressed reservations about the terminology used in the discussion. Schipper regards the dichotomy ‘secular / religious’ as a typical Western perspective, which cannot do full justice to the reality of Asian ritual traditions. Schipper believes that the word ‘Gods’ is misleading, too, because – in the Far East – it is linked inseparably with the concept of ‘ancestors’. He proposed a new term – borrowed from New Age jargon – to address the problem of ritual in Asia from a more objective angle: ‘empowerment’. In his view, the key question is how ‘divine’ human participants are in rituals, and what kind of special powers do they allot themselves in ritual performances.

The relationship between religious notions and musical sounds was only touched upon briefly in the discussions. Dr. François Picard (Paris) observed that, contrary to what is often assumed, there are actually clear criteria to distinguish between ritual and non-ritual music, religious and secular repertoires, at least for a vast part of East Asian culture. He illustrated this with examples from China.

In general, participants in the meeting expressed their concern about the fact that musical rituals in countries like China and Vietnam are under growing pressure from political censorship. In particular the organized secularization of traditional culture in China, instigated by the Chinese government, is viewed as a matter of grave concern.

After the Rotterdam meeting there was a one-day post-conference in Leiden organized by the Research School CNWS, with contributions from participants of the CHIME meeting. A Chinese dinner in which everyone sang folk songs from his or her own native country formed an appropriate conclusion to the whole event.

There are plans for a follow-up meeting on East Asian instrumental music, possibly in Germany in 1997. Proceedings of ‘East Asian Voices’ will be published in vols. 10 and 11 of the CHIME Journal.

For a full report on the Rotterdam meeting, see Tan Hwee-San’s article in the present volume of the CHIME Journal.

FRANK KOUWENHOVEN

A NOTE ON CHIME NO. 9

In the course of 1996, the CHIME library in Leiden (The Netherlands) moved its office to a renovated building in the old centre of the town. Officially, the library will open its doors to visitors from 1 January 1997 onwards. The visiting address is: Gerecht 1, 2311 TC Leiden. Moving the library took us much more time than we had anticipated. As a consequence, the publication of Chime no.9 (originally planned for the Fall of 1995) was seriously delayed. Chime no.9 now appears as (the only) 1996 issue of the Chime Journal. Next year, we will revert again to our normal schedule of two issues per year. All subscribers (individuals as well as institutions) automatically receive a renewal notice at the end of their subscription periods.
MIRRORS & DOUBLE MIRRORS - THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN

New Music from
Hong Kong and Taiwan

BARBARA MITTLER
(University of Heidelberg)

'I wanted to be more Chinese than the Mainland composers, and new on top of it', says Hong Kong-based composer Doming Lam. Like so many other Chinese composers, this artist has aspired to create a 'national' musical style, and to reflect in his works the many unique features of China's culture and the chequered history of its people. This article offers an elaborate survey of contemporary composers in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Its author argues that Chinese composers, no matter in what corner of Asia they live or how sharply they demarcate between one another's local traditions, basically share the same objectives and encounter many similar problems in their careers as artists. Politics has played a tremendous, often paradoxical role in their lives. And most of these composers try to combine Chinese and non-Chinese elements in their music. In doing so, they may find inspiration in elements of Western avant-garde which were in turn originally borrowed from Asian traditional music – the 'double mirror effect'.

Slowly but surely, China's New Music is making a name for itself.¹ New works by composers from the PRC, from Hong Kong and Taiwan are being played at international music festivals and conferences concerned with New Music all over the world.² Composers from China have shown that their music in no way falls short of the music composed by their European or American counterparts. A number of young Chinese composers have been particularly successful abroad. It is their works which have led to the current slow but steady reappraisal of Chinese music in the West, and also to a growing interest in the achievements of older generation composers in China.

Until a few years ago the situation was the opposite. For decades musicologists and sinologists outside China largely dismissed the achievements of Chinese composers as insignificant. The prevailing attitude was to regard the works of Chinese artists as poor imitations of Western 19th century romantic music and as products of

¹ While most of the musical analyses in this essay are new and original, much of the biographical detail on the composers and some of the argumentative structure in this essay have been taken from my Dangerous Tunes, forthcoming (Mittler, 1993a).
² In Europe alone, performances at The Holland Festival, Tage für Neue Musik Donaueschingen, ISCM Conferences, Tage für Neue Musik Stuttgart come to mind.
political propaganda. When a new generation of composers arose in the early 1980s in the People's Republic, one Western observer even perceived the contrast between these young artists and their predecessors as so big that he described the younger artists' music as rising 'out of the desert.' His claim was that only in recent years did Chinese composers acquire a face of 'pluralism.'13 Perhaps the time is now ripe for a critical evaluation of musical achievements in 20th century China, that is to say, for an assessment in which the works of both older and young generation Chinese composers are finally given due attention. In the present article I hope to show that the adventures of artists in Hong Kong and Taiwan are every bit as fascinating as those of their colleagues in the People's Republic (which have been discussed in great detail in former issues of this journal).4

Both Taiwan and Hong Kong can boast of a contingent of truly talented and enterprising composers writing music in many different genres. A closer look reveals that there have been, in fact, similar musical developments in all three parts of China. Arguably, the new works composed in these three places have so much in common—in terms of sound as well as social, political and historical setting—that it makes sense to treat them as a single musical realm.

But this view—the notion of a unified world of Chinese music—is generally contested by the composers themselves. Many of them stress political and historical differences between the three areas, and quite a few claim to see these differences reflected in the actual sounds of the music. In other words, according to the composers, there are three Chinas in music rather than one.

4 See the articles by Kouwenhoven mentioned above.
Yet, one cannot help but face the facts. Artists in the three areas have grown up under largely similar conditions. Not only were they united in terms of language and cultural history, but they also shared periods of violent social transition, conflicts of (post-) colonialism and specific political pressures – aspects which will be discussed in more detail below. Under these shared conditions, most Chinese composers struggled to find a national, specifically ‘Chinese,’ musical style, a style that would reflect in some way or other the sorrows and the joys of their people.

The options were the same for most composers, young and old alike, regardless of the political banner under which they grew up. They could either draw directly on Chinese folk music, using traditional instruments or traditional sounds, or they could incorporate Chinese literary, philosophical, aesthetic and structural concepts in their works (or do these two things at the same time).

Composers in the PRC and composers in Taiwan shared essentially the same goals, but also the same limitations: they had to address the question of national identity in their music. This was not just an inner need, but was also a formal political requirement, an imposed duty which could actually become a burden and a painful embarrassment for many of them. Hong Kong composers had no Chinese authorities to bully them, but under British rule, and cut off from Chinese traditions in the PRC, they faced the equally hard task of finding and preserving a voice of their own.

Naturally China’s vast cultural heritage offered a rich potential of ideas to artists in all three areas, regardless of how political and social circumstances affected their lives. The combination of Chinese elements with musical ideas and techniques borrowed from non-Chinese (particularly Western) traditions eventually resulted, on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and in every corner of the Chinese-speaking world, in a fascinating variety of different styles and forms of new music.

Thus, in Hong Kong today, one finds composers like Shi Kumpor and Lin Shengshih who write piano pieces and symphonic pieces in a style of pentatonic romanticism, beside artists like Tung Laisheng and Law Pingleung, who display their ‘Chineseness’ not so much through any audible references to traditional music, but primarily through conceptual and programmatic elements. They draw their materials from Chinese poetry, mythology, history or philosophy. A similarly wide range of stylistic directions and sources of inspiration can be found among artists in Taiwan and in the People’s Republic.

In all these areas, one may also find composers who show a vivid interest in complex musical structures reminiscent of ‘new complexity’ in the West, or who specialize in subtle timbral effects a la Varèse, or who love to explore the high-tech world of electronic music, or who, for that matter, combine the writing of such works with a glamorous career in pop music. Some of these artists may not seem overly concerned with the problem of a Chinese identity. But even in their works, it is often possible to trace the impact of China’s cultural and political heritage.

The present survey, based on field research from 1992 onwards, only represents a small segment of musical life; it gives a prismatic view of some (by no means all) of the most characteristic and interesting composers and compositions from Taiwan and Hong Kong. But despite its limited coverage, I still hope to illustrate that new Chinese music from these two areas, as much as new music from the People’s Republic, is indeed based on a common cultural, social and political heritage. Regardless of the many differences between Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC in terms of social organization and political orientation, it is precisely the impact of the politics in all these

5 The term has been coined to describe a style of music juxtaposing Chinese (pentatonic) scales with the harmonic structure prevalent in Western music of the late 19th century. Cf. Mitter, 1993a.
6 I have concentrated on those compositions and composers not mentioned in detail in the more comprehensive treatment of music in Taiwan and Hong Kong in Dangerous Tunes (Mitter, 1993a).
areas which has been instrumental in shaping, and even to a large extent unifying the music of 20th century Chinese composers. Before turning to the works of individual artists, this all-powerful role of politics merits a closer examination. Its importance is best revealed in the voices of the composers themselves.

THREE CULTURES – SAME BUT DIFFERENT
To those who have argued that music in China was (and is) nothing but political music, it may appear paradoxical that music which emerges from three politically opposed areas such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and the PRC, under Nationalist, Colonial and Communist rule respectively, should be able to form a shared cultural tradition.

It is indeed true that music in China never had the chance of an organic development. It was military defeat and missionary zeal which first brought numerous Western instruments to China in the nineteenth century. It was an imposed extraterritorial system in Shanghai with its ‘enlightening’ (i.e. Westernizing) influence that lead to the foundation of the first Conservatory of Music in China in the early twentieth century.7

After the split in 1949, the PRC remained a fortress in which anti-capitalist sentiments prohibited almost any kind of prolonged cultural or social contact with the outside world, except with a small number of orthodox Communist countries. Big brother Russia prescribed the type of music to be played and heard in Communist China for decades after 1949. This situation changed remarkably with Deng Xiaoping’s third and lasting ascent to power, some time after Mao’s death. Deng’s famous dictum that it does not matter whether the cat is black or white so long as it catches mice epitomizes the country’s change to a more pragmatic attitude towards economic method. Deng’s attitude had repercussions in the cultural realm, too. It enabled composers in the last two decades to stage a re-opening in the direction of ‘capitalist music’ such as New Music, hitherto condemned as decadent.

Music in the PRC is politicized music, perhaps, but does that make it so very different from music produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan? It is true that extensive foreign trade and the accompanying influx of foreign culture in both Hong Kong and Taiwan enabled composers like Doming Lam (Hong Kong) and Xu Changhui (Taiwan) to introduce modern elements from Western music into their traditional style – even in the 1950s and 1960s when such influences were still virtually barred in the People’s Republic of China. And yet, it is also true that, in this very period, not only Mao, but Chiang Kai-shek, too, would talk of the use of music as a political tool. It will become evident below that in the first decades of the Chinese Republic, Taiwanese composers in Taiwan were caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of different political demands, just as much as composers in the People’s Republic. Similarly, one may argue that the politics of economic survival put composers in Hong Kong and Taiwan under just as much pressure as did the politics of class-struggle in the PRC. Politics is thus an important

7 The Shanghai Conservatory was founded in 1927. A detailed article on this earliest school of music is Schimmelpenninck & Kouwenhoven (1993: 56-91).
factor in the creation of Chinese music on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

However, as will be shown below, the impact of politics was not inhibitive or restrictive only. There were also positive effects. Even a political catastrophe and social and human tragedy on unprecedented scale, such as the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) allegedly was, could lead to unpredictable results. The Cultural Revolution in fact turned out to be one of the most important formative stages in the creative development of PRC composers: as young urban intellectuals in Maoist China, they were forced – for ideological reasons – to carry out heavy physical labour in the countryside. In practice, this offered many of them a unique opportunity to get to know the traditional arts and customs of rural China. When the PRC's political climate became more relaxed in the 1980s, these composers were suddenly confronted with yet another unfamiliar world: that of Western contemporary music. They seized the double opportunity, and enriched their musical idiom with previously unheard sounds and techniques borrowed from Chinese tradition as well as from Western contemporary music.

Eclectic combinations of Western and Chinese elements also turned up in the music of Taiwanese and Hong Kong composers, but partly under different circumstances or for different reasons. A brief look into the history of these areas should clarify this.

MUSIC IN TAIWAN: BACK TO THE ROOTS?
In 1945 the Nationalist government of China under the direction of Chiang Kai-shek received Taiwan back from her colonial sovereigns of half a century, the Japanese. In 1949, when the Civil War between Nationalists and Communists led to the victory of the latter, Chiang Kai-shek and his troops fled to island Taiwan. The Mainland Chinese he brought with him took on the leading positions once filled by Japanese colonialists, whereas the Taiwanese population was again reduced to secondary and subservient positions. The irony of fate: the Taiwanese, who had been heavily suppressed under Japanese rule, were now suspected of collaborating with the arch-enemy since they were able to speak the Japanese language.

In the first years of Nationalist rule over Taiwan, the government felt that an upsurge of nationalism among the indigenous Taiwanese population had to be prevented, along with Communist infiltration. Musically speaking, this meant that the composers, who were asked to write 'national music,' became ever more cautious in using elements of traditional music, such as folksongs, as raw materials for their own compositions. After all, if they used folk songs from the Mainland, these might smell of Communism, yet if they used Taiwanese songs, they might be accused of harbouring thoughts of Taiwanese independence. As a result of this dilemma, composers in Taiwan very early turned to the techniques and the expressive possibilities of modern music. To write works in an internationally accepted style appeared to be politically on the safe side, while writing (or trying to write) music in a 'national' idiom was not.

Consequently, in comparison with composers from the PRC, Taiwanese composers are now often praised for their command of Western technique rather than for their Chineseness. Zhu Jian'er (*1922), a veteran composer from the PRC explains: 'Taiwan composers have very good technique and think of tradition like us. But Taiwan is so small, there is little opportunity to have contact with the folk tradition.' Those who support this view have presumably overlooked a development which took place in Taiwan in the seventies: the so-called xiangtu-movement ('motherland soil'), which brought back a renewed (anti-government) interest in Taiwanese indigenous culture and roots. Composers went out to collect folksongs, writers talked of particularly Taiwanese problems, folksingers revived the old musical traditions. The political radicalization of this movement at the end of the seventies brought its quick and brutal end, in a series of arrests and crackdowns. And yet, the
ideas of the movement were picked up again in the mid-1980s, this time under government auspices.

Since 1981 the term *gongfei* (‘Communist bandits’) had been eradicated from official documents. This new rule of discourse marked the beginning of a gradual and more general relaxation in the relation between Communist and Nationalist China, and eventually led to the lifting of restrictions on visiting the Mainland for Taiwanese citizens.

A Taiwanese president has for some years now been promoting a new relationship between Taiwanese and Mainlanders on the island. Schools and academies which for decades had been restricted to teaching Western musical theory and practice now teach students their Chinese (and Taiwanese) musical roots. Some even make it an obligatory requirement for students of Western instruments to take lessons in at least one Chinese instrument as well.

All these developments were the preliminaries for an increasing and enthusiastic use of traditional Chinese musical elements in the works of Taiwanese composers. Eventually, new music in Taiwan also witnessed the phenomenon of ‘double-mirroring’ that has been observed in new music from the PRC: today, ever more Chinese composers find their own tradition reflected in techniques used in the avant-garde of the West – techniques which Western composers have not always invented but have often in their turn borrowed from Asia’s traditional music.

**MUSIC IN HONG KONG: A MERCHANT’S REPERTOIRE?**

Hong Kong, the Colonial China, for many a place of business rather than of culture; in the memories of some of its own composers a ‘culturally dormant’ territory in the fifties and sixties, it has, since the seventies and the reign of governor MacLehose, built up a great number of projects and venues in the cultural sphere. Hong Kong’s impresarios are now weary of trying to fill the numerous concert halls, the music schools and the museums. The Hong Kong population has not significantly increased its leisure class in the last few decades; one would almost think that no real concept of leisure can persist or even develop in such a busy market atmosphere.

It seems that Hong Kong’s booming economy and firm commitment to a liberal market system have now secured a generous flow of support for the arts, but this has not necessarily resulted in the best possible working climate for its artists. It is true that the Hong Kong composer has not had to suffer the iron hand of severe political propaganda systems, such as existed elsewhere in China. He may not have been forced to answer the call of ‘writing music for the masses,’ but he was not free to write music of his own choice either, not if he wanted to earn a living from it. There was always, for profit reasons, the need to respond to the expectations of a potential audience. Naturally, composers in any part of the world will sometimes have to face the pressures of a ‘market’. But the presence of a particularly commercially-oriented government in Hong Kong and public indifference in the British colony have not exactly made things easier for Hong Kong’s composers. Some of the artists may feel that reality forces them to produce ‘music for the masses’ after all. In the end, the fate of Hong Kong composers, much like that of their colleagues in Taiwan and the PRC, depends pre-eminently on politics.

What does Hong Kong music sound like? It is generally assumed to be the music of an international entrepôt, not the music of China: it is the conviction of many a PRC and Taiwan composer that Hong Kong music sounds ‘less Chinese’ than their own. Despite this suggested lack of cultural consciousness in Hong Kong, data from
interviews with some sixty composers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC reveal no significant differences as far as composers' attitudes to Chinese tradition are concerned: they all attach considerable importance to it.

COMPOSERS' OWN PERSPECTIVES
Clarence Mak (*1959) takes a clear stance: 'I don't pay much attention to Chinese tradition. Born in Hong Kong I know something about China, and something about the West. We don't distinguish here between what is Chinese and what is Western.' Views like his have been interpreted as indicating indifference to the Chinese heritage among Hong Kong composers. Chinese from Taiwan and the PRC have apparently turned a blind eye to other views, such as Doming Lam's (*1939) contention: 'I wanted to be more Chinese than the Mainland composers and new on top of it.'

Many composers from the PRC and from Taiwan have remarked on their similarities in their pursuit of tradition. By contrast, Hong Kong is frequently cited as a negative example, rootless and (often willingly and almost totally) Westernized. As Wu Zuqiang (*1927), a well-known PRC composer, put it: 'What should the Hong Kong style of music be that they advocate? Is it a colonial style? Their culture is dependent on their colonial background.' His much younger colleague, Chen Xiaoyong (*1955), now resident in Hamburg, feels 'pessimistic about Chinese tradition in Hong Kong. Due to the strong English influence on the educational system, a lot of Hong Kong composers don't really feel Chinese any more. Finding their own language, then, is even more difficult.'

Zhou Wenzhong (*1923), the father of Chinese music, scolds from New York: 'Hong Kong is the worst. Hong Kong composers have said publicly that they did not want to represent their tradition. They are too influenced by the colonial attitude. An artist has to have roots.' This unfavourable judgement has had practical consequences for Hong Kong composers, as Doming Lam, amongst others, is quick to point out: 'The conference in 1988 did not include composers from Hong Kong because our music was considered to have no relation to tradition.' A note of disappointment also sounds in a statement made by Chan Kambiu (*1962): 'We Hong Kong composers are still struggling to find our own form of expression; it is difficult to say whether we will have a place in the history of Chinese music. If you come from Hong Kong, people from outside think you are not Chinese, not an authentic Chinese composer.'

This negation of 'Chineseness' in Hong Kongese music offers a sharp contrast to the tendency among young composers in the People's Republic and in Taiwan to emphasize their common culture. They feel close to one another in spirit, in spite of the fact that Taiwan composers, have, for a long time, been taught exclusively in American-style schools and are, in that respect, perhaps more comparable to their (British-educated) counterparts in Hong Kong. Remarks by PRC composers of the *xinchao* generation show that they appreciate their Taiwanese colleagues, notwithstanding certain 'differences of degree'.

Zhao Xiaosheng (*1945) and Chen Yi (*1953) remark: 'There is so much we have in common with Taiwan composers, in style and language and

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8 All interviews were conducted by myself between autumn 1992 and spring 1993 in Germany, France, the U.S., Taiwan, Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. Quotations by individual composers are taken from these interviews.
9 In 1988, a meeting of Chinese composers took place in Hong Kong under the auspices of Zhou Wenzhong and the U.S.-China Arts Exchange. It was the first-ever re-union of composers from Taiwan and the PRC since the split in 1949.
10 The term *xinchao* ('New Wave') is used in Communist China to refer to young composers who, in the early 1980s, achieved a sudden success with their music abroad.
aim. Taiwan is closer to the mainland than Hong Kong; the Taiwanese might even talk more about Chinese culture than we do. Hong Kong, on the other hand, is more Westernized; people there don’t think about their cultural background but emphasize technique.’

Composers on both sides of the Strait appear to agree on the point that the richest reservoir of traditional Chinese music is still to be found on the Mainland. Xu Changhui (*1929), himself from Taiwan, states: ‘Taiwanese music perhaps does not sound as Chinese as music from the PRC: there is more traditional music still to be heard there. In Taipei, you won’t find nanguan easily even if you try. Although xia xiang was forced, at least it gave PRC composers an opportunity to do fieldwork.’

Xu’s views are echoed by Zhou Wenzhong who argues: ‘In the PRC, the environment alone can already inspire people; it is so manifold. In spite of the political system, there are so many minorities and the cultural diversity is amazing. Everywhere there is a distinctive music. This is different in both Hong Kong and Taiwan.’

In short, many would agree with Chen Qigang’s (*1935) assessment: ‘In the PRC the influence of tradition is strongest. In Taiwan there is a search for Chinese traditions because the people over there came originally from the Mainland. They are now looking for their roots, but traditional culture has had less influence on them because they have had a lot of Western teaching and always send their children abroad to study. In Hong Kong, composers don’t know whether they are English or Chinese. Their problems are the biggest.’

POLITICS AND MUSIC IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN
The question remains as to whether disparity between the three parts of China as suggested in these statements has real significance when it comes to the composers’ musical works.

Should we really assume fundamentally different artistic developments in Taiwan and the PRC? Should we do so because, for example, the parallel political movements in these areas are viewed as polar opposites of one another? But are these two areas really so very different, politically speaking? Are not the leaders of their governments products of one and the same nationalist-iconoclastic tradition, that of the May Fourth movement, which shook the foundations of early Republican China? Are not both the artists and the politicians in these respective areas, first and foremost, representatives of a single Chinese community, with a shared past, a shared cultural heritage, a shared political history? Consider the fact that both Chiang Kaishek and Mao Zedong propagated the use of music as a political tool, and that they did so in words that echo traditional conceptions already found in the classic of music (Yueji). Politics has always been omnipresent in Chinese musical culture. It has continued to play its role in the musical world of 20th century Communist China, but not only there.

In Taiwan, composers were asked to write music to fight Communism, at a time when their colleagues in the PRC were urged to write music to battle against the evils of capitalism. Compositions with identical titles, except for the names Mao and

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11 This is interesting in view of Western observers’ numerous statements about the destruction of traditional culture in the PRC. The frequent assumption is that numerous elements and relics of traditional culture were much better preserved in Taiwan. The composers’ views seem to contradict this, and I consider them as support for my own assessment: that in the PRC less Chinese culture has actually been destroyed than is often acknowledged, especially when favourable comparisons with Taiwan take place.

12 A sophisticated genre of traditional Chinese ballad singing.

13 The policy of sending youth to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

14 For an elaboration of these points cf. Mittler, 1994.
Chiang, were produced and hailed on either side of the Taiwan Strait. On the Mainland, Sang Tong (*1923) and Chen Mingzhi (*1925) produced choral music to commemorate the death of Mao Zedong. In Taiwan, Chen Maoxuan (*1936) created on request an elegy for Chiang Kai-shek. The Taiwanese composer was arrested for a day for his efforts, because the contemporary poem which he choose as a libretto seemed conspicuous as it was not flattering (enough) to the late Chiang. Eventually, a high official close to Chiang authorized usage of the poem, and only then was Chen released.15

Do we need more examples? Xu Changhui, Hou Junqing (*1938) and Chen Shihui (*1962) all remember their own or other artists’ difficulties with the Taiwanese government. Taiwan composers could get into trouble whenever they used traditional songs or melodies from the Mainland as raw materials in their compositions. For a long time, those who collected folk songs materials while studying abroad ran the risk of losing what they brought back with them on re-entering Taiwan – these materials often ‘disappeared’ at the Taiwan customs.

Some composers in Taiwan spontaneously began to write music based on political themes. When the country was expelled from the United Nations, Zeng Xingkui (*1946) composed a protest song. This same composer used folk melodies from Xinjiang and Taiwan (luckily unrecognized by the government) in his Woodwind Quartet (1977) – certainly political innuendo, and a dangerous feat during those years of heated anti-Taiwanism. Zeng also wrote an Elegy for Chinese orchestra, dedicated to the victims at Tiananmen (Tiananmen wenge, 1989).

In brief, it is not difficult to see that Taiwanese composers have been caught between the syllogism and charybdis of the demands of nationalism and the demands of anti-communism in their music, as much as their colleagues in the PRC were caught between the demands of anti-bourgeois propaganda and of the propagation of revolutionary romanticism.

Then what about Hong Kong? If we find similarities in the new music of Hong Kong and that of Taiwan, should we assume that these are primarily due to the fact that both places believe in the creed of modernization and thus of Westernization, and that both were strongly influenced by a foreign culture, be it that of England or of the United States? It is certainly true that both places have turned into melting-pots of cultures and interests, but has this fact made new music in these areas any more ‘pluralistic’ than that of the PRC?

If we start thinking about the commercial face of Hong Kong, about market aspects – is it not perhaps the market, rather than any kind of cultural politics, that is the dominating factor today in the successes and failures of young composers, in any part of China? Not only in booming Hong Kong or miracle Taiwan, but also, perhaps most of all, in the greatly-forward-leaping PRC?

I could continue this list of questions about what it is that links the three areas or sets them apart. But perhaps it is time to turn to the music itself. Is it possible at all to hear if a piece of music is written by a Chinese composer from a particular place? Can

15 Interview with Hou Junqing.
16 Zeng Xingkui is a Kejia. He grew up in the countryside of Pingdong but came to Taipei to study at the Normal University (1968-72). Xu Changhui and Hou Junqing were his teachers. Having taught at middle school for a while, he went to the Staatliche Musikhochschule in Freiburg to study composition with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber (1977-81). He has since then been teaching at his alma mater only to take off for France once in 1986-87 to study film and electronic music. His music incorporates different traits of modernism such as minimalism as in his Qixiangyu (‘Capriccio’) for horn and harpsichord of 1983, or parodistic effects as in his Shengming de bufu (‘Steps of life’) for Chinese instrumental ensemble (1991). For an article on his life and works see Wang Weiwen, 1986a. For a critique of his modernist style see Wang Weiwen, 1986b. His Wuhsue (‘Butterfly Dream’) is discussed in Blumenthaler, 1989.
it be traced to one of the three areas? Judging from what the composers have contended, one would almost believe this to be the case.

A listening experiment which I carried out among Chinese and Western probants\(^{17}\) has shown that of the compositions recognized unanimously as Chinese by Chinese most were in fact from Hong Kong, followed by works from the PRC and lastly by compositions from Taiwan! An identical distribution was found in an evaluation by Western participants.\(^{18}\) One should not attach too much importance to this primitive experiment, but it is probably still fair to say, also in view of other evidence which will be presented below, that condemnations of Hong Kong as a rootless or culture-less society are hardly justifiable. Chen Yi, herself a Cantonese, has at one point remarked: 'Hong Kong people are different, they don’t think of themselves as Chinese. But in fact they are the real Chinese.'\(^{19}\) What she means is that people in Hong Kong are often more eager than others to act out their roles as Chinese. They do so precisely because they are so often accused of not paying enough attention to their roots. This defensive attitude, in a way, turns them into the most faithful guardians of a Chinese identity.

Naturally, being Chinese or acting Chinese is not the same thing. The first is a spontaneous expression of culture, the second a political act. This raises the question for the remainder of this survey of contemporary composers from Hong Kong and Taiwan: to what extent is their music political music, and to what extent is it Chinese music? Let us take a closer look first at composers in Taiwan.

**XU CHANGHUI – FROM MODERNISM TO PENTATONICISM**

Xu Changhui is Taiwanese. He is the initiator and father of many a musical movement in Taiwan, be it concerned with New Music or with Taiwanese indigenous folk music. Typical for the Taiwanese experience, he went as a teenager to study in Japan.\(^{20}\) The Japanese colonial reign had in fact set up a useful and advanced musical infrastructure in Taiwanese schools and universities, as well as providing the possibility for further study by talented Taiwanese in Japan itself. In 1949 Xu entered the Music Department of the National Taiwan Normal University studying violin and composition, the latter under Xiao Erhua (*1906). Upon graduation and after completing his military service, he continued his studies at the École César Franck and the Sorbonne in Paris, with Jolivet and Messiaen among his teachers. Since his return to Taiwan he has lectured and taught at several of Taiwan’s music departments. In the sixties he began research on Taiwan’s folk tradition. He was the initiator and founder of many of Taiwan’s

\(^{17}\) Described and evaluated in detail in my PhD (Mittler 1993a), in the third part of chapter 4: ‘Hearing tradition in music.’

\(^{18}\) One factor affecting the recognizability of the ‘Chineseness’ of a piece seems to be its belonging to one of a number of categories of transformation of tradition. These categories can be termed stylization (the simple use of pentatonic phrases in a framework of romantic music), radicalization (the recreation of traditional musical elements in a modernist framework) and mythologization (the use of elements from China’s philosophical and literary tradition as an inspiration or a structural guide for composition). Compositions of the mythologizing category are recognized with difficulty, whereas pieces employing stylization are more readily recognized. This is probably one reason why Hong Kong fared so well and Taiwan so badly here: In the experiment most of the compositions from Hong Kong were from the stylization category whereas all compositions from Taiwan were from the mythologizing category.

\(^{19}\) The findings of a 1985 resident-survey of Hong Kong’s alleged ‘transit lounge [that] offers little sense of place or the room to nurture a cultural identity and creative visio’ (Scott, 1985: 49) only further underpin my point and illustrate the spread of the prejudice: asked about their primary identity, 49.5 per cent of the respondents [in that survey] identified themselves as Hong Kongese, while 36.2 per cent as Chinese. Common to both groups was ethnocentrism, i.e., pride in being a Chinese and belief in the Chinese culture as the best’ (Cheek-Milby and Mushkat, 1989: 104).

\(^{20}\) Another example would be Guo Zhiyuan (*1921) one of the masters of pentatonic romanticism in Taiwan.
composers' groups in the sixties\(^{21}\) and the Asian Composers' League (ACL) in the early seventies (1973). Some of these organisatory endeavours are now being continued by Pan Huanglong (*1945) who was finally able to secure for Taiwan entrance to the ISCM; in 1984, he founded the *Taipei xiandai yinyue zhongxin*, which later formed the basis of the Taiwan branch of the ISCM. A task Xu had never been able to accomplish.\(^{22}\)

To Xu, ‘all music in Taiwan is political music.’ Time and again he was faced, as a composer, with the difficulties of living as a *zoom politikon*. Once in the fifties, he was reprimanded for using an allegedly ‘pacifist’ poem by Du Fu for a vocal composition.\(^{23}\) Since the country was battling Communism there was no place for such music. In the seventies, he was not allowed to leave the island for two years. His offence: he had dared to give a talk on New Chinese music at Cornell University, and had been preposterous enough to include works by PRC composers. What is worse, he had repeated the talk in Taiwan and had thus spread Communist propaganda. It is characteristic of the type of seclusion that Taiwanese composers had to endure that it would have been impossible for him to have collected the material for this talk in Taiwan. He had to go to the U.S. to find data on PRC composers. This situation is slowly changing. The most important PRC music journals such as *Renmin yinyue*, *Yinyue yishu* and *Zhongguo yinyuexue* are now available in Taiwanese libraries, although, even today, under special loan conditions.

Xu's extensive oeuvre, which ranges from operas to solo songs and from piano concertos to solo sonatas for piano, was first misunderstood and rejected in Taiwan as being too advanced. He was condemned as the *enfant terrible* of Taiwan music circles by many a newspaper critic unwilling to listen to his ‘noisy’ and ‘melodyless’ music.\(^{24}\) Eventually, the critics would get used to the sounds of modernism: during the sixties and seventies, more and more composers employed this idiom and concerts by several of the music groups and composers' associations, often founded under Xu's aegis, provided a 'musical education' for the Taiwan audience. The flourishing of these groups, initially instigated by Xu himself, did not directly lead to a greater acceptance of his own compositional oeuvre, rather – and this is again the irony of fate – his own work was now recognized (and criticized) as being oriented toward the classics of modernism.\(^{25}\)

This it certainly is: his Five Piano Pieces (1975-1984) adhere to the maxim 'Life is art.' They are the expressions of a romantic, testifying to different episodes in the life of the composer; its movements include a romance, a funeral and a search. These pieces are neo-romantic in their ductus and formal structure, while at the same time departing substantially from the realms of functional harmony.

The last piece *Xunzhao* (*Recherche, Search*), for instance, tripartite in form (A-B-A') begins in two different keys for the right and the left hand. The keys for right and left hand keep changing but they seem to almost always be a minor second apart (F-e, F#-F). The second and third half of the piece then returns to a common key. The composer's search is depicted in restricted and ever-recurring motifs, once for the left hand, once for the right hand, which often also appear in the reverse direction: a 32nd wavetlike movement and a staccato melody, structured like a short question featuring

\(^{21}\) These groups were often very short-lived. Among the most important are from 1961-1972 the *Zhiyue xiaozhi* (*Composers' Forum*), from 1961-62 the *Xinyue chuazou* (*Music Premiere*), from 1963-1965 the *Jiangliang yueji* (*Jiangliang Group*), from 1965-1966 the *Wuren yueji* (*Group of Five*), and from 1968-1971 the *Xinhuagui yuehui* (*Sunflower Group*). Cf. You Sufeng, 1990: 36. A thorough discussion of the members and activities of these groups follows in her study on pp. 39-72.


\(^{23}\) Du Fu was one of the great poets of the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD), China's golden age of poetry. For a translation of the poem, *Binghe xing* (*Ballad of the Army Carts*), cf. Hawkes, 1967: 5-17.

\(^{24}\) Some of these criticisms are reprinted in You Sufeng, 1990.

\(^{25}\) His life and work are described in Morton and Collins, 1992: 423-425.
variations of the minor third. These motifs return in the form of a recapitulation in the last section, with a common key signature. The search seems to have come to a conclusion when, in the last bar, right and left hand play the wavelike movement in unison.

This wavelike movement began as a perfect scale, up and down within the interval of a fifth. In the course of the piece it becomes infected by the minor thirds of the staccato motif, and when it is heard in unison in the final bar, it presents the basic structure of the pentatonic scale. Xu's search thus appears to be a search for musical identity, and it leads him back to one of the basic features of his own musical tradition, pentatonicsm.

Ex. 1. Xu Changhui – Xunzhao, for piano. Its beginning and its final bars are shown.

Perhaps Xu Changhui is depicting here his own career as a composer: In his early days in Paris he developed an interest in modernism (as the two different key signatures in the piece may symbolize), but he eventually returned to pentatonicsm, the pentatonicism of Chinese folksong, which would dominate his life and his compositional style in the sixties and seventies and ever afterwards.26 In those years Xu began to carry out ethnomusicological fieldwork together with Shi Weiliang (1925-1977)27. Today he is still involved in research into the origins of Chinese folk music.

Despite all his difficulties with Taiwan politics and his role as a cultural enfant terrible in the early phase of his career, Xu Changhui eventually became part of the musical establishment in Taiwan. He is currently a professor in the Music Department of Taiwan Normal University, author of numerous well-publicized books on New and

26 One of his most interesting compositions in this style is his Concerto for piano and Chinese orchestra (1981), of which a detailed analysis is to be found in Mittler, 1993a.
27 Shi Weiliang is a Mainlander from Liaoning who came to Taiwan in 1949. Between 1958-65 he studied in Stuttgart and Vienna. Together with Xu Changhui, he was active in the collection of Taiwanese folksongs and accordingly, his music incorporates pentatonic scales in a Bartókian atonal framework. He was an influential teacher advocating a synthesis of Chinese and Western tradition.
Old Music in Taiwan, and the country’s foremost authority on ‘revived’ Taiwanese folk music. His strong position now gives him the power to overcome all political difficulties. He has become a persona grata.

LI TAIXIANG – A VOICE FROM TRIBAL TAIWAN

A very different case is Li Taixiang (*1941): Li grew up in TaiBei. His father is a member of the Amei tribe, the biggest tribe in Taiwan. His mother is a Mainlander from Puli (Guangxi Province). During his school years he took part in performances and even trained with a troupe of actors of gezaixi, the Taiwanese type of Chinese opera originating at the beginning of the twentieth century. He became a student of violin performance at the National Institute of Arts (1954-62) and after graduation served as concert master in the TaiBei symphony.28

In the sixties his Amei background became more and more important to him. In 1964 he went to teach among the Amei. Many of the features typical of Amei music, its monotony, and free counterpoint in polyphonic singing are to be found in Li’s music. His Dasheiji (‘Great Sacrifice’) of 1973, commissioned by the Cloud Gate Theatre Ballet Troupe, was an obvious glorification of the primitive but good-natured Amei, a sharp contrast with the modernized but brutal Mainlanders in the plains.

Not only his association with this indigenous Chinese tribe and his obvious role as their advocate, but also his endeavours in many other fields of musical activity, especially in the realm of pop music, have created tensions between him and his government. His 1976 song ‘The olive tree’ begins with a self-enquiring question ‘Where do I come from?’ It describes in vivid language the meandering of an insecure youth. A Taiwanese citizen under Nationalist rule was not supposed to ‘wildly wander.’ Such wanderings and questionings might bring him dangerously close to the Communist Mainland.

Sometimes a name alone was sufficient to arouse suspicion: Li Taixiang’s pop song Yi tiao riguang dadao (‘A broad sun-ray-way to the future’) was criticized because anything to do with the sun was suspected of being pro-Mao.29 Unlike Xu Changhui, Li was never a real member, nor did he aspire to be a member of the establishment. He is not a member of the Taiwan Composers’ League; unlike most Taiwanese composers he does not teach at one of the accepted music schools or academies; he has organized his own series of eccentric concerts presenting the newest of the new in avant-garde and pop, a series entitled Chuantong yu zhanwang (‘Tradition and Prospect’). He was the first to introduce electronic music to Taiwan; he was the first to introduce laser and other multi-media stage effects. The concert series ran eight times, from 1978, but has been stopped for financial reasons. His radical and uncompromising musical attempts which have never diminished in novelty were not always successful, and have won him few friends but many foes. In some ways, Li Taixiang is a victim of both the market and politics.

His Taixyin (‘Chant of the Great Void’) for thirteen performers was composed in 1979. In this piece of Daoist inspiration, Li incorporates the minimalist structure of music of the Amei; he requires monophonic, freely contrapuntal singing in a style modelled on the responsorial singing of the Amei; he makes use of elements similar to the Buddhist tradition of reciting the scripture (nianjing). He employs self-made instruments and electronic effects.

The piece is written mainly in a graphic notation (see Ex.2) and the score includes instructions for a stage choreography of the performance. The composer plays with

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29 In PRC propaganda texts Mao Zedong is frequently compared to the sun. Wen Longxin reports that, for the same reason, the Sunflower Group (a group of Taiwanese composers) was asked to change its name after its second concert (cf. You Sufeng, 1990: 67).
different modes of sound production. At the beginning, a group of male and female singers starts breathing; the breathing becomes a humming, the humming becomes sound, the sounds become words.

Ex.2. Excerpt from Li Taixing's Taixuyin, in graphic notation.

Rhythmically free instrumental interludes, played on self-designed instruments made from natural materials such as stones from Hualian, appear now and again, climaxing and relaxing very effectively, almost like a giant's breathing. Li not only juxtaposes many different traditional singing styles but partly exaggerates and alienates them: reminiscences of the flowing movements and flexible pitches of mountain songs appear next to snatches of Chinese operatic recitation or the monotony of Buddhist singing. The text, with Daoist connotations, is extremely restricted, reticent, deep and intense. The constant repetition of certain words or phrases in different modes of performance—sung, recited, or as ostinatos in almost minimalist fashion—have a trancelike effect.

This is a piece of experimental music. It employs many of the features prevalent in this genre in the West: extraordinary instruments, aleatory structure, minimalism, staged movements. At the same time, the piece is a tour de force in terms of its integration of traditional musical habits, and is an ecstatic celebration of Taiwan's aboriginal culture, its nature and its natural sounds. It is precisely because Li is recreating traditional sounds and capturing traditional philosophical feelings that Taixuyin can be heard as a piece of avant-garde music. The double mirror is very effective here.

QIAN SHANHUA – ECLECTICALLY CHINESE

A similar effectiveness is apparent in the way traditional elements are used in Qian Shanhua's music. In the late seventies, this composer (born around 1945) spent an extended period of study in the U.S., followed later by study in Vienna (1984-86). Whereas his early works appear reminiscent of Benjamin Britten (e.g. Qian's Stringquartet I of 1985), his more recent compositions, like Feng-Song (Ballads-Odes) for chamber ensemble (1988) – a work which also employs aleatory techniques – adopted a more contemporary guise.

In Feng-Song Qian quotes traditional songs of the Taiwan Zou minority on Alishan. By the late eighties, such an employment of aboriginal songs no longer
created the kind of political stir which Li Taixiang’s attempts evoked a decade earlier. The atmosphere of national and political compromise characteristic of Taiwan in the late eighties almost seems to be incorporated in this work of Qian: he juxtaposes Taiwan Zou folk melody with percussive elements borrowed from Beijing Opera of the Han (the Mainland Chinese). Apart from the aleatory nature of the piece, it is the use of modern instrumental techniques in particular, which make Qian’s composition a representative work of Taiwan’s avant-garde. It is a study in loneliness. A solo cello provides the structural frame for the piece which, almost like a concerto grosso, is constructed as a constant interchange between solo passages, in which the cello is joined by one or more other instruments, and tutti passages. The piece is dominated by sounds and sound effects rather than by melodic lines. It is characterized by the constant and insistent transformation and renewal of certain moving clusters. The solo cello is present at the beginning and at the end; this instrument provides the structural clues which connect the meditative elements with innuendos and hints of the folksong melodies in the composition. It serves as a link between certain meditative elements and snatches of folk song in the work.

LAII DEHE – A-POLITICAL MODERNISM
It is evident that, until the late seventies, composers directly in search of their national identity, used to run quite easily into political trouble. It has already been mentioned that many a Taiwanese composer managed to escape from these troubles by adopting a more internationally oriented musical idiom, devoid of political implications or connotations. Lai Dehe (*1943) is an important and prominent member of this group among Taiwanese composers. He graduated from the Guoli yizhuan (Institute of the Arts) in 1969, a student of Xu Changhui, Shi Weiliang and Xiao Erhua. In 1978-80 he studied at the Orff Institute in Salzburg. Since 1981 he has been teaching at his alma mater and since 1982 at the Taiwan Academy of Arts. Lai Dehe’s style is distinctly contemporary. He is a sound-architect. His compositions are well-constructed and well-organized sound buildings. To construct his pieces he makes use of serialist techniques as in his Shuhuai yizhang (‘A Statement of Sensation’ or ‘From Apathy to Chaos’) for woodwind quintet (1985). At times the structure in this work is minimalistically reduced to few rhythmic or melodic elements. Sometimes he uses a twelve-tone row. It is his conviction that a definite and well-structured composition technique does not restrain but rather liberates a composer. Like some of his other pieces, this composition is divided into seven parts, arranged serially in terms of tempo: slow-medium-slow-moving-medium-slow. This division reveals a mirror pattern, which is also evident in other aspects of the music’s organization. Some sections are the retrograde forms of other sections. Even in the choice of instruments a mirror effect is applied: for example, flute and clarinet are answered by oboe and bassoon.

Similarly well-constructed is Lai Dehe’s Zuo pin 1980 (‘Opus 1980’) for twelve instruments and two percussionists. Again a work which falls into seven parts and depends on a mirror structure. The main motivic material in Zuo pin 1980 is based on an interval of a consecutive fourth and fifi, which can be heard throughout the piece at different pitch levels and in various guises. The central section of the work first breaks this basic material down to its tiniest elements and then extends it again to large, soaring intervals. The various parts of the music are neatly arranged, without resulting in too rigid a framework. It is in the relative freedom which Lai applies to his own structural rules that he finds his liberty.

There is little evidence of Chinese traditional elements in this piece. Perhaps the recurring stretta effects could be viewed as an inadvertent echo of the type of stretta

characteristic of instrumental introductions in traditional playing in China, but the relation seems far-fetched. Certainly, Lai did not expressly intend to imitate that kind of music, for he would have devised other means for it. His aim was not to write national music, but rather music in a style which responded more clearly to international trends. In this respect he resembled composers as Qian Nanzhang (*1948) and Wu Yuanfang (*1952) who also studied in Germany and Austria.

MORE ‘INTERNATIONALISTS’: QIAN NANZHANG, WU YUANFANG

Qian Nanzhang was born on the Mainland, but came to Taiwan when he was only six months old. He studied at the music department of Culture University (Wenhua Daxue) between 1966-70, under Liu Deyi (who died in 1991)\(^{31}\) among others. Later, between 1973-78 he studied under Killmayer at the Musikhochschule in Munich. He now teaches at the National Academy of Performing Arts. Qian Nanzhang’s style is rather conservative, sometimes neo-classicist as in his Mozhe de qixiang (‘Beautiful thoughts of Mozart’) for woodwind quartet (1973). He seldom refers to the traditional music of his own culture, having only recently started to take some lessons in traditional percussion techniques.\(^{32}\)

Wu Yuanfang (*1952), who studied in Berlin between 1981-86, is a similar case. If he does refer to Chinese tradition, it is not so much traditional music but poetry which serves as a source of inspiration for his compositions. His Jiangxue for seven instruments (1986), for instance, is based on a poem by Liu Zongyuan (773-819). His style is thus another example of the apolitical but often somewhat academic avant-gardism which is such an important trend in Taiwan’s New Music.

Wu’s sextet Xunhui 1-0 (‘Roundtrip 1-0’) for clarinet, oboe, violin, viola, piano and percussion has an aleatory structure. It is a study in tension and relaxation. Harsh plucking sounds are juxtaposed with sustained piercing trills, and with scales which rapidly run up and down in ostinato fashion, suggesting circular movement, and sighs. The bouts of circulation are abruptly broken off and taken up again. One movement infects the next; circulation appears at different pitch levels, in different octaves, in different intervals and with differing instrumental techniques. It becomes quasi-melodical only to be stopped short again in sustained clustering chords. The piece ends in silence. As an aleatory piece, it offers the performer utmost freedom, but its emphasis on technique may strike some listeners as academic.

XIONG ZEMIN – CAPTURING CHINESE TRADITIONS

Taiwanese composers have thus restrained themselves from using the more evident elements of traditional culture, such as folksongs, in their compositions in order to avoid political repercussions. But clearly there are other, more abstract ways of referring to one’s native musical traditions. A number of composers have explored alternatives which allowed them more or less to adhere to the (government) demand of writing ‘national music’.

In 1983, Xiong Zemin (*1954) left Taiwan for a year to study in Austria. Eventually he returned to Taiwan, where he is now a teacher of composition at the Xiaoming Girls Music School in Taichung. In many of his compositions he draws on Chinese traditions. It is primarily traditional poetry and philosophy which interests him. These fields provide conceptual and programmatic ideas for his pieces. His piano composition of 1984, Shi’er shengxiao (‘Twelve animals of the year’), for instance,

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\(^{31}\) Pietro Liu, a student of Genzmer, Hindemith und Bialas in Munich was a conservative composer, who wrote in a choral-like style.

depicts the animals of the Chinese twelve-year-cycle. Xiong employs the pentatonic scale and thus evokes the atmosphere of Chinese traditional music, but by never quoting any particular folk song, he avoids political criticism. The juxtaposition of pentatonicism and Western techniques of harmony and counterpoint, in combination with the relatively plain and transparent character of his pieces are, at best, reminiscent of the world of Debussy's 'Children's Corner'.

His piano trio Taohua yuanyi ('Remembering Peach Blossom Spring', i.e. remembering paradise) of 1988, is inspired by a poem by Wang Wei (699-761). This piece at first appears to be a typical example of pentatonic romanticism. The first movement introduces a quasi-pentatonic theme. It is set off by a cello counterpoint while the piano plays a wavelike arpeggio accompaniment. The minor third, one of the characteristic intervals of the pentatonic scale prevails throughout the piece. But the romantic mood is suddenly interrupted by harsh and dissonant chords which are chromatically shifted; the only romantic element that is (partly) retained in this harsh passage is the wavelike movement in the piano. The initial pentatonic romanticism—which eventually returns in the movement as suddenly as it disappeared—is perhaps meant to lure the audience into the piece, in order all the more to shock them or to make them listen to unheard sounds. The other movements of the piano trio are less radical in their juxtaposition of conventional and advanced techniques.

LITERATURE OR PHILOSOPHY TURNED INTO MUSIC
Many other Taiwanese composers draw on Chinese poetry and philosophy when they compose. Their usual approach is to translate literary or philosophical concepts into a musical structure. Lü Wenci (*1962) played the piano from an early age. She entered Dongwu University as a piano major but changed and graduated in composition (1981-85). Pan Huanglong was her teacher. Having taught music at primary school for a few years, she went to Yale to study (1988-1991). Since her return, she has been teaching composition at the Academy of Performing Arts. Her mini-string quartet Bo Suan-zi (1987) is a neat composition based on a poem by Su Shi (1036-1101). The composer attempts to capture the grammar, rhyme and structure of the poem in musical language. A similar attempt to translate a linguistic form into music is her composition Hao ('Howl'), for erhu (Chinese fiddle), bassoon and guzheng (bridged zither) (1992). Here, the character hao(to roar like a wild beast, to wail, to howl) which gives the piece its name is made up of three singular, meaningful parts: kou: the mouth, zi: the self and fei: not.53

The number of parts determines the number of instruments employed, while the structure of the piece is derived from the meaning of the Chinese

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53 Cf. the translation 'Song of the Peach Tree Spring' in Robinson (tr), 1989: 34-37.
54 The same device is also used by Ma Shuitong in his Bamboo Flute Concerto of 1977 'Peacock Flies Southeast'.
55 Her teacher, Pan Huanglong, has devised a whole theory of musical structure based on the make-up of Chinese characters. A character made up of two semantic parts is related to the playing of two instruments, characters with several parts linked to each other are related to textured musical structure, many different elements in a character relate to a hubbub of mixed sounds. His theory is formulated in his 'Yinxiang yijing yinyue changzuo de linian,' unpublished manuscript.
character: both bassoon and erhu keep turning around a single note, often employing the interval of a minor second, the conventional sigh motif. This insistent return to the same pitch, to the same emotion, appears to capture the nature of crying. Meanwhile, the guzheng seems to delineate the disturbance of a wailing mind in chaotic arpeggios which cover the entire range of the instrument. There are sudden outbursts when pitch leaps occur, like gulps in wailing. There are also moments of relaxation and sighing, in falling glissandos or quarter note changes.

Ex.3. Sounds of sighing and wailing in Lü Wenci’s trio ‘Howl’ for erhu, bassoon and zheng.

Another way of conceptualizing Chinese literary and philosophical traditions in music is demonstrated in the works of such composers as Lü’s teacher Pan Huanglong and Chen Maoxuan. The latter studied music and composition at National Taiwan Normal University under Xu Changhui. He spent two years doing research in Vienna (1970-72) and now teaches composition at his alma mater. His compositions include symphonic and chamber music as well as some choral works. He writes in a moderately contemporary idiom sometimes reminiscent of Hindemith.

His Quintet for violin, horn, harp, cello and percussion, based on an Yijing hexagram, yet again shows the importance of the Yijing for Chinese artists all over the world. Evidently, Chinese composers from the PRC and from Taiwan have been equally fascinated by the philosophical and structural dimensions of the ‘Book of Changes’. Zhao Xiaosheng in Shanghai, Zhou Wenzhong in New York, Xu Yi in Paris and Chen Maoxuan in Taipei have all formed their own serial-structural systems based on this ancient Chinese text. Others, such as Pan Huanglong, have based the architecture of their compositions on the so-called wuxing (Five elements) philosophy. The use of Asian philosophical concepts is very much en vogue among avant-garde composers, not just in Asia but in many parts of the world. The works of Cage and Stockhausen can be mentioned in passing. In other words, the use of traditional elements by Chinese composers actually links their achievements to certain world trends in the avant-garde – once again, we see the double mirror at work.

TOWARDS TRADITIONAL SOUNDS – MA SHUILONG

Another possibility for incorporating elements of traditional culture in one’s music has already been demonstrated above in Li Taixiang’s Taixuyin: some composers draw on the musical heritage of their own country in order to compose. One Taiwanese composer, Ma Shuilong (*1939), has recently done this with particular success. He was born in Jilong on Taiwan and studied composition under Xiao Erhua at the National Institute of the Arts, graduating in 1964. Between 1972 and 1975 he studied at the Regensburg Kirchenmusikalische Musikschule. He is now head of the Music Department at the Taiwanese Academy of Performing Arts. His compositions cover a wide range of genres and in the mid-eighties moved from a relatively
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conservative idiom to a distinctly experimental and contemporary one. In 1986, he spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. His incorporation of Chinese musical techniques in a context of atonal sounds in Dou E yuán (‘The Lament of Dou E’) for eight vocalists, suona (shawn) and percussion (revised 1987), and in Wo shi (‘I am’), composed in 1985, is particularly fascinating.36

‘The Lament of Dou E’ is a dramatic composition. It is based on the interaction between the wailing suona, almost writhing with pain and indignation and the solo voices, which employ a type of speech voice reminiscent of Chinese opera. Furthermore, there are punctuating percussion interludes, and choral passages which seemingly depict the masses — mostly in vocalise — at times groaning, at times singing, at times laughing hysterically. Time and again the chorus climaxes into sheer screams of pain.

Equally dramatic, and perhaps even more effective due to its delicacy, is Wo shi (‘I am’) for soprano, xiao (Chinese vertical bamboo flute, which may be replaced in this piece by Western transverse flute if necessary) and nine percussion instruments. It contains references to various genres of Chinese traditional music, the most evident being opera and shuochang (traditional ballad singing). The typical percussion punctuations, especially in dialogue with the flute, and the characteristic speech song applied in the first half of the composition are taken from the latter genre. The stretta effects in the snare drum part and in the flute and the typical grace notes in the flute part are further elements modelled after Chinese traditional music. The words of the poem are full of indecision: ‘I am a tree, I am a flower, I am the earth, ... one day I fly, one day I walk, one day I stay still.’ The composition depicts this indecision in several ways. Each instrumental part introduces a different motif: the flute has grace notes in stretta, the timpani huge jumps, the snare drum stretta effects, and vibraphone and marimba have rapid sequences of 16th notes in big leaps. Each of these motivic elements plays an individual role, but the various elements are also generically related and mutually linked to one another, much in the same way as the tree, the flower, the earth in the poem are all different, yet one. The grace notes appear in the flute, but also in the timpani; the stretta can be heard in the flute, but also in the snare drum; the jumps typical of the timpani part also turn up in the parts of the vibraphone and the marimba. The poem is performed twice in the course of the music. The first time, it is heard in speech voice; the second time, it is sung in a Western operatic style — yet again, a means to underline the indecisiveness of the poetic content, and perhaps, an indecisiveness in terms of musical identity, too.

Towards Traditional Sounds — Younger Composers

At present, a growing number of younger composers in Taiwan are trying to incorporate elements of Chinese traditional music in their new compositions. The government’s encouragement of the traditional arts is important in this context; for

instance, their initiation and support of competitions for new music written for traditional Chinese instruments, and their editing of tapes and CDs with recordings by the most accomplished masters of traditional music in Taiwan. Furthermore, it is also an important advantage that many music schools in Taiwan are now introducing classes in traditional musical instruments for students of performance and composition.

There is now a greater awareness not only of the melodies but also of other intrinsic qualities of much Chinese and Taiwanese music.

Chen Shuxi (*1957), a student of You Changfa (*1942), who studied in Vienna between 1982 and 1986, is a master of traditional sounds in modern disguise. His piano composition of 1984 Qingpingyue ('Music of Peace and Brightness') is his first step in the direction of a synthesis of Western and Chinese art: he imitates Chinese traditional musical techniques and cites a daoban from Beijing Opera. Extreme reduction of means seems to be his trademark, evident in Beige ('Song of mourning') for oboe, flute and percussion, composed in 1988, and in another tense but quiet work, Wu ti zhi si ('Four pieces without title'), composed for the competition of compositions for Chinese instruments in 1991. It was Chen's first attempt to write for a traditional ensemble.

Tang Danxiang (*1966) comes from Gaoxiong, the southern 'capital' of Taiwan. He studied music at the Normal College in Gaoxiong; he first studied piano and violin, and later changed to composition. He received some private tuition in composition by Liu Deyi, a respected teacher in harmony and counterpoint. At the same time, Tang worked as a teacher at a special music primary school. In the two years before leaving Taiwan, he became more interested in Taiwanese folk music. Since 1992 he has studied at the Musik Hochschule Mannheim-Heidelberg under Prof. Peter Michael Braun. Like Tan Dun, Tang Danxiang envisions a differentiated relationship with the audience: music is conceived as a ritual, in which both audience and performer have equally important parts.

While his earliest compositions were mere imitations of Western models, his more recent compositions show a greater indebtedness to his native culture: In Daijianü sixin ('Thoughts of a girl about to be married') for flute, clarinet, violin and cello (1994) he juxtaposes the very old and the very new. It is an attempt to

Ex.4. The beginning of Tang Danxiang's Huiyi, for piano solo (see next page).

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37 You, a Mainlander from Guangdong, carried out part of his education in Vienna. He now teaches at the National Academy of Arts. His generally academic style is transcended in some of his best compositions such as Yan ('Wild goose') for choir, piano and percussion which captures the listener with rustling glissandos and interesting orchestrating effects.

38 Tan Dun (*1957) is a Chinese composer from the Mainland, now living in New York. The ritualistic aspect in his 'Circle with Four Trios, Audience and Conductor' (1992) may be recalled.
evoke in music the spiritual conflicts that modern-minded girls may face in a fairly traditional society such as Taiwan. One of his most recent pieces is an electronic composition for modern dance. It is based on Qingnù you hun (‘The soul of the pretty girl’), a Beijing opera about a girl whose soul flees with her lover while her body remains.

Huiyi (‘Memorial’) for piano (1993) is written in memory of Tang Danxiang’s sister who, after spending two years with him in Germany, returned to Taiwan to look after his parents, as a filial daughter. The composition is structured as a quasi-Rondo, which depicts the nature of stray thoughts – it returns to the same motifs and thoughts again and again. The beginning motif – quarter chord, eighth chord, three 16th notes – returns at the end and is repeated and varied throughout the composition (see ex.4 on p.23). The entire composition is dominated by a wavelike turning movement in all kinds of different shapes: as quintoles, in diminutions and augmentations of the rhythm, extremely augmented, or changed to septoles in a different direction. Linear structures can often be observed to thicken, like thought, in contrary movement not only vertically but also horizontally in a kind of echo effect.

In this piece, Tang again synthesizes Chinese and Western elements. His composition combines timbral effects à la Messiaen with Luigi Nono’s serial of duration, which he quotes. The low harmonic on e in the final section represents a Chinese gong or bell.

Ex. 5. The final bars of Tang Danxiang’s Huiyi contain a reference to temple music.

TOWARDS TRADITIONAL SOUNDS – WOMEN COMPOSERS
Taiwan can boast a young generation of both men and women composers. All of them make use of Chinese traditional elements in their music. I have already mentioned Lü Wenci, but there are many others worth listing.

Pan Shiji (1957) most important idol since childhood has been the America-based Chinese composer Zhou Wenzhong. It was the urge to write Chinese music that made her leave Canada to which her family had emigrated and where she had first entered university. She went to Columbia University in New York in order to study with Zhou. During her work here, she discovered the reduction of means and repetitive patterning, which are so typical of much Asian music. These elements began to influence her compositional style. So-called linear cells, used in her Quartet for violin, viola, cello and guitar (1988), but also reduced motivic structures, as in her ‘Soliloquy of Pandora’ (1990) and in Paiju sanshoush (‘Three Haiku’), are the outcome of this discovery.39

Another, very young, woman composer, Du Wenhui (1964), a graduate of the National Academy of Arts, and student of Lu Yan and You Changfa, also writes in a sensitive contemporary style, and makes frequent reference to traditional culture. Her String Quartet Tianxianzi (The Fairy) of 1987 resounds with a beautiful lyricism.

Chen Shihui (1962) was born in Taipei. She graduated from the National Academy of Arts in 1982, where she studied with Ma Shuilong, Lu Yan (1930), Dai

39 A detailed analysis of these, her most recent composition is found in Mittler: 1993a.
Hongxuan (*1942) and Xu Changhui. She continued her education in the United States at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Graduating with an M.A. in 1985, she began her doctoral studies at Boston University under, among others, Bernard Rands. Her earliest works, such as the First String Quartet (1979) are strongly influenced by Bartók. In ‘Mime’ (1988) for soprano, harp and percussion, she makes use of percussion and vocal techniques of Chinese opera. Other recent compositions such as ‘Water Ink’ (1989) for piano and ‘Crystal blossoms’ (1992) for flute, clarinet, vibraphone, violin, cello and voice are atmospheric studies in sound.

In ‘Crystal blossoms’, a silent piece full of melodic charm, elements of Asian traditional music, notably the concepts of single sound and of heterophony, are evident. The concept of single sound is most easily explained by considering the numerous fingering techniques of guqin (Chinese zither) playing: except for an occasional chord, the music is essentially monophonic; every individual sound produced on one of the zither strings is manipulated and varied through the use of the fingering techniques; thus, every sound has an independent life and a range of its own. Heterophony in traditional music occurs when various performers roughly play or sing the same melodic line in unison, but deviate from one another in many details (partly as a consequence of differences in the technical possibilities of their instruments). Chen’s piece appears to combine these elements. The melodic material is quite restrained. It seems to turn around one note which is continually reinterpreted. It can thus be considered an augmentation of the notion of single sound. Furthermore, the melodic material is presented by different players in different rhythmic constellations, sometimes slightly varied but always closely related. Usually the counterpoint is limited to two lines which communicate closely. The effect is not unlike that of traditional heterophony and may explain the ‘linear’ impression which this piece makes.

Ex.6. Two excerpts from Chen Shihui’s ‘Crystal Blossom’, for six performers.

Zhang Huili (*1956), a student of Xu Songren (*1940) and Ma Shuilong at Dongwu University went to the Musikhochschule in Köln after her graduation (1980-87). She is now teaching at the Academy of Performing Arts. She has developed a touching lyrical style which employs a vast array of contemporary techniques and

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40 Dai, a Mainlander from Guangzhou came to Taiwan at the age of ten, graduated from the Dept. of Music at the National Institute of Arts in 1964, a student of Xu Changhui and Lu Yan. He is one of the most eccentric artists in Taiwan musical circles. In his music, his almost Daoist impassiveness towards human life and human works is evident. He writes prolifically for the piano, at times, as in his ‘First Well-tempered Piano Album’ (1971) employing techniques of minimalism and musical parody.

41 Xu studied in Germany for eight years. His music is representative of the apolitical and academic contemporary style discussed above in the sections on Lai Dehe, Qian Nanzhang and others.
sound effects. This is evident in her flute solo *Qiu zhi duanjian* ('Letter in Autumn') of 1987 and in 'Altura' for soprano, flute, bass clarinet, percussion and double bass (1991). In these mature works, her sensitivity to sound quality, which was already foreshadowed in her 'Trio 1985' for clarinet, cello and piano comes to fruition.

'Altura' contains elements of heterophony similar to those observed in Chen Shihui's 'Crystal Blossom', but here, the occasional heterophony is much more blurred, more complex. Parallel melodic elements are often placed quite far apart and work rather like echoes of each other (Ex.7).

![Ex.7 Excerpt from the instrumental prelude of Zhang Huili's work 'Altura'.](image)

**SOME RADICALS: WU DINGLIAN, WEN LONGXIN, XU BOYUN**

An affinity with and interest in China's traditional music is found among all, not just young generation, Taiwanese composers.

Wu Dinglian (*1950) is Taiwanese, born in Tainan, where he first attended the Teacher's Training College, graduating in 1971. In his home village he had a lot of contact with a lot of traditional music. He remembers having heard *nanguan* and *beiguan*, *gexaixi* and Beethoven in a sort of collage. At age fifteen he began to play in a Chinese traditional orchestra (*Guoyuetuan*), teaching himself how to play the *xiao*, *erhu* and *zheng*. He began to study privately with Shi Weiliang in 1972, and between 1979-81, followed a B.A. programme in music at the Music Department of Dongwu University under Ma Shuilong. He only realized how little he knew of contemporary music on coming to America, where he received an M.A. from Northern Illinois in 1982 and a PhD from U.C.L.A. in 1987, studying with Elaine Barkin, Paul Reale and Roy Travis. After his return to Taiwan, he first taught at his alma mater; but soon his

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42 Vertical bamboo flute, two-stringed fiddle and bridged zither. Wu's musical experience is somewhat similar to that of many younger Mainland Chinese composers during the Cultural Revolution. Wu also says that his best times of violin practice and teaching were during his two years of mandatory military service (1971-73). Compare this with some of the views mentioned by Liu Yuan and Ge Ganru in former articles in this journal (Kouwenhoven, 1990, 1991) and in Mittler, 1993a.

43 Wu described himself browsing through Taiwan's bookstores, finding books on classical and romantic music and composers, but nothing on modern music. This situation has not significantly changed today, from my investigation, but at least the music departments now have larger collections of score and phono material. Zeng Xingkui attested that librarians are generously supplied financially, at least at National Taiwan University, and buy anything suggested by the professors. For Wu, contact and practice of Asian music in Han Kuo-huang's Asian orchestra at the university were another important experience. For the orchestra and its functions cf. Han Kuo-Huang, 1981:155-164.
Wen Longxin. [Photo: Wim Jansen.]

interest in electronics and multimedia performance led to an appointment at Jiadong Daxue (in 1988). He is now responsible for the establishment of Taiwan’s first important computer-music centre.

Wu wrote his Ji (‘Solitary’) for the 1991 competition for Chinese instruments inaugurated by the Taiwanese government. It is his first piece for Chinese instruments. Unlike Zhang Huili’s composition, it is a study of disconnections rather than connections between different interacting parts. It is an attempt to incorporate some of the polar opposites of Chinese philosophy in music: the difference between ‘to be’ (you) and ‘not to be’ (wu), between ‘void’ (xu) and ‘material’ (shi), between ‘broken’ (duan) and ‘connected’ (lian). Wu creates a corresponding polarity in the music by juxtaposing long and sustained sounds with pipa tremolos and sudden harsh percussion stops. Exuberant climaxes, sometimes reminiscent of Guo Wenjing’s She huo, lead into reflective silences only to swell up again. Ji is both a piece of silence and of exuberance. It recaptures in the many tremolo movements the conventional and familiar sounds of the Chinese orchestra, dominated by plucked instruments. However, at the same time it negates the very idea of such an orchestra by its contemporary language. (One may be reminded of traditional Chinese strretta as an apt model for the constant recurring swells in Wu’s piece, but the composer again seems to negate such a link by depriving the swells of any thematic or melodic content.)

Solitariness for Wu indicates not sadness at being deserted but a feeling of independence. Therefore, all the parts in the piece are unconnected, independent of one other, solitary. The piece does not tell a linear story, but it is more than the sum of its parts.

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44 For his interest in and the proliferation of multi-medial music cf. the discussion in Diao Yuwen, 1985b.
45 Some computing equipment for musical purposes can also be found at the National Institute of Arts and National Taiwan University.
46 Guo Wenjing was born on the Mainland in 1956 and currently lives in Peking. His work She huo for ensemble evokes the ritual percussion and rural ceremonial music of his native province Sichuan.
An equally radical move towards a synthesis of old and new are the works of Wen Longxin (*1944). He began studying the violin at an early age. In 1964 he entered the Guoli yizhuan (Institute of the Arts) where he studied composition with Xu Changhui, among others. Graduating in 1968 with a double major in violin and composition, he joined the Taibei Municipal Orchestra as a violinist in 1969. His compositions are intriguing pieces which exhibit an exquisite sensitivity to timbral effects. Good examples of this are his Zhen-Qita (‘Exhort-others’) for female voice and instruments (1985), and Xiangchou (‘Worry about home’) for Chinese instruments (1991).

Xiangchou is a dialogue between different instruments, held in a flickering, eerie atmosphere which is at times reminiscent of the spheric sounds of He Xuntian’s Tianlai. The evocative and programmatic qualities of Chinese traditional orchestral music are thus preserved and at the same time renewed. Wen, along with Xu Boyun (*1944) and Li Taixiang, is one of the most important avant-gardists in Taiwan’s musical world.

By contrast, some of his early works, like the Sonata no.1 for violin and piano (1971), are yet again the products of a Taiwanese composer trying to avoid political trouble by conforming strictly to international models. The sonata is a tour de force of contemporary string and piano techniques. Noise production is asked for. The piano strings are plucked and played with pieces of steel or bamboo sticks. The violin plays sul ponticello, the piano plays in clusters (see also Ex.8). In the seventies, Wen Longxin apparently did not feel like using elements of his native culture as musical materials. The stylistic development even of a dare-devil such as Wen Longxin is a mirror of political developments in Taiwan.

Ex.8. Wen Longxin’s early Violin Sonata (1971), displays an interest in Western avant-garde.

Wen’s friend and cooperator, Xu Boyun, one of the most unconventional and interesting composers in Taiwan, is a somewhat different case. He is a self-educated man, having taken only a few, cursory composition lessons with Xu Changhui. Even in his earliest pieces, his music reflects traditional influences, due to visits to Chinese opera during his childhood. Compositions such as his piano quintet Zhongguo xiqu mingxiang (‘Meditation on Chinese Theatre’) of 1973 are not exceptional in his work in their direct inspiration from folk music.

An excerpt from his unfinished composition Jing (‘Moon field’) for voices and percussion of 1977 (Ex.9) may serve to illustrate his preference for the use of non-

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47 PRC-composer He Xuntian (*1954) won considerable fame with his Tianlai (‘Sounds of Nature’), a work for an ensemble of newly invented instruments. It was written and premiered in 1986.

European instruments. The piece combines tabla, Burmese gong, and kulintang, African and Arabian drums, with some of the oldest Chinese instruments in the ritual tradition: the temple bell and the stone chime. The graphic notation, so naturally used by Taiwan composers and typical of Xu Boyun's multi-medial compositions, is incredibly accurate while at the same time leaving a lot to the performers. Only once is there a fully aleatory section of improvisation. For the rest, the performers are required to adhere strictly to the dynamic and technical instructions given by the composer, for these alone seem to be able to guarantee the effectiveness of the composition.

Xu wrote most of his compositions in the 70s, and most of them are, in one way or another, related to China's cultural heritage. However, as far as I know Xu did not use folksongs. This is perhaps his method of keeping out of politics.


HONG KONG – THE ERA OF PENTATONIC ROMANTICISM
Clarence Mak (*1959) relates: ‘In the conflict between the older and younger composers in Hong Kong some of the older ones say that they are more Chinese than we are. But that is not the difference. The difference is between our use of modern and their use of conventional techniques, not really between degrees of Chineseness.’

The contrast between music of the older and the younger generation of Hong Kong composers is an obvious one. The sounds of pentatonic romanticism are particularly evident in the works of composers such as Huang Yautai (*1912), Lin Shengshih (1915-1991), Wong Yokhee (*1924) and Shi Kumpor (*1932).

Huang, born and educated in Guangzhou, moved to Hong Kong in 1949, and eventually to Taiwan in 1987. In his effort to find an appropriate synthesis of Western and Chinese musical frameworks he formulated a modal theory to harmonize pentatonic melodies.49

His contemporary, Lin Shengshih,50 born in Canton, a student of Huang Zi at the National Conservatory of Music in Shanghai, settled in Hong Kong after the anti-Japanese War (1945). Lin is also a prolific composer of music in the style of pentatonic romanticism, too. He taught at the music departments of several music schools in

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50 A differing date of birth, 1914, and a short biography is found in Ryker, 1991: 226-227.
Hong Kong: the Chinese Sacred Music School (founded 1950), Lingnan College (founded 1972/73), and Tsinghua College (founded 1963). Only seldom does he attempt some mild departures into a more Bartókian-flavoured folkloristic style, as in his *Thailand Fantasy* for piano (1975) and his *Elegy* for cello and piano (1975).\(^{51}\)

Shi Kumpor was born in Guangdong and studied under Ding Shande at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. After his graduation in 1957 he taught harmony and composition at the Guangzhou Conservatory of Music. In 1963, he emigrated to Hong Kong, where he taught at the music department of Tsinghua College. His style is strongly influenced by the Western nineteenth century romantic virtuoso tradition and nowhere departs from pentatonic romanticism.\(^{52}\) His compositions for piano, such as *Shuqingqu* (‘Romantic piece’) of 1953, or his *Zai chuantianli* (‘In Spring’) for soprano and piano (1956) are typical of their time. The same style is still evident in his later works such as *Qing chun zoumingqu* (‘Sonata Prime of Life’) of 1969, *Wang fu shi* (‘Awah rock’) for mezzo-soprano and piano (1971), *Wushou shuxie* (‘Five Sketches’) of 1978 for flute, cello and piano and his Cello Concerto of 1982.

Despite the fact that he employs the twelve-tone technique as his preferred compositional method, the music of Wong Yokhee sounds much like that of his romantic contemporaries.\(^{53}\) Wong is one of the few of his generation who received an education in Hong Kong. He was born in Shantou, at the Eastern tip of Guangdong Province, and settled in Hong Kong in 1936 where, between 1949 and 1954, he studied at the China Sacred Music School,\(^{54}\) one of the earliest institutions for the study of music in Hong Kong. Huang Yautai and Lin Shengshih were his teachers.\(^{55}\) After

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\(^{51}\) For some of his piano compositions cf. Liu Dangmei, 1986: 102-118.

\(^{52}\) Cf. also Ryker, 1991: 240-241.

\(^{53}\) Wong's musical output is manifold. His early compositions are mostly for orchestra, his more recent works include chamber music, choral and vocal works. He has been writing church music lately, since he feels there is a lack of indigenous Chinese church music. His religious works, such as his 24 Organ Pieces (1992) and his ‘Chinese Mass’ (1990) for soloists, choir and piano make use of the musical language of past days. Whereas the organ pieces could well be baroque hymns, the Mass also incorporates elements of pentatonic romanticism.

\(^{54}\) This institution is also known as the Hong Kong Music Institute and was founded in 1950 by Stephen Shao. The dates of foundation of many of the important music departments in Hong Kong can be found in Liu Ching-chih, 1991: 42-43, or in Chow Fanfu, 1990, 457-476.

\(^{55}\) For the influence of some of the foreign educators important in the teaching of music in Hong Kong such as amongst others Kaleervo Tuukkanen (1909-1980) from Finland, from America Dale
graduating Wong taught at his alma mater. In 1960 he went to Hamburg to study at the Musik-akademie der Wissenschaften, where he studied composition with E.G. Klussman. He graduated in 1965 but stayed on in Germany for two years, studying counterpoint and twelve-tone technique. He returned to Hong Kong in 1967 and has since lectured and taught compositional techniques at many Hong Kong institutions: the China Sacred Music School, Tsinghua College, Hong Kong Baptist College\(^{56}\) and the Hong Kong Univ. Extra-mural department.\(^{57}\)

DOMING LAM – DEPARTING FROM PENTATONIC ROMANTICISM

DOMING Lam (*1935) was born in Macau but after studying in composition and film music in Canada, he came to Hong Kong to work for Radio HK. He was a pivotal figure in the foundation of the Asian Composers’ League (1973) and the Hong Kong Composers’ Guild (1983) and has been prominent in the promotion of New Music (as well as in the promotion of traditional Chinese instruments) in Hong Kong.\(^{58}\)

After his return in the sixties, Doming Lam was one of the first composers to call for musical innovation, and for a style that would free Chinese music from the manacles of romantic harmony. His compositions for Chinese orchestra were daring attempts in this direction. Qiujue (‘Autumn Execution’) of 1978, which tells the story of Dou E’s unjust execution, is a highly dramatic study in description. Here, Lam incorporates certain elements of conventional writing for Chinese orchestra. He alienates these conventional elements to such an extent that they now serve his ultimate aim: the modernization of Chinese music. The very beginning of the piece is a quotation of traditional practices: the drama unfolds with a percussive introduction with strettto effects to build up the tension. But this reference to traditional music is soon given an unexpected twist when a dense polyrhythmic passage is built up. There are many more such instances of alienation, in which Lam plays with conventions, first quoting them innocently and then surprising the listener with a sudden, complete shift.

For example, the second act in which Dou E is condemned in place of her father-in-law incorporates the typical percussion beats often found at tense moments in the Chinese operatic tradition. Here, the beats are used to brutally cut off the wailing of Dou E, which is depicted realistically in the suona (shawn). Her last outcry (in the Chinese fiddle) is similarly cut off with a loud bang when, at the end of the piece, her head falls. Dou E’s wailing is not stylized. On the contrary, it sounds almost unnaturally natural. This illustrates yet again of how the composer amplifies and reinforces the elements which he takes from traditional Chinese music – in this case the tendency to incorporate natural sounds. Dou E’s wailing is not music, but a natural sound reproduced. Earlier in the piece, the technique is adopted to describe the crying of all the people, in an aleatory section (Ex.10, p.32).

Similarly, the depiction of Dou E’s being marched to the execution ground draws on conventions but again immediately negates them. The marching is symbolized by regular triplet movements in several instruments. But it is suddenly broken off and followed by a more meditative section which provides a psychological dimension to this walking: we are at once confronted with the thoughts and feelings of Dou E.

Kunchong shijie (‘Insect world’) of 1979 builds on the qualities already developed in Qiujue. An atmospheric beginning typical of traditional Chinese orchestral music with dizi, sheng and erhu – bamboo flute, mouth organ and fiddle – soon derailed, with surprising departures from traditional techniques and conventional melodic patterns. Again, this is highly descriptive music. One can hear the humming of insects of


\(^{56}\) The music department was inaugurated at this school in 1972/73.

\(^{57}\) In the late seventies, courses in music were offered here on a voluntary basis before the official opening of a music department at the University in 1981.

different sizes, depicted by a big vibrato on different starting notes; one can hear the insects flying up and down; one feels drawn into a natural atmosphere with all kinds of different sounds and noises. This quality is what makes this piece both distinct from and akin to conventional Chinese music: it retains the programmatic, descriptive qualities of Chinese music, but, so to speak, radicalizes them. The sounds of insects and birds are depicted not in melodic phrases, but in noise. They are not aestheticized, not improved to fit the musical idiom as in conventional music, but imitated as realistically as possible. Other natural sounds, too, like the roaring of water and the dripping of rain are not translated, but copied almost directly from nature.

LAW WINGFAI – UNORTHODOX SOUNDS
The same zeal to preserve and develop the tradition of Chinese music in a new manner made Law Wingai (*1949) choose Taiwan as an appropriate place for the study of composition.59 'It is necessary to know about tradition, but one also has to live in the present world, in the contemporary world. Here in Hong Kong, there is not the natural environment for this type of synthesis.' Law thus received a B.A. from Xu Changhui at Taiwan’s Shih Hsin Daxue (Normal University) in 1972 and continued his studies in California under John Crawford. Between 1980-84 he served as lecturer in music at Lingnan College. In 1985, after the opening of the Academy of Performing Arts (APA), he was appointed head of the Composition Department.

Especially the early compositions from his study period in Taiwan and in America show his concern for a modern conception of his Chinese heritage. His Can (‘Silkworm’) of 1971-72 appeals through its unorthodox treatment of the solo pipa.60 His Sanglin dao (‘Mulberry Grove Dance’) for flute and guitar (1975) is a contemporary interpretation of a Chinese traditional image. In this piece, techniques of pipa (Chinese lute) playing are applied to the guitar. For instance, the plucking sound of the guitar stopped with a fingernail, an effect which is introduced in the first few bars, or the snarling noise produced by pulling two strings together, which occurs towards the end – both these elements are taken from the pipa repertoire. The use of the body of the guitar as a percussion instrument, which occurs later in the piece, is also an imitation of a pipa technique.61 The piece is a fascinating dialogue between the mellow flexible flute which introduces huge melodic leaps and a harsh-sounding guitar which constantly repeats notes or phrases. It is a thrilling experience to hear the flute crescendo grow ever louder, until they are suddenly broken off by the entrance of the guitar. The flute, like the guitar, employs contemporary playing techniques, such as flatter-zunge and microtonal inflections.

59 His own contact with Chinese traditional music was through his father who played the erhu.
61 For a paradigmatic use of these techniques in Shimian maifu (‘Laying ambushes in all directions’) cf. Mittler, 1993c: 6.
CLARENCE MAK – MORE UNORTHODOX SOUNDS

Clarence Mak was born in Hong Kong, where he received a B.A. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1984. Since his graduation with an M.A. from Pennsylvania State University, where he studied electronic music with Burt Fenner (1987), he has taught electronic music at the Academy of Performing Arts in Hong Kong. His compositions include chamber and electronic music: his music seems to search for ever new combinations of sounds for conventional instruments. His *Xun* (‘Unitame’) for flute and clarinet (1985) and *Qing* (‘Four Temperaments’) for solo trombone (1987) still employ a rather academic idiom. However, *Jimoxing* (‘Lonely Motion’) of 1986 for temple-blocks and five percussionists, ‘Death be not proud’ for flute, soprano and tape based on a poem by John Donne (1986), *Yunhuameng* (‘A Dream too short’) for soprano, guitar and harpsichord, and ‘Butterfly’ (1989) for two *pipas* and percussion are appealing explorations into new avenues of sound. They are all written for unconventional combinations of Western and Chinese instruments. Like many Hong Kong composers, Mak oscillates between Western and Chinese poles; he employs and combines the instruments of one or the other tradition as well as their musical conventions.

‘Butterfly’ took its name from the shape of two *pipas* held together. The piece makes use of conventional playing techniques such as chordal *lunzhi* (tremolos played in circular motion) and the stopping of the strings to produce ‘noisy’ effects. The percussion performs the conventional function of punctuation. The entire piece is conceived more horizontally than vertically; the instruments play in complementary rhythms. In spite of its reliance on traditional performance techniques, this is by no means a conventional piece of Chinese music. No melodic structure can be perceived, aleatory techniques are employed, and the piece is an amalgam of sound complexes (cf. Ex. 11).

![Ex. 11. Aleatory elements in Clarence Mak’s ‘Butterfly’, for two *pipas* and percussion.](image)

Evidently, the *pipa* has become a fashionable instrument with younger Hong Kong composers. Possibly many effective *pipa* techniques such as the stopping of the strings and the knocking of the instrument’s body, give it a universal appeal because they make use of the instrument in its entirety, not just as a conventional plucked lute. In this respect the *pipa* is probably ideally suited to New Music, in which so many composers continually try to reach beyond the familiar sound potential of musical instruments. Again, through the double mirror effect, the Chinese lute has inspired numerous Hong Kong composers to write effective works for it, contemporary and yet traditional. Compositions such as Tsang Yipfat’s *Dou Sou*, Chan Wingwah’s *Second Symphony* (1981) which employs two *pipas*, and *Pipa* Concertos by Law Wingfai (1986) and Doming Lam (1987) come to mind.

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62 Born in Hong Kong, Chan received a B.A. in music from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and continued his studies at the University of Toronto with John Beckwith. He is now head of the Music Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His compositions are quite academic in style and have been interpreted in detail in Mittler, 1993a.
TSANG YIPFAT – STYLISTICAL PLURALISM
Tsang Yipfat (also known as Richard Tsang) was born in Hong Kong in 1952. He
received a B.A. in music from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a Masters
from the University of Hull (1978). Between 1978-84 he was a part-time lecturer at the
Hong Kong Conservatory of Music (the antecedent of the Academy of Performing
Arts). Since 1981 he has worked for Radio Television Hong Kong. The conventional
idiom and pentatonic romanticism of his earliest works, such as his ‘Nocturne no.1’
for violin and piano (1974), have developed into a highly flexible and contemporary
style, partly through his study of traditional Chinese music.

Often, what sounds modern in his pieces is actually derived from Chinese
traditional culture. Zhong zhi huanxiang (‘Images of Bells’) for harpsichord or piano
(1979) is a meditation on the concept of single sound in Chinese music. The use
of parallel fourths and fifths in Penglai (‘Paradise’) for orchestra imitates the sound
quality and technical abilities of the sheng, in Tsang’s words, is meant to depict the
‘mess’ in zaju (Chinese opera) music. His Lingkai (‘Spirits’s domain’) for Chinese
instruments (1980/86) and his Dou Sou (‘Rousing’) for pipa ensemble (1981) are
studies in Chinese (and contemporary) aleatory composition.

Dou Sou is dominated by the rhythmic aspects of pipa-playing. The most used
techniques are pizzicato tremolos, so-called lunzhi which appear in many different
forms – as chords, on stopped notes, in discant. The aleatory nature of the piece
enhances its rhythmic power. There are many instances where one performer,
responding to the ideas of another, starts developing similar motifs; the piling up of
voices results in constant crescendo effects. The composition seems to begin out of the
blue and it ends similarly, in haphazard fashion. A more lyrical, spheric section in the
middle of the piece, with very high notes and slower tremolo effects, is framed by the
expanding tremolos and noises of the beginning and the end.

Ex.12. Excerpt from Tsang Yipfat’s Dou Sou for pipa ensemble. (The notation shows one
pipa, but the piece is aleatory; from a certain point in the second bar onwards, every player
in the ensemble is free to play the piece according to his/her own tempo and interpretation.)

In his Chinese compositions, Tsang takes quite radical steps away from the mellow
sounds of pentatonic romanticism, which are adhered to by the older generation of
composers and are more easily accepted by the Hong Kong audience than a
contemporary sounding style. By contrast, Tsang’s ‘Overture’ for orchestra (1985) is a
surprisingly conventional composition. It is nicely orchestrated in romantic vein and it
has clearly recognizable melodies and familiar sounding chordal progressions. Is Tsang writing here for an audience? Has he adapted his style for marketing purposes? Or is it again an attempt to lure the audience into a piece that will turn out to be a bit more prickly after a while, a method we have already observed in the case of Xiong Zemin? Constant repetition in the brass leads to a section which is dominated by more advanced harmonic writing, based on the building up of tone clusters. Yet this development of cluster-like structures ends soon, and a section full of Hindemithian gestures and canonic melodies ensues. The composition ends on a conventional chord.

Tsang’s ‘Overture’ seems to be an incidental compromise of the kind that is typical for many Hong Kong composers, regardless of their age or background. No doubt it is with the market in mind that Wong Yokhee chooses to retain the features of Chinese pentatonicism when writing his twelve-tone music. No doubt it is again the market which compels composers like Chan Wingwah63 and Victor Chan to base some of their works on a homophonic structure, in an attempt to write comprehensible and readily performable music.

PUTTING CONCEPTS INTO NOTES – TUNG LAISHING

Tung Laisheng (*1956) has not written many compositions and is not a very active composer in Hong Kong. Yet, less can often be more, and Tung’s limited output contains interesting and attractive music. Born in Hong Kong, he graduated from the music department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1982 and continued compositional studies under George Crumb and Chinary Ung at the University of Pennsylvania.

Especially his ‘Four Pieces for Woodwind and Percussion’ of 1983 appeals through its use of Chinese percussion instruments, traditional rhythms, silences, microtonal inflections and an extreme reduction in motivic material.64 ‘Four Pieces’ is a conceptual composition, describing different moods and situations. The pieces are titled ‘Awakening’, ‘Witchery’, ‘Danse Macabre’ and ‘Night Music’. They are interrelated by certain motivic repetitions and by one specific interval, the augmented fourth, the ‘diabolo in musica’ which serves as a frame for them.

Conceptual or programmatic elements are evident in most of Tung’s compositions. His pieces usually have descriptive titles or hint at an extra-musical background, for example his ‘Day Break’ for piano (1981), ‘Three Sketches’ for clarinet and piano (1982), and ‘Moondark’ for wind orchestra and percussion (1988). Perhaps this is how he interprets his own motto ‘the best music is always within the capacity of a competent listener’: he is writing for a Chinese audience used to the idea that all music is programmatic, and is apparently keen to meet public expectations in this respect.

PUTTING CONCEPTS INTO NOTES – LAW PINGLEUNG

A similar conceptualist is Law Pingleung (also known as Daniel Law) who was born in Hong Kong in 1946, received his B.A. in music from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and went on to study for a masters and a PhD at Northwestern University. Between 1983-84 he worked as a visiting scholar at Harvard University. He has written for Chinese and Western instruments and for choir, sometimes adopting a contemporary style, as in his ‘Ten Piano Pieces’ (1973), where he uses parody in a musical dialogue between Chinese and various Western styles of composition.

His ‘Cantata’ for chorus and piano (1986) is a representative piece of Law’s expressionist style – colouristic, yet pentatonic, modern yet never free of tonal reminiscences. The ‘Ode to the Nestorian Monument’ for orchestra (1972) draws its

63 Chan explains the tonal and homophonic structure in his Fourth Symphony ‘Te Deum’ (1992) for soprano, tenor, choir and orchestra along these lines.

inspiration from the earliest record of Christianity in China, an inscription dating from the year 781, when the Nestorian religion first spread in the Middle Kingdom. The composition creates a delicate, eerie atmosphere reminiscent of Chinese programme music. The orchestral structure provides the musical background, a constantly whizzing foil, out of which the solo instruments emerge. It is a sonorous piece, featuring little or no melody but lots of silences and sound patterns that appear to be static but actually show continual changes at a micro-level. "Variations from themes on Malacandra" for orchestra (1987) is based on the novel 'Out of the Silent Planet' (1938) by C.S. Lewis (1898-1963). Here, the composer traces a visit to the planet Malacandra followed by the return to earth. The opening theme represents the earth, the first variation the planet. The second variation represents a pursuit, the third variation an encounter, and the fourth the return to earth. Again this piece employs a highly expressionist and sonorous style to depict these events.

PUTTING CONCEPTS INTO NOTES - CHAN KANIN
While Tung and Law were translating certain historical, narrative, or pictorial evidence into music, Chan Kanin (*1949) in his Tai-chi ('Shadow-boxing') for flute, oboe, harp, piano, violin, viola, cello, bass and percussion (1985) like Domying Lam in his Gongfu (1987) for pipa and Chinese orchestra and Ho Waion (*1947) in Taiji (1976), was using the body movements of this Chinese sport for inspiration. The musical material and its timing represent a condensed version of a sequence of 108 movements taken from Taiji. Certain movements are symbolized by specific recurring motifs, dynamic elements or even complete themes. Chan writes electronic, vocal and conventional music for chamber and orchestral ensembles. He was born in Hong Kong and emigrated to Canada in 1964. He is married to another Hong Kong composer, Ho Pingyee (*1958). He received a B.A. in music from the University of British Columbia and continued with graduate work until 1983 at Indiana State.

CONFRONTING TRADITION: CHAN WAIKWONG, CHAN KAMBIU
From the survey above, China's cultural traditions are evidently important for composers from all generations. Whether the artists employ abstract or musical elements, and whether they interpret them in a contemporary or in a more conventional sense, an indebtedness to China's traditional culture and an awareness of its continued importance can always be traced in the music. Nevertheless, the deliberate emphasis put on this factor in recent times, especially by organisations such as the Asian Composers' League, creates an extremely restricted atmosphere for anyone who is not so easily drawn to or is not naturally steeped in the Chinese tradition. Composers from Taiwan could explain their "un-Chinese" works by a forced withdrawal from politics, but Hong Kong's composers have a harder nut to crack where this point is concerned.

Chan Waikwong (or Victor Chan) was born in Hong Kong in 1959. He graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and received a doctorate in Music from the...
University of York. He now teaches at the Chinese University. His style is distinctly contemporary, though the impact of years of study in England also shows in an inclination towards British modernism à la Britten.

Chan admits that he has had very little contact with traditional Chinese music. He is aware of this and now feels that he ought to try to incorporate Chinese concepts into his music. Recently, spoken language has become quite an important source material for his compositions. He employs the particular sound structure of certain Chinese words in his music. While this is his way of paying homage to the Chinese tradition, the influence of Britten’s sonorities is perhaps more directly evident in his vocal compositions, such as *Hsien* (*Xian*, i.e. ‘The Immortals’) for tenor, bass, choir and piano (1987) and ‘Images’ for two female voices, flute, piano and two percussionists (1986). The same can be said of ‘Memories’ (1989) for clarinet quintet and piano.

Chan is not only concerned with a growing urge to write tradition-inspired Chinese music. He also feels that he ought to compose this music in such a way that it is accessible to the public and performable in Hong Kong. Chan’s concern for current public taste and for the practical abilities and preferences of his performers become quite obvious in *Hsien*: this work is largely homophonic in structure, especially in the choral parts. The piano accompaniment may prove helpful in many places to singers not too familiar with the dissonant nature of modern music.


Chan Kambiu is another young composer who has been torn between different cultural trends in Hong Kong. His style is evidently influenced by the sound qualities of Polish sonorism, especially in such compositions as *Meiguigu* (‘Roseville’) for Chinese orchestra (1988-89) and *Tuhunding* (‘Cauldron of the naked soul’) for orchestra (1991). With such works, Chan was not able to impress the judges in a recent competition inaugurated by the Asian Composers’ League. They demand music that is less influenced by Western examples, be they modern or traditional. They expect Chinese composers to write Chinese music.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Chan Kambiu’s ‘Midnight Prayer’ for saxophone, bass trombone, piano and percussion (1989) was not awarded a prize, even though this piece had won the first round of the competition. It was not
CHINESE ATTITUDES – LAM BUNCHING
But does one have to write recognizably Chinese music in order to be a Chinese composer? Or is any music written by a Chinese per definition Chinese music? Is the psychological background of a composer who lives in Hong Kong indeed in the first place ‘Chinese’?

Lam Bunching (*1954) was born in Macao, playing the piano from early childhood. She attended the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a student of piano and soon took up composition. She continued her studies in California with Robert Erickson, Pauline Oliveros and Bernard Rands and is now working as a free-lance composer in New York.

Despite the fact that she is not very concerned with writing music that audibly refers to Chinese traditions, traditional culture is still the background and foil to many of her compositions. A close analysis of one of her most interesting pieces, Lü ('Journey') for percussion (1983), shows how her music is actually steeped in traditional Chinese culture. The piece describes the journey to and the performance of a sacrifice, and some of the most minute details of ritual etiquette appear in her musical interpretation. One of her more recent compositions, music for the shadow play, ‘The Child God’ (1993), is a sparkling piece, full of variation, a prism of Chinese and Western musical culture. Reminiscences of Chinese operatic singing and traditional Chinese heterophony can be heard next to disparate elements taken from Western contemporary music. Interludes which might stem from Chinese percussive repertoires are juxtaposed with (and incorporated in) a chaotic amalgam of modern sounds and repetitive ostinatos. A Chinese melody is accompanied by jazzy syncopes. A most dramatic moment in this juxtaposition of opposite elements is the tenor’s eruptive cries for his son, accompanied by noises in bass clarinet.

CHINESE ATTITUDES – HO PINGYEE, LAM MANYEE
Ho Pingyee (*1958) and Lam Manyee (*1950), like Lam Bunching, are composers who do not try to prove that they are Chinese. (Is it coincidental that all of them are female?) Ho Pingyee studied composition at Indiana University from 1978 and after her emigration to Canada continued her education under John Beckwith and Brian Ferneyhough. Extramusical thoughts, not necessarily of Chinese origin, play a part in much of her composing. She paints sensitive and appealing sound pictures, such as her Impetus for viola and double bass (1984), which employs harmonics and only hints at melodic structures. The piece is framed at the beginning and the end in the same double bass note.

Lam Manyee is one of the most interesting and versatile composers in Hong Kong, where she was born. She graduated in sociology and psychology from the University of Hong Kong and only began to study composition during a course for a piano diploma at the Conservatory Santa Cecilia in Rome (1973-76) under Franco Evangelisti. She subsequently received a diploma in composition from the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, where she studied with Brian Ferneyhough. Apart from her interest in serious music she is a successful pop singer and producer.

In ‘Interludes’ for piano (1977), she makes use of a prepared piano and trials her luck with the most advanced piano techniques. Her ‘Journey’ for chamber ensemble (1977/78) employs space acoustics: the performers have to walk about and change their positions in the course of the performance; the lighting is also changed as the piece develops, ‘from darkness to darkness’. This lyrical piece explores the broadest

considered ‘Chinese’ enough. A detailed description of this work and of a number of other important compositions by Chan can be found in Mittler, 1993a (in chapter 3).


A comprehensive analysis of this piece can be found in Mittler, 1993a, chapter 4.

possible range of timbre and employs all conceivable instrumental techniques – the harp pulling the strings, the flute overblowing for tonal inflections and particular sigh motif effects, etc. The psychological theme of the piece, loneliness, is easily recognized: there is no communal part for the performers; Lam juxtaposes solistic parts and tutti but does not allow them to interact. Sometimes the rhythmic structure is reminiscent of jazz improvisations.

Ex.14. Solitary statements in Lam Manyee’s ‘Journey’ for chamber ensemble.

Her ‘Monologo II’ (1980, revised 1981) for clarinet, piano and tape, a highly philosophical and reflective, sometimes very dark collage of natural sounds and other basic materials, manifests her imaginative strides into the field of electronic music. It depicts a private world and has elements of autobiography. The clarinet and piano represent opposite perspectives. The clarinet is inward looking: it keeps returning to a motif of trills and repetitions, as if brooding over certain happenings. The piano is extrovert; its most striking elements are big leaps which suggest a dauntless nature. Using tape, Lam introduces musique concrète. She electronically reprocesses and transforms real sounds from her immediate environment: car noises, pop music, helicopters, the
buzzing of electronic appliances. Only toward the end of the piece, does a dialogue between piano and clarinet begin to develop. Before then, these two instruments sometimes take over each other’s main materials, but only for short moments, always quickly backing away again. In the end, the pizzicato notes in the piano part and the sustained notes in the clarinet part begin to communicate by quoting one another; they start to interrelate by at times sharing the same pitch, at times sharing the same articulation. The piece thus ends peacefully, in a reconciliation of the polar opposites with which it began. The composition is dedicated to the memory of Lam’s first composition teacher, Franco Evangelisti.

CONCLUSION – THE DOUBLE MIRROR EFFECT

The preceding discussion of the lives and works of a number of composers from Hong Kong and Taiwan certainly does not cover the complete range of New Music in these two regions of China. But perhaps it succeeds in showing that composers in all parts of China cannot escape certain political and social pressures which compel them, in various degrees, to write ‘music for the masses’ and ‘music for the government.’

To some extent, government or social manipulation of the artists’ musical output has been similarly restrictive in laissez-faire Hong Kong, in capitalist Taiwan and in proletarian China. The (political) question of writing national music remains a most precarious one for Chinese composers all over China and even abroad. Only very few composers would venture to deny its importance. It is a question that has been solved in many different ways by different generations. By employing the most intricate elements of their own culture they were able to develop a musical language that attracted fresh attention not only at home but also on international concert stages. The incorporation of elements from Chinese traditional culture as illustrated in many of the analyses above has thus enabled Chinese composers to find their own voices in the twentieth century.

In this overview of New Music in Taiwan and Hong Kong I have tried to show how, in a double mirror effect, Chinese composers were able to rediscover elements of their own traditional culture in New Music from the West. This development was possible for two reasons. Firstly, when Western composers, in their quest for innovation, turned away from their own cultural heritage, the East evidently became an attractive target. Constantly on the look-out for new techniques and methods, Western composers travelled far. Debussy’s gamelan sounds, Mahler’s ‘Lied von der Erde’ (1907/08), Cage’s philosophy of silence and his ‘Music of Changes’ (1951), Messiaen’s semantic use of Indian rhythms in his development of the rythme avec valeurs ajoutées, the sense of timing in Boulez’ music, Britten’s ‘Curlew River’ (1964), Stockhausen’s ‘Telemusik’ (1966) and Lou Harrison’s use of Asian instruments – all these examples bear witness to Western composers’ fascination with the East.

However, it has to be said that the ease with which the merge between the Eastern Old and the Western New took place cannot be solely explained by a strong Western interest in Asian culture. Rather, there are certain fundamental similarities and affinities between Eastern old and Western new techniques. With the advent of avant-garde music in the West, the well-established system of functional harmony was almost thrown overboard, while Asian music never had such a system. The concepts of timbre as a predominant structural principle, of layered chordal structures rather than melodic developments, of micro-movements within static clusters – aspects which are all prevalent in Western New Music, as exemplified in compositions by Ligeti, Lutoslawski and Scelsi among (many) others – are common features of traditional Chinese music. Complex rhythmic structures, yet another ‘discovery’ of New Music, are customary in Chinese traditional culture; even the use of speech-voice is reminiscent of the vocal effects in Chinese opera or Japanese Noh-singing. And thus we can perhaps answer a question once posed by Frank Kouwenhoven, who wondered whether young PRC composer Yu Qiang’s experimental composition ‘1/8’ (1991) was
an indication that 'the spirit of John Cage had found its way to China,' or whether, 'perhaps it was a spirit akin to Cage, but native to China?'

If Chinese composers turn to the most essential elements of their own traditional culture, they are bound to write New Music, in the best and most universal sense of the word. Indeed, this kind of New Music is now written by Chinese composers in many parts of the world.

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71 Pinyin romanization is used throughout the article, except for a number of generally accepted alternative spellings (Chiang Kaishek etc.), and local spellings of Hong Kong composers’ names (which take account of Cantonese pronunciation).
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A CHINESE COMPOSER’S VIEWS ON GREEK DRAMA & BUDDHISM

Qu Xiaosong’s opera ‘The Death of Oedipus’

GLEN SAUNDERS
(Manhattan School of Music, New York)

The 1994 Holland Festival production of Qu Xiaosong’s one-act chamber opera ‘The Death of Oedipus’ impressed critics and audiences alike. In this opera, Oedipus’ final quest for peace is depicted as a Buddhist journey towards enlightenment. Stage action is limited to essential gestures and a minimum of lighting effects. The work turns a delicate Greek play into a powerful modern opera with many ‘Chinese’ touches in the music and staging. Glen Saunders interviewed Qu in New York about his remarkable homage to the ancient Greek dramatist. First, he discusses Qu’s opera in the light of other contemporary settings of Sophocles’ Oedipus dramas.

Qu Xiaosong’s The Death of Oedipus, a one-act chamber opera based on Sophocles’ play Oedipus at Colonus, was premiered on June, 24, 1994 in the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. It was shown three times on successive evenings, to the acclaim of the Dutch press and festival visitors.1 It was not the first time that Qu Xiaosong had turned to Sophocles for an operatic subject. One year earlier, the Swedish Folkopera of Stockholm had premiered Qu’s full-length opera Oedipus, to which The Death of Oedipus forms a sequel.2 The Swedish production, too, met with considerable success: it was repeated more than ten times to full houses – no mean achievement for a contemporary opera played in Stockholm, and certainly not if the artist is a composer from China who started his career during the Cultural Revolution!

What is it that attracts Western audiences to Qu’s operas? And what makes The Death of Oedipus, in particular one of the composer’s most compelling achievements so far? This article, which discusses The Death of Oedipus in some detail, is followed by an interview with the composer.3

1 The opera was performed by the Nieuw Ensemble, conducted by Ed Spanjaard, with baritone Romain Bischoff and sopranos Annette Daniels and Elena Vink as principal soloists. Libretto: Qu Xiaosong. Stage director: Mark Timmer.
2 Oedipus, with a libretto by Claes Fellbom, was premiered 18 November 1994 by the Choir and Orchestra of the Swedish Folk Opera, conductor Michael Adelson, with Olle Persson, Stina Tornberg, Erling Larsen, Olle Sköld and Tua Åberg in the principle roles. The director was Matthew Richardson.
3 This article is largely based on my unpublished DMA thesis Mountain was Not a Mountain: Qu Xiaosong’s Opera, The Death of Oedipus, Manhattan School of Music, New York, May 1996.
ABOUT QU XIAOSONG
Like many contemporary Chinese artists, Qu Xiaosong, born in 1952 in Guiyang, is a product of diverse cultural influences. Qu grew up in a period of great social upheaval, in a country that was striving to rediscover its cultural heritage. That same heritage came under violent attack during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s. After the death of Chairman Mao, China slowly moved back to a more normal state. Schools reopened, and talented students once again were given the opportunity to acquire an education. The techniques taught to music students were largely Western, a legacy of the Soviet music professors who populated the ranks of China’s conservatory faculties before relations broke off between those two countries in 1960. The styles taught were very conservative though, and the students’ exposure to contemporary music and pre-classical styles was sporadic. China’s schools had been essentially closed for the entire ten years of the Cultural Revolution. The students were hungry to learn, and a remarkably robust Chinese arts scene developed during the early 1980s. Another manifestation of this movement can also be seen in the film world, where the so-called ‘fifth generation’ directors from China are widely considered to be one of the most exciting forces in international film. Not coincidentally, these directors have employed some of the most promising young musical talent in China to write music for their films. Qu has written music for some of these directors, including Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang.

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4 Chen Yi, interview by author, 15 April 1992, New York.
In 1978, Qu Xiaosong entered the composition department at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, which became the site of an unforeseen explosion of highly original composition students.

Chou Wen-Chung, a Columbia University professor and noted composer in his own right, created an organization whose purpose was to bring some of these composers to New York to get thorough training in technique and perhaps join New York's new music community. Artists like Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, and Zhou Long, went to America through Professor Chou's U.S.-China Arts Exchange. Eventually they began to enjoy international success at levels no previous Chinese composer had ever attained. In 1986, Qu Xiaosong, too, came to New York - but he came as a visiting scholar, and not, like many of his fellow-composers, as a student at Columbia University. Qu Xiaosong opted not to re-enter the scholastic environment. He was - and still is - rather suspicious of any academic approach to music.

Qu Xiaosong now enjoys a busy international career. His work, being a product of his own varied past, is a natural synthesis of styles and concepts. He is at home using Western forms and instruments, yet a distinctly Eastern sense of time informs his music. His Mong Dong, for voices and an orchestra made up of Western and Chinese instruments (1984) remains one of the best known works of serious music from China today. The piece instantly established Qu's reputation in China and eventually led to international attention and commissions from the Nieuw Ensemble, the Holland Festival, The Swedish Folkoperan, The Hibiki Hall Festival in Japan, Boston Musica Viva, and many other institutions and music groups.

Qu Xiaosong's early works were strongly influenced by Bartók. Before he had heard Bartók's music, Qu himself had collected folk music from minority tribes in the Southwest of China. When he discovered Bartók, he felt he had found a kindred spirit. Qu says he admires how Bartók 'captured the soul of folk music.'

After graduating from the Central Conservatory in 1983, Qu looked back on his work and decided it was time to get away from the motivic development, the tight structure and the harmonic logic of European music. The bold simplicity of 5,000 year-old cliff drawings of the Wa people in Yunnan Province inspired him to compose Mong Dong, a joyful orchestral work full of primal rhythms and colourful timbral effects. He went on to write a cello concerto, a symphony (1987), and a cantata, Cleaving the Coffin (1987). After exploring vivacious colours and rhythms in these works, Qu embarked on a different path. He began to compose music with a greater economy of resources, most notably Ji in 1990. This piece for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, double bass, piano, and percussion is radical in its use of silence. The various instruments individually sound short notes, one by one, while a bass drum periodically sounds a single hit, piano. Eventually, the sounds of the ensemble begin to combine, there is a brief climax, after which the music unwinds back to its original level of individual events. Its mood is exceedingly tranquil.

The Death of Oedipus develops a number of the ideas set forth in Ji, including the use of silence and the far away-sounding bass drum. The severe limitation of materials, the individual presentation of events, and the terse expression, are all manifest in Qu Xiaosong's second opera. But The Death of Oedipus also reaches an intensity of expression that goes beyond the level of any of his previous works.

THE IMPACT OF OEDIPUS IN MODERN TIMES
Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles, the sequel to Oedipus Rex, finds the disgraced former king of Thebes as an old and blind beggar. Fate has played a cruel game with Oedipus; and from being a ruler of a great city, he has become a wanderer, depending on his devoted daughter for guidance to lead him from place to place. They are

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6 Qu Xiaosong, interview by the author. 4 March 1996.
welcome nowhere; his name is reviled everywhere. *Oedipus at Colonus* is set twenty years after his expulsion from Thebes. Though the gods dealt Oedipus a tragic fate, they still have plans for him. Oedipus learns he is to spend his final day at the sacred grove of the Eumenides, the feared demons who mete out punishment to mortals guilty of unfilial behavior. When he stumbles upon this land and learns his whereabouts, he refuses to leave, though the local people demand he move on. But Oedipus realizes that he has a gift to bear. The site of his burial will mark the victory of the Athenians in a future war against Thebes. After years of bitter suffering, Oedipus will find redemption in death.

Modern audiences have responded strongly to *Oedipus Rex*. Though the characters are from an ancient time, the struggle in a world where our fate is beyond our control is a theme easily identified with in our anxious age. And, of course the legend of Oedipus has been explored in several modern works. Jean Cocteau has addressed this theme more than once, in his play *Machine Infernale* and in his collaboration with Stravinsky on the opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*. Freud’s theory of the ‘Oedipus Complex’ is arguably the most recognizable concept in the discipline of psychology. Freud described *Oedipus Rex* as a ‘tragedy of destiny. Its tragic effect is said to lie in the contrast between the supreme will of the gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them.’ And Freud believed that this evil is inherently fixed in each of our individual psyches.

*Oedipus at Colonus*, though in the genre of tragedy, is also concerned with redemption. Oedipus suffers greatly as a result of forces beyond his control; yet in the end, he manages to make a great contribution to the people who eventually accept him. The composer Qu Xiaosong decided to examine this story, the story of the aftermath of Oedipus’ great tragedy. This work is set on the last day of Oedipus’ life. As witnesses to what has become of him, we cannot help but imagine what it must have been like to fall so furiously from grace and have twenty years of hardship to reflect on the awful truth that was his fate. The transformation of Oedipus from the noble, yet headstrong ruler of Thebes, to the physically blind but ultimately visionary and spiritual character he eventually becomes is the theme that inspired Qu to compose an opera based on the less famous of the Oedipus plays.

**AN ASIAN OEDIPUS**

At first glance, *Oedipus at Colonus*, a seminal classic of Western Theatre, seems an unlikely choice of setting for an artist from the Far East. But the story is actually an ideal vehicle for Qu. The meaning of the mysterious flash of light that Oedipus disappears into at the end of the play begs the question: What is the nature of death? The play suggests that Oedipus in death is to become, if not a god, an entity that transcends human mortality and will affect the lives of those who remain on Earth. Qu equates this ending with the Buddhist concept of breaking the cycle of life and death through wisdom. And the Buddhists seek wisdom through suffering and discipline.

Qu Xiaosong’s opera is entitled *The Death of Oedipus*, and the libretto was written by the composer himself. Qu strips the action of the play to its essential gestures. Oedipus appears at the opening of the opera alone, symbolic of his place in the world; and his cry is reminiscent of a wolf’s lonely howl in the night. For twenty-three slow bars, there is no other sound but the voice of Oedipus. There is much space between phrases, silence framing the sound very much the way white space heightens the contrast with the black ink in a piece of Chinese calligraphy.

The references to Chinese and Asian culture in this work are clear and abundant. Chinese percussion instruments are used to punctuate stage action and are also employed in extended sequences unaccompanied by other instruments. These are both

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traits of Peking opera. The chorus, whose dramatic role here is consistent with Greek Theatre, often chants in a style associated with Tibetan Buddhists. As Oedipus progresses towards enlightenment, he sings in a style of Indian folk music, the words being in the classic Buddhist tradition.

Musically, Eastern and Western styles are sometimes juxtaposed for maximum contrast, as in the scenes with Oedipus and King Theseus of Athens in the third scene. Oedipus, who is here taking the form of a Buddha, delivers his words within a limited intervallic range, with pitches stretching above and below a tonal center, very much like Indian music. The king, who is wise and noble, sings his lines in a style like Western recitative, highly melodic with much larger intervallic leaps. In a larger sense however, the various styles Qu employs are woven into a unified work. Like Alban Berg, who was eclectical in his approach towards composition, Qu Xiaosong is a synthesist. And like Berg’s work, Qu’s opera sounds like a complete idea and not a pastiche.

SPARE INSTRUMENTATION
In the history of Western opera, we can see a general division between opera where the music serves the words and opera which de-emphasizes the importance of the libretto and in which the music dominates. The Death of Oedipus belongs to the former category. The orchestration is this dramatic work is quite spare. Often there are no more than a few instruments playing at one time, and they frequently play only the pitches that are present in the vocal parts. Long sections of the opera are without instrumental accompaniment or are accompanied by percussion only.

The work was commissioned by the Nieuw Ensemble, a group known for a special ‘sound’ of its own, namely the combination of strings, woodwinds and plucked string instruments (mandoline, guitar and harp). This has obviously affected Qu’s instrumentation. However, it is first and foremost percussion which dominates the instrumental texture. Qu mixes Western percussion instruments with Chinese gongs, cymbals, and bells. These are the only non-Western instruments used in this work. The use of these instruments is also the most readily recognizable non-Western stylistic element. The dominating presence of percussion is a defining feature of Chinese opera — and, more generally, of nearly all genres of ritual music in the Far East — but is uncommon in Western opera. In The Death of Oedipus, percussion appears at many structurally important places in the opera, opening and closing many scenes, generally lending a sense of form to the work. From the car-shattering percussion ensemble cadenzas to the piano bass drum hits that sound like distant thunder, percussion is omnipresent. When other instruments appear, they might punctuate the dramatic action with a percussive blast, as in the first appearance of the cello and double bass in the work.

Each instrument is exploited for its particular sonic properties. Qu is especially adept at combining instruments to invent unique sounds. In fact, he more often uses instruments to create atmosphere through sound effects rather than in their traditional roles of accompaniment. The intended effect is clearly to use instruments to heighten the voices. There are few ‘tunes’ (just one, really), and the story unfolds through a kind of accompanied recitative through most of the work. The orchestra intensifies the action, whether it be agitation, fear, or the rather ethereal expression of Oedipus’

9 The exact instrumentation is as follows: flute (also plays alto flute), oboe (also plays Engl. horn), clarinet (also plays bass-clar.), mandolin, guitar, harp, piano, 2 percussion players, string quartet and double bass. All instrumentalists are sometimes required to play Chinese percussion instruments or to sing or shout. The percussion consists of: large size bass drum, Chinese gongs, Chinese cymbals in various sizes and shapes, suspended cymbals, woodblock, tambourines, antique cymbals, a chime set, bongo, double timpani, large size temple bowls, tam tam, cow bell, vibraphone, and two rototoms.
enlightenment. In this way, Qu allows the drama inherent in the story to present itself without sentiment.

SPECIAL USE OF VOICES
While the instruments in this piece perform a less prominent role, the voices are brought to the forefront.\textsuperscript{10} Many of the composer's innovations are in his handling of the vocal parts. As mentioned earlier, \textit{The Death of Oedipus} opens with an extended vocal solo. Several of the unusual techniques that will be employed throughout the opera are first exposed here. Pitch drop-offs reminiscent of Chinese rural folk singing end many of the phrases. The use of unpitched notation, specific directions regarding vibrato, and a peculiar type of hoarse whisper, are all present in the opening exposition. This section also determines many of the parameters that are to be exploited in general throughout the piece. After Oedipus' solo, the chorus shouts in unison, 'Move out, you impious vagabond!' The vocal forces employed in this piece are worthy of mention here. The chorus is made up of only four bass voices. They are used very effectively in sections that feature chant. But Qu Xiaosong, in a brilliant move of economy, employs the entire orchestra as his extended chorus, instructing the players to sing, shout, and whisper in unison. He also has many of the players and chorus members double on percussion instruments. This way the relatively modest forces he works with are capable of producing a thunderous \textit{III}. The voices are used, as are the instruments, as colours on a large sonic palette. Sections of the opera have the singers at the extremes of their ranges, singing without predetermined pitch, or vocalizing on syllables, whispering, and shouting, which together evoke sound landscapes as an Impressionist painter forms an image by mixing together many diverse shapes and colours.

The uncomplicated materials used in \textit{The Death of Oedipus} can be seen as a manifestation of the Daoist ideal of 'simplicity and genuineness.'\textsuperscript{11} The succinct manner in which Qu explores his subject, from the short length of the work, its minimal use of harmony, its severe limitation of materials and contrast, are all typical of Chinese art. A large departure is the subject. Qu chose a classic of Western Theatre, a character who has acquired a great deal of cultural and psychological baggage through the ages, as the subject of his opera. His treatment of the myth is in a number of ways opposed to both the ancient and the modern approaches to this subject in the West. He confronts these ironies head-on by attempting to demonstrate common links that bridge traditional ideas of the East and the West. His conclusions are controversial and will likely inspire argument, but the issues raised are timely and important in a world where the concept of 'community' is fast becoming global in scope.

Interview with Qu Xiaosong

\textbf{Saunders:} \textit{Oedipus at Colonus} is commonly thought of as belonging to the genre of tragedy. But you say it is not a tragedy.

\textbf{Qu:} At the end of the play, it is not easy to say Oedipus dies. Nobody saw him die. He heard the voice from the Earth, saying, 'come back Oedipus.' And in the ending, Theseus looks like he saw something great. Everything is very mysterious at the end. When Oedipus leaves his daughters, he is quite calm. In this sense it is clear that it is not a tragedy. 'The Death of Oedipus' is just a title. Actually, he reached the

\textsuperscript{10} The cast consists of Oedipus (bass baritone), Ismene (lyrical soprano), Antigone (dramatic soprano), Theseus (tenor), Creon (bass) and a chorus consisting of four basses (including Creon). The members of the orchestra function as an additional chorus.

\textsuperscript{11} Shen Nianci, 'Instinctive Poetic Expression and Daoist Philosophy in Chinese Music Compositions,' \textit{Chinese Music} v.16 no.1, 1994, p.16.
point of death before his real death. He reached his final understanding. This is interesting in Buddhism: many Zen masters reached Zen in their lifetimes. You can see that although they exist in this world, they are living in another world.

Saunders: Much of your more recent music, like Ji, is marked by a lot of silence and very spare writing for instruments. This contrasts greatly with your earlier works, like Mong Dong. What inspired this change in direction?

Qu: I had been invited by the Hong Kong Experimental Theatre Group to collaborate with them on a work. I spent several days in the recording studio. I used one of my older pieces for dance, which is in a very slow tempo. For five minutes I used just one tone, D. In the very beginning this note slowly fades in and fades out. I inadvertently had the tape set at one-quarter speed. At this tempo I could still recognize my piece, because I know every detail very well. But when I tried it at one-eighth speed, something very significant happened. When you make the tempo slower, the pitch drops as well. At 1/8th speed I could no longer hear the pitch, I just heard a kind of white noise, fading very slowly in, fading very slowly out. Then the one bar rest in the music seemed like a million years. I was waiting for the next tone to come in, but for a long time it didn’t come. I was thinking there was a problem with the machine. Then suddenly it came [imitates the sound, like the deep rumbling of an earth quake]. It was a kind of experience I had never had before. When I am listening to music, I like to have the room dark. When I compose I have no colour, no image at all, only the sound in the darkness. At that moment in the darkened studio, I felt I was falling down to the sea of time. No end, no beginning. A very, very huge feeling. Something like touching the heartbeat of the Earth. In that experience, the silence was the most important thing in my memory of the event. Then the two very, very low, very slow noises, for me were existing for the silence. Just the opposite way that we normally think of rests in music. The silence for me is the final destination. The human being’s ability to measure time is very small. We just can feel seconds or hours. We can understand the meaning of years, we cannot feel that passage of time, can we? Then I began to think about the difference between East and West. Laozi [The founder of Daoism, GS] said, ‘The biggest sound is silence.’ And almost at the same time, the Greek philosopher Aristotle, speaking of drama, said ‘We must engage in limitation. If the drama is too long, we lose the sense. If it is too short, it is enough for us to understand it.’ The difference which you can see already, is that in the West the sense of time is very tight. Then later, like in Beethoven’s music, [hums opening to the 5th Symphony] very tight motifs. In a way, I feel that for Eastern people, especially in the old Chinese or Indian traditional culture, the sense of timing is huge, much slower. That’s what inspired me to write this piece, Ji. I wanted a very limited sound to remind the silence. The piece is extremely easy to play, technically. The difficulty is to feel the silence between the notes, to feel the intensity in the silence. Like in the Qing Dynasty. They just painted a little fish, or a point, or a line, and left a lot of space.

Saunders: The Death of Oedipus opens with a specified amount of silence. Why not a fermata?

Qu: You know that most performers come to rehearsal as a job. They are very busy, and have appointments to go to after the rehearsal. The modern life makes people very busy, and they don’t have enough time to feel, to think. So I have to force them to count the measures. If I just have a fermata, they usually make the rest very short, and the

“‘I felt I was falling down to the sea of time.
No end, no beginning.’

“The difficulty is to feel the silence between the notes, to feel the intensity in the silence.”
intensity is missing. This is for the performer's benefit as well. He has to wait. It's like a meditation, he will calm down. As for the beginning of *Death of Oedipus*, it is not easy to sing. Not because of the pitch, but because of the feeling of loneliness. Not just simple loneliness. Twenty years of troubling darkness for someone who has had sight before. A very deep, deep loneliness that has to be expressed in that first sound.

**Saunders:** You have written two operas, and both of them are about Oedipus. Of all the possible subjects you could have written about, why this character?

**Qu:** The first one was suggested by the artistic director of the Swedish Folk Opera, Claes Fellbom. He was the librettist. I thought this must have been arranged by God, because five years earlier [1986] I saw a production in China, a translation in Chinese of *Oedipus Rex*. I was really touched, a beautiful tragedy.

**Saunders:** Was that your first exposure to the play?

**Qu:** Yes, I had heard of the myth, but didn't know the drama. Looking back, I realize I also appreciated the beauty of the simplicity of the dramatic language of Greek Theatre. Very straightforward.

**Saunders:** Compared with what?

**Qu:** Especially compared with Romantic literature. At that time I thought, 'I want to use this for an opera.' And then the time just passed by. Five years later, this person asked me to write an opera based on this play. When I started to compose this, I felt it was very difficult, because I was writing music like *Jr*, Quiet, silent. But the subject was Oedipus; bloody tragedy, very strong characters. In the beginning I had trouble writing. But later I realized that this strong, dramatic feeling is also one part of my nature. This feeling was more present in my earlier pieces such as *Mong Dong*, the cello concerto, my first symphony. This is also the Chinese people's special sense of suffering [smiles]. A long history, and not an easy life. I realized I shouldn't refuse myself [in expressing this type of angst compared to the more serene feeling of the later works].

I think at the end of *Oedipus Rex*, most people come away with the feeling that that's the end. But my understanding of the end of *Oedipus Rex* is that it is a new beginning. He accepted his destiny. This was a turning point for him, the beginning of a new life. What happened in the twenty years since his exile? This is why I had to write another one.

**Saunders:** Your libretto is like the music, it's very spare. Sophocles' writing is direct, but he takes time to fully illustrate all of his characters and dramatic situations. Sophocles writes, 'Acceptance, that's what suffering teaches.' This is one of the essential points that connects the play to your opera. But this line you left out.

**Qu:** A very interesting point. We can think about a comparison between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy. I think the highest essence of philosophy, both Eastern and Western, is largely the same. When the highest essence of philosophy happened in the mind, it must have been very simple. Later, Western philosophers tried to build up great edifices of logic to reach this high essence. But in the East, the Daoist philosophers like Laozi, Zhuangzi, they didn't they didn't try to describe it. They just give it to you indirectly. If you can get it, you get it. If you cannot get it, you lose everything [chuckles]. You have to open yourself to reach the same level. It can't be given to you.

**Saunders:** How important is it for you to make the audience understand the sequence of events that happen in the opera? How much knowledge of the original play did you assume your audience to have, if any?

**Qu:** For the Daoists and Buddhists, there are so many details that are not necessary to describe. What the audience knows about *Oedipus at Colonus* before hearing the
opera is not important. I imagined that Oedipus is the kind of person who has very great wisdom. But still, he is approaching the final destination. He has not reached it yet. Like in the original play, at the end he is still very angry with his son. Still very emotional, not like very wise people. So I cut it out, but I still left in a very important thing, which is his emotional attachment to his daughters. This is his link between him and the world. This detachment looks a little cruel, because he has very natural human feelings for his daughters. Actually, people have to ultimately face their life themselves. On many levels of life, you have to solve the problems on your own. No one can really take sadness from you. Maybe happiness or sadness can be shared, but everything you feel is from yourself. And so it is for Oedipus.

Saunders: The Death of Oedipus you wrote as a chamber opera, and it is exceedingly short considering the size of the original play. Was this partly a result of the requirements of the commission?

Qu: To a certain extent, but there were artistic reasons also. After the first opera, I wanted to use a smaller scale. Also, one thing I like about chamber music is that the musicians who play it are usually very good. They have a good sense of the music. Many of the musicians playing in the orchestra generally regard it as a job. As for the length, I don’t think I need two hours for The Death of Oedipus. The reason I wrote my own libretto is because the first one was written by the artistic director of the Swedish Folk Opera. The style of the libretto was more like Classical opera. So many characters, and so many details, which I don’t feel is suitable for my purpose. Now I understand why Wagner wanted to write his own librettos, because the composer knows what he wants! What I want is to concentrate on the main characters. I don’t need so many characters. I don’t need so many details. I want it to be simple and highly concentrated.

Saunders: Your opera shares a number of attributes with Peking Opera, such as being staged with almost no scenery, and the use of a chorus.

Qu: Actually, there is nothing really clearly related to Peking Opera. The way of using the chorus is more like Sichuan Opera. Sometimes the chorus sings what the main character could be singing. Also, the way of singing between speech and singing, [demonsstrates] the winnmg is blowing, blah, blah, blah. Those kind of things.

Saunders: That’s from Sichuan Opera?

Qu: Sichuan opera and Peking Opera, actually. In the production, the lighting director had designed something very colourful. I said, ‘what’s going on here, are you making a commercial?’ [laughs]. I said, ‘I want you guys to limit yourselves to black and white. You can make your subtleties with these two basic colours.’ In the end the lighting got a very good review!

Saunders: You mentioned to me earlier about collecting folk songs.

Qu: At the Central Conservatory and the other conservatories in China, there is a program for composition students where they have to go to the countryside to collect folk music. I think this is very good. The most interesting and important thing was not just collecting the music, but seeing the different style in which these people live, and how they relate to nature. When Chinese people talk about “the countryside,” what they have in their mind is very different from Western people. For instance, in the United States, when you go the the countryside, yes, it’s different from the city, but you still feel life is convenient, because of the modern civilization. You see the highways, television, telephones, everything. There’s no basic difference. But in the countryside in China, they are living in a former age. They still work by hand, not by
machine. In some places, especially in the deep mountainous areas, there’s no electricity, no television, no telephone. So it’s really far away from modern civilization. People still live in a kind of primitive way. On the other hand, you can feel very much that they are close to nature, and to the mountain. Getting back to the conservatory program, when I started there, I was very, very unhappy. We were asked to write piano music, or instrumental music in a very Western style. I felt that this was not my music, this was not the music I should write. But I did not find the way that would suit me. Then I went to the countryside to collect folk music. One evening, I met two folk singers. They were Yao people, one man, one girl. In the beginning, the man sings pretty softly, like whispering [imitates the sound, like murmuring under the breath]. Suddenly, there is a very strong sound from the girl’s body, [makes a sound starting very low and rises in a portamento fashion, climaxing with a wild-sounding shriek]. I felt as if the soul of the mountain had come through this girl’s body. A very mysterious feeling. In that moment I thought that this is the music I should write, because it reminded me of my experience of living in the mountain area. After that trip, I began to compose my first string quartet. At that time, writing the first movement, I still hadn’t heard Bartók’s music and folk music really caught me. And after years of writing Bartók-like music, I was still thinking I’m not really satisfied. So when I saw these cliff drawings, I was really inspired. I decided to write Mong Dong. I wanted Mong Dong to be more like folk music itself. In Bartók’s music you can still clearly hear the Western composition tradition, the way of organizing climaxes or anything. So Mong Dong was a departure from two traditions, one being the Western tradition, the other being the Chinese people’s tradition. I think minority people’s lives are even closer to nature than the Han people’s, the majority race in China. ‘Close’ to nature isn’t even a good description. They just live in nature. Their life itself is nature.

Saunders: How did you go about finding a form in which you could express these ideas?

Qu: A piece like Mong Dong... I finished this piece very quickly. Everything was done in two weeks. I just wrote it, so this question for me is very difficult.

Saunders: Well, how about since that time? The Death of Oedipus seems to have a thought-out structure, a technique.

Qu: Well, actually Mong Dong has technique in it. The structure is also thought out. And my way of organizing the structure of the composition... I just want it to sound very natural. I used the compositional technique I learned at the conservatory and from the masterpieces. But I just want to hide it in the end. Usually when I talk about composition, I really don’t enjoy talking about technique. I think of technique as something that you learn as a student, and then when you are finished with that, you just write.

Saunders: What is the relationship of your music to traditional Chinese music? Is it quotation, appropriation, transmogrification? What is the relationship in your own words?

Qu: I would say that the relationship is between my music and the Chinese traditional culture, more than with the music. It’s more like a spiritual relationship, like with the Daoism and Buddhism. It’s influenced by the feeling of time, and the way of expressing in folk music, which is straightforward. And through that music you can feel man’s relationship with nature. I don’t take the actual materials of the folk songs. Sometimes I’ll take some things, like the chorus in Sichuan Opera, or the speech/singing style. Vocalization. In Mong Dong, I tried to avoid the well-trained
Western-style voice. In a way I feel it is an artificial human voice. The folksingers aren’t professional musicians. The singing is just one part of life, so the voice is very natural. And the other thing, especially in *The Death of Oedipus*, is trying to use monophonic music to describe all the processes of the drama, and to keep the dramatic intensity. This is one special feature of Chinese music. Not just Chinese music, most Asian music. The counterpoint in the music is the different styles, as for example in the scene where Oedipus meets Theseus.

**Saunders**: What is your relationship with Western music, as far as using its forms, and being inspired by certain composers? You have already mentioned Bartók, are there any others who have been particularly important to you?

**Qu**: I think that since I left China, there are no composers who have influenced me. What I want to do now, nobody is doing.

**Saunders**: Did experiencing 20th-Century avant-garde music in some way show you another way you could go?

**Qu**: No.

**Saunders**: What was the extent of your exposure to Western music when you were in China?

**Qu**: I heard almost everything. And since I left China, I’ve heard them all. And honestly, I’m disappointed. Of all living composers, the one who is most interesting to me is Kurtág. What he is doing is in a way a little bit close to what I am doing, which is a very concentrated language, very economical. But really, I’m on my own path. The 20th-Century composers I most admire are from the first part of the century, like Bartók, Stravinsky, Schoenberg. Some pieces of Messiaen. Today though, I feel a lot of music is academic, it is not interesting to me. Maybe it’s a little too extreme [to say that]. It’s difficult to explain what I mean. For instance, the Kurtág I mentioned. His language is very concentrated. But that alone is not enough. In his pieces you really hear music. There are so many things that are deeply concerned with the human species. The existence of art in a way is like religion. Human beings are never satisfied with their reality. They seek a perfect world beyond the reality of the world they live in. In our arts, humans want to create a world which is better than the real world. So if you’re just writing on the paper, it’s not music. Music is for the soul, not for the mind.

**Saunders**: That makes me think about Bach, and how he was the master of fugue, and form, and all the technical challenges of composing. Yet despite all that, his music is so human.

**Qu**: Very human, yes. Also, very normal. It’s easy to say Bach and Beethoven were very spiritual. But spiritual in a very normal way. That’s the highest level.
FROM RITUAL CHANT TO MAHLER, FROM KABUKI TO TIBET

Tan Dun’s Marco Polo: a multi-cultural journey

BAS VAN PUTTEN
(Vrij Nederland, Amsterdam)

*Tan Dun*’s opera *Marco Polo* (1996) is a journey in sound from Gregorian chant to Peking opera, from Puccini to Tibetan overtone singing, from Japanese kabuki theatre to Gustav Mahler. The opera works almost like an autobiographical testimony sublimated into music. Bas van Putten attended the successful premiere of the work in Munich – in May of this year – and interviewed the composer about Eastern and Western ways of thinking in his music. Tan Dun, gesturing expressively, explains the essentials of Chinese opera: ‘There, you see? It floats in the air... it suddenly takes hold of you... One gesture can convey the whole story!’

During the Munich Biennale in May 1996, Chinese composer Tan Dun conducted, to great acclaim, the world premiere of his second opera, *Marco Polo* – and turned it into an exceptional event by salvaging opera as a genre from ruin. That, at any rate, is the view of the new artistic director of the Biennale, Peter Ruzicka. In the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* he praises Tan Dun as the man who is breathing new life into a dying tradition. ‘If there is any future for opera, it can hardly lie in a further sublimation of conventional dramaturgy. More likely, it lies in a total concentration on the work, a total daring and a preparedness to explore the unknown and the unheard-of. *Hier und nicht in der ruhelos kreiselnden ‘Innenausstattung’ eines tönenden Museums liegt alleine noch potentielle Energie.*’

I refrain from further attempts to translate this statement, but I understand what it says: now that we’ve come to nothing, let the Chinese have a go at it. This is how the myth of Eastern wisdom is given free reign.

Western culture is fed up with itself – quite understandably. The question remaining is what role we wish to allot to the latest Messiah from the East in our contingency plans for the doomed Occident. Will Tan Dun ride the waves, or will he be rejected? Should he continue to act as a builder of bridges between different cultures, symbolizing an idealized synthesis between East and West, and should he quietly accept the role of a living advertisement for the self-indulgent multi-cultural emancipation politics of the West? Or will he be allowed to develop as an artist in his own right, beyond the restrictive demands of any one particular culture?

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1 This article is an abridged version of Bas v. Putten’s *Tan Dun verklaart zijn ongehoorde opera*, which appeared in the Dutch magazine *Vrij Nederland* of 18 May 1996. Engl. translation: F. Kouwenhoven.
One would hope for the last, because, after all, Tan Dun is primarily a musical
craftsman. Ten years ago, after a difficult childhood and a relatively promising start of
his career in his native country, Tan moved to New York to begin a successful second
life as world citizen in the global village. He settled in America as a postgraduate
composer, one who had completed a full-scale Western-oriented education at the
Central Conservatory in Beijing. During his student years in China, he attended guest
lectures by Hans Werner Henze, George Crumb, Isang Yun and Toru Takemitsu, and
partially bridged the gap in his knowledge of Western avant-garde music. He certainly
did not arrive on the Western stage as the Asiatic Parsifal that Ruzicka and his peers
would like him to be. As early as 1983, his String Quartet Feng Ya Song had pleased
European colleagues to such an extent that they awarded him the Weber Prize of
Dresden. And long before his own Great Leap Forward, Tan had found, in his
orchestral work On Taoism of 1985, his own voice – and lost his innocence.

When Mao’s allies sent him to work in the rice-paddies of the Huangjin commune
as an eighteen-year-old, and subjected him to compulsory lessons in state submissiveness,
he must have felt lonely and misunderstood. But even in those difficult years, as a
local village band conductor he managed to make the best of his situation, and
showed sufficient strength to reverse his fate once conditions improved again.

MARCO AND POLO
He does feel the gap between East and West – it is actually his most important theme.
Marco Polo is Tan’s own multi-cultural travel account of the ‘geographical and inner
spiritual’ journey which the 13th century Marco Polo made from Venice in the opposite
direction. That is, if there is any truth in the miraculous events which the real Marco
Polo dictated to his chronicler Rustichello in a Genoese prison cell.

Recent research suggests that Polo may never have set foot on Chinese soil. This
presents no problem for Tan Dun, who, as a genuine artist, is probably more at home
with fabulists than with truthful travel guides anyway. In co-operation with the
librettist Paul Griffiths, he has even split his hero into a Marco and a Polo; a dramatic
tenor for the spiritual aspects (‘memory’) and a mezzo-soprano for the travel
explorations, which, however, in Griffiths’ libretto, hardly result in anything concrete.

Visible action is reduced to a minimum. The fragmented, loosely connected
sentences in various languages, distributed among such figures as Marco’s biographer
Rustichello, the poets Dante and Shakespeare and the composer Gustav Mahler, neatly
fit on two sides of one sheet of writing paper. The first statement (‘I have not told one
half of what I saw’) more or less gives the gist of the text.

QUASI-PARASITIC
The music is infinitely richer than the libretto. With remarkable gusto, Polo’s Chinese
alter ego plods his way through a wealth of musical styles and idioms drawn from all
over the world. Tan refers explicitly to his own roots, with hints of Peking opera and
Chinese folk music. He explores the cradle of Western music history in a quasi-
parasitic way, with snatches of quasi-Gregorian chant and quasi-Renaissance music.
He creates his own audiovisual bastard versions of Tibetan overtone singing, Japanese
Kabuki theatre and Indian sitar sounds.

The shape (four acts, in approximate symmetry), the vocal writing (with forms
resembling choruses, arias and ensembles shimmering through) and the
instrumentation (the Munich Chamber Orchestra in standard formation, with some
reinforcement) all seem based on Western models, but in between the lines, every
melodical turn, every drum roll and every subdued overtone reveals an oriental accent.
The notation of the vocal parts does not stick to fixed pitches, but is subdivided into
five registers, which correspond with the lines of the Western stave; very high, high,
middle-high, low and very low. Sitar, pipa, Tibetan horns, Tibetan bowls, along with
Marco Polo in the presence of Sheherazade and Kublai Khan. A scene from Tan Dun's latest opera, with Thomas Young (standing), Nina Warren and Dong-Jian Gong. [Photo: Regine Koerner.]

various types of Chinese gongs and cymbals support the motto with which Tan Dun presented to the world his first 'ritual' opera *Nine Songs* in 1989: 'Blowing on bamboo, drumming on ceramic, playing the snake-skin with the bow; singing the plain, rough sounds of the earth, dancing the movements of spirits ... Har tset! A shock from the primitive silence.'

**BECKMESSEREI**
The day after the premiere, a handful of critics enter the upper hall of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts for a debate on whether Tan Dun has pulled it off or not. They cannot come to an agreement because they collectively avoid the most important questions. What is theatre? What is Western and what is Eastern musical thinking? What is style? What is multi-culturality? What exactly do we expect from *opera*? Suppose that we do succeed in taming these unwieldy notions and turning them into definable entities, will it actually get us one step further?

Nobody has anything to say. No doubt part of the panel's caution is due to its members' keen awareness of the observant eye of composer Wolfgang Rihm in the front row. In the presence of this friendly but formidable adversary, they may not feel strong enough to stir up mischief. Under the leadership of panel chairman Siegfried Mauser ('this is not the place for *Gehobene Beckmesserei*'), the (absent) composer is subjected to critical judgement. He bears the test of the four reviewers' diverging

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2 *Gehobene Beckmesserei*. A reference to the quarrelsome and pedantic arbitrator Beckmesser in Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger*. Beckmesser tries to prevent a talented singer and potential rival from participating in a song contest.
Wege und Aspekte kritischer Beurteilung ('ways and aspects of critical judgement') reasonably well and comes away from the evaluation relatively unarnished. That is, if he promises to liven things up a bit and to practise the rules of the art more diligently in the future, and if he does not object to freeing his idiom from all its improper eclectic borrowings. If those conditions are met, he will be admitted to the next round.

Only Beate Kayser of the Tageszeitung (Daily) is prepared to unconditionally forgive Tan everything: 'Der Tan Dun bedeckt seine Schwächen nicht' – 'Tan Dun does not cover up his weaknesses.' Neither does she cover up her own: it is clear that the composer has stolen Kayser's heart.

Tan Dun should have been there to watch it all. Marianne Reissinger of the Abendzeitung ('Die Frage ist: hat der Tan Dun seine eigene Sprache gefunden?' – 'The question is: has Tan Dun found his own language?') is perfectly suited for the part of the evil witch; and Tan is fond of opera.

When the talk finally comes to a halt at one o'clock in the afternoon, Rihm turns to the exhausted audience in the room with some devastating remarks: 'The notion “multicultural” is a chimera. The Western symphony orchestra is about the most multicultural medium one could think of.'

QUANTUM LEAP

The next morning, when I report to Tan Dun in his hotel room the outcome of the discussion, I expect him to burst out laughing but he doesn’t. ‘When I write a new piece, I do not rely on any rigid notions about classical music, theatre or opera. Why should I? Other people have already created so much valuable music in those fields. More than anything else, I want to express myself. I write an opera because I’d like to give a new turn to my music, and to feel more at home with dramatic structure and with the sound structure of music theatre.’ His music theatre: ‘If you were to ask me to write a traditional Chinese opera, or a traditional Western opera, I simply wouldn’t be able to do it. I can’t attempt to be either purely Eastern or purely Western. Of course I try to move as freely as possible between those poles. But you must realize that, on the theoretical level, my ideas are rather ambivalent, since I was educated in Beijing in a classical Western idiom.’

‘In Marco Polo I have drawn elaborately from the Peking opera style, and in a very authentic way – every Chinese would immediately recognize it. There was no need to become familiar with that idiom, I used to be a Peking opera player myself. I know a lot about that opera culture and love it very much. All the same, Western opera models play an equally important role in my music. It’s really fifty-fifty, as far as I can see.’

Having said this, the fact remains that Tan’s music has developed enormously over the past ten years. He is still busy coping with the consequences of his own quantum leap. ‘Before I came to the West, I knew very little about Western music. And if I did know Western pieces, I listened to them exclusively from a Chinese listener’s point of view, ignoring the historical context, and with a superficial kind of delight. I loved best the composers who’d woven Eastern colours into their music. Like Puccini’s Turandot and Madama Butterfly, that’s what I liked. But if I listened with Chinese ears to Strauss or Wagner, I was often disappointed.’

A SEARCH FOR NEW COLOURS

In interviews you’ve referred to the shock you experienced when hearing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony for the first time, as a 19-year-old. But what was it exactly that you heard? Themes, chords, modulations?
First of all, I heard fixed pitches, a fixed tuning. Pa-pa-pa-pa. I noticed that the orchestra was able to maintain perfectly a single pitch, something that no Eastern ensemble would ever be able to accomplish. I heard a tempo, I heard dynamic contrasts and the development of motives. I felt it was all very strange, and began to realize this: from the very moment a Western composer writes down his first note, he becomes the slave of his work, and the music will compose the composer, and not the other way around. As soon as he writes down a motif, it will become a determining factor in the rest of his piece. I suppose that is how Western architecture works – it focuses primarily on calculable patterns. A Western architect looks only at the structure of his design. An Eastern architect will be far more concerned about creating a harmonious balance between his edifice and the elements that surround it; the sun, the moon and the wind. Chinese always build their houses facing south, with the back of the house facing north.’ Tan is eager to follow their example.

‘I sometimes feel that Western music depends too much on abstract musical laws. Those laws are fake, as they’ve only been around for a few hundred years. When it comes to Western classical music, everyone immediately thinks of Bach and Beethoven. But really, isn’t that quite absurd? Music was in existence long before then, and people lived with it quite well.’

‘What annoys me in Western music is the stifling framework of harmonic relationships and counterpoint. It’s always note against note, line against line. It’s the same thing with Western functional harmony. In Western music, harmony is a progression from one chord to the next. But shouldn’t a chord be allowed to have a life of its own? For me, harmony implies a search for new compound sounds and new combinations of colours.’

THAT’S DRAMA
Tan Dun is a boyish, poetic man with the most beautiful body gestures in the world. A pantomime player would turn pale when faced with the gestures that accompany this artist’s explanations of stage movement in Chinese opera dramatic. When he sets his powerful arm into motion, the air is split in two. Marco Polo, with its empty stage and busily moving dancers, gave a similarly powerful impression.

‘It is true, though,’ he starts off, ‘that there is a world of difference between my dramatic and Western views of theatre. Western opera culture is fixated on effective contrasts in human conflicts. For that, you need at least two people. Chinese opera is not that way! In Chinese opera, one individual performer can already embody an enormous contrast, and you can evoke that contrast in a split second, where a Western opera composer might need twenty minutes to get anywhere near.

He lifts his arm for a subtly delayed upward movement. His face remains expressionless; he keeps blatantly silent and sends hypnotic glances in my direction.

‘That’s drama,’ he says.

The arm is dropped, again in slow motion, and comes to rest. A second glance.

‘That’s drama,’ he says.

Tension is released with a loud bang.

‘There, you see? It floats in the air... it suddenly takes hold of you, in such a dramatic way. And why is that? Because it is directly linked to the internal tension of the mind. It’s like with calligraphy on rice paper. Just think of how the ink spreads on the paper. One gesture can convey the whole story. It is actually very minimalistic. But not in the sense of minimalism that you’re familiar with in the West. Western composers of minimal music and the choreographers who make use of that kind of
music have only grasped the surface meaning of minimalism. That it is something very
simple. But in reality, minimalism in Eastern and particularly in Chinese philosophy is
based on the idea that nothing means everything. Simplicity can mean richness,
complexity can be empty. A person from Asia can visit a museum and get lost for
hours, looking as if in trance at a single brush stroke on a medieval painting.
I believe him.
Tan proceeds to explain the secrets of space. ‘In Peking opera, there is an act
called “showing one’s face”. This is done with gestures, but there are hundreds of
different ways of doing it. For example...’ Very slowly, he moves his hand in front of
his face, covers his countenance and uncovers it again, while his expression gradually
freezes.
‘So it is a ritual of magical gestures, in a framework of abstract spatiality. Chinese
opera singers can evoke a complete landscape on an empty stage. They climb
imaginary stairs, close invisible windows, offer invisible chairs. You can see how
someone leans against a tree or gets drunk. It is all presented in such a clear way that
the audience immediately perceives what the invisible scenery looks like.’

TOTAL BLACKOUT
So you’re making Eastern operas after all?
‘Not quite. One often hears the view that Westerners should open their minds to
foreign cultures. I think one is entitled to expect the same from people from the East.’
So where are the Western elements in Marco Polo? In the build-up of tempo in the
first scene, with its dramatic acceleration?
‘Not there! It’s actually the very treatment of tempo that cannot be fixed in this
opera. I use rhythm in a way very different from Western composers’ habits. They
divide bars into symmetrically grouped
units. My tempo is more like an idea. In
performance, the execution of a given
tempo can deviate strongly from the
metronome marks that I’ve provided in the
score. This is because, in practice, I have
to find a dramatic balance between sung
music and played music. If a singer goes
at an extremely slow pace, with very long,
drawn-out tones, the orchestra should play very fast. In fact, you find that same
principle in Peking opera, and it has its own logic. If a singer creates a long line, he
should be supported by a solid and sufficiently coloured background to help him
sustain momentum. That’s how you breathe life into the music.’
‘A really Western element is the large-scale structure of the opera, but on the inside
level you will again find Eastern principles at work. Sometimes I insert sudden breaks
to undermine the balance. Shortly before the end, the pipa soloist, the Chinese lute in
the orchestra, is suddenly shown in a spotlight.’
His arm imitates Bruce Lee.
Orchestra stops. Only the lute player. That’s how you build up tension.’

Marco Polo had its premiere on 7 May 1996 in the Muffat Concert Hall in Munich, with Martha
Clarke as stage director. It was repeated in the Biennale six times. A concert performance in June
during the Holland Festival in Amsterdam was recorded by Sony Records (CDs to be issued in 1997).
The Amsterdam performance featured the Dutch Radio Chamber Orchestra and Capella Amsterdam
conducted by the composer, with Alexandra Montano, Thomas Young, Chen Shi Zheng and Susan
Botti as principal soloists.
FIELD REPORT FROM THE YANGZI DELTA

Chinese Folk Singers in Jiangsu Province (2)

ANTOINET SCHIMMELPENNINCK
(Research School CNWS, Leiden University)

In this report, the second in a series of three articles on Jiangsu folk singers, the author takes a look at a number of specific groups of folk singers and their repertoires, e.g. cowherds and their cursing songs, fishermen, labourers, peddlars and itinerant singers. Furthermore, she examines the role of organized festivals in the shan'ge tradition and takes a look at images of shan'ge performers in local mythology. The prototype of the shan'ge singer in folk tales is a carefree person who is able to perform some magic, who likes to seduce women, who is not afraid to play tricks on gods – although he is a loser in the end – and who loves to sing naughty songs. Judging from the stories, shan'ge have a long-standing reputation as a medium for courtship and sexual abuse.

As I discussed in my first article on Jiangsu folk singers (Chime 8, 1995, pp. 32–58), most singers of shan'ge traditionally started singing at a very young age. The singing of folk songs, especially the outdoor genre known as shan'ge, was mainly a privilege of the young. The youngest singer who Frank Kouwenhoven and I met in our own fieldwork trips (1989-92) was aged 10 in 1990, the oldest 88, but most of the singers we recorded were from 60 to 80 years old. Folk song traditions in southern Jiangsu have been on the decline since the early 1950s. Only 6 percent of the singers in our fieldwork were aged below 30.¹

The majority of the singers we met (57 percent) were male singers. The actual percentage of male singers in Jiangsu province may well be much higher: 65 percent or more.² This imbalance must be ascribed partly to the general predominance of men in the Chinese population, caused by factors like female infanticide, in which Jiangsu is no exception. There may be additional reasons why most folk singers in Jiangsu are men. It appears that women were less active in singing shan'ge – the backbone of the local folk song tradition – although this was balanced by a song repertoire of their own, xiaodiao (‘little ditties’). For distinctions between the songs and performance

¹ We interviewed and recorded a total of 106 singers. The majority are past the age of 60 (48 %) or from 50 to 60 years old (16 %). This picture is largely confirmed in a survey of 646 folk singers in the entire province (Zhongguo geyao 1989), in which 54 % of the singers are aged 60 or older.
² The survey of 646 singers in Jiangsu referred to in footnote 1 has 419 men (65 %), 190 women and 37 sex unknown.
habits of men and women, see the article which I wrote together with Frank Kouwenhoven in Oideion 2 (Leiden, 1995): ‘Female Folk Singers in Jiangsu, China’.

COWHERDS: CURSING AND SPEAKING OUT
Traditionally, most outdoor singing took place primarily in summer, during the work in the rice paddies. Shan’ge did more than just divert people’s minds. Some of the lyrics reminded the singers and their audience of a different world of gods and magic in which many of them believed. Love songs and songs of social protest frequently broke through established social conventions and offered some form of mental freedom. And occasionally, Shan’ge were an opportunity to shout a dramatic truth at the top of your voice. Defiance was a reason why young people in particular must have cherished the genre. A country woman in Jiuqi recalls:

'Yes, these songs with a leader and a chorus were sung in the fields, and then people sang whatever they liked. If they were angry with the landlord they cursed him in their songs!' 

Chinese folk song anthologies of the early part of the century include numerous examples of songs of protest against wealthy landowners, greedy tax collectors or foreign oppressors.

Cursing and giving other people a piece of one’s mind was something male singers learned at an early age. The first opportunity to test one’s voice and wit in song came when boys were ten to twelve years old. Many were sent out to take cows to the fields to graze. It was a task exclusively entrusted to boys. Cows and oxen were used as draught animals, and there was dairy farming in some parts of the region. Nobody expected boys who herded cattle to behave as adults. They played outdoor games like children of their age anywhere in the world. They ran around in the fields, caught fish, hunted eggs or young birds and fought among themselves. They were fond of swearing, and of teasing smaller boys - and used Shan’ge as a medium for this purpose.

Hua Zurong (b. 1927), a singer in Dongting, Wuxi County, who was raised by his grandfather who kept cattle, has vivid memories of his childhood years as a cowherd:
'There was usually a whole bunch of us, and we loved to sing shan’ge and to swear at each other. We called it ma shanmen. You sang something rude, and someone else replied. Everyone knew these songs. We formed groups and started cursing. Everyone participated in the quarrels. I was very good at it.' [Hua Zurong, 30 January 1989.]

Hua’s description is confirmed by reports from other singers like Shen Shaqu, northern Zhejiang, Zhao Yongming and Zhang Amu (Wujiang), who also herded cattle in their youth.

One performer in Huangdai referred to the practice as singing ma ren ge (‘cursing songs’) and said that such songs were also inserted in long narrative songs (‘but you won’t find them in printed versions, because those have been purified’). Other singers who were not involved in cattle herding still remember the cowherd’s songs that other boys in their neighbourhood sang, and they confirm the frequent use of abusive language:

‘Duige (dialogue songs) were sung by children in our neighbourhood when they herded cattle. For example, you were from East village, I was from West village, and then we started singing and the words became steadily worse. You see, this is probably also where our dirty songs [hun’ge] came from. Boys were not able to cope with girls. Girls were very attentive, but boys were naughty. If they noticed that they could not defeat the girls in singing, boys always came up with their dirty songs and sang the most terrible things.’ [Jin Wenyin, Shengpu, 11 May 1990.]

Hua Zurong performed one example of a cowherd’s dialogue that he remembered from his youth. He sang it to the local shan’ge tune of Dongting in Wuxi County. The first verse ran:

Don’t boast so much while singing shan’ge. 你唱山歌勿要显摆
A dirty little frog in a cornfield, that’s what you’re like. 好像麦田里巴的一只小田鸡
One kick will send you down the slurry pit: 一脚踢你坑缸里
Go eat muck and maggots for all eternity! 戳世代代吃粪蛆

This was recorded in January 1989. Here is another example, from a song by Wu Alin from Huangdai, recorded in May 1990:

If I’m singing shan’ge, don’t interfere! 奴唱山歌你勿要抢
If you’re going to squeeze in your own songs, may your entrails rot. 抢我山歌你的肠子烂
Yes, let them rot, your entrails, heart and lungs and all! 烂得肠子心肺才烂光
Till nothing’s left – except your two rotten persimmon legs! 推来雨只烂脚踏

If you sing a shan’ge – if you can get it out of your throat, that is – 你有山歌唱出来
I will sing one to pit against yours! 我有山歌唱出来
Go on then, sing dialogues until blood and pus seep between your teeth. 对得牙子缝里血和
Ha, with tousled hair and bare feet into your coffin you’ll go! 赤脚头头下棺材

Martin Yang’s descriptions of cowherds in Taitou village in Shandong Province (1965: 205-207) suggest that swearing and teasing were perhaps something of a national sport among Chinese village boys who herded cattle. The phenomenon was evidently not restricted to southern Jiangsu.

On the whole, vulgar songs – which are often, but not necessarily about erotic subjects – are a far more common phenomenon in Chinese folk song culture than might be concluded from printed collections. Not all texts about vulgar subjects are necessarily rude or distasteful. Metaphors may be chosen carefully and with humour, as in the fisherman’s song below, (sung by Ren Mei, Wuxi, January 1989):

3 The English translations of songs in this article were made in co-operation with F. Kouwenhoven.
On a worn-out greasy carrying pole
I take my load of tortoises to Hangzhou.
Tortoises big and small - I sell them all but one.
No way to get rid of this shoddy beast of mine...
Ah well, let me sing a few songs with it.

The 'shoddy beast' refers to the singer's penis.

THE SHAN'GE TRADITION AMONG FISHERMEN

Fishing in the Wu area is men's work and a specialized profession. Like agriculture, it needs practical skills which are acquired only after years of training. Fishing is usually not carried out in combination with farming, except for domestic use. The large boats with several masts which sail on Lake Tai attest to an ancient tradition of communally organized freshwater fishing in the area. Except for working cries (haozi), no folk songs can be heard during fishing today - neither on Lake Tai, nor on any of the smaller lakes. But there are indications that a genuine fishermen's song tradition existed in the past, of which only a few traces have survived.

The official list of folk singers in Jiangsu compiled in 1989 includes 11 fishermen and more than three hundred farmers. The difference must be due to the fact that only a tiny segment of the population is involved in fishing. The few remaining fishermen who sing or remember songs cannot properly indicate the one-time importance of singing among fishing communities in the Wu area.

Reports of cultural workers in lakeside villages indicate that fishermen originally shared the shan'ge repertoire of farmers - the tunes as well as the lyrics - and infused them with a vocabulary of fishing terms and elaborate descriptions of their working environment. They referred to the songs as shan'ge, not as yuge 'fishing songs' - a name used mainly by Chinese folk song researchers. It is possible to view the fishermen's songs as a separate repertoire, as long as the close continuity between these songs and the farmers' shan'ge is not lost sight of.

A number of fishermen's shan'ge refer specifically to fishing or to boat-life, or describe the beauty of girls or the character of love relationships in metaphors entirely related to fishing. Several of the long narrative songs that circulated in the Wu area were sung both by farmers and by fishermen. The most distinctive aspect of the fishermen's songs, aside from their local expressions, is the performance context. The songs were sung on the water in lulls between work, or while rowing. Dialogues (duige) were popular. On windless days the water carried the sounds over vast distances, from one boat to the next.

We did not do much fieldwork in lakeside villages, which accounts for the near-absence of fishermen (5 names only) in our list of singers. We consulted Ren Mei, a folk song collector who spent the 1950s as a cultural cadre in a village near Lake Tai. At a time when shan'ge singing in the fields was still possible, he discovered that fishermen's songs were already a thing of the past - remembered mainly by old people. He believes that the strong impact of Christian missionary activity caused an early decline:

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4 The survey of singers in Jiangsu (Zhangguo geyao 1989) lists 51 % farmers against 1.4 % fishermen. In 1983, the number of people in Suzhou (most of the area covered in our fieldwork except Wuxi and northern Zhejiang) employed in agriculture was estimated at 58 % of the working population, against 8 % who were engaged in forestry, dairy farming and fishing. The number of fishermen must have been limited in earlier periods as well; since both agriculture and fishing are fairly labour-intensive, the total economic output of Wuxian may give a rough idea: in 1949, 79.8 % was ascribed to agriculture, 3.5 % to fishing. Sources: Yang Jiaxang, 1984: 312. Also cf. Jiangsu shi xian gaituangan, 1989: 499.
‘In the wake of the Opium War [1839-42] most fishermen along the shores of Lake Tai were converted to Catholicism. By the end of the last century more than 95 percent of them had become Roman Catholics. Most of the fishermen’s songs were rather candid texts about love between men and women. These songs were no longer sung by people who were converted. By the time I came to Huaxi [on the northeastern shore of Lake Tai] in the early 1950s, it was mainly people in their sixties and seventies who still remembered the fishermen’s songs, and there were only a few who sang them. Among younger people, there were even fewer singers left.’ [Wuxi, 31 Jan. 1989.]

It is difficult to measure the precise effects of Catholicism on shan’ge singing. It may have been an instrumental factor in the decline of the genre among fishermen, as Ren Mei suggests. No doubt many European missionaries in China saw local folklore as a serious obstacle to the country’s progress and intellectual development.5

There is ample evidence of Christian activities among fishermen in the Wu area, and not only around Lake Tai. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jiangnan became the principal centre of Jesuit missions in China. From their headquarters in Xujiahui [Zikawei], Shanghai, Catholic missionaries found their way into the interior of the Yangzi delta. They were protected by newly won treaties which granted them free access to the villages and full rights to preach. The Jesuits were relatively successful in the heart of the Wu area, but less so in Zhoushan and Ningbo (in the east) where the impact of Buddhism was apparently too strong. They made their chief gain from among the poor – peasants, boatmen, and fishermen. Before 1949, between ten and twenty percent of the fishermen in Wuxian (east of Lake Tai) were converted to Catholicism.6 Compared to the relatively small success of Christianity in most parts of

5 Cf. e.g. one missionary’s comments [Smith, 1899: 55, 66, 312-316, 343] on village theatricals, the ‘monotony and vacuity of village life’ and the ‘meaninglessness’ of rural folk songs.

China—in the years up to 1949 less than one percent of the Chinese population adopted the foreign faith—this was a notable achievement.

Poor fishermen in the Wu area responded eagerly to Catholicism because the missionaries brought orphanages, hospitals and famine relief and offered a road to survival. In the sad cycle of floods, famines and poverty, many fishermen had lost their homes and lived in abject poverty on boats in the reeds. Some had done so for generations—they could not even remember their ancestral origins any more.7

In the early 1980s, Ren Mei returned to the Lake Tai area to collect what was left of the fishermen’s shan’ge. He discovered remnants of various song types which traditionally accompanied special activities, like dang shan’ge (‘rowing shan’ge’), a slow type of song that was sung while rowing a boat. The rowing was done standing, with one or two big oars attached to the stern of the boat.

The appalling living circumstances of fishermen in the past were reflected in many of the lyrics. The song below refers to fishing at night. During the daytime, many fishermen kept their boats in the reeds to hide them from tax collectors or (later) from soldiers. In the 1940s they shared their hiding places with Chinese guerilla fighters who sought refuge from the Japanese occupation army.

At sunset when the sky turns gray they hurry home: 太阳一落��琉璃
The dragon to deep waters, the tiger to his mountain. 龙奔曝曝底归山
On the lake only my lonely and forlorn, cold and 冷冷泠泠,飘飘零零小网船
freezing, floating, drifting little fishing boat. 漂泊手里夸口活命饭
In the dark of night I steal a mouthful to survive.8

In the prevailing climate of war and peasant uprisings in the mid-nineteenth century, Jiangnan was faced with growing social disorder and increased banditry. In this period, Lake Tai was frequented by gunboat (jiang chuan) gangs which roamed the lake and its surrounding waterways in fast three- to five-man boats. The gangs lived on the proceeds from gambling dens and were also active in the salt trade and in opium smuggling (Bernhardt, 1992: 53). Some of the songs attest to the climate of insecurity:

If you have sailed on a salt boat you are not afraid of brine. 坐过盐船勿怕咸
If my love goes out begging I will hold his basket. 姐哥哥讨饭妹提篮
If you’re caught and thrown in prison for my sake 若是为妹捉去坐牢监
I will bring you food every day. [Source: Ren Mei, 1987: 14] 情愿天天来送饭

While shan’ge were mostly sung to slow movements (rowing) or when fishermen rested in their boats, there was a whole range of activities which could be accompanied by working cries or short one-phrase songs of the haozi type. Basically any group action that required a regular pace could be supported by haozi, from lifting anchor (qi mao), hoisting sails (bo peng), and rowing (yao lu) to hauling nets (qi wang), fathoming with a bamboo pole (dian shui) or winding ropes around a spool (qi xing che). Some of these actions were demonstrated for us by fishermen on Chongming island when we recorded their haozi.

The singing of haozi is still functional in fishing today. Perhaps these short songs have “stuck” longer than the shan’ge repertoire because they are more instrumental to fishing: they support the pace of repetitive actions which take only a short time to complete. Shang’ge, with their generally slow pace and longer breath, are mainly suitable for rowing. True enough, they could also be sung by farmers during fishing or collecting plants in sweet water, for example during the picking of caltrops (when people sat in special low tubs which floated on the water). On the whole, shan’ge may

7 Cf. Wang Shui, 1989. The habit of dwelling on boats is continued today, albeit under far better conditions. Between 60,000 and 70,000 people live permanently on boats along Lake Tai today.
8 Sung by Ren Mei, Wuxi, 31 January 1989.
have been less important as functional tools in the process of fishing than they were during farmers' group activities like weeding or planting in the fields. This is a matter open to further investigation.

LABOURERS, PEDLARS, ITINERANT SINGERS
Various professional groups in the Chinese countryside and a number of special events and rituals were traditionally linked with specific folk song repertoires. It is beyond the scope of this article to trace and examine those repertoires – or what is left of them. That they existed, and that they were not necessarily derived from the shan'ge culture but formed independent traditions can be illustrated with a few examples: the songs of itinerant beggars, the street cries of pedlars and the ritual rhymes of construction workers.

Construction workers' rhymes are sung or recited during various stages in the building of a house. The ritual waned after 1949, but it was popular in the past, as we were told by singers in Wuxixian, Wuxian, Wujiang, Dongtingshan and also in Rudong in northern Jiangsu. Dongtingshan used to be very rich in building songs. It was a favourite area for upper-class villas and mansions.

The crucial moment in any building project was when the highest point was reached. When roof beams were laid on houses in Jiangsu, construction workers spoke or sang a number of 'luck-bringing formulas'. This was sometimes accompanied by fireworks and food offerings to the gods. The ritual was called pao liang (laying roof beams) or 趕忙 ‘casting food’. Carpenters or masons at work on the roof sang or recited their formulas while throwing steamed buns, cakes or other
kinds of food into the new rooms of the house. The workers' foreman read aloud a couplet which was pasted to the front entrance of the house. Regardless of the time of day, people then laid down their work to have a banquet with the owner of the house and his family. ‘Luck bringing’ texts were aimed at securing the gods’ future protection and invoking happiness for the inhabitants of the new house. Here is a (spoken) text which we collected in Luxu:

Lay the roof-beam, lay it eastward. 飭梁躐过东
The red-coloured sun rises in the East. 天日出一点红
Lay the roof-beam, lay it southward. 飭梁躐过南
Your son will obtain a First Degree in the Exams. 子个儿子做状元
Lay the roof-beam, lay it westward. 飭梁躐过西
The Great Buddha of the Western Heaven smiles broadly. 西天大佛笑嘻嘻
Lay the roof-beam, lay it northward. 飭梁躐过北
Peace and comfort will reign in the Autumn of your life. 老来有靠享清福

A general term for luck-bringing texts in connection with house building in the Wu area was hao hua (‘beneficial words’) or mujiang hao hua (‘beneficial words by the carpenter’). In Rudong (northern Jiangsu) the recitations were called shuo fugu or chang fugu (‘speaking / singing wealth and rank’). One scholar referred to it as zao wu shan’ge (‘room building shan’ge’). House-builders had various texts and sometimes various tunes in their repertoire to perform at appropriate moments during the construction of a house. We recorded a whole series of such songs in Rudong. 10

It is likely that various categories of factory workers and craftsmen in the Wu area had their own songs – haozi or full-blown lyrics – to accompany specific work activities. In Shuangfeng (north of Kunshan) we recorded a song sung traditionally by girls weaving mosquito nets. Systematic research would probably bring to light a wealth of songs associated with specific professions. We recorded peddlers in Shanghai, Suzhou, Wuxi and provincial market towns who advertised their products and services with the help of all kinds of street cries, jingles, or full-blown songs. Some peddlers were not native to the region but had brought their songs from remote provinces. As an autonomous and richly varied genre, the songs of Chinese peddlers deserve a separate study. Suffice it here to quote a fruit seller recorded in Shanghai in December 1988 (Yao Quan’gen, b.1914, Shanghai):

Oh, sweet oranges from Xinhui! 咸会甜橙啊
Hey, Indian apples, pears from Tangshan! 咸印度苹果啊, 汤山梨哎
Ah, sesame bananas for sale! 咸芝麻香蕉

There is no limit to the variety of trades and services advertised in street cries. We recorded food sellers, collectors of worn clothes or old bottles, carpenters, purchasers of old clocks, bamboo pole sellers and umbrella repairmen. Specific songs must have disappeared together with the crafts or activities which they were associated with. For example, sellers of woodblock prints in Suzhou used to advertise their Spring Festival prints with a song repertoire of their own; these songs disappeared in the 1940s.

Itinerant singers are yet another group with song repertoires of their own. The most prominent category are poor people from Anhui, Zhejiang and other adjacent areas who seal the doors of their houses in the winter season and move into Jiangnan towards the New Year to earn money by begging or singing. They are sometimes referred to as

9 Spoken by Zhao Yongming, Luxu, 17 April 1992, except for the last line, which was supplemented by cultural cadre Yu Wei.
10 For Rudong, see also Xi yuan lu (publ. before 1987). For further information on housebuilding songs and rituals in the Wu area, cf. Li Zhoufang and Yu Zhen, 1989: 62–81.
changchun (‘spring singers’) because they are active specifically during the Spring Festival. They find their biggest audience in cities and market towns, but sometimes they roam the countryside. Normally, beggars are barred from farmers’ houses — people are afraid of their ‘evil’ influences. But changchuns are different:

‘We don’t mind receiving them, because they bring fortune. Last year we had two changchuns from Hangzhou, a father and son. They sang together, in unison, and accompanied themselves on a gong. In between every line they would beat the gong a few times. Their music is different from shan’ge, but the lyrics can be similar. For example, they may sing a twelve months’ song with names of flowers in it, like we do. Sometimes what they do is more like reciting. They can improvise as well. (...) They will sing about things which they notice around them. Without that talent they wouldn’t earn much money. Some of them tell folk tales or know all kinds of little tricks.’ [Lian Xiaodi (b.1958), Huangdai, 6 Feb. 1989.]

‘Nowadays you don’t see them very often. Before liberation [1949] they were common. I remember seeing them as a child. During the first fifteen days of the Spring Festival, the men in our village went to the tenhouses in the centre of town while women and children stayed at home. Those who stayed at home saw the changchun. We did not learn their songs. We weren’t allowed to! Anyway, their music and dialect were different. Sometimes we could not understand them. And they did not understand our shan’ge, so they did not learn our songs either.’ [Lian Dagen (b.1919), Huangdai, 6 Feb. 1989.]

Although these singers do not necessarily come from northern Jiangsu, they are so strongly associated with poverty and patterns of seasonal migration from the north that they are often referred to as Su bei ren (‘people from northern Jiangsu’). Both men and women participate in the tradition. Much of their text repertoire consists of songs that also circulate independently among the resident population in the Wu area, in the form of xiao diao (‘little ditties’). Included are titles like Shizhizai (‘Ten tables’), Shiba shanzi (‘Ten paper fans’), Shiba mo (‘Eighteen strokes’), Yanhua nu gao yinzhuan (‘The pleasure girl takes her case to court in the underworld’) and Meng Jiangnui (‘The girl Meng Jiang’).

The lyrics vary from simple luck-bringing formulas (e.g. fa cai lou – ‘I wish you prosperity’) to complete narrative songs. The most common tunes are those of Meng Jiangnui and of Yangluqing. The music of Meng Jiangnui is sometimes referred to as changchun diao (‘spring festival tune’). The tunes have simple binary rhythms, and the singers often accompany themselves on a gong or a bamboo stick, or on other instruments such as Chinese fiddle or Western concertina. The number of migrant singers who come to Jiangnan in the New Year period has dwindled after 1949.

Begging and singing during the Spring Festival is not necessarily limited to migrants from far-off places. In the past, poor inhabitants of the Wu area sometimes went off for a begging tour of their own, or they sent their children. Huang Xiaodi, a
farmer near Kunshan, remembers the *changchun* trips of his youth as profitable business:

'It was before liberation. I used to take a small gong (*tang huo*) with me and I sang songs like *Shizhi tiazi*. I made ten *kuai* per day, enough to buy myself food and solve all my problems. What I did was called *chang chundiao* ['singing Spring Festival tunes']. [Huang Xiaodi, (b.1933), Xinzen, 13 April 1992.]

Next to the 'seasonal' singers who travel in Jiangan only in the New Year period, there are professional singers who are on the move all year round, alone or in groups. They may sing the kind of songs described above, or perform folk tales or relate opera scenes in the form of long narrative ballads. They are mostly seen in cities and market towns. Their performances can be more stage-like or theatrical in aspect (e.g. with a dancing monkey who represents the various characters in a play by putting on different masks). Perhaps because of the long narrative songs some of the itinerant beggars sing, Chinese scholars sometimes define any kind of beggars' songs—including *changchun*—as a form of *quyi* ( 'story singing') rather than as 'folk song'. The boundaries of *quyi* and *min'ge* ('folk song') are not sharply defined. It should be evident that beggars' songs do not represent just one genre. There are numerous repertoires, linked to specific groups of performers. One genre, Fenyang drum singing (*Fenyang hua*), named after a city in northern Anhui where the first performers came from, has become well known all over China. Another group of itinerant singers are *Daoqing*, beggars with a religiously (Daoist) inspired repertoire. In the eyes of one informant, the position of *Daoqing* was far below that of *changchun* because of their assumed alliance with 'evil forces'. The lowest positions among singing beggars are probably reserved for the blind and the disabled. In traditional China, blindness was a subject of contempt, fear and superstitious beliefs. Blind babies were often killed or abandoned. Families sent blind children to beg in the streets or just to sell them or give them away to fortune-tellers or to itinerant musicians. The position of blind people in China has improved, but excesses still occur. We recorded only one blind beggar in the Wu area. The subject of blind singers in China certainly merits separate research. Although itinerant singers have remained rather in the background of our own fieldwork, it must be stressed that it is to these travellers—as much as to large-scale migration—that China's folk song culture owes much of its present unity.

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A blind beggar performing street songs in Yixing, 1986.

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11 Cf. Lucy Ching, 1982: 11-13. This autobiography of a blind woman in Guangdong makes ample reference to the traditional fate of blind children in southern China: they usually became prostitutes, fortune-tellers, musicians or beggars.
12 It would be interesting to see if any guild-like organisations of wandering blind singers exist (or traditionally existed), comparable to those of the *goze* in Japan (Fritsch, 1992, 1996). Similar organizations existed in parts of southern Europe in the eighteenth century (Burke, 1994: 100).
FESTIVALS, TRADITIONAL AND NEW - THE CASE OF BAIMAO
In the Wu area, as in other parts of China, folk singing used to play a role in traditional festivals which celebrated the birthdays of gods and which marked certain periods of the year. The New Year period, the time immediately before sowing rice in early summer and the interval between the weeding and harvesting of the rice (in early autumn) were particularly suitable periods for large-scale festivities. People could relax from work and had the time to travel and to participate in leisure activities.

The festivals furnished in one unique package a wide spectrum of attractions that drew spectators from far and wide: an opportunity to visit the local towns and to worship at (locally) famous sacred sites; a gay festive mood punctuated by exalted religious moments; elaborate pageantry - in the form of ceremonial processions and outdoor-staged operas - and the excitement of all kinds of musical and physical games and contests. Temples were often the centre of the festival site, but many exciting events took place outdoors and were not necessarily religious in character.

In the twentieth century, many of these popular festivals were suppressed by local intelligentsia and government representatives - presumably backed by military power - who strove to 'modernize' their society along Western lines, or were gradually transformed into government-organized secularized activities. The ritual and religious elements were subdued and greater emphasis was given, in the remaining festivals, to secular elements - especially those that lent themselves to political propaganda and education, such as folk songs.13

The importance of the old temple fairs can hardly be overestimated. They were grand occasions that mobilized tens of thousands of people and were regarded as major markers of the seasons. People lived 'in remembrance of one festival and in expectation of the next', as Fei Hsiao-Tung described it. Most of the big festivals were held in local townships and took place annually, except for the inter-village parade that took place every ten years along Lake Tai (until the 1920s). If traditions began to wane, it was not only because the festivals were viewed as superstitious activities by a disapproving elite, but also because long-term economic depressions and war-time conditions in Jiangsu made it impossible for people to continue these large-scale events. Sometimes there was simply no money to finance a festival. (Fei Hsiao-Tung, 1939: 103-104, 130-131.) Economic conditions may have improved in present-day China, but after an interruption of nearly half a century, and with most of the ancient rural temple-sites in the Wu area closed or destroyed, it appears that many great festivals of the olden days have disappeared, at least in this part of the country. There may be local revivals, but they are different from the old festivals in many ways, and obviously attuned to the needs of a new generation that has grown up with radio, television, pop music and speedier ways of life.

A description by some folk singers of the old-style festivals held annually in Jinze, a small town in Wujiang County, may give an impression of what festival life could be like in the Wu area in the first half of this century.

"In the old days, Jinze was a town full of temples. People used to say: qiaoqiao you miao, miao miao you qiao - near every bridge a temple, near every temple a bridge. Every year, on the 28th of the third month and the 9th of the ninth month, there were huge celebrations. People from the wide surroundings travelled to town. They came in big boats, or walking. Local hotels and private rooms were filled to capacity. Everyone wanted to join in." [Zhang Fanglan, Luxu, 18 May 1990.]

Festivities in Jinze were usually the culminating point of a whole series of events that had started in the surrounding villages. The festival in honour of the Buddhist deity

13 This happened not only in the Wu area. Similar developments were signalled in other parts of China. The hua’er festivals in northern China are a case in point. Cf. Tuohy, 1988: 199-201, 222-227.
Yang Laoye lasted for a whole week and moved to a different village every day, from the 23rd to the 28th of the third month (according to the traditional calendar), when it reached town.

"The weather was already nice at that time of year, and the days grew longer. We had one day of festivities in Luxu, and the next day we went on to Shentia. In our own town and in Shentia it was not quite as big and lively as in Jinze! I remember it all very well. I was in my twenties at that time. The festival ended with the temple fair of Yang Laoye, when they carried all the laoyes [the images of local gods] from the surrounding regions to Jinze, and the image of Yang Laoye was taken outside the temple to welcome them. This was at the Dongwang temple. If you ask old people about this, they can still remember it. Ah, yes, and the Chongyang Festival, on the 9th of the ninth month, was another great event, also in Jinze." [Zhao Yongming, Luxu, 17 May 1990.]

The religious processions in honour of the local gods – gods usually endowed with powers to fend off floods, droughts or locust plagues14 – were not necessarily the most spectacular aspect of the festivals. The best remembered activities were connected with food, dance, and music: markets, folk songs, games, lion and dragon dances, acrobatics and operas.

"When the festival came to a village, they erected a temporary stage [caotai] on which they played. Here in Luxu we watched three days of village opera [cuntaixi]. It was splendid! They gave us entire operas, or bits and pieces. There was also a festival in Xitang on the 3rd of the fourth month, the temple fair of Qi Laoye. On the final day in the afternoon they took him out of the temple and carried him around. And then the opera groups performed all kinds of plays. In Jinze there was a lot of incense burning going on, you wouldn’t believe it! People sang xiaodiao and boat rocking songs (...) Wherever they went they were stopped. They had to sing before they were allowed to walk on. Those boat rocking songs were dancing songs. Four people were clad in a paper boat and held oars, another person sat on top, and they rocked their bodies and sang songs like Shiba mo ['Eighteen Strokes']. It was marvellous. The last festival was in 1949, but then it stopped. They even burned Yang Laoye! Nowadays people go to Hangzhou if they want to burn incense. You will no longer find those wonderful operas and temple fairs..." [Zhao Yongming, 17 May 1990.]

Some of the festivals featured shan’ge singing, particularly during the New Year period. There were numerous other vocal genres – often connected with the use of specific props – such as the various types of paper boat songs (huachuan, danghuchuan etc.), rowing boat songs (hualongchuan), 'lantern songs' (e.g., yangge deng, huadeng, cai chadeng and ma deng, which combined singing and dancing with the parading of colourful lanterns), and staged dialogues with clowns, dancers, and men dressed like women. Stilt walkers (gao qiao) would parade the grounds in colourful opera costumes, to the accompaniment of gongs and drums. People who participated in mini-operas or in various forms of story-telling with instrumental accompaniment (notably huang, 'flower drum songs') were often organized in local performing clubs which had regular rehearsals to prepare for every festival.15

On some occasions folk song contests were held. One annual festival near Baimao village reportedly started life as a harvest celebration but was gradually turned into a massive government-organized shan’ge contest which attracted thousands of people.

The biggest shan’ge contests in Baimao took place in 1949, 1957, 1965 and 1972. At the point where two rivers meet, three kilometers from the village centre, groups of singers lined up on special stages constructed along the shores and engaged in singing dialogues. People north of Baimao competed with people south of Baimao, trying to outwit the other party with funny improvised texts. With no juries, no prizes, and the

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14 Wujiang county has a rich mythology in connection with these topics, especially locust magic. Cf. the myth of Luivian [Liu Wang] in Fei Hsiao-Tung, 1939: 168. Cf. also Xu Wenwu, 1988: 77-78.
audience's response as the principle measure of a singer's success, it was a competition without absolute winners or losers. A local official acted as master of ceremonies. He often kept the best singers for the end, to create a suitable climax.

"The singing lasted three evenings. Boats could not pass because of the crowds of spectators who obstructed the entire river with their own boats. There were thousands of people. Everyone took lights with them so that the area was illuminated. There were up to twenty singers on each side, on special stages erected on boats. The voices carried far over the water. It sounded beautiful. On each side one person acted as a singer while the others made up texts." [Fei Dexing, (b. 1936), Baimao, 14 April 1992.]

"The solo singers had to shout at each other to bridge the distance. It was fun. If one side didn't know how to reply, the other side would sing: 'Hey, why don't you reply?' And if one of the groups was at a loss, another group on the same side could take over to fill the gap." [Shen Jianhua, (b. 1952), cultural official, Baimao, 1 June 1990.]

"We had a separate 'conductor's boat' [zhibui chuan] with the leader on it. Even in the early 1950s, when the festival was still held in a rather improvised way, there was a leader. He sang the opening song and then allowed the singers to begin – those who were most eager came first. (...) One of the highlights was when a singer drew out his pitch for a long time, while the other singer, or even the whole crowd, joined in with a musical reply." [Hu Bufan, cultural official, Changshu, 14 Jan. 1989.]

The propaganda element in the festival was gradually strengthened. In 1972, during the Cultural Revolution, the festival was purely political in character, with songs of criticism directed against private persons, and with all the texts written down beforehand. By then it had entirely lost its former character of a popular festival. The turn-out in terms of spectators was bigger than ever, but it was the last festival of this size to be held near Baimao.

The Cultural Revolution eventually brought an end to shan'ge singing as it did in many other parts of the Wu area. In the 1980s, there were attempts to revive the tradition, when a schoolteacher and a cultural worker took up the task of teaching shan'ge to the younger generation. It was not a return to the old days. Many of the song texts were politically inspired poems and many of the melodies were especially composed for the occasion. The method of teaching (via solmization) had little to do with the original tradition of oral transmission of folk songs. There was some enthusiasm for the 'new Baimao shan'ge', especially among young schoolgirls, who appeared to show more interest in the singing lessons than boys. We recorded an unusual number of young female singers in Baimao. In recent years, some small-scale indoor singing contests have been organized in the local community centre, featuring a mixture of shan'ge, choral singing and pop songs (karaoke). An attempt at a revival of the former outdoor shan'ge festival, in April 1988, attracted approximately a thousand spectators.

FOLK SONGS AND RELIGION
The existence of ritual laments (Schimmelpenninck & Kouwenhoven, 1995: 271) and the fact that the singing of folk songs played a role in temple fairs suggest that certain types of folk song were traditionally associated, in one way or another, with ritual and with religion. Before 1949, many big temples in the Wu area maintained a splendid standard (cf. Zhongguo nongcun, 1971: 3-5, 7-8) and were at the heart of the big annual festivals, where shan'ge and other types of folk song could be heard.¹⁶ In local village temples lay practitioners carried out their own brand of religion – any mixture of

Buddhism, Daoism and local mythology – and sang ritual songs. Rich families invited Buddhist monks or Daoist masters to their homes to perform rituals.

Incense-burning operas were performed for birthdays or funerals, to pray for good health, rain and fertility or to commemorate plagues or diseases that had been overcome. Several informants remembered opera performances which took place in such a context in pre-Communist days.¹⁷

Villagers and monks often joined forces in musical ensembles, or in singing hymns on public occasions. Priests served as the keepers of ancestor records of local families. On a different note, some temples in Jiangnan incidentally served as centres of organized resistance against unpopular (tax) measures of wealthy landowners (Bernhardt, 1992: 34-35, 59-60). In brief, there was musical and cultural exchange on all levels between villagers and ritual specialists.

Religious and secular music in Jiangnan (as in other parts of China) often forms a continuum. While there are most certainly a number of distinctly different genres, it is also possible to find musical forms so closely related that one cannot decide to which genre a song or a tune belongs unless one knows in which context it is performed. An aged Daoist master of the Xuanmiao guan (Temple of Sublime Mysteries) in Suzhou told us that some of the basic melodies (qupai) he performs in his temple (and the instruments on which they are played) are shared with Kun opera.¹⁸ He acknowledged folk-tune influences in some of the vocal melodies. The texts of his song repertoire are based on Daoist scriptures. Some of the songs sung (on ceremonial occasions) by Zhou and his colleagues are reminiscent of folk songs in their wordplay, formulaic structures and long lists of items:

- Spring to fall, four flower-seasons, (oh Immortals!) 夏秋冬四季花, 湖中仙
- Peony and herbaceous peony, matching with emelia, 牡丹芍药对山茶
- Hibiscus flowers, Golden Lion chrysanthemums, 美蓉相对金菊菊
- Yulan magnolia leaves, bigger than big-leaved flowery hydrangea. 玉兰花大绣球花

The myriads of spring flowers are the loveliest of all seasons, (oh Immortals!) 四季名花春色多, 湖中仙

- Summer brings the splendid lotus - one flower alone. 夏天独有一枝花
- Autumn has orange osmanthus and golden chrysanthemum 秋来丹桂黄金菊
- Winter features - scattered over snowy gardens - wintersweet. 冬有腊梅散雪园

All of you: Dongbin, Tiegui, He Xian’gu, (oh Immortals!) 洞宾铁拐李仙姑, 湖中仙
Xiangzi, Zhongli, Lan Calhe. 香子钟离吕洞宾
Old man Zhang Guo and Cao Guojiu. 张果老人曹洞君
You, the Eight Immortals, meet [and enjoy yourselves] with good laughter, ha ha! 八仙客聚会笑哈哈

Terms like xuanjuan, Daochang and Daoqing (widely known in the Wu area) are associated with various kinds of Buddhist and Daoist (semi-)ritual or ceremonial vocal music which reflect a continuous interplay of religious and secular elements.

Xuanjuan is a widely known term in Jiangsu and Zhejiang for (the performing of) baojuan, religious scrolls.²⁰ In the Wu area, xuanjuan are narrative songs sung either

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¹⁷ We have not come across any information on ritual opera in the Wu area in recent times.

¹⁸ For a study on the history and social background of Kunqu, cf. Lu Eting, 1980.

¹⁹ Three stanzas taken from San huan, as sung and played by the Suzhou Daoist Ensemble (Suzhou Daojiao yinyuetuan) on a commercial cassette, Ni shang ya yun, Nanjing yinxiang chubanshe NY 1069, date of publication unknown. The names in the final stanza refer to the ‘Eight Immortals’, a configuration of legendary saints in Chinese folklore.

²⁰ The word xuanjuan (‘proclaim scrolls’) may refer to either the repertoire or the performances. Some singers use the term nian xuanjuan, i.e. to recite or to perform xuanjuan. The general term baojuan covers a number of different traditions in China, all of which are popular forms of narrative singing, usually intended as a mixture of entertainment and religious propaganda: one is the xuanjuan...
unaccompanied or (more commonly) with ritual percussion, like qing (metal bowl) and
muyu ('wooden fish', a small woodblock, shaped like a cow-bell and struck with a
stick). Other instruments, less frequently mentioned, are erhu (fiddle), dizí (bamboo
flute) and bo (small cymbals). The songs are performed by a soloist, sometimes
supported by one or more extra singers in refrain-like sections. The texts are usually
narrative ballads based on Buddhist or Daoist stories, or a mixture of them. They may
also be based on folk legends or on opera or tanci representations of folk stories.

While xuanjuan started off as a propagation of religious texts, the narrative
element gradually pushed religious connotations somewhat into the background. When
and how this happened is a subject for separate study. One xuanjuan text, 'The silk
ribbon baojuan' (Si tao baojuan), describes an itinerant artist (yiren) who — a knapsack
slung over his shoulder and a bundle of scrolls crammed under his arm — travels from
teahouses to inns, from temple fairs to the homes of the rich, and from one brothel to
the next to perform his xuanjuan.²¹ Some folk literature specialists in China trace the
gradual shift to entertainment in Jiangnan back to the Qing, although moralistic
overtones of the genre continued to play a role: bathing and fasting — no wine, no meat
— were required of the singers before any performance.

In examples of xuanjuan which we came across, the words were usually grouped
in two-line stanzas and contained frequent references to Buddha, most obviously in the
small standard refrain 'na(n)mo Amitufo'.²² Local singers familiar with the genre
acknowledged its links with Buddhism on the grounds that 'there is namo Amitufo in
it'. Here is a small fragment of xuanjuan from a local anthology:

| Which precious scroll will be unfolded first? | 哪幅宝卷翻开头开 |
| Which precious scroll will sit on the lotus throne? | 哪幅宝卷坐莲台 |
| Nanwu amituo. | 南无阿弥陀 |
| Which altar for precious scrolls will bestow upon you a long life? | 哪幅宝卷坛留寿 |
| Which precious scroll will prevent three disasters? | 哪幅宝卷免三灾 |
| Nanwu amituo. | 南无阿弥陀 |

The Fragrant Mountain Scroll will be unfolded first.
The Delicious Incense Scroll will sit on the lotus throne.
Nanwu amituo.
The Life-Prolonging Altar will bestow upon you a long life.
The Precious Scroll of Long Life will prevent three disasters.
Nanwu amituo.²³

The folk song Heshang cai hua ('A monk picking flowers'), sung by Jin Wenyin from
Shengpu in May 1987, sounds like a mocking of the genre, and underlines the fact that
monks and priests can have doubtful reputations in Chinese popular culture as much as
in European folklore:

As soon as the bright moon rises, namo...
The chaste monk goes out, molí mohosa...
To pick fresh flowers, Amitufo!

For a comprehensive bibliography of studies on baojuan, see Li Shiyu, 1961.
²² In Sanskrit: namah Amitabha, a formula of faith of the Pure Land Sect. Namah means 'to pay
homage to, to make obeisance'. Amitabha is a name of Buddha. In xuanjuan as we recorded it in
Jiangnan the formula was usually heard either at the end of the first or at the end of the second line of
every verse. Sometimes, the formula was abbreviated (Amituo or Mitufo) or split, e.g. with name
following the first line, Amituo the second. Namo is sometimes written namo or nanwu.
²³ Shange baojuan chu zhanki (‘Which precious scroll will be unfolded first’), in: Suzhou minzu
minjian yinyue jicheng. 1984: 293. In our fieldwork we collected a variant of this song.
When the Master sees him, he is furious, nanmo...  
You have broken our monastic rules, moli mohosa...  
I'll kick you out of this place, Amituofo!  

Modern anthologies of folk songs usually categorize xuanjuan as a form of quyi (narrative singing), not as religious music. As far as our information goes, the performers of the genre in the Wu area were ordinary villagers, not institutionalized ritual specialists. They performed on occasions when the blessings of spirits or gods were required, like funerals, people's birthdays, or when someone was seriously ill. Xuanjuan groups in the Wu area were normally paid for their services.

Musically, xuanjuan in the Wu area seem closer to xiaodiao than to shan'ge, in the sense that the songs have a strict binary rhythm and are traditionally sung to accompaniment, unlike shan'ge. Various textual and musical forms of xuanjuan exist, but I must refrain from discussing them here. Xuanjuan was obviously a very common phenomenon in much of the Wu area until the early 1950s. In recent years, the genre has re-emerged in some villages, notably in the Kunshan and Wujiang regions.

Another vocal tradition with roots in religion (and still firmly associated with ritual ceremonies) is the communal chanting of Buddhist scriptures, usually to repetitive rhythms, and accompanied by simple percussion instruments like myyu (woodblock) and small bells. The occasions for this type of singing may be the same as those for xuanjuan: funerals, birthdays, grave illnesses. The chanting - referred to as nianjing, i.e. 'reciting scriptures' - also plays an essential role in Buddhist ritual services. In 1990 we attended two ceremonies of Buddhist women in villages north of Suzhou who met for chanting and (secret) worshipping at night. A thatched roof supported by stakes served as their makeshift temple. The structure was erected on the site of a former temple which had been burnt in the 1950s.

On a table inside there were numerous candelabras and some small statues of Buddha and Guanyin. Along the footpath leading to this site, sellers of candles, paper money and joss sticks did good business. The women emptied their baskets with paper money and other offerings unceremoniously over a large fire, and went over to the altar to pray. They fought their way into the crowd to get as close to the altar as possible and to kneel in front of it. There they engaged in prayer. Other women, standing around the altar, chanted rhythmically to the accompaniment of myyu (woodblock) and a small bell. One of the worshippers told us that she had learned to sing the songs 'not from a teacher but from spirits'. Interestingly, there were no men at the ceremony.

Daochang is used as a general term for the total of musical and ceremonial activities that Daoists (Daoist priests) engage in on public occasions. Many old people in the regions of Kunshan, Shengpu, Wuxi and Luxu recall having seen Daoshi at work in (hongbai) xishi, mainly before 1949. Hongbai xishi, 'red and white joyous events', refers to a wide range of ceremonial activities, such as funerals, weddings, gods' birthdays, longevity celebrations etc. In certain parts of the Wu area, Daoist groups have re-emerged in recent years, particularly since 1987. They are mainly heard at funerals. Besides reciting and chanting hymns, some Daoist groups also play instrumental music. The performers are often ordinary villagers. Some may be representatives of a more distinguished literate and classically oriented elite. Unfortunately we have not

24 Ma Xiang (1993: 22) claims that the music of xuanjuan incorporates fragments of xiaodiao and shan'ge melodies. Yi Tang (1955) also suggests relationships with local opera and tanci. In our own fieldwork, folk singers familiar with xuanjuan stated that the genre is musically unrelated to either shan'ge or xiaodiao, and has nothing in common with opera. The tunes are described as original for xuanjuan, and the repertoire is said to be quite large.

witnessed any performances and have had to rely primarily on local people's statements and recollections:

'If someone had died, we invited Daoshi [Daoist priests]. The Daoists sang and danced and played on wind instruments and percussion. For Daoqing [Daoist songs] you would normally invite seven to nine people, if you had enough money. Poor families could only afford three people. (...) Yes, Daoists still perform if they are invited for a funeral. In the old days Daoists also played music at weddings, but nowadays people would rather have military bands [junyuedui] on such an occasion.' [A schoolteacher in Dongting, 17 April 1990.]

'There is no temple here, but if someone dies, Daoshi come and recite texts (nianjing). Their activities are calledDaochang. Hundred-and-fifty yuan for five people, one evening. It's good business! Lots of people turn up to listen to them. (...) What is different about xuanjuan? Well, xuanjuan is narrative singing. Xuanjuan is performed at funerals mainly to entertain the guests and to pass the time. As for Daochang, it's actually forbidden, because it's based on superstition and has Daoist priests reciting scriptures. But then, well, these people are not real Daoists, just ordinary peasants. You can't actually call them Daoshi – the word is too big.' [Chen Boxiong, a cultural official in Xinzhen, 13 April 1992.]

'I can still remember some of the tunes which Daoshi sang, in former days. They sang beautifully, but nobody could understand the words. No matter whether they were reciting or singing, it was incomprehensible. If you asked their leader, it turned out that he couldn't understand it either. He would say: 'Well, that's just how I happened to learn it from my teacher.' They accompanied themselves on muyu [woodblock] and xiaolu [small gong], beating the instruments at the end of every verse. Before liberation we had a great many Daoshi groups in this area. Sometimes Daoshi groups held competitions.' [Huang Xiaodi, a farmer and folk singer in Xinzhen, 13 April 1992.]

If priests talked 'incomprehensible language', it could mean that they recited classical scriptures or, alternatively, that some local villagers with spiritual inclinations concocted their own brand of mystical language. The songs normally address spirits rather than living humans, anyway, and do not require vernacular translations. Fei Hsiao-tung, when he wrote about the activities of Buddhist priests in his native village of Kaiyixiangong (Wujian) in the 1930s, said that the priest 'never preaches any religious doctrine to the people, except possibly to the dead. Even then he preaches in a language alien to the local people. The stranger the accent, the more valuable, in the popular view, is the preaching.' (Fei, 1939: 103-104).

Daoqing refers to the song repertoire of beggars who roam the countryside and earn a living with religiously inspired songs, sung in their native dialect. We recorded only one fragment of what was possibly a Daoist beggar song. Except for two references to Daoism (in lines that possibly serve as a refrain in sandwich form), the text could pass for an average shan ge or xiaodiao text.

'With utmost devotion I rely on my fate.'
In the first month, plum flowers blossom, the New Year has come.
In the second month, apricot blossoms turn silver white.
In the third month, peach blossoms abound everywhere.
Their flower-hearts open up and shine sparkling red.
The Three Mao brothers are transformed into true Daoists.

As far as ritual and ceremonial songs in non-institutional contexts are concerned, we may safely assume that many genres are irretrievably lost or are now on the brink of extinction. The preface of the anthology 'Wu Songs' makes a passing reference to dian ge, sacrificial songs which were reportedly sung by fishermen on the Yangzi while they went out to sea, as a kind of memorial service for the dead and (presumably) to
ensure protection of the gods during fishing (Jiang Bin, 1984: 38). It appears that these songs are no longer actively sung today.26

Another increasingly elusive genre are the numerous ritual mourning songs which used to accompany vigils and funerals in Wu villages. Most informants in my fieldwork refer to them as a tradition of the past. In the funeral laments of Nanhu, which can still be heard, we find, once again, an illustration of the continuum of secular and sacred music: the so-called jing are songs related to specific funeral preparations – they combine expressions of grief with detailed instructions for ritual actions – but there is also a long-standing tradition of jing as 'art songs'; they may be performed outside a funeral context, for artistic enjoyment. Other types of laments for the dead in Nanhu are called taoge or alternatively (probably closer to the local idiom) taotou. Taoge means 'serial songs': the texts, which show many similarities with those of shan'ge, usually sum up months, flower names or other things which are counted verse by verse. These are linked rather casually with some standard lines of reference to a dead person (Ren Jiahe, 1988: 3, 277-279).27

Some of the shan'ge and xiaodiao which we found in the Wu area may have had ceremonial functions in the past. One song could be sung during one's journey by boat to a place where incense was burnt. Occasionally, a song text reads like a prayer for pity and deliverance, especially if circumstances of famine and disasters are described. Here is an excerpt from Huangnian ge, 'Calamity year song', sung in June 1990 by Xu Awen from Baimao:

In the first month the plum blossom open their buds.  正 月 梅 花 开 起 头
It is a terrible time for common people in Jiangnan.  江 南 百 姓 苦 悉 悉
The shan'ge singer describes the famine of the 20th and 21st year. 山 歌 唱 到 甘 十 甘 一 龙 年 到
What good is it to eat bean dregs? They give no energy at all. 豆 薄 渣 么 吃 得 咬 破 头

Numerous songs contain references to saints, Buddhas, gods, flood dragons and other spirits, though very few address gods or spirits directly, and it is difficult to estimate the concrete bearings of these texts on people's beliefs and ritual observances. Casual references abound, but there are also more elaborate descriptions of legendary saints' lives and the good deeds of Bodhisatvas. The songs primarily reflect the area's rich folk mythology, in which supernatural events blend freely and easily with themes from everyday life.

SEMI-GODS, HEROES AND 'FOUNDMERS' OF SHAN'GE

Most of the shan'ge texts found in the Wu area today can be interpreted – ought to be interpreted, I think – as secular texts. This is how they are perceived and appreciated by the current bearers of the tradition, and this perception deserves full recognition, regardless of any possible ancient connotations and suggested ritual functions of the songs. Shan'ge singers in the Wu area identify – for better or worse – with the characters in their narratives. In their problems and adventures, they recognize many of

26 Some genres of folk song connected with specific religious doctrines may have survived in isolated places. A local folk song researcher from Zhoushan – a conglomerate of some 360 islands east of Ningbo, of which only a handful are inhabited – drew our attention to the existence of xinwendiao, local folk songs accompanied by gong, bell and drums, and performed either solo or with a lead singer and a chorus. Singers of xinwendiao traditionally went around the islands with these songs and depended on them for a living. The genre is reportedly rooted in local Buddhist traditions. Buddhism has been particularly strong in the Zhoushan region. [Source: Li Hongyi, Shanghai, 10 Nov 1988.]

27 Next to taotou and jing, a third genre of laments mentioned in Ren Jiahe are san'ge or sanku, 'diverse (weeping) songs'. These are not related to any specific ritual actions and have no strict form like the jing, but are more like free textual improvisations in which close relatives of the deceased express their personal feelings of grief.
their own experiences. They primarily enjoy the stories in much the same way as other people enjoy watching a soap series or a good film on television:

‘People died of starvation, that’s what these lines are about. “Wild leaves, tree bark, everything had been eaten.” A song like that makes you cry!’ [Xu Awen, Baimao, 1 June 1990.]

‘Everything ends well for the farmer. But the fisherman who happens to be so fond of fish soup... he gets stuck on the pillar of a bridge. Hahaha! Just think of it!’ [Zhou Zongyuan, Shengpu, 21 April 1992.]

‘She was flailed until her skin peeled off, and she was locked away and not given any food for three days (...) Nowadays I don’t sing this song very often. People don’t like it any more. They haven’t experienced all the bitterness of the past. How can one expect them to understand it?’ [Zhao Yongming, 22 Feb 1989.]

The singers like to identify especially with the (locally famous) heroes of their songs. Interestingly, the main ‘characters’ of the songs are often talented shan’ge singers. The act of singing is very important inside the narratives, particularly in the long ballads. Singing also plays a role in local folk tales. The very origins of Wu songs are explained in various myths.

The main subject of stories about the origins of shan’ge in the Wu area is a legendary singer called Zhang Liang. He is an accepted ‘hero’ in many different parts of the Wu area, and most of the shan’ge singers know his name. Zhang is described as a government official (or otherwise prominent person) from olden times and is credited with the founding of the genre. His life-story encapsulates many prominent themes of shan’ge singing, love, magic, courtship, adultery and defiance of the gods.

‘It was Zhang Liang who started singing shan’ge. The tune which I sing comes from him.’ [Rong Aìn, Xinzhen, 23 April 1992.]

‘Zhang Liang is the one who made our shan’ge. He is a semi-god [banxian]. He was imprisoned by Lady Guanyin because he sang dirty songs.’ [Qin Aifu, Dongting, 17 April 1990.]

‘Our long narrative songs? I think they stem from the Western Han dynasty. That’s when it all started with Zhang Liang, who was our first shan’ge singer.’ [Lian Dagen, Huangdai, 7 Feb 1989.]

‘Yes, we also have a version of our shan’ge tune without the very high wu-a-hei-hei part. That is because Zhang Liang, our first shan’ge singer, couldn’t sing that bit any more when he had grown old, so he left it out.’ [Zhang Fanglan, (b. 1940), Luxu, 18 May 1990.]

Here is a summary of the story of Zhang Liang, the way local people like to tell it: Zhang leaves his wife and his little daughter to go out in the world and seek adventure. His wife calls him a loafer, but when she explains to her daughter what kind of a man he is, her anger is mixed with a touch of respect; she can’t help praising him for his unique qualities as a singer. In the meantime, Zhang Liang travels through the air, clinging to a kite. One day, the rope breaks; he falls down and arrives in the Land of Women (nürenguo). The locals try to kill him but he manages to escape. Many years later he returns to China and lands with his kite in a cotton field in his native area. His attention is drawn towards a beautiful girl who works in the field. He tries to seduce her with the following shan’ge:

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28 Zhang Liang is a popular figure in Chinese mythology. In historical sources he is introduced as an important statesman of the early Han dynasty. He was born in Anhui, but later he became a powerful military leader in Jiangnan. His name is often associated with that of Han Xin, another statesman of the same period. Zhang died in 187 B.C. Cf. Xia Zhongnong (Cihai), 1980: 1084. For the occurrence of Zhang Liang in early Chinese drama. Cf. Idema 1990.
The daughter of whose house are you, from which house are you the flower? 哈家园里 哈家园里花
The daughter of whose house are you – picking cotton in the fields? 哈家园里 佩勒田中 隔棉花
If the daughter of this house will sleep with me tonight, 哈家园里 佩勒田中 佩棉花
Let her wear damask on top and gauze below! 上穿绫罗下穿纱

The girl happens to be his own daughter. He did not recognize her, but she recognized him without difficulty and replies furiously, in song:

I am the daughter of the house of Zhang, the flower of the house of Zhang. 张家园里 张家园里花
The daughter of the house of Zhang am I – picking cotton in the fields. 张家园里 佩勒田中 隔棉花
The mother of the house of Zhang has slept with you on countless nights. 张家园里 佩勒田中 佩棉花
But never did I see her wear damask on top and gauze below! 勿曾看见 上穿绫罗下穿纱

Zhang is deeply ashamed when he learns the truth. He flees and turns to the gods for help. But instead of showing repentance, he continues his game of seduction with the goddess Guanyin. He tries to bait her with a naughty song in which sexual contacts between her and Buddha (Mituofu) are suggested:

Darkness reigns as the sun sets behind the Western mountains. 日落西山 暗烽
Mituofu lifts his hand and fondly touches Guanyin, 弥陀伸手 檔观音
His caresses make her laugh stealthily. 观音 掬得 咧著笑
The Luohans at her side remain unmoved. 两行个罗汉勿用情

Guanyin scolds Zhang Liang for behaving like a pig. She thinks that he deserves to be punished, captures him and ‘puts him under a mountain’. There he will remain her prisoner until the time when no one in the world will sing shan’ge for at least two hours. It means eternal damnation for Zhang Liang – as all the narrators of the story are ready to explain – because ‘there is always someone at work in the fields singing shan’ge, at any time of the day!’

This story portrays Zhang Liang, the prototype of the shan’ge singer, as a carefree person who is able to perform some magic (flying with a kite), who likes to seduce women, who is not afraid to play tricks on gods – although he is a loser in the end – and who loves to sing naughty songs. The story suggests that shan’ge have a long-standing reputation as a medium for courtship and sexual abuse. It is interesting to note that the actual way in which the first shan’ge comes into being is not described. The first song is apparently not relevant. The first singer is.

Zhang Liang is not the only ‘first singer’ mentioned in local folklore, although he is the most prominent one. Other figures are sometimes put forward as founders of the genre. Essentially, any legendary or dead person may feature as the ‘first singer’.

Shen Qige, the main character of a long narrative song in the Wu area, is a strong-minded young man and a very talented singer who leaves his native area to go into the world. He is casually announced as the inventor of shan’ge.

{Shan’ge] are known as mountain songs 总名‘山歌’今知四
Because in olden days their sounds were first heard in mountains. 皆因在山声浪先唱出
Shen Qige became the first singer of mountain songs. 沈七哥 唱仔唱山歌 开头人

29 The story of Zhang Liang as the founder of the shan’ge tradition was related to us by Tang Qiangen, Qian Afu and Lian Dagen. Several other singers made passing reference to it. Zhang Liang is mentioned in several folk tales published in local anthologies and his name turns up in numerous song texts. He is sometimes called a saint. One long narrative song (Zhao Shengguan) contains the line Zhang Liang chang ge Han Xin ji (‘Zhang Liang sang and Han Xin wrote it down’), suggesting that no sooner had the first singer of shan’ge been born than someone else began to act as a folk song collector!

30 From: Shen Qige, sung by Qian Afu, collected and edited by Zhu Hairong (1983: 41). The next fragment quoted above is from the same text (1983: 50).
Shen Qige is a saint rather than a pleasure-seeker of the Zhang Liang type. His main objective is to travel to a sacred mountain and to secure heavenly assistance for his aged and ailing mother. He draws everybody’s attention with his beautiful shan’ge. When the birds in the forest hear Shen’s voice they praise him as the ‘god of singers’. Every time danger is near, Shen is saved by a female Bodhisattva, who admires his virtue and communicates with him in songs. At one point she hands him a magic parasol and tells him what to do if he gets into trouble again:

If ever you are faced with mischief, just sing another song and have peace! 每 当 你 多 麻 烦时 就 唱一支 歌 平 安

Song and magic are linked directly in this passage, but other connotations of shan’ge singing – courtship and seduction – are also preserved: an evil-minded fairy invites Shen Qige to sing a shan’ge, in the hope that he will be tempted to court her.\(^{31}\)

Yet another person who is sometimes called the originator of shan’ge is Wu Taibo, the first king of Wu.\(^{32}\) A temple in his honour was erected in Meicun near Wuxi. The following folk song refers to him:

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Most beautiful of all flowers is the plum blossom.
It grows like a sea and was cultivated by Taibo.
Taibo was the first to sing Wu songs,
His songs were passed on by countless generations.
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Not all the heroes who occur in shan’ge are hailed as originators of the Wu song repertoire, nor do all of them become kings or saints or endowed with special powers. But most of them are introduced as talented shan’ge singers, and the suggestion of would-be kings or saints is never far away, not even in the case of tragic heroes like Zhao Shengguan. Zhao is a rich merchant’s son who falls in love with a girl in the countryside. She returns his affection, but death intervenes: Zhao falls ill and dies. The unhappy fate of these lovers is the subject of a long narrative song in the Wu area.

At the beginning of the story, Zhao leaves his parents to travel. Sometimes he is presented as a shan’ge singer, but not always. In some versions he is a boy of noble birth who regrets that he never learned to sing shan’ge – and is amazed when he hears them for the first time:

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If shan’ge are sung well, they sound like tinkling bells.
When Shengguan hears the singing, he feels a tickle in his breast:
“It is eighteen years since I left my mother’s belly
And only now do I hear the lovely song of the phoenix!”
(...)\(^{33}\)
Irrigation songs fill the air and compete with planting songs;
Shengguan reflects deeply, calculates that now he has read
one time nine is nine... three times three is nine... nine times
nine... eighty-one trunks of books! So why on earth can’t he
produce a single shan’ge line?
“Shengguan, your face may be clever, but in your heart you’re
a fool!” [Source: Li Lin, 1986: 26-27]
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\(^{31}\) Zhu Hairong, 1983. There are over forty references to shan’ge and to singing in this version of Shen Qige, which is one of the shortest versions in print (roughly 500 lines). We are indebted to Dr. Jörg Bäcker (Cologne) for kindly sending us a draft of his (unpublished) German translation.

\(^{32}\) In his youth he descended from the Yellow River Valley, so the story goes, and settled south of the Yangzi, where he adopted his life-style to that of local people. Although he was of noble birth, he cut his hair short, painted (tattooed) his body and lived a rough and plain life. He taught local people to use new tools, to harvest several times a year, to cultivate silkworms, to keep domestic animals and to irrigate the land. His teachings brought so much prosperity to Jiangnan that people decided to crown Wu Taibo as their king. (Cf. Zhang Yongchao: 1988.) His story is already related in the Zuo zhuan [Zuo Documentary], an account of the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC).
In one version of the story Zhao is not a singer of shan’ge. In this version a second couple of lovers is introduced: Zhao’s boatman and a servant girl. They do what Zhao cannot do – court each other via (frequently erotic) songs. In other versions, Zhao himself is an accomplished shan’ge singer. When he catches a glimpse of a beautiful girl in a tower he falls in love with her, and draws her attention with his fine voice:

His shan’ge sound as clear as the tinkling of bells.
Ertjie runs from front door to back door to hear him sing.
If she listens at the door, her mother will wonder!
Feigning to clean her kerchief, she goes to the river.33

The girl, Lin Ertjie, is kept away from men. Her parents force her to recite Buddhist scriptures all day long. Zhao manages to abduct the girl. In one version of the story he rows his boat underneath her window and, with his ‘golden throat’, commands the water level of the river to rise until it is high enough for him to climb inside. In another version he simply enters the tower. Zhao eventually introduces Lin Ertjie to his parents. They disapprove of a marriage, and Zhao dies of sorrow. In some versions of the story his death is caused by contaminated food. The girl retreats to a monastery.

There is a very strong local belief that a rich salt merchant’s son called Zhao Shengguan lived in a village west of Suzhou in the early half of the eighteenth century. He was reportedly born in 1736 at the foot of Lion Mountain (Shizishan), a place mentioned in the ballad, and died at the age of nineteen. Folklorists claim that printed ballad texts about Zhao Shengguan’s unhappy love began to emerge in the Wu area by the end of the eighteenth century.34 No records have been preserved, but there are indications that Zhao Shengguan was an historical person.

What happened to him in reality is hardly relevant for the ballad text as we know it today. Local people believe that Zhao’s life gave rise to the song, but the words of the song may be much older than the salt-merchant’s son. It is quite possible that an ancient ballad about an unhappy pair of lovers was adapted to fit the new situation and to spread the news of Zhao’s death.

Regardless of the veracity of the story, it is an interesting question how modern descendants of the Zhao clan respond to it. Is Zhao Shengguan still remembered in his native village? What kind of impression does he make today? How is a legendary singer-hero regarded by his 20th century would-be relatives – by people who are probably the most prominent guardians of his myth today?

In the spring of 1990 we travelled to Zhaozhaiqian, which is assumed to be Zhao’s native place. People there knew full well who their famous ancestor was. One old woman was able to sing long sections of the actual ballad. We should have come ten years earlier, she told us. There had been many more singers around at that time. The younger people mostly knew only the story. The villagers showed us the former site of Zhao’s parental home. They told us about all the changes in the village, the modern buildings that had appeared.

A memorial stone erected in honour of Zhao had been torn down some years ago, and the ancestral grave of the Zhao family at the foot of Lion Mountain had been removed to create space for a barn. Did we want to see Zhao’s memorial stone? At one spot some youngsters spontaneously started to dig, and to our surprise a beautiful

33 See also Zhang Fanglian, Ma Hanmin & Shen Yi, 1983: 3, 8.
34 But none of those early versions survives. An official list of forbidden publications issued by an imperial censor during the Tongzhi reign (1862-1874) includes “Zhao Shengguan” as a title (cf. A Ying, 1958: 139). Presumably the ballad was forbidden because of the generous amount of erotic verse it contained. A handwritten version of the ballad, dating from 1898, is the earliest version of the text that survives to the present day (printed in Li Lin, 1986: 129-204). Numerous oral versions of (fragments of) the song have been traced in the Wu area in recent years, notably around Suzhou, in Wujiang and in northern Zhejiang.
stone was unearthed. This one was unrelated to Zhao Shengguan, to everyone's
disappointment. People were soon digging up all kinds of memorial stones for us.
Unfortunately, we could only spend a few hours in the village.

Talking with the older people, we noticed that they were proud of their hero and
had kept his memory alive, even if all outer signs of his past had been erased.\(^{35}\) They
were not afraid to increase even further his mythical proportions. Some claimed that
Zhao Shengguan had almost become an emperor. He was predestined for it, but failed
because of an unfortunate spell. (Or, alternatively, because he angered the gods when
he made the water in the river rise. He caused a flood in which many people died.)

There are now many different stories about Zhao, it appears, and many different
ways of looking at him. Zhao never had children. According to one story, his closest
surviving relatives can be found in Xuguan, a village north of Suzhou. People in
Xuguan are ashamed of the fact that their famous ancestor 'died for a woman'. If
singers from outside Xuguan come and perform Zhao Shengguan, the villagers will
throw stones at them: they feel that it is in bad taste to remind the spirit of Zhao of his
unhappy fate on earth.\(^{36}\)

The conclusion can only be that there is no standard image of Zhao. Sometimes he
is regarded as a tragic hero, sometimes as an accomplished shan'ge singer, sometimes
as an unhappy – or perhaps despicable – ancestor, conflicted by folk mythology. In
the end, it seems that every singer invents his or her own image of Zhao Shengguan:

'Zhao Baoquan grew up in Zhao's native region. He managed to describe Zhao Shengguan's
childhood very convincingly. I think it was because he had no children of his own. He loved
children so much that Zhao became the boy for which he had always longed! Sheng later taught his
version of Zhao Shengguan to Lu Qiaoying, who furthered the development of the song. She was a
girl, you see, and she was much better equipped to work out the character of the heroine of the
story, Lin Erjie. In fact, she also invented the subplot, the love affair between Lin Erjie's servant
girl and Zhao's boatman.' [Qian Xingzhen, a local folk song researcher in Suzhou, 19 April 1992.
Cf. also Li Lin, 1986.]

Heroes in Wu songs are continually re-invented. Their 'original' story, if there is one,
is of secondary importance. The one thing that nearly all the heroes in Wu songs have
in common is their extraordinary ability to sing. Why are they so often presented as
shan'gesingers?

It may be a clever device to justify the ad hoc inclusion of all kinds of extra songs
at suitable moments – a trick of performers to fill gaps and to prolong the performance.
It probably also reflects self-interest on the part of the performers. Ultimately, the fact
that countless listeners accept all the imagery associated with singing and songs
suggests that shan'ge singing in the Wu area at one time enjoyed considerable
popularity. If folk mythology was so rich in singing saints, singing officials, singing
spirits and semi-gods, it may even suggest that some shan'ge singers were admired in
much the same way as their subjects. The most prominent singers of the past may have
been venerated as great masters of their art, as true poets of their society – perhaps
even as heroes larger-than-life. Some may have had a position not unlike that of
priests: as mediums between the mortal world and the realm of gods and spirits.

\(^{35}\) People in the Wu area are generally proud of (assumed) personal links with the heroes in their
songs, as we were not surprised to discover. Two other 'historical' lovers, Xu Atian and Wu Gunian,
who were immortalized in the narrative song Wu Gunian, have become the subject of a heated
controversy. The name of the girl's village, Fanqianbeng, can be found in southern Jiangsu as well as
in northern Zhejiang. In which village was the 'real' Wu Gunian born? Singers in Zhejiang as well
as in Jiangsu proudly claim that they are related to the lovers' families.

\(^{36}\) Source: interview with Qian Xingzhen, folk song collector, Suzhou, 19 April 1990. Mrs. Qian
heard this story from villagers in Zhaozhaqiuan. It may be just another good story!
But if this assumption is true, what was it that made them so important in the first place? Who or what decided the making of new ‘master’ singers – if such a notion is really appropriate? Did ‘master’ performers and ‘poets’ really exist in the Wu area, and if so, what was their authority based on? And how are we to reconcile the idea of shan’ge singers as great poets with statements like ‘every sang’? The first key to such questions is a closer examination of the mechanisms of transmission of the repertoire, and the rules for sharing it. Naturally, once we start thinking of singers as poets, still other questions arise. How ‘oral’ and how ‘literate’ was the shan’ge tradition in the Wu area? How innovative, how inventive? These questions will be dealt with in the third and final article in this series.

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RITUAL VILLAGE SONGS FROM EAST QINGHAI

Minhe Monguor Nadun Texts

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Every summer, people in Monguor villages in east-central Qinghai (northwest China) hold one-day festivals in honour of the gods. These festivals, called Nadun, are important to ensure a good harvest and safety to man and livestock. Nadun involves village processions, ritual offerings, pole dancing, singing and drumming, dance plays and (towards the end) a trance medium going into trance. In this article, the authors present a number of nadun songs which may be heard in the first part of the festival. The texts relate to a specific Nadun celebration by Sangburia and Nuojie villages, held in 1995, and they are given in original and in English translation. This is followed by descriptions of what happens during the singing. Shenling (‘Gods’) is a thanking song sung by the leaders of the procession at the very beginning of the festivities. Xixing (‘Happy Star’) is sung afterwards, while pairs of four men perform pole dancing.

The Monguor are a minority group living in northwest China. They number approximately 190,000 and live dispersed in five areas in the provinces of Qinghai and Gansu. By far the largest number live in Qinghai.

The Monguor have a number of (rather) different dialects with a basic vocabulary similar to Mongolian. They have borrowed many religious terms from Tibetan, while many everyday words and phrases come from Han Chinese. The Monguor written language is still in its infancy, so usually Han Chinese is used in writing. Monguor religion is a complex blending of shamanism, Daoism, Buddhist elements and veneration of Tiangere (a personification of heaven and sky).

Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County is one of the five Monguor areas in northwest China. It is situated in the eastern plains and mountains of Qinghai, where the Yellow River flows eastward into Gansu Province. It had 38,872 Monguor in 1993, among a mixed county population of 344,273. The southern part of this county is the main location of nadun, a series of numerous village-level festivals, each of which is quite similar and one day in length, held from the twelfth day of the seventh

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1 The Monguor were classified as ‘Tu’ by the Chinese government in the 1950s. Mongols refer to Monguor as ‘White Mongols.’
2 Divided in: Han Chinese 45 per cent, Hui 39 per cent and Monguor 11 per cent.
lunar month to the fifteenth day of the ninth lunar month. Within this period, every Monguor village has its own designated day for holding the nadun, according to a system devised earlier this century.

It is likely that the term nadun derives from the Mongolian word for ‘play,’ variations of which are shared by Daur, Eastern Yugu, Dongxiang, Baoan (Bonal) and various groups of Mongols. Judging from the term, its roots may be in na:dam, the festival that nomadic Mongolians observe. However, the historical origins of Monguor in the southern part of Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County are obscure, and what transpires at the Mongolian na:dam (horse races, veneration of sacred stone mounds, wrestling and, historically, archery competitions) is actually very different from what the Monguor do during nadun.

In this article we will provide a brief, general description of nadun, and then proceed to examine a number of specific nadun song texts, collected 8 August, 1995 in the Xiakou Region. The value of this paper is primarily in its presentation of the texts, both in the original and in English translation, of the nadun songs. For different versions of two songs presented here (translated in English, and with information about the performance context, but without the original texts), see Stuart and Hu (1993: 20-21). For a more elaborate account of nadun rituals, and a review of the limited related literature, see the same source, from which we have also taken some general information presented in the section below.

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3 Songs are sung mostly in the local Chinese dialect, although there are occasional Monguor words. This should not be construed, however, as an indication that Monguor is not spoken in this area. See Zhu, Chuluu, and Stuart (1995) for a review of the general linguistic environment of this area. We have used pinyin to approximate the Chinese (a number of items of which are not Modern Standard Mandarin) and the Monguor.

4 Stuart and Hu (1989, 1990, 1991) contain popular treatments, with photographs, of the nadun.
At the beginning of the nadun, participants march about the nadun performance area with flags, drums and cymbals.

KEY ELEMENTS OF NADUN
The festival is frequently held jointly by two villages, with one village serving as host and the other as guest. Male inhabitants of the villages involved line up in order of age to form two independent processions which meet on the festival grounds. The men wear long robes, carry poles to which coloured flags are attached, and hold fans and willow branches. The procession from the guest side usually brings in a sedan on shoulder poles with a local village god.

The nadun performance area is usually a large threshing area that will accommodate several hundred to a few thousand spectators as well as many pedlars with stalls and tent-restaurants. In the case of two villages co-operating in the nadun, the total of events in this arena is referred to as huishou (possibly meaning ‘joining together of heads, or ‘meeting of hands’).

When the processions meet, firecrackers are set off, there are ritual greetings between the leaders of the groups, to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. At one end of the grounds, a large Tibetan-style tent is erected where the deities are placed and where honoured village elders (usually men) are received and served drinks and cigarettes. In front of the tent, various performances will take place with the purpose of delighting the assembled deities. At some distance from the main tent there is usually a smaller second tent which serves primarily as a storage place for costumes and props needed during the nadun.

Performances begin with pole dancing, and continue with (masked) dance plays drawn from the 14th century novel ‘Three Kingdoms’. This is usually followed by the enactment of a local story of killing a tiger. Drums and cymbals accompany most of these events. The finale and culmination of the nadun entails a fala going into trance and his god speaking through him. Fala are religious practitioners common to Han and Mongour in eastern Qinghai. They are often consulted in the case of illness and in

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5 Each village family is expected to send one male to take part in the nadun proceedings.
trance, and seek to cure patients by expelling whatever evils are thought to be responsible for their illnesses. During the nadun, the gods are delighted with the presented offerings. The fala's god then shows his delight by possessing the fala, who is his medium.

Nadun are held after a period of intense agricultural work, and as such, represent a time for recreation and rest for the villagers, in the shape of a festival that local people take pride in as being distinctly Monguor. The hundreds of spectators are in a festive mood. For them, nadun is not only a sacred ritual but also an important social occasion. They give varying degrees of attention to the nadun performances. Some wander to and from the site and have conversation with friends and relatives whom they may not have seen for a long while. Much liquor is consumed during nadun—drinking is an integral part of Monguor culture. The atmosphere is relaxed until the end of the program, when the fala is possessed.

SONGS COLLECTED IN XIKAOU IN 1995
The texts under discussion were collected during the day of the nadun (8 August, 1995) held jointly by Sangburia and Nuojie villages in the Xiakou Region of Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County.

Mr. Wang Jinxian (b. 1935), a Monguor native of Laozhuang Village, Xiakou Region, supplied a written version of the first song to us on 8 August, 1995 in Dr. Wang Xianzheng's home in Sangburia Village, where we were staying. This song, Shenling ('Gods') is a thanking song. It is sung by leaders of the visiting procession before the dancing performances.

Mr. Wang Yongsheng (b. 1923), a Monguor resident of Dazhuang Village, Xia- kou Region sang four Xixing ('Happy Star') songs on 8 August, 1995 in Dr. Wang Xianzheng's home. We recorded this performance of Xixing on cassette tape and subsequently transcribed the words. Xixing is sung during the festival while pairs of four or six men stand holding their poles erect. After the song is completed, the pairs of men execute pole dances.

The songs in this paper are sung in several naduns, including those held in Qi, jia, Wangjia, Xinjia, and Majia villages. There are textual differences, however, because their respective temple gods are not the same and the nadun songs address local gods.

During the Sangburia nadun, held on the fourteenth of the seventh month, Nuojie Village nadun players brought their temple god, Dragon King, to a tent on the nadun grounds in the Sangburia vicinity. Four gods, all in their respective wooden sedans, were placed here: Erlang God, Niangniang Goddess, Dragon King, and Watergrass Great King. The order of the sedans (rear view) was as depicted below:

Watergrass Great King-----Niangniang Goddess-----Erlang God-----Dragon King

Erlang, a Daoist warrior deity, looms large in Monguor religion. Owing to him being the most powerful god in this area, his sedan is always placed in the middle-left position. Niangniang is the main goddess of Sangburia Temple; consequently, her sedan is placed in the middle next to Erlang. Dragon King's sedan is placed to the left of Erlang and Watergrass Great King's sedan is placed to Niangniang's right.

THE SONGS
After males comprising the nadun groups from Sangburia and Nuojie villages ritualistically met on a large open area recently reclaimed from the Yellow River on 8

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6 The Yellow River, in this location, separates Qinghni Province from Gansu Province.
The four Gods, all in their respective wooden sedans, under the sacred tent with burning incense sticks as offerings.

A Mongguor woman in her eighties attends the *nadun*.
August, 1995, men sang the songs presented in this paper. Generally, two elderly tieren (leaders) start off by singing 'Gods' when the two groups of nadun players meet for the first time. Tieren refers to two nadun leaders from a single village, who are considered commanding officers of their village's procession. They dance at the head of their village's nadun players, who follow in two lines behind them. The tieren hold a gangdao, or a steel sword, in one hand and a fan in the other hand. If the nadun is performed in Sangbura, it means that the Nuojie Village nadun team forms the visiting procession. In that case, it is generally Nuojie's two tieren who sing 'Gods.' If the nadun is held in Nuojie, it is Sangbura's tieren who sing 'Gods.'

Tieren normally are good singers. However, if a commanding officer cannot sing well, the man just behind him in the line may take over the singing.

All the nadun players come to the performance area, a flat area between the two nadun tents. The two tieren leave their 'army,' kneel in front of the gods, and sing. As they sing, other nadun players quietly listen. What follows is a transcription of Shenling,7 plus a translation of the song into English.

Shenling

神灵

神灵，上方祝敬的神灵，嘱他二位祝敬的神灵：

经几时，大清国；大清国，生落皇帝，中国之地。

陕西省城，分成地方灵王二道。 神道赐道头领之百事。 5

河州卫地方之道，河州卫徐立爷，刘文爷。

便下留封背笛的时会到，黄河以西晋宁地方该管金灵寺。

大山往右，下五川，天马，郭家堡庙祷占了三万之地。

a级！神！

a级，上方见了九天神母娘娘，玉母娘娘，大陆娘娘金花小姐娘娘，雷公雷母呼雷闪电的娘娘。

10 a级！神！

a级，上方见了变化二郎，传化二郎，赶山二郎，千庙的二郎。

a级！神！

a级，上方见了赛龙王，赛牌大帝，掌天地师水草大王。

a级！

15 东海见了花果宝山金龙大王。

南海见了普陀宝山先生大王。

西海见了须弥宝山白马大王。

北海见了五龙宫山雷公大王。

中海见了五龙宫山是五山的大王。

20 四庙同一庙，姓氏同一姓。

同心者可以。

大中华人民共和国国里排在一万九五年，月里排在七月内，日里排在十四日。

上八日，下五日，端阳对庙官，锣头对锣头，旗头对旗头。

众人齐报，花锣响到那九月九。

25 思风里雨远里消逝。

十月的青草结冰，黄草上场，五谷包收时，四庙的会手唱恩者答灵哩。

Shenling, shangfang zhujindi shenling, Nianbei erjin zhujindi shenling:

Jin jishi, Daqingguo; Daqingguo, zuoluo huangdi, Zhongguo zhi di.
Shanxi Shencheng, fencheng dihuang Linggong erdao.

7 This song is also known as 'Luoyen Xielielang,' which may be translated as 'The Gods Are Being Thanked.'
Zhidao, Xiandaotouling zhi beishi.

5 Hezhouweidehuang zhi dao, Hezhouwei Xuliye, Liuduye.
Bianxia liuhong qingmiaodi shihui, dao Huanghe yixi Xining dihuang gaiguan Jinling Si.
Deshan wangxia, xiawu Sanchuan, Sanabu, Nuojiabu miaotan zhuanliao yiwa zhi di.

Aol 6 Shen!
Ao, shanghaijianliao Jiutian Shenmuniang, Wangmu Nangniang, Dailu Nangniang, Jinhua Xiaojieniang, Luigong Luimu hulu shundian niang.

10 Aol Shen!
Ao, shanghaijianliao Biahua Erlang, Chuanhua Erlang, Ganshan Erlang, Gaminiaodi Erlang.
Aol Shen!
Ao, shanghaijianliao Mojue Longwang, Suojue Daidi, zhangtian shuishi Shuicaodo Daidi.

Aol

15 Donghai jianliao Huaguobao Shanlze Daidong.
Nanhai jianliao Putuo Baoshan Xianshen Daidong.
Xiha jianliao Xumi Baoshan Beima Daidong.
Beihai jianliao Wulong Baoshan Gaigu Daidong.
Zhonghai jianliao Wulong Baoshan ... 9 shi wushandi daiwang.

20 Liangmiao tong yimiao, liangxin tong yixin.
Tongxin zhe keyi.
Da Zhonghua Renmin Gonghuoguo nianli paizai yijujuwumian, yueli paizai qiuyuenei, rili paizai shishiri.
Shang bahu, xia wuhu, minoguan duí miaoguan, luotou dui luotou, qitou dui qitou.
Zhongren dabao quiluoxiang, zaidao ni jiuyueju.

25 Nuohong baoyi yuanli xiaosan.
Shiyuedi qingcaod jiezi huangcao shangchang, wugou baoshou shi liangmiandu huishou xienen zhe datin li.

[Translation:] ‘Gods’

Gods, gods respected in heaven, gods respected in the two cities of Nianbei:10

Many centuries (passed) before the Qing11 nation; the great Qing nation became supreme, supreme over the locality of China.
The capital city of Shaanxi Province12 conferred its regions (to its generals) and became two dao13 of Linggong.*14
Zhidao* and Xiandaotouling lead in dealing with everything.

5 Hezhou Wei15 is the local dao and the leaders are Xu Li Ye* and Liudu Ye.*

8 A sound word expressing emphasis.
9 The singer likely forgot to sing ‘Daiwang ’ (Great King) here. We added ‘Great King’ in the translation.
10 Nianbei (Standard Chinese: Nianbo) County was established in 1724. The name became ‘Ledu County’ in 1929 and, in 1930, the eastern part became Minhe County. Eijing may signify ‘the two cities of Minhe and Ledu.’
11 Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).
12 Chang’an, or modern-day Xi’an, the present capital of Shaanxi Province was, at certain times in Chinese history, the national capital.
13 In the Ming and Qing dynasties, dao was an administrative division that fell between the sheng (a present-day province) and fu (a present-day prefecture) in terms of size.
14 A star (*) indicates that we have no explanation for the term so marked.
15 Hezhou was a former name of the present Linxia Prefecture in Gansu Province. Wei refers to a first-class administrative unit of the Ming and Qing dynasties.
When (they) came to inspect the green wheat, \(^{16}\) (we moved to) Jinling Temple\(^{17}\) west of the Yellow River, administered by Xining Region.\(^{18}\)

Moved down the Great Mountain, passed Sanchuan\(^{19}\) of the five big villages, and in the places near the temples of Sama\(^{20}\) and Nuojia villages (our ancestors) had a place to live.

* \(^{ad}\) Gods!

* \(^{ad}\) in heaven (we) see Nine-Heaven Goddess, Wangmu Goddess, Daliu Goddess, Mistress Gold-Flower Goddess, and Thunder God and Thunder Goddess who command thunder and make lightning!

10 \(^{ad}\) Gods!

* \(^{ad}\) in heaven (we) see Transforming Erlang, Distributing-Flowers Erlang, Mountain-Driving Erlang, and Gan\(^{21}\) Temple’s Erlang.

* \(^{ad}\) Gods!

* \(^{ad}\) in heaven (we) see Footless Dragon King, Feet-Locked Great Emperor, *zhangtian shuishi* Watergrass Great King.

* \(^{ad}\)

15 In East Sea (we) see Gold-Dragon Great King of Flower-Fruit Precious Mountain.
   In South Sea (we) see Xianshen* Great King of Putuo Precious Mountain.\(^{22}\)
   In West Sea (we) see White-Horse Great King of Ximi* Precious Mountain.
   In North Sea (we) see Gaigui* Great King of Five-Dragon Precious Mountain.
   In Middle Sea (we) see Five-Dragon Precious-Mountain Great King, who is Great King of the five mountains.

20 The two temples are as one temple, and the two family names\(^{23}\) are as one.
   It is fine if hearts are unified.
   The great People’s Republic of China arranges the *nadun* in the year 1995, the seventh moon, the fourteenth day.
   The upper eight families and the lower five families, one templekeeper symmetrically faces the templekeeper (of the other village), the first gong player symmetrically faces the first gong

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\(^{16}\) This part of the sentence is translated according to Mr Wang Yongsheng’s explanation.

\(^{17}\) The temple is also known as Kadikawa. It lies in Jinning Village, Gangou Hui Autonomous Township.

\(^{18}\) The first part of this sentence is not clear, therefore, we provide our best estimate of what it may mean. Xining refers to the present capital of Qinghai Province.

\(^{19}\) *Bu* originally specified a castle or a walled settlement. It has often been used loosely to refer to a village. Before Liberation, Mongol areas in southern Minhe County were referred to as Wudabu Sanchuan (literally: ‘five big villages three valleys’). In the late twentieth century, this name continued to be used by aged Mongol.

\(^{20}\) *Sama* translates literally as ‘free-herding horse.’ Because this area is a plain surrounded by mountains forming a bay (*wan*), it is also called *Sanawan*. In the late twentieth century young people referred to the village as Sangburia. We have no explanation for the last name.

\(^{21}\) *Gan* may mean ‘dry,’ and thus ‘Gan Miao’ would translate as ‘Dry Temple.’ However, the Gan Family Temple lies between Sangburia and Nuojie villages. Consequently, we have chosen to retain ‘Gan’ in the translation.

\(^{22}\) Putuo Mountain is also known as ‘Putuo Island.’ It lies in the northeastern region of Zhejiang Province in Lotus Sea and is, administratively, part of Zhoushan City. It has an area of 12.76 km\(^2\). It is reputed to be a platform from which Guanyin Bodhisattva reveals her soul and recites scripture. In the year 916 the Japanese monk, Hui’e, took images of Guanyin Buddha from Wutai Mountain and started back to Japan by ship. At the present site of Putuo Island, his ship ran against rocks and was damaged. Consequently, the images were left here and a temple was subsequently erected.

\(^{23}\) Mongol in this area all have Chinese surnames. Villages are often known by one surname, as in Baoja Village (Bao Family Village), because nearly all families in the village have the same surname. Here ‘two family names’ refers to the two villages that are jointly holding the *nadun*.
player (of the other village), and the first flag holder symmetrically faces the first flag holder (of the other village).

Everyone gives thanks, and they hold flags and beat gongs till the ninth of the ninth moon.

25 Evil winds and torrential rains will disappear into the distance.

Green grain in late autumn has seeds, yellow grain comes to the threshing grounds, and all the crops were well harvested, and the two temples huishou\textsuperscript{24} members give thanks for (the gods') grace and favour.

After the two tieren finish singing, all nadun players repeat what was done prior to the singing of ‘Gods.’ This entails the beating of drums and gongs as the nadun performers dance around the performance area in great joy, in order to delight the assembled gods. After dancing around one-half of the playing ground, they dance before the gods’ tent. Two boys approximately twelve years old, who are required to be nadun players, now sing the song just presented above. When the two boys stand before the gods, all the other players stop and stand in two long lines. Each of the boy singers takes a gong and a gong stick and begins to sing after kneeling. What they sing is a repetition of ‘Gods’, the song shown above. When they finish one line of the song, they beat their gongs once and bow their heads once. Then they continue with the next line. Our informants indicated that this was how younger generations were taught this song. However, boys often have little interest in the nadun. Therefore, sometimes the song Shenling is sung only by the tieren.

When the two boys finish singing they return to their places in the nadun player formation. The huishou performance now begins its third phase. This entails dancing around the performance grounds once more as previously described. Finally, the nadun players return to the positions they took in while the tieren first sang ‘Gods.’

\textbf{‘HAPPY STAR’} 喜星

At this point, while the nadun players stand quietly, the tieren who sang ‘Gods’ proceed to sing Xixing (‘Happy Star’), which is actually a sequence of four songs. Each song is sung to a particular god or goddess. With the nadun being played in Sangburia, the Nuolei Village tieren are the guests, and they are the ones to sing ‘Happy Star.’ A man with a gong and a drummer stand to the side of the two singers. After each song that the two singers finish, the gong player and the drummer shout ‘Dahao er hao!’, (literally; ‘Very-good and good!’) while beating the gong and drum. By convention, the gong player and drummer are Sangburia nadun players. Now it is the gong player’s and drummer’s turn to stand before the gods’ tent, while four ‘generals’ of the Sangburia nadun players line up behind the singers. Each of the generals wear long white gowns.\textsuperscript{25} They also each hold a wooden sword and other props that are used in the so-called ‘Three Generals’ and ‘Five Generals’ performances, which are enactments of scenes from ‘The Three Kingdoms’.\textsuperscript{26} Each ‘general’ may also hold willow branches and a fan.

In turn, different groups of four ‘generals’ now come forward. Each group is from a different part of the nadun players’ line. The first four are from the front part, and usually they are village leaders and elders. When the singers start singing, each of the four comes to the center of the performance area holding a pole that is used to carry the deity sedans. Each of the four ‘generals’\textsuperscript{27} stands in one of two lines. Each man holds

\textsuperscript{24} Huishou refers to the nadun players and also to the dance of all the nadun players before their performance of Zhuangjiqiang (Farmer). Relatedly, huishou diaoli means ‘dance the huishou performance’ and huishou huoqiao means ‘nadun dancers (of two villages) meet.’

\textsuperscript{25} They are not required to wear such clothing, but most do.

\textsuperscript{26} These two performances were explained in detail in Hu and Stuart (1993).

\textsuperscript{27} It is possible that each group of ‘generals’ signifies the ‘generals’ of the particular deity addressed in the song.
a deity-sedan pole\textsuperscript{28} that is approximately two meters in length and eight centimeters in diameter. The men face each other. They twirl the poles in front of their breasts, suggesting that they are practicing martial art skills.

The first \textit{Xixing} song is sung to Erlang, because he is the guest god and also because he is considered more powerful than the other gods in attendance. The next song is to Niangniang Goddess. In addition to being the main temple god of Sangburia, she is the goddess of certain other temples in the area, such as the Dazi\textsuperscript{29} Village Temple. Afterwards, they sing to Dragon King, who is the main god of nearby Nuojie Village temple. Finally, they sing to Great King, who is the secondary god of the Sangburia Village Temple. There is a short pause between the songs.

While the term \textit{xixing} is used in these songs, the songs are actually often referred to as \textit{qixing}, which translates as ‘seven stars.’ In context there is no obvious relationship to the ‘seven stars’ which appear on Mongol coffin lids and figure in certain other folk religious activities. We have no convincing explanation for this difference in the term used in the songs (\textit{xixing}, or ‘happy star’) and what many local residents refer to as \textit{qixing}(seven stars). In translation, we employ ‘Happy Star’.

\textbf{\textit{('Happy Star', song no.1:) Erlang}}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Erlangye xinyi xingao mao tangjiang yao,} & \textbf{二郎}
\end{tabular}

\textbf{Xixing yao\textsuperscript{30} yanlai xixing yao,}  
\textbf{Jialiuoxin xixing zhi kai tianmen yao,}  
\textbf{Kailiao tianmen zhi qing wanshen yao,}  
\textbf{Qingliao wanshen qing Erlang yao.}  

\textbf{Erlangye lianger zhuijin zhi mgu yongguang yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye tou dailiao sanzhan mao yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye shen chuanliao baguadi jiujiang long yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye yao jiliao hantandi fuyin dai yao,}  

\textbf{Erlangye jue chuanliao zaoxuedi panlongwa yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye shen kuiliao tongongdi xiang yueliang yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye shou nafiao sanjian shuangren qiang yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye qidi shi beilongma,}  
\textbf{Longma chidi shi wujijian shui yao.}  

\textbf{Erlangye qishangge beilongma zhi xia huitian yao,}  
\textbf{Xiiliao huitian dian huishou yao,}  
\textbf{Shang yu bahu xia wuxu yao,}  
\textbf{Liangmiudi huishou du youxi yao.}  

\textbf{Erlangye qishier bianhua zhi xian weiling yao,}  
\textbf{Guotai minnan zhi hao tieping yao,}  
\textbf{Erlangye hongqiao zhi yishun zhi jiu wamin yao,}  
\textbf{Nuohongdi buoyighi konghuangli san yao,}  
\textbf{Bintongdi zainanhu konghuangli san.}  

\textbf{Wamin baonen zhi xie shenmeng yao,}  
\textbf{Xiiliao shenmeng zhi xie wanshen yao,}  
\textbf{Changhuandi baogaila xie shenmeng yao,}  

\textbf{\textsuperscript{28} The huishou members, as well as other participants and observers, refer to the wood poles as gangdao or ‘steel swords.’}  
\textbf{\textsuperscript{29} Dazi} is a derogatory term for ‘Mongols.’  
\textbf{\textsuperscript{30} A sound word.}
Tougang toujiula xie shennen yao,  
Toumiandi supalna xie shennen yao,  
Sigedi jiangjunnmu lai cihou yao.  

[The four singers say, not sing, the following sentence:]  

30 Sigedi jiangjunnmu guolai guoqi dage dindaiba. 四个的将军们过来过去打个顶刀把

[Translation:] Erlang God

Happy Star, the original happy star,  
Call Happy Star to open heaven’s gate,  
Opens heaven’s gate and invites all the gods,  
Invites all the gods and invites Erlang.

5 Erlang God is dignified in appearance with new clothing and a new hat,  
Erlang God’s two ears touch his shoulders and his eyes are piercing,  
Erlang God wears on his head a three-mountain hat,  
Erlang God wears the nine bagua 31 dragons on his body,  
Erlang God ties the floating-cloud belt in the sky around his waist,  
Erlang God wears black boots on his feet with curling dragon socks,  
Erlang God carries a tangong 32 like a round moon on the side of his body,  
Erlang God takes a three-headed spear with two blades,  
Erlang God rides a white dragon horse,  
The white dragon horse drinks water from the five rivers.

10 Erlang God rides a white dragon horse and descends to the nadjun meeting,  
Descends to the nadjun meeting and calls33 the nadjun players,  
There are eight families in the upper position and five in the lower position,  
The nadjun players of the two temples all obtain happiness.

Erlang God displays his power with his seventy-two manifestations,  
20 With the nation at peace people are secure and all tranquility is kept,  
Erlang God safeguards all the people with favorable weather (for crops),  
(He) scatters evil winds and torrential rains into a barren place,  
(He) throws illnesses, pains, and sufferings into a barren place.

Everyone repays these kindnesses and thanks the gods,  
25 Thanks the gods' favour and thanks all the gods,  
Thanks the gods' favour with changhuan and baogai,34  
Thanks the gods' favour with liquor from the first vat.35

31 bagua literally means 'eight characters.' In Taoist theory these eight characters stand for eight basic elements comprising the world. Various combinations of these characters are used by Taoist practitioners to predict future events. A bagua is an eight-sided cylinder approximately ten centimeters long and two centimeters in diameter. The bagua may be dropped by a person and the characters that face up are then used to determine the future.

32 tangong generally refers to a slingshot but, here, it may refer to a bow.

33 'Calls' (dian) may refer to 'calling the role' of 'generals and soldiers,' that is, the males participating in the nadjun performances.

34 Changhuan and baogai are made of paper and symbolize money of great value. They are used in certain formal religious rituals.

35 The liquor that is distilled first, that is, the liquor that fills the first vat, is considered the best liquor.
Thanks the gods’ favour with nice bread of the finest flour,  
The four generals come and serve.

[The four singers say, not sing, the following sentence:]  

30 The four generals exchange positions and fight dindaiba.

When the four singers speak the last sentence, the ‘generals’ begin ‘fighting’ each other. They do so in two or three pairs of two men. The fight takes the form of a series of pole dances. In the songs, these are referred to as dindaiba, jiadaoba, sadaoba and liadaoba. We do not know the actual meaning of the word daoba, but the affixes indicate different kinds of movements and, subsequently, the ‘generals’ ‘fight’ differently each time.

In dindaiba, the ‘generals’ raise their poles and bang the center of the pole at chest height of the man they face. One holds his pole at a ninety degree angle and the other holds his at an opposite ninety degree angle. Next, ‘General A’ turns so that his back faces ‘General B’, his opposite number. ‘General A’ holds his pole horizontal to the ground and above his head. ‘General B’ then taps ‘General A’s’ pole with one end of his own pole. ‘General B’ spins his pole one hundred and eighty degrees and taps ‘General A’s’ pole again with the opposite end of his own pole. ‘General A’ now turns around and faces ‘General B’. The two ‘generals’ grip their poles at a forty-five degree angle in front of their chests and tap the top ends of their poles together. Then they exchange positions and repeat this entire sequence three times. When they finish the dindaiba performance the four ‘generals’ leave the poles on the ground and walk from the playing ground.

When the singers resume singing, four other ‘generals’ from among the drummers come to the performance area and pick up the poles, which they twirl in front of their breasts, suggesting that they are practicing fighting skills.

(‘Happy Star’, song no.2:) Niangniang

Xixing yao yanlai xixing yao,  
Jiaoliao Xixing zhi kai tianmen yao,  
Kailiao tianmen zhi qing wanshen yao,  
Qingliao wanshen zhi qing Niangniang yao.

5 Niangniangyue tou dailiao honghuang mao yao,  
Niangniangyue er dailiao jinyin huan yao,  
Niangniangyue shen chuanliiao baguadi niao yao,  
Niangniangyue yao jiliao dituo qiong yao,  
Niangniangyue jie chuanliiao xiuhun xue yao,  
Niangniangyue shou nadi jjiju wanmin pai yao.

10 Niangniangyue qid shi honghuang que yao,  
Honghuang chidi shi gaohongdi xuebohian yao,  
Niangniangyue shou nadi jjiju wanmin pai yao.

Niangniang qishangliiao honghuang zhi xia huitan yao,  
Xialiao huitan zhi dian huishou yao,  
Shang you baohui xia wuhu yao,  
Liangingmao di huishou du youxi yao.

Xiuhongdi xiyula jiu wanmin yao,  
Nuohongdi baoyiha yanchu san yao,  
Sigedi jiangjummu lai cilou yao.

100
[Then the four singers say:]

20 Sigedi jiangjunmu guolai guoqi da yige jiadaoba. 四个的将军们过来过去打一个架刀把

[Translation:] Niangniang Goddess

Happy Star, the original happy star,
Call Happy Star to open heaven’s gate,
Opens heaven’s gate and then invites all the gods,
Invites all the gods and invites Niangniang.

5 Niangniang Goddess wears a phoenix hat,
Niangniang Goddess wears gold-silver earrings,
Niangniang Goddess wears a long bagua coat,
Niangniang Goddess ties a skirt around her waist that falls to the ground,
Niangniang Goddess wears embroidered shoes on her feet.

10 Niangniang Goddess rides a phoenix bird,
The phoenix eats lotuses as white as snow on high mountain tops,
Niangniang Goddess carries a symbol in her hand of saving all the people.

Niangniang rides a phoenix and descends to the nadun meeting,
Descends to the nadun meeting and calls the nadun players,

15 There are eight families in the upper position and five in the lower position,
The nadun players of the two temples all obtain happiness.

(She) saves all the people with gentle winds and rains,
(She) scatters evil winds and torrential rains far away,
The four 'generals' come and serve.

[Then the four singers say:]

20 The four 'generals' exchange positions and fight jiadaoba.

Now, the 'generals' raise their poles and bang the center of the pole at chest height of
the man that they face. When the poles collide, one pole is horizontal and the other is
vertical. The two 'generals' then hold their poles at forty-five degree angles in front of
their chests and tap the top ends of their poles together. Subsequently, they exchange
positions and repeat this entire sequence three times. When they finish jiadaoba they
leave the poles on the ground. Following, four men from among those holding flags,
who are usually the youngest nadun players, come act as 'generals.' They retrieve the
poles and twirl them in front of their chests, suggesting that they are practicing martial
art skills.

('Happy Star', song no.3:) Longwang 龙王

Xixing yao yanlaidi xixing yao, 喜星哟 喜来的喜星哟
Jialiao Xixing zhi kai tianmen yao, 叫了喜星 什开天门哟
Kailiao tianmen zhi kai shenmen yao, 开了天门 什开神门哟
Kailiao shenmen zhi qing wanshen yao, 开了神门 什请万神哟
5 Qingiao wanshen zhi qing Longwang. 请了万神 什请龙王

Longwangye tou dailiao sanshan ma mao yao. 龙王爷头戴了三山马毛哟
Longwangye shen chuanliaoluo sitio long yao yao, 龙王爷身穿了三条龙他哟
ZHANG - STUART: Ritual Village Songs from East Qinghai

Longwangye yao jiliao p'anhuadi bagua d'ai yao,  
Longwangye jue talião denyong xue yao,  
10 Longwangye shou naliao ganashanbinn yao,  
Longwangye qidi shi heiyuma yao,  
Yuma chidi shi tianhe shui.

Longwangye qishangliao yuma zhi xia huitan yao,  
Xialiao huitan zhi dian huihui yao,  
15 Liangmiaodi huihoumu du youti yao.

Longwangye xuanqiliao ganyn zhi jiu wanmin yao,  
Wanmin buonen zhi xie shenren yao,  
Changhuandi baogai zhi wanshen yao,  
Tougang toujiula zhi wanshen yao,  
20 Toumiandi supanla zhi wanshen yao,  
Xieliao wanshen zhi Longwang.

[Then the four singers say:]

Sigedi jiangju guolai guoqi dage sadaoba.  

[Translation:] ‘Dragon King’

Happy Star, the original happy star,  
Call Happy Star to open heaven’s gate,  
Opens heaven’s gate and then opens the gods’ gates,  
Opens the gods’ gates and invites all the gods,  
5 Invites all the gods and invites Dragon King.

Dragon King wears on his head a three-mountain hat,  
Dragon King wears on his body a four-dragon robe,  
Dragon King ties about his waist a bagua belt with embroidered flowers,  
Dragon King steps with his feet on the stepping-on cloud boots,  
10 Dragon King carries in his hand a mountain-driving whip,  
What Dragon King rides is a black jade horse,  
What the jade horse drinks is the water of heaven’s river.

Dragon King rides his jade horse and descends to the ndun meeting,  
Descends to the ndun meeting and calls the ndun players,  
15 Ndun players of the two temples all obtain happiness.

Dragon King God shows his power to save all the people,  
All the people repay the kindness and thank the gods,  
Thank the favor of the gods with changhun and baogai,  
Thank the favor of the gods with liquor from the first vat,  
20 Thank the favor of the gods with nice bread of the finest flour,  
Thank all the gods and thank Dragon King.

[Then the four singers say:]

The four generals exchange positions and fight sadaob."
other holds his at an opposite ninety degree angle. The two 'generals' now grip their poles at a forty-five degree angle in front of their chests and tap the top ends of their poles together and then tap the bottom ends of their poles together twice. Following, they tap the top ends of their poles together again. They next exchange positions and repeat this entire sequence three times. When they finish this performance, they leave the playing ground. The next four 'generals' come from any part of the nadun performers. They pick up the poles and twirl them in front of their chests as did their predecessors.

(‘Happy Star’, song no.4:) Daiwang

Xixing yao yanzaidi xixing yao.
Jiaoliao Xixing zhi kai tianmen yao,
Kailiao tianmen zhi kai shenmen yao,
Kailiao shenmen zhi qing wanshen yao,
5 Qingliao wanshen zhi qing Daiwang.

Daiwangye tou daoliao sanshan ma mao yao,
Daiwangye shen chuanliao jinlongdi piao yao,
Daiwangye yao jiliao panhuadi dai yao,
Daiwangye jue taling denyong xie yao,
10 Daiwangye zhoush wnsai zhanyaoqian yao,
Daiwangye qidi shi zhaolongma yao,
Zaohongma chibi shi wushandi cao yao.

Daiwangye qishangliao zaozhongma zhi xia huitian yao,
Xialiao huitian zhi dian huishou yao,
15 Liangminodi huishoumu du youxi yao.

Then the four singers say:

Sigedi jiangjun guolai guoqi dage liaodaoba. 四个 的 将军 过来 过去 打个 摆 刀 把

[Translation:] ‘Great King’

Happy Star, the original happy star,
Call Happy Star to open heaven’s gate,
Opens heaven’s gate and then opens the gods’ gates,
Opens the gods’ gates and invites all the gods,
5 Invites all the gods and invites Great King,

Great King wears on his head the three-mountain hat,
Great King wears on his body the golden-dragon robe,
Great King ties about his waist a belt with embroidered flowers,
Great King steps his feet on stepping-on-clouds boots,
10 Great King carries in his hand a monster-beheading sword,
What Great King rides is a purplish-red horse,
What the purplish-red horse eats is grass on the five mountains.

Great King rides his purplish-red horse and descends to the nadun meeting,
Descends to the nadun meeting and calls the nadun players,
15 The nadun players of the two temples all obtain happiness.

Great King God shows his power to safeguard all the people,
All the people repay kindness and thank the gods,
Thank the gods' favor with changhuan and baogai,
Thank the gods' favor with liquor from the first vat,
20 Thank the gods' favor with nice bread of the finest flour,
Thank all the gods and thank Great King.

[Then the four singers say:]

The four generals exchange positions and fight liodaoba.

In liodaoba, the ‘generals’ raise their poles and bang the center of the pole at chest height of the man that they face. One holds his pole at a ninety degree angle and the other holds his at an opposite ninety degree angle. The two ‘generals’ now hold their poles at forty-five degree angles in front of their chests and tap the top ends of their poles together and then exchange positions. Subsequently, they throw their poles in front of themselves on the ground to the side of their opposite number. Each ‘general’ picks up this new pole and then they repeat the entire sequence three times.

CONCLUSION

When liodaoba is finished, the singers and the ‘generals,’ holding their props, walk back to the huishou line. The huishou performance is repeated. Next, they dance once more around the performance area before the two villages nadun players separate. This is followed by some minutes of the drummers joyfully beating their drums while happily shouting ‘Dahao er hao!’ before the next item of the nadun performance begins.

During the nadun ‘parents’ and their ‘son’ and ‘daughter in law’ perform a skit teaching the importance of agriculture. Here the young couple hold their ‘team of oxen.’
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ZHU Yongzhong, Qiijiedlin Chuluu (Chao Lu Wu), and Kevin Stuart

GLOSSARY

Baojia 鲍家  
Nianbo 婉伯
Dao 道  
Niangniang 娜娘
Dazhuang 大庄  
Nuojie (Monguo) 娜结
Dazi 道子  
Qijia 秦家
Erlang 二郎  
Qinghai 青海
Fu 府  
Samawan 撒马湾
Gangdiao 铜刀  
Sangburia (Monguo) 桑布里亚
Gan’gou 甘沟  
Sheng 省
Gansu 甘肃  
tieren 铁人
Guanting 官亭  
Tu 土(族)
Guanyin 观音  
Wang Yongsheng 王永胜
Hezhou 河州  
Wang Jinxiang 王进祥
Hu 胡(军)  
Wang Xianzheng 王贤政
Hui 回族  
Wangjia 王家
Hui’e 怀德  
Wei 卫
Jingning 靖宁  
Wudubu Sanchuan 五屯堡三川
Kadikawa 卡地卡哇  
Wutai 五台
Laoyeni Xieliang 老妮西里lang (ni/nieliang: Moguo) Xi’an 西安
Laozhuang 老庄  
Xinjia 瑞家
Ledu 乐都  
Zhejiang 浙江
Linxia 临夏  
Zhongchuan 中川
Majin 马家  
Zhoushan 舟山
Minhe 民和  
Zhuangjiaqi 庄稼其

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HOW PERFORMERS ARRIVE AT NEW VERSIONS OF A PIECE

Creative Variation in Traditional Pipa Music

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Folk musicians will never play a piece of music twice in exactly the same way. There will always be variations. The present author compares a series of different scores (from between 1842 and 1974) of Chunjiang hunyue ye, a particular Chinese lute piece. He also examines a number of sound recordings of this piece, the earliest one dating from ca. 1950. He goes on to discuss the process of creative variation among traditional pipa players. How do they generally arrive at fresh and individual interpretations of a piece? Living performers (interviewed by the author) and some 19th century pipa masters (via their writings) provide fascinating answers to this question.

In this article I will discuss notational and musical changes in an important composition for the Chinese plucked lute pipa, and address some aspects of creative variation. I will take one particular solo piece that has become well known in the pipa repertoire as my point of departure. This piece, the history of which I have traced back to the early half of the 19th century, is called Chunjiang hunyue ye (‘Flower, Moon and Evening in Spring River’), but it is also known by other names: Xiyang xiaogu (‘Flute and Drum at Sunset’) and Xunyang yeyue (‘Evening Moon in Xunyang’). For the readers’ convenience, I will refer to it in this article simply as ‘Spring River’.

The earliest extant music score of this piece is contained in a manuscript dated 1842. Quite possibly the music was known earlier than this. Traditionally, music in China was usually not written down but learned by rote, and transmitted from master to pupil, generation after generation.

After studying the pipa for many years, and after searching in China in music libraries of the Music Research Institute and of the conservatories, as well as in archives of broadcasting stations, performers’ private collections, and music catalogues, I traced thirty-nine different versions of the piece – some in written or printed form, some as sound recordings or live transmissions. I actually learned several versions of the piece from my teachers in Beijing in the 1960s and 70s.

What has aroused my interest in ‘Spring River’ is that none of these versions is the same. They all differ in tempo, duration, number of sections and musical material. Some differ quite considerably. The various versions were all passed down in one form or another by teachers and performers. In the process of transmission, most
versions were adapted and modified in form, style and technique according to the fancies and predilections of the individual performers.

This process is undoubtedly a resource of living, traditional music. At the same time, it presents a major challenge to the historical musicologist. I have selected eight music scores and three tape recordings of 'Spring River' for closer examination. These versions provide a framework for a study of pipa players' creative performance practices. My aim as a researcher is to determine changes in form, structure, notation, and practical techniques of the pipa and its music between the 1840s and 1980s. In the present article, I will limit the discussion to one particular musical phrase from 'Spring River'. A comparison of different versions will serve to illustrate how the piece has changed over time. This will be followed by a brief discussion on the general nature of creative variation in pipa performance traditions.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) The pipa is a plucked lute with four strings, with the common tuning A, D, E, A. The instrument is played as a solo instrument, as an accompanying instrument in vocal music, and as part of various kinds of folk instrumental ensembles. The pipa was extremely popular during the Tang dynasty (618-906), a glorious period in the development of China's culture.

In the remote past, the name pipa has been applied to various types of plucked instruments in China. (Chang Renxia 1956: 14; Cao Anhe 1956: 15; Hayashi 1962: F1) The term pipa is onomatopoetic and describes the movements of the hand plucking the strings: pi refers to the down-stroke, pa to the up-stroke. There are two early types of pipa. The first type appeared in China in ancient times (roughly in the period between 214 B.C. and 105 B.C.) and was probably inspired by plucked lutes in ancient Middle-Eastern cultures (Zhuang Liben 1968; Yang Yinliu 1981: 130; Myers 1987: 11). The second type was imported to China from Central Asia around the fourth century A.D. (Kishibe 1940: 259-304; Shosoin Office 1967, vii-x; Picken 1975; Yang Yinliu 1981: 215; Han Shude and Zhang Zhinian, 1983).

In the course of its development, the instrument and the playing techniques underwent various changes. The number of bamboo frets was increased to allow for higher left-hand positions, and the instrument was played increasingly in a vertical position. (The fashion of playing it in a near horizontal position survives today in some local folk music traditions, notably in Nanguan music.) On
EIGHT SCORES OF ‘SPRING RIVER’

The eight notations and three tape-recorded versions of ‘Spring River’ were chosen from the total body of thirty-nine versions which I collected during research in China. The selection was carefully planned, and many factors were considered. Overlapping and uncertainties were avoided. The selected versions are all representative forms of ‘Spring River’. Three manuscript versions stem from the 19th century (1842, 1895, 1938). The remaining written or printed notations are from the present century (1920, 1929, 1940, 1955, 1974). First let me briefly introduce these eight versions.

1. The 1842 version was transcribed in gongche notation by Zhang Jianshan. It is the first piece in a manuscript Tancao ji (‘Collection of Tancao’) for pipa solo. The date of transcribing was indicated on the second page of the preface as the twenty-second year of the reign of Emperor Daoguang (1821-1850).

2. The 1895 version was created by pipa master Li Fangyuan. It took Li more than twenty years to finish Nanbei pai shisan tao daqu pipa xinpu (‘New Score of Thirteen Suites for pipa of Southern and Northern Schools’). His score, in gongche notation, was published in Shanghai around 1895.

3. The 1898 version features as the first of a series of pieces in a manuscript called Pipa pu (‘Pipa Score’). This manuscript was transcribed in gongche notation by master player Qiu Huaide. The date of transcription is indicated on the first page as the twenty-fourth year (1898) of the reign of Emperor Guangxu.

4. The 1920 version was transcribed in gongche notation by the well-known Chinese musicologist Yang Yinliu, as part of a three volume manuscript of pipa pieces, called Pipa pu (Pipa score). Yang mentions in 1954 that the earliest known written version of this piece was a transcription made in 1875 by his teacher Wu Wanqing. Wu learned the piece from an unknown street musician in Wuxi before 1875 (Yang Yinliu 1986: 227) and presumably passed it on to Yang (Yang Yinliu, 1920: 55).

5. The 1929 version is the first piece in volume two of Yangzheng xuan pipa pu (‘Pipa score of Yangzheng Veranda’) which was written in gongche notation in 1926 by Shen Haochu, and was published in 1929.

6. The 1940 version was transcribed in gongche notation by an amateur pipa player called Wang Shuxian. He was the first student of Wang Yuting, a master player whose pipa school was popular in Shanghai between the 20s and 40s. (This information was obtained by the author from Wang Enshao in 1991.)

7. The 1955 version was transcribed in cipher notation from Li Tingsong’s performance by Cao Anhe. Cao’s transcription was mimeographed by the Chinese Music Research Institute in 1955.

8. The 1974 version was transcribed in western staff notation by the present author from a manuscript written by pipa master Liu Dehai.

the basis of various modifications, contemporary scholars distinguish two further major types of pipa: the classical pipa which became popular in the 14th century, and the contemporary pipa which came into use in the 1950s (Yang Yinliu 1981: 999-1003; Deng Wei 1987: 54). The contemporary pipa has metal strings (instead of the traditional silk) for greater resonance, and is plucked with false fingernails.

2 A traditional notation system in which Chinese characters represent degrees of the scale, as in solfège. It also has symbols for left- and right-hand finger techniques.

3 Most scholars in China believe that the original transcription of the 1875 version has survived, but its location is unknown. On a return visit to China in 1991, I tried to retrieve it, without success. But in December 1991, I interviewed the music scholar Cao Anhe, a relative and a close colleague of Yang Yinliu. She recommended Yang’s 1920 transcription as a reliable reference to the 1875 original.

4 In cipher notation, Western numerals are used for the degrees of the scale. This system (called jianpu or Chevé system) was originally imported from France, presumably via Japan. It became popular in China towards the end of the nineteenth century.
3 TAPE RECORDINGS OF ‘SPRING RIVER’
Tape recordings of 3 versions of the piece were collected in 1991. The author obtained the permission to use these recordings, which date from ca. 1950, 1954 and 1978, in this article. Background information about these tape recordings is rather limited. For many private and noncommercial recordings of *pipa* music in China, only the names of players are given, while dates and makers of the recordings remain unknown. In the case of the current material, recording dates had to be either conjectured from biographical information available about the performers, or recalled by performers’ friends, students or family members.

1. A performance by Yang Kun, recorded around 1950. Yang Kun was one of Yang Yinliu’s students (Chen Zemin, 1991. Pers.comm.). A copy of Yang Kun’s recording was made from Chen Zemin’s private collection in 1991. Chen is a former senior lecturer at the Central Conservatory, he retired in 1990.


3. A performance by Liu Dehai, recorded in Guangzhou in 1978. A copy of Liu’s recording was made from his own tape in 1980.

THE FIRST MUSIC PHRASE OF ‘SPRING RIVER’
I have chosen the first phrase in the eight music notations of ‘Spring River’ as a sample to show how the (notation of) the piece has changed over time. The same phrase will also be analysed as it occurs in the three sound-recordings of the piece. But here, to begin with, are the written and printed versions of that phrase (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1. Eight different versions of the first phrase of ‘Spring River’, taken from various manuscripts and published scores.
The first five versions, which appeared from 1842 to 1940, were all transcribed in gongche notation, the traditional Chinese notation system in which characters represent relative pitches. The other three versions, of more recent date, were transcribed in cipher notation and in western staff notation. In order to facilitate a comparison, all versions are here presented in staff notation.

The 1898, 1929, 1955 and 1974 versions have (almost) no bar line divisions and expressly imply a rubato style of playing. In the original scores, this absence of a regular tempo or regular rhythm is indicated in various ways. Normally, in gongche notations, a small symbol (※) will mark the first beat of every measure (in regular, measured music), but in rubato phrases this mark is left out, as it happens in the first phrase of 'Spring River'. In other versions, transcribed in cipher notation or western staff notation, bar-lines are omitted, and a Chinese symbol (₄) is used to indicate free tempo until a time signature appears (e.g. 2/4 or 4/4). Ellipsis dots (...), or a symbol which is called 'pair of glasses' because of its shape (○○○), are used to indicate that a given rhythmic group of notes should be repeated an unspecified number of times. (Both symbols are interchangeable and are sometimes also used in combination.)

Apart from the different notational systems used, the changes which occur in these eight versions can be summarized as follows.

Only two degrees of the scale (two pitches) occur in the first phrase of the 1842 and 1895 versions. The number increases to three notes in the 1898 and 1929 versions, but is reduced to one note in the 1940 and 1974 versions.

The number of rhythmic units of the first phrase increases from four beats in 1842 to fourteen beats in 1895. This number decreases to eight and six beats in the 1898 and 1929 versions, then grows to nineteen in 1940, and it becomes unspecified in the 1955 and 1974 versions.

The term gusheng (literally, 'sound of drum') appeared first in the score of 1895. It was an indication to players to imitate the sound of a drum on the pipa. This suggestion was adopted by most later performers and transcribers.

In general, the scores suggest an increase in rhythmic activity and a gradual expansion of the first phrase. But what does this really mean? Did the actual performances of 'Spring River' in the past reflect such changes? Or do the scores only show that some transcribers have gradually tried to write down more accurately what pipa players have been doing all along? A comparison of the sound recordings suggests that the changes in the scores do reflect an actual change in musical practice, from simple to more (rhythmically) complex.

The first phrase of 'Spring River', as it occurs in the three sound recordings of the piece, is shown in staff notation in Ex.2.

Ex.2. Three different versions of the first phrase of 'Spring River', transcribed from the three sound recordings.
Version A, played by Yang Kun around 1950, has a first phrase of two notes, of which the first one is played as a tremolo. After a crochet rest, the second phrase starts. Version B, performed by Wu Mengfei around 1954, consists of repetitions of a single pitch, first grouped as two notes to one beat, played softly and followed by a rest, then gradually increasing in speed and loudness until the phrase culminates in a rapid tremolo. Version C, performed by Liu Dehai in 1978, is representative of how the first phrase of the piece is played in contemporary versions. A series of three notes of the same pitch is grouped together and is softly repeated, with short rests in between. This triplet, which covers one beat, is gradually played faster and louder until it becomes a rapid and uninterrupted tremolo. The phrase ends with an isolated repetition of the triplet.

A question for myself as a player researching this music is this: how do pipa players interpret the given material? How do they arrive at new results?

THE ROLE OF THE PIPA SCHOOLS
In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, private pipa schools were gradually established in and around Shanghai. This city acted as the leading centre of pipa performance in China. The word ‘schools’ should not be understood here in the Western sense of ‘institutions’. A school essentially consisted of a master pipa player, who would invite to his home a number of carefully selected students and teach them on a private basis, and without accepting money for his services. The musical development of the pipa schools was determined by three factors:

1) a hereditary music tradition: many pipa masters stemmed from musical families, and transmitted traditions which had been handed down through various generations;

2) amateur status: most pipa masters earned their living through other activities than pipa playing;

3) representative versions of pipa repertoire: each school had its own representative versions of traditional pieces of pipa music: once a musician’s versions were accepted as representative, it usually meant that this person was respected as a master and that his school was considered to be a leading pipa school.

Most master players were well educated and were venerated as scholars. But at the same time they took pride in being identified as amateurs: they practised other professions for a living – some were medical doctors or private teachers, others independent businessmen or business employees of a firm. The ability to perform music was an important accomplishment for any scholar in traditional China.

Self-enjoyment from the musical performances seems to have been more important than playing music in front of audiences. In fact, most master players refused to participate in any pipa activities that yielded money, such as public concerts, institutional teaching, commercial recording or publishing.⁵

Private schools played the main part in pipa teaching in the nineteenth century and towards the middle of the twentieth century. A master player and his students often gathered. The theme of the meeting was pipa playing, and tea would be served. The master’s performances were appreciated and studied by the students. The students would play in turn, and their achievements were corrected by the master, who would play the correct versions. No study fees were required, but it would take several months for any outsider to become an insider of a school. After attending school activities for a certain time, novices might obtain the transcription of a few sections of a musical piece from the master player, or might be invited to comment on a given performance.

⁵ This, and other information contained in this section and the ones still following is partly based on extensive interviews which the author had in 1991 in Beijing with Cao Anhe, Chen Zemin, Fu Xueyi and Wang Enshao.
CREATIVITY AND THE IMPACT OF NOTATIONS
The main teaching material was the master player’s own oral versions of traditional music pieces. A master player had a creative role as a composer; he could interpret the given material freely. He placed greater emphasis on his virtuosity and ability to improvise than on giving an exact and literal reproduction of any musical notation. Indeed, the success of a performance was judged not only on the performer’s ability to play a particular piece of music, but also on his ability to interpret it in a personal way. New versions of traditional musical pieces appeared frequently, and old versions were forgotten quickly.

The ability to memorize music was important for both master players and students. Musical individuality was encouraged, even to the extent that it was normally forbidden for any student to look at a score during his performance. The students came to know the musical pieces primarily by listening to the master’s performances during the regular meetings. Eventually the students would obtain a music score in gongche notation from the master player, and could start studying it. In the course of his teaching, a master player could well produce more than one score of a given musical piece. He would often make changes to a piece, and some of these changes found their way into subsequent versions of a score.

As for changes in performance which would not appear in the score - students were required to pay careful attention to them, and to memorize them. The result of all this in practice was that no two students ever learned a similar piece exactly the same way, and that no one played a piece of music exactly the same way during study, performing, or teaching. But undoubtedly, one particular version one learned from one’s teacher - sometimes one version favoured among various ones offered by the teacher - would serve as the main basis for the student’s interpretation.

Changes to such a basic version occurred gradually.

TWO LEVELS OF INTERPRETATION
Interpretation apparently took place at two levels. The point of departure was usually the literary tradition of the piece - the poems or stories behind a piece would offer a player inspiration for modifying and recreating the music. The next step would be to present the new interpretation of the music to others, to discuss it and eventually to preserve the new version in a written or published score. Let me examine these two stages of creative interpretation in some more detail and illustrate them with some practical examples.

Stage one. In traditional pipa playing, the player’s creativity draws primarily on the well-established literary tradition of the pieces which he performs. This aspect goes beyond the technical level of the music. The literary background of a given pipa piece will directly influence any (re-)composition and performance of that piece in a number of different ways.

First of all, the player will classify the piece under one of the two major categories of pipa repertoire: ‘martial music’ (usually fierce and technically very demanding music, which often evokes historical or legendary battles) and ‘lyrical music’ (more reflective and quiet music, frequently associated with private moods). Secondly, the performer may change the original title of a piece, and/or give a subtitle to each section of the score, to enhance or modify the programmatic contents of the music. Thirdly, pipa players may compose little poems to go with the piece, or with particular sections of it. The poems may refer to ancient myths and stories about well-known persons - real or imagined - from the past. Again, such references enhance the attractiveness and literary impact of the music. Sometimes, a piece is fancifully attributed to some ancient scholar or princess, who features henceforth as the ‘composer’. Finally, a new interpretation of a pipa piece may also require a certain amount of imitation of natural sounds - yet another means to enhance the programmatic effect of the piece.
Stage two: Experimental performances of new versions will be given to one’s friends and students. Any new version will be studied and discussed among different players. Ultimately, a new version will be transcribed or published (Li Fangyuan c.1895, 4). The score may not only contain new notational elements, but also, and very importantly, different (sub-)titles, new poems, indications for players to imitate natural sounds, etc.

In brief, this is how new versions of existing pieces came into being in the traditional pipa schools. Creation was literary imagination expressed via the music. The process of musical interpretation in this context can essentially be described as creative stylized imagery – as the direct importing of images from poems and stories into the musical presentation. I will provide two practical examples of how this affected the scores and the music of the piece ‘Spring River’.

LI FANGYUAN’S 1895 INTERPRETATION

Li Fangyuan, the compiler of the 1895 version, is chosen to illustrate how a master player interpreted this piece. Li was born into a scholarly family. When he was young, he learned Chinese literature at a private school. He passed the imperial examinations at the national level (Yang Yinliu 1981: 1002).6

Li mentioned in the preface to his 1895 score that his family made a living from business, and that their special interest was in Chinese music performances on pipa and qin (a Chinese bridgeless horizontal zither with seven strings). The music tradition in his family can be traced back five generations (Li Fangyuan, c.1895: 4).

Li classified ‘Spring River’ as ‘lyrical music’. He knew the piece as Xiyang xiaoqu (‘Flute and drum at sunset’) but changed its title to Xunyang yeyue (‘Evening Moon in Xunyang’). He gave each section of the piece a subtitle, and added the name of an ancient scholar as the composer.

The subtitle of the first section in the 1895 version was Xiyang xiaoqu. In other words, Li Fangyuan reapplied the older title of the piece but now used it only for the first section. Furthermore, Li added several performance indications in his version. The term gusheng appeared before the first phrase. It suggested to players to imitate the sound of a drum on the pipa. Li stated that his interpretation was based on an earlier version which he had learned from his father. In his preface, he described five steps which he took in order to arrive at his current interpretation. First, he studied various early versions; then began to work on his own version, which he discussed with more than ten different players. He expanded the piece from seven sections (his father’s version) to ten. Next, he played this version to his father, as well as to his brothers, friends and students. The final step was the publishing of this version in 1895.

Li’s interpretation was widely accepted by his followers, such as Wu Mengfei, Zhu Ying and Yang Shaoyi. Unfortunately, the way in which Li actually performed the piece can not be deduced from his score, nor can we rely on his followers’ performances. Li’s score does not provide enough information to allow for a reliable construction of his original way of performance. Many musical elements are not included in the notation, such as for example the rhythmic values. Moreover, his followers made their own changes in the piece. None of them played ‘Spring River’ in exactly the same way (Deng Wei 1993).

QIU HUAIDÉ’S 1898 TRANSCRIPTION

Qiu Huaide, the transcriber of the 1898 version, is chosen to show how a player transcribed a rubato phrase. Qiu’s predecessor, Li Fangyuan, had required the

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6 In imperial times, China held state civil-service examinations in the capital every three years to select the country’s most brilliant students for future service in the imperial bureaucracy.
mimicking of the sound of the drum in the first phrase. This made the initial tempo more flexible. Indeed, it is now so changeable that no one, not even a master performer, would ever succeed in playing this phrase twice in exactly the same way.

Three years after the publication of Li’s score, Qiu Huaidi decided to transcribe the first phrase in an unmeasured form, that is, without dividing it in regular rhythmical units. It seems that the idea was that a free notation would give players more freedom in imitating the drum sounds. Qiu’s unmeasured notation was taken over by later players. In fact, the playing of certain phrases in rubato fashion was nothing new to performers. It was often required in solo instrumental compositions, and in such cases performers would often transcribe the music without bar lines or rhythmical marks. Rubato phrases even have a special name: they are referred to as haopijin. (Both Cao Anhe and Wang Enshao mentioned this term in interviews with the author). Haopijin can be translated as ‘rubber band’ in English. A rubato phrase with its flexible speed can be compared to a rubber band being pulled and loosened frequently. Pipastudents learned orally from master players how to play such rubato phrases.

**PIPA PLAYING IN MODERN TIMES**

By the middle of the twentieth century, the controlling influence of the *pipa* private schools had gradually diminished. The *pipa* became a subject at the freshly founded conservatories of music, which were partly modelled after Western music institutions. It meant that students from many musical backgrounds were now able to learn the *pipa*, and that they would study it in combination with other Chinese, as well as Western, musical theories and practices. At present, professional *pipa* performers are all graduates from the music conservatories. The new leading players are mostly unrelated to traditional players’ families.

Successors of the traditional master players were left with a number of dilemmas. They could either retain their amateur status or become professional players, but then they would have to be incorporated in a new educational structure. They could refuse the world of the music conservatories, or accept it – and accept Western musical knowledge and many modifications of their tradition into the bargain. They could remain faithful to all the things they had learned from their teachers, or modify their *pipa* heritage in many different ways – that would mean modified fret positions, the use of metal strings, the use of finger plectrums, the adoption of Western staff notation, the acceptance of contemporary compositions for the *pipa*, new fingering signs, new performance techniques, etc. etc. Some players rejected all these changes, or they were unable to comply with them. These performers quickly lost popularity and were regarded as old-fashioned.

I learned ‘Spring River’ from Wu Zunsheng at the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1964. Wu graduated from the Central Conservatory in 1962. He is currently a senior lecturer at the China Conservatory. The piece as I learned to play it had ten fragments of poetry in the score. The poem for the first section runs as follows:

> The remote sound of a drum is heard.
> The sun has gone.
> Wind took the shadow of a flower away.
> The moon casts its light.

I was asked to memorize these lines before playing the piece, and was expected to convey the feeling of the poetry in the actual performance. From the poem it is clear that the traditional imagery of the first phrase has been retained in contemporary versions. The term *gusheng* is still used by contemporary players. Below, I have transcribed the first phrase from my own 1990 performance of ‘Spring River’. I have borrowed some notational techniques from western twentieth-century compositions in an effort to produce a detailed transcription of the phrase.
Example 3: The first phrase of ‘Spring River’ in two supplementary transcriptions, as played and transcribed by the author. (Ti = Time, T = tempo, D = dynamics.)

SOME CONCLUSIONS
Creative imagination plays an important part in the process of interpretation of pipa pieces. In traditional Chinese music making, the interpreting of compositions can best be described as creative stylized imagery. The music is made directly responsive to literary images. This tradition is carried on in current pipa practices.

Contemporary scores of pipa music show that modern players often try to conciliate the ‘rubber band manner’ of playing with the rigid precision of western staff notation. Staff notation and cipher notation have effectively replaced gongche notation in practice, but this is not to say that these systems can solve all the problems of notation. Many temporal changes, vibrato, glissando and embellishment techniques, as well as timbral shifts are still very hard to capture in writing. Further experimentation in this field is evident in practice. In the case of ‘Spring River’, oral transmission and rote-learning from tape recordings remain essential.
GLOSSARY

Cao Anhe 孙安和 scholar / pipa player (b.1905)
Chen Zemin 陈泽民 scholar / pipa player / teacher (b.1930)
Fu Xueyi 付雪燕 scholar (b. 1922)
Li Fangyuan 李芳园 nineteenth century pipa master player (? - c.1899)
Li Tingsong 李廷松 pipa player / teacher (1906-1976)
Liu Dehai 刘德海 pipa player / teacher (b.1937)
Qiu Huaidi 邱怀德 nineteenth century pipa player
Shen Haochu 沈浩初 pipa master player / medical doctor (1889-1953)
Wang Enshao 王恩绍 amateur pipa player (b.1922)
Wang Yuting 汪玉庭 pipa master player / businessman (1872-1951)
Wang Shuxian 王叔咸 amateur pipa player / medical doctor (1900-1982)
Wu Mengfei 吴梦飞 pipa player (1881-1979)
Wu Wanjing 吴婉静 pipa & df player / teacher (1847-1926)
Wu Zunsheng 吴俊生 pipa player / teacher / composer (b.1938)
Yang Kun 杨昆 amateur pipa player
Yang Shaoji 杨少计 pipa player / teacher
Yang Yinliu 杨印楼 scholar (1899-1984)
Zhang Jianshan 张建山 nineteenth century pipa player
Zhu Ying 朱英 pipa player / teacher (1809-1954)

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WANG Shuxian 1940 Xunyang pipa [Pipa in Xunyang]. MS.

YANG Yinliu 1920 Pipa pu [Pipa score]. MS.

ZHANG Jianshan (tr.) 1842 Tane cuo ji [Collection of Tancao]. MS.

Tape-recordings


YANG Kun c.1950 Xiyang xinogu ['Flute and drum at sunset']. Beijing: Chen Zemin's collection.
‘WHAT AN ARTIST NEEDS MOST IS COURAGE’

Hou Dejian and the Rise of Pop Music in Taiwan in the Seventies

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(Sydney, Australia)

The following is an excerpt from a biography-in-progress of Hou Dejian, the Taiwan singer-songwriter who composed ‘Heirs of the Dragon.’ Hou subsequently defected to China in 1983, only to be returned to Taiwan as an unwanted dissident seven years later. The present excerpt concentrates on the origins of ‘campus folk’ and popular music in Taiwan in the late Seventies. ‘The campus folk movement was not just about music. It represented an entirely new sort of awareness.’

It was in his third year of university that Hou Dejian met Dai Hongxuan, a teacher in the music department of Cheng-chih University. His friend Sun Weimang had taken one of Dai’s courses and raved about him to Hou. Dai, though some fourteen years their senior, soon became part of their life. Physically unprepossessing, indeed, faintly comical, with his balding pate, one eye that appeared slightly larger than the other due to a squint, and a languorous, Cantonese-accented voice, Dai was the son of a minor Cantonese warlord who had studied music in Heidelberg. Hou says, ‘My best memories of university life all centre around Dai Hongxuan.’ Hou describes Dai as ‘an artist of life, a work of art himself,’ a sensualist and an incurable romantic.

Dai had a tremendous influence on Hou Dejian’s approach to music, even if, as Sun Weimang recalls with amused distaste, Hou sometimes preferred Ann Murray to Mendelssohn. Nonetheless, Hou relates: ‘From Dai Hongxuan I learned that Bach’s music was a communication with God, that Mendelssohn loved his sister more than anyone else in the world... I became acquainted not only with Western music but with Western philosophy and culture, and with the principle of self-affirmation that has been central to Western intellectual and artistic life since the Renaissance. I learned from him what it meant to be an true artist.’

Dai Hongxuan taught us that art could tolerate neither pretense nor hypocrisy. Than what an artist needs most of all is courage, the courage to be true to oneself, to one’s feelings. In fact he probably did me a great deal of harm. I’m a pop composer. Under normal circumstances I’d have probably gone on to a happy, commercially-oriented career. But there he was, teaching me to think of myself as an artist. What a mess! How can you be both a pop musician and an artist as he

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1 Provisional title: Banned in China: The Strange Tale of Pop Star, Defector and Dissident Hou Dejian.
2 Hou Dejian was born on Oct.1, 1956 in Zhiyuan village in Gangshan, outside Gaolong (Kao-hsiung). He studied accounting at Cheng-chih University.
defined the word? I really don't know. When I start fretting and fussing over my music, [Liu]
Xiaobo [a friend Hou met in the late 80s on the mainland] laughs at me for taking it too seriously.
But the reason I take it seriously is Dai Hongxuan, and he's also the reason there's so much
seriousness and classical influence in my pop music. Oh well. I think what I do is right for me. I
think it's been worth it.

Significantly, Dai was also a supporter of the burgeoning 'campus folk' movement that
began in Taiwan in the mid-70s and which was to provide a context for Hou's first
forays into songwriting. Dai has been quoted as saying, 'As a civilised person, one can
see that folk songs are something that we've already lost and yet cannot afford to lose.
We are left with "homesickness," but no "home".'

The setbacks Taiwan had experienced on the diplomatic front in the early 70s had
sent ripples through the island's artistic and intellectual communities. Although a
mooted boycott of Japanese goods to protest Tokyo's severing of ties with Taipei
never got off the ground, there remained, Hou recalls, 'a certain hostility towards the
outside world.' Pride wounded by the acts of outlanders was salved and renewed by
turning the gaze inward. A growing nativist (xiangtu) stream in the arts and literature
brought the 'little man,' the 'ordinary person' on Taiwan into fictional prominence and
celebrated the island's traditional culture. Students and lecturers hung the distinctive
woven-straw raincoats and hats worn by Taiwanese farmers on their walls of their
Taipei flats, partook of tea on tatami mats in teahouses decorated with 'found' bits of
local pottery, or sipped coffee in the faded European elegance of the Astor Café off
Chungking South Road, a hangout for writers.

Hou read the books everyone was talking about but, he says, 'couldn't get into it
at all.' The nativists' horizons lay at the shores of the island; Hou's didn't. Nor was he
excited by the quality of the writing of even the hottest nativist authors, whose political
concerns he found often tended to overshadow their artistic ones. But the 'discovery'
of Taiwan as source of pride and identity unquestionably had a galvanising effect on
the intellectual atmosphere as a whole; Hou describes the mid-to-late 70s, when he was
in university, as 'in terms of cultural reflection and change, one of the most stimulating
and exciting periods in Taiwan's recent history.'

EVERYONE A COMPOSER
In music, the big year was 1975, the same year that Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder
Revue swept across the northeast of America and Hou's contemporaries in the West
grooved to 'Mr. Tambourine Man' and 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door.' A student called
Yang Xuan set a poem by the contemporary poet Yu Guangzhong (one of Hou's
favourite writers) to music and sang it to wild applause at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial
Hall in Taipei. Soon afterwards Yang put out his debut album, 'A Collection of
Contemporary Chinese Folk Songs.' The trend was on. For guitar-playing students
like Hou who'd been content until then to play and sing American and British songs it
was as if they'd suddenly found a voice of their own. Soon, everyone was a
composer: a popular joke held that if you lobbed a stone into a university campus
you'd be sure to knock out a folk singer. Some people continued to set contemporary
poetry to music; others gave traditional Chinese folk songs a modern beat; and still
others composed both words and lyrics.

Musically, they took their cues from contemporary American folk rock, country-
and-Western and the lighter side of rock 'n' roll. Arrangements tended to be basic,
requiring only a singer and an acoustic guitar, though in performance there might be a
bass player and a drummer for backup. The melodies were simple, the beat clear, the
style of singing natural and plain.

4 Luo Qing, 'Mantan xindai mingge geci chuanyun,' in Tao Xiaoqing, ed., Qiufenglilide diyu, p.142.
5 See Li You, 'Erjin wo xianggao,' Xin guanca zaibo, p. 15.
Performers of the new folk began to appear in the smoky coffee shops and bars with names like Idea House and Scarecrow, the first meeting places of Taiwan’s nascent youth culture, where long-haired university students hung out to debate the issues of the day and listen to music. Previously, the main entertainment would have consisted of singers doing sets of songs like America’s ‘A Horse with No Name,’ Don McClean’s ‘American Pie’ or even James Brown’s ‘Baddest Man in the Whole Bad Town.’ The ‘new folk’ had an electric effect on the crowd; its significance for them was summed up in the title of one of the seminal hits: ‘Sing Your Own Songs.’

CAMPUS FOLK
Like most genuine artistic movements, Taiwan’s campus folk movement was less an organised cultural project than a confluence of intellectual trends, historical circumstances, personalities, and chance. Like many artistic movements, it was marked form the beginning by all manner of lively debates and controversies that ranged in subject matter from nomenclature to politics. It even had its own martyr of sorts: the singer/songwriter, painter and writer Li Shuangze, who drowned trying to save a foreign child in 1977, at the age of 28. Through his writings, Li had helped familiarise Taiwan’s youth with the origins of contemporary Western folk and rock music from Woody Guthrie to the Mothers of Invention. At the same time, Li warned of the dangers of American cultural imperialism, and helped pioneer the home-grown variety of folk-rock.

As Hou later was to put it, ‘The campus folk movement was not just about music. It represented an entirely new sort of awareness.’ He recalls that the first time he heard one of Yang Xuan’s songs ‘it was a revelation: hey, you can actually write Chinese music like that! Strictly speaking they weren’t brilliant. There was no incredible breakthrough in musical terms or anything. But I really liked them. And when I said this to my friends they encouraged me to write songs too. They said they thought I could do at least as well as them.’

Fired by Yang Xuan’s example, emboldened by his friend’s advice, Hou wrote his first song. The inspiration came from his youngest brother, Dejun, who since their parents’ divorce had been living with his mother and the other children in a flat not far from the university. Hou Dejian remembered a time several years before when Dejun had asked him to take him to the rice fields to catch mudfish. Fishing for mudfish was great fun: kneeling at the edge of the padi, you had to urge the slippery creatures into a corner with a bowl and then grab them with your fingers.

The ponds are full of water
The rain has stopped
In the fine wet mud of the padi fields
Swim the mudfish.

I’ll wait for you every day
And take you fishing.
What do you think of your big brother now?
Let’s go looking for mudfish.

Little Ox’s brother
Takes him to catch mudfish.
What do you think of your big brother now?
Let’s go looking for mudfish.

Set to a cheerful, airy tune, ‘Fishing’ (‘Zhuo niqu’) swam happily in the mainstream of the new folk movement. The Seventies had been the decade when Taiwan’s economy began to take off, and the countryside was fast disappearing under an industrial, urban sprawl. Many students, like Hou, had not grown up on the land, but by the land. Unlike more traditional folk singers, they sand not as the tillers of the field but as strollers-by. As the voice of the island’s first truly urbanised generation, the folk movement promoted a happy nostalgia for, if not rural life, at least the pastoral entertainments of their not-so-distant childhood.
Hou Dejian composed several more songs. He wrote them for the joy of it and shared them with his friends. One of them introduced Hou to a record company executive who liked the songs and offered to buy the rights to the lot. He paid about NT$4000 (approximately $100) for each song, an amount equivalent to about one-third of an average monthly wage at the time. Hou, who'd been supporting his studies by giving guitar lessons and doing various other part-time jobs, was thrilled to pieces.

The record company, Syneco, a division of Sony, found a saccharine-voiced woman singer called Bao Meisheng, a graduate of Taiwan University's history department who coincidentally also grew up in Zhiyuan Village, to record 'Fishing.' It was an instant hit. In an island-wide survey of more than 7,000 people conducted by two Taiwan TV stations and a magazine, 'Fishing' was voted the fifth most popular song of 1978. It even became a fixture in Japanese and South Korean karaoke bars.\(^6\)

**INFERIORITY COMPLEX**

As a result of the success of 'Fishing,' Hou became a fixture on the campus folk scene. He still could never quite involve himself with the movement's polemics. Attending one meeting of campus folk activists, he was listening unmoved to their impassioned debates over such issues as what the music ought to be called – campus folk? new Chinese folk? – when he was asked to say a few words. 'I said music is something you play and I couldn't see the point of all the talk about it. When I finished speaking I got up and left.' While sometimes Hou spoke in the same serious terms as the rest about artistic mission and so on, he increasingly refused to play the game, and occasionally shocked his growing number of fans with such frank statements as the one he gave to a reporter who asked why he wrote music: 'I said there were three reasons. One was to get over my inferiority complex. The second was to attract girls. The third was that I liked music.' Later, he would add that there were three conditions under which he didn't write music: 'No inspiration, enough money to live on and too many other amusing things to do.'

Hardly in a position to criticize self-indulgence, Hou was nonetheless put off by the sophomoric solipsism of some of his fellow campus singer/songwriters. In an essay written for the university paper, he described attending an afternoon musical performance at a Taipei restaurant at which a number of singers, including himself, were to present their work, talk about it and sing. The first performer began by showing family slides and nattering on about her life; by the time this had gone on for over ten minutes, the audience was fit to riot, and began rattling their cups and saucers in a display of frustration. The second was a long-haired, sweet-faced youth accompanied on the piano by his girlfriend; as they played and sang, their eyes never left each other's faces. As Hou noted wryly, 'the audience had its standards. The applause [for both acts] was thin.' Another singer told the audience about the wonderful atmosphere at a John Denver concert he'd attended in the U.S. and yet another, relatively famous one, contumaciously treated his listeners to one song performed limply before shuffling off the stage and to some other, no doubt more interesting appointment. When it was his turn, Hou told the audience simply that he was there because of his vanity, that he'd written a few songs and liked to inflict them on others.\(^7\) He doesn't say how he was received.

**KIDNAPPED**

Among the songs Hou composed at the time was one called 'Guiqu laixi.' The title is a semi-classical phrase taken from a poem by Eastern Jin Dynasty poet Tao Yuanming

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8 Hou Dejian, untitled and undated manuscript, pp. 1-11 passim.
JAININ: Hou Dejian and the Rise of Pop Music in Taiwan

(365-427 AD). It means, 'why do you not return home?'; Tao was writing of his own return home after years as a court official. Hou's song was inspired by the true story of one of his old neighbours in Zhiyuan Village. As a young man in Shandong Province, he had been married but two years when he was kidnapped by Kuomintang army 'recruiters' as he and his 25-year-old wife were coming out of a movie theatre one evening. (The Nationalist Army was infamous on the mainland in the late 40s for their desperate practice of forced conscription.) Made to retreat to Taiwan with the rest of the army, he pined after his beloved wife and as the years passed, eked out a living in the village doing odd jobs. One day, he spoke to Luo Yingwen, Hou's mother, in a state of excitement. He told her he was getting remarried. Congratulating him, she asked how old the bride was. Giggling like a schoolboy, he told her, 'only twenty-two and even prettier than my first wife!' Luo Yingwen had a sense of foreboding but kept her doubts to herself. In the end, the wife took every last cent the poor old soldier had managed to save and ran off with it. Devastated, he committed suicide.

At first, Hou had written the story up as a play, but when he showed it to one of his teachers, the horrified response was 'Buyao mingle!' - literally, 'you want to die?!' He said the topic was just too politically sensitive. The teacher may have been overly cautious. The government clearly would not have wished to draw attention to the plight of the Nationalist soldiers whose hopes of reunion with their families eroded with each passing day of the stalemated civil war. Yet their tragedy, as an undeniable aspect of Taiwan life, found its inevitable way into Taiwan literature, in stories like 'A Sea of Blood red Azaleas' by Bai Xianyong (Pai Hsien-yung) and 'A Race of Generals' by Chen Yingzhou (Ch’en Ying-chen).9

Possessed by the old soldier's story, Hou Dejian finally wrote it up as a song. In it, he plays with the language of the Tao Yuanming poem.

Why do you not go home?
Your fields will be choked with weeds.
Years of indecision,
Years of pallor,
Years of waiting,
Years of trembling,
Return lest youth itself
Be overgrown and choked with weeds.
When I left home, she was only twenty-five
A wave goodbye and how many winters since
How many miles before we can see one another again?..

The rest of the song continues in this vein to describe the singer growing old, until his hair is white and his very soul the abandoned field.

THE TAIWAN QUESTION
On the morning of December 16, 1978, when Hou Dejian was in his fourth year of university, the whole island came to a shocked standstill as President Chiang Ching-kuo broadcast the news that U.S. President Jimmy Carter had informed him earlier that morning of his decision to break off formal ties with Taiwan to establish them with the People's Republic of China. It wasn't totally unexpected: the writing, you might say, had been on the Great Wall ever since Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China, which had culminated in the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué. The Communiqué reaffirmed China's position that 'the Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the

normalization of relations between China and the United States,' and stated that the U.S. acknowledged that 'Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.' In the hopes that there will be 'a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves,' the U.S. affirmed its intention to withdraw its forces from Taiwan eventually.\(^\text{10}\)

The reaction on the Cheng-chih University campus, as elsewhere in Taiwan was a mixture of distress, anger and sorrow. Some students wept openly at the news. Others shook their fists in the air, accusing the United States of 'abandoning' Taiwan. Hou saw the fear on people's faces and found it deeply disturbing. Indeed, he felt profound shame.

Certainly, the U.S. had been Taiwan's closest ally and trading partner in a world increasingly taken with the People's Republic. The move was not simply a blow to Taiwan's international prestige and standing; it also introduced doubts as to the future of the island's economy and defense. Yet, Hou asked himself, were the Chinese people on Taiwan so lacking in self-confidence and respect, so emotionally dependent on the U.S., so culturally and politically uncentred that they couldn't accept what was, after all, and inevitable political development?

It seemed that at the core of their dilemma was a basic uncertainty as to their identity. Who were they? Chinese? Taiwanese? Both? What did it mean to be Chinese, to come from a culture every central image of which, from the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers to the Great Wall, was tied to a land that you might conceivably never have a chance to step foot upon? What did it mean to say your ancestor - your parents - came from this land when you couldn't even picture the faces of the people who lived there now? Moved by a powerful inspiration, Hou Dejian sat down and in one half hour composed the words and music to 'Heirs of the Dragon.'

In the far-off East flows a river called the Yangtze.
In the far-off East flows the Yellow River too.
I've never seen the beauty of the Yangtze
Though often have I sailed it in my dreams.
And while I've never heard the roar of the Yellow River,
It pounds against its shores in my dreams.

In the ancient East there is a dragon;
China is its name.
In the ancient East there lives a people
The dragon's heirs every one.
Under the feet of this mighty dragon I grew up
And its heir I have become.
Black eyes, black hair, yellow skin,
Once and forever, an heir of the dragon.

A hundred years ago on a quiet night,
The deep dark night before the great changes,
A quiet night shattered by gunfire,
Enemies on all sides, the sword of ignorance.
For how many years did those gunshots resound,
So many years and so many years more
Mighty dragon, open your eyes
For now and evermore, open your eyes.

Soon afterwards, Hou Dejian sang 'Heirs' live on the radio. One of Taiwan's two largest newspapers, the United Daily News published the words on December 26. Within a week, hundreds of fan letters, many of them impassioned, poured in from all over Taiwan. Much to his bemusement as well as delight, Hou Dejian was on his way to stardom.

\(^\text{10}\) For the complete text, see Chiu, ed., China and the Question of Taiwan, p. 346.
A REPORT ON THE 1995 CHIME MEETING

East Asian Voices

TAN HWEE SAN
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In September 1995, the European Foundation for Chinese Music Research (CHIME) held its second International Conference in conjunction with the XIth European Seminar in Ethnomusicology (ESEM) and a meeting of Teaching World Music (TWM) in De Doelen Conference Centre in Rotterdam. Entitled, 'East Asian Voices', the four-day conference (11 – 14 September) involved over 90 participants. A total of 34 papers were presented, concentrating on the vocal folk music and living folk traditions of China, Japan, Korea, India, Vietnam and Laos. Key issues included the extent to which gods or mortals are addressed in ritual performances, and the interplay of religious and secular aspects in the musical traditions.

East Asian Voices was organized by CHIME in co-operation with the Universities of Leiden (Research School CNWS) and London (SOAS), and with support from IIAS, the Asia Committee of the European Science Foundation (ESF) and various other institutions. During the four days, sessions treated narrative singing, Chinese opera, folk song, ritual music and recent traditions; panel discussions were arranged; and the last two days included workshops on Chinese shīfān luōgu (percussion ensemble), the southern Chinese nanguan (ballad ensemble) and various other traditions, giving participants a chance to experience these musical traditions first-hand.

Many people who attended ‘East Asian Voices’ did not mind stepping outside the boundaries of their own disciplines. They were able to acquaint themselves with many unfamiliar musical styles, and especially the practical workshops offered welcome opportunities for this. Among the events noted as ‘highlights’ were a workshop shōmyō singing (Japanese Buddhist chant) by Junko Ueda (Wereldmuziekschool Amsterdam), and a guqin workshop by Dai Xiaolian, a zither player from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. (The CHIME Foundation hopes to set up regular guqin courses in Holland in the future.)

On the opening evening a prize-winning documentary on five contemporary Chinese composers, filmed by a leading Dutch cineast, Eline Flipse, was shown. It portrayed a fascinating narrative of the composers – Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Mo Wuping, Chen Qigang, Guo Wenjing – and their search for their musical roots. The third evening was devoted to a concert mainly on the vocal traditions of various East Asian countries. The programme included Mongolian folk songs from the Trio Tal Nutag, Japanese biwa (4-string lute) narrative singing by Junko Ueda, nanguan ballads performed by the Taiwanese troupe Han Tang Yuehfu, a vocal and pipa performance by Liu Sola and Wu Man, pipa solo by Wu Man, and guqin solo by Dai Xiaolian.
TWO CHAINED METAPHORS
The keynote paper of the conference was delivered by David Holm, author of several important studies on Chinese performing arts and ritual. In his paper 'A seamless garment: sacred and secular strands in Chinese song', Holm raised several important points regarding music research in China. He noted firstly that the secular and sacred in traditional music in China are two chained metaphors and that researchers cannot explore one without reference to the other. With this in mind, both temporal and spatial dimensions must be accounted for. Borrowings between musical genres occur both within and between regions. In Guangdong, for example, the song style of persons weighing the fishermen's catch is strongly influenced by Cantonese opera; and in Shaanxi, a wide range of vocal genres, cross-cutting ethnic boundaries, share preferences for particular intervallic, scalar and colouring devices. Transregional influences in Chinese music are found everywhere just below the surface. Holm's advice is to look deep into local soil and also to look outside of one's own
particular topic. Both Chinese and foreign scholars need to widen their perspectives in their continued efforts to push Chinese music research to a higher plane. It is only possible to discuss a selection of the papers read at the conference. A list of all papers in the order presented is appended to the report.

NARRATIVE SINGING
In the session on narrative singing, Lucie Borotova of Charles University in Prague introduced a Qing dynasty account written by the official Li Dou, of the Yangzhou pleasure boats in Jiangsu province. An important primary source for Chinese quyi, this book gives many details of the dispersion of different types of storytelling in Yangzhou. From this source, we can also see how a sub-type of narrative singing, qingqu (plain song), although no longer found nowadays, could still be traced through kunqu (Kun opera). In a paper on the vocal style in nanguan, a ballad singing genre found in Fujian, Kyle Heide of Indiana University considered some of the reasons for stylistic variations among singers today. He analysed the changes in the singing style of Wang Yaxin, who was originally from Quanzhou but is currently the lead singer of Han Tang Yuehfu, and also compared examples of a distinct style from Xiamen. In conjunction with the workshop by the nanguan ensemble Han Tang Yuehfu, participants were able to hear from Wang Yaxin herself on the stylistic changes in her singing. Papers on narrative singing in India, Korea and Vietnam were also presented.

CHINESE OPERA
The session on Chinese opera included several historical studies. Isabelle Duchesne’s paper on ‘Flavour/taste (wei)’ in the vocal music of Jingxi (Peking opera) looked at how famous Beijing opera singers of the 1930s, including Mei Lanfang, Shang Xiaoyun and Yu Shuyan, used certain vocal techniques combined with their individual musical and artistic attainments to produce the element of ‘wei’ (flavour/
FOLK SONG TRADITIONS
The folk song session held on the third day of the Conference was a lively one. Many papers dealt with traditions outside the Han Chinese sphere: Mongolia; Xinjiang; the Dong minority in Guizhou; polyphonic singing among the Hani tribe in Yunnan; the degree of ornamentation and its significance in Japanese folk and religious song were issues discussed by David Hughes; another paper focussed on traditional social singing among the Kammu, an ethnic minority tribe in Laos. Papers on Han Chinese folk song covered mostly those of the Wu dialect speaking area of Jiangsu. Antoinet Schimmelpenninck’s ‘Why shan’ge singers die “with rotten teeth” – on erotic folk song in Jiangsu province’ introduced one aspect of her fieldwork carried out between 1986 and 1994. In the Jiangsu area, erotic songs were widely sung in villages and accepted as an inherent and natural part of the local culture. Songs of this nature go back a long way in Chinese history; the best known anthology of erotic lyrics is the 17th-century compilation of shan’ge by Feng Menglong. Dealing with a topic which is
still largely avoided by Chinese music researchers, Schimmelpenningink examined the many metaphors used to express eroticism in folk song, giving an insight into the social context of these songs and the responses of singers and audience. Frank Kouwenhoven’s paper ‘On “continuity” in Chinese folk song’ examines a common phenomenon in rural Jiangsu of shan’ge singers’ penchant for singing continuously once they get started. He discussed and even demonstrated some of the techniques used by singers to extend their songs, putting forward the argument that sustaining momentum is essential in creative performance.

MUSCIE IN RITUAL
Music in ritual featured highly in the Conference. Papers on rituals performed by ethnic minorities treated the Nuo plays of Anhui, the Tanking Gods ritual of the Rukai aborigines of Taiwan, the marriage and funeral customs and related music of the Mosuo tribe in Yunnan and Sichuan, and the Dongjing associations of the Naxi people of Lijiang in Yunnan. This last paper, by Helen Rees and Zhang Xingrong, discussed the background of this type of association (in which elements of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are fused), its dissemination and regional differences in the music.

Among the papers on Buddhist music and folk ritual, François Picard’s presentation advocated the interesting idea that Chinese funeral music is a genre comparable to the Western Mass for the Dead or the Requiem by composers from Campra to Mozart, Berlioz and Verdi. A contemplative paper on Buddhist ritual fang yankou (‘releasing flaming mouth’, more commonly known as ‘feeding the hungry ghost’) by Tian Qing related his observations in the field, leading to new insights into the function of music in ritual. In the performances of this ritual accompanied by melodic instruments, he found an interesting phenomenon: the lead singer or the precentor, the monk who begins a hymn, does not pitch his voice according to the instruments, rather the instrumentalists will often wait for the precentor to begin before searching for a corresponding (sometimes only approximate) pitch to accompany the singing. The result is disharmony during the first few moments of the hymn, or in some cases a minute discrepancy between the pitch of the instruments and the vocalists throughout the piece. Tian’s initial conclusion was that the precentor or the master of a ritual has the power to invoke Gods and spirits: his voice (including his pitch) is the intermediary between mortals and gods and is most revered. Clearly religious considerations can outweigh aesthetic ones in Buddhist ritual performance. Stephen
Jones, in his paper 'Precious scripture: a living performance art', pointed out the importance of studying 'precious scriptures' (baojuan) because they reveal much about ritual performances. In the villages in Hebei province where he has carried out extensive fieldwork, he found not only that village ritual associations preserve very old scriptures but that these also serve as ritual manuals. They often contain texts of hymns, gathas and even 'labelled melodies' (gupai). Chinese music researchers often lament the lack of records on performing precious scriptures, but if they were to study folk ritual in Chinese villages, they would find a wealth of tradition which is very much alive.

SECULAR AND SACRED

Papers on recent traditions were discussed in a parallel session. These ranged from Christian hymns and psalm singing in a remote village in southern Gansu to North Korean revolutionary songs to Buddhist and Daoist rock music, and modern Chinese composers and their works.

The first day ended with a panel discussion, featuring fierce debate among panelists and audience on issues such as the extent to which performers are addressing gods or
The Nanguan ensemble Han Tang Yuehfu from Taipei during a rehearsal for the concert.

mortals when they perform rituals, whether secular music traditions could be linked with religious culture, and whether an overall trend can be detected in the interplay of 'secular' and 'sacred' music. Most panelists agreed that in China even secular music traditions are indeed often closely linked with religious culture. The question of whether ritual are performed for mortals or gods elicited diverse views; some held that there was a time when rituals were performed for the Gods, but 20th-century secularization has virtually eliminated this; others felt that the views of the ritualists themselves must be sought; indeed, the validity and the fundamental meaning of these questions was challenged.

On the whole, the Conference was hugely successful; the organisers should be commended for their efforts in encouraging research in East Asian musical traditions by bringing together scholars from all parts of the world. A well-combined programme of scholarly papers with concerts and workshops helped deepen the participants' understanding and appreciation of the topics discussed. Much valuable interaction took place outside the formal structure of the Conference providing fresh opportunities for scholars of a diverse range of East Asian musics to exchange ideas. One such outcome was the discussion of a possible joint venture by scholars of different specialized fields to carry out fieldwork research in one specific area in China. One regrettable fact during the Conference was the exclusion of many Chinese scholars from the panel discussion due to the language barrier. Simultaneous translation, although surely expensive and cumbersome, would have helped tremendously. Perhaps the organisers of the next Conference can include this expense in their fund-raising.

A selection of papers presented at the 1995 Chime conference 'East Asian Voices' will be published in Nos. 10 and 11 of Chime (1997).
PAPERS ‘EAST ASIAN VOICES’
(Listed in order of presentation.)

Lucie Borotová – ‘Storytelling as seen in Yangzhou huafeng ju (18th century China).’
Hyun Moon – ‘Shijio: its origin and development.’ (Korea)
Domenico di Virgilio – ‘Addressing mortals in the name of Gods.’ (India)
Barley Norton – ‘The interaction between sociopolitical movements and the song texts of the North Vietnamese musical genre ca tru.’
Isabelle Duchesne – ‘Flavour / taste (weir) in the vocal music of Jingxi (Peking Opera).’
Marnix Wells – ‘“Tail-sounds” (weiseng) – The operatic three-line coda.’
Zhang Boyu – ‘Off stage: Kun Opera Music sung by Tang Ming.’
Helen Rees – ‘Where Confucianism, Taoism & Buddhism meet: Dongjing associations of SW China.’
Zhang Xingrong – ‘The varying voices of worship: regional differences in Dongjing music.’
Stefan Kuzay – ‘The Nuo plays of Guichi / Anhui.’
Terence Lancashire – ‘Iwami kagura: ritual or entertainment; changes in role and function.’ (Japan)
Colin Huehns – ‘Melodic structures in the Kazakh songs of Xinjiang.’
Frank Kouwenhoven – ‘On “continuity” in Chinese folk song.’
A. Schimmelpenninck – ‘Why shan ge singers die “with rotten teeth”: On erotic folk song in Jiangsu.’
David Hughes – ‘Ornamentation in folk and religious song in Japan: decoration for gods or for mortals?’
Urna Chahartugchi – On Mongolian folk songs (interview by A. Schimmelpenninck).
Schu-Chi Lee – ‘The cricket sounds of the Dong minority in Guizhou, China.’
Håkon Lundström – ‘Kamru Tédm singing, communication and individual expression.’ (Laos)
Chang-yang Kuo – ‘Buddhist chant in Taiwan.’
François Picard – ‘Mass for the souls or requiem, Buddhist rituals and popular music in China.’
Wang Yaohua – ‘The development of Chinese Buddhist music from the viewpoint of Fujian.’
Cheng Shui-Cheng – ‘The Thanking Gods Ritual of the Rukai aborigines of Taiwan.’
Joanna C. Lee – ‘Hymns, spirituals and Psalm singing of Christians in southern Gansu.’
Gerlinde Gild – ‘Early principles of modernization of Chinese music.’
Keith Howard – North Korea: Songs for the Great Leader, with Instructions from the Dear Leader.’
Andreas Steen – ‘Buddhist & Daoist Rock music – A new musical style?’
Barbara Mittler – ‘Bland and insipid? The sounds of antiquity appeal not to the modern ear’.
Kyle Heide – ‘Vocal style in Nanguan music.’
Tian Qing – ‘Music in Chinese Buddhist Rituals – addressing Gods or addressing mortals?’
Zhang Xingrong – ‘Funeral music of the Mosuo (Yunnan / Sichuan).’
Li Wei – ‘Living voices of a matriarchal society: marriage and funeral customs of the Mosuo.’
NIAS WORKSHOP ON CHINESE ORAL LITERATURE, DENMARK

Storytellers know best about storytelling

FRANK KOUWENHOVEN
(Chime Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands)

Chinese traditional storytelling is almost dead – it has become a cultural relic cherished only by a handful of intellectual connoisseurs and ‘traditionalists’. Or: Chinese storytelling is alive and kicking; it continues to thrive in traditional centres like Suzhou and Yangzhou. These and other contradictory opinions could be heard during a recent NIAS workshop in Copenhagen on oral literature in modern China. The meeting testified to the sheer variety of Chinese oral traditions, whether alive or slumbering. Aside from papers on folk song, opera, storytelling and storytelling, there was ample room for demonstrations by master storytellers invited from Yangzhou.

Stories about storytelling are best told by storytellers. This might be one conclusion from the workshop on ‘Oral Literature in Modern China’, held at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen from 29 to 31 August 1996. A brilliant impromptu performance by master storyteller Li Xintang from Yangzhou, towards the end of the meeting, may have clarified many issues that had been left hanging in mid-air during the discussions.

Lin related ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, an episode from the popular novel Shuihu zhuan (‘Water Margin’ or ‘Outlaws of the Marsh’). The tale of the nonchalant travelling hero who kills a fearsome beast is an inherent part of oral storytellers’ repertoires in Yangzhou teahouses. Participants at the NIAS workshop could fancy themselves in the heart of the local Yangzhou scene: holding Chinese fans and drinking green tea, they listened to the tiger story for the fourth time in the span of a few days.

It had been told by Lin and by others during earlier sessions, but this time, in a spirited tour de force, Lin Xintang combined the adventures of the masculine hero with a delicate show of parody aimed directly at his academic audience. He frequently interrupted his tale to examine his own words or actions with quasi-seriousness: why lift two fingers in the air instead of one? Why use a particular tone of voice in such-and-such a place? Why repeat certain facts so many times? Details scholars had addressed earlier in the course of the workshop were now lifted to a new level of discourse, where the storyteller’s raised eyebrow or faint smile proved more telling than many a scholarly comment.

Lin’s poking fun at the workshop was an adequate response to Nikolai Speshnev’s curious claim, earlier that day, in a paper on guyi, that the Chinese lack a sense of
Irony. It was also a keen reply to Marja Kaikkonen who, in her paper on *xiangsheng* (comic dialogue), had wryly complained that the *quyi* arts in China have now largely become 'a selection of museum pieces'. There was nothing in the Yangzhou storytellers' feats in Copenhagen to support that view, though it may be valid for certain other genres.

**HANDICAP**

The idea for the workshop, attended by some fifty participants from many parts of the world, came from Vibeke Børødal, a Danish researcher currently based at the University of Oslo. She is a passionate lover of Yangzhou storytelling traditions, and the author of many scholarly works on this topic. Her book *The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling* (Curzon, Richmond) came off the press just in time for the workshop. Several storytellers who feature prominently in her study had come to Copenhagen to demonstrate their skills.

In adhering to a particular repertoire and to particular performance styles, inherited from masters of an older generation, the storytellers represent various 'schools' of storytelling. Thus, Li Xintang, Hui Zhaolong and Wang Xiaotang tell stories from *Shuihu zhuan*, while Fei Zhengliang and Dai Buzhang's repertoires are linked up with *San Guo* ('The Three Kingdoms') and *Xijiu Ji* ('Journey to the West'), respectively. All these masters had made their way to Copenhagen. Experts in China often claim that the popular novels contain the original versions of the tales. Børødal and other researchers, however, believe that oral and literary traditions have existed side by side for several centuries in China, making it difficult to identify any original source. These opposing views inevitably led to some discussion after a paper by Duan Baolin (University of Macao) on the historical development of folk tales and storytelling.

Dai Buzhang was the first storyteller to perform before the Copenhagen audience—an audience largely composed of non-Chinese. It was a bit of an experiment, since
neither he nor his colleagues had ever done anything of this kind before. Dai began by introducing himself. He had learned the profession from his father, who had learned it from a storyteller from Nanjing and from books. Dai came late to the profession: he only started when he was twenty, while many of his colleagues began in childhood, round the age of ten. His reason for becoming a storyteller was simply that he needed to earn a living. 'The better you are, the more you can earn.'

He is now past seventy and, like other aged storytellers, receives a pension from the Chinese government. Can anyone become a storyteller in China? To this question from the audience, Dai replied: 'Many give it a try, and some are forced by their families to go out and earn money. But it is not an easy profession; you must have certain qualities: a lively facial expression, good voice control. Remember also that, unlike in opera, you don't perform just a single role, you have to play them all!' He recalled once having met a short-sighted storyteller who was very good at his job, but was sadly ignored by his listeners because of his handicap.

In Copenhagen, Dai presented an excerpt from 'The Journey to the West' (better known as 'Monkey'). His lively act immediately set the tone for the entire workshop.

**BARRIERS**

While most storytellers sat behind a table during their performances, Hui Zhaolong remained standing while presenting an episode from World War II. It was the kind of anti-Japanese resistance story that became popular in the 1950s and was much promoted by the Chinese government. 'Nowadays we already consider this a traditional story,' Hui explained, 'since it took place half a century ago. Actually, it is quite popular among young people.'

Hui's humorous tale about Chinese soldiers outwitting the enemy was well-received by most of the audience, but it irritated one listener, who complained: 'Aren't you degrading the art of quyi by making a cheap caricature of a Japanese soldier, and by poking fun at historical facts that were actually not funny at all?'

Hui thought not, and there was a passionate response from folklorist Chen Wulou, who sat in the audience: 'We're not antagonistic against all the Japanese, but goodness, aren't we allowed to portray those who beat us up in whatever way we like?' There were supportive nods from many in the audience.

On the whole, the tone of the papers and discussions was fairly relaxed. The inevitable language barriers between Chinese and Western participants were bridged as much as possible by distributing summaries or full translations in English of papers presented in Chinese, and also by a good deal of translation on the spot. (Lindi Li Mark and Susan Blader must be complemented for their services as interpreters.) If someone missed details in the story of Wusong defeating the tiger (told in Yangzhou dialect), he could perhaps begin to pick them up after repeated hearings.

Wang Xiaotang, well over eighty, told the Wusong story during a social evening held at the Danish Writers' Association. The next afternoon, he told it again, and began, rather surprisingly, by announcing that this time he would perform it without the habitual storyteller's props, such as handkerchief and fan, tea, and a jade stick called zhiyu ('talk stopper').

The stick is beaten on the table to accentuate certain events or turns in the course of the story and to heighten listeners' attention. It has special significance as a symbol of the professional storyteller's status as a fully trained performer. So why refrain from using it? If nothing else, Wang certainly raised expectations by doing something so unusual. He began his story haltingly, but gradually speeded up to a vivid tempo, and after some time found that he could hardly make himself stop - and that nobody wanted him to stop. The old man's performance was such an inspired show that it was awarded a standing ovation - a rare event in a conference room! He explained that he had decided not to use his requisites as a special sign of respect for the audience's scholarly knowledge of his art.
Along with attractive demonstrations, there were many stimulating papers. Oral Theory specialist John Miles Foley (University of Missouri) undertook an heroic attempt to summarize in twenty minutes the fruits of several decades of research in his field. Oral Theory has expanded enormously since Parry and Lord published their first influential studies in the late 1920s and 1930s. Foley’s point of departure was that ‘oral traditions work like languages, only more so’; that is, their contents depend not only on the grammatical rules and the vocabulary of any given (national or regional) language, but also on genre-specific idiomatic and structural rules. According to Foley, it is not possible to say whether ‘oral tradition’ is a universal phenomenon, since it cannot be reduced to a single model. He proposed a three-part theory of ‘traditional referentiality’ as a basis for understanding a wide variety of oral traditions.

Foley’s compact approach may have left some listeners dumbfounded, but his notion ‘traditional referentiality’ struck a chord with Susan Blader, who discussed the transformation of a particular oral tale into a printed work, showing how the process resulted in a new text. ‘The Chinese word zhengji (‘edit’, ‘revise’) often sends chills up and down our spines’, Blader said. David Rubin’s recent book Memory in Oral Traditions (OUP, 1995) had helped her to understand that the new version of the story was authentic in its own right, though it did not necessarily do justice to the older variant.

Antoinet Schimmelpenningk (Leiden University) showed that Parry and Lord’s theory of formulaic substitution was valid for Chinese folk song texts from Jiangsu, even in short and seemingly rigid lyrics.

Historical issues were addressed in Lucie Borotova’s two informative papers on Qing sources. She introduced a fascinating album of Qing ink drawings of Chinese street characters, including various types of entertainers. The album is kept in Prague and known only to a few art historians. He Xuewei discussed historical relationships between bianwen (Buddhist and secular tales from the Tang dynasty) and baojuan, a narrative genre which emerged many centuries later in the Song Dynasty according to He, in the late Ming according to most Western scholars. Hui Zhaolong explained the development of huaben (manuscripts) of Yangzhou storytelling. Fei Li commented on the editing process of some Yangzhou tales.

Wilt Idema (Leiden University) introduced a fascinating corpus of women’s ballads, part of the genre nushu. The texts, written by women in Hunan in a special script of their own, focus mainly on problems of married life and motherhood. Nushu is, or was, uniquely found in the Jiangyong district in Southern Hunan until the middle of this century. As a medium created by women for women it is a remarkably created genre in a male-dominated society such as China.

A number of papers dealt with living traditions or with recent developments. Helga Werle-Burger (Puppet Theatre Museum, Lübeck) discussed the influences of puppet theatre and film on the Chinese opera stage, providing many fascinating examples. Mark Bender (Ohio State University) showed brief video excerpts of Suzhou tanci (for which he adopted Patrick Hanan’s translation of that term, ‘chantefable’) and discussed the complex process of shifting between various communicative devices in this genre.

Sun Mei (University of Singapore) commented on the ‘crisis of Chinese xiqu (opera) in the last decade’, calling for measures to protect traditional opera from being overrun by modern TV and radio amusement. The effects of (Communist) politics on Chinese oral traditions were dealt with at length in papers by Adrian Chan (University of New South Wales) and Marja Kaikkonen (Stockholm University).

Boris Riffkin (Taiwan) compared different Suzhou pingtan versions of a tale from ‘The Three Kingdoms’, and Nicola Speshnev (St. Petersburg University) talked about psychological aspects of audience perception of quyi. Some of Speshnev’s statements prompted critical comments, for instance that one cannot easily assume general validity for any kind of psychological feature in the population of an entire country. Speshnev took the criticism good-naturedly. It was characteristic of the mood of this entire workshop – definitely one of the most pleasant and most informative meetings on Chinese oral culture held in recent years. Proceedings will be published by NIAS.
TAIWANESE GROUPS PROMOTE NANGUAN

The Han Tang Yuehfu
Tour of Europe, 1996

STEPHEN JONES
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Nanguan has migrated from its base in southern Fujian to overseas Hokkien communities throughout southeast Asia. In Taiwan, amateur Nanguan has a history of over two centuries. The earliest base is the port of Lugang, where societies such as the Yazheng zhai and Juying she have maintained exalted amateur traditions. But while Nanguan still thrives on the mainland, its condition in other overseas Hokkien communities is variable. In Taiwan it is now in decline, but some of the groups still active perform to a standard which remains the envy of mainland groups. Following his review of the Nansheng she recordings of Nanguan (Chime No. 7, pp. 114-120), Stephen Jones introduces another distinguished Nanguan group from Taiwan, the Han Tang Yuehfu, who under their dynamic leader Chen Mei-O are doing great work in spreading the gospel of Nanguan in Taiwan and abroad.

Apart from the Nansheng she, another outstanding professional group, devoted to spreading the gospel of Nanguan on the concert stage, is the Han Tang Yuehfu, founded in 1983 by Chen Mei-O. As in Chime 7, these are again notes from an outsider – the reader should further consult forthcoming writings of Kyle Heide (Indiana University).

Chen Mei-O trained with the Nansheng she and took part as pipa player in their 1982 Paris tour, which resulted in the first of the fine Ocora CDs which I reviewed in Chime 7. On returning to Taiwan she decided to form her own group: she established the Han Tang Yuehfu in 1983, as their programme says, 'with the aim not only to re-establish Nanguan's significance to the scholarship of Chinese music history, but also to train a new generation of Nanguan musicians for the transmission of this disappearing classical musical tradition.' While thus setting forth from the endangered state of the art in Taiwan, they have gone from strength to strength under Chen's energetic leadership. They make many foreign tours, not just in East Asia but worldwide.

In September 1995 they performed beautifully at the Chime conference in Rotterdam. This September, along with their newly devised Liyuan Dance Studio, they made a European tour, including Paris, Latvia, Denmark, and England.

Han Tang Yuehfu richly deserve the support which they now receive from the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan, and they also deserve to be widely heard in Asia and Europe. In 1995 their 2-CD set Nanguan shangxi rumen (Introduction to the
Appreciation of Nanguan], was awarded best album and best singer in the Golden Tripod Award in Taiwan. The set comes with a finely illustrated booklet. They have also recorded several other excellent CDs in Taiwan. This year they have also been realizing a long-held dream, the vast project of recording all sixty-four of the zhisuites, the most magnificent part of the repertory, much of which is rarely heard today.

Chen Mei-O is a fine musician passionately devoted to Nanguan, and also a highly articulate scholar of Nanguan history. Rarely have I heard a musician argue with such passion about music history! She has a rare gift, of being an insider to a musical tradition, but also a scholar: Chen’s theories on early Chinese music are expounded in a book Zhongyuan guyue shi caogao, shangpian [Draft history of the ancient music of the Central Plains, Volume One] (Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1993). In her study of the musical ancestry of Nanguan (especially its key system) she acknowledges the teaching of the great amateur Nanguan aficionado and painter Yu Chengyao (1898-1993); her research also resonates with that of the senior Beijing scholar Huang Xiangpeng. But her insights are not only into the early history of Nanguan she also has fine perceptions on the social and cultural background of Nanguan in modern times on both sides of the strait. Anyone wishing to study Nanguan would do well to heed her diatribes on Nanguan and Chinese music history!

Chen is also nurturing a new generation. On an early visit to Quanzhou in 1984, Chen Mei-O knew as soon as she saw the young Wang Xinlin (also known as Wang A-hsin) that she had found an exceptional singer. Wang A-hsin, also a fine player of the Nanguan instruments, became the star of the professional Nanguan troupe in Quanzhou; she may be heard on several cassettes recorded in Quanzhou in the late 1980s. In 1991 she moved to Taiwan, becoming the leading singer with the Han Tang Yuehliu. Chen Mei-O is nurturing scholars as well as performers, like Yang Yunhui, now not only a fine performer but also a promising music historian, currently studying in Beijing.

MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH FUJIAN

Naturally the Han Tang Yuehliu musicians are most aware of the need to maintain contact with fellow Nanguan devotees across the strait in southern Fujian, and throughout Hokkien communities in southeast Asia.

The Liyuan Dance Studio marks a new departure for the group. It is indeed an innovation in as much as they have used the music of Nanguan to recreate a dramatic style of great intimacy, far more refined than the Liyuan drama which is still commonly performed in the Quanzhou area. It is a polished performance well suited to the stage, which utilizes the highest traditional elements of Hokkien music-theatre.

A striking feature of the varied programme is the finale Mantang chun, a choreographed piece featuring five performers on the sikuai (sibao) clappers, themselves unique to Nanguan, creating a constantly changing shimmer of sound. Another item, Yeweiyang, has Wang A-hsin singing an intimate ballad accompanying herself on the pipa. Costumes and lighting are eminently tasteful. While it is an imaginative recreation of the spirit of ancient drama, it is done with such integrity that it is in another world from some of the garish mainland spectacles claiming to represent ancient music!

For their Oxford concert in the beautiful Hollywell Music Room they were assisted by Piet van der Loon (a long-term Nanguan aficionado) and Glen Dudbridge. The SOAS concert was organized by David Hughes and Tan Hwee San, with support form the Asian Music Circuit; the day following the concert, Kyle Heide headed a stimulating lecture-demonstration at SOAS in which the musicians took part.

It is very much to be hoped that the Han Tang Yuehliu will come again soon to Europe, and can perform their exquisite repertory for ever larger audiences worldwide.
Nuo Spirit Masks from Anhui


This booklet is one of the first of its kind to gather together information on nuo – on this occasion in Guichi in Anhui Province – for the general and the specialised reader in the West and must be recommended for its attempt to provide a careful account of this little known form of masked ritual theatre in China. In spite of some conflicting statements and some missing elements – notably a Chinese glossary, and some introductory definitions of key terms – the booklet is a step towards the understanding of this genre. Unfortunately, the size of the publication does not allow the authors to include any of the recent Chinese literature on the subject by specialist researchers such as that published by the two international nuo conferences held in 1990 in Shanxi and in 1991 in Henan, for example.

The booklet is composed of three sections: 1. ‘Masked Theatre in Guichi (Anhui province) and its Cultural Background’ by Erhard Rossner; 2. ‘Photo Documentation of the Nuo Rite and Description of the Masks’ by Stefan Kuzay and Erhard Rossner; and 3. ‘Nuo Masks and Earth God Rites in 1990 in Guichi (Field Report)’ by Rudolf M. Brandl. The research team of Professor Brandl, Daniela Brandl and Stefan Kuzay traveled to Guichi in 1990 where they witnessed six full days of nuo performance in different villages. The booklet was published to accompany an exhibition of a complete set of 26 masks which Professor Brandl acquired there. It aims to be more than a catalogue to the exhibition. The two articles by Rossner and Brandl seek to provide the cultural and historical background to nuo. A small appendix includes diagrams of two different performance sites, maps and a list of the Chinese dynasties.

Erhard Rossner’s essay contextualises the nuo event against the background of other forms of theatre in Anhui. In particular, the author stresses the importance of the ‘Anhui troupes’ in contributing to the birth of Beijing opera, and outlines two other major forms of theatre in Anhui: Huangmeixi and Luju. He then turns away from these
better known forms to examine the ‘theatre relics (Restformen)’ that exist in more remote areas of Anhui, to which category, he believes, the nuo theatre belongs. This ‘relic’ is distinguished by two major characteristics. It is a) ‘embedded in a complex ritual deeply bound to the New Year celebrations’, and b) it ‘makes use of masks’.

Rossner derives the meaning of the term nuo from a related character for ‘sickness demon’ and states that nuo is the process by which sickness is expelled, particularly at the end of the year. A description from the Later Han History of a seasonal exorcism at the imperial court conducted by a figure known as the Fangxiang shi is set forth to highlight the relation between this ‘ancient’ rite and contemporary nuo – a relation which the author emphasises throughout the article, since Rossner views nuo as a ‘remnant’ of more ‘archaic’ forms. Indeed, page 11 is devoted to a brief summary of the ‘development’ of rite into theatre, whereby ‘actors replace the shaman’ wearing costume and mask. The ‘transition’ from rite to theatre is completed in the form of nuo plays such as Meng Jiang Nü, Liu Wenlong gan kào, and Chang Wenxuan (a Judge Bao piece). Unfortunately the issue of the religious/secular content and form is not taken up. Rossner states that the so-called ‘spirit masks’ worn by the nuo performers are mere remnants of a ‘past world’ which the ‘Chinese people in rural areas have adapted to their own [secular/theatrical] uses.’ (p.14).

The illustrations in the middle section of the booklet are of excellent quality and briefly notated for the non-specialist public. Some of the explanations would have been helped by a less descriptive, more interpretative approach, as for example the figures Lao Heshang and Xiao Heshang in plate 9 which might have been more fully interpreted in the light of Kristofer Schipper’s work on the ‘divine jester’ in marionette theatre (1966). Here, Schipper draws a close relation between the laughing monk ‘he sheng’ and the concept of harmony and unification expressed through the homonym he meaning ‘to be united, joined in harmony’. The nuo event is nearly always concluded with some kind of re-unification/harmonising sequence, and this aspect of the performance is as integral to the nuo event as the ‘exorcism’ that precedes it. It is unfortunate not to be able to see more photo documentation of the masks in a performance situation or how they are made.

The third section of the booklet, ‘Nuo Masks and Earth God Rites in 1990 in Guichi’, is a detailed field report of the sequence of events witnessed by the research team. The essay opens with a consideration of ethnographic theory. Brandl dismisses any evolutionary or universally historicising approach but paradoxically continues with a long extract from Granet and the essay is founded on works by Eberhard, Gimm and De Groot. Perhaps authors such as Clifford Geertz or Stanley Tambiah would have provided a more useful vocabulary of terms? Brandl sets Guichi nuo apart from most other kinds of nuo in China as a form which is exclusively performed by Han Chinese and by amateurs rather than (semi) professionals. He sees the nuo event as tightly bound to extended familial or ‘clan’ systems (p.40). The clan is held together by a belief in a ‘mythological primary ancestor(s) or totem’ and every clan defines its territory by a kind of earth lord which is offered sacrifices by the clan.

Brandl provides a description of the procession of the mask trunks to the ancestral altar where the nuo event will take place. He adds the information that the character for ‘corpse’ was originally written on the tongzi’s mask since the tongzi also danced at funerals. This item could have been more fully explored. The character for ‘corpse’, shi, suggests that the youth in the nuo performance may be related in function to the shi (‘corpse’) who acts as a ‘personator’ (Carr 1985) of the deceased for the duration of the burial ceremony. This would have been the perfect opportunity to discuss the whole question of ‘impersonation’ or ‘acting’. The reader is still unaware of the extent to which performers of nuo are ‘acting’ the roles they perform. Instead, Brandl goes on to describe the significance of the parasol (san) used by the tongzi, and concludes that the mask trunks are always rocked during the various halts in the procession to show ‘on the one hand that they are filled with life; and on the other, in order to entice the gods into them through movement.’ This apparent paradox is not considered in
RILEY: Nuo Spirit Masks from Anhui (Book Review)

further detail, and Brandl describes the ‘wiping the masks’ ceremony (kai guang) which is held prior to placing the masks in their allotted places on the ‘dragon bed’ altar. This again raises the question of ‘spirit’ or ‘presence’ in the masks as suggested in the title of the booklet: the kai guang ceremony is used to ‘open the artefact’ to a godly presence. Details of this ceremony can be found in Chu 1991.

Brandl recounts in detail the events witnessed by the team. The separate elements of the nüo such as tiao cai shen, meng jiangnu, wen tudi, processions of masks and qing shen ceremonies (calling the gods to descend – invocation?) are handled in the sequence they were performed. Some differentiation or categorization of the nüo event might have been helpful: do the performers distinguish between elements of the nüo event as, for example, in other forms of nüo where the terms daxi and xiaoxi, waixi and neiixi, tianxi and dixi are used?

In his discussion of the music, Brandl describes the significance of the role of the drummer: ‘he stipulates the tempo and beat (ban), and also improvises with quick sequences at various moments’ even occasionally ‘filling in’ (Füllschläge). This seems to deny any sense of intention in what the drummer does. The author suggests the presence of ‘quite complicated [rhythmic] patterns’. Rather than explaining some of these patterns, as for example Alan Lloyd Kagan does in his chapter on the invocation pattern xia shan in Cantonese rod puppet theatre (1978), he continues: ‘In comparison with other regions in China, as in the north, for example, the nüo rhythms played in the nüo dances are comparatively uncomplicated and only worked out a little more in the plays.’ Summarizing the nüo event, Brandl suggests that ‘it has, other than the tongzi, no dominantly ritualising function[ary]. The (old) nüo leader serves primarily as soufflleur and authority on the correct execution of the event’ (p.71). However, a case could certainly be made that the nüo leader is a kind of ‘Master of Ceremonies’, just as personation rites described in the Lijia are led by a master whose role is vital and actively controlling. A passing statement on page 71 that there is ‘no direct exorcism’ (nothing is exorcised out of anything) seems to undermine at a blow the opening theory of nüo as a primarily exorcising event, and misses possible implications for a performance-based theory of nüo.

Brandl closes the booklet with a critical review of the source material used by the team, and candidly speaks of the difficulties that arose during fieldwork. All credit is due to the research team that they have managed to compile such detailed information. It is to be hoped that longer publications will follow this initial report.1

Jo RILEY
Zornheim, Germany

REFERENCES

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CHU Kun-heng,

KAGAN, Alan Lloyd

SCHIPPER, Kristofer

Du Yaxiong's book is the first thorough ethnomusicological survey of the folk music of all the classified ethnic minorities in China. It will serve as a valuable introduction for anyone interested in working on music and the ethnic minorities in China. Du Yaxiong, now Professor of Musicology at the Chinese Conservatory in Beijing, is ideally placed to provide this introduction to minority music. Originally trained in composition, he was sent down to Western Gansu following the Cultural Revolution. He spent several years living amongst the semi-nomadic Yugu people, and — unusually for the sent-down Han youth — he learnt the local language as well as making a study of their music. The language, a Turkic dialect, served him in good stead when, in 1979, he obtained permission to make a survey of ethnic minority music in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. He travelled widely in the region, working with local musicologists and making many beautiful recordings. (These are now preserved in the library of the Chinese Conservatory, and form a valuable body of reference; some of the music traditions which he recorded are considerably impoverished today.) Since then Du has worked in the North-East and parts of Southern China. He has published widely in Chinese and in English on many aspects of Chinese music and musicology, and on links between Hungarian and Chinese music; his ideas often go out on a limb, but are always stimulating! He is regarded as the leading authority on Northern minority music, and is well-respected and influential in the areas where he conducted his fieldwork. Local music workers have been inspired by his visits to do more research into their own traditions; his theories on Uighur and Yugu music have even been taken up in the thorny debate between Han and Uighur historians on the origins of the Uighur people.

This new book is based on an earlier smaller textbook covering the music of the Northern ethnic minorities (Du 1986). As such it preserves the traditional format of dealing with each classified minority sequentially. The problems of this classification system in the wider context have been pointed out before (see for example Dru Gladney's study of the Hui, 1991). Inevitably the imposition of a limited number of 'national' labels on a highly complex ethnic situation results in a degree of disjunction with reality. In the field of music we find, for example, the overarching term 'Mongol music' applied to a wide range of regional styles, from Xinjiang to the North-East, subsuming for example the distinctive traditions of the Tuva, who are not a recognised minority in China. Reality is far more complex than the labels may lead one to believe: thus in Xinjiang there are people who mark their nationality in their identity cards as Kazakh, speak a Turkic language, but whose folk song repertoire is largely identical to their Mongol neighbours. As Gladney noted, after a period of time the classificatory system takes on a life of its own, symbols are erected by the government and countered by new nationalist symbols from the group. In the case of Uighur music, most Han
Chinese will probably think of the ditty ‘The girls of Daban town’ (Dabancheng de guniang) by the Han composer Wang Luobin in relation to Uighur music, while in Xinjiang a burgeoning cassette industry promotes a Uighur popular music across the region based on the Kashgar style which leans stylistically towards the Near East. The situation is complex and highly sensitive; many such issues cannot at this time be fully addressed in Chinese publications.

In the introductory chapters Du does give us some alternative reference points to the usual classification system. He has organised the ethnic groups into larger linguistic groupings, with the basic opposition of the Altaic and Sino-Tibetan language families, which more or less parallels the geographical North-South divide. This emphasis on language groups is significant: Du refers frequently to the relationship between language and song, especially in speech rhythms. For example, he argues that the predominant stress on the final syllable in Turkic languages is matched by a tendency to ‘short-long’ rhythmic patterns. Du also suggests some basic characteristics of song structure for the whole overarching Altaic group; it is this kind of theorising based on a broad view that makes the book especially interesting. Against the linguistic classification, he presents also geographical divisions, what he terms ‘colour areas’ (scei cui) where largely consistent stylistic traits coincide with geographical areas: oasis versus grassland; the high Tibetan plains; the loess plateau of Gansu. These are useful divisions; it would be interesting to see a study made of one such area, incorporating both Han and minority music.

In his discussion of each ethnic minority, Du first gives some informative historical and cultural background, though this inevitably stops before 1949. It is somewhat odd to find equal space in the book devoted to the 20,000 Xibo and to the 5 million Uighur, but then perhaps numbers should not be a mark of a musical repertoire’s interest or worth! The music of each group is presented under the standard Chinese categories: folk song; instrumental music; dance music; balladry and theatre music. These categories are not always applicable to every context, but I suppose there is value in keeping the book consistent. Moreover Du sets off this eclectic framework with some rare information on emic terms and classificatory systems. The numerous transcriptions are in cipher notation, with lyrics in Chinese, and are used convincingly to illustrate basic stylistic traits and specific analytic points. A careful analysis of the music of each group focuses on scale and mode, rhythm, and structure. As with most Chinese musicology, scale and mode are analysed with immense thoroughness (in the Confucian tradition). I must admit that while I am greatly impressed by the complex modal analysis, on the whole I find his analyses of rhythm and structure rather more insightful and useful (perhaps I am not a good Confucian?). One very welcome aspect of the book is the contextualisation of the music repertoire of each group in the wider picture of the surrounding peoples, and their past. The music of each group is not described in isolation, Du makes constant reference to assimilation and cross-fertilisation between ethnic groups not excluding the Han Chinese, over several centuries, building up a picture of vast and fascinating complexity.

Du has set up a definitive study of minority music in this book, with clear conclusions reached on the musical system of each defined ethnic group. The book will be an invaluable reference tool. It is to be hoped that it will inspire greater interest in minority music, both inside China where it is now being used for teaching purposes, and beyond. Du Yaxiong has provided a standard reference work in a little-studied field for future researchers to be inspired by, and to pick holes in!

Rachel Harris (SOAS)

REFERENCES

DU Yaxiong

GLADNEY, Dru C.
Chinese instrumental folk music


Until recently, Western readers with an interest in Chinese instrumental folk music but without access to Chinese-language works had to rely on a handful of Western books and articles mostly dealing with specific genres or with Chinese music as a whole. The best overall survey was Liang Ming-yueh’s *Music of the Billion* (1985), which had good sections on instrumental folk music and offered a fair amount of historical background, but was still problematic in some ways. The book created an image of China’s traditional music as a well-defined universe with a largely familiar history. Most readers must have sensed the ‘black box’ hidden in much of the author’s information. For example, how could one link up many of the historical genres described in the first half of Liang’s book with the living traditions discussed in the second half? They seemed to inhabit two different worlds: one the realm of Chinese music archaeology and ancient scholarly writings (often heavily imbued with Confucian ideology and not much concerned with performance); the other the realm of living (village or urban) instrumental traditions over the past one hundred years and into the present. While providing excellent analyses of musical structures and sound principles involved in various genres, Liang did not always describe their wider performance contexts. And it was often unclear where exactly much of the music in question could be found, beyond the level of ‘Sichuan’ or ‘Jiangsu’ (areas as large as Germany or England).

‘Music of the Billion’ remains an important reference work, but for village instrumental music, Western readers may now wish to turn to a book which supersedes everything previously written in this field in a Western language: Stephen Jones’ *Folk Music of China – Living Instrumental Traditions* is a very informative study, well-organized, well-illustrated, and beautifully designed. It is important not only in providing the reader access to many genres barely touched upon in other Western writings so far, but also in drawing attention to the present gaps in our knowledge, the many issues that remain to be solved.

The author has carried out extensive fieldwork in China since 1986, in cooperation with researchers of the Music Research Institute in Beijing, and wrote his
book on the basis of his own observations, combined with the findings of Chinese colleagues, which are recorded in a vast number of field reports from the early 1950s onwards. He has also consulted many historical writings and musical scores.

His main focus is the living folk music of Chinese villages, not so much the ‘conservatory style’ music (xueyuan pai) of urban professional ensembles which is much promoted on Chinese sound recordings, radio and TV, and is often passed off as folk music. As a fairly recent and Western-influenced development, this urban music is accepted passively or ignored by the vast majority of China’s rural population.

Jones’ chapters on specific regional genres bear witness to the continued vitality of folk ensemble traditions in many parts of China. Shawm-and-percussion bands in Liaoning and Shandong, ritual ensembles in Hebei, Beijing and Tianjin, ritual ensembles in Shanxi and Shaanxi, shifan genres and Jiangnan silk-and-bamboo in Southern Jiangsu, nanguan and other traditions in Fujian, and Chaozhou, Hakka and Cantonese music in Guangdong are all dealt with in admirable detail.

Jones stresses the historical dimension of the large corpus of melody from which these traditions draw their repertoires, claiming that ‘in a traditional society such as China, “early music” and “traditional music” should not be considered separately’. He feels that it is no longer necessary to restrict discussion of ancient Chinese melody to theoretical descriptions in early texts, although he is clearly aware of the pitfalls of historical extrapolation. It has become popular among scholars in China to trace links between the great traditions of the past and living music of today, but this research has also led to conclusions ‘more ambitious than the circumstantial evidence may support’ – as Jones delicately puts it.

The author does full justice to the hard work of various generations of Chinese scholars, with special emphasis on the work of Yang Yinliu, who is singled out as one of the world’s great musicologists, but there is also room for criticism. He notes the lack of attention for social background in local field studies, and the fact that the Chinese system of classification of Chinese music tends to obscure religious and kinship aspects of various genres. The two problems are related, for the fact that Chinese researchers pay little attention to social context must be due, at least in part, to the ritual or semi-ritual character of many (if not most) of the instrumental traditions. Writing about living rural religious practice and, consequently, about the ongoing process of forced, government-induced secularization remains tricky business in Communist China. Most native researchers apparently prefer to concentrate on the structural and technical performance aspects of the music, rather than touch upon politically sensitive matters.

Jones draws on an immense corpus of Chinese scholarship and has consulted a truly stunning number of books and articles. All the same, his own fieldwork forms the basis of his study. Obviously he cannot cover all of China. The varied musical traditions of ethnic minorities have not been included, and vast areas of Han Chinese music, notably northern Shaanxi, Sichuan, Hunan and Anhui, still await in-depth study.

In the first half of the book, the author pays ample attention to the social and historical background of ensemble traditions. The impact of the Cultural Revolution on village ensemble music is briefly discussed. For obvious reasons, this period is little documented in China, and no one has yet undertaken a thorough study of the subject based on oral history. The CCP victory of 1949 marked a turning point for many instrumental traditions, as it did with folk song and opera. Many musicians were forced to go underground or give up their activities altogether. The 1930s are now looked upon as the heyday of traditional instrumental music – not only of rural village music, but also of elite traditions such as guqin music. Quite a few genres in China have survived in spite of all the social upheaval, but not many can boast of an uninterrupted practice. Jones discusses the changes in performance context and in musical repertoire (and performance habits) over the years.

I expect that this book will be a major reference work on Chinese village ensembles for many years to come. It may not be easy reading for outsiders and non-
musicologists, but let no one feel discouraged. The complexities on the theoretical and terminological level should not distract from the musical pleasure – on the contrary! Very helpfully, the author addresses in separate sections a number of issues that are normally ignored or dealt with only in footnotes; for example, the confusing question of titles of musical pieces. (The book contains the clearest explanatory essay on qupai (‘labelled melodies’) that I have ever come across.) One may regret that, in a reference work of such substantial proportions, there is no Chinese glossary for the many terms introduced. Perhaps one would have wished for more detailed descriptions of the musical instruments, but other books already provide that information.

The only real pity is that no paperback edition is available yet. It would bring the book within the reach of more people and would extend its function beyond that of a library reference work. Apart from being a thorough scholarly study, Jones’ book is also the kind of practical guide one would like to take along on fieldwork trips in China for continuous reference – and in practical fieldwork every gram of luggage counts!

The publication of the book coincides with the appearance of a double CD of Chinese instrumental folk music: Chine - Traditions populaires instrumentales, issued by the Archives Internationales de Musique Populaire (AIMP) in Geneva. It contains examples of various Chinese ensemble traditions, recorded by Stephen Jones, by researchers of the Music Research Institute in Beijing and others. Most of the recordings were made either in the 1950s or in the past decade. There is one sample of Cantonese music from about 1930. Like the book, the CD set is of great value to anyone interested in Chinese instrumental folk music, and many of the recordings can serve as direct illustrations of genres discussed in the book. Those with access to recent recordings of Zhuhua temple music in Beijing should compare them with the 1953 recording of Beijing monks in this CD set. I prefer the greater liberty and splendour of the 1953 recording, and am quite willing to put up with the poor sound quality. The CD set has some other splendid historical recordings for which there is, to my knowledge, no match in modern recorded performances. The Shifan gu and shifan
Iuogu recordings of 1950, from the cradle of these repertoires (Wuxi in southern Jiangsu), are truly marvellous feats of tempo juggling and musical individuality in ensemble playing. Forget about the poor sound – imagine what fun it must have been to perform like that!

One genre, Jiangnan sizhu, dealt with in Jones’ book but not on the CDs, is given separate attention in J. Lawrence Witzleben’s “Silk and Bamboo” Music in Shanghai, a revised version of Witzleben’s 1987 PhD thesis from the University of Pittsburgh. This is the first comprehensive monograph on that subject, and once again, a major reference work. Unlike some of the ensemble traditions discussed by Jones, the Silk and Bamboo music of southern Jiangsu is easily accessible to foreign visitors of China: one can hear this music played several times a week in teahouses in Shanghai, the best-known location being the Huxin ting, the pavilion in the Yuyuan shopping area in the Old City. It can also be heard in other urban centres in southern Jiangsu. There is a sustained tradition of Jiangnan sizhu in some rural areas of Jiangsu as well, but this awaits further research. (In my own fieldwork with A. Schimmelpenninck on Jiangnan folk songs I have come across sizhu village ensembles in areas close to the Yangzi.) A growing number of commercial recordings attest to sustained interest in the genre, both in China and abroad.

Alan Thrasher’s recordings issued on a PAN CD apparently came too late for inclusion in Witzleben’s discography, but form an obvious companion to his study. Thrasher provides a broader picture of Silk and Bamboo traditions in southern China, including fine examples of Hakka, Chaozhou and Cantonese music. Jiangnan sizhu is represented by two pieces, Huanle ge and Zhonghua liuban. The latter was recorded in the Huxin ting, in Shanghai, complete with background noise.

In the first half of the 1980s, Lawrence Witzleben carried out extensive fieldwork on the history, social context, musical characteristics and instruments of Jiangnan sizhu. During his studies at the Shanghai Conservatory, he was able to move away from official musicdom and establish close contacts with local sizhu musicians in the city, with whom he played together. He acquired a detailed understanding of the genre and of the principles of variation which form the core of this tradition. His analyses, in chapters 5, 6, and 7, of interrelationships between the ‘eight great pieces’, variational mechanisms at work in performance and aspects of heterophony are fascinating to read. Amongst many other things, Witzleben shows that the nature of heterophony in Jiangnan sizhu is different from that of southern nanguan, in the sense that no single instrument in Jiangnan sizhu actually plays the skeleton melody: the leading instruments instead tend to play the most ornamented lines.

For the history of the genre in Shanghai, Witzleben partly depends on an essential article by Jin Zuli and Xu Ziren, which appears in full translation in the PhD thesis. Unfortunately this translation is not included in the book. Relationships with other musical genres (such as shifan gurui and shifan luogu) are referred to, but in the absence of sufficient musical material and concrete comparisons, much of the early history of Jiangnan sizhu remains a theoretical issue. Beyond discussing the music and the social context of the tradition, the author goes into such topics as regional identity and the current split between the amateur circuit of the local Jiangnan sizhu clubs on the one hand, and professional, conservatory-trained performers on the other hand. Professionals have created their own (polished, arranged or completely re-composed) versions of the repertoire, but Witzleben seems confident that the amateur tradition, with its own unique qualities, will continue to flourish. If sizhu is a world of limited proportions, it is nevertheless a tradition central to our understanding of Chinese music, and a marvellous source of creative musicianship. Witzleben has written an essential book about it.

Frank Kouwenhoven
The editors of the CHIME Journal encourage all 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 in the field of Chinese music. For the announcements below, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of: Andreas Steen (AST), Andreas Vath (AV), Chen Oigang (CO), Chen Yi (CY), Dennis Rea (DR), Dai Xiaolian (DR), Ione Meyer (IM), Jeroen de Kloet (JK), John Thompson (JT), Jiang Shan (JS), Lam Bun-Ching (LB), Nora Yeh (NY), Qu Xiaosong (OX), Randy Raine-Reusch (RR), Stephen Jones (SJ), Su Zheng (SZ), Wen Deqing (WD), Xu Shuya (XS), Zhou Long (ZL) and Zhu Shuiru (ZS). These announcements were compiled by Antoinet Schimmelpenninck (AS) and Frank Kouwenhoven (FK).

PEOPLE & PROJECTS

NEW BOARD MEMBERS CHIME
Following the CHIME meeting "East Asian Voices" in Rotterdam, Barbara Mittler (Sinologisches Seminar, University of Heidelberg) and Tan Hwee-San (SOAS, London) were elected new members of the board of the CHIME Foundation. They replace Helen Rees and Jo Riley. Helen moved to the United States and Jo Riley was overburdened with work and could not continue her work as a board member. We would like to thank Jo and Helen for their warm support in the fledgling years of CHIME. Both will continue to assist CHIME as liaison-officers (in the USA and in Germany respectively). We welcome San and Barbara in their new functions, and look forward to future co-operative work.

IONE MEYER: STUDY OF BODY AND RITUAL
Ione Meyer has begun an MA in Medical anthropology at SOAS starting from October 1995. From her original background of knowledge in Beijing opera and other forms of Chinese theatre, she hopes to undertake a study of the philosophical approach to the body in connection with ritual theatre, shamanism and drama therapy. (IM)

NORA YEH AT AMERICAN FOLK LIFE CENTER
Nora Yeh has parted fro UCLA and has started to work at the American Folk Life Center in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. in 1995. An important activity of the Center is to collect information about American folk life and that of other countries. Among their 2,000 plus collection there is very little material on the Asians. One of Ms. Yeh's responsibilities is to acquire collections concerning the Chinese and Chinese American folk life, including music, dance, and theatrical traditions. In 1995 she was in Taiwan three times to exchange ideas with the Taiwan government about ethnomusicology, the establishment and operation of a new ethnomusicology archive, library automation and information concerning the overall planning of a new 'ethnic music center.' In addition, as the Director of Asian Affairs and on behalf of the University of the World, which is a foreign arm of the computer network EDUCOM, she initiated talks in Taiwan with university and government leaders in order to promote distant education via satellite. The American Folklife Center seeks to cooperate with other organizations and individuals via acquisition, exchange, loan, and donation of materials, and joint projects to facilitate cooperative research. Address: Nora Yeh, Archivist, American Folk Life Center, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540-8100; tel: +1.202.707 1729; fax: +1.202.707 2076; Internet: NYEH@LOC.GOV (NY)

BELL YUNG IN HONG KONG
Bell Yung took leave from the University of Pittsburgh for two years, beginning in September 1996, to teach at the University of Hong Kong. He has also been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for his project on Cantonese narrative songs, which he will defer to 1998-1999. (SEM News/ACMR Reports.)

J. THOMPSON: GRANT FOR QIN RESEARCH
In 1976, after two years studying the Chinese seven-string zither (guqin) in Taiwan, Artistic Coordinator of Hong Kong's Festival of Asian Arts John Thompson came to Hong Kong to study reconstruction of music from ancient guqin tablature. His first project was to reconstruct music from the oldest surviving guqin handbook, Shen Ci Mi Pu (1425 AD). By 1991 he had transcribed all the guqin tablature into about 350 pages of handwritten staff notation, recorded the music onto six one-hour cassettes, and translated all the original commentary. While trying to decide what to do about this rather large amount of material he embarked on a similar project with the second large collection of guqin tablature, Zheyin Shizhi Qinpu (<1491), which has mostly the same music, but adds 'lyrics' and has 13 pieces with new music. Of these 13 pieces he has also made transcriptions and cassette recordings - about 70 minutes. In February 1996 the Hong Kong Arts Development Council awarded him a grant providing funds to hire a studio to make a digital recording of these Zheyin
Shizi Qinpu reconstructions. For this purpose he has been loaned an 800 year-old guqin, but he plans also to use a Qing dynasty guqin recently repaired in Geneva by Richard Bart – to make 200 CDs, to have the staff notation put into Finale computer notation, and to print 200 copies of these, together with analysis. Tentative English title of the CD: Music Beyond Sound, the Chinese silk-string zither. (The original compiler of the tablature called himself Xiulan, i.e. the Beyond-Sounds Immortal, and according to Thompson there have been no commercial recordings of guqin with silk strings since the 1950s.) Thompson is expected to send these materials to various academic institutions. Since the music has lyrics he intends to send them to some Sinology as well as music centres. In addition to this he hopes to produce a commercial version of the CD. He can be reached at: 24A Peak Road, Cheung Chau, NT, Hong Kong; Te/fax: (852) 2081 0206; e-mail: thompson@iohk.com (JT)

STUDY ON ETHNIC CULTURE

Anthropologist Beatrice David of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in France has been granted a CCK Fellowship for a study on diversity and unity among Han ethnic groups in China. She will investigate local subgroups of Han in Guangxi Province, concentrating on the culture of Lingnan. (CCK Newsletter)

TERRY LIU ARTS COORDINATOR

Terry Liu reported to work as Traditional Arts Coordinator for the Public Corporation for the Arts, the Long Beach Regional Arts Council in Long Beach, California (USA) in November 1996. He worked on contract until then for the National Endowment for the Arts, arranging site visits and technical assistance, setting up a new process to handle National Heritage Fellowships nominations, and creating a national public sector ethnomusicology/folklife electronic bulletin board to network efforts to support traditional arts. Terry Liu, phone +1.703.553.5574; e-mail: tliu@cpcug.org (SEM Newsletter)

SU ZHENG: CHINESE MUSIC AND GENDER

Su Zheng, assistant professor of Music at Wesleyan University, has been awarded a 1996-97 National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China Fellowship by the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China for her project ‘The Gendering of Music and Women’s Musical Traditions in Modern China.’ She was on sabbatical in the fall of 1996 to finish her book ‘Immigrant Music and Transnational Discourse: Chinese American Music Culture in New York City,’ and will be in China during the spring of 1997 to conduct the fieldwork for her new project on gender, women, and Chinese music. (SZ)

H. DE FERRANTI AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Hugh de Ferranti will be a Mellon Post-doctoral Teaching-Research Fellow at the Department of Music, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY, USA) for 1996-97. He recently completed his dissertation for Sydney University and has begun work on a life-history of Yamashita Yoshiyuki, the principal musician with whom he has worked in southern Japan.

DENNIS REA: STUDY ON POP MUSIC

Dennis Rea has received a Washington State China Relations Council travel grant which enabled him to pursuing his study on Chinese pop music. He travelled to China in May 1996 to conduct more fieldwork and cooperate with Chinese bands. He gave concerts with his own band “Red Thunder.” In the USA, Dennis Rea put up a web page, ‘New Directions in Chinese Music.’ The page can be accessed under http://www.sonarchy.org. Sonarchy is an innovative listening-based web site, concerned with ‘mapping the world with sound.’ The New Directions page presents examples of contemporary music from China, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora, focussing on creative rock music, modern composers, and various hybrid forms. The page does not include Chinese traditional music, which is well documented elsewhere. The selections are rotated monthly and include a recorded excerpt of a given work, some ‘liner notes,’ and a graphical element. Dennis Rea invites readers of China to interested in this project to become involved. (DR)

XUE YIBING AND SHEN QIA VISIT UK

Professor Shen Qia [Chinese Conservatory, Beijing] will spend November 1996 – March 1997 as British Academy K.C. Wong Visiting Fellow in Ethnomusicology at the University of Durham (UK). Shen will be engaged in collaborative work on relationships between ethnomusicology and the study of Chinese music with Dr. Jonathan Stock.

Xue Yibing, deputy director of the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts, Beijing, received a fellowship of the British Academy to visit the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London for a period of 5 months starting from December 1996. He collaborates with Stephen Jones in research on the music of ritual village associations in Hebei province, and is preparing a manuscript on the Sociology of Chinese Music. (SJ)

T.VINOGRADOVA: THESIS ON ZAJU

Tatiana Vinogradova of the Institute of Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg (Russia) has received a CCK PhD Dissertation Fellowship to enable her to finish her dissertation ‘Beijing Musical Drama ZaJü on the Chinese Theatre Popular Prints Nianhua.’ (CCK Newsletter)
AWARD FOR ERIC LAI
Eric Lai, Assistant Professor of Music Theory at Baylor University, read a paper "The Realization of Re-merger: Compositional Aesthetic in the Early Music of Chou Wen-chung" at the joint meeting of the American Musicological Society, the Society for Music Theory, and Center for Black Music Research in New York City in November 1995. He received the Young Investigator's Award, presented by the Graduate School of Baylor University, on Feb. 14, 1996. He served on the program committee for the Annual meeting of the Texas Society for Music Theory, March 1-2, 1996. (ACMR Reports, Spring 1996)

ERRATUM CHIME 8
In Chime no. 8 (p.149), Andreas Vath's MA thesis Rockmusik in Beijing - Aspekte von Subkultur und Wertewandel in der urbanen Jugendszene Chinas was mistakenly attributed to Andreas Steen who, like Vath, is a German researcher of Chinese pop music and published a thesis of his own in the same field. The editors of Chime offer their apologies for the error. The correct information is given below.

ANDREAS VATH: THESIS ON BEIJING ROCK
Andreas Vath (Münchener Universität, Germany) finished a MA thesis entitled Rockmusik in Beijing - Aspekte von Subkultur und Wertewandel in der urbanen Jugendszene Chinas in Spring 1995. The thesis is partly based on Andrew F. Jones' publication Like a Knife, Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music and contains translations of the songs of five Beijing rock-bands (Cui Jian, The Breathing (Huxi), Black Panther (Heibao), Tang Dynasty (Tangchao), and He Yong). Andreas Vath returned to China early October 1995 for another stay in Beijing. He plans to reinforce his ties with the local rock scene and possibly to participate in a Chinese band. He is currently working as a studio musician in Beijing, teaching bass at a music school. He is active as a journalist for Der Spiegel (AV/JK)

and interprets the first seven officially released rock records of these three periods: Two records by Cui Jian (The New Long March of Rock'n'Roll, Solution), Huxi (The Breathing), Tang Chao (Tang Dynasty), Hei Bao (Panther), the two samplers Zhongguo huo (Chinese Fire) and Yaogun Beijing (Rock Beijing). He gives a translation of the songs involved. In his final chapter he looks at alternative rock traditions, with examples of Hou Muren, He Yong, Wang Shuo. He discusses the 'Chineseness' of the lyrics and shows how they reflect the intentions of the musicians and fit into the three periods of their composition. Andreas Steen has also written several articles on Chinese rock and related subjects. He has been to China several times for additional fieldwork in 1995 and 1996. He has been lecturing on the development of Chinese Pop- and Rockmusic at the Freie Universität in Berlin. In the autumn of 1996, he published a book, Der Lange Marsch des Rock'n Roll: Pop- und Rockmusik in der VR China, UTB-Verlag, Hamburg/Münster. Address: Kochhannstr. 38, 10249 Berlin. Tel: +49. 172.310.4627. (AST)

J. DE KLOET: STUDY ON BEIJING ROCK
Jeroen de Kloet (M.S. in Tropical Forestry, M.S. in Communication Science) has just started a PhD project at the Amsterdam School of Social Science Research in the Netherlands. His subject is 'Processes of Cultural Transformation in contemporary China - The Rock Culture in Beijing.' While studying Communication Science, De Kloet did research in China for a whole year. From his initial interest in youth culture phenomena in Europe, he now developed affinities for the Rock scene in Beijing. De Kloet has planned several visits to China to keep up with new developments. He can be reached at the Amsterdam School of Social Science Res., Fax: +31.20.525.2446, e-mail: deskloet@psw.uva.nl (JK)

NEWS & REPORTS

QIN SOCIETY'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY
The Jinyu Qin Society celebrated its 60th anniversary during a Qin meeting and concert at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 22 and 23 November 1996. The concert included traditional as well as newly composed pieces for guqin, the Chinese seven-string zither. Qin performers included Dai Wei, Dai Xiaolian, Gong Yi, Hu Weili, Yao Gongbai, Zhao Jiazheng, Zhu Tiequn. Xu Youli, who was invited as a special guest, performed the qin song Guan shan yue with Gong Yi (qin) and Dai Shuhong (xiao). Composer and pianist Zhao Xiaosheng played his work Qin tan tao piano solo. The programme also featured Qin pieces arranged for solo instruments like xun and erhu, and for an
ensemble of xiao. In addition to the concert, there were papers, practical demonstrations and panel discussions. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary, a special collection of materials has been projected for publication in 1997. It will be titled Jinyu qinshe lilishi zhourian sheqing tekan. Recently, Ms Dai Xiaolan was appointed vice-director of the society; all correspondence concerning the society’s activities can be directed to her. Address: Shanghai Conservatory Journal, Fenyang Rd 20, 200031 Shanghai, China. E-mail: zsliao@sjtu.edu.cn

ADDITIONAL EDITORSHIP ASIAN MUSIC
The Society for Asian Music has announced a restructuring of its journal editorship. The duties of editing Asian Music will be divided between a Managing Editor and a Production Editor. Dr. Martin Hatch of Cornell University has agreed to continue as Production Editor, having served for many years as the journal’s single editor. Dr. Sean Williams of Evergreen State College is the new Managing Editor. Manuscripts for articles should be sent to Dr. Sean Williams, The Evergreen State College, Com 301, Olympia, WA 98505, or by e-mail: williams@elwha.evergreen.edu (SEM Newsletter).

ASSOC. FOR KOREAN MUSIC RESEARCH
At the 40th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology in October 1995 in Los Angeles, some thirty scholars and musicians specializing or interested in Korean music founded the Association for Korean Music Research (AKMR). It concerns – to cite its founding document of the AKMR – ‘the first effort to establish an international community of scholars to promote, exchange, and advance in-depth study of Korean music as a distinctive cluster of traditions.’ Dr. Byong Won Lee, Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, was elected President of the AKMR. The six elected Steering Committee members are Mr. Joseph Celli (Director, Korean Performing Arts Institute, New York), Dr. Marnie Dilling (Univ. of California at San Diego), Dr. Okon Hwang (Eastern Connecticut State Univ.), Miss Youyoung Kang (Univ. of Pennsylvania), Mr Andrew Killick (Univ. of Washington) and Dr. Robert Provine (Univ. of Durham, UK). Miss Ruth K. Oh, an attorney-at-law with a background of ethnomusicology, has agreed to serve as counsel. Interested parties should contact Dr. Byong Won Lee, Music Dept., Univ. of Hawai’i, 2411 Dole Street, Honolulu, HI 96822-2318. Tel.: +1.808.956.7618, fax: +1.808.956.9557; e-mail: byong@hawaii.edu. (Bulletin of the ICTM 87, Oct. 1995)

NEW TYPE OF BASS ERHU
Chinese instrument makers continue their efforts to revolutionize the designs of traditional Chinese musical instruments. They often take their cues from Western instruments when trying to improve the resonances or other qualities of the instruments. The late Yang Yusen in Beijing spent most of his life designing king-size versions of the Chinese spiked fiddle erhu. His aim was to create a sound like a double-bass. The gehu which he invented in 1958 found its way to many of the Chinese instruments’ orchestras which emerged in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei and elsewhere in that period. After his death in 1980, Yang’s work was continued by his assistant at the Central Conservatory’s Violin Production Department, Jiang Yunkai, who created a whole series of new models of the gehu. The photo shows his latest design, with a partially open soundbox which helps the instrument to retain some of the timbral qualities of an erhu. (JS)

MODERN CHINESE THEATRE
Zhang Yuan, one of China’s first independent film makers and a director of international acclaim, directed his first theatre piece, Dong Gong, Xi Gong, for the kunstenFESTIVALdesArts in Brussels in May 1996. The piece interweaves age-old conventions of Peking Opera with a contemporary story about a homosexual writer. The script, written by Zhang Yuan and Wang Xiaobo, was performed in
Chinese (with simultaneous translation provided by the festival).  
Another Chinese stage director, Mou Sen from Beijing, returned to Europe in November 1996 for his second independent stage production abroad.  
With the Chinese group Xijiu chejian ('Theatre Garage') he staged 'The Hospital,' a semi-documentary play in which a surgeon, a poet, a nurse and others tell about their daily lives in contemporary China.  
Rather than with professional actors, Mou Sen works with people who have not performed on the stage before.  
Their individual experiences form the basis of the texts spoken in 'The Hospital.'  
Far removed from the official theatre and conventional play-acting in China, Mou's group has to lead a marginal and semi-legal existence in the People's Republic.  
But even without subsidies, advertising campaigns and advance booking, Mou has been able to secure the attention of Chinese audiences.  
His first production abroad, File Q, was premiered in Brussels in 1994, and toured Europe and Canada for eighteen months. 'The Hospital' will be shown in international theatre festivals in Dresden, Munich, Dijon, Rotterdam and elsewhere. (FK)

PUBLICATIONS

CHINOPERL PAPERS  
Chinoperl Papers #18, Fall 1995 includes articles by Vibeke Berdahl, Wenwei Du, Richard Vanness Simmons, Kimberly Besio, Yao Yao, Lindi Li Mark, Ch'iu Kuei Wang and Book reviews by Fan Pen Chen and Grace Wiersma. See the 'Miscellaneous' section below. Chinoperl #19 and #20 are scheduled for Fall 1996 and 1997 respectively. #19 includes the following articles: Peter Li - 'Lao She and Chinese "folk literature"'; Collin Mackerras - 'Chinese traditional theatre: A revival in the 1990s';  
Chen Fan Pen - 'Forbidden Fruits: prohibitions related to the performing arts during the Yuan, Ming and Qing'; and a translation of an interview with popular song writer Li Lifu. For further information, contact Dianne Dakis, Asian Studies Program, 405 Forbes Quad, Univ. of Pittsburgh, PA 15260, USA. Tel: 00.1.412.648.7387; fax: 00.1.412.648.2199; e-mail: dakis@vms.cls.pitt.edu

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

In the past few years, a considerable number of Western-language articles and books on Chinese and East Asian Music (and related subjects) were published. The bibliography below is arranged according to subject matter.  
Most of these titles have not featured in our publications section before.  
The subject categories are: 1. History & theory.  
2. Religion & ritual music.  
3. Oral narrative genres, including folk song.  
4. Theatre.  
5. Instruments and instrumental music.  
7. New music; avant-garde.  
14. Other areas.

1. History & theory.


CHANG, Lulu Huang - 'Cross Cultural Musical Processes and Results: Music along the Silk Route (From Second Century BC to Tenth Century AD). In: Asian Culture Quarterly 21 (3) 1994, pp. 34-40.


BOOK REVIEW OF NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CHU CULTURE DURING THE EASTERN ZHOU PERIOD by Thomas Lawton. In: Ethnomusicology 37, 1993, pp. 117-120.


"There is no music in Chinese Music History": Five Court Tunes from the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1271-1368). In: Journal of the Royal Musical Association 199 (2), 1994, pp. 165-188.


2. Religion & ritual music.


PEGG, Carole - ‘Ritual, religion and magic in West Mongolian (Girad) heroic epic performance.’ In: British Jnl of Ethnomusicology 4, 1995, pp. 77-100.


CHIME JOURNAL, NO. 9, AUTUMN, 1996


TRACK, Norman S. - Song of a Water Dragon. [Brief biography of He Yi, an aged Chinese Daoist who lives in Yunnan]. YMAA Publication Center, 38 Hyde Park Ave., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, USA; 1996, 151 pp., illus.


3. Oral narrative genres & folk song.


--- The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No.73. Curzon Press, Richmond UK, 1996. 497 pp., photos. A major study of the art of professional storytelling in China, excellently conceived and based on extensive fieldwork. The book focuses entirely on traditions in Yangzhou and provides ample data on the origins of the genre, the performance setting, performance styles, individual storytellers’ backgrounds, aspects of orality and literacy, the nature of the narratives. It also discusses in detail many particular structural and linguistic aspects of the (dialect) texts. The book includes nine full transcriptions of stories from various storytelling schools. The texts are given in Chinese as well as in English translation. A major reference source.

--- ’Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ in Yangzhou Storytelling.’ In: Acta Orientalia 54, 1993, pp. 126-149.


FLÜCKINGER, Joyce Burkhalter and Laurie J. Sears, ed. - Boundaries of the Text: Epic Performances In South and Southeast Asia, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 35. Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. of Michigan, 1991. x, 161 pp., bibliog., illus.


IDEMA, W.L. (transl.) - Vrouwenwacht. Vrouwenschat, huwelijk en onhuwelijk van Chinees vrouwen, opgetekend in een eigen schrift. Meulenhoff, Amsterdam, 1995. 224 pp. A collection of translations in Dutch of nüshu, letters of rural women in the Jiang-yong district in south Hunan, written in their own invented system of writing. The texts were rhymed and were meant to be read or sung aloud. They deal mainly with the women’s daily lives, their friendships and hardships in traditional rural China.


LIU, Claire - ’Dialogues for Your Dialect – Traditional Comedy in Local Lingo.’ [Journalistic article on xiangsheng as performed in Taiwan]. In: Sinorama, Vol.21, No.6, June 1996, pp. 100-109.


MILLER, Lucien, ed. - South of the Clouds: Tales from Yunnan. Oral narratives from Yunnan, trans. by Guo Xu, Lucien Miller & Xu Kun. Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1994, xiii, 328 pp. (For a review, see: Wiersma.)

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4. Theatre.

BESIO, Kimberly - 'Enacting Loyalty: History and Theatricality in The Peach Orchard Pledge.' In: Chinoer Papers No.18, 1995, pp. 61-82.


-------------------- 'Operatic Interpretations of Song-Poems in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).’ In: Asian Culture Quarterly 23 (1), 1995, pp. 71-76.


-------------------- 'Reaching out for Cultural Roots: A Singapore Example in Reviving Traditional Theatre.' In: Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia, ed. by Chua Soo Pong, 1995, pp. 91-102.


LIU, Claire - 'The Neo-Classic Dance Company - Not the Same Old Song and Dance.' [Short interview with choreographer of modern Taiwanese dance group.] Sinorama, 217, July 1996, pp. 54-57.


5. Instruments and instrumental music.


KIDO, Toshio & Steven G. Nelson (transl.) – Kodai gakki no fukugen / Reconstructed Music Instruments of Ancient East Asia. Ed. by the Department of Performing Arts, National Theatre of Japan, Publ, by the Japan Art Council, Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha, 1994. 175 pp., drawings, photographs, mus. bibilogr. Lavishly illustrated monograph in Japanese and English on (the reconstruction of) the 75 musical instruments stored in the famous Shoso-in treasury house of Nara. Ordering information can be obtained from: Japan Art Council, 4-1 Hayabusa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102, Japan; tel: +81.3. 3265-7411. [For review, see: Fujie.]


—— ———— *Musical Creativity in 20th-Century China: Abing, His Music and Its Changing Meanings.* Univ. of Rochester Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk UK, 1996. 380 pp., illus., CD.


——— – Der Lange Marsch des Rock ’n’ Roll: Pop- und Rockmusik in der Volksrepublik China, LIT-Verlag, Hamburg/Münster.


CHOW, Rey – Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema. Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1995, 253 pp. A warmhearted, original and critical approach to the films of the Fifth Generation of Chinese film makers (Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou etc.), and the first monograph entirely devoted to this subject. Not just ordinary film history, but a cultural theoretical approach of a fascinating subject. (For a review, see: Shoesmith.)


TUOHY, Sue – ‘Current Bibliography on Chinese Music.’ In: ACMR Reports, 9/1, 1996, pp.53–80. (A
survey of sources in English and selected European languages published in the period 1991-96.


LANG, Miriam - 'Swan Songs: Traditional Musicians in Contemporary China - Observations from a Film.' In: East Asian History 5, 1993, pp. 149-182.


14. Other areas.

ADLER, Christopher - 'Interview with Sam-Ang Sam, Executive Director of the Cambodian Network Council.' [Talk about Cambodian traditional music, ethnomusicological scholarship and CD and CD Rom publication projects]. In: SEM Newsletter, Vol.30, Number 4, September 1996, pp.3 ff.


HELFFER, Mireille - 'Quand le terrain est un monastère tibétain.' In: Cahiers de Musiques Traditionnelles, Vol. 8, Terrains, 1995, pp. 69-84.


THORNBURY, Barbara E. - 'From Festival Setting to Center Stage: Preserving Japan's Performing Arts.' In: Asian Theatre Journal 10 (2), 1993, pp. 163-178.


--- ChinesE Publications ---


DU Yaxiong - Zhongguo minzu jiben yuequ [Basic music theory of the Chinese people], Zhongguo minzu yinyue wenhua congshi, Zhongguo wenxian chuban gongsi, Beijing, 1995, 237 pp. A succinct but detailed exposition of Chinese music theory in which the author sets out to describe the subject in its own terms, discussing temperament, scales, metre, and using and explaining traditional notation as a basic device for understanding the subject. Should become a classic textbook! (SJ)

--- Zhongguo Ge Shaoshu Minzu Minjian Yinyue Gaishu [A survey of the folk music of each of China's minority nationalities]. Renmin yinyue cbs., Beijing, 1993. (For reviews, see publications section 6: Horvath, and this issue of Chime, pp. 141-142.)

--- News & Reports ---

ASIA-PACIFIC FOLK MUSIC SOC., OCT. 1995
The second international meeting of the Asia-Pacific Folk Music Society (Yazhou tajipin yang minzu yinyue xuehui) took place in Japan from 24 to 30 October 1995. The main theme was 'Transmission and Transformation of Traditional Music.' More than one hundred participants from Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Indonesia attended the conference. Participants from mainland China included Qiao Jianzhong, Mao Jizeng, Wang Yaohua and Zheng Jinyang. Because of illness, Zhao Feng, chairman of the society, could not attend, but board member Hsu Tsang-houei kindly replaced him and spoke some warm welcoming words. During the conference, there was lively debate and discussion, with simultaneous translations in Japanese, English and Chinese, which helped the participants to overcome language barriers. Subsequent meetings of the Society will be held in Thailand (1996), China (1997), Taipei (1998) and Indonesia (1999). For further information, contact Professor Qiao Jianzong, Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts, Dongzhimenxi Xinyuan No.1 West Bldg., 100027 Beijing, P.R. China. (Yinyue Yanjiu 1996/1)
SINO-AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL
Various departments of the University of Cincinnati (the College Conservatory of Music and the Departments of Anthropology, Political Science, and History of the College of Arts and Sciences) participated in the organization of a festival of Sino-American music and culture at the Conservatory on March 28-31, 1996. The festival brought together composers, performers, and scholars. There were concerts and lecture/demonstrations of music by May-Tchi Chen, Chen Yi, Chou Wen-chung, Guo Wenjing, Ping Jin, Bun-Ching Lam, Pan Hwang-Long, Qu Xiaosong, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, and Zhou Long. Except for Guo and Tan, all composers were present and participated in the events. Performers included faculty and students of the conservatory, as well as Chinese musicians Wang Yong and Ke Min. Lecturers included Chou Wen-Chung, Eric Lal, Joseph Lam, Ruan Chao Plan, Sue Tuoey, Bell Yung, and Su Desan Zheng. The organizers were William Black, Man Kwan, Bruce McClung, Severine Neff, and Frank Samarotto. (ACMR Reports, Spring 1996)

THREE MEETINGS IN TAIWAN
Under auspices of the Taiwan Provincial Symphony Orchestra, a Chinese Musicians' Conference was held from February 27 to March 3, 1996. It was attended by invitees (musicians, composers, and musicologists) from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Two further conferences on Chinese music and related subjects took place in cities in the southern and eastern parts of Taiwan in April and May, as part of the Taipei International Music Festival (TIMF). Both meetings were sponsored by the Council for Cultural Planning and Development. The first one, a Conference on the Traditional Music of the Austronesian Linguistic Groups (19-23 April) was organized by Hsu Tsang-houei. It included scholars from Japan, Okinawa, mainland China, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Altogether eight papers were presented. In addition, there were nightly performances by aboriginal groups in the region, including the She people from Fujian province of China, the Kalingga people from northern Luzon of the Philippines, as well as the Bunun Amis peoples of Taiwan. The second conference 'The Past and Perspectives of Traditional Music' took place from April 23 to May 5. It was organized by Ming Ligu, and consisted of panels and paper presentations by 29 scholars from mainland China, Hong Kong, USA, and Taiwan. (ACMR Reports, Spring 1996)

CHINOERL MEETING / AAS, APRIL 1996
The Conference on Chinese Oral and Performing Literature held its 28th annual meeting on April 11, 1996 at the Center for Korean Studies, East-West Center, on the campus of University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies. Papers presented included 'Forbidden Fruits: Prohibitions Related to the Performing Arts During the Yuan, Ming and Qing' by Chen Fan Pen (Univ. of Calgary), 'Home of Drama: Theater and Performances in Early Twentieth-Century Nantong' by Sao Qin (Trenton State College), 'A Revival in the Peking Opera: An Evaluation' by Colin Mackerras (Griffith University, Australia), and 'Western Theatrical Techniques in Two Recent Productions of Peking Opera' by Sarah L. Anderson (Whitman College). The keynote lecturer was Fei Shikun of Guangdong Institute of Music Research, who spoke on 'Dancing in the Straw Mat Shack: A Cultural Heritage of Cultivation in the Remote Antiquity'. The meeting ended with a short guzheng recital by Zhang Ling (Shandong Economic College).

One paper in relation to Chinese music was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, held from April 11 to 14 in Honolulu, Hawai'i: 'Music! Music! Does it mean more than bells and drums? Theories and Practices of Confucian Ceremonial Music' by Joseph Lam (Univ. of California at Santa Barbara). This was part of the panel on 'The Cult of the Supreme Sage: Social, Ritual/Musical, and Political Aspects of the Temple of Confucius.' (ACMR Reports, Spring 1996)

VOCAL TRADITIONS, HEIDELBERG, MAY 1996
A workshop entitled 'Chinese vocal traditions, religious and secular' was held at the Sinologisches Seminar at Heidelberg University, Germany on 31 May 1996. It was organized by Dr. Barbara Mittler. Lectures were held by Frank Kouwenhoven of the CHIME Foundation ('Continuity in folk songs'), Antoniet Schimmelpeninck of Leiden University ('Erotic folk songs in Jiangsu province'), Professor Tian Qing of the Music Research Institute in Beijing ('Music in Chinese Buddhist rituals') and Wang Yinqun from Jinan ('Qyi from Shandong'). Following the papers, Tian Qing presented a workshop on Buddhist music, with practical demonstrations by the Beijing Buddhist Ensemble. The ensemble was on tour in Germany and concluded the seminar with a splendid concert in the evening.

ACMR MEETING, OCT. 1996
The 10th anniversary meeting of Association for Chinese Music Research (ACMR) was held in conjunction with the 41st annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) on October 31, 1996 in Toronto, Canada. It included the following presentations: Alan Thrasher (Univ. of British Columbia) - 'Temperament and Mode in the Instrumental Music of South China'; Siu Wah Yiu (Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong) - 'The Chinese and Mongolian Aspects in the 18th Century Manchu Court Music'; Jonathan Stock
(Univ. of Durham) – 'The Early History of Shanghai Opera'; Fred Lieberman (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz) – 'Copyright and Musical Affordances in the PRC'; Helen Rees (New College, Univ. of South Florida) – 'Resuscitating Baisha Xuye: The Interplay of Local and Outside Influences in a Lijiang Naxi "Folk Revival"'; Larry Witzteben (Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong) – 'Cantopop and Mandopop in Pre-Colonial Hong Kong: Identity Negotiation in the Performance of Anita Mui Yim-Fong'.

SEM AT TORONTO, OCT.-NOV.1996

Nancy Guy (Univ. of Pittsburgh) presented a paper on 'An Art with Two Milleniums of Tradition: Packaging Peking Opera for American Consumption' in the session Framing Performances for New Audiences: Frederick Lau (California Polytechnic State Univ.) spoke about 'Sound, Memory, and Identity: Musical Experience of the Teochew Chinese in Contemporary Bangkok, Thailand.' A special session on Chinese Music included Ben Wu (Univ. of Pittsburgh) – 'Symbols of Authority and Harmony: Multi-ethnic Music in the Last Imperial Court in China,' Hui Yu (Westney Univ.) – 'Musical Reflection of Political Dilemmas in Lüjú A Regional Chinese Opera in Anhui Province,' Su Zheng (Westney Univ.) – 'Engendering Chinese Ge Qu from the 1900s to the 1930s,' and Jay Rahn (Yale Univ.) and Xu Xue-Qing (Univ. of Toronto) – 'Chinese Harmony' and Contemporary Non-Tonal Music Theory.'

A session on Vietnamese Music featured Jason Gibbs (San Francisco Public Library) – 'Reform and Tradition in Early Vietnamese Popular Song,' Chan Le (Univ. of California, Berkeley) – 'Tan Co Giao Duyen: A Case of Musical Adaptability,' and Miranda Arana (Westney Univ.) – Nhac Dan To Cai Bien: Neo-Traditional Vietnamese Music and its Impact on Musical Sensibilities.'

Junko Oba (Westney Univ.) spoke on 'To Fight the Losing War, To Remember the Lost War: Changing Definition and Significance of Gunka, Japanese War Songs,' and Nadine M. Saada (Univ. of Pittsburgh) on 'A Musical Ethnography of Place: The Chiang-Kai Shek Memorial in sessions related to politics, war and music.'

There was a session on folk song in east Asia with Keith Howard (SOAS, London) – 'Miyino in Korea: Songs of the People and Songs for the People,' David W. Hughes (SOAS, London) – 'Folk Song and the "imagined Village" in Japan,' Sue Tuchy (Indiana Univ.) – 'Generating Genre in China: The Social Dynamics of Song Terminology,' and Mercedes M. Oujunco (Univ. of Alberta) – 'Discourse on the "Folk" in Mainland Chinese Film and Popular Music of the 1980s.' Jo Anne Combs (Los Angeles Unified School District) spoke on 'Intuitive Learning and Dancing for Joy: Embodiment of Inyo, Dana, and Improvisation in Japanese bon odori.'

A session on Japanese music included Hugh de Ferranti (Univ. of Sydney) – 'Performance Strategies Among Blind Biwa Players in Kyushu,' Gerald Groemer (Earlham Coll.) – 'Nog at the Crossroads,' Patrick Hallwell (Tokyo National Univ. of Fine Arts and Music) – 'Individualism and Groupism; Hierarchies and Equality in Japanese Sanyoku,' and Satomi Oshio (Ochanomizu Univ.) – 'Stats and Change in a Musical Style: A Case of Nagauta Transmission.'

David Henderson (Univ. of Texas, Austin) spoke on 'Remaking Distinctions in the Music of Nepal,' Masayoshi Kobayashi (Tenni Univ. Japan) on 'The Articulation of Movement with Music: A Case of the Learning and Performing Process of Japanese Folkloric Dance.'

Connecticut State Univ.) – 'Current Status of Popular Music Study in South Korea,' and Margaret Dilling (Univ. of California, San Diego) – 'Music in Korean American Youth Culture Clubs.' Yoshihiko Tokumaru (Ochanomizu Univ.) gave a video presentation on 'The present situation of Vietnamese court music in Hue: results of an international research project and investigation into the past, present and future of nha nhac (court music) of Vietnam.'

In the session New Approaches to Analysis, Nathan Hessellink (SOAS, London) spoke on 'Changdan Revisited: Korean Rhythmic Patterns in Theory and Contemporary Performance Practice,' and Bell Yung (Univ. of Pittsburgh/Univ. of Hong Kong) on 'Whose Family Values? Taxonomic, Cultural and Genetic Approaches to Tune Family and Tune Identity.' (SEM Newsletter, vol. 30 no. 4, 1996)

CHINA TOUR NIEUW ENSEMBLE

The Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam), specializing in contemporary music, will visit the People's Republic in the second half of March for a series of concerts of Dutch and Chinese contemporary composers. In Beijing and Shanghai they will perform works by Gu Xiaosong, Xu Shuya, Guo Wenjing and many others. They are among the first foreign musicians of avant-garde music to tour the People's Republic. Other performers who preceded them, such as the group of Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg, have been rather successful in China.

CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA IN CHINA

While 'new music' is still a rare phenomenon in Communist China, Western classical musicians have found the country increasingly receptive to live performances of the Western 'iron repertoire.' The number of foreign ensembles visiting China has grown rapidly in the past few years. A notable event was the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra's debut in the Great Hall of the People (at Tian'anmen Square), 23 September 1996, amidst the enormous red and white political slogans that normally adorn this hall. There was a well-willing response to Debussy's La Mer, but especially the final item in the programme, Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, was awarded with thunderous applause. During the extras (from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker), the audience of 8,000 people overwhelmed conductor Chailly and his musicians with loud ovations, and Chailly could do nothing but turn to the hall and conduct people's clapping to the rhythm of the music. The Great Hall is hardly a suitable space for concerts. Pianist Maria João Pires initially lost her way in Mozart, but after her performance she was called back five times by the audience. Other soloist contributions came from cellist Jian Wang (in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto). In Shanghai, the orchestra performed for as many as 10,000 people in a sports arena. The city's new concert hall is still under construction. The cardboard scenery in the sports hall was a faithful copy of the Concertgebouw's interior in Amsterdam, complete with a big organ, constructed after a photo.

MEETINGS

TEACHING WORLD MUSIC, MAY 1997

From May 15-18, 1997, the Fourth International Symposium on Teaching World Music will take place at Dartington College of Arts, in Devon, UK. The theme is 'Cultural Diversity in Music Education.' The diverse nature of music and its study are considered in relation to 1) Teaching at elementary level (music teachers in schools), 2) Training specialist teachers (teacher training), 3) Professional courses (conservatories), 4) Community music projects. Within these strands some specific areas and issues will be highlighted: successes and failures, the effects of different styles of teaching, the resources of communities, the attitude of governments towards cultural diversity in the community and in education. For more information on the Symposium, please contact Trevor Wiggins, Director of Music, Dartington College of Arts, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6EJ, UK; fax: +44.1803.866053; e-mail: T.Wiggins@dartington.ac.uk.

After five years of international exchange through conferences on 'Teaching World Music' and through the many formal and informal contacts that have resulted from the 'TWM-Network', the Netherlands Institute for Arts Education (LOKV) has taken the initiative to start an international, practice-orientated project, aimed at helping existing institutes to include aspects of cultural diversity in programs at all levels. 'Cultural Diversity In Music Education' aims at making successful approaches to intercultural music teaching available within Europe. In order to achieve this, it sets up networks, conferences, consultations and stimulates exchange of good practice. For 1997-2000, it proposes to follow three courses of action: 1) Organizing the exchange of persons and information between institutes interested in developing multicultural programs, 2) Coaching projects aimed at integrating non-western cultures in European institutes for music education, 3) Setting up additional programs and projects to stimulate the growth of activities in this field on a European scale. Initial funding for the project has been applied for from the Arts and Training Initiative (EU), the European Cultural Foundation, and the Dutch Ministry of Culture and Education (OCW). At the Fourth Symposium of TWM in Devon, a first plan of action for the project will be presented and discussed. Institutions and individuals who are active in this field (or would like to be) are invited to present projects for consideration in this context, either at
the conference, or before. Contact: Huib Schippers or Stephanie Smook, LOKX, Netherlands Institute for Arts Education, P.O.Box 805, 3500 AV Utrecht, Holland; tel: +31.30.2332328, fax: 2334018, e-mail: loku@lokx.nl (TVM Newsletter 12, Autumn 1996)

34TH ICTM, SLOVAKIA, JUNE 1997
The 34th world conference & 50th anniversary of ICTM will be held in Nitra, Slovak Republic on 22-28 June 1997. The following themes have been chosen: 1) Music and Dance of Peasant Societies in National and Political Contexts, 2) Music of the World's Cultures in Education, 3) Music and Dance as Identity Markers in Multicultural Societies, 4) Traditional Music, Digital Technology and Electronic Networks, 5) Sound and Image in the Study and Presentation of Traditional Music and Dance, 6) Traditional Music and World Beat, 7) Musical Instruments in the 20th Century, 8) Crossing Boundaries - Redrawing Boundaries in Music. Proposals for papers should be sent to Wim van Zanten (Program Committee Chair), Faculty of Social Sciences CAV SNWS, P.O.Box 9565, 2300 RS Leiden, Holland; tel: +31.71.527 3495; fax: +31.71.527 3619; e-mail: zanten@ruliw.LeidenUniv.nl.

27TH BALLAD CONFERENCE, JULY 1997
The 27th International Ballad Conference will take place 13-19 July 1997 in Slovenia (Hotel Spik, Gozd Martuljek, near Kranska Gora). All researchers who, in one way or another, have come across ballad traditions in their research, are invited to participate in the conference. Researchers whose work is interdisciplinary or who are tackling comparative research - in Europe or elsewhere - on a specific folk ballad tradition which is somehow linked to the Slovenian ballad tradition are especially welcome. Suggested topics include: 1) Contemporary interpretation of ballads; 2) Ballad motifs in children's folklore; 3) Ethnicity in ballads; 4) Ethics in ballads; 5) Miscellaneous, including fieldwork and classification. During the conference, a cultural evening with folk singers, musicians and interpreters of ballads from Slovenia will be organized. For further information, contact: Dr Marjeta Golez, Glasbenonarodopisni institut ZRC-SAZU, Novi trg 5, 1000 Ljubljana; tel: +386.1.125.6068; fax: +386.61.125.5253; e-mail: gni@zrc-sazu.si (SEM Newsletter)

3RD CHIME MEETING, LEIDEN, SEPT. 1997
The third International CHIME Meeting will be held early September 1997 in Leiden, the Netherlands, partly at the compounds of the CHIME Foundation. The organizers aim for a working conference in practical format, with a flexible programme and sufficient room for discussion and some music performances. Some time will be reserved for one or two in-depth presentations on specific genres. The programme starts on Friday evening and ends on Sunday afternoon. Three major sessions are scheduled: 1. A series of practical (10 or 15 minute reports) on current experiences with fieldwork in China (no abstracts required). 2. A paper session on solo traditions of pipa and guqin. 3. A session on miscellaneous genres and ongoing research. The conference fee is 50 guilders and can be paid upon arrival. This includes conference handouts, two lunches and a concert. Participants are required to arrange their own accommodation in Leiden. We provide a list of fair-priced hotels on request. For further information, contact the CHIME Foundation. If you wish to take part in the meeting, please tell us before 1 August 1997. (Address: P.O. Box 11092, 2301 EB Leiden, Holland, phone +31-71-5133.974 or 5133.123, fax 5123.183.) Further announcements will follow in Chime No. 10.

COMPOSERS

FESTIVAL PRÉSÉNCES, PARIS
The Présences festival of Maison de Radio France in Paris (2-24 February, 1996) paid major attention to Chinese composers. No less than twenty Chinese works were scheduled among the eighty-odd compositions in the programme, including many premières. Among the highlights were Chen Xiaoyong's 'Warp' (1994), one of the most delicate orchestral scores to emerge from the hands of a Chinese composer in recent years. Chen Qijiang's exuberantly romantic Oboe Concerto 'Exstase' (with Jean-Louis Capezzalli) and, perhaps above all, Zhang Xiaofu's stunning work for percussion and electro-acoustics, Nuo Pi Lang, arguably one of the most original and most theatrical works to be played in the Festival. Percussionist Jean Pierlot worked miracles in this piece, though one would suspect a skilled Chinese percussionist of beating the record here.

The Ensemble of traditional Chinese instruments Huaxia from Beijing, founded by Li Xi-an, contributed with many performances. A vast number of composers from China and Taiwan (some now living in Europe) participated in the Festival person. In the concerts, older generation artists like Zu Jian-er (Shanghai), Gao Weijie (Beijing), Tszeng Shing-Kwei and Pan Hwang-Long (Taipei) found themselves flanked by younger colleagues like Xu Yi (b.1963) from the PRC, Miao Wenwang (b.1963) and Hung Chien-Hui (b.1965) from Taiwan. The intermediate generation was presented by Zhu Shinui, Xu Shuya, Zhang Haofu and others. Some of them had not met for years, and for them the festival worked like a meeting of old friends. Composers not present but listed in the programmes included Ma
Shui-long, Tan Dun and Chen Yi. The event was well-attended, with full houses in most of the concerts. Extensive publicity and the fact that admission was free certainly must have played a role. While the organizers may have envisaged a broad sampling of Chinese avant-garde works, the works played were hardly always representative of the best of Chinese contemporary music. Tan Dun was represented with ‘Silk Road’, a fine chamber composition, but surely one could have thought of programming one of his more recent orchestral works? Other major composers like Qu Xiaosong, Zhou Long, Lam Bun-ching or Li Taixiang were not included at all, and very sadly not a single work by a Hong Kong composer was part of the programme. Many artists tended to be represented with uncharacteristic works. One can hardly guess Guo Wenjing’s artistic potential from his brief miniature ‘Late Spring’ for Chinese ensemble. A more investigative spirit might have brought to light far more attractive works and a number of key pieces which should definitely feature in a major festival introducing new Chinese music.

Some of the concerts suffered pathetically from lack of time for rehearsals. One can only guess at what Zhang Xiaofu’s intriguing Piano Concerto might have sounded like if pianist Li Yun and the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra had had more than one brief opportunity to meet and rehearse this major and complex new work. Both Zhang and the soloist deserve better than that!

The Huaxia ensemble’s playing was respectable. The ensemble had no difficulties with Chen Olgang’s Sanxiao (which elaborates in a natural way on traditional melodic patterns and playing techniques) but the Chinese musicians were sometimes at a loss in more complicated works, albeit not for technical reasons. The notes were there, but the spirit was sometimes lacking. Li Xi’an must be congratulated for his major efforts in founding this group. Huaxia helps to create a wider understanding for new music inside the People’s Republic. The fact that the group played Taiwanese as well as PRC composers is also a notable fact. Some listeners may have found the group at its most inspiring in the Taiwanese works, such as Pan Hwang-long’s ‘Dialogue between Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism’ of 1991. Other notable performances in the Festival included Ma Shullong’s ‘idea and image’, a sad autumnal piece for shakuhachi and four cellos, and Xu Shuya’s ‘Recit sur la vieille route’, for voice and electronics. ‘Recit’ was a premiere, sung by Xu’s wife, soprano Xing Rufeng. Well-versed primarily in Western opera, she has made a convincing debut in Présences as a singer of avant-garde music. Let’s hear more of her!

Next to Chinese music, Présences paid ample attention to the music of Maurizio Kagel, who participated in the festival as conductor and performer.

Other artists featuring in the concerts included the Arditti Quartet, Pierre-Yves Artaud, Glendon Kremer and composer/pianist Zygmunt Krauze. (FK)

COMPOSERS MISCELLANEOUS

- Guo Wenjing is ‘Late Spring’ for eight Chinese instruments had its European premiere during the Festival Présences in Paris, 11 February 1996. Guo spent several months in New York in the autumn of 1996. He visited America on the invitation of the Asian Culture Centre, and returned to Beijing in November. His work ‘Inscriptions on Bone’ for alto and ensemble was premiered successfully by the Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam during the Holland Festival 1996. Guo is currently working on a Cello Concerto for Natalia Gutman. The work will be premiered by the Nieuw Ensemble in March 1997 in Holland. The Ensemble has planned a whole series of concerts dedicated to the works of Guo Wenjing. Their programmes will include a Suite from Guo’s chamber opera ‘Wolfs Cub Village’ (1994), Guo’s chamber arrangement of the first movement of Shostakovich’s Thirteenth Symphony, and some works by Guo’s younger colleagues and students at the Beijing Central Conservatoy. Guo will participate in the Festival d’Autome in Paris, in the second half of 1997. His music is now published by the Italian publishing house Ricordi.

- Tan Dun had a busy year with the stage and concert premieres of his opera ‘Marco Polo’ (Munich and Amsterdam, May-June 1996) and ‘Orchestral Theatre III’ (Huddersfield, UK, 26 November 1996). ‘Orchestral Theatre III’ incorporates a montage of 1950s newsreel of the Cultural revolution and video art. Musically, it included allusions to pop music. The Donaueschingen Musiktag of 18-20 October 1996 saw the premiere of Tan’s ‘Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra’ (18 October), with Sharon Isbin and the Orchestre National de France. Tan’s ‘Ghost Opera’, written for the Kronos Quartet and pipe soloist Wu Man, was played many times in London, Sicily, Paris, Bonn and Amsterdam. Some smaller works by Tan Dun were premiered in late 1995 and 1996, including ‘Soliloquy for dizi’ (28 October, 1995, New York), ‘A sinking love’ for soprano and string quartet (with Barbara Baier and soloists of the Bavarian State Orchestra, in Munich, 15 May, 1996), and ‘Intercourse of fire and water’ (by cellist Reimund Korupp in Heidelberg, 10 November 1995). Tan has been invited by the Hong Kong Philharmonic to conduct a series of concerts during the 1997 Hong Kong-PRC reunion celebrations.

- Qu Xiaosong’s works Jio no.4 for solo percussionist and tape, and Jio no.5 for koto, sho and string quartet were premiered this year in Japan. Qu’s ‘Concerto for Percussion Trio and Orchestra’ (1996) was premiered by the Cincinnati Percussion Group
and Peoria Symphony Orchestra in Peoria, 7 December 1996. In November 1996, Qu participated in the Vienna Modern Music Festival as a vocal soloist in his work Mong Dong (played by the ensemble Contrecamps). Forthcoming premieres of Qu's works include 'The Dream World Yu Long' (1996), a ritual theatre project with music and dance, to be staged by the Hong Kong Dance Company (10-12 January, 1997) and various new works for solo instruments: Ji no.6 for violin solo (commissioned by Kishiko Suzuki for a premiere in the Hibiki Festival, June 1997) and 'Stone' for cello solo. 'Stone' will be a part of the programme of three concerts of Qu Xiaosong's music with the Nieuw Ensemble in Holland in February 1997, to be conducted by the composer. In the autumn of 1997, Qu will participate in the Festival d'Automne in Paris with 'Lam Mot' (1991) for Percussion Trio, 'Mist' for two voices and ensemble, and various pieces from his Ji series. The Hong Kong Arts Festival has commissioned Qu to write a chamber opera 'Life on a String', to be premiered in the spring of 1998. (OX)

● Chen Qigang wrote a work for guqin and ensemble which was performed in Holland in April 1996 with Chen Lei (gēqín) and the Nieuw Ensemble. Chen's Concerto 'Extase' for oboe and orchestra was premiered in the Présences Festival in Paris, 24 February 1996, with Jean-Louis Capezzali (oboe) and the Philharmonic Orchestra of France conducted by Mark Foster. The Chinese premiere (same soloist with the China Central Conservatory Orchestra) took place 8 November 1996, in the Beijing Concert Hall. From 12 to 17 November 1996, Chen participated in the Second Link Ongaku Festival in Tokyo, Japan, where 'Extase' was played again (with the Tokyo City Philharmonic). His co-operation with oboist Capezzali resulted in another work for oboe, premiered at that festival: 'Énergie Spirale', with percussions. Forthcoming concerts with Chen's music include the American premiere of 'Un Pétale de Lumière' for flute and orchestra (2 February 1997 in Chicago, with the South Bend Symphony and soloist Pierre-Yves Artaud) and further performances of 'Extase' (Taiwan, 25 and 27 March). His 'Poème Lyrique II' for voice and ensemble can be heard in concerts in Grenoble and Lyon, 18-19 March; and at the New Music Festival, Münster, May 1997. (CQ) Some smaller works by Chen had their first performances in 1996, including a piece for Chinese traditional instruments, called Sanxiao (Présences Festival, Paris, 11 February).

● Xu Shuya (Paris) will feature prominently in a series of concerts by the Nieuw Ensemble in February 1997 in Holland (25 February in Paradiso in Amsterdam). The ensemble will perform new works by Xu for pipa, zheng, electronics and Western instruments, as well recent electronic works by composers from Shanghai and IRCAM (Paris). The programme will include Xu's 'Vacuité / Consistance' for Chinese and Western chamber instruments, and a work inspired by Inner-Mongolian chant, featuring the composer as vocal soloist. (Xu Shuya has vowed to stop smoking for a few months by way of preparation!) In September 1996, Xu was involved as a teacher in a composition course in Royaumont, in the company of composers like Klaus Huber, James Tenney and Brian Ferneyhough. He co-operated with François Picard in a lecture on the use of Chinese scales in his own music. Recent performances of his works include Tahiti (numerous times, notably in Germany and Lithuania, with either Pierre-Yves Artaud or Harry Starreveld as flute soloists), 'Dense / Clairement', commissioned by the Ensemble Intercontemporain (Paris, 26-27 January 1996) and 'Récit sur la vieille route', for voice and electronics (Paris, 22 February, with soprano Xing Rufeng as soloist). Commissions for new works include a work for harp, and major orchestral works for the 70th anniversary of the Shanghai Conservatory, 31 November 1997, and an International Music Festival in Shanghai, also in November next year. (XS)

● Chen Yi (New York) is currently working on a Flute Concerto for James Galway. She was awarded Guggenheim and Goddard Lieberson Fellowships for 1996 and a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship (Italy) for 1997. She has been appointed full-time composition faculty of Peabody Conservatory, Johns Hopkins University. Recent performances of her works include 'Tang Poems' (premiered by vocal ensemble Chanticleer in New York, 13 October 1995), 'Fisher-
man's Song' for Violin and Piano (premiered by Ho Hongying in San Francisco, 3 November 1995), Symphony no.2 (by the Hallé Orchestra in the UK, November 1995) and Duo Ye, for orchestra (by the Town Orchestra of Winterthur, Switzerland, 8 May 1995). Pianist Gwendolyyn Mok has been giving further performances of Chen Yi's Piano Concerto. A major occasion was a series of gala concerts devoted to Chen Yi's music at the Center for the Arts Theater at Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco, 14–16 June 1995. These concerts featured the Second Symphony, a 'Chinese Myths' Cantata, 'Tang Poems' and other works. A new CD of Chen Yi's music (Symphony no.2 and 'Chinese Myths') will be published by Koch. Some older works are available on Nimbus and Cala. (CY)

- Zhou Long's 'Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra' was premiered 17 and 18 November 1995 by the Kronos Quartet and the Brooklyn Philharmonic in New York. The San Francisco Symphony played his pipa concerto ‘Peking Drum’, 20 April 1996 in San Francisco. A new String Quartet was performed by three quartets in the United States. In the past two years, Zhou Long was a composer-in-residence of the New Music Consort in New York. The ensemble played various works by Zhou, including the premiere of a new piece for bamboo flute and chamber ensemble. (ZL)

- Zhu Shirui's recent chamber compositions Shuang Yun I and II, for two voices and ensemble, Wan Lai for pipa solo and the Second String Quartet were performed in Stuttgart (Germany), 10 December 1995, by the Variante Ensemble and soloists led by Manfred Schreier. Ya Dong was the pipa soloist. Zhu is currently based in Stuttgart and works on a PhD dissertation at the University of Tübingen. (ZS)

- Wen Daqing (b.1958) had a concert of new works in Geneva on Saturday 21 October 1995, performed by the Ensemble Contrechamps. It featured Wu for voice, alphorn and doublebass, String Quartet no.1, 'Complaint' for Peking opera narrator and three percussionists, 'Le Souffle' for six instruments, 'Distance', for soprano, tenor, female chorus and percussion, and some piano works. Wen studied music in Fujian and graduated from the Chinese Music Conservatory in Beijing (under professors Shi Wanchun and Luo Zhongrong) in 1990. He continued his studies in 1991 at the Music Conservatories of Geneva and (subsequently) Lyon in France, where he was a student of Gilbert Amy. He is currently based in Geneva. (WD)

- Lam Bunching was in Italy in March-April 1996 to work on 'Bigorio', a film score for the Swiss cineast Stine Werensfels. Other recent commissions include chamber works for cellist Maya Beiser and 'Fa' for the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet. There are also plans for a Piano Concerto. Lam's 'Sudden Thunder' for pipa and orchestra was premiered by the Wu Man (pipa) and the American Composers Orchestra conducted by D.Russel Davies at Carnegie Hall in New York in the fall of 1995. Further performances of the work followed in Europe in the Summer of 1996 with the EC Community Orchestra. 'Last Spring' for Piano Quintet - written in 1992 and premiered by Ursula Oppens and the Arditti quartet - was played in Japan at the Tokyo Summer Festival 1996. The American label CRI has just released a CD with chamber works by Lam Bun-ching. (LB)

- Jia Daqun visited the United States from September 1995 to May 1996, on the invitation of the United Board For Higher Education in Asia and the University of Redlands, California. He presented lectures at the Universities of California, Minnesota, Michigan and elsewhere and met with John Corigliano, John Adams, Aaron Kernis, Michael Daugherty, Brian Ferneyhough, Joli Yuasa and many others. His 'Flavour of Bashu' for two violins, piano and three percussionists, a work inspired by Sichuan opera, was played 19 March 1995, and 'Counterpoint of Time' for woodwind septet, 7 May, both in Redlands. An older piece, 'Rondo' for Clarinet and Piano' (1984) was premiered in Paris by Chinese clarinetist Bai Tie in July. 'Intonation for Chamber Orchestra' was premiered 21 September by the Juilliard New Ensemble conducted by Joel Sachs, in New York. 'Ji' for Chinese instruments and percussion had its first performance in Tokyo in the Fall of 1996. Other recent performances included concerts in China (notably 'Overture' for bass drum, Chinese winds and percussion, in Beijing, Fall 1995). Jia
Daqun returned to Chengdu (Sichuan) in May. He is currently working on a piece for orchestra. (JD)

- Ye Xiaogang founded a chamber ensemble of Western instruments in Beijing in May 1995. The ensemble, called Eclipse, performs works by composers like Messiaen and Takemitsu, as well as by young Chinese composers. The group will bring out a CD on the German label Wergo. Ye’s music is published by the German publishing house Schott.

- Gang Situ, a graduate of the Shanghai Teachers’ University and former teacher at the institute’s Music Department, has been living in the United States since 1985. He obtained an M.A. degree in composition at the Music and Arts Institute of San Francisco in 1988. His (orchestral, choral, chamber and dance) works have been performed in China, Europe and the United States. Gang’s Double Concerto for violin, erhu and orchestra was premiered by the Palo Alto Philharmonic in San Francisco in June, 1994. A CD of his works will be published by Water Lily Acoustics.

- Randy Raine-Reusch is a Canadian-based composer and performer who specializes in new, improvised and experimental music for non-Western instruments. He has worked with a wide range of musicians in Asia, ‘from National Treasures to headhunters’, and has amassed a working collection of over 600 world instruments. He has written new works for guzheng (Chinese bridged zither), for Japanese ichigenkin (1 string zither) and nigenkin (2 string zither) – he is one of a handful of people in the world who play this instrument – and for the Thai khen (mouth organ). Raine-Reusch has co-operated with musicians from many different spheres, including rock artists Aerosmith and the Cranberries and avant-garde composer Pauline Oliveros. His current projects include producing a CD ROM on the music of the Silk Road and working together with Chinese zeng and pipa performers. (RR)

at home in Eastern and Western ways of musical thinking. Among her most successful works are ‘Sudden Thunder’ for pipa and orchestra (1993) and music for the Chinese shadow play ‘The Child God’ (1993). She does not ‘proclaim’ Chineseness in her works, is more interested in writing music than in writing Chinese music. American critics like Tim Page and Allan Kozinn have praised her music as ‘alluringly exotic’. Alluring is, but not exotic. Miss Lam likes to compare music to ‘action’ paintings, where ink is splashed on a canvas and drips into thinner lines or settles in blebs. Contrasts of stillness and motion, the element of ‘chance directed by time’ and a strong sense of continuity are evident in her works, and may be viewed as allusions to her Asian background, but conscious imitations of Chinese sounds are rare. Lam Bun-Ching seems very much at home on the piano, a rather un-Chinese instrument from a traditional point of view.

CRI, which has previously released CDs with music by Tan Dun, Zhou Long, Korean composer Chinary Ung and others, has now issued a CD with Lam Bun-Ching’s chamber pieces. Some of the older works in this album, dating from 1981 and 1993, are written in a reflective, relatively unadventurous idiom. The dream-like ‘After Spring’ for two pianos may untold its qualities only after repeated hearings. Lô (1983), for one percussionist, originally a dance score, is different. Here the composer comes closer to her ideal of ‘action’ painting of aural landscapes. Some vivid dramatic outbursts colour the delicate canvas of this piece. ‘Another Spring’ (1988), a subdued work for alto flute, cello and piano is followed by ‘Last Spring’ (1992) for Piano Quintet, which is more extrovert and more daring.

None of these works are shockingly modern, but something in Lam’s seemingly unobtrusive style keeps the listener on his feet. Perhaps it is, first of all, a quality of composure that makes Lam Bun-Ching’s pieces so appealing to the ear. (FK)

NEW MUSIC BY LAM BUN-CHING

"Mountain Clear Water Remote." Chamber works by Lam Bun-ching, played by the New Performance Group and Lam Bun-ching, piano. 1 CD, total playing time 60'50". CRI CD 726. (Composers Recordings Inc, 73 Spring Street, Suite 506, New York, N.Y. 10012. Phone +1-212-941.9673.

Lam Bun-Ching (born 1954 in Macao) was first trained as a pianist in Hong Kong. She did not start composing until 1976, when she moved to the United States. Now based in New York, she has gradually established a name as a composer equally
HISTORICAL CHINESE RECORDINGS

This is a fascinating collection of early recordings of Chinese opera and instrumental music from China and New York. Considering the recording dates, the sound quality of most items is surprisingly good, and both for the music and for its historical value, this CD is worth purchasing. Most of the items included come from Chinese recordings made on location for the label Victor in the 1920s. In an agreement with G&T (England’s Gramophone and Typewriter Company, later renamed His Master’s Voice), Victor reserved recording rights for China shortly after the turn of this century.

The general attitude of Westerners towards Chinese music at that time may be summarized by self-appointed recording pioneer Fred Gaisberg who visited the Far East in 1902-03. He showed limited enthusiasm for the musical talents of the ‘Chinamen’ – ‘their idea of music is a tremendous clash and bang’ – but captured many unique samples of music from a world now generally considered ‘remote’ – that of imperial China. The CD includes one astonishingly good recording from 1902 of Cantonese chhuia with shawms and percussion, performed in New York. This is one of the very earliest Chinese recordings, with a very good sound balance. It became so popular that it remained in the catalog of Victor for several decades. The music is close to Cantonese music heard in China today, but listening to the historical recordings, one also realizes the inevitable loss of many former performance habits and contexts, not to speak of disappearing repertoire. There are two fine examples of Cantonese Buddhist longevity songs, sung to the accompaniment of flute and drum, two excerpts of Peking opera with Mei Lanfang (around 1929), several pieces of Cantonese opera from the same period, and a few respectable instrumental pieces, mostly recorded in New York in 1930 with an ensemble led by by Cantonese erhu player and composer Yau Hok Chau. Documentation is limited – the producers have made the best out of the scant information available. We are left in the dark about the functions and performing contexts of some of the pieces. If it turns out that there is a market for this kind of CDs, Chinese and Western record companies should redouble their efforts to search for further material – in their own archives or in museum collections. There is a vast amount of material awaiting rediscovery, many hundreds of early commercial records and an unknown number of private collections. Let’s wait and see. (FK)

MUSIC FROM MONGOLIA

These are studio recordings of an ensemble of semi-professional Mongolian singers and instrumentalists, recruited by Dutch art-photographer Jeanne Driessen during a visit to Ulaan Baatar in 1990 and invited to perform in Europe. Some belong to a Music Theatre Group, others come from the Mongolian Music and Dance Secondary School. The CD combines instrumental pieces and vocal pieces, with some pleasant solo contributions from female singer Ragjiiaa Bin Banzaagii, and a few male duets. The instrumental ensemble consists of plucked and bowed strings, flute and a hammered zither. There are demonstrations of overtone singing on track 5 and – particularly ‘aeolian’ in sound –
track 12. The dark tones of the spiked fiddle *morin xuur* are captured well in some of the instrumental pieces, with a bit too much gawling to my taste. Most of the instruments involved can also be heard solo in some of the items. Nice, unpretentious music, perhaps not 'folk' but fairly close to it, performed by a group of sincere musicians and well-recorded. The accompanying booklet is well-documented, though one would have liked to see more information about the background, status and viewpoints of the musicians. (FK)

**SHAWMS FROM NORTH-EAST CHINA**

This CD captures the joy and excitement of the yearly street parades of New Year in Liaoning Province in Northern China. Sonorous Chinese shawm and percussion bands – an acquired taste – feature prominently in these celebrations. The Chinese groups are more than an Eastern equivalent of Western brass bands. They play a supportive role in Chinese theatre performances, weddings and funeral rites, and reflect many different levels of amateur and professional, village and urbanized music making. A number of studio recordings in the second half of the album highlight some of these aspects. We get to hear all the crazy musical tricks that *suona* players are capable of. The CD is a worthy successor to Picard’s album of wind and percussion ensembles from southern China, released earlier by Unesco-Auvitudis (see Chime 5, 1992, pp.159-161). True enough, seventy minutes of shawm music are a bit too much to swallow in one go. Some pieces for *guan* have been included for variety. All the same, one should pick a few bits and pieces at the time. The music on track 3 is reminiscent of Turkish *zurna* and drum music, possibly a related tradition. Track 5 has an ensemble performing in alternation with vocal contributions from a chorus of dancers. Some of the studio recordings lack the spontaneity and vigour of the outdoor performances, but professional boredom, too, is part of urban musical life, and may be documented. There is enough excellent playing on this disc to make it worthwhile. Apart from spelling and grammar mistakes in English, the accompanying notes in the CD-booklet are excellent.

**VIDEO SERIES ON CHINESE MUSIC**

In the early 1980s, a film team directed by Deben Bhattacharya visited parts of Asia for a series of television films on the local music and cultures of India, China, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Turkey and Hungary. These films have been published under the title ‘Asian Insights’. The series on China’s performing arts consists of six films of 30 minutes each, dealing with the following subjects: Instruments and Music; Folk Music; Uighurs on the Silk Route; Minorities of the Southwest; The Opera, and The Children: Tomorrow’s Artists. The films are not only meant as an introduction to Chinese music, but also as a presentation of China’s scenery, national art, cultural relics and various aspects of daily life. Naturally, the approach being so broad, it becomes hard to show more than the outer shell of China’s musical culture. Moreover, the series was made in the early 1980s, at a time when the country was even more wary about its self-images abroad than it is today. For a first impression, Bhattacharya’s tapes may serve their purpose. The landscapes are breathtaking, the brief visits to the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the vast plains of Mongolia and other famous sites may wet the viewers’ appetites. The shots of opera training schools and art schools and the excerpts from operas, narrative songs and virtuoso concerts all contribute to an image of music in China as a well-trained, disciplined, technically brilliant professional stage world. But that is unfair to reality and gives a very one-sided idea of music making in the People’s Republic.

Presumably in the absence of sufficient research material to rely upon, and without any prior affinity with the country, Bhattacharya’s team had to rely on officialdom and official self-images promoted by the People’s Republic. The resulting films, no matter how interesting, and regardless of some
genuinely unique footage, present Chinese music and traditional theatre largely in a framework of conservatory clichés and tourist folklore. The programme on folk music shows 'travelling musicians' who entertain nomadic herdsmen in their yurts in Inner Mongolia. These musicians are dressed in stage costumes and perform what sounds like a mixture of Mongolian ballads and modern Han Chinese stage traditions. What if the attending herdsmen had been asked to sing a few songs of their own?

In an instant we move from Mongolia to the temples and gardens of Hangzhou, and from there to the orange groves of Dongdongtianshan in Jiangsu. We are shown a female tanci singer (a 'folk singer' according to the American commentator) who performs amidst the orange trees, with some peasants standing around her. These people must be perplexed; they have probably never spotted a tanci singer in their back-garden before. We move to a school in Suzhou where twenty pipa playing boys and girls are being drilled as 'professional folk musicians'. There are some nice shots from a storyteller performing in a village in Zhejiang, and here, finally, one may rest assured that the singer is not out of place and that the villagers enjoy what is happening.

So much for folk music. But what about village processions, temple rites, funeral bands, teahouse music, rural folk songs, village operas? Some of those elements could be filmed in the early 1980s if one knew where to go. But the film makers were seemingly unaware of the existence of rural, folk and ritual dimensions to Chinese music, or were required to ignore them completely. The programme on 'The opera' begins with images of Cantonese artists making up their faces, and soon focuses on the aspects best liked by most foreigners - combat scenes and acrobatics. Once again, the ritual dimension of Chinese opera is lost, we hear nothing about the substance and functions of special roles, and nothing about the vocal music. What if the film makers had turned to the singers, or to the people in the audience to ask them to comment on the performances? What makes anyone in China fond of opera? Why is it worth to go there? What sort of performances do people like best? In three hours of video, there is virtually not a single comment from either the musicians or any of the spectators on the genres and performances shown. Characteristically, a little 4-year old boy in 'The Children' who finishes playing and starts talking excitedly is immediately hushed by his teacher; talking was not meant to be part of the film!

Instead we have the commentator's voice, providing noncommittal statements like 'Suzhou operas are among the most prestigious in China'. All this is not to say that the films are without merits. We get many fine shots of instruments being played, of stage actions, training sessions, and we are introduced to a number of musical instrument factories. We see gongs being hammered into shape, silk strings emerging from a machine, and there is this funny factory orchestra playing ensemble music. The work of these and other craftsmen shown in the film is lovingly portrayed. Some of the music performances and stage actions are very good and enjoyable. Numerous details make one aware that almost two decades have gone since this material was filmed in the early 1980s. The performers' blue suits have gone, some of the ensemble music played has long gone out of fashion, and China continues to change at a breathtaking speed. Much of the material shown in these films can already be called 'historical', and some of it may be precious for historical reasons. For example, who is the old man playing the big drum so marvelously in the fragment of shifan kuagu (in the programme on Folk Music)? Such fragments are value for money. For educational purposes, these films are worthwhile, provided they are supplemented with updated information and additional materials, putting Chinese music in a more balanced perspective.

CHINESE FOLK SONGS ON CD

Songs of the Land in China. Labour Songs & Love Songs. Chinese field recordings, 1953-1996, compiled by Qiao Jianzhong. 2 CDs, total playing time 2 hrs and 20 min. TCD 1020, produced 1996. Wind Records, No.14, Lane 130, Min Chuan Road, Hsin Tien, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC. Phone 886-2-2185881, Fax 2189484.

Two independent record companies have published the first commercial CDs with field recordings of mainland Chinese folk songs. For decades we have been waiting for materials of this kind to appear. The hundreds of commercially available 'folk songs' sung in studios by professional artists - usually in modern arrangements - could hardly give an idea of the underlying traditions. There was much to choose from: folk songs in army style, or disguised as beat, disco, jingju, agiptrop, Hawaiian, schlager, grand opera, and so on - it was all available, except folk folk songs. Some of this repertoire for the professional stage is certainly attractive in its own right, but why have we been left to guess for such a long time what Chinese folk songs sound like in folk contexts?

Chinese song collectors have made numerous field recordings, particularly in the 1950s, and again from the late 1970s onwards, but much of the material
One cannot develop a taste for Homer if the words are presented in cipher code. Is there anything like Homer in Chinese folk poetry? Perhaps not. But let's find out! Naturally, Professors Zhang and Body and producer Bernard Kelkamp must be complemented with this excellent CD - musically, it is a nice preparation for anyone planning adventurous travel in Yunnan, and a musicological source of great value.

Perhaps an even more exciting document is the 2 CD-set of (mainland) Chinese folk songs published by Wind Records in Taiwan: this is an anthology of studio and field recordings from the 1950s up to the present, compiled by Qiao Jianzhong, director of the Music Research Institute in Beijing. The songs largely stem from the institute's archives and (presumably) from Qiao's own collecting. While this album can only give a limited cross-section of Han folk song traditions in China, it still presents many of the best-known genres. The inclusion of alternative performances and variant versions for a number of songs allows for comparisons.

There is a lot of enjoyable music, and some that is truly magnificent. There are wonderful huá'er from the north, loud-voiced mountain songs with impressive falsetto parts. There are some amazing work songs, such as the logger's song (1st CD, track 30), where the agony and tremendous physical efforts of the singers shimmer through in their amazing vocal energy. Or take the shànggě bān song from Zhejiang, nearly ten minutes of superb yodeling and falsetto singing which should bring any music-loving person to his feet! Group songs of this kind (with alternating solo parts) are rarely heard in the Jiangsu area today. Still, a few singers remain who can remember these extensive forms and are able to master the demanding falsetto parts. But perhaps it is the earliest item contained in this album which is the most gorgeous one. Gorgeous, literally speaking: we mean the Yangzi river boat song of 1953, by Luo Ziqing and his group (1st CD, track 14), which is normally sung by boatmen while passing a stretch of dangerous rapids in the gorges of Sichuan. The pace of singing is continually adapted to the changing motion of the water. What we hear are amazing vocal acrobatics, with a bout of two- and three-part polyphony towards the end as exciting and complex as the speediest runs of Bach or Bartók. A pathetic comparison, I suppose, and one should probably say 'heterophony' here, but how to make clear that the boat songs are really in a class of their own? Audiences in Paris could hear these songs performed on stage in the Festival d'Automme in the mid-1980s by soloist Chen Baogui and his group, but what they presented were watered-down, regularized versions of the repertoire sung by Luo and his colleagues in the 1950s. One may still hear these vigorous songs sung on the Yangzi, but seldom as inspired as in this recording!

Musicologist Zhang Xingrong from the Yunnan Art Institute in Kunming has been collecting music of the Yunnan minorities since 1982. He co-operated with Jack Body in Wellington, New Zealand, selecting fifteen hours of (mainly instrumental) music for release on cassettes by the Asia-Pacific Archives of the Victoria School of Music. Pan Records in Holland has now planned to bring out five programmes from this selection on CDs, and the first one, with solo and group songs of thirteen minority nationalities of Yunnan, holds a promise for the future: we are presented with nearly seventy minutes of wonderful material, excellently recorded, neatly documented, with ample room for both accompanied and unaccompanied traditions, and work songs as well ritual chants. There are samples of many different vocal styles. For more elaborate background information on the local song traditions, we must obviously resort to Zhang Xingrong's writings - which ought to be translated - but surely the publisher could have included more than just two of the lyrics? (The texts are given in translation only). Listening to folk songs in dialect without access to the meaning of the words is like eating the wrapping and throwing away the food. We have the voices, the tunes and the rhythms, but we really ought to have the poetry alongsidés.
The album presents a wide range of genres and different performance contexts. This includes semi-professionalized performances on stage, such as the series of songs sung with instrumental ensemble towards the end of the second CD. There is so much variety that one gets a good picture of modern transformations of Chinese folk song repertoires in the 20th century. The popular song ‘Meng Jiangnü’ as performed on track 28 (CD 2) gives a good idea of how this song was performed in the villages in the late 1950s. Track 21 has the same song in a semi-professional arrangement, sung shortly before the Cultural Revolution, still quite ‘folkly’. Track 17, a different song, exemplifies the style of song arrangements that became popular in the early 1980s, with mixed instruments and the incorporation of Western devices like waltz rhythm, bass line, lead instruments playing in triads, etc. The next step, not included in this album, since there is already enough commercial material available in that field, are the pop and disco versions of the mid-1980s and later.

The sound quality of Qiao Jianzhong’s selections varies a lot from one item to the next. Some of the historical recordings are quite good. A few items have been given artificial echo, some sound rather muffled. In tracks 5 and 6 on the first CD we hear gurgling sounds reminiscent of the age of the wire recorder, but these recordings were made recently (1984), and were presumably included as rare examples of of work songs recorded on location. The majority of songs were recorded in a studio or during special organized song sessions or staged performances. We have doubts even about some of the items specifically presented as in situ recordings. If track 6 is a pounding song, why don’t we hear any pounding? The vivid impression of a dialogue singing contest (2nd CD, track 8) leaves no doubt about the circumstances of recording, and the same goes for the impressive lament on track 27.

The ‚tiange‘ (‘field songs’) from Guizhou sound somewhat rigid, as if they were sung under a conductor. The ‘haozhi luogu‘ (tracks 20 to 25) sound rather tame; I am convinced that more inspired recordings of this genre exist, but anyway, we can now finally get an idea of what the ‘song and drum songs’ of Hubei sound like. Some recordings are curiously divided over several tracks. In such a case, we may be dealing with a series of related songs, or strokes in one go. Suite-like performances of folk songs are not unusual, and they may even be viewed as a single structure. E.g. the percussion solo on Track 20 (CD 1) may have a special name and a track of its own, but it is no more than the overture (and the refrain) to the song that follows.

The album has accompanying notes in Chinese and (abbreviated) in English. The Chinese notes provide information about when and where specific recordings were made: we get names of singers, indications of genre, recording dates and locations. Sometimes only a province or district is given. We must bear in mind that the people who made the historical recordings may no longer be around to provide more accurate data. Lyrics are shown in fragmented form, which is still a major improvement on numerous Western-produced folk song CDs which don’t provide lyrics at all. There are some fine (black and white) illustrations.

The major division of the songs in two categories, ‘songs of labour’ (CD 1) and ‘songs of love’ (CD 2), is a bit confusing, since both CDs include work songs and love songs. Essentially, Chinese theorists – as well as folk singers – tend to make a distinction between haozi, work songs sung in the rhythm of the work, and rhythmically free songs, which may be work songs in all but name. The distinction is not problematic for the core repertoire of haozi – rhythmical group songs with a lead singer and an antiphonally responding chorus – but what about many solo songs which exist in two formats: a version in free rhythm (called ‘love song’ or whatever) and a rhythmically pulsating one, perhaps with the same text and (largely) the same tune, but suddenly called haozi ‘work song’? Compare track 3 on the first CD with track 1 on the second, which, melodically speaking, are two variants of the same ground form, and are both sung during work. Going through the album, the listener makes a geographical journey from north to south – since the songs are presented in the order of the regions in which they can be found. Because of the division in two categories, the listener must make the same journey twice. As a consequence, close connections between melodies or performing styles within one region are sometimes lost from sight. It might have been easier to group the songs per region. There is enough variety within each of the regional repertoires. But after all this nit-picking, let me stress that these are just the petty frustrations of a Dutch admirer of
Chinese folk songs. Nothing said here is meant to detract from the value of this wonderful and attractively designed album 'Songs of the Land in China'. Qiao Jianzhong is right in pointing out that this is just a 'tiny drop in the ocean' of all the folk songs still awaiting discovery - but what a fine selection it is! Qiao, like Zhang Xingrong, must be congratulated for his pioneering work. Perhaps, with the growing attention in China for the unique qualities of rural folk songs, we may now hope for the release of further (both new and historical) recordings highlighting one the world's richest and most fascinating folk song cultures. (FK)

**PIPA MUSIC**


By the 1920s, Cantonese music was evolving towards a jazzy new urban style, blending the sounds of traditional Chinese music with that of the dance hall orchestras, keyboard music for silent movies and other musical novelties imported from the West. Composer-performers in Hong Kong and Canton earned fame with their 78 rpm recordings. In the past two years, some excerpts of old Cantonese recordings have been re-issued on compact disc, making it possible for us to compare modern performances of Cantonese music with the playing in those days. Perhaps Cantonese artists would be rather surprised to hear how Chinese musicians are playing their works today, towards the end of the century.

Listen to ‘Birds in the forest’ (*Niao tou liang*) as performed on a new Nimbus album by *pipa* player Wu Man and Ensemble. It is a small programmatic piece with a prominent role not for *pipa* but for the two-stringed Cantonese fiddle *gao hu*. One is struck by the calm perfection and sheer classicism of Tian-Juo Wang's playing, even in such a bird imitation piece. The other instruments blend perfectly, like in a Western String Quartet. We still hear a kind of 'foxy' piece, but transferred from its humble smoky Chinese teahouse origins to a modern concert stage in Paris or New York. This is music for black ties and gala dresses. Essentially, all the pieces on Wu Man's new CD, whether traditional or new - she plays a number of avant-garde works by Bun-Ching Lam, Tan Dun and Zhou Qinru - inhabit this same world of perfect timing and sophisticated classicism; to some extent an unusual approach for musicians brought up in Asian heterophony. The danger of playing Chinese 'folk' as if it were Western chamber music is that you risk killing all the fun. Wu Man and her companions know how to keep the music alive. They are just wonderful musicians. Anyway, most of the pieces in this album are not 'folk' but 'elite' right from the start. The good news about the avant-garde pieces in the album is that they are not boring! 'C-A-G-E-I-V' is traditional Chinese music of the 21st century. A composer must be crazy to make a *suona* play like a Mahlerian Fernorchester, while the ensemble of *pipa*, *erhu* and *zheng* are softly humming and strumming in the foreground. But Tan Dun knows what he wants, and yes, it works!

So what about traditional traditional *pipa* music? Is there no future for the old masters who have no interest in doing everything in new ways? Listen to one of the finest *pipa* CDs to appear in recent years: 'Hunting Eagles Catching Swans', an album featuring Lin Shicheng (Beijing) and his student Gao Hong. The disc was recorded by Paul Dice in Minneapolis during a concert tour of Lin and Gao. The latter is praised as Lin's 'best student'. I can't judge, except that I'm very impressed! I will refrain from discussing the album in detail. Let me just say that this is the present you want to give to your friends. Magnificent playing, truly radiant, well-balanced, yet at times very wild. The *pipa* duets are among the most vivid pieces I've heard for a long time. Lin Shicheng is a truly great performer, and this CD shows him at his best. For an elaborate review of the album, see Wu Ben's expert report in the ACMR Journal. Once again, we have two very attractive *pipa* CDs to choose from... But how to choose? (FK)

**CD BRIEFS**

AIMP Geneva has published an attractive album with opera music of the Puppet Theatre of Quanzhou, Fujian, recorded in 1994-95 while the group was touring Europe. There are three additional excerpts
Fanbei, featuring the Buddhist morning service in Shanghai. With explanatory notes from Tian Qing, China's foremost expert of Buddhist music. Total playing time 72'10. Ocora HM 83.

Hugo Records published an attractive CD of Xi'an Drums Music, featuring various Drum Music Societies and Wind and Percussion Bands. Total playing time 64'21. Hugo, HRP 758-2. (To be reviewed in Chime 10).

Haus der Kulturen der Welt published 'Thundering Dragon, Percussion Music from China', a concert of professional percussionist Li Zhengui and his ensemble recorded live in 1993 in Berlin. Neat performances, a bit over-organized. The programme lists classics like 'Squabbling Ducks' next to new compositions such as 'Drum Poem', created by Li in cooperation with Tan Dun. The comparison with 'Xi'an Drums Music' makes the Hugo album an easy winner.

AMFRC (France) published two important CDs with minority songs: 'Chants des aborigenes Rukai et Tsou de Taiwan', and 'Musiques des Hakka I: Chants montagnards des Hakka des deux rives du Détroit de Taiwan.' Fascinating recordings made on location by Cheng Shui-cheng. AMFRC 9401 and 9501.
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