



# ASIAN-EUROPEAN

## MUSIC RESEARCH

## E-JOURNAL

**ASIAN-  
EUROPEAN  
MUSIC  
RESEARCH  
JOURNAL**



No. 4 (Winter 2019)  
ISSN 2625-378X

COTTBUS/BERLIN: WENDISCHER VERLAG

**ASIAN-EUROPEAN  
MUSIC RESEARCH  
E-JOURNAL**

**SPECIAL PRINT**

**No. 4 (Summer 2019)**

**ISSN 2625-378X**

**COTTBUS/BERLIN: WENDISCHER VERLAG**

# CONTENTS

## ARTICLES AND TOPICAL ESSAYS

**Acceptance and Identification: Three Brides Who Did Not Have Crying Marriages, 1-12**

Liu Hong [刘红]

**The Interpretation of the Huqin as Recorded in the Laufer Collection, 13-24**

Jin Qiao [金桥]

**Some Revelations about the Song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, 25-42**

Kiều Tấn

**Observing a Pang Then Ritual of the Tày People in Lào Cai Province, 43-48**

Phạm Minh Hương and Nguyễn Thuý Tiên

**Changes in Music Practices of the H'rê People in Quảng Ngãi Province, 49-58**

Nguyễn Thế Truyền

**“Music as a Gift from God”—On the Indigenization of Sacred Music in the Chinese Christian Church, 59-74**

Sun Yue [孙月]

## REVIEWS

**The Yandun Dagu Story – A Field Report Review, 75-78**

Gisa Jähnichen

**Unique Experience In the 3rd SEAMEX (Southeast Asia Music Education Exchange) Event, 2019, Indonesia, 79-82**

Yin Xiang [尹翔]

**Book review on ‘A Phonemic Theory: On Traditional Chinese Music’, 83-86**

Han Mei [韩梅]

**“Cultural Imperialism and the New ‘Yellow Peril’ in Western Classical Music” Study Day Report for Asian-European Music Research, 87-98.**

Kawabata Maiko and Tan Shzr Ee

**My Impressions of the 1<sup>st</sup> China Musics Ethnographic Film Exhibition, 99-100**

Terada Yoshitaka

# ISSUE 4

(Winter 2019) Welcome to Number 4 of AEMR-EJ!

## Introduction

Issue 4 of AEMR-EJ shows the wide array of possibilities in presenting music research from topical essays to descriptive reports to analytical discussions. For the first time, there are 3 Vietnamese scholars included who are working on very different projects. Also, all different academic presentations prove that the outcome of research does not principally depend on a standard design of these researches. This issue is, therefore, an invitation to all scholars interested in music from, within, and between Asia and Europe, to explore their own possibilities. The review section is not less diverse. The book review being the central point of this section is surrounded by reviews about events and detailed observations that contribute to an open-minded discourse about music and its role in society. Issue 4 of AEMR-EJ appears with some modifications. In this issue abstracts, keywords, short biographical data or affiliation(s) of the author(s), and the author's(s') contacts are included in the article or review and not put as an extra file. Also, video and sound supplements are referred to in the references. Since these supplements are widely distributed, it is useful to try an opposite approach by linking the articles or reviews to the already existing video and sound files.

# ACCEPTANCE AND IDENTIFICATION: THREE BRIDES WHO DID NOT HAVE CRYING MARRIAGES

## THE NARRATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RE-OBSERVATION OF THE “KUJIA” (哭嫁) MARRIAGE CUSTOM IN WESTERN HUBEI DISTRICT, AND THE DISCUSSION OF THE MUSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE “SONGS OF KUJIA”

Liu Hong [刘红]

### Abstract

When paying a return visit to the Laifeng (来凤) and Xianfeng (咸丰) in western Hubei province, the author occasionally found three “Xin Guniangs” (新姑娘, means “brides”, called by local people) who did not marry according to the “rules”. Therefore, the article concerns about the minority which did not have crying marriage for various reasons. It was and is lack of attention. And the article extends to come up with questions as follows. How should we look at those “Xin Guniangs” who cried and those who did not, when now the time-space relationship has changed profoundly? What statement should we make when it comes to the acceptance and identification of whether to/ can people have “Kujia” or not? At the same time, the author discusses the musical attributes of “the song of Kujia” by analysing the emotions and reactions of the people who perform “songs of Kujia” when they were asked about whether to agree that “crying” is “singing” or not.

**Key Words:** Identity, Laifeng , Xianfeng , Xin Guniang , the song of Kujia

### PREFACE

I went to Laifeng and Xianfeng in Hubei Province as a leader of a group of postgraduate students from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in July 2016. The purpose of our trip is to make field observation for the research topic “The Restudy of the Marriage Customs of the Tujia (土家) People in Western Hubei”. During the interview, an interesting phenomenon attracted my attention. While brides usually would have crying marriages according to the traditional custom of Tujia people in western Hubei, we occasionally found three “Xin Guniangs”, who did not “obey the rules”, that is to say, they did not cry on their marriages. The relative introduction to this “not crying” phenomenon is rarely seen in the past. At the same time, the relative study from the academia is also scarce. Therefore, it occurred to me that the three cases we coincidentally noticed are actually representatives of a minority which lacks attention. It consists of people who did not manage to cry on their marriages due to various reasons when the majority of people take it for granted that everyone should cry on marriage due to the ritual and custom. What this minority shows are questions worth further discussing: how should we look at those “Xin Guniangs” (brides) who cried and those who did not, when now the time-space relationship has changed profoundly; what statement should we make when it comes to the acceptance and identification of whether to/ can people have “Kujia” or not; at the same time, how should we explain the emotions and reactions of the people who perform “songs of Kujia”, “Xin Guniangs” or we can say “brides”, when they were asked about whether to agree that “crying” is “singing” or not.

### CHAPTER 1: COME INTO CONTACT WITH “XIN GUNIANG”

The first stop of our interview is Shemihu (舍米湖) Village in Baifusi (百福司) Town, Laifeng County. The “Xin Guniangs” that received the interview were contacted and arranged in advance by the Village Branch Secretary and Village Head Peng Chengjin (彭成金), who was in charge of the Cultural Heritage

Project of “Kujia” ceremony and hand-waving dance, also in charge of our reception. In order to enable us to conveniently watch the “crying Xin Guniang” (another name of “Kujia” called by local people), Village Head Peng arranged to meet four about seventy-year-old “Xin Guniangs”, who cried on their marriage when they were young, to perform the “songs of Kujia” in a huge newly-built hand-waving dance hall. For the purpose of receiving some extemporaneous, “natural” information, we did not abide by the timetable to hurry to watch the “Kujia” performance, but rather chatted randomly and casually with those “Xin Guniangs” and had basic acquaintance with their birth, family background and life experience. When the performance began, the “Xin Guniangs” went to the hand-waving dance hall, put down the small chairs and sat opposite each other. The four “Xin Guniangs” are Zhang Ancui (张岸翠) in white shirt with embroidery, Tian Ermei (田二妹) in white-and-grey plaid shirt, Zhang Jinbi (张金碧) in rose red top with pattern, and Zeng Qianzhi (曾前芝) in white T-shirt. Seen from the appearance, they had no difference from the ordinary old women in the village. They wore plastic slippers or low-cut low-heeled cloth shoes and tied up their silver-grey hair casually. The deep wrinkles on their faces told their actual age. After taking their seats, some of them put their knees together, some of them crossed their legs or some of them even kicked away their slippers gently and put their bare feet on the stone ground directly. Before the performance, the four people all declined to cry first out of modesty, after a while, they began to perform according to the usual way. Originally, no matter when they declined to cry or when they started to cry at first, their behaviour was still frolicsome. But soon, the situation has changed. They were not just performing but crying genuinely. Later, they cannot stop crying and wailing and their tears fell like rain. Seeing this, we were also very moved. We began to wonder why “Xin Guniangs” would cry so sentimentally and self-devotedly. Is it because they thought of the same emotion as when they were young? Or are there other reasons? “Xin Guniangs” said they seldom cried like this in the usual performances. They did not explain why. So, we could not understand the “secrets” behind it. However, we speculated that maybe it is because we communicated friendly with them before the performance, or maybe it is because the female students, who were just like their granddaughters, listened to their stories amiably and naturally, so that it was different from the usual performer-and-audience atmosphere.



FIGURE 1: The four “Xin Guniang” were performing “Kujia” (photo by the author).

## CHAPTER 2: DISCOVER THREE “XIN GUNIANGS” WHO DID NOT HAVE A CRYING MARRIAGE

The three “Xin Guniangs” who did not have a crying marriage were found coincidentally. It was unexpected to know about the people who did not “Kujia” and hear their stories. The three “Xin Guniangs” were Xia Fengxiu (夏凤秀) the League member, Zhang Ancui the daughter of the landlord, and Wang Bingxiu (王丙秀) the child bride who was literate and anti-feudal respectively.

It was accidental to learn about Xia Fengxiu’s experience of not having “Kujia”. When we were watching the performance, a woman was peeking behind the door, which was different from other people who just walked into the hall directly. She attracted my attention and by intuition, I thought this person must have some stories. Hence, I walked in front of her and asked why she would not come into the hall and watch the performance. But she smiled, shook her head and waved her hand, saying “I will not come in, not come in”. She even equivocated, hid her face and smiled when I asked her if the “Kujia” ceremony was very lively in those years. At this time, a man, who was also standing by the door and watching the performance due to the pesticide box on his back, told me the story of Xia Fengxiu altered the old customs and had a revolutionized wedding. He said that in those days, Xia Fengxiu was very prestigious for her uncle was the secretary of the commune. In order to lead the new fashion of marriage and set the example for destroying the old by establishing the new, at the day she got married, Xia Fengxiu not only wore a straw rain cape and bamboo hat, but also put hoes on her shoulder. She held The Little Red Book in her hand and shouted quotations from Chairman Mao. Listening to the old stories, Xia Fengxiu laughed without words, but kept saying: “Those were past things”.

At Shemihu Village, during the communication with “Xin Guniangs”, we found Zhang Ancui was the most outgoing and active. We could hear her bright and clear laughter even from twenty meters farther. She was also a bit different from other “Xin Guniangs” in clothing. Printed sparrow and totem patterns scattered on her white shirt with waving lines. The delicate crystal buttons on the front showed the fine quality of the clothes. The golden earrings, the bracelet and the ring fitted her disposition. What’s more, despite the wrinkles on her face, her smooth skin, her regular teeth and her unconstrained smile showed her vigour and energy. It is hard to perceive that she was actually a grandmother of a twenty-year-old grandson. In fact, Zhang Ancui was already sixty-six years old, and her two daughters and two sons were all married. She also had several grandchildren. She still has five sisters, four elder brothers and two younger brothers around her parents’ home. We noticed that whenever we asked about the situation when she got married, she always widened her eyes unnaturally, frowned and open her mouth, responded smartly by asking: “When did I get married? Even my grandsons are older than you!” Perhaps it was because we all surrounded her, which made her a little bit embarrassed, she reluctantly said: “You all laugh at us. The past things are not that funny.” After saying this, she turned her head shyly, squinted and laughed out loud. The person who sat around us explained that actually Zhang Ancui did not have “Kujia” ceremony when she got married because she was the daughter of a landlord and her family had much land, which meant her family background was not good at that time. Zhang Ancui said: “We, landlords’ daughters, were not allowed to ‘Jizu’(ancestor worship), not allowed to ‘Bei’(Be carried out of the house to marry), not allowed to ‘Baijiu’(banquets). It was those poor and lower-middle farmers who were allowed to ‘Jizu’ and ‘Bei’.” “Not allowed to ‘Jizu’” meant “not allowed to offer sacrifices to ancestors”; “not allowed to ‘Bei’” meant her brother was not allowed to carry her on the back to send her to the husband’s family; and “not allowed to ‘Baijiu’” meant “not allowed to have wedding banquet”. Therefore, her relatives and friends could not accompany her. And since her brother was not allowed to carry her on his back, then there was no lively activity when she got married, that is to say, the marriage did not hold any ceremony. According to Village Head Peng Chengjin, the day that Zhang Ancui got married, snow was falling heavily in the mountain area. Owing to the absence of ceremony and company, she had to stagger in the heavy snow all by herself, heading to her husband’s home. Compared with the common, lively crying marriage, Zhang Ancui’s wedding seemed to be miserable and dismal. But Zhang Ancui said she “had no complaint”, “had no grievance”, “did not cry much” and her “mind is open and wild”. Fortunately, the distance between the two families’ houses was not very far, so she could often go back to her mother’s home. Hence, she jokingly said: “There was no need to cry.” However, in speaking of the experience and feelings of “Kujia”, the facial expression of Zhang Ancui turned from enthusiasm into a little bit disappointed. She squinted and stared at the ground, recalling something we

did not know. Even so, she insisted that she did not feel aggrieved about not being able to cry at that time. Until later, her daughter did not cry at the wedding, either. In Zhang's words, it was "merry and happy", "delighted and joyful" to get married; the make-up made the person a "flower-like bride", "beautiful bride"; the bride can also "ask for red envelopes", so there was no reason to cry. Although Zhang Ancui simply talked a little about her own experience, what confused us and made us contemplate is that those customs and rules of "Kujia" that she told about vividly and those jokes she recited imitatively, were actually not her experience. Now we understood that she deliberately used witty remarks to deal with our questions and avoided to recall and to talk about her history, her experience of marriage. Only we chatted about her mother's home that she began to open her mind gradually. No one really knows what deep in Zhang Cuixia's mind has experienced in that era. No one can know the feelings of a bride who could not have wedding banquet and was not permitted to have the lively "Kujia" ceremony which everyone else could enjoy. Even later when people were free to marry without the words of a matchmaker, Zhang Ancui's daughter still could not choose the crying marriage due to the sensitivity of the social environment.

The third "Xin Guniang" who did have crying marriage is Wang Bingxiu who was found in Yangdong Township. According to Wang's own words, she "was born in the old society and grew up in the new society". When she was eight years old, she was arranged by her parents to be a child bride in a Zhang family. After liberation, the sixteen-year-old Wang went to school for two years. She did not get married with the Zhang family as promised. Wang said: "I look down upon that Zhang family." Later, she met her husband now by other people's introduction. At that time, her husband was a soldier in the army. He wrote a letter to ask his brother to find a wife for him. Therefore, someone introduced him to Wang Bingxiu. Wang was very willing to marry him, so she wrote a letter to express her mind to him immediately. Although Wang Bingxiu was educated for two years, she knew only a few Chinese characters and was not very good at writing. Still, she bravely wrote a letter with many wrong Chinese characters. Besides, she found a place with great difficulties to take a photo of her and sent it along with the letter. It was a letter like this that established the two people's relationship. Wang Bingxiu said, her husband told her later that when he saw the letter, he was sure that she was the one he wanted. In 1955, they got married. Her husband's army was in Shandong Province, so Wang Bingxiu moved from Yangdong Township in Xianfeng County, Western Hubei Province to Shandong. Wang said they had the "new style marriage" without "Kujia". She said: "The wedding we had in Shandong was all about just a few bags of candies on the tables. They took the candies one by one. The people in the army did not care about the formalities that much." Wang said at that time she was the only woman who did not have crying marriage, "because [she] needed to break the 'old-fashioned idea' and destroy the feudalism." "So, I definitely would not cry," said Wang. Whenever she told us the experience of not having "Kujia", her voice was full of bravery and indifference, even showed a little bit pride.

### CHAPTER 3: SOME QUESTIONS TO BE REFLECTED ON

The three "Xin Guniangs" who did not have crying marriage all have their own reasons. By observing these phenomena, we come up with some questions that need further consideration.

They all have private pain that is unspeakable. Xia Fengxiu, a progressive youth, wore a straw rain cape and bamboo hat, put hoes on her shoulder, held The Little Red Book in her hand and shouted quotations from Chairman Mao when she got married. Her uncle was the secretary of the commune and herself was League member. She led the new fashion of "destroying the old and establishing the new", so she impassionedly gave up crying. Zhang Ancui, the landlord's daughter, had a bad family background. She was the descendant of the "class enemy" and "object of dictatorship" of the proletariat, so she had no right to cry. Wang Bingxiu, the child bride, was promised by her parents to a Zhang family when she was eight years old. She did not like her future husband and was not willing to marry him. But she went to school for several years, so she was a little bit educated. She wrote a letter to the handsome young man who served in the army, made independent decisions for her love, and went to Jinan to have marriage by assigning a few bags of candies. She disdained to cry.

The reflections are as follows. There are few researches before pay attention to the minority of people



who do not have crying marriages. They are neglected in the cover of the “Kujia” custom. Although today we should respect the objective reasons for not having crying marriage, we should also be aware of the shortage of the social and cultural care towards this minority.

Specifically speaking, the Youth League member Xia Fengxiu’s special behaviour was the representation of demanding progress and changing customs of that the special time. Zhang Ancui was born involuntarily in the landlord’s family so she had no right to cry. Wang Bingxiu was educated and conscious and her behaviour was the expression of resisting the arranged marriage, of escaping the bondage and of pursuing the independent marriage.

But it is worth discussing that whether those historical or traditional phenomena that do not exist now should be explained and reflected under the new historical conditions. Still, we shall take the three “Xin Guniangs” as examples. Nowadays, how should we define the anti-traditional behaviour of changing customs, destroying the old and establishing the new of the Youth League members? How should we consider the “injustice” of the landlord’s daughter cannot “Kujia” though the landlord class does not exist anymore? What role does the anti-feudal educated rebel plays in the traditional customs? Today, it seems that not only the traditional phenomena should change, but also the “spectators” who observe and deal with them.

At present, we need some kind of cultural consciousness and reflection which based on the historical attitudes.

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE IDENTIFICATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CRYING OR NOT**

The chain reaction of identity relation: the self and social identification of the three “Xin Guniangs”.

Identity is originally a philosophical and logical topic. However, the most common identity phenomenon, which is in the sense of social system, includes social class, rights, power, interest and responsibility. Everyone in the society has multiple identities, and most importantly, the social system of identity often contains value preferences (Zhao Tingyang 2003: 16).

It is a common sense and identity in Tujia people of western Hubei that every woman should get married and every marriage needs crying. Based on such identification, people constitute an identity community. Xia Fengxiu, the guard of the revolution, transformed social traditions. Encouraged by the “anti-trend” spirit, her refusal to cry on her marriage is a resistance to the identity community of “old traditions”. Zhang Ancui, who was not able to cry on her marriage, was not accepted by the community. Therefore, what she could only do was to endure such exclusion. Wang Bingxiu thought crying on marriage is “superstition”, so she disdained Kujia and was unwilling to cry. She independently and deliberately disagreed the community’s identification.

Seeing from a present perspective, is the former standard of whether one can be accepted by the community in agree with the standard now? Besides, how should we interpret it if the identification standard back then is not same as the present? Of course, the fact is these past experiences no longer form any real impact on the interviewees as time goes by. Yet we still face a lot of questions to think about, considering how the academia looks upon this special period of history.

As a theoretical framework was used the separate identification and the explanations based on the “identity” theory (Bloom 1993).

Here we can give explanations from two perspectives: one is cultural identity, and the other is the value of “crying”.

Theoretically speaking, one’s cultural self is not fixed through a time dimension. The question “who am I” can at least be divided into “who I used to be”, “who am I now” and “who will I become”. When people are understood under an essentialism attitude, they are judged based on “who they used to be” as the essence is presumed as “to always be like this”. The essentials have more or less the general thinking pattern of “origin of family background theory”, and thus it is detested by all those people who try to change their destiny. On the contrast, using a standard of “who will they become” reflects a typical

modernist idea. Although such consciousness of identity is comparatively real, it has little relation to the cultural self, which is the issue in the focus of this age. It is “who I used to be” and “who I will become” that are closely related to the cultural self (Zhao Tingyang 2003).

We have observed during the field trip that for the overall Shemihu villagers, their acknowledgement of “Kujia” culture and pride in mentioning the “crying bride” may derive from the fact that their perception of “Ku” (to cry) is more than the nature property of a crying behaviour. Their crying not only means sadness, but also means “education” to some degree. After watching “Ku” that is “prepared”, “arranged” and finally “getting serious” in the hand-waving dance hall, we began to think about several methodological questions: How much autonomy should field observers have? What is the condition of the autonomy and the self-consciousness of the observed? When the autonomy of the observed is confined to some degree, how should observers face and interpret this? When seeing the “Xin Guniangs” cry bitterly to perform “Kujia”, people are bound to pay sympathy on them. However, in order to present this cultural heritage and publicize the local marriage culture, they must repeat countless marriage rituals, which is supposed to be held only once in their life. Being watched and interviewed by scholars, journalists and tourists over and over again, what kind of “identification” is pursued in such repetitive crying (even some of them, such as Zhang Ancui, did not cry in the past)? From another perspective, as the director of the local cultural tourism program, Peng Chengjin is considered to be the leader and “person who has knowledge” by the villagers. He is the one who publicizes the local “Kujia” culture of the mass media and the society, and he therefore contributes to the local tourism economy. Because of that, the “Xin Guniangs” approve and agree his deeds and are willing to obey the “arrangement” of him or the “upper section” (here it means the relative local government or organization). Besides reserving their “who I used to be” period in their own real history, “Xin Guniangs” acquiesce to be “shaped” into the condition of “who I will become” (including the reality). Therefore, Zhang Ancui, who did not really experience “Kujia”, learned and practiced it under the premise of accepting “the past” “unregretfully”. She has become an outstanding “Kujia” performer, who can both narrating and singing. When she presents “Kujia” to outsiders, she can tell the jokes orderly and sing “song of Kujia” effortlessly once she covers her face with a handkerchief. The scene is vivid, but also artificial. From the perspective of naturalism, Zhang Ancui’s “non-primordial” performance is a kind of distortion to some extent. What she “performs” may be the sound of a certain bride crying in her marriage, or maybe she imitates the posture of a particular crying bride. Therefore, if we did not talk about her parents’ condition and know by accident that she actually did not cry, no one would suspect that Zhang Ancui has any difference compared with other “Kujia” performers. Although the cliché she talks or “is asked to talk” is partly false, it is not overly wrong in our view. Just imagine, being imposed on an identity of “landlord’s child”, she was an outsider who did not even have the right to “Ku”. Hence, after watching four “Xin Guniangs” performing “Kujia” in hand-waving dance hall, other three performers talked fluently about their first experience being the crying bride except Zhang Ancui. At that time, Zhang Ancui’s vivid face suddenly lost vigour, and her eyes wandered among her friends like Peng Jumei and Zhang Jinbi, crumpling her handkerchief absentmindedly. When looked at us, she just smiled awkwardly. Such embarrassment may derive from the fact that her built-up, self-identified fictional Kujia was revealed. In such situation, Zhang Ancui, who was supposed to and willing to, but was not allowed to cry, lost her “position” at once.

## CHAPTER 5: CRYING OR SINGING? THE “MUSICAL” IDENTITY OF “SONG OF KUJIA”

After reviewing the existing studies, we can see that the “crying voice” of “crying bride” (Kujia) is often named as “Song of Kujia” and regarded as a “musical” phenomenon. The reason why it is a kind of “song” is that “Kujia” has its tune and melody and therefore conforms to the external presentation of a musical standard. For an observer who is not the person involved in “Kujia”, it is reasonable to treat the sound condition in “Kujia” ritual by using simple musical consciousness. Such phenomenon can be called a shared “musical” identity on the basis of certain group’s (mainly the musical academia) common identification, in other word, the “musical” identity in the self-expression of intellectual academia community.

According to the identification theory, identity can be shared by people. The result of that is people who share the same identity will take action together to preserve and enhance their mutual identification. (William Bloom 1990) If we agree to this theory, it is apparent that the relevant research that studies “song of Kujia” under “musical” identity is a kind of “act” and “defence” of the people in academia who share the identification that “Ku” is a kind of “music”. However, from the perspective of those participants of crying marriages, whether the tune of crying can be considered as “music” is not their major concern. Their mutual identification is whether the crying is presentable, decent and conforms to the local etiquette. Crying, being their concerted action, functions to preserve and enhance their common identification to a “social norm”. The stories narrated before trigger a question: what kind of identification do these “Xin Guniangs” seek through their crying? In addition, what we should pay attention to is that when we look at this “musical behaviour” in a whole marriage ritual structure, such stereotyped, regular, normative crying which can be seen as music: is it a kind of singing performance containing fundamental musical attributes that can be appreciated, or is it a natural ritual behaviour with normative tunes? If the answer is the latter one, then apparently to name this “musical behaviour” that has such strong sense of ritualism and lasts for several days as a kind of “song” is far-fetched, for it understands and analyses “Kujia” by taking it out of the complete ritual structure. Therefore, the participants of “Kujia” are neither possible to constitute a consensual foundation with scholars nor reach an agreement with them on the “musical” properties of “Kujia”.

According to those “Xin Guniangs” we have interviewed, the crying in “Kujia” is due to the reluctance to leave their parents, relatives, friends and places they grew. Therefore, in the several days before the wedding, the most important task for a bride is to cry: cry for parents, uncles, brothers, sisters, even for the matchmaker. Whoever or whatever the bride meets, she should cry for that. Crying here should not be interpreted simply as an action. It can be a condition, a spirit or a realm of thought. It is also a form of the social rule, a ritual, a kind of emotion, a representation of lifestyle and cultivation and so on. The “Xin Guniangs” of Shemihu village told us that in the past, the bride cries in her bedroom several days before the wedding. After crying for her parents, she will cry for anyone who comes to congratulate her for the wedding. Since the bride is wearing a red bridal veil and cannot see anyone, the bridesmaids have to run between the living room and the bedroom in order to deliver messages for the bride. They would tell the bride which person is coming, so the bride can prepare to cry for him or her. If the crying is appreciated, this person will also cry together with the bride, expressing their friendship to each other, or he/she will give the bride a red envelope called “comforting money”. According to Du Quzhen (杜曲珍), the eldest daughter of Wang Bingxiu in Yangdong (杨洞) township, a bride must cry in her wedding. If she doesn’t cry, she must be a “not promising” daughter without being “properly educated by her mother”. The rules of Kujia should be taught by the bride’s mother. If the mother is not familiar with that, the rules must be taught by an aunt or other female elders, and the teaching normally starts from 10-15 days before the wedding. The main content is the appellations in the crying, crying for father, mother, aunts, uncles, for instance. Before the wedding, the bride has to cry for three nights. In the first night she cries with her own family members, and in the second day when her husband’s family comes to present the wedding gift, she cries for her uncle and the matchmaker. In the third day, everyone in the village will come, and the bride must cry for every person she meets. “In traditional rules,” Du Quzhen added, “for each one who comes to her bedroom, the bride must cry in his or her name. If she did not cry for someone, that guest will feel that he or she was ‘looked down’ by the bride. In this case, the guest will not only refuse to give the gift money but also speak ill of the bride to neighbors. That is to say, the bride must not omit a single guest during the whole process, and there are also many norms in it. For example, the guest who is mentioned in the crying must give back some gifts; otherwise he will be ‘criticized’. Normally the guest will give a little gift money. If he or she does not have money, the guest can give something like a towel or a handkerchief instead. If he or she does not even have that, the guest should return a salute by crying back, speaking some blessing words such as ‘may you be happy and prosperous’ or ‘may you have many children and grandchildren’.” Du Quzhen also said that there are some special rules in crying for the matchmaker. First, if the matchmaker is an elder from the bride’s own family, just as her condition, then the bride should not cry. Second, the crying for (or complaining) the matchmaker should only be made on the second day of “Kujia”. If a bride still cries for (or complains) the matchmaker after the second day, she will incur misfortune for herself. (When we interview Wang

Bingxiu's family, they told us a story about a bride and her mother who later suffered misfortune because the bride did not cry for the matchmaker according to the rules.) Besides, if there is no wedding, one should not cry at home without proper reason as the tune of "Kujia" is same as that of "Kusang" (crying at the funeral), except for the words of the two crying that is different. When interviewing Tian Ermei in Shemihu village, a member of our research group asked her about the difference between her "Kujia" when joining another family and her daughter's "Kujia" when leaving the family. Peng Dazhao, the husband of Tian, answered: "Wedding is a happy ceremony, but why must we cry? Actually, 'Kujia' is just a kind of etiquette, and it means nothing more." "At the time when we get married, we cannot see each other before the wedding. Once the bridal sedan chair comes into my home, I must marry this woman." For marrying Tian Ermei, the Peng family prepared a house, a bed and some new clothes, but they did not have money. When the eldest daughter of the Peng couple got married, there were two younger brothers in the home, so her crying includes their names, too. It was the comparatively older brother who carried her in his back and sent her out of her bedroom. When being asked who taught her daughter the way to "Kujia", Tian Eermei said: "The bride's crying ('Kujia') needs not to be taught. When there is 'Kujia' in other people's houses, my daughter will go to see it. 'Kujia' is actually speaking in one's heart, expressing one's true feeling. It would be dull to teach 'Kujia' to a bride. 'Kujia' is to cry according to the atmosphere and one's real conditions, and a song taught by someone else cannot be sung well. 'Kujia' is same as the folk song: both of them come from one's own heart, and they haven't fixed lyrics or tunes. They are both very casual." When being asked "do you call it 'song of Kujia', or you have other names for it", Peng Dazhao answered: "no one calls it 'song of Kujia'. 'Kujia' is to cry, and a song is to sing. Crying and singing is different, so 'Kujia' is not a kind of song but itself an art. Besides, if it's not for a wedding, one cannot cry at home. Crying is not allowed if there is no wedding or funeral in the family." When chatting with Wang Bingxiu and her three daughters (the eldest, the third one and the seventh one), I asked: "Do you sing in 'Kujia'?" The third daughter was confused and asked back: "Sing? Sing what?" Wang Bingxiu answered to me: "Who have the time to sing? All I did is crying." Then, I replied: "But someone said your crying sounds like singing sometimes." They all said: "Alas! That is the case now, that performance thing." Wang also said: "I can cry for one or two sentences. Let's see if that is singing." Since crying at home is a taboo, we all stopped her.

Obviously, "Xin Guniangs" do not have the concept of "Song of Kujia". However, there is a phenomenon that needs to be explained: in a "Kujia" which lasts for several days, there are apparent differences and variations in the "crying sound" and "crying manners".

First, there are huge differences and variations in the external forms of the crying sound and manners. To be specific, sometimes the crying between mother and daughter or among the best friends can be very emotional. The people are crying in great sorrow and shed rain of tear, expressing the misery of leaving each other. Take "Tomorrow We Will Be Nine Hills Apart" as an example, this song of "Kujia", which is included in the CD "Song and Earth" ("Tudi Yu Ge" (CD), WIND MUSIC, 2001) / ('土地与歌' (CD), 台北: 风潮有声出版有限公司出品, 2001 年.), Sounds basically like irresistible crying that has little relevance with "song". On the contrary, in the same situation, sometimes the crying sound is mild and has tunes like music, and the manner also looks like singing. Form the section presented below, we can see the traces of singing clearly:

## 哭妈妈

我的妈哎（啜泣）娘啊，（啜泣）月亮弯弯照花堂啊，妈哎，（啜泣）娘啊，

有你（啜泣）有你娘啊，妈哎，（啜泣）娘啊，我的妈哎，（啜泣）娘啊，盼你盼家盼得苦啊，

妈哎，（啜泣）娘啊，盼（的）女儿思乡难解苦啊妈哎，（啜泣）娘啊。

Figure 2: Notation by Wang Yue, 2016.

Second, the differences and variations in crying sound and crying manners are closely related to the arrangement in the wedding time and process. They are also strongly influenced by the degree of intimacy in the interpersonal communication. According to the rules, the bride and her family members, relatives and friends should begin to cry several days before the formal wedding. In this process, the content of crying, just as the text before has described, includes not only the relationships between relatives and friends expressing emotions but also greetings to guests and complaints to the matchmaker. From the perspective of the time, in the night before the wedding, the bride and her family members (especially her mother) has a stronger grief of separating compared to earlier days. At this time, their crying sound and manners are most frequently presented as natural weep, and the bride's eyes usually become red and swollen because of the severe crying. Compared with such situation, in the several days before, the grief is weaker because many guests will come to celebrate and congratulate, and the bride has to deal with them. Here the sound and manners of crying tend to be like singing, which has to do with more musicality.

The process described above can be presented in following chart: (Liu Hong 2003: 24).

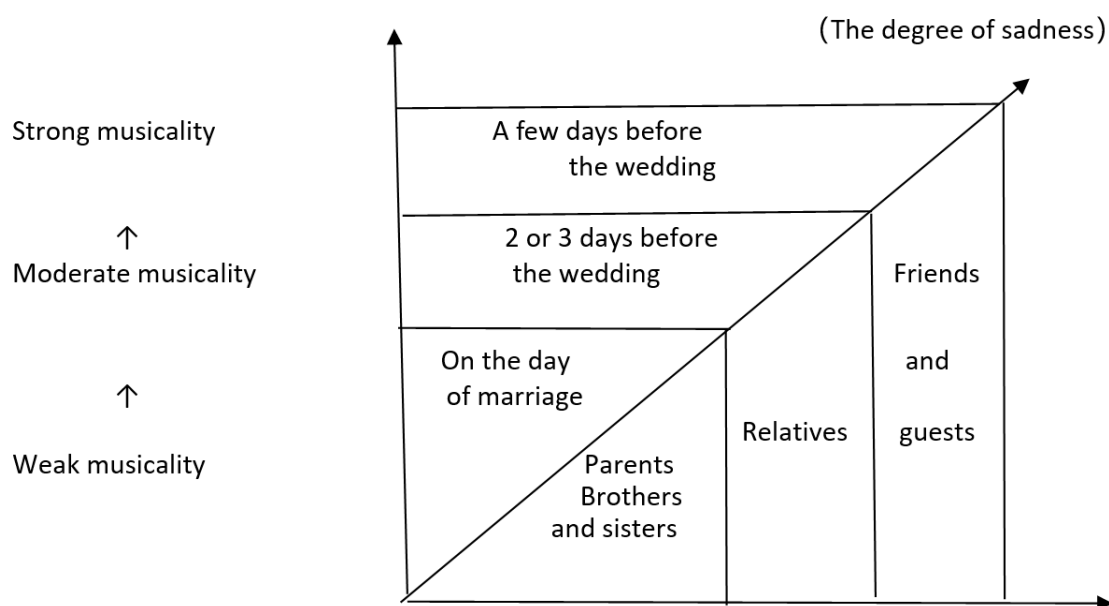


Figure 3: Chart of the degree of sadness: Cry → Like singing and crying → Cry in the song (Chart by the author).

This coordinate graph shows the relation of crying sound and manners with the strength of grief:

The horizontal axis presents the tendency from almost natural crying (the most severe occasion can be a bitterly wail, like the case in “Tomorrow We Will Be Nine Hills Apart”) and the more rational crying which is like a “song”.

The vertical axis shows the tendency of musicality from the weakest to the strongest in accord with the horizontal axis, which shows from the crying condition to the singing condition.

We can see from the graph that the closer the time comes to the wedding day, the stronger the grief will be. The stronger the grief is, the weaker the singing attributes and musicality of the crying will be. On the contrary, when the crying contains stronger musicality, the sentiment of separating at that time will calm down more quickly. There is an inverse ratio between the two elements.

How should we understand that?

On the one hand, the observers listen to “Kujia” from the perspective of music. So in their ears, the crying has tunes. Does it mean that crying equals singing, and the sounds of crying are songs? So “the song of Kujia” is observers’ musical identification that they think it conforms to the musical standards. But seen from the “Xin Guniangs”, crying is not singing. It is a custom, a rule which should be obeyed by everyone. Crying is crying. It is their mutual identification.

On the other hand, although the participants of “Kujia” do not agree with the observers to take crying as singing, they clearly know that during the process of crying, the sound, the state and the manner of crying do change. They also know that some crying is similar to singing, but based on the nature of crying in “Kujia” custom and the rule that “Kujia” has to be crying, they do not think and identify “the song of Kujia” is named for the crying is like singing. Therefore, though we may see some participants in “Kujia” indeed understand what is “the song of Kujia” called by us, and they even also call it “the song of Kujia”, we should understand they are just echoing us or acquiescing to us. It does not mean that they share the same knowledge and common sense with the scholars in the concept and the fact of “the song of Kujia”. They do not identify completely with the scholars.

At the same time, an undeniable fact is, as the “Kujia” ceremony (or “the song of Kujia”) is commonly known and the social attention raises, the local people and participants of “Kujia” can feel the focus and appreciation from the outer world. They understand why the outsider would take crying as “songs”; therefore, even though the “Kujia” custom has gone now, they would fake it. That is to say, they would pretend to have “Kujia” custom, arrange the demonstration of the traditional culture, which is maybe actually not identified by themselves and the academia, to show their identification to the outside world’s acceptance to their cultural value. For example, the “Kujia” will be performed several times in the tourist attractions, and all sorts of “original”, “natural” and well-trained performances in the traditional culture program (which is exactly what Wang Bingxiu and her daughters said about “that performance thing”) will be shown to outsiders, etc.

## A BRIEF CONCLUSION

Several years ago, a friend of mine went to the desert in Northwest China to do field work. When he saw the workers were washing the gold, he sighed for everyone knows the value of the gold, but few people are aware of the value of those people who bring value to the gold (Wu Yuebei, 1986). If we borrow his thought, we can consider when the value produced by our academic work is identified, do we ever think of whether the observed (no matter people or things) that brought value to our work are identified and respected or not? When the objects of our observation change beyond the will of them (or us), which is we are not willing to see or accept, what kind of attitude did or should we show in the aspect of identification?

## REFERENCES

- Bloom, William. 1993. Identification Theory: its Structure, Dynamics and Application. *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25-53.
- Wang Bing, transl. 2006. Chinese reprint 'Rentong Lilun. Qijiegou dongli jiyinyong'. *Shehui Xinli Yanjiu* [Journal of Social Psychology], 2: 80-96.
- Liu Hong. 2003. Yishi Huanjing Zhongde Daojiao Yinyue [Taoist Music in Ritual Environment], *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music* 1:19-27.
- Wang Yue. 2016. Song notation, made in Shanghai. Unpublished ms.
- Wu Yuebei. 1986. Personal communication with the author in Wuhan.
- Zhao Tingyang. 2003. Rentong Yu Wenhua Zishen Rentong [Identity and Cultural Identity]. *Zhexue Yanjiu* [Philosophical Research], 7:16.

## NOTES AND THANKS

This is the author's project topic conducted through the "Research Center of Traditional Music Culture along the Yangtze River" at Wuhan Conservatory of Music. The purposes of the research topic are as follows:

- (1) We would like to investigate the status of people who had a crying marriage at a specific time period in the current cultural situation, and their feelings about the "Kujia" custom.
- (2) By recording the stories of those people who had a crying marriage, we can narrate and explain how the same people in the different times and spaces transformed social and cultural traditions from the perspective of change.
- (3) How should we consider the relationship between social class and structure presented through the observation whether a person enjoys the crying marriage (or the traditional ritual) or not, influenced by the special social environment in the given time.
- (4) What do those people who no longer cry in their marriage think of their ancestors and these marriage customs and rituals which may seem "bizarre".

Members of the research group included Zhang Ludan (张露丹), Gu Yuqing (顾雨晴), Li Yiping (李怡平), Wu Siyu (吴思雨), Chen Yu (陈瑜) and Wang Yue (王悦), who are postgraduate students at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Part of this article is derived from their interviews. Special thanks should be made to Mr. Gong Daoyuan (龚道远), a postgraduate from Wuhan Conservatory of Music, who born as one of the Tujia people in western Hubei and is very familiar with local personnel relations. He made prior contact for us and helped us to complete the whole field trip. Peng Chengjin, head of Shemihu village of Baifusi town, Laifeng county, took trouble to be our guide, taking us in his motor tricycle to look for the interviewees. The curator Xie Xiaoyu (谢小玉) of Xianfeng Art Museum and Ms. Yang Junfang (杨俊芳) of Xianfeng Ethnography Museum did a lot of preparation for our trip to Yangdong. Here I would like to express my gratitude to these people.

Many thanks go to Zhang Ancui (张岸翠), Tian Ermei (田二妹), Zhang Jinbi (张金碧), Zeng Qianzhi (曾前芝) and Du Quzhen (杜曲珍) for their sharing of special information during fieldwork in 2016.

**Liu Hong** [刘红], PhD in Ethnomusicology, is Professor of Musicology at Shanghai Conservatory of Music with a focus on Chinese traditions.

**Contact:** liuhongusa[[@](mailto:liuhongusa@163.com)]163.com



# THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HUQIN AS RECORDED IN THE LAUFER COLLECTION

Jin Qiao [金桥]

## Abstract

As a musical instrument, the long-necked stringed *erhu/huqin* has an extensive history and a wide international audience. However, as a musical form, many scholars consider *erhu/huqin* to be foundationally Chinese, its history beginning at the start of China's modern period. Scholars of Chinese music history widely credit Liu Tianhua as the founder of Chinese *erhu/huqin* music. His 1915 masterpiece, *The Chant of the Disease*, is touted as China's first *erhu/huqin* solo. But, the 1901 recording *Shanghai Huqin* in the Berthold Laufer Collection disproves this popular notion. This newly discovered musicwork is not only the earliest recording of Chinese instrumental music, but also the first *erhu/huqin* solo currently known. It represents considerable technical and artistic levels in many respects, especially left/right-hand skills, tonality, and performative styles. This piece of music will change many of our inherent understandings of traditional *erhu/huqin* music, usually considered to be simple in structure, featuring rough performance technique, and evidencing a narrow range of voicing. Historical and performance research of this work will aid re-examination of traditional Chinese music's development during and after the 20th century.

## Keywords

Shanghai, Huqin, Liu Tianhua, Hua Yanjun, Edison, Wax phonograph, Berthold Laufer,

## A TRIP HOME

On 25 April, 2019, Shanghai is sunny after the rain. A rare historical recording from the other side of the Pacific Ocean, caused strong ripples on its journey home, 118 years after it left its homeland.

10 o'clock in the morning, "The Hundred-Year Old Laufer China Recordings and Music Records under Reconstruction"—Round Table was held on time at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Musicologists from Indiana University's Audiovisual Archive and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and many senior Shanghai music experts gathered in the conference room of the Conservatory's Linhuai Building. Under the auspices of Xiao Mei, Director of the Asia-Europe Music Research Center, Alan Burdette, Director of the Audio Archives of Indiana University, and Wei Xiaoshi, the project leader of the Berthold Laufer Archives, gave a detailed account of the many stations this file experienced and inspired the scholars attending the round table.

Berthold Laufer (1874-1934) was a German-American anthropologist and historical geographer. He was known as one of the most prominent sinologists of his time for his knowledge of Chinese and another number of East Asian languages. In 1897, he was awarded his doctor philosophiae (PhD) in “Oriental Language” at Leipzig University. After he immigrated to the United States of America, he participated in the "Jacob Schiff Exploration Project of China" (1901 ~ 1904), starting with Beijing and Shanghai in 1901. He used a cylinder phonograph that was invented not long ago to collect about 400 cylinders with recordings. These historical recordings of the beginning of the last century, were widely recognized as the earliest recordings in China by the academic community. Laufer returned to China in 1908 and 1923, and his research achievements were included in a large collection of archaeological, historical, and ethnographic objects, most of which were collected in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where he later worked. The museum has become the center for Chinese collections of American museums. As one of the few western scholars, who could speak and write Chinese fluently, he has made the study of the Chinese language and culture becoming his life work.

In 2018, the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University officially launched The “first recordings in China” project, which aimed to digitally transfer and publish Laufer's wax cylinder recordings made between 1901 and 1902. The traditional music collection, which was transferred from the American Museum of Natural History to Indiana university in 1961, is now officially known as the Laufer Collection, where 104 photographs and 7,500 physical and field notes are assessed and detailed as part of it.



**FIGURE 1: The mysterious dance of the five lamas. Source: Historical images from the Laufer collection.**

Compared with the sporadic audio materials recorded in China at the same time, the Laufer Collection is a systematic record archive, which not only includes various types of music, but also has relatively complete supporting materials such as descriptive texts and graphics. In an integrated way, this special collection has preserved the oral art forms of more than ten kinds of music and many dialects existing in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among

them, the cylinders recorded in Shanghai in 1901 contain the music and drama of *Wu* folk songs, *Tanhuang* opera, *Qinqiang* opera, and other traditional genres, reminding people of the wonderful atmosphere of the Shanghai beach 100 years ago. However, one recording of *huqin* playing in these special collections, with its incredible "realistic" sound effect and unexpected performance, triggered the author's thoughts on this magical wax cylinder and the many historical, scientific, and cultural phenomena it can reveal.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE SOUND

The historical music recordings of *huqin* in the first half of the 20th century left only a handful of compositions and their performances to listen to at later times. That included the *nanhu* solo music *The Chant of the Disease* recorded by the Odeon Company for Liu Tianhua in 1931, and the *erhu* solo music such as *The Moon Over a Fountain* played by Hua Yanjun, recorded by Yang Yiliu & Cao Anhe in 1950. The publication of this recording in the Laufer Collection not only pushes the recording history of the *huqin* as a musical instrument forward for several decades, but also may be the earliest recording of Chinese instrumental music in the history of human-made audio recordings.

On 18 July, 1877, Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) invented the phonograph, the "speaking machine" and a series of other great inventions that revolutionized the way people performed, recorded, and listened to music in the 20th century. In 1888, the 'perfect phonograph', which could record and replay sound, was launched on a four-inch long wax cylinder with a diameter of 2.125 inches. The phonograph could record sound for about two minutes. With the improvement of the recording technology and the increase of the diameter of the wax drum, the recording time was extended to 3 and 4 minutes by the end of the nineteenth century. The modified wax cylinder used by Laufer in Beijing and Shanghai from 1901 to 1902 is supposed to be this kind of wax cylinder.

The *huqin* performance in the 'Laufer collection' is recorded in Shanghai in 1901, and the recording time after digitalization is 3 minutes and 26 seconds. There is no other written record that can be referred to except the number scy2931, so the tentative title of the song is *Shanghai huqin*. When listening for the first time, the sound quality of this recording is amazing. The sound is clear, the frequency response is relatively wide, and the echo components and distortions are low. However, the pitch of the *huqin* is about two cents higher than that of the modern *erhu*. Comparing the similar works such as the recordings of Liu Tianhua and Hua Yanjun in 1931 and 1950, the sound quality of this recording is unexpectedly good. It is likely that a combination of the following factors contributed to this impressive performance.

First of all, although the phonograph is the first recording device for mass production of audio items in human history, the principles and the structure are very simple, but the sound quality is not weak. Around 1900, the sound quality of wax cylinder phonograph recordings was in fact better than recordings on discs or 'records' in the same period because the stylus used for the acoustically dimensioned groove hold a relatively constant speed. The wax cylinder quality and the fidelity of the performance is superior comparing to early records on disk using a similar principle. The flat record might change in sound quality when reading the inner circles, while the cylinder phonograph is more convenient and accurate to record the highest harmonics.

Secondly, as the engineer, Laufer was very professional in the operation of this talking machine. Regarding the physical recording in 1901, The volume level recorded by the phonograph depends on the distance of the sound pick-up. According to the results of the replay, Laufer did chose the right position, angle and distance when making this recording.

Crucially, researchers at the Indiana University sound archive showed professionalism in preserving this historically valuable collection of recordings. They used a professional Endpoint Audio Labs device to read and digitally transfer wax cylinders. The device has a laser-assisted adjustable shaft, which minimizes the vibration and noise of the wax cylinder through high-precision mechanical rotation, which can freely adjust to the rotation speed in order to adjust the pitch. Compared with traditional methods, such an audio digitization process does not damage the wax cylinder and can obtain good sound quality. In the process of digitalization, researchers did not completely filter the frictional noise present in the recording, but retained the precious ‘raw state’, realistically restored the live sound of this historical recording.



**FIGURE 2: Wax cylinder replay and digitization equipment in the "endpoint audio lab" (photo by the author).**

Regarding the pitch of the *huqin* recording can be said that because the speed of the phonograph at that time was between 120 and 160 rpm, and the driven machinery rotation accuracy was not very high, the possibility that the rotational speed at the time of recording was different from the rotational speed at the time of transmission can be quite large.

In addition to the amazing sound quality of the recording itself, the performance techniques and musical language of this music piece also changed many parts of our inherent understanding of the instrument.

### THE LEGEND OF TWO-STRINGS

*Huqin*, which is also called *erxian* and *nahu*, *huhu*, *wengzi*, *erhu* (modern), might have been established on the basis of the Tang dynasty classification as a bowed string instrument type like the *gazheng* or *xiqin*. (Li Mingxiong, 1997: 18) In the early days, the so-called *huqin* was even included as one of the “instruments introduced into the central plains in northwest and northern minority regions, such as *Pipa*, *Five-string*, *Konghou*” (Chinese Music Dictionary, 1984: 159). In the long process of evolution after that, as a member of the family of bowed string instruments, the *huqin* has been widely used in many parts of China since the Song dynasty. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the vigorous rise of local operas and *quyi*, the

*huqin* has been further subdivided into a variety of similar musical instruments, becoming an important accompaniment and ensemble instrument. But it is really appropriate to name the instrument *erhu*, which only happened later in modern times. During the late Qing dynasty, the Liu Jinzao compilation of literature of the Qing dynasty continued to mention it from the 51<sup>st</sup> year of *Qianlong* (1786) up to three years of *Xuantong* (1911) in “Ministry of All the Instruments”. There, it was included around the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was used for diverse instrumental music played for musical dramas in denominations such as “*banhu, three strings, banghu, erhu, four-stringed instrument played with a bow...*” (Liu Jinzao, 1912, vol. 194).

In the local people's eyes, the *erhu* was basically used as an accompanying instrument or ensemble instrument for the opera up to the time of the late Qing dynasty. Chen Zhenduo<sup>1</sup> had explicitly pointed out:

“*Erhu* is a kind of accompaniment instrument popular among the folk. Because Liu Tianhua saw this instrument playing an important role in folk music, therefore, he has carried on some bold innovation with creativity to it. That increased the *erhu's* status as a solo musical instrument.” (Chen, 1997: 9).

Chen and Chen (2006) also called the instrument as being widely used in opera accompaniment such as *huju* opera, *xiju*, *yueju* opera, *huai* opera, *yangju* opera, *huangmei* opera, *huandeng* opera, *flower drum* opera, *pingju*, *Peking* opera, or *kunqu* opera.

In the twentieth century China and in the process of the development of *erhu* music, Zhou Shaomei, Liu Tianhua, Hua Yanjun, Sun Wenming and others, were considered as the representative figures of different stages, and they inherited the features of the open-minded *huqin* culture. They integrated different elements such as court and popular culture from east and west, which greatly enriched the treasured repertoire of *erhu* music. *Erhu* in the status of Chinese national instrumental music families, not only had already become a part of professional music education, but also had become one of the most important national orchestra melody instruments. Up to now, most Chinese seem to leave such a fixed "impression" on this instrument: the *erhu* music before Liu Tianhua was basically used as an accompanying instrument for folk opera, the playing skills were rather simple. The lack of technique of changing positions led to a narrow range of tones, and even the fixed tune was not very reliable. For this reason, some authors in the Chinese music history textbooks call Liu Tianhua "the founder of *erhu* music".

Then in Shanghai, 118 years before today: who was that player who left this legendary recording for Laufer? What was the level of instrument performance before *erhu* music as independent type was established? Was the *huqin* only used for ensemble and accompaniment as previously recorded? What is the connection between the creation of "folk artists" and *erhu* artists such as Liu Tianhua and Hua Yanjun, and even the new music in China in the 20th century? With such doubt, the author listened to this historical recording again in its entirety, taking d<sup>1</sup>-a<sup>1</sup> as the reference pitch, to notate the recording. Through comprehensive analysis of acoustics and the music score, the author made the following basic observations on “the earliest recording of *huqin* music currently available in China”.

1. The performer's use of the instrument *huqin* has reached a very high level, with a wide range of tones, excellent intonation, rich timbre and proficient techniques. The maturity of the *erhu* instrument playing is surprising, both in terms of its composition and performance (the two features were probably one and the same at that time). The range of the whole piece reaches 12

---

<sup>1</sup> Chinese *erhu* performer. He was a student of Liu Tianhua.

tone steps, which is a considerable width for the local stringed instruments of that time. No doubt, this can only be achieved through the “changing positions” of the *huqin* players.<sup>2</sup> The rich timbre reflected in the music is attributed to the soloists' diversified playing skills, including the sliding, trilling of the left hand, the splitting, joining and tremolo of the right hand, and other skills. All these string performance techniques with a rich expressive strength are well used in this piece. In addition, there are quite a few large jumps in the work, especially the 12-tone jump across the two ends of the sound range, which creates a sense of open space and leaves a deep impression on listeners. The performer's control of intonation is also quite accurate, which is particularly valuable for a stringed instrument like *huqin*, on which it is quite difficult to control the intonation. To sum up, this piece of music has reached a high level in performance and helps refresh the inherent understanding of *erhu* music.



FIGURE 3: 12-tone jump interval (notation by the author).



FIGURE 4: Changeable left hand fingering and the right hand bowing (notation by the author).

2. This recording is neither an improvisational performance nor an opera accompaniment. It could be recognizing as an exquisitely conceived *huqin* solo. The basis for this judgment is that the theme of music is prominent, and the *huqin* plays melodic lines with obvious undulating lines and expressive features throughout. The whole melodic line is quite complete, and the paragraphs and phrases of the music have a distinct structure, with strong instrumental characteristics. The wide range of the work, the large intervals that often appear, is far from the instrumental use of accompaniment or ensemble playing. In traditional Chinese folk instrumental music, there is no lack of improvisation, but this *Shanghai huqin* is clearly not improvisation. From the recording, it can be heard that the performer of this music is very confident and leisurely in the whole continuous process of the music. There is no hesitation in the performance process, but it appears to be ‘perfect in mind’ after a long time of practice. Also, through analyzing the recording, the music conception is quite delicate, both for the conversion between the different modes of the ancient Chinese music system, which also has a variety of skilled melodic development techniques. The musician plays in different tempi, slow and fast. The observed speed can be divided into three sections. Obviously, this is a deliberate solo work of a popular instrumental music.

<sup>2</sup> Traditionally *huqin* players use only one position when playing as the accompaniment of opera and popular songs. If they encounter one tone above or below this range, the performer may play the notes in a way that turns up or down within the octave in order to keep the range within this octave.



FIGURE 5: The four lines of the music piece (notation by the author).

3. The creative conception of the work follows the various development modes of a normative traditional music in China. It was basically not affected by Western music theory. In the development of traditional Chinese instrumental music, there are many common principles, such as repetition, serialization, circulation, variation and development, which have been widely spread among the people for a long time.<sup>3</sup>

One of the distinctive features of the melodic development of this piece is the continuous support of the main melody. The basic method of ‘overlapping head and tail’ between musical phrases is called *fish biting tail* among folk musicians. Although the way of melodic progressions is mainly driving forward, it often uses big jumps of six, seven and even twelve tones in important parts. This combination of progression and jump is very impressive. In the first section of the music, the melodic development principle of repetition and variation is mostly adopted. In the three basically similar sections of 12+12+16 bars, the melody development techniques of ‘adding flowers’, ‘changing the head’, ‘fish biting the tail’ are also comprehensively used, so as to maintain the unified style of the whole music without blurring color changes.

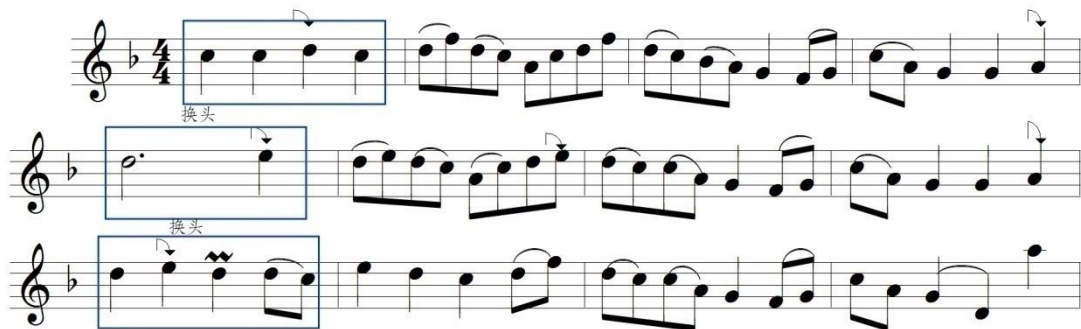


FIGURE 6: Music section ‘change head’ (notation by the author).



FIGURE 7: Tonal changes in the music (notation by the author).

The varied use of mode and tonality in the music is also impressive. Although the whole music takes on the *Yu* mode as the main key, there are various tonal scales in succession, such as *Zhi*

<sup>3</sup> 李民雄著《民族器乐概论》，上海音乐出版社1997年12月出版，第88页。

mode, *Qing music scale* and *elegant music scale*, which makes the tone and color of the whole music varied. In particular, the skill to ‘change *gong* for *jue*’, which is often used in the music, takes the *Biangong* sound of the original key (F *gong*) as the *jue* tones in the new key (C *gong* of the elegant music scale). This ‘soft shift’ approach, brings fresh and elegant colors to the music.

The overall structure of the music reflects the layout principle of normative Chinese instrumental music. The whole piece is composed of three sections whose speed is slow but then faster, and whose emotions are constantly exhibited. There are no obvious pauses between the sections, and the rhythmic and metric patterns marking a prominent personality becomes the main basis for dividing sections. In the first section, the rhythm is relatively balanced and symmetrical, which gives people the sense of ‘even and steady’. The second paragraph not only speeds up gradually, but also has new elements in the use of rhythm. The frequent syncopation of rhythm and dotted tones make the music atmosphere of this section more turbulent. In the last section, the solo *huqin* reached a climax in *Ji Ji Feng*. So, the whole piece ends with a stirring melody and a sonorous rhythm. The special use of tones and rhythms in this section, seem to be a reminiscent of the last section of Hua Yanjun's *Listen to Pine Trees*.



FIGURE 8: ‘Urgent Board’ in the last section.

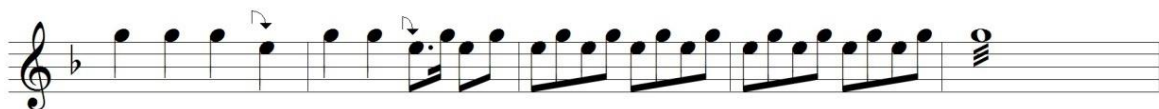


FIGURE 9: The end phrase of the end section of *Shanghai huqin*.



FIGURE 10: the penultimate phrase in the end of *Listen to Pine Trees* (all notations by the author).

## CONCLUSION AND SOME THOUGHTS

Through the above interpretation and analysis, we can basically draw the following conclusions.

At this time, the *Shanghai huqin* is not only likely to be the earliest historical recording of a Chinese musical instrument, but also a very important recording of Chinese *huqin* music in the first half of the 20th century. Because the time of the work came out 30 to 50 years earlier than the corresponding recordings of Liu Tianhua and Hua Yanjun, the historical value of the recording for scientific and cultural research is particularly prominent.

As the first *huqin* solo piece that can be heard right now, the recording *Shanghai huqin* updated many of the inherent perceptions about this instrument and its history. In the last years of the Qing Dynasty, additionally to being used as an accompaniment and ensemble instruments, *huqin* has indeed been used as a solo instrument. This piece of music has reached a high standard in terms of creativity and performance, and has an extraordinary artistic expression.

As the first audio recording device that was invented and mass-produced by humans, the cylinder phonograph was used for field work of Chinese music collections shortly after its launching. So, it played an important role with its excellent mechanical and acoustic features.



Because of its systemic originality and uniqueness, the Laufer Collection has an immeasurable value in the study of traditional Chinese music.

As an important promoter of *erhu* music in the 20th century, Liu Tianhua and Hua Yanjun's position in the history of modern Chinese music is beyond doubt. But their outstanding creations did not come out of thin air. Both absorbed rich nutrients from the past music traditions. In the structure of music, the development of melody, the playing techniques and others, the recording *Shanghai huqin* has become a pioneering practice exploration.

Born 118 years ago, the recording *Shanghai huqin* has reached an amazing level in terms of creativity, performance, and expression. The sound of time prompts us to rethink the Chinese tradition before the 'new cultural movement'. It may have not been an uncultivated and desolate land in people's impression. For thousands of years, the folk music created by Chinese people with their own inherent music methods has gradually evolved into various unique forms of expressions. In the aspect of solo instrumental music, it includes not only literati music such as *guqin*, *dongxiao* and *pipa* music, but also folk instrumental music such as *dizi*, *sona* and *huqin*. Hua Yanjun's *Two Springs Reflect the Moon* And *The Great Wave Tongs the Sand* are just the representatives of his many excellent creations. Among the folk, "there are more than ten thousand folk artists like Hua Yanjun who possess unique skills and have excellent creations in modern China" (Chen & Chen, 2006: 223).

For the music of 21st century China, the return of the Laufer Collection may be the beginning of a new cycle. Over the past 100 years, Chinese learners have been constantly watching the West. However, in the process of pursuing the world trend and modernization, how many genres of local culture have been forgotten, erased, ignored or even abandoned intentionally or unintentionally? It is necessary to learn the advanced techniques and theories of western music, but the traditional music, which has evolved for thousands of years, is an indispensable foundation for the development of new music in China.

## REFERENCES

- Chinese Music Dictionary*. 1984. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House.
- Chen Zhenduo. 1997. *Liu Tianhua's Creation and Contribution*. Shanghai: China Federation of Literature and Art. [李民雄著《民族器乐概论》，上海音乐出版社 1997 年 12 月出版，第 88 页].
- Chen Yingshi and Chen Lingqun, 2006. *A Brief History of Chinese Music*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- Li Mingxiong. 1997. *An Introduction to the Country's Instrumental Music*. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Liu Jinzao. 1912. *General Examination of Qing Dynasty Literature*. N.p.: Commercial Press, Volume 194.

APPENDIX: Full score of *Shanghai huqin* (notation by the author).

## 上海胡琴

中板

更加流动

Musical score for the first system, consisting of 11 staves of music. The music is in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature. It features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Musical score for the second system, consisting of 3 staves of music. The first staff is marked "急板" (Allegretto) and the second staff is marked "突慢渐快" (Ritardando). The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings.

Dr. **Jin Qiao** [金桥] is Associate Professor in the Department of Musicology at Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Senior Visiting Professor at the School of Music, Taiwan Normal University. He graduated from the Department of Composition and Conducting, Shanghai Conservatory of Music and completed his Doctoral Degree in Musicology there. Previously, he taught at Shanghai Jiaotong University. His research scope includes music in modern China, ethnomusicology, and film music. He wrote comprehensively about various teaching subjects, symphonic music, sound effects in films, and other topics.

**Contact:** rexjin[[@](mailto:rexjin@163.com)]163.com

# SOME REVELATIONS ABOUT THE SONG

## DẠ CỔ HOÀI LANG

**Kiều Tấn**

### **Abstract**

Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang - the forerunner of today's song Vong Cổ, important to many events and performances in the South of Vietnam, still delivers many interesting facts. There have been some documents about the composer's biography, the origin of the song and its musical mood, the title and other names, the lyrics and their connection to the original melody, or versions of it. But at present, there are still many details that have not been clarified or agreed upon by those who need to know about this song. Insufficient research has affected a number of them. This paper, based on participant observation and literature studies in the broadest sense, is to give some more recent insights into the topic and to clarify some issues often discussed among scholars of Vietnam and beyond.

**Keywords:** South Vietnam, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Vong Cổ, Historical Study, Music Analysis

### **INTRODUCTION**

Through a number of historical documents as well as private texts and records, there were recently research materials added to the already available knowledge<sup>1</sup>. New investigations could be made using methods such as comparison, notation, and analysis. At first, the intention of this particular research was to make new findings and comments on:

- the year of birth and the place of birth of composer Cao Văn Lầu
- the way and the cause of the composition,
- the naming and the year of publication,
- more information about the Hoài Lang,
- the original version of the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang,
- the original music and lyrics of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang,
- the process of renaming the work.

From the results of the above research, we use it to try to interpret the main features of the history of formation and perfection of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

### **THE CREATION OF DẠ CỔ HOÀI LANG**

How did the Đờn ca tài tử movement throughout the east and west region of South Vietnam influence the birth of the song?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Southern region had many places for Đờn ca tài tử. In the beginning of the movement, groups in Vĩnh Long và Sa Đéc, later increasingly in other important places of early urban character such as: Sài Gòn - Chợ Lớn, Cần Đước - Tân An, Vĩnh Kim - Cái Thia (Mỹ Tho), and Bạc Liêu. These groups of talented musicians are linked, yet invisibly divided into two circles: The circle of Eastern talents (Biên Hòa - Sài Gòn - Chợ Lớn in the past) with the leader Nguyễn

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper consists of a large number of Vietnamese expressions that are used as they are. It would distort the reading flow to italicize them all. Nevertheless, the editor tried to mark important terms through capitalizing or through other means.

Quang Đại<sup>2</sup> in Cần Đước, together with talented writers and musicians such as Sáu Thới, Tám Hạnh, Cao Quỳnh Diêu, Cao Quỳnh Cư. The circle of Western talents (concentrated in the area of Vĩnh Long - Sa Đéc - Mỹ Tho in the past) with the is Trần Quang Quờn<sup>3</sup> was centred around in Vĩnh Long, joining forces with famous writers and musicians such as Phạm Đăng Đàn, Nguyễn Liên Phong, Nguyễn Tùng Bá, Tống Hữu Định.

Both circles have made great contributions to the music movement and created new compositions, they developed an academic system of musical issues. These musicians were teaching and spreading the music of *đờn ca tài tử* in their own way. Among the Western circle members, the most significant activities were conducted by the Bạc Liêu musicians with Lê Tài Khí<sup>4</sup> as the head and other disciples such as Bảy Kiên, Cao Văn Lầu, Ba Chột, Trịnh Thiên Tư, who became later famous musicians. From the early years of the twentieth century, the repertoire of the *đờn ca tài tử* was developed through new compositions of the members of both circles. Going ahead, Ba Đợi of the Eastern circle had some pieces such as the *bộ bát Ngự* (set of 8 pieces in Ngự mode) : Đường Thái Tôn, Vọng phu, Chiêu Quân, Ái tử kê, Bắc Man tấn cống, Trương tư, Duyên kỳ ngộ, Quả phụ hàm oan; then the pieces called *bộ ngũ châu* (a set of five pieces): Kim tiền bản, Ngự giá, Hồ lan, Vạn liên, Song phi hồ điệp, then the instrumental versions of the Bạc Liêu group had a four piece set (*bộ tứ bửu* [set of four pieces]: Minh hoàng thượng nguyệt, Ngự giá đăng lâu, Phò mã giao duyên, and Ái tử kê.

Not stopping with that number, the western circle of musicians later (from 1919 onwards) also released a series of new works, for example those by Ký Quờn: *Hiệp điệp xuyên hoa*, *Thanh đình điếm thủy*, *Kim oanh trích liễu*, *Anh vũ năng ngôn*; or those by Cao Văn Lầu like *Thu phong*, *Dạ cổ hoài lang*, *Chiết hoa*, *Giọt mưa đêm*; or those by Ba Chột: *Liêu giang*, *Ngũ quan*, *Mẫu đơn*, *Tam quan nguyệt...*; Trịnh Thiên Tư: *Hận tình*, *Đông mai*, *Thu cúc*, *Hạ Liên* and some others.

## THE TOPIC OF " CHINH PHỤ - CHINH PHU " AND ITS CREATION INITIATED THROUGH NHẠC KHỊ AMONG THE TALENTED MUSICIANS IN BẠC LIÊU

The success in the field of composing among the musicians of Bạc Liêu has to be attributed to the great role of their leader, Nhạc Khị, who trained his disciples in this way. He advocated that the apprentices would later be not only musicians but also composers, not only artistically but also humanly, bringing lyrics to the country and the people in the world. Vietnam's social scene had this vision at that time. In that spirit, musically trained students were expected to create new versions of songs and pieces as soon as they could find a possibility. Letting his students do the creative part, he also, in addition to it, particularly emphasized the theme " *chinh phụ - chinh phu* " - taken from the song " *Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi văn*"<sup>5</sup> in the version of the mode 'Nam ai', expressing the faithfulness of the wife who looks after

---

<sup>2</sup> Nguyễn Quang Đại is also known as Ba Đợi. There is a legend that he was a mandarin of the Hue court and went into the South in 1885, lived in Đa Kao and then returned to Cần Đước, and died (in a year unknown to friends and family in Rạch Cát, Bình Đông, District 8 of Ho Chi Minh City. He achieved merits in perfecting and completing with great effectiveness *nhạc lễ* and *nhạc tài tử* [ritual music and music of the talented musicians].

<sup>3</sup> Trần Quang Quờn was also called Kinh lịch Quờn and Ký Quờn (1875-1946). He is a versatile talent in music: using a variety of instruments, improving musical instruments, composing new musical ideas and creating his own way of writing music.

<sup>4</sup> Lê Tài Khí was often called by the name Nhạc Khị, and Hai Khị (1870-1948). He had a special talent in performing instrumental music, composing and transmitting *nhạc lễ* and *nhạc tài tử*. He is considered to be the founder of the Bạc Liêu school of traditional music and he is honored as an ancestor of it.

<sup>5</sup> According to the legend: the historical reference is attributed to Tô Huệ who was a silk-weaving daughter, married to a soldier from a distant village (the theory says Tô Huệ [357-?] was married to Đậu Thao - a mandarin of the pre-Qin dynasty of China, who was arrested (surrounded by unforgiving mountains and rivers). After three years of waiting and waiting, with her outstanding literary talent, Tô Huệ embroidered 10 great poems on a square brocade to give them to her husband, each word arranged in a reading style around and back and forth. The piece "Chức cầm hồi văn" [Poems about literature weaving on brocade] touched the king and he gave order that this divided couple should be reunited. *Tích Tô Huệ* spread to Vietnam

her husband, who is fighting at the border. This was also a type of metaphor for cleverly trying to bypass the authorities, reflecting the tragically dispersed parts of many families within the country. This content has been imbued by his students and expressed successfully through some new works, such as *Liêu giang*, *Tam quan nguyệt* (Ba Chột), *Đưa Chồng Ra Mặt Trận*, *Chinh Phụ Thán*, *Sầu Chinh Phụ* (lyrics by Trịnh Thiên Tư), especially the piece ‘*Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang*’ by Sáu Lầu alias Cao Văn Lầu.

### SOME BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE PIECE DESCRIBING THE SEPARATION OF HUSBAND AND WIFE BY MUSICIAN CAO VĂN LẦU

The musician and composer Cao Văn Lầu<sup>6</sup> was born on 22 December, 1890, in Cây Cui, a small hamlet of Thuận Lễ settlement in the village Thạnh Mực Hạ, Tân Thạnh district, section Tân An, in Gia Định province (now this is the Thuận Mỹ commune, Vàm Cỏ district, Long An province). He was from a poor family. His father Cao Văn Giỏi alias Chín Giỏi was also a musician, and his mother was Đỗ Thị Tài. The family consisted of six brothers. Therefore, he was also called Sáu Lầu, meaning the ‘sixth’.

When he was young, he followed his parents to go and beg for food when he was four years old. Finally, in 1900, the family settled along the Ông Bồn canal, now ward 2, of Bạc Liêu city. He died there on 13 August, 1976. In 1901, the little boy Sáu Lầu was temporarily sent to the Vĩnh Phước An temple to get familiar with the scriptures, until three years later he returned to learn writing in Vietnamese. In 1908, Sáu Lầu studied ritual music and the music of the talented musicians under the leading teacher Nhạc Khị. In 1915, Cao Văn Lầu got married to Trần Thị Tấn (1899-1967) who was just in the right age. In 1917, according to the music delivered by teacher Nhạc Khị on his theme song "Chinh phụ vọng chinh phu", composer Cao Văn Lầu immediately sketched a draft consisting of 22 sentences, in a two-beat scheme but did not yet complete the structure.

The creative work was still in the process of exploration and rethinking, when in 1918, an incident happened to his family. His simple and seemingly happy marriage went through a stormy situation and the relationship was broken. The reason is that after three years of living together, his wife did not have any children. According to the feudal notion at that time, this was a very serious issue because the male part of the family that was considered to be the leader, would not continue the family line without children. He had to kick out the wife of the husband's house in accordance with the phrase "three years wasted immortality". Obeying his mother, Sáu Lầu felt pity to say farewell to his young wife. In their hearts both were still filled with a love intact as if from the beginning. So, the composition to be completed had to be shelved, because he no longer had the mind to invest into creativity.

### THE PROCESS OF FORMING, PERFECTING AND RENAMING THE PIECE

The situation lasted for about a year, with the love still salty and the silently growing nostalgia, the young couple had discreetly sought each other occasionally, making Cao Văn Lầu's spirit somewhat stable again. the creative work was continued.

#### *The Piece Hoài Lang*

At this time, it was already in 1919, on the one hand he wanted to have a "spiritual child" for his wife, on the other hand, he also wanted to finish the piece to be submitted to the teacher. So, he had seen it as

---

at the end of the nineteenth century and was popularized through the songs *Nam xuân* and *Nam ai Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi vân*”, which is considered by the musical world as one of the classic songs of the talented musicians.

<sup>6</sup> As previously announced, Cao Văn Lầu was born in 1892, in Thạnh Hội Hạ village. However, in the old ID card [used from 1970-1976], the year of birth was 1890; Since 2014, on his tombstone in the relic his birth year has also been revised to 1890. Particularly, the place Thạnh Hội Hạ village, is not published in his letter to the newspaper *Buổi Sáng* (and some other newspapers in Saigon). In this letter, dated 18 November, 1963, is clearly stated: “I am the musician Cao Văn Lầu, 73 years old, ID No. 62074, born in Thạnh Mực Hạ (1890), Tân An, living in Vĩnh Lợi, Bạc Liêu”.

a double task and on the basis of the previous sketch he developed a sad, fragmented music, expressing the feelings of loving his wife. But deeply inside, he also reflected optimism and hope. The instrumental music that Cao Văn Lầu dedicated to his wife was named *Hoài lang*, meaning ‘Remembering her husband’. This version had still the 22 sentences at first, but later he decided to cut them down to 20 sentences. The tune is as follows<sup>7</sup>:

**Hoài lang**

Sáng tác: CAO VĂN LẦU  
Độc tấu cò: SÀU LẦU  
Ký âm: KIỀU TẤN

$\text{♩} = 80$

\*) Cao độ thực tế của Fa, Sol và Do = Fa<sup>+</sup>, Sol<sup>+</sup> và Do<sup>+</sup> [dấu + = cao hơn trong khoảng nửa cung bình quân, r = rung].

**FIGURE 1: Transcription draft (by the author).**

This version, according to the analysis, the whole song is in true Oán (Oán 1 mode)<sup>8</sup> on the basis of the tone order: Hò, Xu, Xang<sup>+</sup>, Xê, Cồng and the modifier slightly higher than an average Phan<sup>+</sup>. Normally, while noting down the way to play *Tài tử* and *Cải lương* musical instruments, all types of songs are written in the simplified form of the moon lute’s score, because this is the teacher’s lute, the main instrument, so to say, it also keeps the meter and this score is considered being the frame. Based on this core frame of the instrumental music, the further development adds up to suit the instrumental features that are used. *Hoài lang* is the version that was transformed through playing the two-string spike lute *đàn cò*. Because the author did not transmit the original, any research has to rely on this version to restore the core frame for comparison.

<sup>7</sup> In 1979, an audio recording “Interview with composer Cao Văn Lầu” with a length of 7’39”, was made by Kiên Giang on 15 November, 1963 at the headquarters of the Kiên Giang Drama Theatre, in the street Nguyễn Tấn Nghiê (now called Hồ Hào Hôn), Sài Gòn. The content includes questions and answers about the origin and future of *Vọng cổ*, especially *Hoài lang*, which the author played on the two-string spike lute *đàn cò*. This is a document that preserves the voice and sound of the author and is historically very valuable. It illustrates the cause and case of the composition as well as the fact that *Hoài lang* is the origin of the song *Dạ cổ hoài lang*. This document was just recently (November 2018) returned to the Cao Văn Lầu memorial site in Bạc Liêu.

<sup>8</sup> According to Lư Nhật Vũ (1983: 295-297), the scale system of Oán modal pitches consists of 5 derivations with different intervals. He structures these derivations using an absolute Western Solmization approach putting the base tone on Re. So, his outcome declares: Oán 1 = Re, Fa, Sol, La, Si; Oán 2 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Si; Oán 3 = Re, Fa, Sol, La, Sib], Oán 4 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Sib, Oán 5 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Do. Taking this scheme to better understand, here are temporarily used the names of these derivations, mostly Oán 1 and Oán 3. To facilitate the analysis, only Oán 1 is called a true Oán.



This core frame in traditional writing looked as follows:

**Hoài Lang**

(dây Bắc-Oán, according to Kiều Tấn)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <u>H</u> ò <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê                            | 11. <u>X</u> ư, <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ư <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò             |
| 2. Liu <u>X</u> ê Liu <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang                               | 12. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò __                                     |
| 3. Hò <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò                                    | 13. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê              |
| 4. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò __                                      | 14. <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang |
| 5. <u>X</u> ê <u>H</u> ò <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê                              | 15. Liu <u>X</u> ê Liu <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ang                            |
| 6. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò      | 16. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>Ph</u> ạn Liu <u>X</u> ang Liu                            |
| 7. <u>H</u> ò <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê                            | 17. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò                           |
| 8. <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang  | 18. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang              |
| 9. Hò <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>L</u> iu/ <u>X</u> ư                       | 19. Liu <u>X</u> ê Liu <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ang                            |
| 10. <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ê <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang | 20. <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang Liu.           |

**FIGURE 2: Traditional syllable transcription of the instrumental part (by the author).**

Please be aware that all syllables Xang are actually Xang<sup>+</sup>. The 9<sup>th</sup> final tone Liu, is Hò sliding up to Xư. This piece is noted as if it is for the moon lute đàn kìm in the tuning Bắc-Oán (which corresponds to Xê-Hò or also Xê-Liu). Therefore, the lower register at the end of the 15th sentence cannot be played in this relation and has to be transposed an octave above. In the 16th sentence it is similar in order to achieve the right microtonal environment. Analog to it, the 19th and 20th sentences are constructed.

Looking at this and considering the changes in five sentences, the core frame of Hoài lang can be transcribed as follows:

**Hoài Lang**

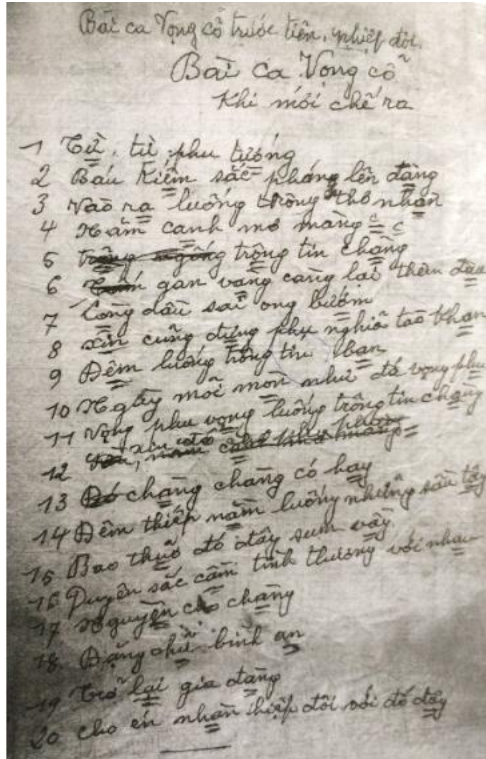
core frame: Kiều Tấn  
composition: Cao Văn Lầu

**FIGURE 3: Transcription draft for comparison (by the author).**

The tone set can be usually compared to F, G<sup>+r</sup> and C<sup>+r</sup> (the sign + indicates a pitch that is a quarter tone above, while r (meaning ‘rung’) indicates a compulsory hovering over the average frequency or vibrating of the tone).

### The First Version of the Song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang

After completing the song Hoài Lang, Cao Văn Lầu continued to use the core frame of Hoài Lang to put the lyrics in accordance with the theme of the music the teacher assigned to him. The author of the lyrics



originally wrote them with 22 verses, but Cao Văn Lầu following the advice of his friends<sup>9</sup> decided to remove the last two sentences (the verses 5 and 6) and left only 20 sentences.

At the Mid-Autumn Festival, the work was de facto completed but the author was still wondering how to name it appropriately, because the content of the lyrics was no longer a private affair of him and his wife.

The lyrical content of the piece was created in the following shape by the author<sup>10</sup>:

Accordingly, the lyrics with some crossed out letters are the original lyrics that the author has just finished writing and submitted to the teacher - temporarily called the version one (or version 1).

When comparing the lyrics of the song in version 1 with the music of Hoài Lang, it is visible that the sentences with crossed out lyrics are carrying almost the same tonal of each music syllable in the piece Hoài Lang, while the edited lyrics are not equipped with the same tonal.

FIGURE 4: Copied autograph of Cao Văn Lầu (1974) as exhibited at the memorial site (Photo by the author).

**Music syllables in Hoài lang:**

- 5. (Xè) Hò Xê Xang Xư Xê
- 6. Xê Xư Xê Xang Xư Xê Xang Hò
- 12. Xê Xư Xê Xang Hò
- 13. Xê Xang Hò Xang Công Xê

**Lyrics deleted:**

- ~~Trông ngóng trông tin chàng~~
- ~~Tám gan vàng càng lại thêm đau~~
- ~~Sầu, năm canh mơ màng~~
- ~~Đó chàng chàng có hay~~

**Lyrics corrected:**

- Trông tin chàng
- Gan vàng càng lại thêm đau
- Xin đó chớ phụ phàng
- Chàng chàng có hay

Unlike in the song, there was always a similarity of the music syllable’s tonal and the lyrics. In the traditional music of this kind, the tonal of the lyrics does not necessarily follow each music syllable but only needs to meet the tonal of the main beat in the music, while the space between two main beats can be flexible (Jähnichen, 1997, 2014).

Therefore, the song Hoài Lang’s music and its lyrics of version 1 are still satisfyingly keeping to this rule because they still retain the structure of the core frame which is obvious when listening to it. Only

<sup>9</sup> Some documents claim that this comment was made by Ba Chột, Bảy Kiên, Trần Xuân Thơ.

<sup>10</sup> This seems to be an autograph hand-written by the author himself and given to Trần Phước Thuận in 1974, now on display at the Memorial site of Cao Văn Lầu, in Bạc Liêu.

the end of sentences 1 and 7 seem like the tonal of the lyrics (being an upwards moved syllable) and the music syllable (being a straight tone) do not match:

Sentence 1: *Từ, từ phu tướng* [Hò Xê Xang Xê Cống Xê]  
 Sentence 7: *Lòng dầu say ong bướm* [Hò Xê Xang Xê Cống Xê]

That is why it is called incomplete, because the author's level of lyrical composition at the beginning was limited. Compared to Nam Ai " Tô Huệ chúc cầm hồi văn"<sup>11</sup> it is clear that in version 1 or 2, there is an inheritance of the content and lyrics of this piece:

Words and metaphors used in Dạ cổ hoài lang are listed as follows:

v.1/v.2: *Từ* [first sentence], exists in Nam ai "Tô Huệ chúc cầm hồi văn": [2/61]; *Báu kiếm sắc phán* [2]: [33]; *luống* [3/9/11/14]: [4/9/40]; *trông thơ nhàn* [3]: [62]; *Năm canh mơ màng* [4 or 12 v.1]; *Trông tin chàng* [5/11]: [29/62]; *Lòng* [7]: [51]; *dầu/dấu* [7]: [25]; *say ong bướm* [7]: [20/25]; *nghe tào khang/tào khương* [8]: [26]; *Đêm* [9/14]: [17/29]; *bạn* [9]: [31/55]; *Ngày* [10]: [28]; *Sầu* [12-v.1]: [31/52]/*phụ phàng/phũ phàng* [12-version 2]: [51]; *chàng* [13/17]: [2/8/37/50/53/59/61]; *chàng có hay* [13]: [15]; *thiếp* [14]: [7]; *nằm* [14]: [29]; *sầu tây/niềm tây* [14]: [55]; *Bao* [15]: [44]; *thuở* [15]: [45]; *Nguyện* [17]: [7]; *Trở lại* [19]: [38]; *hiệp* [20]: [68].

Keen to use this "two-in-one" piece, on the full moon night of the 1919, Cao Văn Lầu brought the song to the home of teacher Nhạc Khị, but did not show the title and asked him to name it. At that time, the monk Nguyệt Chiếu<sup>12</sup> attended the talk. After listening to Cao Văn Lầu playing and singing, he commented: "... Although the music and lyrics still have some inconsistencies, in general it still describes Tô Huệ's feelings. So, just follow this scheme and name the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang"<sup>13</sup> (meaning: Listen to the drum and remember your husband). Of course, this was not yet an official song because it was not completed regarding its music and lyrics, but a mark for the birth of the work. Thus, the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang in its version one most likely includes:

- Music: is the core frame of Hoài Lang in 20 sentences, each with 2 beats, following the mode of true Oán.
- Lyrics: is the "Vọng Cổ" handwritten autograph of Cao Văn Lầu, in which the crossed-out letters were the original words.

### Version Two of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang

After commenting and naming the title by monk Nguyệt Chiếu, the author has also given the manuscript to some musicians in order to improve the lyrics and the music.

Accordingly, from version one of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Cao Văn Lầu corrected the words in some sentences:

Sentence 2:	<i>Báu kiếm sắc phong lên đàn</i>	→	<i>Báu kiếm sắc phán lên đàn</i>
Sentence 5:	<del><i>Trông ngóng</i></del> <i>trông tin chàng</i>		<i>Trông tin chàng</i>
Sentence 6:	<del><i>Tấm</i></del> <i>gan vàng càng lại thêm đau</i>		<i>Gan vàng càng lại thêm đau</i>
Sentence 12:	<del><i>Sầu, năm canh mơ màng</i></del>		<i>Xin đó chớ phụ phàng</i>
Sentence 13:	<del><i>Đó</i></del> <i>chàng chàng có hay</i>		<i>Chàng chàng có hay</i>

<sup>11</sup> Trần Phước Thuận (2014: 341-343).

<sup>12</sup> Sư Nguyệt Chiếu (1882-1947) - a master of Sinology and ritual music, is considered to be one of the two leaders, following Nhạc Khị, who reformed and revised Bạc Liêu's music traditions.

<sup>13</sup> In this regard, the common entry in Wikipedia about Cao Văn Lầu is interesting: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao\\_V%C4%83n\\_L%E1%BA%A7u](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao_V%C4%83n_L%E1%BA%A7u), last visited 22 November, 2019.

According to Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018: 183). Nguyệt Chiếu named the song "Dạ cổ hoài lang". It is derived from the two sentences in the piece Nam ai "Tô Huệ chúc cầm hồi văn". According to the lyrics by Phụng Hoàng Sang, (1905), verse 54 (58): The drum is empty, vibrates in the night (khuya = dạ, trống = cô); and verse 55 (59): I don't bear to miss him, as if the sting was left (nhớ chàng = hoài lang).

Also, the music was revised as follows:

FIGURE 5: Revised version 3 in a transcription of the author.

Here, Cao Văn Lầu named this piece according to the monk Nguyệt Chiêu, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang. It should now be called Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, version two (or version 2). Because the simple editing may not have taken much time, so it is likely that this version two was completed between the full moon night of the Mid-Autumn-Festival and the end of the year 1919, a time in which no special events took place. It can be imagined that the musical melody in the beginning was followed closely by the singer, similarly to the way of playing the two-string spike lute đàn cò for the piece Hoài Lang with lyrics as follows:

### Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2)

Composed by Cao Văn Lầu

Transcribed by Kiều Tấn

<sup>\*)</sup> Cao độ thực tế của Fa, Sol và Do = Fa<sup>-</sup>, Sol<sup>+</sup> và Do<sup>+</sup> (đấu - = cao hơn trong khoảng nửa cung bình quân, + = rung). Câu 15-16 và 19-20 có thể ca lên xuống một quãng tám.

FIGURE 6: Transcription of version 2 with lyrics (by the author).

And based on the core frame of Hoài Lang (version 1), it is possible to restore the core frame of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang version two as follows:

**Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2)**

(tuning in Bắc-Oán, core frame notation according to Kiều Tấn)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>Hò Là Xang Xê Công</b>                      | 11. Xư, Xang <u>Xư</u> Công Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u>    |
| 2. <b>Líu Công Líu Công Xê Xang</b>               | 12. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Lìu __                   |
| 3. Líu <u>Xê</u> Công Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u>          | 13. Xê <u>Xang</u> Líu Xang Xê Công <u>Xê</u>     |
| 4. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Lìu __                    | 14. Xê Công <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Công Xư <u>Xang</u> |
| 5. Xê <u>Lìu</u> Xê Xang Xư <u>Xê</u>             | 15. <b>Líu Công Líu Công Xê Xang</b>              |
| 6. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Xư Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u>     | 16. <b>Líu Xang Xê Oạn Líu Xang Líu</b>           |
| 7. <b>Hò Là Xang Xê Công</b>                      | 17. Xê <u>Xư</u> Công Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u>          |
| 8. Xê Công <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Công Xư <u>Xang</u>  | 18. Xê <u>Xư</u> Công Xê Xang Xư <u>Xang</u>      |
| 9. Líu <u>Xê</u> Công Xê Xang <u>Lìu/Xư</u>       | 19. <b>Líu Công Líu Công Xê Xang</b>              |
| 10. Xê Công <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Công Xư <u>Xang</u> | 20. <b>Líu Xang Xê Oạn Líu Xang Líu.</b>          |

However, this piece was from that time onwards further revised and eventually considered the basic and official version of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, which Cao Văn Lầu later called the "historical" Vọng Cổ. Thus, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, version two, is a song composed of:

- Music: Hoài Lang version as it was initially corrected, 20 sentences, second beats per sentence, true Oán mode.
- Lyrics: the lyrics are the handwritten autograph of the author, called "Vọng Cổ", in which the remaining words after the outcrossing become the original words.

According to the traditional notation, it is visible that version two is a song with 3 sections:

Section I [Sentence 1 – 6]: *“Từ, từ phu tướng.....Gan vàng càng lại thêm đau”.*

Section II [Sentence 7 – 16]: *“Lòng dầu say ong bướm...Duyên sắt cảm tình thương với nhau”.*

Section III [Sentence 17 – 20]: *“Nguyện cho chàng.....Cho én nhàn hiệp đôi với đò đây”.*

There should also be noted that the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2) right from the original has fixed the first 6 sentences as sequential sentences in negative order with the final tones being Cong, Xang, Hò, Hò, Xê, and Hò. This order became then the default order in the Cải Lương based versions from which the rhythm and the basis for the core frame of the "6 sentences" Vọng Cổ were developed.

**Version Three of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang**

Music and Lyrics: In 1920, with the vigilance and effort to complete the song, Cao Văn Lầu continued to edit according to his friends' suggestions. This was the second revision and is considered to be perfect in terms of music and lyrics of the later famous song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

Through the printed text of Trịnh Thiên Tư's “Bạc Liêu Classical Music”, from 1962, this version, temporarily called the old Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3), is by everyone believed to be introduced by the composer of the music himself. Cao Văn Lầu, so it is written: "... the song 'Vọng Cổ' with my lyrics in this book is basically a four-beat song...".

Music notation: historical <b>Vọng cổ</b> (Bắc mode, four beats per sentence)	Lyrics: historical <b>Vọng cổ</b> (four beats per sentence)
1. __ <b>Hò</b> Là __ Xang Xê <b>Cổng</b>	1. __ <i>Từ</i> là __ <i>từ</i> <b>phu tướng</b>
2. __ <b>Ú</b> Liu <b>Cổng</b> Liu <b>Cổng</b> Xê <b>Xang</b>	2. __ <i>Báu</i> <b>kiếm</b> sắc <b>phán</b> lên <b>đàng</b>
3. __ <b>Hò</b> <b>Xê</b> Liu <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Xang Là <b>Hò</b>	3. __ Vào <i>ra</i> <b>luống</b> <b>trông</b> tin <b>nhận</b>
4. __ <b>Xê</b> Xang <b>Xê</b> Xang Là <b>Hò</b>	4. __ <i>Năm</i> <b>canh</b> __ <i>mơ</i> <b>màng</b>
5. __ <b>Liu</b> Xáng U Liu <b>Xàng</b>	5. __ <i>Em</i> <b>luống</b> <b>trông</b> tin <b>chàng</b>
6. __ Liu Xáng <b>Xàng</b> Xê <b>Liu</b> <b>Ú</b> Liu	6. __ <i>Ôi</i> , gan <b>vàng</b> thêm <b>đau</b> __
7. __ <b>Hò</b> Là <b>Xang</b> Xê <b>Cổng</b>	7. __ <b>Đường</b> <i>dâu</i> xa ong <b>bướm</b>
8. __ Xê Liu <b>Xừ</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Liu <b>Xừ</b> <b>Xang</b>	8. __ <i>Xin</i> <b>đó</b> <b>đừng</b> <b>phụ</b> <b>ngĩa</b> <b>tào</b> <b>khang</b>
9. __ <b>Hò</b> <b>Xê</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Xang <b>Xự</b>	9. __ <i>Còn</i> <b>đêm</b> <b>luống</b> <b>trông</b> tin <b>bạn</b>
10. __ Xê Liu <b>Xừ</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> <b>Xừ</b> <b>Xang</b>	10. __ Ngày <i>mỏi</i> <b>mòn</b> như <b>đá</b> <b>Vọng</b> <b>phu</b>
11. <b>Xừ</b> __ Xang <b>Xừ</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Xang Là <b>Hò</b>	11. <b>Vọng</b> __ <i>phu</i> <b>vọng</b> <b>luống</b> <b>trông</b> tin <b>chàng</b>
12. <b>Xê</b> Xang <b>Xê</b> Là <b>Hò</b> “ <b>Xê</b> Là <b>Hò</b> ”	12. <b>Lòng</b> xin <i>chớ</i> <b>phụ</b> <b>phàng</b> __
13. __ <b>Cổng</b> Xê <b>Xang</b> <b>Hò</b> __ Xang <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b>	13. __ <b>Chàng</b> là <b>chàng</b> có <b>hay</b>
14. __ Xê Liu <b>Xừ</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Liu <b>Xừ</b> <b>Xang</b>	14. __ <i>Đêm</i> <b>thiếp</b> <b>nằm</b> <b>luống</b> <b>những</b> <b>sầu</b> <b>tây</b>
15. __ <b>Ú</b> Liu <b>Cộng</b> Liu — <b>Cộng</b> Xê <b>Xàng</b>	15. __ <i>Biết</i> bao <b>thuở</b> <b>đó</b> <b>đây</b> <b>sum</b> <b>vầy</b>
16. <b>Liu</b> Xáng <b>Xàng</b> Xê <b>Phạn</b> <b>Liu</b> “ <b>Ú</b> <b>Liu</b> ”	16. <b>Duyên</b> <b>sắt</b> <b>cầm</b> <b>đình</b> <b>lọt</b> <b>phai</b> __
17. __ Là <b>Xự</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Xang Là <b>Hò</b>	17. __ Là <b>nguyện</b> __ cho <b>chàng</b>
18. __ Xê Liu <b>Xự</b> <b>Cổng</b> <b>Xê</b> Liu <b>Xự</b> <b>Xang</b>	18. __ <i>Hai</i> <b>chữ</b> an __ <b>binh</b> an
19. __ <b>Ú</b> Liu <b>Cộng</b> Liu <b>Cộng</b> Xê <b>Xàng</b>	19. __ <i>Trở</i> <b>lại</b> __ gia <b>đàng</b>
20. <b>Liu</b> Xáng <b>Xàng</b> Xê <b>Phạn</b> <b>Liu</b> “ <b>Ú</b> <b>Liu</b> ”.	20. <b>Cho</b> <b>én</b> <b>nhàn</b> <b>hiệp</b> <b>đôi</b> __

Attention: The noted musical syllables (left) and the lyrics (right) printed bold are the emphasized beats of a measure as used in the cited book.

## DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In the completion of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3), compared to the previous version (version 2), there are noticeable changes:

- Regarding sentence structure: sentence 5 changes from the Xê to Xàng and the 9<sup>th</sup> from the Xừ (actually pronounced Lìu meaning Hò Luyến<sup>14</sup> to Xừ) changes to Xự.
- About the beats: Within the lyrics, a silent final beat is in verse 12, while verse 4 changes to a sounding final beat. At the same time, by removing some of the lyrics, verses 6, 16 and 20 all turned into silent final beats. Regarding the music, all sentences have sounding final beats, no silent beats.
- About the lyrics: out of 20 sentences, there are only 6 sentences left: 2, 4, 10, 11, 14 and 19 which are completely in line with the lyrics of version two, the rest are sentences with more or less words or replaced words. The last two words of verse 3: "thơ nhàn" are replaced by "tin nhận" from the tone of the heavy accent to the simple heavy accent; while in the instrumental part, it remains the same with the heavy accent is Hò. In verse 20, we find that the book is still printed as "én nhàn" but not "én nhận", the arbitrary word here is consistent with the mysterious tone of the Xàng in the instrumental music. This detail shows that one is due to the printer's fault,

<sup>14</sup> Luyến is a specific treatment of a tonal microstructure that consists of a sequence of tone glides.

the other is that the author himself is also inconsistent between the word *nhàn* and *nhận*, it seems not to matter.

**Hơi-điệu (Modal Features)**

The highlight of this adjustment is that the author used two alternating beat systems in the same song and used on the tuning *Bắc* for the moon lute đàn kim. Specifically, besides the true *Oán*, there is also the "Oán pha Bắc": "Oán pha Bắc": *Hò, Xự, Xang<sup>tr</sup>, Xê, Cống*.

Although it is recorded as "four-beat piece", it is actually a two-beat piece, so there is a copy of the two-beat version to ease the comparison.<sup>15</sup>

<b>Nhạc: Dạ cổ hoài lang (version 3)</b>	
<b>(tuning in the mode Bắc, two-beat meter)</b>	
1. <i>Hò Là Xang Xê Cống</i>	} true Oán
2. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xang</i>	
3. <i>Hò Xê Líu Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	
4. <i>Xê Xang Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	
5. <i>Liu Xáng U Liu Xàng</i>	
6. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Liu Ú Liu</i>	
7. <i>Hò Là Xang Xê Cống</i>	} Oán pha Bắc
8. <i>Xê Líu Xừ Cống Xê Líu Xừ Xang</i>	
9. <i>Hò Xê Cống Xê Xang Xự</i>	
10. <i>Xê Líu Xừ Cống Xê Xừ Xang</i>	} true Oán
11. <i>Xừ Xang Xừ Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	
12. <i>Xê Xang Xê Là Hò "Xê Là Hò"</i>	} Oán pha Bắc
13. <i>Cống Xê Xàng Hò Xang Cống Xê</i>	
14. <i>Xê Líu Xừ Cống Xê Líu Xừ Xang</i>	} true Oán
15. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xàng</i>	
16. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu "Ú Liu"</i>	} Oán pha Bắc
17. <i>Là Xự Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	
18. <i>Xê Líu Xừ Cống Xê Líu Xừ Xang</i>	} true Oán
19. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xàng</i>	
20. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu "Ú Liu"</i>	

This was a unique and new way of composing music at that time, which was usually just a simple tune. It happened also thanks to the intriguing impact and implementation from the sentences of the piece *Hành vân* played with a Northern tuning of strings.

A comparison between the two pieces in a specific version, it is visible that there are some musical lines of the older *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3) influenced by some sentences of *Hành Vân*:

---

<sup>15</sup> Oan 1 = true Oan.

Musical syllables:	<i>Hành Vân:</i>	<i>Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang</i> (version 3):
Là <u>X</u> ư <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang <u>H</u> ò	= câu 1/câu 2/câu 12	câu 11/17
Liu <u>C</u> ông Liu <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ang	= câu 17	câu 2/15/19
...Liu <u>Ú</u> Liu	= câu 14/câu 18	câu 6/16/20
... <u>C</u> ông <u>X</u> ê <u>X</u> ư <u>X</u> ang	= câu 19	câu 8/10/13/18

This might be the reason for some scholars and musicians to consider *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* is a piece in the modes described as “điệu Bắc/hoi Bắc”, or “dây Bắc-hoi Huế”. Therefore, these questions are discussed as follows:

Is *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* in the Northern mode and/or using a Northern tuning?

There seems to exist some evidence discussed among musicians that the musical core frame noted for the song is thought to be in the Northern mode following the scale *Hò, Xư, Xang, Xê, Công, Phan* and the strings of the moon lute and the two-string spike lute were in the Northern tuning. In my opinion, this interpretation is not accurate because:

- Though the music is a scale of the North, the expression is a little bit dependent on the way of playing styles are applied to it. For example, pressing for a strong vibration according to the Northern convention and other considered embellishments are different and even compulsory.
- The Northern tuning is the basic open string for the moon lute *kìm* based on *Xang, Hò* [i.e. G-D], used for male and female voices. The Northern tuning noted on the instrument is an indication of which system the tuning, in this case called *dây*, should be compared to such as *dây Bắc, dây Bắc-Oán, dây Hò nhì, dây Hò tư*, in order to perform the correct expression of the song. Indicating a Northern tuning does not mean that the piece is in that mode.



Therefore, just relying on the musically indicated scales through the core frame of the song or the Northern tuning indicated to determine the mode of the song is definitely not enough. Moreover, *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 2) is consisting of an *Oán* melody and the lyrics and content of "chinh phụ vọng chinh phu" within *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3), would be of such a construction that the mood of the music may contradict each other and switching between the melody of sadness (version 2) and the brighter Northern mood (version 3) is ridiculous.

**FIGURE 7: Record label mentioned (photo by the author).**

Is *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* in the Northern mode and/or using a **Huế** tuning?

The audio material of *Cải lương* music is considered to be the oldest available source, only one Pathé disc of teacher *Năm Tú* survived, dating back to 1922-1928. Among the recordings that are known, is one carrying the number 44623, which is a part of the opera *Kim Vân Kiều*, the scene number 4, where *Hai Cúc* sings an aria according to the model of *Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang*.

Although the production year is unknown, the name *Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang* can tell whether this record falls in the time period when either “*Vọng* or *Dạ*” was kind of right. Meaning, the record was done before the name of the piece was changing to *Vọng Cổ*, which was about 1923-1926. With the musical appearance not being far from the original as found in 1920, the modal analysis of this song can shed some light on the true melody of the earlier *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3).



The following is a song as in staff notation as it has been sung on the record.<sup>16</sup>

Song in the core frame of the piece **Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang**  
(excerpt from the opera Kim Vân Kiều)  
Music: Cao Văn Lầu  
Singer: Hai Cúc  
Notation: Kiều Tấn

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of ten staves of music, each with a line of Vietnamese lyrics underneath. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 100. The lyrics are numbered 1 through 20. The notation is in a single system with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are: 1. Ngày vào ra phu tử 2. Chắc phải chốt gà cho xong 3. Thuyền quyền tới nơi yêu trèo 4. Thật yêu quý còn gì quý bằng 5. Duyên (ý... ý) tiên trần 6. Rồi loan phòng hiệp hiệp vạn mây 7. Ngày rồi đêm trăng trở 8. Quan hết vì tóc rối, đầu quần 9. Trời ơi, giúp bao nhiêu nợ 10. Giờ oán nào giúp miếng thưng kia 11. Thằng quan kia có ai đâu mà 12. Nhờ biết nói làm gì, làm gì 13. Oi, trời thiệt trách thân 14. Đem với thân lái cây da nám, mây đen 15. Da nám, tóc xanh hơi kiếm 16. Vác đi nài ngoại lang ở đâu 17. Trời thiệt giúp ? ? 18. ? ? thân nói thiệt cho hoãn ? ? 19. Trốn lo (ý ý) vô cùng 20. Thiếp bao giờ hiệp long với loan.

Please, note: The exact frequencies are different. The notation is relative as any other type of solmization. The average pitches written as F, G, and C, are slightly higher than noted and some carry a compulsory. Starting from sentence 8, the average pitch E also vibrates at times making two different qualities for this average pitch that could be marked with a superscript r or an apostrophe.

**FIGURE 8: Notation of Version three by the author (from an audio recording).**

<sup>16</sup> Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018). Because the record was too old, the sound quality is quite bad, although having tried hard noting the music down. But some lyrics were heard unclearly and could not be identified. This piece has a complete sentence structure similar to the one in Lê Mai's reformed song presented in 1924.

The entire song has a far more diverse repertoire of tones that can be seen as Hò, Xư<sup>r</sup>, Xư, Xang<sup>+r</sup>, Xê, Cống, Phan<sup>+r</sup>, Liu, Ú.

Based on this observation, the melody of the sentences, can be temporarily arranged into two main tone sets, called Điệu:

- Set Oán: Hò, Xư, Xang<sup>+r</sup>, Xê, Cống with 2 complementary syllables Ú and Oan<sup>r</sup>.
- The temporarily called ‘strange’ set: Hò, Xư<sup>r</sup>, Xang<sup>+r</sup>, Xê, Cống.

Comparing the strange set with the following:<sup>17</sup>

Điệu Nam in the mood of Huế (also called Dựng)	Hò	Xư <sup>r</sup>		Xang <sup>+r</sup>	Xê	Cống <sup>r</sup>
Điệu Bắc:	Hò	Xư <sup>r</sup>		Xang	Xê	Cống <sup>r</sup>
Điệu Oán	Hò		Xư <sup>+</sup>	Xang <sup>+r</sup>	Xê	Cống
Điệu “lạ”	Hò	Xư <sup>r</sup>		Xang <sup>+r</sup>	Xê	Cống

Điệu Nam in the mood of Dựng (Huế) is very similar to the ‘strange’ Điệu, except for the different compulsory vibration on Cống<sup>r</sup>.

In addition to the other Northern mode of Cống<sup>r</sup>, there is a very basic difference in the third step, Xang or Xang<sup>+r</sup>. So, it is very difficult to consider a kinship.

In particular, the Oán melody is very close to that ‘strange’ construction and could easily become one when the hovering above the pitch of Xư<sup>r</sup> is added to it as visible in the Northern mode while the main step stays with the frequency between Xư<sup>r</sup> and the higher Xư<sup>+</sup> as a main step, though Xư<sup>+</sup> is auxiliary (if used at all).

Based on that consideration, I suggest to temporarily name the ‘strange’ mode ‘Oán pha Bắc’ [Oán mixed with Bắc] to facilitate a later comparison.

Observing the music, it is clear that:

- From sentence 1-7, second half sentences 11-12, sentences 15-16 and 19-20: the scale of the Oán mode is used with the complementary ending Xư<sup>+</sup> (in sentence 5) and Oan<sup>r</sup>. Both complementary sounds appear in sentences 16 and 20.
- From sentences 8 to the first half of sentences 11, sentences 13-14 and 17-18: the scale of the Oán pha Bắc is used.
- The Ú and Oan<sup>r</sup> often appear in the weak beat or part of a measure, and fall only sometimes on a strong beat. In such a case the strong beat is rather understood as an ‘embroidery’ or transition. In the lower octave it reads Xư<sup>r</sup>, but in any Nam/Oán mode it is still pronounced as Ú or U, for example, in sentence 5, when the melody is taking a downwards movement below the main octave, the musical syllables are written: ‘Liu Xáng<sup>+r</sup> U Liu Xê’ rather than ‘Hò Xang<sup>+r</sup> Xư Hò Xê’ or ‘Liu Xáng<sup>+r</sup> Xư Liu Xê’. In such a case, Xư without vibration can still be used and is considered a complementary sound of the Oán mode, which is different from the Oán pha Bắc mode where Xư<sup>r</sup> is part of the main tone set.

This transformation of modes from one to another, as shown above, is one of the methods in creating a mutation and a diversity of emotional nuances through the melodic flow, commonly found in Southern songs and is called the modal mix in an ‘alternating’ way.

<sup>17</sup> According to Dương Bích Hà (1997: 142-143), the 5-tone scale Hò, Xư-, Xang<sup>+r</sup> [rung = hovering, vibrating], Xê, Cống is called Nam Ai in the tradition of Ca Huế, and associated with a sad mood. When the song is using this tone order in the melody line, there are many Xư, Cống [of the Northern mode điệu Bắc] that make the character not as sad as the mood in Ai. This application is then called điệu Nam hơi Dựng or điệu Bắc hơi Khách.

Thus, the key point here is the combination of modes and Xự<sup>r</sup> in the điệu Oán pha Bắc. Because of this Xự<sup>r</sup>, many observers find it strange and have used different solutions to describe a new scale Hò, Xự<sup>r</sup>, Xang<sup>r</sup>, Xê, Cống as “North-mood of Hue” / “North-tone set mixed with Hue” / “Northern-Central mood and tone set”. Or the innovation was praised as ‘new features’, ‘strange modalities’ as narrated by the two young authors, such as Cao Kiến Thiết (2009: 61) who says “... after a period of popularizing the music and lyrics, my father had plaid many times songs in front of his friends, among his brother musicians, singers, monks, and poets. ... He listened to their comments. Regarding the music, all of us praised it for its new features”. Cao Văn Bình (2010: 131-132) “... after long nights of pondering over the poem, the tones have gradually formed in his mind a kind of music with a strange tune, it does not match any of the previous works ...”.

It can be said that the success of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3) is based on to the wise combination of two alternating styles of Oán and Oán pha Bắc, and at the same time the adding in of some similarities of the piece Hành Vân into the composition. That has created a nostalgic Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3) with the music that is both passionate and plaintive, more typical of the mood in the songs of the Southern region, while reflecting the inherent optimism-brightness of the Northern mode. It has a hidden sadness of Huế’s Điệu Nam in the mood Dựng, which some researchers say is “a little bit of Xuân (Hành Vân) and a little bit of the mood Ai (Xuân nữ), then transformed into the mood Dựng (Tứ đại oán)”<sup>18</sup>.

### ***Renaming Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang into Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang***

With vigilance and effort to perfect the song, Cao Văn Lầu continued to ask for some advice and the monk commented further. Among these comments, especially the contribution of Trần Xuân Thơ benefitted the lyrics and lead to the renaming of the piece.

According to Cao Kiến Thiết (2009: 61): “Teacher Thống alias Trần Xuân Thơ from the North, was very good at Confucian writings. He proposed to replace the old fashioned Dạ Cổ (night drum) with Vọng Cổ (meaning the drum echoes). The reason is that my father used the classic “Tô Huệ chúc cầm hồi vân” as the content of the song and the musical piece, imagining that Tô Huệ when recalling the poem, the sound of drumming from afar was echoed, not that the drum beat at night, so the word Dạ Cổ is obscure, and the word Vọng Cổ seemed more clarifying and, therefore, during that meeting, my father agreed to change the word Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang into Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang, meaning that the drum echoed and the husband felt missed. But at that time, the older version of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was popularized and widely distributed in many places, so it took quite a long time for it to introduce the name of Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang”.

Vũ Văn Thiện (1963) also recalls Cao Văn Lầu’s words: “Let me continue what my father was telling: I took my music, hid it, I gave it to an advisor to read, and asked, please, give it a name ... When he finished reading, I sang and played the song for him to listen to, and he took it very well announcing to name it Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang.”

Taking the narrative of Cao Kiến Thiết as a connection, it is clear that the person he calls advisor or teacher is Mr. Thống alias Trần Xuân Thơ.

In the piece Lục Vân Tiên by Trần Tự Thành, composed in 1923, there was integrated a song Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang using the following lyrics:

“Ten years of Confucius  
Up to now, even in mourning ...”

---

<sup>18</sup> Trương Bình Tòng (1997: 81).

This piece has a remark noted below the text which says “Vọng or Dạ are both possible”.<sup>19</sup>

The above data show that the name Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang has appeared since 1923 and at this time the local world of music has not yet decided between the two names Vọng or Dạ at the beginning of the song’s name Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

### *The Name Changes from Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang to Vọng Cổ*

In a recorded interview (1963) made by a journalist who asked: “Why the name changed from Hoài Lang to Vọng Cổ?”, Cao Văn Lầu replied, “before that it was a nostalgia [hoài lang], but after the Trần Xuân Thơ corrected it, the piece became the ‘Vọng Cổ’ [The Drum Echoes]”.

The comments are explained. In a meeting, sharing about the success of the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang – as this was Cao Văn Lầu’s very subject, his wife gave birth to a son – the author recalled the old “married three-year wife without children” and Trần Xuân Thơ proposed to rename the song into “Vọng Cổ” [Vọng = remember; Cổ = old, ‘Remember the olden times’] with the idea of the entire work. Cao Văn Lầu happily approved this and the Vọng Cổ began to be popular from then.

In a letter sent to Chín Tâm on 22 July, 1962, Trịnh Thiên Tư wrote: “In his days, Trần Xuân Thơ was called a master of Hai Thống (who passed away), a very great authority who was working as a composer for the singer Ba Xú (Bạc Liêu), he proposed to name this music Vọng Cổ to ‘remember the olden times’ that fits the music best and he found the agreement of the author.”

According to Trần Văn Khải (1970: 132): “For example in the play Tham phú phụ bần performed in the year 1926 in Biên Hòa, when Ai Châu complained to Huỳnh Kỳ Thoại because her father wanted the fiancé was married to a wealthier person, a ‘Vọng Cổ’ with two beats per sentence using, among others, the lyrics:

Tham phú phụ bần (Vọng Cổ) [Join the Poor]

1. Because where should be encouragement if not
2. The father could start sharing ...”.

Sỹ Tiên (1984: 24) describes another case: “We try to revisit an old play, Trần Nhựt Chánh, performed by the troupe of Văn Hí Ban ... the second scene has the all the pieces and songs like Hành Vân, Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang ... the sixth curtain has Vọng Cổ, and Long Hồ Hội ... It should be known, in the period of time mentioned above, the piece Vọng Cổ was still with 4 beats per sentence... Ms. Ba Hui (the sister of Ms. Năm Kim Thoa) plays the role of Kim Dung as one of Trần Nhựt Chánh 's three wives, singing a paragraph of Vọng Cổ:

1. The one who is torn apart,
2. The eyes are piercing like needles ...”.

According to Trần Phước Thuận (2014: 367-369), who got to know about it through the retelling of Trần Tấn Hưng, the word ‘Vọng Cổ’ has been used since August of the year of the Pig (1935) at the suggestion of Trịnh Thiên Tư. Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang and Vọng Cổ are two different pieces, but Vọng Cổ is still existing, so, Vọng Cổ must have the meaning of ‘looking back to the past’. However, according to Trần Văn Khải’s material the word Vọng Cổ has existed since 1926 and the idea that Vọng Cổ is proposed by Trịnh Thiên Tư contradicts the letter Trịnh Thiên Tư wrote himself to Chín Tâm.

According to some researchers, from the time Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was developed up to containing 8 beats per sentence (1935), the name Vọng Cổ was agreed upon to be used to designate the fourth beat and the

---

<sup>19</sup> Trần Tự Thành. 1923. Bài ca Lục Vân Tiên. Mỹ Tho: Imprimerie Provinciale, 5. Also cited in Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018: 219).

later extensions of meter. Only the early version with two beats per sentence still was called Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

The above evidence proves that the name Vọng Cổ was found very early (1926) and during that time the name was used interchangeably, there was no distinction between Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang, and Vọng Cổ until 1935. Only at that time, there was a common understanding of what is Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang and what is Vọng Cổ.

Taking all these considerations and discussions into account, it is possible to summarize the milestones of the time of writing of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang as follows:

- 1917-1918, conceived and drafted a 22-sentence and two-tone set.
- 1919, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was a completed draft.
- Mid-Autumn Festival, 1919, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was created (version one), having 20 sentences, each with two beats.
- Around the end of 1919, the first editing started as well as disseminating some sections of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version two).
- 1920, this edition was completed and officially disseminated as " Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang " (version three).
- From 1923 onwards: renamed on the song Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang.
- About 1926 the song changed the name to Vọng Cổ.

For a long time when the details have not been clarified yet, many researchers looked at this problem from different angles such as the case at the time of drafting, at the time of publication, at the time of finalizing the work in order to determine the year of creation. The birth of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang is, therefore, inconsistent throughout academic and scholarly literature in this matter.

The results of the research are also preliminary, suggestive in tracing as well as contributing to unravel the issues surrounding the earliest Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang. It is hoped that this brief elaboration will be a reference of interest to everyone.

## REFERENCES

- Cao Kiến Thiết. 2009. Ba tôi với sự ra đời bản Dạ cổ hoài lang. *Vọng mãi bản Dạ cổ hoài lang*. Bạc Liêu: Sở VH TT&DL Bạc Liêu, 61-69.
- Cao Văn Bình. 2010. Quê hương Bạc Liêu trong cuộc đời và sự nghiệp của cố nhạc sĩ Cao Văn Lầu. *90 Năm - Bản Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang*, Bạc Liêu: Sở VH TT&DL, 127-136.
- Cao Văn Lầu. 1963. "Bản Vọng cổ ngày nay là đứa con chung của quý vị". Newspaper *Dân quyền*, 21 November, 1963. Further information at [https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao\\_V%C4%83n\\_L%E1%BA%A7u](https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao_V%C4%83n_L%E1%BA%A7u), last visited 24 November, 2019.
- Dương Bích Hà. 1997. *Lý Huế*. Hà Nội: NXB Âm nhạc.
- Jähnichen, Gisa (2014). Melodic Relativisation of Speech Tones in Classical Vietnamese Singing: The Case of Many Voices. *Jahrbuch des Phonogrammarchivs der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 4. Göttingen: Cuvillier., 180–194.
- Jähnichen, Gisa. 1997. Studien zu traditionellen vietnamesischen Instrumentalpraktiken des HAT A DAO und des CA VONG CO (Habil.). *Schriften und Dokumente zur Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur Vietnams*, Nr.7, 2 vol.

- Lư Nhất Vũ and Lê Giang. 1983. *Tìm hiểu dân ca Nam Bộ*. Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: NXB Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.
- Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh. 2018. *Bước đường của Cải lương*, nxb Tổng hợp Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.
- Sỹ Tiên. 1984. *Bước đầu tìm hiểu sân khấu Cải lương*. Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: NXB Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.
- Trần Phước Thuận. 2010. “Bút tích của ông Cao Văn Lầu qua bản Dạ cổ hoài lang”. *90 năm - bản Dạ cổ hoài lang*. Bạc Liêu: Sở VH TT & DL Bạc Liêu, 69-76.
- Trần Phước Thuận. 2014. *Tìm hiểu cổ nhạc Bạc Liêu*. Bạc Liêu: NXB Âm nhạc Liên hiệp Hội VHNT tỉnh Bạc Liêu.
- Tran Quang Hai. N.d. Collection of online material under <https://tranquanghai.info/v1/p1853-trinh-thien-tu-%3A-tieu-su-bai-vong-co.html> referring to <http://www.vnhoathinhdon.net/giangtuyen/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1278>, last visited 24 November, 2019.
- Trần Tự Thành. 1923. Bài ca Lục Vân Tiên. Mỹ Tho: Imprimerie Provinciale
- Trần Văn Khai. 1970. *Nghệ thuật sân khấu Việt Nam*. Sài Gòn: Nhà Sách Khai Trí.
- Trịnh Thiên Tư (1962), *Ca nhạc cổ điển điệu Bạc Liêu*. Bạc Liêu: NXB Quốc Hoa Bạc Liêu.
- Trương Bình Tòng. 1997. *Nghệ thuật cải lương những trang sử*. Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: Viện Sân khấu.
- Vũ Văn Thiện. 1963. “Bạc Liêu, Vọng cổ và Sáu Lầu”, báo *Dân quyền*, 23 and 24 November, 1963.

## AUDIO RECORDINGS

- Record of the company Pathé, opera Kim Vân Kiều, fourth scene, *Vọng cổ hoài lang*, HAI CÚC performs, Number 44623, Theatre group Cải lương của Thầy NĂM TÚ in Mỹ Tho (1922-1928).
- Audio Cassette with the recorded interview containing the part of CAO VĂN LẦU, Sài Gòn, 1963.

**Kiều Tấn** is a musician, musicologist, researcher, music journalist, and composer working and living in Ho Chi Minh City.

**Contact:** kieuangsg[ ]gmail.com

# OBSERVING A PANG THEN RITUAL OF THE TÀY PEOPLE IN NORTHERN VIETNAM

Phạm Minh Hương and Nguyễn Thủy Tiên

## Abstract

This brief paper introduces and discusses the observation of a Then Ritual that is part of the belief system among some Tày People in Lào Cai Province, Vietnam.

Having had the opportunity to observe a very auspicious *Pang Then* ritual, the main parts of the ritual are here briefly described and commented. Some interviews helped find a realistic view on the future of preservation and the way fieldwork can be done that is of the benefit of the people as well as of the researchers.

## Keywords

Vietnam, Pang Then, Tày People, Ritual Music, Fieldwork

## INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is home to a number of diverse people using different languages, with a varying cultural background, and their specific belief system (Đỗ Thị Hòa 2004). Each of them performs what those people agree upon is traditional culture. The belief culture plays a significant role in those people's life. The term *Then* refers to a ritual closely related to the belief system of the Tày, Nùng, and Thái people who are still living in the mountainous provinces of northern Vietnam.

The *Then* rituals are seemingly indispensable in the spiritual life of the named communities<sup>1</sup> and mark important events of each family. The communities of some Tày, Nùng, and Thái people organize the *Then* rituals based on different purposes, such as praying for good crops, praying for safety, celebrating a newly constructed house, celebrating a wedding, praying for a baby, praying for good health, or praying for a good medical treatment. Each community relies on a *Then* master. *Then* masters are in charge of performing these specific rituals. Some people of the community believe and support this believe with numerous stories that *Then* masters have a special competence to communicate with deities, and, therefore, they can make their prayers come true.

## SOME ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Despite the *Then* rituals held for the communities, there are also some organized for major events during the learning processes on the way of becoming *Then* masters. For example, a *Then* ritual to officially recognize a person and allow him/her to take up the *Then* profession, or a *Then* ritual to upgrade the level of a *Then* master, and a *Then* ritual held for a *Then* master who wishes to resign because of an advanced age, all these rituals are considered to be high ranking *Then* rituals. These rituals are supposed as great *Then* days and mark very happy days of the entire village. A ritual usually lasts from three to five days with the participation and witness of *Then* practitioners all coming from the community and nearby places.

---

<sup>1</sup> The communities mentioned are still living quite isolated and in their traditional geographical boundaries. However, it is already an idealizing view since not all young people stay in the villages or small hamlets and take up a profession far from their communities. This paper has to consider these cases, that will be investigated in the near future.

## PREPARING THE OBSERVATION

Each *Then* ritual integrates music, dance, fine arts, and language. Thanks to these components, that were already part of earlier studies (Bế Việt Đăng 1992, Norton 2002, Nguyễn Thị Yên 2007, Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2013, Jähnichen 2016) it is easier to understand the outlook on life, to some extent the changing worldview, and the specific aesthetics of some *Tày*, *Nùng*, and *Thái* people in the northern part of Vietnam. Below is a great *Then* ritual – the *Pang Then* ritual (level upgrading) of a young *Then* master. He belongs to the *Tày* people and lives in the district Văn Bàn of Lào Cai province, Vietnam.

## THE THEN MASTER

*Then* Master Chu Hồng Phương was born on 19 July, 1994. In accordance to a ‘*căn số*’ which is a foresight of one’s destiny based on family roots he became a *Then* master in the year 2011. Until 2017, he cured medically 338 children and nearly two thousand people invited him to hold *Then* rituals at their private houses, which was an enormous effort. Through this experience, *Then* Master Chu Hồng Phương reached a certain reputation and was going to organize the *Pang* great ritual, also considered a *Pang Then* ritual. After holding such a ritual, a *Then* Master is believed to have more power, and the number of ghost soldiers and horses will increase to support his professional practice as a *Then* Master.

One day prior to the great *Pang Then* ritual, people set up and decorate the *Xăng bjoóc* tree at the *Then* Master’s home. According to a deeply rooted traditional conception, this tree is to mark, protect, and embrace offerings that link the dead and living beings of the world. Under the tree, people set up their farming products which will be later offered by the *Then* master to the realm of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

The official ritual takes place during the following three days with support of a invited *Mật* master who has enough power to upgrade the *Then* master’s level. The assistants of the *Mật* master, including a person blowing the *pí* (a free-reed aerophone that is often a byproduct of *khen* making<sup>3</sup>) and secondly a female, called *Náng Mật*, have to help in the ceremony. Some female assistants are also called Misses *Then*. They dance and play in an ensemble some musical instruments such as the *bằng bu* (a bamboo slab), and a drum.

## THE RITUAL

The beginning of the *Pang Then* consists of a series of acts on the first day: *Lễ cúng Thổ công, Thành hoàng làng, gia tiên dòng họ của thầy Then* [the rituals to worship the Local God, the God-like village’s Protector, and the family ancestors of the *Then* master]. Master *Mo*, who was chosen to take over this role, performs these rituals outdoors for the purpose of asking the family’s permission to organize the upgrading *Pang Then* ritual.

The *Pang Then* ritual starts formally with a journey during which the *Then* master and his soldiers bring offerings to the deities in the realm of the Heaven. The path is comprised of sections. It is told by the present community members that, normally, each day is a section of the long road.

Section 1: The *Then* master and soldiers go to meet the representative of the realm of Heaven (Quan Hành khiển), asking for permission to upgrade the *Then* master’s level and to wear a level-upgrading Mandarin dress.

---

<sup>2</sup> Similar observations can be made in other contexts within the northern part of Vietnam described by Enders (2008) and by Norton (2002).

<sup>3</sup> *Khen* (mouthorgan) playing among some people in the northern part of Vietnam is still quite common. If one of the pipes was not fitting well into a wind chest, then this pipe, called *pí*, is either used as toy or is taken up by a ritual assistant to accompany a ceremonial act.



Section 2: The *Then* master and soldiers go to the realm of Heaven, reporting the progenitor to hold the *Pang Then* ritual.

Section 3: The *Then* master and soldiers go to the realm of Heaven, asking permission of the *Nam Tào* Mandarin, who is in charge of the constellation in the northern hemisphere, to upgrade the professional level of the *Then* master.

Participants of the *Then* ritual together with the *Mật* and the *Then* master also include a group of people dancing specific dances such as *múa khăn*, *múa kiếm*, *múa ma hình* [dancing with handkerchiefs and swords, dancing with the rattle sticks]. These people are also playing the *bằng bu*, and the *đâm đuống*, which is a form of rice pounding within a boat-shaped mortar performed during important festivities. This dancing group, according to the *Then*'s understanding, paves the way for *Then* soldiers to reach their destination in a safe way. After the completion of worship and praying, the *Then* soldiers and villagers start the next part of the festivities. They sing, dance, and drink “tube wine” around the *xăng bjoóc* tree. All people express their great happiness.



**Figure 1: An important moment in the ritual process (photo courtesy of Nguyễn Danh Long).**

The *Then* Master together with the people dance and perform working processes and games of their daily life as farmers and craftsmen, for example tilling, selling, picking bamboo sprouts, or playing with the *còn*, a specific shuttlecock, which is thrown like a ball and is richly decorated, sphere-shaped, and made from knots of colorful cloths. Next, people take down the trays and bags with offerings, vying for objects hung on the tree, throwing eggs and flowers to each other to try for good fortune. The great *Pang Then* ritual finishes in this way.



**Figure 2: The tools of a *Then* Master. (photo courtesy of Nguyễn Danh Long).**

In today's practice, people are spontaneously preserving and maintaining the *Then* rituals among their small communities. In order to organize a *Pang Then* ritual successfully as it was observed, neighbors and villagers have to go to the *Then* master's house some months earlier in order to be ready for preparing this special ritual.

The *Then* Master's family pays the total expenses of this ritual including the offerings and the food for the feast that will be consumed by the villagers (in this case, it was around 10,000 USD). The *Then* Master and all villagers are glad to have each other and their festivities, since their community is closer and closer after each time joining a *Then* ritual.

## FURTHER FUNCTION OF THE RITUAL

People not only preserve rituals but separate the unique art forms, especially the performing arts, from the conducting of *Then* ritual as part of their belief system. The music and dance are used as a form of entertainment in daily life, it is now called the *Then* singing and the *Tính* lute music. Vietnam organized six national festivals of *Then* singing and *Tính* lute playing in the time period between 2005 and 2018. The festivals included professional and amateur artists, who showcased their skills, and the *Then* Masters. A *Then* singing and *Tính* lute festival is a place for performance of beautiful musical pieces and dances deriving from the *Then* belief ritual. The pieces presented may be rather as used in the communities or adapted arrangements. Additionally, there are new works composed on the basis of some fragments of the *Then* tunes that have also been performed in the festivals.

The 2017 general inventory of *Then* heritage practices in Vietnam lists a total number of *Then* masters: 802 artists (221 male masters and 581 female ones). In Vietnam, 127 groups and clubs with more than three thousand professionals and amateurs know how to perform *Then* singing and *Tính* lute playing. All prove the vitality of this unique art that has its roots in the belief system still practiced among some Tày, Nùng, and Thái communities of Vietnam. Hopefully, the *Then* art of the Tày, Nùng, and Thái ethnic groups will be recognized by UNESCO in their Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity.

However, the main point of the observation undertaken was the fact that this ritual as well as all connected activities are despite all changes and social re-interpretations are alive and spread a big part of happiness among their participants.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The entire analysis and this paper are an activity contributing to the project “Urgent solutions to preserve and promote the values of traditional music of minorities in Vietnam”, implemented by researchers from the Vietnamese Institute of Musicology, Hanoi, Vietnam from 2017 – 2019.

## REFERENCES

- Bé Viêt Đăng. 1992. Các dân tộc Tày – Nùng ở Việt Nam [The Tay and the Nung Minorities in Vietnam]. Hanoi: Insitute of Ethnology.
- Đỗ Thị Hòa. 2004. Văn hóa các dân tộc Việt Nam [Cultures of Minorities in Vietnam]. Hanoi: Department of Minority Cultures.
- Endres, K. W. 2008. Engaging the Spirits of the Dead: Soul-calling Rituals and the Performative Construction of Efficacy. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14 (4): 755–773.
- Jähnichen Gisa. (吉娅•贾妮珍) 2016. 文化音乐学视角下的少数民族与遗产议题 [Minority and Cultural Heritage Issues from a Musicological Perspective]. 民族艺术 [National Arts], 1/2016: 141-155.
- Norton, Barley. 2002. The Moon Remembers Uncle Ho: The Politics of Music and Mediumship in Northern Vietnam. *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 11 (1): 71–100.
- Nguyễn Thị Yên. 2007. *Then Tày*. Hanoi: Vietnamese Institute of Cultural Research.
- Szymańska-Matusiewicz, Grażyna. 2013. Is Ancestor Worship a Vietnamese Tradition? *Asian Anthropology*, 12 (2): 156-171. DOI: 10.1080/1683478X.2013.833041

**Phạm Minh Hương and Nguyễn Thủy Tiên**, are both working at the Vietnamese Institute for Musicology in Hanoi, Vietnam.

**Contact to the authors:** thuytien.hanoi[ @ ]gmail.com

# CHANGES IN MUSIC PRACTICES OF THE H' RÊ PEOPLE IN QUẢNG NGÃI PROVINCE

Nguyễn Thế Truyền

## Abstract

This paper explores the changes of music practices conducted by the H' rê people in Quảng Ngãi, Vietnam, which are highly impacted by a rapid globalization. In particular, two important issues are observed: One are changes in musical instruments, comprising changes in strings, changes in air tubes and resonance boxes. The other is the change in the entire music culture surrounding traditions such as the gradually or completely evolved disappearance of musical and non-musical functions, the shrinking common understanding of traditions, the counter-establishment of new popular music, and changes related to the communal environment. Discussing these issues, this contribution is to reveal several causes and to promote traditional values of the H' rê people in Quảng Ngãi province, Vietnam.

**Keywords:** H' rê, Music Practices, Traditional Ethics, Quảng Ngãi Province.

## INTRODUCTION

The H' rê people live in the Trường Sơn - Tây Nguyên area, belonging to the Môn - Khmer language group and the South Asian linguistic family.<sup>1</sup> The number of H' rê people living in Vietnam is in the middle field of all counted different ethnic groups. H' rê people live mainly in the mountainous areas of Quảng Ngãi province, in the east of the Trường Sơn mountain range, concentrated in the river basin of the Rvá River (Minh Long), Lien River, H' rê River (Ba Tơ), or Rhê River (Sơn Hà). In addition, H' rê people also reside in An Lão district (in Bình Định province), Kon Plong district (in Kon Tum province) and some parts of Bình Thuận province.

Previously, in the time before 1975, the H' rê people were called by some other names: Mọi<sup>2</sup> Đá Vách, Mọi Sơn Phòng, Thượng Ba Tơ, Mọi Lũy, Chom, Chăm Rê, Chăm Quảng Ngãi. The people called themselves by the name of the river in the area. In An Lão (in Bình Định) there is the Đinh River, called "Nước Đinh"; in Minh Long (in Quảng Ngãi) there is the Rvá river, called "Rvá"; in Sơn Hà (in Quảng Ngãi), there is the Kré river, so, the people called themselves "the Kré people"; In Ba Tơ (in Quảng Ngãi), there is Liên river, so, they called themselves "Lien people" and along the H' rê river, they called themselves "H' rê people". The group along the H' rê River is more crowded (*Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam's Southern Provinces*. 1984).

The Trường Sơn - Tây Nguyên cultural space experiences special attention since many people living there are culturally endangered. Music and dance are well studied and results have to lead to recommendations that put the people's values at the center of decision making.

The people living in Quảng Ngãi are mentioned earliest in Lê Quý Đôn's (1726 - 1784) classical report *Phủ biên tạp lục*, vol.1. Then, in *Đại Nam thực lục* (frontier) (Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi

---

<sup>1</sup> Ethnic groups are determined by their distinct languages. In this paper, other than language differences cannot be considered since it is about recent developments and many people already merged with or moved to other groups of people sharing a joint territory in rural or urban areas of present-day Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> "Mọi" comes with the meaning "the wilds of".

- 1970) (3), and also in *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*, vol.5. All these classical works were published in the 1970s.

In the first half of the twentieth century, there were a number of French researchers, who wrote ethnographic notes about the savage people of the Quảng Ngãi region (H. Haguet 1905; H. Maitre 1912).

Much later, there were published compilations by Nguyễn Trắc Dĩ (1972) under the title *Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities (Origins and Customs)*.

All these sources have provided valuable information on habits, customs, and religious beliefs of the people living in the Highlands of Vietnam, including the H'rê people.

After 1975, many studies on the Trường Sơn - Tây Nguyên people were conducted, such as: *Ethnic minorities of Vietnam's Southern Provinces* by the Institute of Ethnology in 1984 and a book about the *Cultural Life of Ethnic Minorities in Quảng Ngãi Province* edited by Tạ Hiền Minh who gathered writings of some other authors with support of the Office for Culture and Information of Quảng Ngãi in 1996. This book is dedicated to the cultural life of three people in Quảng Ngãi: Co và Xơ Đăng. It consists of five chapters: Quảng Ngãi Mountains, its Nature and Population, Production Culture, Culture as a Guarantee of Life, Culture and Social Norms, and Cognitive Culture. In the chapters mentioned, previous literature was carefully reviewed and re-researched in addition to the fieldwork undertaken.

The book "*Quảng Ngãi - Country - People - Culture*", edited by Bùi Hồng Nhân, Office for Culture and Information of Quảng Ngãi in 2001 has 3 parts, which are "Country", "People", and "Culture" that are embracing the entire territory of the people and their culture in Quảng Ngãi. It is a valuable document.

Documents further relating to H'rê music were written by Lê Huy and Minh Hiến (1994), who unfortunately did not mention the H'rê people as their writing concerns the entire country in which H'rê people might not have been very influential. But, introducing a number of Musical Instruments in Vietnam, Tô Ngọc Thanh (1995) at least mentioned some musical instruments and refers to similarities between instruments. Despite these few basic sources, there is a journal article by Nguyễn Thế Truyền (2000) on H'rê folk music that might be quite substantial and another writing by Lê Toàn (2001) in the *Academic Bulletin of the Music Institute in Hanoi*. This is a document about H'rê music, on which the author spent a lot of time surveying and recording with a team about ethnic minority areas in western Quảng Ngãi during the years 2000-2001. In 2010, another important source of knowledge became the book "*Instruments of the H'rê people in Quảng Ngãi*" by Nguyễn Thế Truyền who was supported by the Vietnam Folk Arts Association, and its Culture and Information Publishing House. This book, is a fairly complete and detailed monograph about H'rê musical instruments. However, the issues of the changes in these musical instruments used by the H'rê community have not yet been addressed.

This current study introduces music practices of the H'rê people that are still present in the places of Quảng Ngãi and in concentrated places, where they still live on under communal conditions and remember past music practices. Studying the evolution of H'rê music over a longer period of time, throughout different spaces, as well as in the context of globalization and technology 4.0 may impact a better understanding of today's developments.

Here, are applied interdisciplinary research methods of ethnography, anthropology, and music analysis such as open surveys, fieldwork observations, personal interviews with H'rê musicians.

During the last decades, music practices of the H'rê people changed tremendously. In this paper, two issues are looked at: 1) instrumental music, and 2) the transformation of the entire musical culture.



**FIGURE 1: The traditional stilt house of the H'rê people in Teng village, Ba Thanh, Ba Tơ district (photo by the author).**

### **SOME CHANGES IN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

The acculturation process can be clearly observed are shown in specific strings, musical instruments and resonators of some musical instruments. These changes are often interpreted as scientific and technological achievements.

#### ***Variation in Strings***

According to the older musician and instrument maker Đinh Ngọc Su (born in 1943) in Tà Pa village, Sơn Thượng commune, Sơn Hà district and Đinh Văn Uoc (born in 1946) in Ba Tơ town, Ba Tơ district, the H'rê used *k'jăh* (a kind of forest rope), or cat intestine to make strings for the *rođoang*, *k'rau*, *b'rooc*. Then they switched to using iron wire (guitar strings, telephone wires). Now, many of use nylon strings (nylon guitar strings or fishing threads, which is that type of threads bought per meter and being also used to knit fishing nets).



**FIGURE 2: The *rođoang* is made by Đinh Văn Ước (photo by the author).**

The replacement of these types of wires is not only a matter of material but also causes profound changes in their music. When performing, each type of strings will bring a different timbre and volume results.

String material won from rotang, and also cat intestines will give fuzzy sounds that do not much resonate with the soundbox. Moreover, because the strings may have inconsistent diameters and differ in their

thickness even in short segments of the same string, they do not sound in the right pitch or volume, as they should do according to present-day expectations.

Iron strings have a much clearer sound, they are rich in overtones and resonant, but the sound seems less warm and deep.



**FIGURE 3: The *k'râu* tree of the H'rê (photo by the author).**

Nylon material is not as good as iron strings, but it sounds warmer and deeper in timbre. This kind of sound, is seemingly more suitable for the lyrical, charming love songs that are expected. Therefore, it is on purpose that the H'rê instrument makers and musicians choose this type of material for strings.



**FIGURE 4: *B'rooc* of the H'rê (photo by the author).**

### ***Changes in Air Tubes and Resonator Boxes***

Recently, there have been cases where plastic pipes (water pipes) were used to replace bamboo pipes. There exist a two-pipe-set called *vàpút* (2 bamboo pipes), a three-pipe-set called *pênhpút* (3 bamboo pipes), and the five-pipe-set called *akhung* (5 bamboo pipes).





**FIGURE 5: *Vápút* performance (photo by the author).**

In case that plastic tubes replace the bamboo pipes of the above instruments, the sound is affected. It is obviously less clear.



**FIGURE 6: *Akhung* performance (photo by the author).**

Through some interviews, the musicians answered all the same way, because this item has a shape similar to many other instruments.

In the Son Hà District Art Festival (Quảng Ngãi) in 2003, a case of musicians was encountered who were replacing the resonator box (usually the gourd) of the *b'rooc* and *k'râu* with an aluminum tin can. After doing so, they were pleased because the sound was strange, bright, and metallic. However, according to the musicians observed, this replacement makes the sound of the instruments slightly lifeless and less lyrical.

This seems to be a way to satisfy the curiosity and hunger for discoveries of the young artists. However, in these cases, if used for communal repertoire, no material can replace the traditional material, because it is strange to the sound of the H'rê.

## CHANGES IN MUSIC CULTURE

In the process of development, songs of daily use among the H'rê sung in their language changed in some aspects as in the following. These changes, which affected the text of songs and the skills to accompany them by the H'rê musicians, led to a complete loss of some and the transition into pop music for some others.

### *The Change of Circumstances Leading to the Current Situation*

The research revealed that there are some H'rê musical instruments that have now disappeared. For example, the *vâk k'jeo* (wind bell), *k'la jec* (water instrument), *chinh k'vanjar*, *ling la*, *ravai*, and 8-gong-set. These instruments, could only be traced through the stories of aged villagers or through books written far earlier. In today's life, they do not exist practically.

#### *Vâk k'jeo* (wind bell)

The wind bell was actually the "astronomical and meteorological station" that initially served the H'rê people as the weather forecast. So far, it has completely disappeared and has been replaced by radio, television, mobile phones, defacto the internet, to which everyone can see or listen to weather forecasts.

#### *K'la jec* (water instrument)

The water instrument, was in fact one of the earliest irrigations and farming tools used by the H'rê people. It is, so far, completely gone. The water instrument, a system of tubes placed in a way that leads water from a higher level to a lower level and had a typical sound if the balance was given and had a strange sound or no sound if there was a problem, are replaced by irrigation canals and water pumps.

#### *Chinh k'van*

Through the story of the Đinh Ngọc Su in Tà Pa settlement, Sơn Thượng village, Sơn Hà community, Quảng Ngãi, district, this was briefly described as follows: *chinh k'van* consists of 3 small bamboo segments, a performance must have 3 people playing it. The way of use and the patterns of playing are already unknown.

#### *Ling la, ravai and gong (8 pieces)*

In the Book of Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam's Southern Provinces (1984) of the Institute of Ethnology, is written about a number of instrumental music of the H'rê: "*Ling la* is like a bamboo flute, *ravai* is structured in a humble way". This description is rather not clear. Also, "In some upland areas, the H'rê have a *ching* dance with eight gongs holding the beat." Cannot help much in reconstructing the lost items.

During fieldwork, these instruments were not seen. Although research in the region was often supported by state institution<sup>3</sup> which helped in the search, there had to be realized that the instruments named *ling la*, *ravai*, *chiêng* (8 pieces) of the H'rê, as this book stated, have likely been lost to the musical life of this community and to humankind.

Regarding the text-bound songs, singing *kaêh* (children's singing) of the H'rê children has died out for a long time. According to the observation, at least through the gaze of the generation of grandparents today, children do no longer sing the same songs. However, the children of the H'rê people do sing and

---

<sup>3</sup> Collaboration was conducted with the following institutions: Music Institute (Vietnam National Academy of Music), Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism), Voice of Vietnam, Vietnam Television, Da Nang Television, Quảng Ngãi Radio and Television Station and a number of foreign research groups (such as the Study Expedition in Ethnology, led by Prof. Tamura Jumi

singing is one of the attractive activities. On the contrary, the young pupils and students participate a lot in popular Vietnamese singing programs organized by the school and some local teams.

### ***Narrowing Repertoires***

Along with the socio-economic development seasonal music practices disappear such as: *Túc k'oa* (Frog jumping), *Tuc h'lay* (Voice of the waterfall), *Tuc tuguoc* (Rainy bird sounds); Sing song (*t'jeo*), crying-singing (*taoi*), singing lullaby (*vađôcon*), singing love songs (*taleu*), singing stories (*tamon*) (equivalent to epic *khan* singing of some people inhabiting the Central Highlands). These practices are diminished or significantly eroded.

For example, singing *kachoi* is a genre only for adults, that is to talk about teaching their children, to care for a wife and a husband. This type of songs, so far, has died out.

Fieldwork and researches made obvious that it is increasingly rare for H'rê boys and girls to chat in their mother tongue. Thereby, it was also said that singing traditional songs in H'rê language takes place naturally during community activities, but this were very rare.

### ***Current Popular Music***

Currently, the main instrumental music called according to the instruments used *chinh*, *tàvố*, *b'rooc* và hát *talêu*, of the H'rê are popular in terms of being wide spread. There are two ways of caring about popular music practices: participating and consuming.

#### ***Participation***

Direct dissemination of popular music practices takes place when musicians in the area are teaching and when people directly participate in performances of the arts and culture programs at district, provincial, and national levels. For example, in the past years, cultural houses in H'rê districts organized teaching lessons of traditional music. These classes have been taught directly by excellent musicians such as Đinh Ngọc Su, and Đinh Văn Ước. In addition to this teaching, some musicians also directly participate in performances on many different occasions. Specifically, cultural festivals of districts, Quảng Ngãi province, cultural festivals of ethnic minorities nationwide, or the Tây Nguyên gong festival and performances of folk musical instruments in Korea in 2010, 2011, among others.

#### ***Consumption***

In addition to the direct and most popular way above, H'rê musical instruments are also popularized through indirect means. One of the most effective indirect ways is through channels of broadcasting and television stations. For many years, broadcast programs on music culture with H'rê people singing their songs on Quảng Ngãi Radio and Television, have contributed to indirectly disseminating some cultural and musical values of the H'rê people, who could follow the current development and fast changing public taste through modern mass media.

### ***Changes Related to Social Environment***

The exchange and transformation of the H'rê folk music relates to the social environment and the specific cultural space. The changes in function and method are quite profound in this process. Currently, due to the social encouragement to preserve and promote cultural heritage, the musical instruments might be restored in the near future.

### ***Changes in Function***

Changes in musical functions of instrumental music of the H'rê people can be seen in the following cases:

#### *From performance function to display function*

Once upon a time, the instrumental music of the H'rê was designed to be performed for their own spiritual life. However, since recent years, these instruments have been used for display and introduction into traditional houses, museums, resorts and some coffee shops. Here only some instruments are preferred such as *b'rooc* and *k'rau*.

#### *From inside community performances to outside community performances*

H'rê musical instruments are associated with the cultural environment of the community, even it is associated with each individual, such as the *b'rooc* and *k'rau*. The inclusion of these values on stage, in official meetings, conferences, reviews, or introductions of non-musical events, or promotion purposes in some tourist areas, this function is transformed: from a performance in the community to a performance outside the community.

### ***Basic Changes***

Some changes in the music practices of the H'rê people are very easily to observe. One is the simple duration of a performance item.

These changes are affecting everything though they are basic.

#### *Changes in the duration of the lesson*

H'rê instrumental music was usually performed by musicians who did not pay much attention to the duration of the performance. They only stopped when they were tired or could not play anymore or they felt challenged and were exchanged with another player. Going to the stage to perform, made the repertoire of instrumental music be mutilated and broken to fit the prescribed program that is constructed by people who, from their side, do not care about these preconditions. This way is contradicting the imagination of the H'rê people and their musicians. This approach degrades the musicians to become passive and losing their passion.

#### *Changes in the song of music*

The change in music functions, performers, performance space, duration of performances has resulted in:

The elasticity of the song is due to fact that these music practices are put on an anonymous stage.

The complexity in the performance changes and requires players changing into rather passive performers. This change, which inadvertently caused the previous "attention" of acting to be damaged. In the performance of instrumental ensemble music, the "intention" of the musicians is very important. These people were often in the same *p'lây*<sup>4</sup> and usually often act together, so, the performance was smooth and could reach sophistication. This perfection, certainly cannot be trained overnight. Therefore, in these cases, the music practices of the H'rê people are not unique anymore. In response to stage performances, recruiting and integrating actors in different areas is unavoidable. In addition, organizers

---

<sup>4</sup> *p'lây* = group of musicians that knows each other, friends, family members, the meaning of coming from the same village.

tend to choose beautiful young actors from different locations, rather than talented musicians to build stage performances according to their view on what is “beautiful”.

Doing this, has something and misses something: The thing is the wider spreading of musical skills in that communal environment, needs actors from areas with cultural exchange conditions. But it is not possible to have good and excellent performances of the H'rê, because the “well-meaning” actors have no chance to play in the same ‘village’ (*p'lây*).

The many H'rê students in ‘ethnic minority boarding schools’ of Quảng Ngãi province also unknowingly change the musical values of their *p'lây* performance. While studying the presentation of the H'rê music practices in various districts of Quảng Ngãi province, it became obvious that the H'rê students who attended ethnic minority boarding schools in the province (this is a very large number of people compared to the entire H'rê population) is one of the direct causes that can change cultural values of the H'rê in their *p'lays* performances. Over the years of studying in the provincial capital, the H'rê students have acquired another direction and were driven into many streams of Western music. Many students have become organ or guitar playing musicians and creating programs very professionally. After graduation, these people returned to their modern *p'lays* and became the “nucleus” or “the art scholars” of the locality. This is only a very understandable development following the expectations of the given social environment.

The performance space of the H'rê instrumental music is in houses on stilts or in front of them on the verandah, in their *p'lays*, their new fields ... In Quảng Ngãi, every year, under the slogan “Come once come every time”, there are often organized performances in order to foster cultural exchanges among communes and districts. The transformation of their performance space is reflected in these performances and in the repertoire. In addition, the performance space of the H'rê musical instruments may even expand into other provinces and cities throughout the country and abroad.

## CONCLUSION

Although there is a will to spread widely, some musical practices, especially instrumental music of the H'rê people is still declining in community life. During some seasonal festivals, happy days, and weddings, musical activities are missing. Instead, there are electronic sounds of instruments as they are used by the Vietnamese majority such as organ, electronic guitar, or electronic drumset. Currently, most young H'rê people are less interested in the music of their community and its past times. Following this momentum, the risk of the disappearance of H'rê music practices is inevitable.

The changes related to the social environment are also expressed in terms of property ownership. Most musicians make their own instruments, except in the case of the *chinh* or *k'rengneng* (rattles), they must buy materials or trade from other places, so the H'rê instruments became a personal property. The state, organizations buy H'rê musical instruments to display them in museums, cultural and information centers, resorts, and some other places. This changes the way these instruments are built and it is a transformation related to the current social environment.

Luckily, the encouragement to preserve cultural heritage taking many examples throughout the country as a model, some musical instruments, but also figures, pins, frames, and fabrics will be restored in the near future.

The mountainous region of Quảng Ngãi is a place where people suffer many hardships and where people still have a good memory about the suffering from the wars. During this time, they had few conditions to organize traditional festivals, as well as other types of cultural activities. Due to the war, in many cases, the H'rê people had to live away from their hometown, so there was a lack of closeness and

community cohesion. A number of generations of H'rê people is born during the war, so there are few opportunities to stick with their traditional cultural capital.

Currently, the issue of cultural changes has been appeared very actively and strongly. This has led to the situation that some cultural values underwent a profound transformation, which is a challenge not only for H'rê music practices, but also for the music practices in general.

## REFERENCES

- Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam's Southern Provinces*. 1984. Edited by the Institute of Ethnology. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 117-127.
- Lê Quý Đôn. 1977. *Phu biên tạp lục* (vol 1). Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- National history of the *Nguyen* dynasty. 1970. *Dai Nam thục lục* (frontier). Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, n.p.
- National Historical History of the Nguyễn Dynasty. 1970. *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* (volume 5), Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 356-357.
- Haguet, H. 1905. *Noitice ethnique sur les Moi de la région de Quảng Ngãi* (Ethnographic record of Moi people of Quảng Ngãi area), *Revue Indochinoise*.
- Maitre H. 1912 *Les jungles Moi*. Paris: unknown publisher.
- Nguyen Trac Di. 1972. *Ethnic Minorities of Vietnam (Origins and Customs)*. Saigon: Ministry of Ethnic Minority Development.
- Nguyễn Thế Truyền. 2000. H'rê Folk Music. *Journal of Culture and Arts (December issue)*: n.p.
- Ta Hien Minh, ed. 1996. *Cultural Life of Ethnic Minorities in Quảng Ngãi Province*. Quảng Ngãi: Office for Culture and Information.
- Bui Hong Nhan, ed. 2001. *Quảng Ngãi: Country - People – Culture*. Quảng Ngãi: Office for Culture and Information.
- Le Huy and Minh Hien. 1994. *Vietnam's Traditional Instruments*. Hanoi: World Publishing House.
- To Ngọc Thanh. 1995. *Introduction of Some Ethnic Musical Instruments of Vietnam*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ethnic Culture Center, Art Publishing House.
- Le Toan, 2001, Cadong, Co, H'rê Folk Music and Dance in Quảng Ngãi Province. *Academic Bulletin* 5. Hanoi: Vietnamese Music Institute, 32-62.
- Nguyễn Thế Truyền. 2000. Âm nhạc dân gian người H'rê. *Tạp chí Văn hóa Nghệ thuật, Hà Nội*, tháng 12: n.p.
- Nguyễn Thế Truyền. 2003. *Interview with Đinh Ngọc Su and Đinh Văn Ước*. Quảng Ngãi.

Dr. **Nguyễn Thế Truyền** was born in 1965 in Quảng Ngãi province. Currently, he is living and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He is a lecturer at the University of Ho Chi Minh City, Conservatory of Music, and in charge of music editing in South Vietnam. He is working for the Culture and Arts Magazine, published by the Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism.

**Contact:** thetruyenvhnt[[@](mailto:thetryenvhnt@gmail.com)]gmail.com

# “MUSIC AS A GIFT FROM GOD”

## ON THE INDIGENIZATION OF SACRED MUSIC IN THE CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sun Yue [孙月]

### Abstract

Since the 20th century, the predecessors of the Chinese Christian Church began to research and compose Chinese sacred music with characteristics that were considered being ‘ethnic’. For the lack of audiovisual materials in pre-audio-technological China, we can only roughly assume that the possibility of hymn chanting has already appeared during the Tang Dynasty of the 7th century according to the Nestorian Stele found in Xi’an<sup>1</sup>. The introduction to Christianity will have to inevitably consider local conditions and customs, and it will have led to the development of an indigenized, national, and functional music used in the context of Christian religion. This article will discuss “the indigenization of sacred music in China” on its purpose and significance, the contemporary interpretations, and some aesthetic issues of composing and performing. Besides, a musical analysis will be given to the Chinese Christmas cantata *The Anointed* by Ma Geshun, which might be seen as a Chinese counterpart of Handel’s Messiah.

### Keywords

Sacred Music, Chinese Indigenization, *The Anointed*, Composition, Aesthetic Education

The indigenization of sacred music in China is no longer a new term. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Chinese Christian predecessors were dedicated to exploring and writing hymns with supposedly ethnic characteristics. Although the origin of Christianity is not to be found in China, its introduction and spread throughout the country will have to investigate some synergic effects with local customs and social practice, which may have led to the development of music serving a specific nationality and religious functionality in the history of China.

In recent years, the topic *Indigenization of Sacred Music* has been often discussed in circles of the Chinese Christian Church. On the one hand, there are governmental decrees and political needs, and on the other hand there are also considerations within the church's own direction of development. Based on a brief overview of the historical development of Christian sacred music in several time periods in China’s long history, this article attempts to combine the current problems and present situation of the Chinese Christian sacred music to explore the contemporary predicament and future prospects of the indigenizing construction.

## I. CHINESE INDIGENIZATION OF SACRED MUSIC: THE HISTORY AND PRESENT

According to historical documentations, Christian sacred music in the Chinese context can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty (Keevak, 2008), so there has been a long history of no less than 1300 years. However, with the change of dynasties and societies, the situation of Christian sacred music was very different in each time period. Considering the introduction of Protestantism into China, as well as the changes in the political system of modern Chinese and the most recent history, this paper will divide the historical time periods of Chinese Christian sacred music into four stages.

---

<sup>1</sup> 大秦景教流行中国碑. The Nestorian Stele documents “the Propagation in China of the *Jingjiao* (Luminous Religion) of *Daqin* (Roman Empire)” (Keevak, 2008).

## A. BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF PROTESTANTISM (FROM THE EIGHTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)

In view of the lack of audio materials in pre-audio-technological China, we can only roughly say that the possibility of singing hymns has appeared during the core time period of the Tang Dynasty, around when the famous Nestorian Stele was founded in 781. The earliest hymn that can be verified at present is the Nestorian Hymn *All Heav'n Worships in Great Awe* of the eighth century, which was belonging to the hymnal used in worship service during the Tang Dynasty and was translated by the Persian missionary Adam.<sup>2</sup> The content of the poem and the lyrics are in the form of seven-syllable rhymes with typical Chinese characteristics. Unfortunately, only the lyrics remained and traces of the music have long been lost.

During the Ming Dynasty of the early seventeenth century, the Italian missionary Matteo Ricci matched eight chapters of Christian rhythmic poems in Chinese with some Western tunes. He integrated them into a collection titled *Xiqin Quyì* (Songs with Clavichord). But there was still no further record of the musical structure, only the lyrics were handed down.

In the 1750s, the French Catholic Jesuit missionary, Qian Deming, introduced Chinese music to some places in the West and asked people to copy a batch of scores in both Chinese traditional musical notation *Gong Che* and European stave notation. One of them, called *Shengyue Jingpu* (Sacred Music with Scripture Score), is a Catholic hymn translated into Chinese. The tunes are said to be related to the traditional *Southern and Northern Drama Music*.<sup>3</sup>

## B. THE INDIGENIZATION ATTEMPTS OF CHRISTIAN SACRED MUSIC (FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY)

The earliest Protestant Chinese hymns appeared in the nineteenth century and were related to the time when Protestantism was introduced to China. Compared with the Catholic church, the Protestant church paid more attention to the music activities that were compatible with the local culture, extensively promoting the sacred music with a combination of popular Chinese tunes and language. These practices were probably consistent with the doctrines of Martin Luther, the former leader of the Protestant Reformation, who advocated sacred music close to believers' lives.

*Yangxin Shenshi*, is a collection of edifying hymns, published by the first Protestant missionary Englishman Robert Morrison in 1818. It contained 30 hymns that were translated from English verse poems and hymns. It was regarded as the first songbook of Chinese Protestant hymns. There was a proverb on the cover printed "Zhuangzi said: Many evil thoughts will be launched if you don't learn goodness in one day", which shows the very distinctive characteristics ascribed to other nationals. Since then, hymn collections from Christian churches throughout China have been compiled and published, including many of the same name, some dialect and phonetic editions. The main collections are summarized in Figure 1 as follows:<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Reportedly, the texts on the *Nestorian Stele* were written by Jin Jing [Adam] (Schmidt-Leukel & Gentz, 2013: 108).

<sup>3</sup> Chen (2006: 367-368).

<sup>4</sup> Chen (2006: 518-520).



Time	Editor(s)	Title	Venue	Qty.	Language	Type
1818	Robert Morrison	<i>Yangxin Shenshi</i>	Guangzhou	30	Chinese	Edifying hymns
1840	Walter Medhurst	<i>Yangxin Shenshi</i>		71	Chinese	Edifying hymns
1844	Divie Bethunc McCartee	McCartee Hymns			Ancient Chinese	Edifying hymns
1844	R. Lecher	<i>Yangxin Shenshi</i>				
1844	S.W.D. Martin	Selection of Hymns		72	Ningbo dialect, marked with Roman letters	Edifying hymns (in four-stave notation)
1851	W.C. Burns	Selection of Hymns	Xiamen	68	Chinese	Edifying hymns
1852	William Young	<i>Yangxin Shenshi</i>	Xiamen	13	Southern Fujian vernacular	Edifying hymns
1861	W.C. Burns	<i>Chaoqiang Shenshi</i>		29	Chaoshan dialect	Edifying hymns
1862	W.C. Burns	<i>Rongqiang Shenshi</i>		30	Fuzhou dialect	Edifying hymns
1862	W.C. Burns	<i>Xiaqiang Shenshi</i>			Xiamen dialect	Edifying hymns
1883	Timothy Richard, Mary Martin	Short Hymns	Taiyuan	121		Textbook of music theory and sight-reading ( <i>Gongche</i> notation, including traditional Chinese music and Buddhist music)
1883	Xi Zizhi	We Have A Reason for This Gathering.			Chinese	An original hymn
1886	Xi Zizhi				Chinese	Edifying hymns
1895	Elwood Gardner Tewksbury	<i>Songzhu Shiji</i>	Beijing	400	Chinese	Hymns in four parts (notation in letters)

FIGURE 1: Table of main collections of hymns.

### C. THE INDIGENIZATION OF HYMNS DURING THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (FROM 1919 TO 1949)

*The Hymns of Universal Praise*, published in 1936 by the Christian Literature Society for China, is considered to be the most representative and most influential Chinese hymnal from the early twentieth century. Its compilation originated from the National Christian Conference held in Shanghai in May 1922. The Hymnal Committee of Six United Sects, which was composed of the Church of Christ in China, the China-based Anglican Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church North, the East China Baptist Convention and the North China Congregational Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South, jointly compiled this collection of hymns. It contains 512 hymns overall and 172 of them were written in Chinese texts or adapted in traditional Chinese tunes or composed in Chinese music style. In other words, the indigenized Chinese hymns account for about one-third of the total.<sup>5</sup>

### D. THE INDIGENIZATION OF CHINESE SACRED MUSIC SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (FROM 1949 TO PRESENT)

After the founding of New China, the most representative and influential hymns are *The New Hymnal* and its *Supplementary Book* consecutively published by the Chinese Christian Council since the 1980s. This nationwide church music ministry is the result of the fundamental unification of the various Christian branches and denominations in China.

*The New Hymnal*, published in 1983, includes 400 hymns, nearly half of which are classical hymns that are widely spread among Christians around the world. They are translated and applied to older popular melodies and set to harmonic progressions. More than 200 hymns are Chinese compositions or deriving from popular local tunes. 56 of them are originally written by Chinese Christians dedicated to compositions. In addition, there are 42 short choral songs selected in the form of an appendix.

Half a century later, in order to adapt to the rapid development of Christianity in China and to improve some of the shortcomings of the original hymns, *The Supplementary Book* which was published in 2009 has added 200 hymns, including 61 new compositions that meet the selection criteria. In general, nearly one-quarter of the 600 hymns of these two selections were composed or written by Chinese Christians. In the respective publication, those marked with a single asterisk (\*) are some already-published hymns

<sup>5</sup> Chen (2006: 574).

or hymns with supposedly Chinese tunes; the double asterisks (\*\*) marks works newly composed after 1980. Most of them are set with fitting harmonic progressions in four parts as a chorale.

In essence, not only those marked with an asterisk are the de-facto nationalized and localized works, but, both hymnal books in general are the essential expression of sacred music among the Chinese Christians. Even though most of the collected hymns use melodies and harmonic progressions of Western provenience, they are widely reflecting a modern Chinese style because of the lyrics and their musical requirements. They can be almost models in the way how they combine text and music. Not only does the lyrics accurately interpret the meaning of the originating text, but they also conform to the rhythm of texts and rhyme of poems in the respective Chinese pronunciation and language tone, without facing any conflict or appearing as exotic singing.

However, compared with the use of Western melodies and newly composed hymns, they are rather a cultural symbol. There are not many satisfying works taking other adapted works as a measurement. The reason is not difficult to clarify. Popular Chinese tunes are thought mainly as monophonic musical structures and restricted by language tones arranged in pentatonic scales.<sup>6</sup> They are accompanied with four-part harmonic progressions in a Western choral style. Although the main melody is smooth and easy to sing and the rhythm of the four parts is neatly following the rules, each vocal part has to be kept in a sub- and coordinated flow resulting in a thick voice texture. Since this is often difficult to achieve, the whole sound is not as full as imagined to meet the ceremonial requirements. This is one of the problems faced by the Chinese indigenization of sacred music and other types of music based on similar imaginations.

## II. TWO CATEGORIES OF CHINESE SACRED MUSIC

Sacred music (Mansfield, 1927) in China can be roughly divided into two categories: from a broad and from a narrow perspective of existence. I have once argued in an article (Sun Yue 2017), about Chinese sacred music, *Sacred Music as the Most Beautiful Offering*, that sacred music includes not only the hymns that are usually chanted, but also all the music related to worship ceremonies and the life of the believers. All music in the church, hymns sung in the Christian fellowship, spiritual songs in daily life of believers, seem to make people feeling closer to God, no matter in which style and form they are. This is in a general observation about any kind of sacred music.

The narrow perspective on sacred music is also the most important one within the general sacred music. It is the music of the Sanctuary during liturgy. Its style and form must pursue a specific sanctity and beauty of artistic quality.

It is believed that music is a kind of language of the heaven and a universal grace that transcends human communication barriers. It is seen as the Word of God and has no borders. However, the lyrics in hymns are linguistically different since people live under culturally different conditions. As the main language of Christian life in China, the Chinese language plays an important role in the composition and performance of sacred music.

About five hundred years ago, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German and compiled a large number of German choral texts for his songs and some songs written or collected by others. Nearly three hundred years ago, John Sebastian Bach composed several popular Passions based on German verses. More than a hundred years ago, Johannes Brahms offered *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem) and practiced successfully the Germanization of the requiem mass, which once used to be a genre of sacred music celebrated in Latin and dedicated to the Catholic Church. These publicly accessible works of composers have had an indelible influence on the spread and development of Christian music in the German-speaking region. In the same way, the Chinese sacred music may use the advantages and strengths of the Chinese language, to explain accurately and vividly the connotation of the Word of God, as required by this religion. At the same time, musical adaptations can facilitate to remember the texts. Therefore, the combination of specific language types and musical forms is an effective way for

---

<sup>6</sup> This view reflects the adaptation of early Western teachings on musical structures, forms, and analyses. However, many tunes produced in China neither show monophonic nor otherwise restricting features. The terminological use of mono in connection with phonic, i.e., indicates that polyphonic might be the “right” norm to adhere to in the context described.

measuring the qualitative effectiveness of Chinese sacred music compositions from the religious perspective.

### III . THREE COMPOSITION MODES OF CHINESE SACRED MUSIC

Judging from the current implementation, there are three main ways of composing Chinese sacred music dedicated to the Christian Church. Two of them are the Chinese translation of Western classical or foreign-language modern hymns and the lyrics-filling in accordance with the existing Chinese popular tunes. The other is an original musical composition using Chinese lyrics.

#### A. CHINESE TRANSLATION OF CLASSICAL WESTERN OR FOREIGN-LANGUAGE MODERN HYMNS

As the music is definite, the Chinese adaption of Western classical or modern hymns is usually an accurately translation with embedded lyrics into the original structure of the music. However, since the adaptative translation is different from the translation of the pure contents, the translator must well consider the close relationship between the structure of music and the rhythm of language. This work is not just a matter of mastering a foreign language. It is also necessary for translators to have a deep understanding of various pronunciations of singing in Chinese. In this respect, Gershon Ma (马革顺, Ma Geshun) emphasized the "incorporation into Finals" (归韵) problem in choral singing according to the "four exhalations" classification in Chinese phonology and he pointed out that the very feature of Chinese pronunciation does not exist in many foreign languages. Therefore, through the way of translating, the musicians who can be qualified for this job should be acquainted with foreign languages, understand the regulations of Chinese phonology, and master the composition techniques of those vocal works as well.

*Be Still, My Soul*, No.292 of *The New Hymnal*, is a model work in Chinese translation. The origin of this hymn can be traced back to the Baroque period nearly three hundred years ago. It has been translated many times into different languages. Its original texts came from a German poem *Stille, mein Wille! Dein Jesus hilft siegen*, written in 1755 by a German Lutheran believer Katherina von Schlegel, who lived mainly in the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1855 Jane Laurie Borthwick, a Scottish hymn writer, translated it into English from her compilation of "Hymns from the land of Luther: Translated from the German language". Since then, it became the popular hymn "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side". Its original form of music was unknown, but the reason why it became popular among Christians all over the world was because it was later recomposed with the lyrical theme of *Finlandia*, a patriotic symphonic poem composed by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius in 1899.<sup>7</sup> The melody of this hymn is as smooth, soft and serene as its lyrics. Its rhythm seems to be broad, soothing and regular, and the long tones at the end of each phrase is full of affection. The Chinese lyrics are selected from the *The Universal Praise*, faithful to the original meaning of the English texts. It consists of four paragraphs of lyrics, each paragraph consists of six phrases, and each phrase consists of ten words. Each word has a rhyming in the same paragraph at the end of the phrases (see Fig.2).

---

<sup>7</sup> Composed in 1899 and premiered in Helsinki, revised around 1900.

292 我灵镇静歌 信徒灵修 平安喜乐

施莱格尔词 1697 - (Katharina von Schlegel) 西贝柳斯曲 1899 (Jean Sibelius)

选自《普天颂赞》

1. 我灵, 镇静: 上主在你一方; 忧痛十架, 你  
 2. 我灵, 镇静: 上主决然担任, 未来引导, 仍  
 3. 我灵, 镇静: 若因离别凄惶, 若在泪谷, 四  
 4. 我灵, 镇静: 日月过去如飞, 到时我众, 永

要忍耐担当; 但凭上帝为你吩咐主张;  
 似过去情形。莫让何事摇你希望信心;  
 顾黑暗茫茫, 此时更见我主慈爱深长,  
 能在主周围, 失望惊惶完全消除灭迹,

万变之中, 惟主忠实永长。我灵, 镇静: 天  
 目前奥妙, 待后必成光明。我灵, 镇静: 风  
 亲来安慰, 使你停止悲伤。我灵, 镇静: 莫  
 忧愁忘记, 纯爱之乐复回。我灵, 镇静: 世

友最是善良, 经过荆棘, 引到欢乐地方。  
 浪依旧听遵, 救主当年所发吩咐声音。  
 忧所失所亡, 主恩丰富, 日后赏赐无量。  
 变泪痕既逝, 我众欢聚, 大家平安永憩。 (阿们)

278

FIGURE 2: *Be Still, My Soul*, No. 292 from *The New Hymnal*, published by Chinese Christian Council in 1991: 278.

### B. LYRICS-FILLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EXISTING CHINESE TRADITIONAL TUNES

The existing Chinese music tradition of popular tunes are also basically fixed. The compositional work is to write lyrics in accordance with the music and make appropriate modifications. The advantage of this approach is that believers have a higher level of familiarity and identity with the original tune or the musical form itself. Thus, it is naturally much easier to be sung, achieving a better understanding and communication of contents. At the same time, the composers make a careful choice of popular tunes existing in local traditions and fully consider the artistic quality of the combination of Chinese pronunciation and rhyme in the lyrics.

*May Thy Divine Life*, No.365 of *The New Hymnal*, is a hymn composed by Pei Huizhen (裴慧真) based on the minority Bouyei (布依族) folk song melody *Red Flowers Are Good* (好花红). It adopts the typical Yu mode melody using popular Chinese tone rows and represents a distinct local character for

the audience. The lyrics were originally paired with a melody of the piano piece called *Canonbury* by the German composer Robert Schumann. In order to adapt to the indigenous requests later, the melody of this short tune was used and four-part harmonic progressions were added. Although there is a rich local song flavor in the tune, the originally decorating accents and some tones at the end of the phrase are missing. It is obvious that the configuration of the four-part harmonic progressions is a compromise between the melodic mode and the style of the chorale. (see Fig. 3).

365

活出基督歌\*

信徒灵修  
忠心服务

布依族曲调  
裴基真改编 1982

焦维真词 1886-1970

1. 你的 生命 藉我表 彰, 耶稣我 主  
 2. 你的 大爱 藉我宣 扬, 耶稣我 主  
 3. 你的 工作 我愿担 当, 耶稣我 主  
 4. 忧喜 甘苦 与你共 尝, 耶稣我 主

万王之 王; 使我 能有 你的形 状,  
 万王之 王; 使我 作你 反光明 镜,  
 万王之 王; 全 心 力 由你支 配,  
 万王之 王; 成 为 你 的 忠 心 伴 侣,

随时随 在 为你发 光。  
 将你荣 美 昭显与 人。  
 凭你差 遣 决不推 诿。  
 一生一 世 跟主到 底。 (阿 们)

通用调: 352 遵旨做工歌  
348

FIGURE 3: *May Thy Divine Life*, No.365 from *The New Hymnal*, published by Chinese Christian Council in 1991: 348.

In contrast, *Creator's Artistic Brush*, No. 178 of *The New Hymnal*, whose lyrics were written by Chen Zemin, is based on one of the many different versions of the *guqin* music *Pingsha Luoyan*. All the lyrics are rhyming. The text is not only praising God for creating wonderful things, but also encouraging believers to work with the Lord to build a beautiful world. The first sentence of the lyrics shows this: 平沙一片无穷极, 万籁悄然静寂, 落日红霞映海空, 列雁翩翩归憩 (Endless our flat and sandy land, Soundless all creation; Sunset hues light sea and sky, Wild geese return to rest). It reproduces the artistic conception of the tune with the imagined intension of ancient poetry. The combination of lyrics

and melody fits quite well but the musical form has changed after having added functional four-part harmonic progressions. (see Fig. 4).

178                      神工妙笔歌\*\*

教会生活  
为国求福

陈泽民词 1982

中国古乐曲  
陈泽民改编 1956

1. 平 沙 一 片 无 穷 极, 万 籁 悄 然 静 寂,  
2. 三 江 五 岳 皆 主 恩, 平 川 沃 野 无 际,  
3. 努 力 建 设 新 世 界, 和 平、 仁 爱、 公 义,

落 日 红 霞 映 海 空, 列 雁 翩 翩 归 憩,  
历 代 辛 劳 血 和 汗, 装 点 更 加 瑰 丽。  
高 擎 十 架 证 圣 道, 宣 扬 基 督 真 理。

我 愿 化 身 为 飞 鸿, 翱 翔 俯 瞰 大 地,  
愿 我 信 众 随 先 哲, 世 世 相 承 勿 替,  
紧 偕 人 民 同 一 心, 自 立 自 强 不 息,

祖 国 山 河 无 限 好, 皆 主 神 工 妙 笔。  
共 参 神 妙 造 化 业, 与 主 同 工 同 契。  
瞩 望 来 日 功 成 时, 暮 见 新 天 新 地。 (阿 们)

166

FIGURE 4: *Creator's Artistic Brush*, No. 178 from *The New Hymnal*, published by Chinese Christian Council in 1991: 166.

### C. ORIGINAL COMPOSITION IN CHINESE

Original compositions of musical works for sacred religious purposes written in Chinese, in which music and lyrics can flow relatively freely, may embrace a higher sense cultural identity. There is no limit to the form of such music, it can have its own structure. Not only can the composers draw on popular

cultural traditions, but they can also borrow from Western classical and contemporary music. The content of the lyrics can be obtained from the Chinese Bible and it can also be appropriate to express the devout aspirations and desires of Chinese Christians, with the spirit of times. It is necessary for the sacred music used for worship to pursue the best possible quality at the same time, even though this would be at the costs of customized hymns for the choir and the general congregation. For example, Chinese sacred music composer and conductor Gershon Ma (1914-2015) composed many short choral songs and a Christmas cantata *The Anointed* for the Chinese Christian Church in the 1950s. Although these hymns have been in use for half a century, they are still difficult to be surpassed.

According to Psalm 121, Gershon Ma composed a song *Raise My Eyes to The Mountains*. Originally the 50th in *Thy Rod and Thy Staff: A Short Choral Song Collection*, it was later included in *The New Hymnal* as the fifth of the short songs as appendix. The music is simple and seems rather beautiful. An ascending rise of the opening melody provides an expression of sacredness. The rhythm is full of power and rich in the momentum as a march. It is a masterpiece of short songs, accompanied by a powerful and colorful four-part harmonic progression. (see Fig. 5).

我要向山举目 5

(诗121:1-4)

我 要 向 山 举 目, 我 的 帮 助 从 何 而 来?

我 的 帮 助 是 主 耶 和 华! 他 永 不 打 盹, 永 不 睡 觉。

FIGURE 5: *Raise My Eyes to The Mountains*, No. 5 in the Appendix of *The New Hymnal*, published by the Chinese Christian Council in 1991: 385.

*Lord Jesus, When I Think of You*, No.251 of *The New Hymnal*, is an original hymn written by Chinese Christians in the 1930s. Its lyrics are touching, quite simple, and plain as well. The melody is kept in a popular Chinese style. The brisk rhythm, the normative harmonic progressions and the reasonable structural arrangement of phrases make the whole hymn unique in clarity and lyricism. The hymn seems a bit difficult to sing because there are many semitones and various intervals in the inner parts. (see Fig. 6).

251 每想到你歌<sup>\*</sup> 信徒灵修 念主恩爱

唐守临词 1929 毛宗杰曲 1931

1. 主耶稣啊,每想到你,心中便觉甜蜜:  
2. 世上并无一个声音,能把你恩唱尽;  
3. 最能满足我的心怀,尚非你恩你爱:  
4. 你爱多么长阔深高,没有人能知晓:

深愿我能早日见你,与你永在一起。  
人间也无一颗慧心,能道你爱何般!  
乃你自己和你神采,最能使我畅快。  
蒙爱的人只能说:“哦,你的爱奇妙!”

(副歌)  
主!你是园中的凤仙花,你是谷中的百合花,  
你是沙仑的玫瑰花,我心岂能舍下? (阿们)

236

FIGURE 6: Lord Jesus, When I Think of You, No.251 from The New Hymnal, published by the Chinese Christian Council in 1991: 236.

*The Anointed* (受膏者), composed by Gershon Ma in 1954, is not an indigenized music in the usual sense but rather a truly local composition. It is the first large-scale sacred musical work in the history of China. It is also called "The Messiah in Chinese", which is inspired by the oratorio of Georg Friedrich Händel. The lyrics are all taken from the Holy Bible. The structural form of the cantata is exceptionally complex. Although many Western classical chorus composition techniques are used, it shows an integrated Chinese way of structuring the music to the text elements. The music combines some fragments of popular Chinese music with Western polyphony and a choral style, accompanied by a modern piano or a chapel organ. As shown in the catalogue, the cantata consists of two parts: one is *Prophecy* and the next is *Fulfillment*. Each part consists of six independent movements, including a variety of different forms of singing, from soprano, baritone, tenor solo to male duet, three-part female chorus and a soprano with a mixed chorus.

The second movement, *How Beautiful are the Feet of Those Who Bring Good News*, is a mixed chorus that combines the chorale with polyphonic imitations. The opening chorus represents rich harmonic



progressions, powerful rhythms, appealing moods and the melody of the upper part continues to rise through an ascending semitonal progression until the climax in pitch range. A following polyphonic passage quotes a part of the popular tune of the Christmas song "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" as a thematic motive. Along with some canonic imitations and contrapuntal techniques, there launches a gradual progression from a soft whisper to a resonant eloquence. Finally, the four parts reunify in the same rhythmic steps, reaching the ending through a perfect cadence. (see Fig. 7).

<b>The Anointed</b>		Page
<i>Part One Prophecy</i>		
<b>1. The Root of Jesse</b> ( <i>Isaiah 11 : 10</i> )	<b>Tenor</b> .....	1
In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.		
<b>2. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!</b>	<b>Chorus</b> .....	3
(Romans 10 : 15) How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!		
<b>3. Shout for joy, O heavens</b> ( <i>Isaiah 49 : 13, 40 : 8</i> )	<b>Baritone</b> .....	10
Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.		
<b>4. Immanuel</b> ( <i>Isaiah 7 : 14</i> )	<b>Soprano</b> .....	14
Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.		
<b>5. A sure foundation</b> ( <i>Isaiah 28 : 16, 9 : 2</i> )	<b>Tenor and Chorus</b> .....	18
"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.		
<b>6. For to us a child is born</b> ( <i>Isaiah 9 : 6</i> )	<b>Chorus</b> .....	22
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.		
<b>5. Burst into jubilant song with music</b> ( <i>Psalms 98 : 1, 2, 4</i> )		
<b>Duet—Tenor and Baritone</b> .....		
Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;		
<b>Chorus</b> .....		
(This one can be sung either in duet or in chorus.)		
<b>6. To him be the glory</b> ( <i>Romans 11 : 36</i> )	<b>Chorus</b> .....	59
For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.		
<i>Part Two Fulfilment</i>		
<b>1. My soul glorifies The Lord</b> ( <i>Luke 1 : 46-49</i> )	<b>Soprano and Female Trio</b> .....	30
"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. ...."		
<b>2. God so loved the world</b> ( <i>John 3 : 16</i> )	<b>Tenor</b> .....	36
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.		
<b>3. Glory to God</b> ( <i>Luke 2 : 8-14</i> )	<b>Recit—Soprano and Chorus</b> .....	40
And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."		
<b>4. The Spirit of the Lord is on me</b> ( <i>Luke 4 : 18-19</i> )	<b>Baritone</b> .....	47
"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."		

FIGURE 7: the lyrical contents of *The Anointed*, published by the Chinese Christian Council in 1997, 4-6.

The seventh movement, *My Soul Glorifies the Lord*, uses the texts of Mary's Song from the Gospel of Luke. It is composed in a ternary form: first two musical passages are in a performance of a solo soprano and the last passage is a soprano with a three-part female chorus. The melody of the soprano solo fits the Chinese lyrics of this passage, and the tune is soft, delicate and seemingly feminine. The first passage "My soul glorifies the Lord", in E flat, is reflecting gratefulness. Then it reaches a climax while the scripture at the same time is "from now on all generations will call me blessed." The second passage "for the Mighty One has Done Great Things for Me" turns into C minor, with a soft whisper just as inner monologue getting into a deeper mystery. In the last passage, the soprano solo theme reappears in a style of the three-part female chorus. The climactic phrase shows a close relationship between soprano solo and the chorus, ending in a peaceful, gentle and seemingly grateful mood. In addition, there is another choral version based on the first passage of the theme, changed to C major, which bases on three verses

of lyrics added that are re-harmonized in a four-part mixed chorus. It has already been included as No. 329 of *The New Hymnal*, titled *My Soul Extols the Lord*. (See Appendix).

#### **IV . THE AESTHETIC PROBLEMS AND EDUCATIONAL INHERITANCE OF SACRED MUSIC**

Although the Chinese sacred music has been in China for nearly a hundred years, it still faces some difficulties in the present. For example, compared with secular music or other social music, the richness and artistic quality of Chinese Christian sacred music are far from superior, and the pursuit of cultural identity is comparatively more onesided and simplified. In the process of compositional exploration of Chinese sacred music, there is a more prominent problem that most composers only pay attention to the writing and application of local melodic features, while other elements of music are relatively neglected, such as the musical instruments used, sound textures, voice flow and harmonic progressions, forms and structures, and others. The following three aspects may lead to an improvement from the perspective of musical artistry and religious effectiveness.

##### **A. MAKING MUSIC IN A SPECIFIC ARTISTIC QUALITY**

Christianity is a religion supporting music. Undoubtedly, the most important in all kinds of Christian sacred music is the one performed in worship rituals. It is thought as an offering to God. In this context, liturgical music has the widest and deepest influence on the believers. Therefore, the liturgical music should have the highest artistic quality, strive to be solemn and beautiful, and at the same time be suitable for the congregation. Both the composition and the performance of Chinese sacred music should be improved to perfection, which depends not only on musical ability but also on personal attitude. Consequently, the indigenization of Chinese sacred music may be particularly rigorous and prudent in musical composition and performance for liturgy. It is necessary to follow the essential laws and structural rules of the musical art itself, that is, first to seek high standards in art quality, and only then a local identity.

The actual situation of Protestant choirs differs vastly from place to place. Generally speaking, improvements on the overall musical literacy of the Chinese Protestant choir should be an important part of the construction of choirs. In particular, the conductor of the choir must not only have a certain musical professionalism, but also have close cooperation with the relevant pastoral staff. On the basis of the principle of faith, the music service should be fully hosted by professional conductors by fully respecting the essential laws of this musical art, and cultivating, training, and leading choirs in a regular manner as well, so that the musicians and singers can serve the church wholeheartedly.

##### **B. CUSTOMIZING MUSIC FOR SPECIFIC CHOIR AND CONGREGATION**

It is said that an extremely highbrow song is too difficult to be popular. The composer ought to consider the actual situation of a specific singing group. The composition of Chinese Christian sacred music as we wish is to customize some well suiting sacred music for some specific choirs and for the general congregation. The ideal situation is that it does not make the singer feel difficult, but also has a high level of artistry in a Chinese way of musicianship. A feasible approach is to regularly commission professional composers to customize music for congregation and specific choirs. Give the composer full respect and freedom so that they will be able to write the most sophisticated musical works dedicated to God. According to the actual situation of a choir, the composer can customize music of different levels so that the vocal parts can be harmonized and textured reasonably. By means of various composing techniques, the overall sound structure of performance may have a much stronger expressive power, which is affective enough to lead the hearts of the congregation to get closer to God. As long as the music is conceived and based on spirits, languages, tones, and emotions of the local population, there will be a standard arrangement of combination between lyrics and melodies. If the design of harmonic progressions and texture is reasonable, the music might be eloquent and unconstrained. It is possible to fully express the connotation of faith in the singing of Chinese texts, which is far more effective than applying local tunes directly.

## **C . MUSIC EDUCATION AND TALENT CULTIVATION**

The cultivation of music talents should become an important plan in the construction of sacred music in China, which can provide a guarantee for the sustainable development of Chinese sacred music in the future. Throughout the history of Christian music, choirs have always cultivated a large number of outstanding musicians, not only for the church but also for the entire society. They have become the core strength of the development of Christian sacred music in the world and have carried out the reproduction of the greatest works of art in this context. Without a well-balanced normative music education as the foundation and support, it is impossible to bring up these outstanding musicians. It is remarkable that it is closely related to the attitudes of church towards music services and music professionals. For example, if J.S. Bach was not put in such an important position at that time by St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, his historical contribution to Western music would be difficult to have an irrefutable universal value in present days. It is true that such great musicians are numerous in history. From this point of view, the construction of Chinese sacred music not only relies on social forces to enrich and supplement, but also needs to make useful attempts and efforts on its own in order to popularize music education and talent cultivation.

As far as the current situation of Chinese Christian music is concerned, there is a great space for developments in this regard. Even the main church in the first-tier cities have some projects and special institutions dedicated to the education and training of musical talents. In contrast to the wider secular society, official or commercial art training institutions involving music education are now spread almost all over the country and have become important sources of future music talents.

APPENDIX: My Soul Glorifies the Lord (the seventh movement of *The Anointed*), pages 30-35.

## 第二部 成就

### 我心尊主为大

路 1:46-49

女高音独唱与女声三部合唱

感谢, 赞美 柔和  $\text{♩} = 78$

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part begins with a soft (*p*) dynamic and includes markings for *cresc.* and *f*. The vocal line starts with a *dim.* marking and includes lyrics in Chinese. The score is divided into eight systems, each with a vocal staff and a piano accompaniment staff. The lyrics are: 我心尊主为大, 我灵以上帝我的救主为乐, 因他顾念他使女的卑微, 因他顾念他使女的卑微, 从今以后, 万代要称我有福, 从今以后, 万代要称我有福.

First system of musical notation, including piano accompaniment with dynamics such as *cresc.*, *f*, and *dim.*

Second system of musical notation, including vocal line and piano accompaniment with dynamics such as *mp* and *p*.

Third system of musical notation, including vocal line and piano accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation, including vocal line and piano accompaniment with dynamic *mf*.

Fifth system of musical notation, including vocal line and piano accompaniment with dynamic *f*.

Sixth system of musical notation, including vocal line and piano accompaniment with dynamic *f*.

Seventh system of musical notation, featuring multiple vocal parts (女高音 *p*, 女中音 *p*, 女低音 *p*) and piano accompaniment with dynamic *p*.

灵 以上帝我的救主为乐。 因他 顾念他 使女的卑微，  
灵 以上帝我的救主为乐。 因他 顾念他 使女的卑微，  
灵 以上帝我的救主为乐。 因他 顾念他 使女的卑微，

从今以后， 万  
因他 顾念他 使女的卑微。 从今以后， 万  
因他 顾念他 使女的卑微。 从今以后， 万  
因他 顾念他 使女的卑微。 从今以后， 万

代要称我有福。 从今以后， 万代要称我有  
代要称我有福。 从今以后， 万代要称我有  
代要称我有福。 从今以后， 万代要称我有  
代要称我有福。 从今以后， 万代要称我有

福。 万代要称我有福。 要称我有福。 ppp  
福。 万代要称我有福。 要称我有福。 ppp  
福。 万代要称我有福。 要称我有福。 ppp  
福。 万代要称我有福。 要称我有福。 ppp

## REFERENCES

- Chen Xiaolu [陈小鲁]. 2006. *Christianity Music History 基督宗教音乐史*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press.
- China Christian Council [中国基督教协会]. 1997. *The Anointed 受膏者*(2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Shanghai: China Council.
- Keevak, Christian Michael. 2008. *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625-1916*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Ma Geshun [马革顺]. 2013. *Ma Geshun Hechangxue Xinbian 马革顺合唱学新编 [The New Choralology of Ma Geshun] (Chinese-English Bilingual Edition)*. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Mansfield, Orlando A. 1927. *What Is Sacred Music? The Musical Quarterly*, 13 (3): 451-475.
- Schmidt-Leukel and Joachim Gentz. 2013. *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sun Yue [孙月]. 2017. *Dang Xianshang Zuimeide Ji 当献上最美的祭 [Sacred Music as the Most Beautiful Offering]*. *Tianfeng 天风 [The Magazine of the Protestant Churches in China]*, 10: 22-23.
- The Chinese Christian Hymnal Committee [中国基督教圣诗委员会]. 2009. *A Supplementary Book of The Hew Hymnal 赞美诗新编·补充本*. Nanjing: National TSPM & CCC.
- The Chinese Christian Hymnal Committee [中国基督教圣诗委员会]. 1999. *The New Hymnal (English-Chinese Bilingual edition) 赞美诗新编*. Nanjing: National TSPM & CCC.
- The Chinese Christian Hymnal Committee. [中国基督教圣诗委员会]. 1991. *The New Hymnal (five-stave edition) 赞美诗新编*. Nanjing: National TSPM & CCC.

Dr. **Sun Yue** [孙月] is lecturer at Shanghai Conservatory of Music, member of the International Association of Aesthetics, executive secretary of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Interdisciplinary Musicology in 2015. Her researches range mainly from systematic musicology, including philosophy of music, aesthetics of music, music criticism, art theory to interdisciplinary studies of the arts (especially between music and architecture).

**Contact:** sunyue[ @ ]shcmusic.edu.cn

# THE YANDUN DAGU STORY: A SHORT FIELD REPORT REVIEW

**Gisa Jähnichen**

## **Abstract**

This brief field report review is based on a short-term observation in 2019 and the discussion with attending field work participants regarding reasonings for changes in the construction of Yandun Dagu and the way performances are organized. The focus of the report includes some observations on the fringe of any fieldwork and thoughts about the social sense in the survival of musical instruments.

## **Keywords**

Chinese Drums, Yandun Dagu, Guangxi Culture, Instrument Production, Performance Practice

## **INTRODUCTION**

On the way into a future of things and no-things, this very short essay will help to clarify the urgent necessity to keep to facts, either historical or social, in order to move the understanding of human relationships from reacting to a pro-active approach to the arts that is not only valuing the outgoing objects, the drums build in Yandun (Chen Hongbo, 2016), but also the people's ideas about it and the history making them what they are.

Lu Song is a young researcher coming from Hunan. He is proud of being from Hunan though he cannot name one single thing that makes him specifically proud of it except some food. Whatsoever, this is a normal story nowadays. Everybody seems to be in need of being proud of something: relatives, parents, children, birth places, nations, food, songs, languages, and many more. People were in long term trained to develop this kind of attachment to elements of human culture they do not directly comprehend. Although this also applies to Lu Song, he is seemingly very curious and tries his best to qualify for an expert in his field: ethnomusicology.

In order to complete his fieldwork notes, I had the great opportunity to accompany him to Yandun, a place not far from Nanning. Taking a two-hour bus ride and a short trip on a motorbike, the famous drum maker's home was reached. Here, one of many small problems started. While being a proud Hunanese, Lu Song had to clearly understand the pride of a Yandun drum maker, of Yandun drummers, and of Yandun villagers. He had to split his own local rootedness with his professional interest in another local rootedness. And, in writing, he is going to promote a local rootedness that is not his own. Once such a young student starts to explore a specific topic in order to find out what makes others being proud of what they name, then this issue rapidly changes its dynamics. Nevertheless, it seems still too early to feel the urge of questioning the purpose of any pride and turn towards some rather non-dividing facts.

## **THE FACTS**

The Yandun Dagu is a phenomenon (Golany 2001:87) of producing an extra-large drum conducted in order to have a tool of communication crossing valleys. Also, it is a competitive tool in celebrating festivals, the start and end of journeys or similar important events.<sup>1</sup> In times of the internet, the communication function is rather obsolete. The size only matters in the eyes of the stranger. Here is one point of observation: Who actually are the strangers and who are the insiders of this kind of drum

---

<sup>1</sup> I an article about the Sebbang of the Bidayuh in Sarawak, I wrote together with the audiovisual archive curator of the Sarawak Museum, Beddie Frank, on a similar function of drums and the impossibility to attach the taboos of "not-playing" to an object that is promoted (Jähnichen & Frank, 2015). Other problems are reported by Australian researchers on gender and age-based taboos of "listening-to" specific recordings (Musgrave & Thieberger, 2006).



production? The insiders are the drum makers and some of the players who know more or less of the history that these drums can reveal. This is just a handful of people. All others, especially people coming from as far as from Hunan or even from Shanghai, are strangers to the tangible object and mainly to the intangible knowledge the object represents. To them, it is just a big drum that can be hit and makes an unbearable noise.



**FIGURE 1 (from left to right and from above to below): Damaged drum skin in the exhibition of the Guangxi University's (GXAU) Museum Hall for Ethnic Music; FIGURE 2: Two persons attaching the skin with the green plastic rope to the body of the instrument; FIGURE 3: Size matters – different Yandun Dagu examples, some for playing them some for selling yet still well-sounding; FIGURE 4: Historical picture exhibited in GXAU to explain the traditional attraction of the Yandun Dagu.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Photographs in |Figure 1-3 by the author. Figure 4 courtesy of GXAU Museum of Ethnic Music.

While the size does not matter anymore for communication, the drum is increasingly downsized in order to accommodate the wishes of strangers who want to own one of these drums. This is, from the perspective of history another sign of strangeness, since these drums were most of the time played in groups. It is a bit as selling the single keys of a piano to strangers without them having a piano culture. They can put them in a glass cabinet and enjoy the fragmented object from all sides.

While downsizing the drums, the drum maker still does not give up on the construction of a good sound. He is willing to construct the drums with an acceptable acoustic outcome. So, he is not compromising the skin quality, nor the attachment of the skin to the body. Nevertheless, he created a big problem by following the current tendency of using artificial ropes for tightening the skin over the body. These green colored ropes of plastic are not really elastic and are chosen to reflect the fresh bamboo that was once used in the past. Natural bamboo stripes can be created from the bamboo skin of long knotted types of bamboo growing in the surrounding area, especially along small lakes and waterways in the soft valleys of Yandun. However, while these natural stripes are losing their green color after a few days, the green artificial ropes stay strong and do not adjust easily to the behavior of the skin. They live even longer than the skin that is often attacked by rodents.<sup>3</sup> If so, the ropes have to be changed as well since they only fit the single skin on an instrument and cannot be recycled. Therefore, the reason given that the plastic ropes would replace bamboo for durability cannot be taken seriously. They only ease the way of production but not the way of maintenance. That means that not every improvement is contributing to the life of an instrument.

## CURRENT PROBLEMS

Here, the first important problem is named, which is that of the instrument production: the life of an instrument and its entire contents is not properly defined. Any instrument can be affected by this approach. This is visible in many undertakings that focus strongly on the material features and their production yet little attention is paid to the entire story, the real use, the changes, the events of a musical instrument in its changing environment.

The second important problem is the prevalent abstraction<sup>4</sup> from different time periods. While specific time periods in other contexts are often exactly given or even exaggeratedly emphasized, in the case of instrument construction, those time periods are rather undervalued. However, repertoires, purposes, ensemble arrangements, qualification of musicians, the way of instruction, and the construction of the instruments are very much dependent on each other. A better understanding of only one of these historically different issues would help improve the view on instrument construction in present times as well as in the future.

And the third big problem might be the fact of ignoring the personal attachment to the object of a musical instrument. As in the case of the Yandun drum, when in the past<sup>5</sup> each rich family or a family clan owned at least one Daggu, these people were always considering to play their own drum together with the drums of other family clans. This considering of sound and fitness of the players is an element of the instrument's life. It makes people thinking in a joint way of understanding and code their behavior towards the musical instrument. This coding is missed today in many ways. So, the musical instruments will have been already reduced to their current arbitrary existence as material objects. Anyone can come along and buy a single drum of any size that fits the transport vehicle.

In order to prevent the end of the Daggu's life and the Daggu becoming a pure commercial item which is freed from place and time, drums may have to re-establish their own taboos and restrictions. If only

---

<sup>3</sup> In one case, mice were attacking and eating off the skin at its thinnest parts which is directly between the holes for the tightening pegs inserted in a circle around the edge of the body. The skin got loose and had to be repaired with glue. This happened in a storage building of the Guangxi University of the Arts in Nanning between 2015 and 2017. Nowadays, this is a problem that also often appears in Yandun (Lu Song and Jähnichen, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Here, abstraction is related to both encapsulation and data hiding in regard of viewing the item in its changing characteristics. It means mainly that the item is seen as a static object of research and denies flexibility towards any of the named essentials. This phenomenon applies on external observations documented in academic writings (Furniss, 2006; Golany, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The past means in this case the time before 1979. Further back, nobody can remember.

Dagu (meaning very big drums) could make the job in the past, they should be kept alive for all the still existing events. For people, who just admire the sound or shape, small souvenir drums that do not sound well or at all, can be a good solution since they will never be seriously played as they would have to when keeping to their social functioning. The middle-sized compromises are actually the one who cut off the life of the big drums and create a mediocre understanding that does not respect the past and does not help the future of these highly interesting drums.

## OUTLOOK

Lu Song, the young researcher may have to further focus on what changed the people by interacting with the material presence of the Yandun Daggu, what makes these people being proud of the big drums but not really comprehending their past history, and what has to be done for the survival of them despite changing into items of heritage care. Once he could find some answers to these questions, he might be in another mood of being proud. I cannot but wishing him sticking to the facts and voicing out the uncomfortable truth of changes that could make him successful in overcoming current social short-term preferences. The story of the Yandun Daggu would be without purpose if the story could not have an impact on at least this young researcher's understanding.

## REFERENCES

- Chen Hongbo [陈洪波]. 2016. On the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Lingshan County, Guangxi [县域非物质文化遗产保护与传承的几点思考--以广西灵山县为例]. *Journal of Hezhou University*, 03: 1-7.
- Furniss, Ingrid Maren. 2008. *Music in Ancient China: An Archaeological and Art Historical Study of Strings, Winds, and Drums During the Eastern Zhou and Han Periods (770 BCE-220 CE)*. Amherst: Cambria Press
- Golany, Gideon. 2001. *Urban Design Ethics in Ancient China*. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press.
- Jähnichen, Gisa & Beddie Frank (2015). The Bidayuh's Sebbang: Preservation Issues. *Music: Ethics and the Community*. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen, Made Mantle Hood, and Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda. UPM Book Series on Music Research, vol. 7. Serdang: UPM Press, 175-184.
- Lu Song and Gisa Jähnichen. 2019. Personal communication. Nanning.
- Musgrave, Simon and Nick Thieberger. 2006. Ethical Challenges in Documentary Linguistics. Selected Papers from the 2005 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society. Edited by Keith Allan. Informal distribution, accessible via: [https://www.academia.edu/666439/Ethical\\_challenges\\_in\\_documentary\\_linguistics](https://www.academia.edu/666439/Ethical_challenges_in_documentary_linguistics), last visited 11 December, 2019.

**Gisa Jähnichen**, Prof. Dr. at Shanghai Conservatory of Music, is working on Southeast Asian music practices, sound ecology, and audiovisual archiving.

**Contact:** gisajaehnichen[ @ ]web.de

# UNIQUE EXPERIENCE DURING THE 3RD SEAMEX (SOUTHEAST ASIA MUSIC EDUCATION EXCHANGE) 2019, INDONESIA

Yin Xiang [尹翔]

## Abstract

SEAMEX (Southeast Asia Music Education Exchange) is said to be the 1<sup>st</sup> dedicated marketplace for music education in Southeast Asia. The 3rd SEAMEX 2019: “Music, Sphere, and Interconnected Generation” was held at Jogja National Museum in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 6-8 September, 2019. As a group, Gamelan Shanghai, organized by Gisa Jähnichen from Shanghai Conservatory of Music, was very honored to be invited to participate in this big event. 10 members of the group are from different countries and have different majors such as composition, instrumental performance, music education, and ethnomusicology. But this time, they were all gamelan performers. Some of them studied gamelan over 2 years. This paper will present their unique thoughts and feelings during the event SEAMEX.

## Keywords

Southeast Asia, Gamelan, Festival, Education Exchange

The event “SEAMEX” (Southeast Asia Music Education Exchange) is said to be the 1<sup>st</sup> dedicated marketplace for music education in Southeast Asia. The founder of SEAMEX is Isabella Pek from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. After the event was held in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, the 3rd SEAMEX 2019 under the title “Music, Sphere, and Interconnected Generation” was organized at Jogja National Museum of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 6-8 September, 2019. More than 1,200 music professionals from 10 ASEAN countries came together to share ideas and musics. Other international representatives were also invited to participate in the dialogues<sup>1</sup>.

SEAMEX consisted of 7 organizational parts: Music Edu Fair, Conference, Performances, Music Talk, Music Demonstration, ASEAN Youth Music Projects, and Music Workshop. Hilmar Farid, who is the director general of “Culture of Yogyakarta”, said that SEAMEX 2019 would contribute greatly to the efforts in promoting Southeast Asia’s music in particular, and culture in general, to the global stage. SEAMEX was expected to become a platform for a series of discussions that talked about music between speakers, coaches, and practitioners from different genres of music and of various backgrounds<sup>2</sup>. It was clear that the discussions were based on different issues and related to a variety of music practices, such as Jazz and Popular Music in Indonesia, Harmonization in Hindustani Music Fusion, Music-Women-Continuity in Minangkabau, Folk Music in the Basic Education of Thailand and others. Also, the workshops and performances are consisting diverse forms, some of them are attributed to traditional music, but new compositions were welcome, too. The topics include Malaysian and Philippine choir music, keroncong, Jazz improvisation and dance theatre.

As a group, “Gamelan Shanghai” organized by Gisa Jähnichen<sup>3</sup> at Shanghai Conservatory of Music (SHCM) was very honored to be invited to participate in the event. “Gamelan Shanghai” exists since

---

<sup>1</sup> SEAMEX 2019 Indonesia Secretariat. 2019. <https://seamex2019.com/page/12/about-us>. Consulted 10/20/2019.

<sup>2</sup> SEAMEX 2019 Indonesia Secretariat. 2019. The Program Book of SEAMEX.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dr. Gisa Jähnichen is, among others, teaching gamelan practice at Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

2016. Every semester, the gamelan course takes in new students and staff from all main subjects at SHCM. Some members stay for another semester. This mixture is challenging and helpful at the same time. This time, the team was formed by six persons from SHCM: Gisa Jähnichen, Yin Xiang (尹翔), Jiang Anran (蒋安然), Lim Hyoseung (林孝承, 韩国), Liu Xiangkun (刘祥焜), Angga Yudhistira (杨宇嘉) and four persons from Malaysia: Ainnur Aiman, Gerald Ng, Shirley Lim and Amin Nur Azim.

All of them have for a shorter or longer time participated in gamelan classes taught by Gisa Jähnichen. Some even learned gamelan more than 2 years. This chance brought them together. Despite the interesting rehearsals and the well-attended performances, they exchanged instruments and tried some new improvisation, so, they also have had discussions with each other about their different musical cultures.

The repertoire they performed this time include two parts: one part was themed “Plants in Chinese Life” consisted of 6 pieces: Bamboo, Tea, Rice, Gingko, Chrysanthemums and Burning Forest. These plants, actually excluding the last one, are specifically meaningful in China. Their connotations go beyond the view of them as simple plants. They relate tightly with life and they all have a special meaning in some parts of the Chinese culture such as Bamboo with literati, Chrysanthemums with the Double Ninth Festival and yearning. As Gisa Jähnichen said, a choice from flowers, grains, trees, and grasses may invoke associations through the presented pieces dedicated to environmental issues that all follow the cyclic scheme of gamelan playing and the layer rules of gamelan instruments. It is worth mentioning that the last piece “Burning Forest” was a special arrangement. Firstly, it means that all the plants we showed before may one day burn in the fire. The aim is to remind people to protect the environment. Secondly, there was a sad event taking place at that time: a big fire burned parts of the Amazonian Forest. This is an enormous disaster for the whole humankind. We try to use this way to express our sorrow. In addition, the melodies of them are partly taken from traditional local repertoire and interwoven with complex interpretations to shape a new texture.

The second part was a special piece based on the traditional Bubaran and composed by Supanggih assisted by a number of talented arrangers from Indonesia. It is a piece for a symphonic orchestra, choir and gamelan. Such a unique experience for all of us! We got the stave notation of the gamelan part instead of a traditional one in order to read it faster. And we needed to follow several gamelan players from Jogjakarta who sat before us thus being able to focus on the conductor’s gestures all the time. This is a totally different feeling of playing the gamelan. We learned that for a gamelan ensemble, the most important thing is listening. We have to learn to be responsible for our own part, but in the same time, we need to listen to others, to cooperate with everyone else. During the gamelan lesson, we always try to arrange the pieces, and adjust our own part frequently with the whole group. But when we play with the orchestra, the way of cooperation changed. I feel like the gamelan plays a special role and is in charge of a unique timbre representing the local thoughts of Indonesia to some extent. Without doubt, the piece Bubaran is a wonderful piece. It is a fusion work to express grand-epics-emotion.

SEAMEX involved many different types of music and discussion issues. Inclusivity is a typical trait of it. This is important to the social and cultural context of Southeast Asia, which is in need of open inclusivity. We could feel this core problem in the piece Bubaran and other works produced in this land. Different persons brought their own understanding of Southeast Asia, too, just like our “Plants in Chinese Life”, which progressed coming from a preceding “Animals in Chinese Legends”. After participating in this event, Lim Hyoseung from Korea, who is one of the many international students at Shanghai Conservatory of Music, looks forward to have more interflow with SEAMEX and tries to create a new composition combining gamelan with Chinese and Korean music elements. Similar thoughts move the drum player Angga Yudhistira, he joined the workshop in SEAMEX and tried to use his way of drumming to have more open conversations between different musical experiences. And SEAMEX also made myself thinking more about the role of different music cultures, the cooperation and negotiation between them, and let me rethink to the abundance of creative possibilities. What’s the influence of SEAMEX on these different types of music? I think raising this question is, maybe, the core significance of SEAMEX.





**FIGURES 1-3: Gamelan Shanghai on stage (Photos courtesy of the organizers).**

## REFERENCES

- SEAMEX 2019 Indonesia Secretariat. 2019. The Program Book of SEAMEX.
- SEAMEX 2019 Indonesia Secretariat. 2019. <https://seamex2019.com/page/12/about-us>. Consulted 10/20/2019.

**Yin Xiang** [尹翔] is a PhD student at Shanghai Conservatory of Music majoring in ethnomusicology. She is interested in traditional music of South China and is maintaining multiple daily tasks in the department. She is also a participant of Gamelan Shanghai.

**Contact:** yinxiangyvonne@163.com

## BOOK REVIEW

# 'A PHONEMIC THEORY: ON TRADITIONAL CHINESE MUSIC' BY SHEN QIA

Han Mei [韩梅]

### Abstract

This review is about 'A Phonemic Theory: On Traditional Chinese Music' [音腔论]. Shen Qia [沈恰]. 2019. Shanghai. Shanghai Music Publishing House and Shanghai Literature Audio and Video Publishing House. Chinese language. 298 pp., 257,000 characters, hard cover, black and white graphs and illustrations, footnotes, references, index. companion websites: [www.smph.cn](http://www.smph.cn) and [www.slav.cn](http://www.slav.cn). ISBN 978-7-5523-1633-9/J.1515. 118 RMB.

### Keywords

Phonemes, Chinese Music, Traditions, Theory

*A Phonemic Theory* (Chinese: *A Study of Yinqiang*) is a theoretical study of Chinese music devised by the author Shen Qia. A Professor, Ph.D. advisor, and former Director of the Music Research Institute at the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing, Shen Qia is a Chinese Musicologist and a recipient of Fumio Koizumi Prize for Ethnomusicology (2011). He has made considerable contributions in the disciplines of anthropology of music, ethnomusicology, music education and others.

*A Phonemic Theory: on Traditional Chinese Music*, is an outstanding work that reflects a lifetime of dedicated scholarly study. It is an inspiring and thought-provoking publication that is long overdue. Structured in two parts, the first component of the book is the central discussion of the theory, comprised of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. The text was based on the author's graduate thesis published consecutively in the *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music* (1982, vol. 4 and 1983, vol. 1), with the addition of new commentary by the author. The second part of the publication consists of seven articles co-written with a variety of Chinese scholars that document the use of modern technology in collecting quantitative data on the size, shape, and variations of *yinqiang*.

The Phonemic theory is a methodology for analyzing Chinese music by identifying the smallest coherent musical unit. It is an innovative theoretical approach to the study and analysis of Chinese music, particularly that of traditional Han people. The methodology presented here questions and challenges the application of the concepts and theories of Western classical music to the studies of Chinese music. The author argues that the methodology of European musical analysis for culturally idiosyncratic Chinese musical elements is imprecise, if not awkward, and his approach remedies the discrepancies.

Shen Qia's phonemic theory was born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period of growing interest in, and the advocacy of, cultural relativism in the field of Anthropology of Music and Ethnomusicology. The early 1980s were a critical time for the study of Chinese music. European classical music and theory dominated Chinese music practice and scholarship from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the "Reform and Open Door" policy of 1978 created a social and academic environment for intellectual growth and the development of the study of Chinese music. Ethnomusicology, originally a Western discipline for the study of non-western music cultures, had expanded globally as a way of studying traditional music. Its use, at that time, of comparative analysis and emic vs. etic perspectives inspired Chinese scholars to reexamine Chinese music from a new perspective. Scholars like Shen Qia, trained in European-style music conservatories who also had



extensive knowledge of Chinese traditional music, began to question European classical music's supremacy and its use as the developmental model for all world music cultures. Shen Qia argued that, although principles from a variety of music systems could mutually influence, complement, absorb, or transform each other, "a set of music principles can only be situated within specific music canons and, therefore, can only be parsed from these canons. ... It is not appropriate to simply take a set of musical principles from one music system and promote it as the universal principle that applies to all human music" (p.8). It was within this context that the author constructed his phonemic theory in the interest of understanding the core of Han Chinese music.

The book opens with the author outlining his theory of a musical phenome, or *yinqiang*. Phoneme, a term borrowed from linguistic studies, is the "smallest unit of speech distinguishing one word (or word element) from another..." (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica). In the European music system, a given pitch is the smallest cell and, in a linear process, the combination of a series of pitches and durations create music motifs and melody.

Shen Qia proposes that, unlike the European music system, the smallest acoustic "cell" in Chinese music that is culturally intuitive and perceptible to Chinese is a *yinqiang* (p. 11). In Chinese, *yin* carries multiple meanings, ranging from "sound" and "tone" to "pitch"; *qiang* similarly conveys the meaning of "tone," but it also suggests "accent," "lingering tones," or "contour of tones." Combining the terms *yin* and *qiang* denote that, unlike a "cell" in the European music system, a *yinqiang* can be more than a simple pitch. An example of a typical *yinqiang* Shen Qia provided is a note played on the zheng, a Chinese long zither. The player plucks the open string  $e^1$  then bends the string to  $g^1$ , or first bends the string to  $g^1$  then plucks and releases so that the pitch slides down to the open  $e^1$ . There is an audible pitch variation in the movement between the two notes, and from the Chinese music perspective, the pitch slide is inseparable from the note plucked. Therefore, *yinqiang* is a basic musical unit of motion that cannot be further dissected without losing its meaning. It is one note in continuum, musically, experientially, and culturally. This recognition of a single note in motion is significant as it is a fundamental element that differentiates Chinese music from Western common practice music. A similar concept of *yaosheng* or "moving tone" was introduced by Du Yaxiong, another scholar from the China Conservatory of Music (1999). However, the scope of Shen Qia's *yinqiang* is much broader.

The author describes that *yinqiang* can have a number of shapes and introduces some principles of the morphological classification of various types of *yinqiang*. As a sound unit a *yinqiang* contains a pitch range of over 100 cents, and is a complete entity comprised of a "body," the main tone, and a "head" or/and a "tail," both of which are in motion. Other types of *yinqiang* can also be identified as units of sound in motion such as the pitch change relationship of a note, the shifting density of an idiosyncratic percussive gesture, as well as the change of dynamics or timber change of a vocalized sound. Shen Qia has therefore defined the building blocks in Chinese music as fundamentally different from European music. These are the smallest units of Chinese music that are in motion, including pitch change, time, dynamics, shape, tone color, and texture. His theory clarifies why Chinese music feels alive in its unique way: as the very cells of the music are not static, and the foundation of the music is constantly in motion. This culturally specific and holistic approach to the analysis of Chinese Han music clarifies what has been an essential identifying component in Chinese music for thousands of years.

Shen Qia broadens the discussion to the fundamental reasons for the development of *yinqiang*, from historical, geopolitical, religious, and philosophical perspectives. Shen Qia's core argument is placed on the correspondence between the development of music and that of the language. He believes that generally vocal music was the earliest form of music, in which melodies coincided with the motion of the language. Developmentally, the two were inseparable (p.46). Shen Qia states that in Indo-European languages a word can have multiple syllables and that European spoken words do not have fixed pitch motion which impart fundamental meaning, while in Chinese each word is a single syllable, and that words are spoken with designated tones that through pitch motion differentiate the meaning. Thus, language laid the crucial foundation for the distinct development of both music systems. The impact of Chinese language on music was clear, the author contends, as tonal variations in Chinese language precipitated the pitch range of *yinqiang* (p. 65).

Shen Qia further presents a complex analysis of *yinqiang* within the framework of two sets of comparative studies: linguistic vs. music, as well as between Western classical music and the music of the Han Chinese. This analysis emphasizes *yinqiang* as a key difference between Chinese and Western compositional structure, leading Shen Qia into proposing an extensive new theoretical approach for using *yinqiang* in the study of Chinese music theory, performance, and education. He suggests devising new notation to accurately indicate *yinqiang*; he advocates that as *yinqiang* can function to indicate modal change, an important distinction from Western music, this difference should be addressed within analysis; and he identifies the wide range of beat variations that are unique to Chinese music and that should be dealt with within culturally relevant perspectives.

This is an important book. It draws attention to the need for theoretical tools specifically tailored to the variety of Chinese genres. Comprehensively, Shen Qia makes a powerful case that *yinqiang* are essential to the Chinese music tradition and needs to be understood within a cultural context. If the music is stripped of these elements, it no longer sounds Chinese. The publication of this book is also timely as China becomes more powerful economically and politically, the country's awareness and respect to its own music has been growing. Although there may be challenges to the broad application of his theory, Shen Qia has taken the difficult step in opening a new door to the study and analysis of Chinese music, and possibly other musics worldwide.

## REFERENCES

- Du Yaxiong. 1999. *Fundamentals of Chinese Music Theory and Its Cultural Basis*. Eurasian Studies Yearbook 71. Bloomington: Eurolingua.
- Phoneme. N.d. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed via <https://www.britannica.com/topic/phoneme>, last visited 22 June, 2019.
- Shen Qia. 1982. "Yinqiang Lun." *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*. 4: 13-20.
- Shen Qia. 1983. "Yinqiang Lun." *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*. 1: 3-12.

**Han Mei** [韩梅] PhD. from University of British Columbia, is an Associate Professor in the School of Music, and the founding Director of the Center for Chinese Music and Culture, at Middle Tennessee State University. Her research areas include Chinese Han instrumental music, Dong music in Southwest China, and Western contemporary music influenced by East Asian philosophy. Dr. Han also maintains an international performance career as a *zheng* virtuoso, performing contemporary and traditional music. Dr. Han has published in journals and book chapters in English and Chinese, and released seven CDs.

**Contact:** Mei.Han[ @ ]mtsu.edu

# “CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW ‘YELLOW PERIL’ IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC”: A STUDY DAY REPORT

**Kawabata Maiko and Tan Shzr Ee**

## **Abstract**

This Study Day Report is giving a factual overview about an event that took place earlier this year. The Study Day was the first in a series of planned events and publications in a large-scale and ongoing research project examining issues of yellowness in Western classical music in the UK and Europe. This is an enormous undertaking, for which a preliminary day of open discussions provided a welcome launching point.

## **Keywords**

Cultural Imperialism, Western Classical Music, Asian Students, Decolonization

## **INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION**

We are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal—being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory—there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it “study” is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present.

Fred Moten & Stefano Harney, 2016

[We put forward a] critical proposition to transform the existing knowledge structure and at the same time to transform ourselves. The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other's points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivities rebuilt. On this basis, the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia may be mobilized to provide alternative horizons and perspectives.

Chen Kuan-hsing, 2010

## **ABOUT US**

Our project is explicitly about identity and one of the key decolonizing initiatives currently sweeping higher education institutions is to interrogate subject position in the formation of epistemologies (to combat the idea of white norms as universal and objective). As such we feel it is important to begin by saying a few words about ourselves and why we convened the Study Day.

We are Asian female academics, one in musicology, one in ethnomusicology. While we currently work in the UK, we have both been brought up in transnational Asian environments, and have experienced both the privileges and challenges of extensive travel and migration for family, education and our professions. Today, we wear our experiences as ‘Other’ as well as ‘Included’ Asian women in our differently-sited and multifaceted identities, including distinct instances of microaggressions in the wider workplace. While a frequently-echoed anecdote of white colleagues mistaking us for someone else due to the problem of ‘all-look-same’-ism may now have become a self-deprecating casual joke among many East Asian communities, the seemingly unintentional slights performed in these actions hint at more dangerous unconscious biases hidden with deeper race asymmetries in systems and institutions around the world – not least in the world of classical music. In June 2019, we banded together to address structural inequality in our field, a research area in its infancy in the UK.

Kawabata Maiko and Tan Shzr Ee. 2019.

“CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW ‘YELLOW PERIL’ IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC”: A STUDY DAY REPORT

The Study Day was the first in a series of planned events and publications in a large-scale and ongoing research project examining issues of yellowness in Western classical music in the UK and Europe. This is an enormous undertaking, for which a preliminary day of open discussions provided a welcome launching point. [see full text of Call in Appendix]<sup>1</sup>.

The day has also signalled the need for more safe spaces to enable more voices to come forward in the early stages of data gathering. Our commitment to the latter begins with our ‘outing’ of selves in context, below:

**Maiko Kawabata** (Lecturer in Music, Royal College of Music): I was born in Tokyo to Japanese parents and raised in Australia, Italy, and the UK. Like many middle-class Japanese girls, I grew up playing a musical instrument – violin in my case. I studied music in the UK and USA, where I trained as a historical musicologist specialising in nineteenth-century violin virtuosity. My first research into Asian and Asian American female violinists being exoticized and eroticised dates from 2004. Since then, some outstanding scholarship has emerged from the US-based Asian female academics Mari Yoshihara, Mina Yang, and Grace Wang. Over many years of playing violin professionally and belonging to various music institutions in the USA, UK and Europe, I have witnessed instances of racism (and sexism) against non-white (and female) musicians. Only recently have I discovered that I was conducting ethnography as an industry ‘insider’ without realising it.

**Shzr Ee Tan** (Senior Lecturer, Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London)

I was born in Singapore and brought up partly in Japan, where I first learnt the piano. As with many families in Asia, this gendered middle-class pursuit was deemed a civilising hobby for girls to undertake, partly in the security of a teaching-at-home job it could offer at the end of a music education. I left Singapore to study music/ology in the UK, where my delusions of grandeur of becoming a concert pianist were immediately put to rest. There I ironically also discovered ethnomusicology upon questioning my existence as a twice-diasporic Chinese person with postcolonial English-speaking abilities (a constant surprise to many in London who kept mistaking its own former colonial outpost as ‘somewhere in China’). My itchy-fingered urge to learn new instruments led me to pick up the erhu (out of guilt for not knowing my Chinese roots), Korean percussion (in my further questioning of East-Asianness), plus the viola and accordion (for pure annoyance purposes). I returned to Singapore to work for *The Straits Times* as an arts journalist for six years, before coming back to the UK to retrain as an ethnomusicologist, researching indigenous peoples of Taiwan and their musics. Since then I have come full circle to the piano again, working from the different perspective of a (hopefully) politically-more-attuned researcher. I am grateful to my parents for being open-minded and supportive enough of my plans to take the instrument into different roads.

## ABOUT THE STUDY DAY

“Cultural Imperialism and the New ‘Yellow Peril’ in Western Classical Music” was held at Royal Holloway University of London’s Bedford Square campus on 10 June 2019. The day was an over-subscribed event, and brought together 40-50 academics, musicians, and music students from universities and conservatoires across the United Kingdom and Europe. Notably, it was the first gathering known to us of NBPOCs (non-black people of colour) in our field on this continent – with majority representation from delegates with Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Southeast Asian ancestry - - alongside white, brown and black colleagues. As a range of emotional comments came to show on even the issue of visibility at such events, immediately it became clear how important and necessary it was to create a safe space for initiating discussion on sensitive, sometimes controversial, issues. This is because structural inequalities do persist for many Asians in the music profession and in higher education, from the student body to faculty and in the curriculum.

---

<sup>1</sup> Follow hyperlink <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfv3qZouoyfQMI0rt4iTGv4YacEticiS3O9-9YbRtqrpcYi5w/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>.

We reproduce the full text of our Call For Participation in the Appendix below, which states our aims and objectives for both the Study Day as well as our longer-term project.<sup>2</sup>

The following then is a summary of discussions that took place across three panels and open discussions, two brief live performances, and a transatlantic video interview.

### PANEL 1: IDENTIFYING AND UNPACKING THE ‘YELLOW PERIL’ IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

**Maiko Kawabata** began by observing the disparity between high percentages of Asians at European and UK conservatoires (particularly in string instruments) and low percentages in orchestras and asked what accounts for this. Preliminary research shows that many Asian musicians struggle against the prevalent stereotype of robotic/mechanical/expressionless playing; against discrimination based on appearance (i.e. because of the colour of our skin), at auditions without screens; and against “innate capacity” (Grace Wang’s coinage), the idea that only Viennese musicians can truly understand Mozart – which automatically excludes foreigners. These tropes propagate in a field guarding itself from a dreaded invasion, i.e. ‘yellow peril’. Kawabata also related these prejudices to assumptions about specific types of repertoire (e.g. Paganini) in which Asians are said to excel. She wanted to point out that Asian instrumentalists therefore do not have opportunities equal to those of their European counterparts; so how can the playing field be leveled?

**Tina K. Ramnarine** (Professor, Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London) spoke from her experience as an orchestral violinist and researcher on orchestras around the world. First, she noted that Western art music is based on discourses of technique, mastery, and power and posed the question as to whether we can theorise classical music as the new cricket (c.f. C.L.R. James’ *Beyond a Boundary*). Second, she noted that the ‘peril of alterity’ needs a wider and more inclusive reach, and she pointed to orchestral initiatives such as the Reggae Philharmonic and Chineke! which, as commendable as they are in many ways, risk ghettoizing black, and other ethnic minority, musicians. Third, she raised the issue that histories of colonialism have shaped Western classical music itself – for example, composers such as Elgar and Holst were drawing on Indian classical music, even though they are seen as quintessentially English. In light of this history, ongoing issues around the representation of diversity, and the aspirations of musicians across Asia to excel in Western art music, she posed the question whether the term neocolonial might still be applicable in conceptualizing the politics of classical music, and she emphasized the political frames through which we think about musical participation. She also suggested that we should consider changing the terms of discussion to tell a new story about who performs Western art music, noting how performers such as Lang Lang and Kyung Wha Chung have contributed to 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>- century changes in performance aesthetics, paralleling the development of recorded performance, which creates a greater demand for interpretations that are technically and expressively proficient.

Citing from a long list of published sources in the media, **Daniel Leech-Wilkinson** (Emeritus Professor of Music, King’s College London) pointed out that the language of record critics and other professionals displays structural prejudice against Asian performers as being unemotional, lacking personality, or in the case of one pianist a “heartless finger fest”. The kinds of criticisms of East Asian musicians made in reviews are all of characteristics such as technical perfection, absolute accuracy, faithfulness to the composer, obedience to tradition of teachers -- which are, after all, principles fundamental to Western ideologies of classical music pedagogy. Racism and hypocrisy are both widely evidenced within the industry, he suggested.

**Weida Wang** (PhD student, Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London) provided a perspective on the classical music industry in post-socialist China. His PhD investigated how the industrialisation of Western classical music in China has been incorporated into China’s marketplace and political contests, e.g. the NCPA and Beijing Music Festival. His work sites China as a major force

---

<sup>2</sup> See also Hyperlink: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfv3qZouoyfQMI0rt4iTGv4YacEticIS3O9-9YbRtqrPcYi5w/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>

and voice to be reckoned with in the shaping of the new political economies, communities and aesthetics of Western Classical Music.

There followed an open discussion on the notion of agency in relation to the “Yellow Peril” - [fear of jobs being taken, fear of ‘dilution’ of cultural heritage; fear of loss of representative voice; fear of other alleged existential dangers]. With ‘Orientals’ constantly being told that we cannot understand Mozart or Brahms, it goes without saying that the field of innovations in performance styles automatically excludes Asian performers. One Asian instrumentalist shared her personal experience of frustration with the system where ‘East Asians are always going to be more harshly judged’. Questions were also raised about the power held by critics, and about the possibility of reconsidering the idea of a “script” to reframe the way we experience music – i.e. with the composer as primary, the performer secondary, and audience tertiary. Finally, there was a discussion about class, specifically the need to recognise that, in the words of one delegate, ‘in classical music we immediately have a certain amount of privilege. Do we recognise our own advantage?’ For instance, it was noted that black cellist Sheku Kanneh Mason comes from a middle-class family; the privilege of paying for expensive music lessons and instruments cannot be ignored. As another delegate put it, we need to consider class by saying, for example, “I’m a person of a certain ethnicity but I come from a very privileged background which has given me certain advantages and has given me certain opportunities”.

**Reylon Yount** gave a hypnotic performance of **Alex Ho’s** *Rituals and Resonances for Solo Yangqin* (2018). The two then spoke about their positioning as Asian performer and composer, raising the question of what this means for the yangqin as an instrument in the Western context. The issue of genre (cross-cultural) was posed and of “world music” being a problematic term. Shzr Ee Tan pointed out that a certain composer born in China was criticised for being too Western and ‘not Chinese enough’ in his compositions, thereby reinforcing the idea of white composers having the privilege of normativity. Ho brought up the issues of appropriation and pentatonicism – is this an Eastern trope? – and Yount shared his experiences of fusion groups combining Western & Eastern instruments.

## PANEL 2: EDUCATION, CURRICULUM, RECRUITMENT, RISE OF CHINA AS REVENUE SOURCE

**Shzr Ee Tan** offered several provocations from her standpoint as a UK-based ethnomusicologist and educator: given the significant influx recently of students from East Asia – Hong Kong and China, especially – the question arises as to what they should be studying. Many students are surprised to see a non-white face giving a lecture on non-white music. Perhaps students have every right to want to consume a particular romanticised model of Western art music, especially considering their tuition fees in comparison to other students’ fees. These are ironically the very in-built paradoxes of the decolonization process: how can an educator of East Asian ethnicity work to challenge tropes and rewrite scripts here? Simultaneously, Chinese students are often perceived as rich, arrogant and entitled. Tan also suggested that issues of student diversity and curriculum planning are related, and that the term ‘Yellow Peril’ is used deliberately, to provoke. Are East Asian students only to be thought of as ‘cash cows’ by university (particularly, graduate) admissions programs? And is music performance one of the more prominent arenas in Higher Education in which ratios of East Asians to non-East Asians (to invert the problematic trope of the non-Western) are especially significant?

**Andrew Killick** (Reader in Ethnomusicology, University of Sheffield) spoke as the author of a new book on Asian music currently thinking about the cultural intersections of East and West. He questioned the expectations of composers that they would express their national identities whether they wanted to or not, e.g. Chinese composers being expected to write Chinese music, or wear ‘fancy dress’. Composers are taught to try and find their own voice but, even now, the expectation is that it comes from the composer’s own place of origin. In contrast, no such expectation applies to performers – indeed, there is some ambiguity as to whether performers are actually expressing themselves or someone else’s ideas -- yet Asian performers suffer from stereotypes of being too technical or lacking expression, as previously mentioned.

**Rainer Prokop** (Department of Music Sociology, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna) reported the findings of an Austrian empirical study into how performance professors evaluate the

musical achievements of classical music students. Analysis revealed stereotyping of students from Japan, China and elsewhere, as being technically skilled through discipline but lacking in feeling when performing. It also became clear that playing with feeling is not only a question of technical capability but also a question of self-presentation – how to carry the body, how to walk on stage, how to manage mannerisms—over which Asian students experienced harsh critiques.

There followed a discussion about how stereotypes and discrimination manifest – through name-calling, denial of opportunity, the optics of racialised bodies (against which blind auditions, behind a screen or curtain, provide a mitigating factor). As one delegate remarked, the reality is that many people make judgments about sounds based on visual information: ‘You look Chinese, therefore you sound Chinese’ (!). **Shzr Ee Tan** related that for an increasing number of East Asians the idea of the aspirational cosmopolitan was at work: they saw themselves as equal members of a (paradoxically class-elite) international world, where access to and practice of Western Classical Music was a matter of Utopian ‘cultural rights.’ This was not only because of Western classical music’s potential claims to ‘universalism’, but also because of how it became simply ‘another cultural product... alongside Latin American salsa, or French Food, or Japanese anime that could be consumed in an international cultural marketplace.’ But the Asian cosmopolitanism remains aspirational and select, because playing fields have yet to be equalized. European/ North American counterparts have far from recognized East Asia as an equal and fully-fledged partner on international stages (at least for Classical music).

**Andrew Killick** suggested that we need to teach and engage in dialogue in a way that recognises East Asia as being part of the sphere of Western classical music, not as foreign to it – as Nicholas Cook observed in his chapter ‘Western classical music as world music’ in the *Cambridge History of World Music*; statistics show that the number of people who can read staff notation is much higher in Asia than it is in Europe.

Another discussion centered on how Western classical music ideology promotes its own universality, for example the idea that Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is about all man-kind (‘All men will be brothers’). Kawabata pointed out that 200 years later, it is apparent that the “universal” -- revolving around white, male, European, Western normativity -- is mistaken for true universality, for instance when Japanese performers extol tropes of genius and transcendence that have characterised the reception of Beethoven’s music since the mid-late nineteenth century.

A lecturer in a UK music department revealed that the modus operandi for many graduate programmes was to aggressively recruit students from the fast-growing market of China, without necessarily paying enough attention to this target community’s expectations of a music education, or providing enough training/ consideration for their English language skills upon arriving in the UK, or their increasing-othered experiences as a critical mass of marginalized students in UK campuses. There did not seem to be adequate preparation of UK students in terms of expectations of cultural diversity and integration issues in postgraduate music programmes as well.

In relation to student activism on cultural diversity, one participant brought up the ongoing Occupation at Goldsmiths against institutional racism as a good example of a socially-conscious student movement.

On the topic of students in university departments vs. conservatoires, one speaker pointed out that many conservatoire students are not interested in broader political and sociological issues around their discipline because they are very focused on a career which is built on the ethos of practice, and more practice. So for some, critical thinking is not valued in their education and career development, and this can be a big problem.

On the question of how to level playing fields, several university lecturers spoke of a decolonising initiative to remove compulsory undergraduate music courses on Western art music/ notation and keep them optional instead; of the need to expose, say, Orientalist tendencies in nineteenth-century opera to show how European culture has appropriated the cultures of the world; to use the work of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) scholars in reading lists, videos, and guest lectures. This enterprise has some way to go before it will catch up with redressing gender imbalance, which has already been underway for a long time. The actual work of facilitating discussions on colonisation, race and inequality in the classroom however remains very difficult, given the pre-university education that students come in with, working on conservative A-level syllabi taught by teachers who swear by the ‘canon’. Often, attempts



at cultural inclusivity, for example in global music survey courses, still have to resort to the use of musico-cultural stereotypes in curriculum first, before the same stereotypes can be broken down in the same class as part of discussions. Students are not always receptive to discussions on decolonisation, although with changing university demographics more conversations (and different kinds of music) are being heard in classrooms. Alongside these ongoing developments, there have also been bastions of conservative musicians and academics active in the UK (and Europe) who openly resist and attempt to take down the decolonisation initiatives. How do we build conversations between these groups? How do we work towards positive change, re-writing of scripts and re-structuring of frameworks?

In some of the smaller breakout groups, some East Asian students and performers spoke up about personally-experienced instances of micro-aggressions, from objectifications of East Asians as ‘robot’ performers ‘with no passion’, to constant forgetting and mixing up of their names, faces and output by colleagues, to hidden accusations of plagiarism, and gendered projections of model minorities who were expected not to speak up or argue, but simply keep quiet and toe the line, and be the subservient student. In private one-to-one conversations, one student also related newer experiences of racism where students from China specifically were thought to be rich and arrogant, or political spies of the Chinese Communist Party. These were separately confirmed by those gathered as not unique experiences. One participant with education and work/ performing experience in the United States pointed out that many issues of race ‘taken for granted as decent and politically-correct behaviour’ were not so in the UK, and there were cultural gaps at large in terms of normative attitudes towards people of colour, starting with terms of references.

Overall the discussion pointed towards the need for curriculum reform in Higher Education and recognised the value of recent innovations such as **Building the Anti-Racist Classroom** and the **Race Equality Charter**. However, it could be a dangerous game simply treating these structures as box-ticking exercises merely existing on paper as opposed to agents for real change, or worse, pushing the affective labour of enacting these difficult policy and institutional changes to racially-profiled BME members of staff. Several participants also noted that Sociology and Education are the disciplines where leading scholarship in this area is being done in the UK.

**Beibei Wang performed her own** scintillating percussion composition, *Drama* (2017), and spoke about her practice as a Chinese-born musician residing in London. She sets a graceful example as an Asian musician ‘being herself’ in Western music, as neatly symbolised in her piece, which combined percussive gong effects from Chinese opera with pitched percussion made out of overturned IKEA plant pots of various sizes.

### PANEL 3: WAYS FORWARD: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY

**Diana Yeh** (Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Culture & the Creative Industries, City University of London) brought her wide experience researching inequalities in the arts, particularly television and theatre. She noted that in such areas, there is quite a lot of activism amongst the British East Asian community, e.g. the 2012 protest against the Royal Shakespeare Company production of a play set in China, in which, although the advertisement showed a young Chinese boy, the cast of 13 included only two East Asians, in the roles of a maid and a dog. It was noted that, in stark contrast, no such protests have been organised in classical music in the UK. However, there have been protests against yellowface productions of the *Mikado* and the ‘Oriental dance’ from the *Nutcracker*, which was subsequently revised through the removal of Orientalist elements including shuffling feet, make up with exaggerated pointy facial hair, and straw hats. *Madame Butterfly* has also been called out as being a racist opera in the British press – because of its Orientalist subject and musical language. Interestingly, such conversations seem to be happening mostly in the US and in journalism, rather than in British/European academia – which explains how little impact such acts of resistance have had on students, academics and musicians on this side of the Northern Atlantic.

It was acknowledged by many that the Study Day had generated great conversations. However, apart from the historic gathering of NBPOC in the same room, one senior participant pointed out that such conversations have existed since the 1980s in discussions in Higher Education UK (not just music) on

issues of race, inequality and postcolonialism. ‘And yet, we still continue discussing them today; the issues have not gone away. What can we do to take these conversations further and take action on the problems we have raised? What can we do to change things?’

**Maiko Kawabata** called for formulating, through this research, ways for promoting true ‘Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity’. Anti-racist thinking needs to filter through education, performers, into the fabric of composition. One ‘way forward’ is to follow the examples of musician activists Jennifer Koh and Vijay Iyer.

In terms of ‘ways forward’, several discussants spoke of consolidating networks and support groups and building a community online as a positive step, e.g. starting a group on Facebook. A black musician based in London noted that there is a Facebook group for black people working in music. The group allowed one to find a safe space/ virtual home just to talk about things with like-minded people and not feel like they are alone.

Another participant spoke of introducing mandatory micro-aggression training (as well as unconscious bias training) for all staff in all university/ institution departments, citing the example of their university. This could open up discussions on dealing with the nuanced and smaller but chronic and no-less damaging day-to-day challenges of casual racism in workplaces, schools, practice rooms and performing venues. The problem is convincing universities to institute this as an enforceable policy, and the potential backlash from uncooperative staff and students.

Participants also spoke about increasing representation of BME scholars and musicians at, or working closely with national and international groups such as the **Royal Musical Association (RMA)**, **British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE)** and the **National Association for Music in Higher Association (NAMHE)**, or the **Association of British Orchestras (ABO)**. To this end the RMA and BFE have already begun holding important curricular diversity and social inclusion events.

Lobbying was put forward as a potential course of action; this was a successful path followed by scholars and practitioners in the theatre community vis-à-vis the Orphan of Zhao incident at the Royal Shakespeare Company. As to whether this approach is effective in the Western classical music world remains to be seen.

Another course of action was the proposed setting up of a resource site/ internet-based toolkit specifically for musicians of colour to combat or pre-empt instances of racist and micro-aggressive bullying. This could for example give models of good practice or tips on recognizing and learning how to respond to specific instances of verbal and latent race-based discrimination.

It was also noted that when calling out racism, people are risking their necks since there is always a cost – to one’s career, employability, or reputation. “In raising a problem you become a problem”, one participant said, quoting a senior colleague and emphasising their awareness of the politics that inevitably come into play.

**Vijay Iyer** (Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts, Harvard University) **joined us on a video call from the US to talk about his music and outlook.**

**Maiko Kawabata** referred to Iyer’s 2014 keynote talk ‘Our Complicity with Excess’ at Yale for Asian American alumni, which addressed the history of racism and inequality in the US, and asked a series of questions related to his recent compositions which appear to make statements about race, such as the *Bridgetower Fantasy* (2014), in which Iyer created a companion piece to Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata* (originally written for George Bridgetower, Beethoven’s ‘mulatto’ contemporary).

Kawabata first asked Iyer whether or not he thought of himself explicitly as an activist composer, to which he replied that it is easy to call oneself something but it does not mean it is happening. There are people who are grassroots activists or union organisers, etc. He tries to be an ally to these movements and actions but to call yourself an activist is too self-congratulatory. His entire artistic orientation and trajectory in music-making has been about addressing certain questions for himself and to try and move the needle where possible, to address, say, 15,000 people. One can harken one’s own reality and speak to the times. It does not mean that it will work and move any needle anywhere. So he was careful about self-congratulatory naming as an activist but he has always made choices that addressed questions of

difference and power in ways that he felt might stay with people. For that to turn into change takes a lot, more than the particular moment. When it comes to activism we must consider its real-world impact. It's one thing to call a given piece of music "political," and it's another thing for acts of music-making to actually do political work. That is a helpful distinction to make.

Kawabata then turned the conversation to his piece 'Trouble' violin concerto (2017), composed for the Korean-American violinist Jennifer Koh, one movement of which is dedicated to Vincent Chin, the Chinese-American beaten to death in 1982 by two white men who mistook him for a representative of the Japanese 'peril' posed to the US auto industry in Detroit. In his composer's note for the piece, Iyer suggests that the concerto challenges the traditional Romantic concerto model with its swashbuckling hero (which reflects the colonialist reach of ideas like individualism/heroism/conquest) and instead characterises the soloist as a kind of shaman, as vulnerable in relation to the orchestra.

Iyer explained that there are moments in the piece that call for virtuosity but nothing extreme like playing off-stage, he said, laughing. Julietta Singh's *Unthinking Mastery* works through some of the questions Kawabata implied, especially the notion of mastery itself is some kind of vestige of the imperial project. Indeed, he built the piece from below, starting with just two repeating notes. He did not think he blew open the concept of virtuosity in the post-war tradition but he did rethink the notion of virtuosity. This is not a new question - he constructed this work for her to build the music from nothing and then build to something. At the end, the soloist is engulfed by the ensemble and merges with the power of the multitude. He was wary of forcing narratives, however.

In response to a question from the floor regarding whether or not there was some implicit political critique in concerto models (e.g., Sibelius's *Violin Concerto* rethought what the role of the soloist was in relation to the orchestra) and whether there were any violin concerto models that underpinned his own, Iyer commented that the Sibelius concerto was one of Koh's favourite concertos to play. He had played tutti violin in Sibelius's Second Symphony as a kid, a work he still knows bar for bar, and felt the dynamics of the orchestra from *within*. Right down to the techniques of orchestration, the question is how to write for one violin against, say, thirty, and how to guide the ear through that set of relationships.

The process of writing *Trouble* arose from an organic, ongoing conversation between Koh and himself - what this piece is about, what is it meant to do, what it might say. Much of it came from an affective register, 'structures of feeling' in Raymond Williams's sense.

Another comment came from a South-Asian delegate, who raised the issues of anti-blackness, colourism, and looking introspectively within one's own communities, interrogating issues about who gets to speak (e.g. agency, voice, intersectionality). Iyer observed that all these elements compound one another and referred to Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacy of Four Continents* which has shifted how the relationship between oppressors and immigrant communities is discussed.

He brought up Frank Wilderson's idea of "the time of the paradigm" - the system in which we all think and labour is a system based on global capitalism coming out of a history of imperialism and enslavement. Subsequently, he asks himself what he can do from where he is - this involves understanding his relationship to these systems, histories, and privileges he enjoys as a man, as a Harvard professor, as a MacArthur fellow. To quote Toni Morrison, "When you get these jobs that you've been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you're free, you need to free somebody else."

## CONCLUSION

At the end of our Study Day, we felt we had managed to get the ball rolling on having difficult conversations that are long overdue. We are proud of having created a safe space in which important words on structural discrimination, cultural integration, unequal globalisations, and anxieties of as well as hope for (uncertain) futures in contemporary music practice could be said, exchanged or reiterated. We were inspired and grateful for the opportunity to hear different – sometimes contradictory – voices. We found the contribution of each attendee to be valuable and came away inspired by the passion and

thoughtfulness of many delegates. We were surprised and energised too by the voluminous support we received from far and wide on our registration page, including many members outside of the NBPOC (Non-Black People of Colour) community who were clearly supporters and allies.

We are aware that there is much more to investigate and reflect on, including dimensions of history, shifts in the global political economy of music, inter-Asian intersectionalities, commercial aspects of changing scenes, gender issues and affective labour, among others. We are pleased to report that a follow-up symposium in June 2020 is under way with Jennifer Koh as guest speaker, and look forward to welcoming our returning participants as well as newer members of this community.<sup>3</sup>

## APPENDIX

### CALL FOR PARTICIPATION: CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW 'YELLOW PERIL' IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

**STUDY DAY: June 10 2019, Royal Holloway, University of London**

**11 Bedford Square WC1B 3RF**

The myth of Western classical music as an international language has elevated its false claims to universality. This music has been troped through the past 200 years as the cultural doxa (Kingsbury 1988, Nettle 1996, Nooshin 2015) in spite or because of its hidden and deeply embedded histories of cultural imperialism and racial oppression. By this we refer to deeper structural oppressions brought about by imperialist campaigns and colonisations via pianos, not only guns, which came as the final ratification of their hegemony. Among the traces of this history are everyday examples of casual and institutional racism found in, for example, the micro-aggressive exclusion of and casual racism towards non-white staff and non-white students at UK and European music institutions – university music departments, conservatoires, competitions, and orchestras (membership, boards and management).

While phenomena above have long been discussed in the field of ethnomusicology over several decades, they still remain openly unacknowledged in the actual practising of Western Classical Music around the world today. However, as global politics shift with the (imagined) politico-economic rise of East Asia (particularly, China) as a global cultural player, such oppressions are beginning to be re-understood in fresh light. We seek to call out again, and unpack some of these structural inequalities in the Western classical music industry at large by focussing on hitherto undocumented examples of racism against East Asian musicians ('Yellow Peril') in the UK and Europe. The prejudice that such musicians excel technically but not musically has coalesced most visibly into stereotypes of the robot/automaton or exotic sex toys in the case of some females (Scharff 2017, Tan 2013, Yang 2014, Yoshihara 2008, Kawabata 2004). That this is happening in a climate of heavy recruitment of students from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore – countries which provide considerable revenue streams – lends urgency to its exposure. Students from these countries also bring with them the image of the 'model minority' who are perceived as non-threatening, disciplined, hard-working, and respectful of elders, derived from (variously) Confucianism, rote-memorisation, teacher-emulation, 'Tiger Moms', the Suzuki method, the colonialist reach of ABRSM, etc. (Chua 2011, Tan 2013). While we propose to focus on East Asian transnationalisms in Europe and the UK, the positioning of East Asian musicians and music researchers in an intersectional context (various BME communities, gender, class, in interaction with Asian-American debates) is another complex issue of interest.

---

<sup>3</sup> We also encourage our readers to speak up too, and join our new Facebook group. Hyperlink: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/500954420664021/>

In the zeitgeist of #MeToo and emerging perspectives on decolonisation, it is timely to pose the following questions:

### **1. What is the new 'Yellow Peril' in Western classical music?**

As per our introduction, we interrogate the construction of musicians and musical institutions projected as originating from East Asia but practising in global Western Classical Music scenes as alternate 'threats' to and 'saviours' of an imagined ailing industry. Stereotypes of East Asian performers as non-spontaneous and didactic technicians have abounded over the past few decades, whether heard in the whisperings of conservatoire corridors or in newspaper music reviews. However, with the rise of East Asia – particularly, China as a rising economic power, and Japan as the world's second largest music market – the mass cultural consumption of classical music has been feted as deployed to a large extent to these new growth areas outside of Europe and the United States. As new concert halls continue to open in China alongside its aggressive domestic and international cultural diplomacy campaigns, more students than ever from East Asia have begun to enrol in conservatories in Europe and the United States, joining their Asian-American or European-born counterparts.

Here, unsettled re-projections begin to emerge as new cultural shifts take effect: the new cultural consumption power of East Asian musicians, while celebrated, have also drawn suspicion from self-appointed tradition bearers. What are their motivations? Will they take over aesthetic styles, interpretations, pedagogy, jobs and institutional power structures? Will they 'go home', or 'stay', or hit global superstardom? And yet, there is no single monolithic category of East Asian musicians, as intersectional hierarchies across gender, generational histories, and also across different Japanese, Korean and Chinese communities and their associated notions of musicianship and motivations compete for dominance in conversational representation. For many, the privileging of a personal career within diasporic and dislocated contexts goes beyond old-school transnational dialogues where exchanges take place in zig-zag patterns, and back and forth. Often the (elitist) approach of aspirational cosmopolitanism (Tan 2017) comes to fore where East Asian musicians see themselves as freshly arrived 'citizens of the world', and seek to fully embrace Yellowness-as-equally-entitled to consuming and appropriating Whiteness in artistic and musical identity in an imagined equal playing field.

### **2. How can one construct a truly inclusive history of Western classical music fit for the purposes of a progressive 21st-century education?**

In contradistinction to *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Everett and Lau 2004) we propose: Locating Western Art Music in East Asia, and locating East Asians in Western Art Music. Following the approach of Nathan Glazer (1998) in deploying the lens of transformative multiculturalism as opposed to additive multiculturalism, we pursue this line of enquiry not simply in looking towards East Asian musicians and music consumers as an alternative/additional voice in various conversations unfolding around the construction of Western Art Music, but in their direct impact on global structures of musical production, the (un)making of musical aesthetics and the (re)institutionalization of canons. In this respect we also look towards Koichi Iwabuchi's (2002) theory on the recentering of globalization, and understand the contributions of East Asia and East Asian musicians from a non-othered perspective.

### **3. What are the ramifications for East Asians of the myth of Western classical music as a universal language?**

To state that Western classical music is an example of cultures of circulation seems oblivious to its inherent elitism, dependent on access to expensive instruments, training and practice-hours, and a musical language posited as singular, natural and supreme. Western music notation, and particularly functional harmony and the diatonic system, has recently come to be contested as the lingua franca of university music curricula (e.g. Harvard University). The myth of Western

classical music as a universal language, and the historicisation of canonic composers as mythical supreme arbiters of creativity-at-source, has started to be exposed by such movements within Western Classical Music-centric educational institutions. While scholarship in ethnomusicology has long identified these problems, it is only in recent years that university music departments and to a much less extent, conservatories (mostly outside of the UK and Europe) have taken active steps in revising curricula and teaching practices.

#### **4. What are the ways forward?**

In seeking to identify solutions to the problems described above, we seek to create a safe space for challenging conversations to happen. We take into serious consideration ethical concerns regarding differently-staked perspectives/ privileges in regard to the issues we have raised, as also issues of privacy/ anonymity, conscious and unconscious biases and fears of recrimination for speaking out. We also draw inspiration from the advances made by our colleagues in American History and in Asian American studies – since much of the laying of the groundwork has already been achieved, there is no need for us to reinvent the wheel in terms of methods. In particular, we are encouraged by Miya Masaoka's free koto improvisations (in collaboration with George Lewis) as a form of Asian-American resistance (Wong 2004); Dorinne Kondo's work on Asian-American theatre and what she has termed 'counter-orientalism', also as a mode of resistance (Kondo 1997); and Deborah Wong's theory of 'the Asian American body' in jazz, hip-hop, and taiko performance (Wong 2004).

Simultaneously, however, a sensitivity must be taken in recognising the distinctly different context of the UK and Europe. Because race relations in the US have long been polarised along black/white lines, or along lines of indigeneity, theorizing yellowness has always conditioned by these two polarities (see Frank Wu and others) – a condition that simply does not apply in the UK/Europe. Rather, yellowness and the 'yellow peril' are set against the backdrop of former empires and postcolonialism and shifts the debate to class and race or at least to considering them in intersectional interaction.

We invite proposals for activism, educational reform, artistic platforms, performances, web activity, and further research to make the practice of Western classical music more inclusive.

## REFERENCES

- Chen, Kuan-hsing. 2010. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chua, Amy. 2011. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Everett, Yayoi Uno, and Frederick Lau, eds. 2004. *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Kondo, Dorrine. 1997. *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theatre*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Glazer, Nathan, 1998. *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Iwabuchi, Koi. 2002. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Kawabata, Maiko. 2004. Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender (1789-1830). *19th-century Music*, 28(2): 89-107.
- Kingsbury, Henry. 1998 [2010]. *Music Talent & Performance: Conservatory Cultural System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney. 2016. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Autonomedia.
- Nettl, Bruno. 1996. *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*, Vol. 476. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Nooshin, Laudan. ed, 2015. *The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music*. New York: Routledge.
- Scharff, Christina. 2017. *Gender, Subjectivity, and Cultural Work: The Classical Music Profession*. New York: Routledge.
- Tan, Shzr Ee. 2013. New Chinese Masculinities on the Piano: Lang Lang and Li Yundi. *Gender in Chinese Music*. Edited by Rachel Harris, Rowan Pease and Shzr Ee Tan. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 132-151.
- Tan, Shzr Ee. 2017. Feminist Asian Cosmopolitanism in Singapore Tango Clubs. *Women in Asian Performance: Aesthetics and Politics*. Edited by Arya Madhavan. New York: Routledge.
- Yang, Mina. 2014. *Planet Beethoven: Classical Music at the Turn of the Millennium*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Yoshihara, Mai. 2008. *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Wong, Deborah. 2004. *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. New York: Routledge.

Details about the authors see page 88.

**Contact to the authors:** shzree.tan[@]rhul.ac.uk

# MY IMPRESSIONS OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CHINA MUSICS ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM EXHIBITION

**Terada Yoshitaka**

**Abstract**

This short review is dedicated to the first China Musics Ethnographic Film Exhibition, which took place in the second half of 2019 in Shanghai.

**Keywords**

Ethnographic Film, Chinese Music, Exhibition, Diversity

It was such an honor for me to rub shoulders with distinguished film makers and scholars from ROC and Taiwan at this film festival and exhibition. Watching their masterful films and hearing their incisive comments on those by other filmmakers was an exceptionally valuable learning experience. I was equally impressed with the level of interest and enthusiasm among young scholars and filmmakers toward this media. The festival was intense with about 40 films screened and commented during the five-day event. For non-specialists of the region like myself, the festival served also as an excellent crash course on the enormous diversity of musical genres and styles as well as contents and styles of filmmaking. Regardless of such diversity presented during the festival, I was reminded of the importance of solid research for making a persuasive film. This may sound a decisively banal and common-sensical observation not worth repeating, but I found the emotive impact and academic merit of the film depended greatly upon the quality of research (and often a film maker's long-term engagement with individuals and communities at hand).

The technology has made such a rapid advance that making a film with high-quality audiovisual images has become considerably easier but it is often in-depth research that makes a film compelling with lasting impressions in the end. The downside of the technological advance is ironically the easiness with which a film can be made. I would encourage young/less experienced directors to reflect deeply on why they wish to make films to begin with and to what audience they wish to communicate with.

I believe that ethnographic films can contribute to a deeper understanding of, and empathy toward, the subject (particularly the marginalized individuals and communities) and that a film's value should be evaluated by the degree to which they achieve the goal by appropriating the unique features of audiovisual media.

Below are a few of my general observations on the tendencies that I observed during the festival. First, I was struck with the number of films using the drone. The bird's-eye view of the area or an event is often spectacular and satisfies the visual desire of the audience. It also provides the viewers with a larger spatial context. Yet, after watching several films with similar drone shots, I became a bit restless, feeling it has become a cliché. I admit it can be effective in some cases but the filmmaker needs to think hard about why such perspectives are necessary in the context of the entire film narrative. The panoramic view is infused with a sense of power and ownership as local minority people had no access to such perspective until very recently and therefore the filmmaker needs to be sensitive to such representation. Having said that, with the increasing availability of the drone, minority communities in rural regions are also getting used to having this type of vision, which may affect (and may even have already affected) their manner of performance.

Second, the use of BGM in some films seems to deprive the viewers of the sound environment of the scene depicted. It is a common technique in feature films and TV documentaries, but for ethnographic



films with a focus on the local perspectives, this needs to be utilized carefully, if used at all. By injecting sound imagery from outside sources, the filmmaker is instilling his/her particular perspectives: i.e. contrasting rural and urban lifestyles, contemporaneity of traditional arts and many more. It should be used sporadically and only when the objectives of such external sound images are clearly defined and do not hamper the ultimate goal of the film.

Third, some films include a “set” scene where members of the minority community were instructed to perform specifically for filming, often with a visually stunning scenery in the background. This generates a post-card imagery of performing arts with colorful costumes to impress the viewer, which tends to exoticize minority groups by fixating them to traditional culture.

Perhaps, these areas of my concerns mentioned above are aspects frequently used in typical TV documentaries, to which most of the general public are accustomed. If so, we all need to ask how the films, ethnographic or otherwise, can contribute to the deeper understanding and empathy of the minority groups (who are the subjects of many films presented) and other film subjects through such audiovisual media.

I think that the style of mass media presentation should be critically analyzed because there is a danger in such manners of presentation or depicting them as the exotic other. It should not be brushed away too hastily, however, as the power of mass media to reach a larger public can be appropriated for a better cause. The urgent task for us ethnomusicologists, in my opinion, is to explore how we can collaborate with media specialists to incorporate anthropological and ethnomusicological perspectives into popular media. In this context, I was happy that filmmakers with ample experiences in TV production are now interested in making ethnographic films.

Finally, I owe my profound gratitude to Professor Xiao Mei and her team for organizing the festival so efficiently and look forward to the future development of this highly valuable endeavor.

**Terada Yoshitaka**, PhD in ethnomusicology, University of Washington, 1992, is Professor of ethnomusicology in the Center for Cultural Resource Studies at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan. He specializes in music cultures of Asia and Asian America, and has conducted fieldwork in the India, Philippines, Cambodia, Japan and North America. Since 1999, he has produced ethnographic films on music from diverse locations, many of which deal with the music culture of marginalized communities.

**Contact:** teradadoraneko[[@](mailto:teradadoraneko@gmail.com)]gmail.com

## AEMR

*Asian-European Music Research Journal* is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes scholarship on traditional and popular musics and field work research, and on recent issues and debates in Asian and European communities. The journal places a specific emphasis on interconnectivity in time and space between Asian and European cultures, as well as within Asia and Europe.

The *Asia-Europe Music Research Center at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (AEMRC)*, which is the physical *site of the journal*, is a new academic platform established by the conservatory on the basis of synergetic cooperation between academic institutes at home and internationally. The platform focuses on the study of musical cultures in the geographical arenas connecting Asia with Europe, specifically looking at the flows of musical ecologies and civilizations. It examines and compares the histories and current developments of multicultural practices between Asia and Europe, and explores the reinterpretation of traditional music resources in applied and sustainable contexts. The Centre seeks to promote in-depth academic exchange at home and abroad, with emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaborations, including the promotion of cultural diversity in the digital humanities and musical knowledge building. It aims at providing a supportive research and teaching environment with a commitment to the larger interests of equality, tolerance, capacity building and the stimulation of artistic creativity, and the exploration of innovative approaches towards redefining fields of cultural study.

The journal is also associated with longstanding 'key tertiary research bases' focusing on humanities and the social sciences in Shanghai, including the Chinese Ritual Music Research Center and the Oriental Musical Instruments Museum, both at Shanghai Conservatory, as well as with the work of other departments at the Conservatory. The Center also cooperates with various Chinese and international universities and research institutions.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

**Editor:** Xiao Mei, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, e\_xiaomei@126.com / editor@asian-european-music-research-ej.com

**Reviews Editors:** Tan Hwee San, SOAS, ht5@soas.ac.uk and  
Chuen-Fung Wong, Macalester College, wong@macalester.com  
Send books, films, links and other materials for review to:

Tan Hwee San, Chuen-Fung Wong, Gisa Jähnichen, Xiao Mei

**Co-Editor:** Gisa Jähnichen, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, gisajaehnichen@web.de / editor@asian-european-music-research-ej.com

The official email address of AEMR-EJ is AEMRC@shcmusic.edu.cn

### Editorial Board:

- Ako Mashino (Dr., Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan) akomas@sky.email.ne.jp
- Alexander Djumaev (Dr., Union of Composers of Uzbekistan) adjumaev@yahoo.com
- Chinthaka P. Meddegoda (Dr., UVPA, Colombo, Sri Lanka) chinthaka.pm@vpa.ac.lk
- Chow Ow Wei (Dr., Putra University, Malaysia) chowwei@upm.edu.my
- Earl Jimenez (Dr., Philippine Women's University, Philippines) ecljimenez@pwu.edu.ph
- Esbjörn Wettermark (Dr., Office for Cultural Development Gävleborg, Sweden) esbjorn.wettermark@regiongavleborg.se
- Helen Rees (Prof. Dr., UCLA, USA) hrees@ucla.edu
- Liu Hong (Dr., Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China) liuhongusa@163.com
- Xu Xin (Dr., Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China) iamxuxin@yeah.net
- Razia Sultanova (Dr., Cambridge University, UK) razia@raziasultanova.co.uk
- Tan Shzr Ee (Dr., Royal Holloway, University of London, UK) shzree.tan@rhul.ac.uk

## **CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

The journal provides a forum to explore the impacts of post-colonial and globalizing movements and processes on these musics, the musicians involved, sound-producing industries, and resulting developments in today's music practices. It adopts an open-minded perspective on diverse musics and musical knowledge cultures.

Despite focusing on traditional and popular musics, relevant themes and issues can include explorations of recent ideas and perspectives from ethnomusicology, social and cultural anthropology, musicology, communication studies, media and cultural studies, geography, art and museum studies, and other fields with a scholarly focus on Asian and European interconnectivity. The journal also features special, guest-edited issues that bring together contributions under a unifying theme or specific geographical area.

In addition, the journal includes reviews of relevant books, special issues, magazines, CDs, websites, DVDs, online music releases, exhibitions, artwork, radio programs and music festivals.

The official email address of the Center is [AEMRC@shcmusic.edu.cn](mailto:AEMRC@shcmusic.edu.cn).

Please, send your full submissions (non-formatted with all your figures and items placed within the text of a word-document and a cover sheet with your personal data) to this email address. The editors will then get in touch with you on an individual basis.

## **ABSTRACTING & INDEXING**

*RILM (core), others in progress*

## **FREQUENCY AND PUBLICATION**

*Two issues per volume year, June (summer) and December (winter) commencing 2018.*

## **EDITORIAL REMARK**

*Instead of providing full biodata of the authors, we leave this decision to the readers (starting with number 4) who can contact the authors directly via email.*

# CODE OF ETHICS

## PUBLICATION ETHICS AND MALPRACTICE STATEMENT FOR AEMR-EJ

### 1. PUBLICATION, AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

AEMR-EJ is a double-blind, peer-reviewed journal. Papers in whatever research tradition must report new scientific findings. They should knowledgeably present the findings, give correct and complete references to previous related work by the authors and by others (citations), repeat previously published findings only inasmuch as it is necessary for understanding the context, and in a clearly identified form.

Authors of scientific publications are always jointly responsible for their content. A so-called "honorary authorship" is inadmissible.

With this definition of authorship, other contributions, even though seemingly significant are not by themselves regarded sufficient to justify authorship. For example, the following are not grounds to claim authorship:

- the responsibility for obtaining the funds for the research,
- the contribution of important materials,
- the training of co-authors in certain methods,
- involvement in the collection and assembly of data,
- directing an institution or working unit in which the publication originates.

However, institutions, organisations, or private persons funding or otherwise assisting the author's research have to be acknowledged in the text of the contribution.

Authors are obliged to participate in the peer-review process, to provide retractions or corrections of mistakes and to state that all data in article are real and authentic. In papers with multiple authors, all authors have to state that they have significantly contributed to the research.

Authors have to list all references used in the paper. This includes written and audiovisual sources. Plagiarism or any use of fraudulent data will lead to rejection from publication. In the process of editing, detection software is used to help identify such issues. With respect to the originality of papers published, it is strictly forbidden to publish the same paper in more than one journal or book series at a time.

By making a submission for consideration, the author(s) agree on all the statements above.

### 2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REVIEWERS AND EDITORS

Reviewers and editors of submitted manuscripts are bound to respect confidentiality and to disclose conflicts of interest with respect to the research, the authors, and/or the research funders.

Judgments should be objective, constructive and based on best scientific practice. Reviewers should recommend relevant published work, including audiovisual materials, which are not cited.

Reviewers must agree to respond to a submitted manuscript within 6-8 weeks.

Editors have complete responsibility and authority to accept or reject an article, based on the recommendations of the reviewers. Editors should recommend a submission for publication, suggest that further revisions be made, or reject it outright. Editors must preserve the anonymity of reviewers. When a paper is accepted for publication, editors and reviewers must agree on the statements above.

### 3. PUBLISHING ETHICS ISSUES

The editorial board will monitor ethics of publication, following the rules and practices mentioned by COPE. [1] Papers submitted that cause ethical conflicts through plagiarism, fraudulent data, or issues that endanger the integrity of any academic record, will be rejected and the authors excluded from further publication in the series. Rejection of a paper follows the reviewers' recommendations and a majority decision by the editorial board. In the same way, the editorial board precludes business needs from compromising intellectual and ethical standards.

The editorial board will publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies, if necessary. Authors and readers are invited to raise any ethical concerns with the board.