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Sound and Meaning: The Case of Martial Pieces

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As a musician, I never believed in the meaning of instrumental music, nor in its supposed programmatic content. Studying Chinese music, I was, as every one, confronted to the fact that the most played pieces were alleged to be programmatic, if not realistic. During these many years of collaboration with Chinese musicians, I did find outstanding instrumentalists who do believe in programmatic, and other outstanding musicians who do not care. It took me almost ten years before I could show evidences of the place esthetics occupies in Buddhist rituals and music.

Through the careful study of the origin of one single instrumental piece, *Jiang he shui* (River waters), I was able to prove that the alleged meaning of this piece changed with times and contexts. I want in this paper to go even further, by examining the most obviously descriptive piece, the martial suites for *pipa* lute, *Shi mian mai fu* and *Ba wang xie jia*. I shall particularly examine the modal aspects of two sections taken respectively from these suites, *Chu ge* and *Chuida*.

PICARD François, *Time, Sound, and the Sense of Beauty: Chinese music and Buddhist Rituals*, « IAS Newsletter », n°10, Autumn, 1996, pp. 30-31.

PICARD François, *Du temple aux maisons de thé, et retour, Les tribulations d'une incantation en Chine*, in *Méthodes nouvelles, musiques nouvelles*, ed. by Grabócz Márta, Strasbourg, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1999, pp. 31-55.

PICARD François, *Chine, comment décrire une musique décrite comme descriptive?*, in *De l'Ecoute à l'œuvre, Etudes interdisciplinaires*, ed. by Michel Imberty, Paris, L'Harmattan, coll. « Sciences de l'éducation musicale, 2001, pp. 43-59.

Song of Chu Kingdom / The King of Chu Moves his Armor / Ambush from All Sides / Farewell to the Concubine

The Story

The story of the Gaixia 垓下酣戰 battle, in present days Anhui, took place in 202 B.C (5th year of Gaozu) between the king of Chu 楚 Xiang Yu 項羽 and Liu Bang 劉邦, founder of the Han 漢 dynasty. It is to be found in the chapter called « The Story of Xiang Yu » 項羽本紀 in the *Chronicles (Shi ji 史記)* written by Sima Qian 司馬遷¹.

Xiang Yu's army is surrounded.

« At night the King [Xiang] heard that, from all sides among Han army, one sung [Chu] songs; quite frighten, he said: "Has Han conquered all the population of Chu?" King Xiang stood up during the night to drink under his tent; he had a beautiful woman, named Yu 虞, who was always with him, and an excellent horse named Zhui 騅, which he always rode; King Xiang sung therefore with sadness his generous regrets; he made on himself this verses:

My strength destroyed the mountains; my energy dominated the world

Times are no more auspicious; Zhui does not run anymore;

If Zhui does not run, what can I do?

Yu! Yu! What is your fate?

See Musical exemple 2 Chu ge qin (Xie Lin / Picard)

« He sung several stances and his beautiful woman sung along. King Xiang dropped many tears; all his soldiers cried and no one could dare to look at him. »²

« He divided his horse into four parts which he posted on four sides *si mian* 四面] ». ³

Finally, Xiang Yu finds himself on the bank of the Wu River 烏江. The head of the watchtower is there, and proposes to help him cross (*du* 渡) the river, but Xiang refuses to leave his soldiers. He offers his horse to the head of the watchtower to save the brave companion. He fights on foot, and eventually cuts his throat (*ziwen* 自刎).⁴

Several famous episodes of this story passed from oral literature to writings, from theater to - at last? - music.

The theme of the Chu song has become a proverb, down to modern musical mythology.⁵ *Chu ge* is said to be « the song emitted by chicken (*Jimingge* 雞鳴歌) »⁶ but the term 歌 'ge' which now means 'a song' used to be specific to Chu, the Wu 吳 region having 'ou' 謳 and the Yue 越 region having 'yin' 吟.⁷ As to the song sung by Xiang Yu, it figures in several anthologies, including the one by the Music Bureau in its chapter on songs to be accompanied by the *qin* zither (*qin ge* 琴歌).⁸

¹ SIMA Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記, juan 7, Peking, Zhonghua shuju, 1959, reprint 1972, vol. 1, pp. 295-339. Translation after Edouard CHAVANNES, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien*, T. II, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1897, pp. 247-323.

² SIMA Qian, p. 333, CHAVANNES p. 316.

³ SIMA Qian, p. 334, CHAVANNES p. 318.

⁴ SIMA Qian, p. 336, CHAVANNES p. 320.

⁵ See for instance LI Yongsheng 李永生, ed., *Zhongguo yinyue gushi* 中國音樂故事 (Chinese Musical Stories), Hefei, Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1985, p. 74-76.

⁶ *Ying Shao* 應邵, quoted in notes to SIMA Qian, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁷ *Yan shi gu* 顏師古, quoted in notes to SIMA Qian, *op. cit.*, p. 316. Voir aussi *Chu Han chunqiu* 楚漢春秋

⁸ GUO Maoqian 郭茂倩, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Anthology of Poems from the Music Bureau), reprint *Sibu congkan chubian*, juan 58, reprint Shanghai, Shanghai Wenye, s. d., p. 434.

The story of Liu Bang having his soldiers sing a Chu song to demoralize the enemy can be found under a poetico-narrative form in a Dunhuang manuscript dated 939, under the title *Ji Bu shiyong* 季布詩詠 (Poeme of Ji Bu), including a regular poem *shi* of eight times seven verses and a prose poem *ci*⁹. Ji Bu is an historical character, a general from Chu, who appears in the *Han Chronicle* (*Han shu* 漢書).

Analysis of the Chu poem

Sima Qian does not mention the singing of the Chu song by the armies of Liu Bang, but only the verses by Xiang Yu sung by him and his woman. These verses are in the classical form of a quatrain with seven foets. One thing which deserves particular attention is the presence of the separation particle 'xi' 兮 in the middle of each verse. It comes from the *Nine Songs* (*Jiuge* 九歌) from the "Chu Odes" (*Chu ci* 楚辭) by Qu Yuan 屈原.¹⁰

One can find also some Chu songs, well identified, in the big anthology from the Music Bureau *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, among different categories: *Xianghe ge* 相和歌 (j. 29, vol. 2, p. 260), j. 41 à 42, vol. 2, p. 328), *qin* songs 琴歌 (vol. 2, p. 434 - already evoked, it is the very song by Xiang Yu - and 436), and at last among the 'various popular songs' *zayaoge* 雜謠歌 (j. 83, vol. 3, p. 573).¹¹ But this songs have not the characteristic form related to Chu songs by Qu Yuan.

Musical versions

Opera from 14th to 20th century, *qin* zither from 15th or 19th century, *pipa* lute since the 17th century, flute since a few decades, even symphonic orchestra, one can find many musical versions, which I shall examine in some details.

Shi mian mai fu (opera)

Shi mian mai fu 十面埋伏 (Ambush from all Sides), Yuan opera by Wang Ziyi 王子一 (circa 1368)¹², and anonymous Yuan opera¹³.

The latter opera is a suite composed of ten labelled melodies (*qupai* 曲牌) in *shangdiao* 商調 mode, which form a classical suite (*taoqu* 套曲), preceded by a tune for wind and percussion instruments *chuida* 吹打 entitled *Shuilong yin* (水龍吟 The Water Dragon Declamation).

Chu Han (puppet opera)

Chu Han 楚漢 (after the names of these two dynasties), a drama for string puppet theater *Mu'ou xi* 木偶戲 from Quanzhou, Fujian.¹⁴

Xie jia (Beiguan tune)

Xie jia 卸甲 ([The King of Chu] Removes his Armor), Beiguan 北管 tune from Taiwan.¹⁵

⁹ P. 3645, S. 1156. DING Chu 項楚, ed., *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu* 敦煌變文選注, Chengdu, Bachu shushe, 1989, pp. 770-775. Two other narrative poems from Dunhuang tell the battle, *ivi* pp. 106-138 et 139-190.

¹⁰ *Chu ci. Jiuge* in *Shijing zhuan, Chu ci zhangju* 詩經傳。楚辭章句, Changsha, Yuelu shushe, 1989, pp. 53-81.

¹¹ GUO Maoqian, *op. cit.*

¹² *Jiugong dacheng Nan Bei ci gongpu* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜 15, 5.

¹³ In WANG Jilie 王季烈, LIU Fengshu 劉風叔, *Jicheng qupu. Yu. Yi* 集成曲譜。玉一, Shanghai, Shangye yinshu, 1925, f. 78a-84a.

¹⁴ Refer to musical extracts in CAI Junchao 蔡俊抄, *Quanzhou tixian mu'ou xi chuantong* 泉州提絃木偶戲 傳統曲牌, Quanzhou, Quanzhou difang xiqu yanjiu she / Quanzhou mu'ou jutuan, 1987, vol. 3, p. 91.

¹⁵ LÜ Chuikuan 呂錘寬, *Paizi qu ji* 牌子曲集 (A Collection of Labelled Melodies), Taibei, Guoli chuantong yishu zhongxin, 1999, p. 219.

***Ba wang bie ji* (ballad)**

Ba wang bie ji 霸王別姬 "The King Says Farewell to its Concubine", spoken ballad accompanied by *sanxian* 三絃 lute, a genre from Mandchouria whose first transmitted libretto dates back to 1804.¹⁶

***Ba wang bie ji* (opera)**

Ba wang bie ji 霸王別姬 "The King Says Farewell to its Concubine", also called *Xi Han Yanyi* 西漢演義, a Peking opera scene written for Mei Lanfang in 1921 after the *chuanqi* 川奇 *Qianjin ji* 千金記. Also a scene in Huqin style in Sichuan opera. King Ba with his characteristic White and Black make-up and his whip is also part of a piece entitled *Jiuxing shan* 九星山, or *Chu Han zeng* 楚漢爭, by Huang Ji'an 黃吉安 (1836-1924).

***Chu ge* (qin)**

The versions for qin zither

One finds thirteen versions for *qin* 琴 zither of a piece entitled *Chu ge* 楚歌, from the first great book from 1425 down to 1611, then only one after 1802.¹⁷

1425 First musical version, published in the *Shenqi mipu* 神奇秘譜 (Spiritual and Marvelous Notations) by the Ning prince 寧王 Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378-1449), 1425, vol. Zhi xia 之下, f. 33a-36b¹⁸. It has eight numbered sections, without words, but with sub-titles, the preface tells that this piece is an ancient tune (*guqu*), then tells the story of the battle with Han and of the using of a Chu song to demoralize the enemy.

1491 *Zheyin shizi qinpu* 浙音釋字琴譜, before 1491, f. 57b-61b.¹⁹ In eight numbered sections, with sub-titles and words, preface citing the *Shenqi mipu* and telling the story.

1513 Xie Lin 謝林, *Taigu yi yin* 太古遺音 (Mysterious Sounds from Great Antiquity), juan 2, f. 13a-19a.²⁰ In eleven unnumbered sections, with words differing from the former, preface after the *Shenqi mipu*.

1515 Huang Shida 黃士達, *Taigu yiyin* 太古遺音 (Mysterious Sounds from Great Antiquity). reprint from the former [Xie Lin].

1530 *Faming qinpu* 發明琴譜 (Notations to Increase Light), *qinxia*, f. 9b-15b. In eight numbered sections, with words, similar to the former [Xie Lin]²¹

1539 *Fengxuan xuanpin* 風宣玄品 (Mysterious Articles from Feng Songs), *juan* 8, f. 49b-1556a.²² In eight unnumbered sections, without words, with sub-titles, a similar version to the one in *Shenqi mipu*.

1549 *Xilutang qintong* 西麓堂琴統, *juan* 23, f. 16a-20a.²³ In ten numbered sections, without words, with sub-titles, a similar version to the one in *Shenqi mipu*.

1557 *Xingzhuang Taiyin buyi* 杏莊太音補遺, *juan* xia, f. 28b-32a. In nine numbered sections, without words, with sub-titles, a similar version to the one in *Shenqi mipu*.²⁴

¹⁶ In *Danxian paizi qu xuanji* 單弦牌子曲選集 (A Collection of Labelled Melodies for Three Strings Lute), Peking, Yinyue chubanshe, 1956, p. 69, quoted in *Minzu yinyue gailun*, Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1964, reprint 1986, p. 134-135.

¹⁷ See also XU Jian 許健, *Qinshi chubian* 琴史初編, Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1982, p. 95.

¹⁸ Reproduction fac simile in ZHA Fuxi 查阜西, ed., *Qinqu jicheng* 琴曲集成 (Collection of Pieces for qin), vol. 1, Peking, Zhonghua shuju, 1981, pp. 162-164.

¹⁹ Reproduction *ivi*, pp. 209-211.

²⁰ Reproduction *ivi*, pp. 274-277.

²¹ Reproduction *ivi*, pp. 348-351.

²² Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 2, pp. 294-298.

²³ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 3, pp. 256-259.

²⁴ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 3, pp. 385-387.

- 1561 *Qinpu zhengzhuan* 琴譜正傳, *juan* 4, f. 1b-5b. In nine numbered sections, without words, with sub-titles, a similar version to the one in *Shenqi mipu*.²⁵
- 1585 *Chongxiu zhenzhuan qinpu* 重修真傳琴譜, *juan* 7, f. 17a-24a. In twelve numbered sections, with words and sub-titles, a similar version to the one in Xie Lin.²⁶
- 1596 *Wenhuitang qinpu* 文會堂琴譜, *juan* 6, f. 33b-36b. In nine numbered sections, without words or sub-titles, a similar version to the one in *Shenqi mipu*.²⁷
- 1611 Yang Lun 揚掄, *Taigu yiyin* 太古遺音, dans *Zhenzhuan zhengzong qinpu* 真傳正宗琴譜, *juan Chu ge*, f. 1-8. In nine numbered sections, with words and sub-titles, a version differing from the former ones.²⁸
- 1611 *Yangchuntang qinpu* 陽春堂琴譜 (*Qin* Notations from Yang Chun Hall), by Zhang Daming, reprint by Shen Guoyu under the name *Taigu zhengyin qinpu* 太古正音琴譜 *juan* 4, f. *Chu ge*1-4. In nine numbered sections, without words or sub-titles, a version differing from the former ones.²⁹
- 1802 *Liluxuan qinpu* 裡露軒琴譜, after 1802.

Tuning and mode

Chinese musicology is very quiet about the difference between 'tuning' and 'mode'. In practice, the term '*diao*' 調 can mean both, and one can generally consider that the main aspect of it is tuning. But we shall show that at least in the case of *Chu* songs there is a real concept of mode.

The *Chu ge* piece is classified among the *Qiliang diao* tuning 淒涼調 (sad tuning), in *Shangjue diao* 商角調 (litteraly meaning « Tuning in the *mi* mode on *re* ») or in *Chu shang diao* 楚商調 (tuning in the *re* mode in *Chu* style). Other pieces in the relevant tunings as *Li sao* 離騷 (The Sadness of Separation) are to be played *jin* 緊 2 5, which means that number 2 and 5 strings must be raised (C Eb F G Bb c d, or *re fa sol la do re mi*). According to Xu Jian, the name *Chu shang diao* comes precisely from this tune, since it is a *re* mode, namely *sol la do re mi fa*. One notices a diatonic descending movement c d Bb A G G F F Eb D G G G C C, which is a *re* mode on C.

Strangely, without having the same tuning, two pieces, *Chu ge* and *Yangguan*, share the same melodic material³⁰ (beginning of section [2] in *Yangguan*), which in fact is the modal prelude in *Ruibin diao* 蕤賓調³¹. But *Yangguan sandie* 陽關三疊 (Three Variations on the Sun Pass) is classified by *Shenqi mipu* - at its end - after the *Qiliang yi* 淒涼意 modal prelude. It is obviously a mistake. In fact, *Yangguan* is to be played with *jin* 5, which means raise number 5 string (C D F G Bb C D, also *re mi sol la do re mi*), like *Xiao Xiang shuiyun*, which is in *Ruibin diao* tuning.

The classification of the pieces in *Qiliang diao*, *Shangjue diao* and *Chu shang diao* modes

1425 *Shenqi mipu*

Six pieces in *Qiliang* or *Chu shang* or *Shangjue* modes:

Huaxu yin 華胥引 (Prelude to Dream Land)³² is in *Qiliang* mode but not classified.

Qiliang yi and *Chu shang yi*³³ follow each other, and immediatly after we find two pieces:

²⁵ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 2, pp. 465-467.

²⁶ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 4, pp. 414-417.

²⁷ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 6, pp. 269-271.

²⁸ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 7, pp. 145-149.

²⁹ Reproduction ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 7, pp. 428-429.

³⁰ As noticed by XU Jian, *op. cit.*, also *Zhongguo yinyue cidian* 中国音乐辞典 (Chinese Music Dictionary), art. "*Chu ge*" 楚歌.

³¹ ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 1, p. 154<<.

³² Reproduced in ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 1, p. 106.

³³ *Ivi*, pp. 157-160.

Zepan yin 澤畔吟 (Lament on the Muddy Bank) and *Li sao* 離騷 (The Sadness of Separation)

Shangjue yi follows immediatly with three pieces:

Shenhua yin 神化引 (Prelude to Spiritual Transformation), *Zhuang Zhou meng die* 莊周夢蝶 (Zhuangzi Dreams of the Butterfly) and *Chu ge*.

1491 *Zheyin shizi qinpu*

Eight pieces in *Qiliang* or *Chu shang* or *Shangjue* modes:

*Shangjue yi*³⁴ has three pieces, the same as before but in a different order:

Chu ge, *Shenhua yin* and [*Zhuang Zhou*] *meng die* π/Ω ∫ .

Qiliang yi and *Chu shang yi* come after³⁵ with five pieces:

Huaxu yin, this time under a heading, *Zepan yin* which follows *Li sao*, then *Qu Yuan wen du* 屈原問渡 and at last *Yangguan sandie*.

1539 *Fengxuan xuanpin*

Five pieces in *Qiliang* mode:

Qiliang yi, *Li sao*, *Chu ge*, *Qu Yuan wen du*, *Zepan yin*, *Huaxu yin*.

Confusion between modal names

There is a persisting ambiguity between the *Qiliang*, *Shangjue* and *Chu shang* modes³⁶. The analysis shows that they share the same tuning.

One last criterion gives some light on the question of mode as related to tuning. The *Shenqi mipu* 1425 indicates at the end of *Chu ge* that one must play « the harmonics of its own tuning » (*bendiao fan*). If one plays the preceding *diaoyi*, which means *Shangjue yi*, one modulates completely (F E D C Bb D C), but if one plays *Qiliang diao* or *Chu shang*³⁷, according to the very name 'Chu shang' and to the *Fengxuan xuanpin* edition from 1539, one stays in the same tone (Bb C D C).

The *Yuwu qinpu* 玉梧琴譜 scorebook from 1589 gives a precious indication on the esthetical meaning of *Qiliang diao* as a mode. Quoting the *Zixia dong kao* 紫霞洞考 (Essay from the Purple Cloud Cave) in relation to the monumental scorebook - now lost - by Yang Zuan 楊纘, from Southern Song Zhejiang school, entitled *Zixia dong qinpu* 紫霞洞琴譜 (*Qin* Scorebook from the Purple Cloud Cave), it writes:

Zixia dong kao zhi shi ming Chu shang diao ui ming wai diao Jiliang

Yun zhe gai yi kai rong Xiang Yu zhi kun yu Gaixia ye ci diao jin er wu ge yi zhi

紫霞洞考之是一名楚商調一名外調淒涼

云者蓋以形容項羽之困于垓下也此調緊二五各一徵

« The *Chu re* mode also bears the name of 'strange (*wai*) tuning of sadness (*qiliang*)', which means that it describes the difficulties encountered by Xiang Yu in Gaixia. For this tuning one raises both 2 and 5 strings, in relation of fifth. »³⁸

In fact, pieces classified under *Chu* mode like *Li sao* 離騷 (The Sadness of Separation) and *Zepan yin* 澤畔吟 (Lament on the Muddy Bank) refer not only to sadness³⁹, specially to the one related to separation (a theme found in the *Chu* song story, and also in the Sun Pass), but specifically to *Chu* kingdom, and to what it

³⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 209 sq.

³⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 244 sq.

³⁶ Apart the tuning of *qin* zither open strings, *Shangjue diao* is also the name of one of the twenty-eight *diao* from Yanyue 燕樂 music played at the Tang court: A Bib C D E F G A (*mi* mode on A).

³⁷ Reproduced in ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 1, p. 257.

³⁸ Reproduced in ZHA Fuxi, *Qinqu jicheng*, vol. 6, p. 90.

³⁹ It is to be noticed that the *qichu* 淒楚 locution has taken the general meaning of "sad".

is poetically the most famous for, the "Chu Odes" (*Chu ci* 楚辭) by Qu Yuan 屈原. In fact, if one considers the list of the pieces in Chu mode found in 1539, there is only one piece left, *Huaxu yin*, which is not related to "Chu". One can just add that *xu* 胥 is in some cases a graph equivalent to *chu* 楚.

The modal difficulty of Chu songs

The modal strangeness of Chu songs has become proverbial, up to the point to signify, not only exotism, but also difficulty, leading to elitism. The story about the songs called "Sichuanese from Low Quarters" (*Xiali Ba ren* 下里巴人) and "Spring White Snow" (*Yangchun baixue* 陽春白雪) has been famous, from Shen Gua (*Mengxi bitan* 5/102) to Mao Zedong (Yan'an Speeches). It is first to be found in the "Song Yu" 宋玉 chapter from *Shuo Fu* 說郛 *Xiangyang qijiuzhuan* 襄陽耆舊傳. Song Yu describes Chu modality in this way: « One begins in *re* (*shang*) with a strong *la*, then varies to a movable *sol* » *Yin shang ke yu za yi liu zhi* 引商刻羽 繁以流徵. One has to notice with astonishment how this description matches well with Chu song as played on the *qin* zither.

Conclusion on mode

In conclusion, there has been, as so often, and not only in China, a confusion between tuning and mode. One as to rectify: *Chu ge* is indeed in *Qiliang* and *Chu shang* modes, like *Zepan yin*, *Qu Yuan wen du* and *Li sao*, as well as *Huaxu yin*; but this mode - at the same time sad and related to Chu kingdom - differs from *Shangjue* used in *Shenhua yin* and *Zhuang Zhou meng die*.

The Chu song sung by Xiang Yu and put into music at the beginning of Xie Lin's *Taigu yi yin* from 1513 is but just a variant from the modal prelude in *Qiliang*. This identification allows us to rectify a mistake which would lead to oddness: the fourth note, on string 1, must not be played with the finger on point eleven like the former note (E), but on open string (C).

Interpretations

The *Chu ge* piece is extraordinary seldom played, I could find only one published recording of it, played by Yao Bingyan 姚炳炎 (1921-1983).⁴⁰ No transcription of this or other interpretation has been published either, except for a few very short extracts.⁴¹ On the other hand, Yao Bingyan is the one who has made a recording of an other piece in *Qiliang diao* mode, *Huaxu yin*.⁴² After my oral communication in Venice, I went to Shanghai in December, 2001, and at last could obtain from my friend Dai Xiaolian 戴曉蓮 a copy of the handwritten manuscript of *Chu ge* as performed by her great-uncle Zhang Ziqian 張子謙.

San Chu ci (zheng)

San Chu ci 散楚辭 alias 散楚 (Poem about Chu Dispersion), for *zheng* 箏 zither, in the Hakka tradition, Hanyue genre from Guangdong Province.⁴³ This is a melody according to the 68 *ban* (strokes) type.

There are a few other tunes related to the same battle of Chu: *Bie ji* 別姬 "Farewell to the Concubine",⁴⁴ *Wujiang ziwen* 烏江自刎 "Suicide on the Wu River".⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Rec. circa 1963, reprint *Guqin xuan Anthology of Chinese Traditional and Folk Music. A Collection of Music Played on the Guqin*, vol. 5, pl. 5, Zhongguo changpian China Record CCD-94/346, 1994.

⁴¹ XU Jian 許健, *Qinshi chubian* 琴史初編, Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1982, p. 95.

⁴² Rec. 1963, Zhongguo changpian 3-5902, reprint *Guqin xuan* 5, op. cit., pl. 2, transcription in *Guqin quji*, vol. 2, p. 50-51.

⁴³ See Luo Qingtian 羅青田, Luo Dezai 羅德栽 [et al.], *Guangdong Hanyue sanbai shou* 廣東漢樂三百首, Dafu (Guangdong), Dafu xian wenhua ju Guangdong Hanyue yanjiu zu, 大埔縣文化局 廣東漢樂研究組, 1982, p. 82-83. Recordings by RAO Ningxin 饒寧新, cassette *Chinese Plucked Instrumental Music Series Vol. 1*, Hugo HRP 724-4, B3, 1988, timing 6'11". CD Xingway Xing C8016, pl. 3, 2000, timing 5'40".

⁴⁴ Li Ling 李凌, *Guangdong yinyue* 廣東音樂, Peking, Zhongguo wenlian, vol. 1, 1986, p. 120.

⁴⁵ *Ivi* p. 144-145.

The *pipa* versions

The theme of the Chu vs. Han battle appears in the two martial suites *Shi mian mai fu* 十面埋伏 (Ambush from all Sides) and *Ba wang xie jia* 霸王卸甲 (The King of Chu Removes his Armor). There are to be found in most of the scorebooks for *pipa*, and in all the main ones, except in the Pinghu school. One must distinguish between *Shimian's* structure, a suite composed of various different tunes, and *Ba wang's* structure, a suite composed from variations on the same melody, of which *Chu ge* is but one.

Northern School	Southern School	Pinghu School	Pudong School
Wang Junxi	Chen Mufu	Li Fangyuan	Ju Shilin
Hua Qiuping			Shen Haochu
Yang Yinliu			Lin Shicheng
Wang Yuting			
Li Tingsong			

Shi mian mai fu (pipa)

Shi mian mai fu 十面埋伏 (Ambush from all Sides). Attributed, without historical reference, to a famous poet, Bo Letian (Juyi) 白居易 (居易) (772-846). In fact, one finds only a reference⁴⁶ by this poet to the fact that he would have listen to a music describing a battle and played on the *pipa*.

Ba wang xie jia (pipa)

Ba wang xie jia 霸王卸甲 (The King of Chu Removes his Armor). Attributed to a Tang dynasty musician.

Wang Youding 王猷定 (1598-1662), *Sizhaotang wenji* 四照堂文集 (Writings from Sizhaotang), has an entire chapter dedicated to Tang Yingzeng 湯鷹曾, entitled *Tangpipa zhuan* 湯琵琶傳 (The Tang Pipa Player), where he tells in details the performance by this musician of a piece for *pipa* entitled *Chu Han* 楚漢.⁴⁷ *Chu ge* is a section of the *Ba wang xie jia* suite.

1762 Yisuzi 一素子, MS. This scorebook, not specialized for *pipa*, contains eight "ancient" pieces, among which *Ba wang xie jia*, also called *Si* 四 *mian mai fu*, for *pipa*, and six "modern" pieces.

1790 Ju Shilin 鞠士林, *Xianxu youyin* 閒敍幽音, dating from the periode going from 1796 to 1820, probably from 1790, published in 1819 and with a MS. from 1860, contains the two martial suites⁴⁸. But the authenticity of this scorebook remains to be under discussion.

1818 Hua Qiuping 華秋莘 (1784-1859) left a scorebook with pieces organized according to two schools: the "Northern School" *Zhili* 直隸 (Hebei) from Wang Junxi 王君錫, from Yanjing city, split into different genres: 49 "Western" pieces (*xiban* 西板) including the civil (*wenban* 文板) and military (*wuban* 武板) repertoires; five great pieces (*daqu* 大曲); one varied piece (*zaju* 雜曲); the "Southern School" pieces from Chen Mufu 陳牧夫, from Zhejiang, belong to the civil and military repertoires, to the "various pieces" (*zaban* 雜板) repertoire and to the five great pieces *daqu*. The fusion of Northern and Southern schools has a major importance. Among modern players relevant to it, one must mention the two great music scholars Cao Anhe 曹安和 (born in 1905) and

⁴⁶ BO Juyi 白居易, *Pipa xing* 琵琶行 (Preface to the Lute), 816, quoted by LI Minxiong 李民雄, *Chuantong minzu qiye qu xinshang* 傳統民族器樂曲欣賞, Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1985, p. 74.

⁴⁷ In HAN Shude 韓淑德, ZHANG Zhinian 張之年, *Zhongguo pipa shigao* 中國琵琶史稿, Chengdu, Sichuan renmin, 1985, pp. 172-174. See also John E. MYERS, *The Way of the Pipa. Structure and imagery in Chinese lute music*, Kent, Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1992.

⁴⁸ LIN Shicheng, ed., Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1983, *Shi mian mai fu* pp. 14-19, *Ba wang xie jia* pp. 22-24.

Yang Yinliu 楊蔭瀏, (1899-1984). *Ba wang xie jia* belongs to the "great pieces" in Chen Mufu (South) and *Shi mian mai fu* to the "great pieces" [the only one of this type] in Wang Junxi (North).

1895 Li Fangyuan 李芳園, *Nanbeipai shisan tao daqu pipa xin pu* 南北派十三套大曲琵琶新譜 (New Scores for Pipa for the Thirteen Great Suites from Southern and Northern Schools) does not include the two martial suites.

1926 Shen Haochu 深浩初 (1889-1953), *Yang Zhengxuan pipa pu* 養正軒琵琶譜 includes the two martial suites *Ba wang xie jia* and *Shi mian mai fu*.⁴⁹

1942 Wang Yuting 汪昱庭 (1892-1951). The reference versions of both *Ba wang xie jia* and *Shi mian mai fu* are these ones, published by the Central Conservatory of Peking,⁵⁰ both according to the performance by Li Tingsong 李廷松 (Shanghai 1906-1976), Wang Yuting's most preferred disciple.

1982 Li Tingsong's own interpretation under his own name has been published by his son, Li Guangzu.⁵¹

Wujiang hen (Symphonic Poem)

Composed by Yang Liqing 楊立青 (born 1942), composition professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the symphonic poem *Wujiang hen* 烏江恨 (Regrets by the Wujiang River) has been inspired by the abundantly quoted *pipa* piece *Ba wang xie jia*. This piece, not very much considered by its own composer, has won a Second Prize and its recording has been published in 1986.⁵²

Comparative analysis of "Chu ge" sections from the *Ba wang* suite

Wang Yuting 1942 #10 section ; Li Tingsong 1986 #10 section; these versions, both by Li Tingsong, are the same.

Shen Haochu 1926 section 9, is different, also being a variation on the same melody. The #10 section (*Bieji*) in Shen Haochu does not differ from #9 *Chu ge* by Li Tingsong; Ju Shilin does not include *Chu ge*.

Chu ge (xun)

A few years after Liberation (1949), Chen Zhong 陳重 (born in 1919 in Pudong, Shanghai's suburb) wrote, in collaboration with Du Ciwen 杜次文 (a flautist born in Peking in 1939) an arrangement for the *xun* 埙 globular flute and the *zheng* 箏 zither of the *Chu ge* 楚歌 (Song of Chu Kingdom), extracted from #10 section from *Ba wang xie jia*, as found in Wang Yuting's version played by Li Tingsong. The new piece is composed of modulating sections. First section (meas. 1-24) comes directly from the *pipa* piece, omitting meas. 14-17 and 24-34. There is a pentatonic modulation to the upper fourth (*re mi sol la do* to *re fa sol la do*). B section modulates in the same way (*re fa sol la do* to *re fa sol sib do*). C section is a chromatic descending lament ending on a lower quinte in minor mode (*la* or *re* mode). After a short zither solo transition, the last section goes back to a shortened A section. From pentatonic system and its modulations, one has come to diatonic modality: G minor, going to dominant (D minor) and back. Or better, as there is no sensible, which characterizes tonality, it is a *re* mode on G. The diatonic descent (meas. 75-77) A-G-F-E-D is only a passing effect, although it furiously relates to diatonic modality and furiously reminds the diatonic descent in the *qin* versions.

Is it therefore possible to conclude that there is a strong reminiscence and permanency of a particular modal feeling related to the "Song of Chu Kingdom", found in early days in the *Chu shang diao*.

The score (unpublished, 1984/06) distinguish various sections:

⁴⁹ LIN Shicheng, ed., Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1983, pp. 51-57 et 58-68.

⁵⁰ *Minzu yueqi chuantong duzouqu xuanji* 民族樂器傳統獨奏曲選集 (A Collection of Traditional Instrumental Solos), Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1987, pp. 15-25 et 26-35.

⁵¹ Li Guangzu 李光祖, *Pipa guqu, Li Tingsong yanzou pu* 琵琶古曲。李廷松演奏譜 (Ancient Pieces for Pipa. Li Tingsong's Scores), Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1982, new pub. Taipei, Taipei shi Ligu yuetuan, 1996, *Ba wang* pp. 1-10, *Shi mian* pp. 44-54.

⁵² Cassette Zhongguo changpian HL-514, side A, Shanghai Symphonic Orchestra, directed by Cao Peng 曹鵬, with Ke Ming 柯明, *pipa* solo.

- 1 *Sanxu* 散序 (Unmeasured Prelude)
- 2 *Lige* 唢歌 (Song of Shouting)
- 3 *Youwu* 優舞 (Acrobatic Dance)
- 4 *Aoge* 鑿歌 (Song of Slaughter)
- 5 *Hunge* 魂歌 (Song of the Deceased Soul)
- 6 *Tan'ge* 嘆歌 (Lament)

Comparative analysis of "Chuida" sections from the *Shimian maifu* suite

1790 Ju Shilin p. 14

#2. *Chuida* 吹打 "Wind and Percussion Music"

1926 Shen Haochu p. 59

#5. *Chuida kaimen* 吹打開門 "Open the Door to Wind and Percussion Instruments"

1982 Li Tingsong p. 34

#7. *Chuida* 吹打 "Wind and Percussion Music"

Li Tingsong yanzou pu 1982 #7 section is almost identical to Wang Yuting #2 (*Minzu yueqi* p. 16, also played by Li Tingsong)

The piece is divided into two groups A and B of thirteen two-beat measures, grouped in five- four-four. The central group (meas. 6-9 and meas. 19-22) modulates to the fifth by substitution of degree.

Ju Shilin #2 does not include A group. Notably, this simplification allows not to modulate, while keeping the same fundamental notes.

Shen Haochu #5 (staff notation) and Wang Yuting #2 (staff notation) are very close to each other, but Shen Haochu is written twice slower and with only one sharp instead of two in the other sections, as is the case in the other versions. There is a modulation, which goes to G A B D E, (1 = G), written *fa sol la do re* 4 5 6 1 2.

Between Shen Haochu (A - B) and Li Tingsong (A - B - B) there is a simple adjunction in the latter of a repeat from the second part (meas. 14 to 26).

If one examines the simplest version, the one by Ju Shilin, from which all the others come, one notices that the modulation does not concern only secondary notes, but the tune itself, whose main note (initial and terminal) is the first degree (*do* / 1), in the rare aspect of *do re fa sol la do* 1 2 4 5 6 1. The examination of several thousands tunes did not lead me to the identification of the original tune, a task which was not done by either of my (many) predecessors. One can find however a few tunes which feature the same scale/mode materials, including *Dafan'er*/ *Daifan'er* 打番兒 帶番兒.⁵³

Conclusion

One single theme: the battle between Chu and Han, has travelled throughout China, passing through several genres: puppet theatre, opera, ballads, songs, instrumental music for the *qin*, the *pipa*, to finish (?) with symphony and modal/tonal arrangement. What remains from meaning? Not the melody itself, except for recent adaptations. The search after other musical characteristics would be in vain. But there is a quasi-constant in all the versions of the "Song of Chu Kingdom": the use of special and rare modes. In the same way, the instrumental effects used to describe the battle sounds - which we find also in Japan in the Heike biwa genre (平家琵琶), related to the battle between Heike and Genji clans - appear to be specific to the *pipa* martial repertoire and can not bear by themselves "the meaning".

⁵³ YANG Yinliu 楊蔭瀏, CAO Anhe 曹安和, *Sunan shifangu qu* 蘇南十番鼓曲, (Shifan gu Tunes from Southern Jiangsu), Peking, Renmin yinyue, 1957, reprint 1982, n°55, p. 244.

Annexes

Sub-titles (*qin*)

1425 Shenqi mipu in eight sections

1. *Yi bie jiang dong* 憶別江東 "Farewell Thoughts at the East of the River"
2. *Qi yu tun tai* 氣欲吞秦 "Desire of Annexing Qin"
3. *Ye jian tie di* 夜間鐵笛 "Metal Flute in the Night"
4. *Baqian bing san* 八千兵散 "Disperion of 8000 Soldiers"
5. *Yingxiong qi xiao* 英雄氣消 "The Energy of the Heroes Fells"
6. *Qibie yuji* 泣別虞姬 "Sorrow for a Farewell to the Concubine"
7. *Yinling shi dao* 陰陵失道 "To Lose One's Way at Yinling"
8. *Wujiang bu du* 烏江不渡 "No Passing of the Wu River"

1491 Zheyin shizi qinpu in eight sections

1. *Yumei chu sai* 御枚出塞 "Passing the Wall in Silence"
2. as 1425
3. as 1425
4. *Chentu shi nian* 塵土十年 "Ten Years of Dusty Soil"
5. as 1425
6. as 1425
7. as 1425
8. as 1425

1513 Xie Lin, Taigu yi yin in eleven unnumbered sections

0. The very text of Xiang Yu's song as quoted by Sima Qian and the *Yuefu shiji*, continued by: *Ci fu mu shi jun wang shi nian zai jiang chang* 辭父母事君王十年在疆場
1. as 1425.1
2. *Chang qu kai sai* 長驅開塞 "Passing the Wall in Silence"
3. *Tieyi chentu* 鐵衣塵土 "Dusty Soil and Metal Dresses"
4. *Hetai qiu feng* 禾黍秋風 "Cereales and Autumn Wind"
5. as 1425. 3
6. as 1425.4
7. as 1425.5
8. *Yuji qibie* 虞姬泣別 "Sorrow for a Farewell to the Concubine" See 1425.6
9. *Bajian sheng* 拔劍聲 "Sounds of Arms" See 1425.6

10. as 1425.8

Sub-titles (opera)

Shi mian mai fu (opera)

Shi mian mai fu 十面埋伏 (Ambush from All Sides), anonymous opera from Yuan dynasty⁵⁴.

This opera is a suite (*taoqu* 套曲) of ten labelled tunes (*qapai* 曲牌) in *shangdiao* 商調 mode. The names are not related to the action or content.

0. *Chuida* 吹打 *Shuilong yin* 水龍吟 "The Water Dragon Declamation, for Wind and Percussion Instruments".
1. *Dianjiang chun* 點絳脣
2. *Hunjiangchun* 混江龍??
3. *You hulu* 油葫蘆
4. *Tianxia le* 天下樂
5. *Nazha ling* 哪吒令
6. *Queta zhi* 鵲踏枝
7. *Qing ge'er* 青歌兒
8. *Liuye qing* 柳葉兒
9. *Ji sheng cao* 寄生草
10. *Zuan sha* 賺煞

Sub-titles (pipa)

Shimian maifu (pipa)

1942 Wang Yuting 13 sections

1. *Lie ying* 列營 "The Camps"
2. *Chuida* 吹打 "Wind and Percussion Instruments"
3. *Dianjiang* 點絳 "Attribution of Roles to the Officers"
4. *Paichen* 排陣 "The Army in Order"
5. *Zoudui* 走隊 "The Army is Marchin On"
6. *Maifu* 埋伏 "Ambush "
7. *Jiming shan xiaozhan* 雞鳴山小戰 "Skirmish at Jiming Hill"
8. *Jiuli shan da zhan* 九里山大戰 "The Battle of Jiuli Hill"
9. *Xiang wang baichen* 項王敗陳 "King Xiang Yu is Defeated"
10. *Wujiang ziwen* 烏江自刎 "Suicide on Wu River"
11. *Zhong jun zou kai* 眾軍奏凱 "Reports of Victory"

⁵⁴ WANG Jilie 王季烈, LIU Fengshu 劉風叔, *Jicheng qupu. Yu. Yi* 集成曲譜。玉一, Shanghai, Shangye yinshu, 1925, f. 78a-84a.

12. *Zhujiang zheng gong* 諸將爭功 "The Officers Contending for Merits"
13. *Desheng hui ying* 得勝回營 "Triumphant Return to Camp".
1926 Shen Haochu 18 sections
1. *Lie ying* 列營 "The Camps"
2. *Leigu* 雷鼓 "Thunder Drums"
3. *Zhang hao* 掌號 "Take the Horns"
4. *Fang pao* 放炮 "Install the Cannons"
5. *Chuida kaimen* 吹打開門 "Open the Doors to the Sounds of Wind and Percussion Instruments"
6. *Dianjiang* 點絳脣 "Attribution of Roles to the Officers" (1942 #3)
7. *Paichen* 排陳 "The Army in Order"
8. *Maifu* 埋伏 "Ambush "
9. *Xiaozhan* 小戰 "Skirmish "
10. *Da zhan* 大戰 "Great Battle"
11. *Nahan* 吶喊 "Battle Shoutings"
12. *Zhong wei* 重圍 "The Camp is Surrounded".
13. *Zhuan hao* 傳號 "Change Horns"
14. *Bai Bei* 敗北 "Win on North"
15. *Gu jiao sheng* 鼓角聲 "Drums and Horns Sounding"
16. *Wujiang* 烏江 "At the Wu River"
17. *Zou kai* 奏凱 "Victory"
18. *Shou chen hui ying* 收陳回營 "The Armies Return to Camps"

Ba wang xie jia (pipa)

1942 Wang Yuting 16 sections

1. *Yinggu* 營鼓 "Drums in the Camp"
2. *Shengzhang* 升帳 "Dress the Tents"
3. *Dianjiang* 點絳 "Attribution of Roles to the Officers"
4. *Zhengdui* 整隊 "The Army in Order"
5. *Dianjiang* 點絳 "Attribution of Roles to the Officers"
6. *Chuchen* 出陳 "The Officers Get Out"
7. *Chuchen* 出陳 "The Officers Get Out"
8. *Jiezhàn* 接戰 "Nearing the Battle"
9. *Gaixia gan zhan* 垓下酣戰 "The Drunken Battle at Gaixia"
10. *Chu ge* 楚歌 "Song of Chu Kingdom"
11. *Bie ji* 別姬 "Farewell to the Concubine"

12. *Gu jiao jia sheng* 鼓角甲聲 "Drums and Horns Sounding"
13. *Chu wei* 出圍 "To Get Out of the Surrounded Camp".
14. *Zhui bing* 追兵 "Pursue the Soldiers".
15. *Zhu qi* 逐騎 "Pursue the Horse".
16. *Zhong jun guili* 眾軍歸里 "All the Armies Go back".

1926 Shen Haochu 11 sections

1. *Yinggu* 營鼓 "Drums in the Camp"
2. *Shengzhang* 升帳 "Dress the Tents"
3. *Dianjiang* 點絳 "Attribution of Roles to the Officers"
4. *Zhengdui* 整隊 "The Army in Order"
5. *Paichen* 排陳 "The Army in Order" (Shimian 4)
6. *Chuchen* 出陳 "The Officers Get Out"
7. *Jiezhàn* 接戰 "Nearing the Battle" (1942 #6)
8. *Gaixia* 垓下 "Gaixia" (1942 #7)
9. *Chu ge* 楚歌 "Song of Chu Kingdom" (1942 #10)
10. *Gu jiao jia sheng* 鼓角甲聲 "Drums and Horns Sounding"
11. *Zhong jun guili* 眾軍歸里 "All the Armies Go Back".

Bie ji 別姬 "Farewell to the Concubine" is missing.

Recordings

Shi mian mai fu (pipa)

Wei Zhongle 衛仲樂 (Shanghai 1908-circa 1998) has played *Shimian* as soon as 1928 and recorded it in 1935 for Pathe/Baidai. His recording of 1961 was published as a cassette *Guoyue jingcui, Wei Zhongle jiaoshou yanzou yuequ xuan*, vol. 1, Shanghai wenhua Luyin luxiang zhongxin SH 8505, face B, track 4, time 10'00".

Li Tingsong has recorded *Shi mian* around 1960, record *Zhongguo changpian XM.912*, republished in *A Musical Anthology of the Orient, China*, vol. 32, Musicaphon-Unesco BM.30.SL.2032 (1985), face A, track 5, reprint Unesco-Auvidis D 8071 (1996), track 2, and *Chine : musique classique*, Ocora C559039, track 4 (reprint CD1988), time 8'34".

Lin Shicheng 林石城 has recorded *Shi mian* many times on records, cassettes and CD published in China, Hong Kong and France. Cassette *Yang Zhengxuan pipa pu* 養正軒琵琶譜 *Renmin yinyue*, vol. 1, 8026 L006, track A2.

Lui Pui-yuen (Lü Peiyuan 呂培源 Shanghai), *China, Music for the Pipa*, Elektra Nonesuch, Explorer Series 7559-72085-2, (rec. 1979, pub. 1980-1991), track 1, time 6'38".

Li Guangzu, *Li Guangzu duzou qu*, *Zhongguo changpian AL-46*, track B3 (1986).

Wu Yuxia 吳玉霞, (Shanghai, 1959) cass. *Meiren siyue* 美人思月, Kaiming wenjiao yinxiang KY9003, track A4.

Wang Weiping 王維平 (Xi'an, 1963), CD *China. Wang Weiping*, pipa *lute*, Ocora C 560128 (1988), track 5, time 5'26".

Ba wang xie jia (pipa)

Wei Zhongle has recorded *Ba wang* en 1954, Li Fangyuan version, published on cassette *Guoyue jingcui, Wei Zhongle jiaoshou yanzou yuequ xuan*, vol. 2, Shanghai wenhua Luyin luxiang zhongxin SH 8506, face A, track 1, time 10'20".

Lam Fung, cass. *The History of Chor Hon Yu*, Fung Hang Rec. CCMC 040, track A1 (1971).

Li Tingsong has recorded *Ba wang* before 1964, record Zhongguo changpian M402 (M33/1082), reprint ATC-213. Cassette *Yang Zhengxuan pipa pu xi* [⊗∞αμ\μ] √ – Renmin yinyue, vol. 1, 8026 L006, track B1.

Lin Shicheng has recorded *Ba wang* many times on records, cassettes and CD published in China, Hong Kong and France. Pacific Audio and Video PCD 6206, track 11, 1999.

Lui Pui-yuen (Lü Peiyuan Shanghai), *Hong Kong Instrumental Music*, Unesco Auividis D 8031, (pub. 1974-1990), track 1, time 7'10".

Li Guangzu, *Li Guangzu duzou qu*, Zhongguo changpian AL-45, track A2 (1986).

Wu Man, *Music for the Chinese Plucked Lute Pip*, Nimbus NI 5368 (1993), track 3, time 10'27".

Wang Weiping (Xi'an, 1963), CD *China. Wang Weiping, pipa lute*, Ocora C 560128 (1988), track 6, time 9'09".

Commentaries

If we compare the various commentaries written about those pieces, we will easily be convinced that, even among the ones who believe that Chinese music is descriptive by nature, there is very little description ever found, if not of sounds. Of course the belief in music as telling stories or depicting landscape in deeply rooted in Chinese culture, we can now appreciate how the musicians have managed allways to go back to the very nature of music: sound.

Liu Senmin, speaking of Yao Bingyan

The two kingdoms, Chu and Han, were at war with each other and the Han soldiers besieged the Chu's in Gaixia. King Liu Bang of Han adopted Zhang Liang's scheme to instruct his soldiers to sing the folk songs of Chu round the camping troops of Chu. On hearing their native tunes, the morale of Chu's army sagged and were soon routed. This short and concise piece is rich in the distinctive characteristics of Chu's music.

Liu Senmin 劉森民, speaking of *Chu ge "The Song of the Kingdom of Chu"*, *Anthology of Chinese Traditional and Folk Music. A Collection of Music Played on the Guqin*, vol. 5, track 5, China Record CCD-94/346, 1994, p. 6.

Isabel K.F. Wong, speaking of Lui Pui-yen

1. *Shi mian mai fu* (Ambuscade From Ten Sides)

Belonging to the "martial piece" category of the traditional repertoire, this famous piece portrays realistically an historical battle which occurred some time from 206-203 B.C. during the war between the forces of the King of Chu and those of the eventual founder of the Han dynasty (206 B.C-23 A.D.). The first part of the piece depicts the military maneuvers of the Chu army, complete with fife and drum and cannon fire. The second part depicts the ambush of the Chu army by its opponents and the skirmishes which eventually escalated into full battle, which resulted in the Chu forces defeated. As a programmatic description of battle, this piece uses the whole gamut of percussive effects for the pipa to represent artillery fire as well as a series of unusually long and distant portamenti to represent the wailing of the wounded.

Isabel K.F. Wong, *China, Music of the Pipa*, Lui Pui-yen, pipa, CD Elektra Nonesuch Explorer Series 7559-72085-2, 1980.

Wang Qun, speaking of Li Tingsong

2. *Shimian maifu* (The Great Ambuscade) *Pipa* solo. Performer: Li Tingsong

This is a large-scale *pipa* work popular since the latter half of the Ming dynasty. There is a detailed account of a performance of the *pipa* work *Chu Han* by Tang Yingzeng 汪映曾 in the chapter called *Tangpipa zhuan* 汪映曾 (The Pipa Player Tang), contained in *Sizhaotang ji* 四知堂集 (Collections of Sizhaotang) by Wang Xianding [sic for Youding] 汪希定向 (1598-1662), of the Ming dynasty. This work, *Chu Han*, is believed to have been the early version of *Shimian maifu*. The written music of this work first appeared in the *Pipapu* (*Pipa* Notations) of Hua Qiuping. The various editions of the work differ as regards the divisions and sub-titles of the music, which is usually divided into 18 parts, including "Lining up

Camps", "Fanfare and Drums", Skirmish at Jiming Hill", "The Battle of Jiuli Hill", "The Defeat of King Xiang Yu", "Suicide on the River Wu", "Reports of Victory", "The Officers Contending for Merits" and "Triumphant Return to Camp".

Shimian maifu is for the most part an eulogy in honour of the victor of the war between Chu and Han-Liu Bang, the founder of the Han dynasty. The piece opens with the *pipa* imitating the powerful and martial sounds of drums in the high register, followed by the dramatic effects produced by the means of modulations and transitions. Imitations of the typical sounds of ancient battlefields - bugles, cannons, horses- evoke the mighty image of the Han army. The work focuses on the "Ambush", "Skirmish at Jiming Hill" and "Battle of Jiuli Hill"; with unique and characteristic techniques of the *pipa*, and highly versatile rhythmic features, the music conveys a magnificent and coherent pageant of ancient warfare.

Mr. Li's performance of *Shimian maifu* is coherent as a whole and knits passion and narration into one, differing from some of those ordinary practices which produce isolated and farfetched interpretative frames according to the successive sub-titles.

Wang Qun, *A Musical Anthology of the Orient, China*, vol. 32, 33 rpm Musicaphon-Unesco BM.30.SL.2032, 1985, reedition CD Auvidis Unesco D 8071, 1996.

Alain Swietclick, speaking of Li Tingsong

Consacré à la musique classique instrumentale chinoise, ce disque enregistré par les Chinois eux-mêmes propose les pièces les plus connues du répertoire, en particulier le cheval de bataille de tout joueur de luth *pipa*, l'archi-célèbre « Embuscade », œuvre très descriptive (analogue à notre *Bataille de Marignan* de Janequin), où l'on entend chocs d'armures, chevaux... [...] Les exécutants sont excellents et très expressifs (si vous aimez la *Fantastique* ou la *Pastorale*, vous serez en terrain connu!) Deux reproches: les joueurs de *pipa* sont trop rapides [...]

Alain Swietclick, speaking of "A Musical Anthology of the Orient, China, Musicaphon-Unesco BM.30.SL.2032" (1985), *Telerama* 1970, 17 octobre 1987.

François Picard, speaking of Li Tingsong

4. Ambushed from All Sides (*Shimian maifu*)

Pear-shaped lute (*pipa*) : Li Tingsong (1906-1976).

Recorded around 1960; record Zhongguo changpian XM.912.

One of the bravura piece of the "military repertoire", that recalls the origins of the instrument which was brought into China by the soldiers in Central Asia. *Shimian maifu* was published in the first collection for *pipa*, that of Hua Qiuping, in 1818. The contrasts of timbre, registers and types of attack, the vast dynamic range and the variations of speed illustrate the fundamental concepts of Chinese music, concepts that were developed especially in percussion ensembles, and that are far removed from an alleged melancholic romanticism. Li Tingsong, another musician from Suzhou, began at sixteen to study the *pipa* with the great master Wang Yuting (1892-1951). He then played in clubs in Shanghai, and mastered the *erhu*, the *zheng* and the *sanxian*. He had an immense influence and a refined style with nevertheless a very great virtuosity.

François Picard, *Chine: Musique classique*, CD Ocora C 559039, 1988.

François Picard, speaking of Wang Weiping

5. *Shimian maifu* (All-side Ambush). Traditional

This suite, which is drawn from the first important collection of pieces for solo *pipa*, that of Hua Qiuping (1818), is representative of the so-called "military" *pipa* repertoire at its best. It was inspired by the struggle between the two "battling kingdoms", Chu and Han, and depicts the latter's final victory. A wide variety of techniques is used to evoke the armies preparing, arms clashing, horses riding, violent hand-to-hand fights, defeat, and victory. Beyond mere descriptive music, there is a two-way communication between sound and meaning, music and noise, technique and expressive power. Wang Weiping plays according to the master Liu Dehai's score, but she has entirely revised the intention, expression, nuances and contrasts.

François Picard, *China. Wang Weiping, pipa lute*, CD Ocora C 560128, 1998.

François Picard, speaking of Chen Zhong

6. *Chu ge* (Song of Chu Kingdom) $\Sigma^{\circ} \int q$

by Chen Zhong 陳重, globular flute *xun* 埙, Yang Lining 楊麗寧, *zheng* 箏 zither

This is one of the pieces which best brings out the nostalgic sound of the ocarina. This arrangement by Chen Zhong and Du Ciwen is taken from the sixth section of the famous suite for the lute "Ba wang xie jia" (The King of Chu Takes off his Armor).

François Picard, *Chine. Chen Zhong*, CD Ocora C 560090, 1996.

John Thompson, Introduction to *Zheyin Shizi Qinpu*

In *qiliang* (cold; in misery) mode most pieces have themes related to death. The second and fifth strings are raised from standard tuning (making 5 7 1 2 4 5 6, transposed to 2 4 5 6 1 2 3); main cadences are on 2, secondarily on 6.

12. *Qu Yuan Wen Du* (#41; Qu Yuan Asks for Advice)

This title is found in 13 handbooks to 1802, all melodies apparently related. *Wen du* literally means to ask to be ferried over a body of water, but this has become a standard expression for asking for advice. Qu Yuan (332-295 BC; see below) was famous as an upright minister not properly appreciated. His suicide at the Miluo River is still commemorated in the Dragon Boat Festival of the 5th of the 5th lunar month.

The following is extracted from Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*,

Qu Yuan... caring no longer to live... went out to the bank of the Miluo river. There he met a fisherman who accosted him, saying, "Are you not his Excellency the Minister? What has brought you to this pass?" "The world," replied Qu Yuan, "is foul, and I alone am clean. There they are all drunk, while I alone am sober. So I am dismissed." "Ah!" said the fisherman, "the true sage does not quarrel with his environment, but adapts himself to it. If, as you say, the world is foul, why not leap into the tide and make it clean? If all men are drunk, why not drink with them and teach them to avoid excess?" After some further colloquy, the fisherman rowed away; and Qu Yuan, clasping a large stone in his arms, plunged into the river and was seen no more...."

Zheyin Shizi Qinpu makes no attribution; Zha Fuxi says it has Song dynasty folk origins. Here is the original preface:

The Rare-Sounds Immortal says, as for this melody, it is not known where it originated. It is not in the Royal Ancestor's Handbook. It is thought that while the sage (Qu Yuan) was exiled to the barbarous Southern region, not knowing where to go, he asked a fisherman to take him (across the river), and so this was created.

Section sub-titles are:

1. Expelled to the barbarous South
2. The wilderness ferry is a dangerous obstruction
3. The old fisherman asks his name
4. (Qu Yuan) reports his bitterness
5. A lonely person in exile
6. The gentleman's grief extends 10,000 miles (, as he worries about his king)
7. (Sounds of) the delicate Canglang river
8. The ever-changing situation

Scores

Chu ge 楚歌

Shen qi mi pu, 1425

Qin

transcription F. Picard

Section 7



Final Chu ge



Diaoyi Shangjue diao



Diaoyi Qiliang diao



Diaoyi Chu shang diao



Musical exemple 1 Chu ge qin (*Shenqi mi pu* / Picard)

C Eb F G Bb c d

Chu ge
Qin

楚歌

Xie Lin, *Taigu yi yin*, 1513

transcription F. Picard



Li ba shan xi qi gai shi
力 拔 山 兮 氣 蓋 世



Shi bu li xi Zhui bu shi
時 不 利 兮 騅 不 逝



Zhui bu shi xi ke nai he
騅 不 逝 兮 可 柰 何



Yu xi Yu xi nai ruo he
虞 兮 虞 兮 柰 若 何



Ci fu mu shi jun wang shi nian zai jiang chang
辭 父 母 事 君 王 十 年 在 疆 場

Musical exemple 2 Chu ge qin (Xie Lin / Picard)

Song of Chu Kingdom 楚歌

Chen Zhong, Du Ciwen, 1986

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Song of Chu Kingdom' (楚歌) by Chen Zhong and Du Ciwen, 1986. The score is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 1, 9, 17, 25, 33, 41, 49, 57, 65, 73, 81, 89, and 97 marked at the start of their respective lines. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a final measure marked with a double bar line.

Musical exemple 3 Chu ge xun (Chen Zhong - Du Ciwen)

Chuida

Shi mian mai fu

Ju Shilin 1790: 14

Shen Haochu 1942: 59

Li Tingsong 1982: 34

The image displays a musical score for the Chuida piece 'Shi mian mai fu'. It consists of three staves, each representing a different version of the piece: Ju Shilin (1790), Shen Haochu (1942), and Li Tingsong (1982). The score is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. The first three staves show the initial measures (1-5) of each version, which are nearly identical. The fourth staff (labeled '6') shows a variation in the 6th measure, with the Ju Shilin and Shen Haochu versions using a 3/4 time signature and the Li Tingsong version using a 2/4 time signature. The fifth staff (labeled '6') shows further variations in the 6th measure, with the Ju Shilin and Shen Haochu versions using a 3/4 time signature and the Li Tingsong version using a 2/4 time signature. The sixth staff (labeled '10') shows the 10th measure, which is identical in all three versions. The seventh staff (labeled '10') shows the 10th measure, which is identical in all three versions. The eighth staff (labeled '10') shows the 10th measure, which is identical in all three versions.

Musical exemple 4 Shimian chuida (Ju Shilin / Shen Haochu / Li Tingsong)

Chuida 吹打 Shi mian mai fu Ju Shilin 1790: 14

Dafan'er 打番兒 Sunan shifan luogu qu n°55

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Ju 1790 and Shifan. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-5) shows the Ju 1790 part on a treble clef staff and the Shifan part on a bass clef staff. The second system (measures 6-10) continues the Ju 1790 part on a treble clef staff and the Shifan part on a bass clef staff. The third system (measures 11-14) shows the Ju 1790 part on a treble clef staff. The Shifan part is not present in the third system.

Musical exemple 5 Shimian chuida Ju/Dafaner (Ju Shilin / Sunan shifan luogu qu #55)