

S O A S M U S I C O L O G Y S E R I E S



雁北乡村礼乐  
*Ritual and Music*  
of North China

*Shawm Bands in Shanxi*



An Ashgate Book

S T E P H E N J O N E S

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# Foreword

My main theme here is the continuity of the folk ceremonial practice of shawm bands in one small area of rural north China – the painful maintenance of ceremonial and its music under Maoism, its revival with the market reforms of the 1980s, and its modification under the assault of pop music since the 1990s.

Having lurched from an overview of instrumental ensembles in the whole of China (Jones 1998) to a rather detailed study of the music-making of one single village (Jones 2004), I now consider musical life as part of local ceremonial and cultural networks, not within an area even so large as a whole county, but within a few districts of a single county – Yanggao, in the Datong region of north Shanxi province.

The text is in three parts. [Part One](#) explains the social and historical background by outlining the lives of shawm band musicians in modern times. [Part Two](#) looks at their main performing contexts: funerals and temple fairs. [Part Three](#) discusses musical features such as instruments, scales, and repertoires.

The DVD consists of a 47-minute film in two parts, showing excerpts from funerals and temple fairs (complementing [Part Two](#) of the text), while a separate section contains a 1992 funerary performance of a complete shawm-band suite.

The study explores two seemingly contradictory issues: while music must be understood in its whole ritual context, yet ritual studies can no longer afford to neglect it.

The package complements an audio-CD, *Walking Shrill* (Pan Records, 2004); whereas that CD documents the ‘classic’ repertory of the shawm bands, this study illuminates the wider ceremonial context, making a more complete illustration of the total ritual-music experience of villagers. Indeed, while the modern stage repertoires of urban professionals remain our main exposure to Chinese music, and while staged versions of ritual are becoming a disproportionately large aspect of research, this publication is all

the more valuable in showing the typical musical experiences of the majority of people in China.

To supplement [Part Three](#) of the text, my more detailed analysis of the core repertory of shawn suites will appear in vol. 2 of the *Musiké* (Semar Publishers) series.



## Prelude

Those who are aware of religious practice in modern China at all may know of ('institutional') ritual in the major Buddhist and Daoist temples in cities and on the major mountain sites; those who know a little more may be aware of lay Buddhist and Daoist ritual specialists ('diffused') performing for rural ceremonial, often with the aid of ritual manuals. And then, apart from temple and lay ritual specialists, other religious performers also deserve attention, including spirit mediums, *fengshui* geomancers, *yinyang* masters, and lay sectarians – not to mention, of course, ordinary folk drawing lots, burning incense, and pledging vows to the gods.<sup>1</sup>

Thus – for convenience, avoiding lengthy theoretical qualifications – for the rural Chinese situation I shall use the term 'ritual' to refer narrowly to religious ritual, and the term 'ceremonial' to describe the broader range of customary practices (which may include 'ritual').<sup>2</sup> The broader term includes all kinds of performance at lifecycle ceremonies (for the family, here notably funerals) and calendrical observances (for the wider community, notably temple fairs), as well as at occasional rituals such as those to fulfil vows after being granted a healthy son by the gods. Apart from 'ritual specialists' – even apart from my broader definition of the term above – other performers also take part in such occasions, such as opera troupes, narrative-singers, and shawm bands. This study takes shawm bands as an instance of this less specifically religious type of group, in order to illustrate the complex ceremonial practices still to be observed – though lay Daoists, true 'ritual specialists', are also much in evidence.

In China since the end of the Cultural Revolution, much fieldwork on traditional music and local ceremonial has inevitably had an element of 'salvage' (*qiangjiu*). Meanwhile, Chinese scholars have tended to view living traditions not merely as remnants of pre-communist traditions but as illustrations of arcane ancient treatises of music theory. Other scholars, more concerned with music in society, document synchronically, describing rituals

which they have observed since the 1980s; if these may appear to maintain pre-Communist traditions more or less intact, the process of maintenance is hardly documented. Others recognize a partial revival since the repression under Maoism, but appear to see it as a pale reflection of pre-Communist traditions, preferring to interview elderly informants on the riches of the tradition before Communism. Still other studies, including the monumental *Anthology of folk music of the Chinese peoples*, and the notable series edited by C.K. Wang, seek to combine synchronic and diachronic approaches, though the two may be hard to disentangle.<sup>3</sup>

This study mentions the pre-Communist tradition only briefly. One might attempt to document it, with all its temples and rich ceremonial life; ideally one would seek to periodize the pre-Communist period for ritual and music – the Republican era was anything but tranquil, and if we had more local data, we might undertake a similar task for the late imperial period too. But material would be provisional and sparse compared to the riches of fieldwork on living memory.

Thus I am largely concerned with describing the traditional ceremonial and musical repertoires as performed today, while recognizing their impoverishment since the 1950s. Observing the shawm bands around 1990, the traditional repertory might seem unchallenged, as if Maoism had never happened. By 2000 it was hard to ignore the pop repertory, which was rapidly eating into the traditional pieces that had outlived Maoism.

Though some of the performers are locally renowned, the ceremonies described here are not particularly spectacular. Nor do they represent any kind of ‘living fossil’ – though they do reveal the tenacity of pre-Communist traditions. The village temple fairs have only a local reputation; they are not even mentioned in local gazetteers. That is part of the significance of the study: rather than making claims for any exceptional antiquity or grandeur, I seek to show music-making in the daily life of a typically poor community, the constant modification of the ongoing traditions (*lao guiju*, ‘old rules’) of ceremonial (*banshi*, ‘doing things’, as it is bluntly called, hence the title of the DVD).



- 1 Exemplary studies are the writings of Chau on popular religion in the Shaanbei region – where his broader definition of ‘ritual specialist’ is clearly applicable (2003: 57–61; 2006: 75–6). The convenient concepts of ‘institutional’ and ‘diffused’, taken from C.K. Yang (1967: 20–21, 294–340), have now been questioned: Chau 2005: 143–6. For religion in rural north China, see also Jones 2004, Dubois 2005. For ‘ritual music’ in China, Xue 2003 seeks definitions; cf. Zhang Zhentao 2003. For Western-language bibliography on popular Chinese religion, see [http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography\\_CPR.html](http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography_CPR.html) (as of 23/09/07).
- 2 For a succinct summary of some relevant issues, see Harris and Norton 2002. For one among a plethora of definitions of ritual, see Grimes 1990: 9–15; Bell 1997 is a fine survey.
- 3 For my comments on ‘ritual music’ in China, see Jones 2003: 318–21. For the recreation of pre-Communist ritual, see Lagerwey 1996–. For reviews of the Wang and Lagerwey series, see Overmyer 2002.

# Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to all the shawm bands, lay Daoists, funeral families, and temple committees who have hosted us. For my early trips to Yanggao in 1991 and 1992, thanks to local scholar Chen Kexiu, local cadre Zhao Fu, Shanxi provincial scholar Jing Weigang, and Beijing scholars Xue Yibing and Liu Shi. For my trips since 2001, I again thank Chen Kexiu, as well as Li Hengrui and the Datong Bureau of Culture; and for support in Yanggao, Ye Lin, the magnificent Li Jin, and all at the Yanggao Bureau of culture. On our two visits in 2003, Zhang Zhentao, Wu Fan, and Wang Yingrui made splendid fieldwork companions. I am particularly grateful to Wu Fan, who has continued to field, and prompt, questions; her 2006 PhD thesis complements the present work, containing more detail and theoretical perspectives.

In Beijing, my thanks as ever to Matt Forney and Paola Zuin for hospitality, and to the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts. Rachel Harris, Shuni Tsou, and all at the Smithsonian Folklife festival of the Silk Road in Washington DC in 2002 helped make the festival a delight for both the Hua band and me. In 2005 we again relished the chance to work together in the UK, for which we thank Elie Gussman, Viram Jasani, Wang Lei and the Asian Music Circuit, as well as Keith Howard, Sareata Ginda, and many helpers at SOAS. Helen Rees and Adam Yuet Chau have provided invaluable comments on draft versions of this book.

I rejoice in the enthusiasm of the other members of our amateur SOAS shawm band: Rachel Harris, Simon Mills, Manuel Jimenez, and Morgan Davies. I am grateful to the AHRC for funding, and to Keith Howard, Director of the AHRC centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance in the Music Department at SOAS, London University, under whose auspices this work has been done. Sarah Bilby has been a fine editor of the DVD, with invaluable help from Niall Stuchfield. At SOAS, Jeremy Glasgow has provided further technical assistance, and Sven Cawley has



worked his magic on the maps. Sarah would also like to thank Andi Hector-Watkins and Ian Dean for their assistance on sound engineering issues.

The DVD has been supported by the AHRC Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance.

## Terms used in the text

**Transliteration and pronunciation:** some basic guidelines follow to pronouncing the *pinyin* system of romanized chinese, and some of its local variants:

c	as <i>its</i>
q	as in <i>choose</i>
X	between <i>ss</i> and <i>sh</i>
z	as in <i>bids</i>
zh	as in <i>Joe</i>
a	as in <i>bar</i>
e	as in <i>her</i>
i	ee: <i>di 'dee'</i> ; but when preceded by c. ch. r. s. sh. z. or zh then shorter than er. Thus, <i>dizi 'deedz'</i>
o	as in <i>lord</i> : <i>bo 'bore'</i>
u	as in <i>boo</i>
uo	(after c, d, l, n, r, s, sh, t, z, zh) same as o above: <i>luo 'lore'</i>
ü	as in German umlaut; after x or q. the u is also effectively an umlaut
ao	as in <i>now</i>
ian	<i>ee-en:jian 'jee-en'</i>
ie	<i>ee-veah: die 'dee-yeah'ou oh</i>
ui	<i>way: steal 'shway'</i>

Below are some very approximate clues to how Yanggao dialect varies from *pinyin*:

<i>pinyin</i>	<i>Yanggao dialect</i>
guo	gua
hai	hei
hao	hou

he	ha <i>or</i> huo
xiao	xiu
shi, chi, zhu	si, ci, zu
xian	xie <sup>n</sup>
liang	lia <sup>ng</sup>

Thus Xianhai sounds like Xiehei; ‘*Haobuhao he?*’ (‘Is it good to drink?’) sounds like ‘*Houbuhou ha?*’, but Xinghe county like Xinghuo; *piaoliang* (‘beautiful’) sounds like *piolia*; *haoshuo* (‘It’s easy to say’) sounds like *houshua*. The 4th tone is used with abandon, and the first syllable of a binome is often stressed: thus *gu* ‘drum’ is firmly in the 4th tone, and the stress in *gujiang* ‘drum artisans’ is on the *gu*. For more precise guidance, see Yanggao 1993: 624–36. Where an ‘r’ is commonly added to a term, I add it without punctuation: Yinhur.

**Ages** are given in terms of *sui* ‘years’; since one is 1 *sui* old at birth, and one year older with every Chinese New Year, these ages generally translate into Western ages of one year less. Even where the word *sui* is not used, I have adhered to Chinese ages, leaving the reader to subtract one from the number. Where we have firm dates of birth (often when the subjects mention under which of the Twelve Animals of the Chinese calendar they were born) and death, they are cited as such.

**Calendar:** dates are often given in terms of the Chinese lunar calendar, still used throughout rural China. The Chinese New Year (1st day of the 1st moon) generally falls around late January–early February.

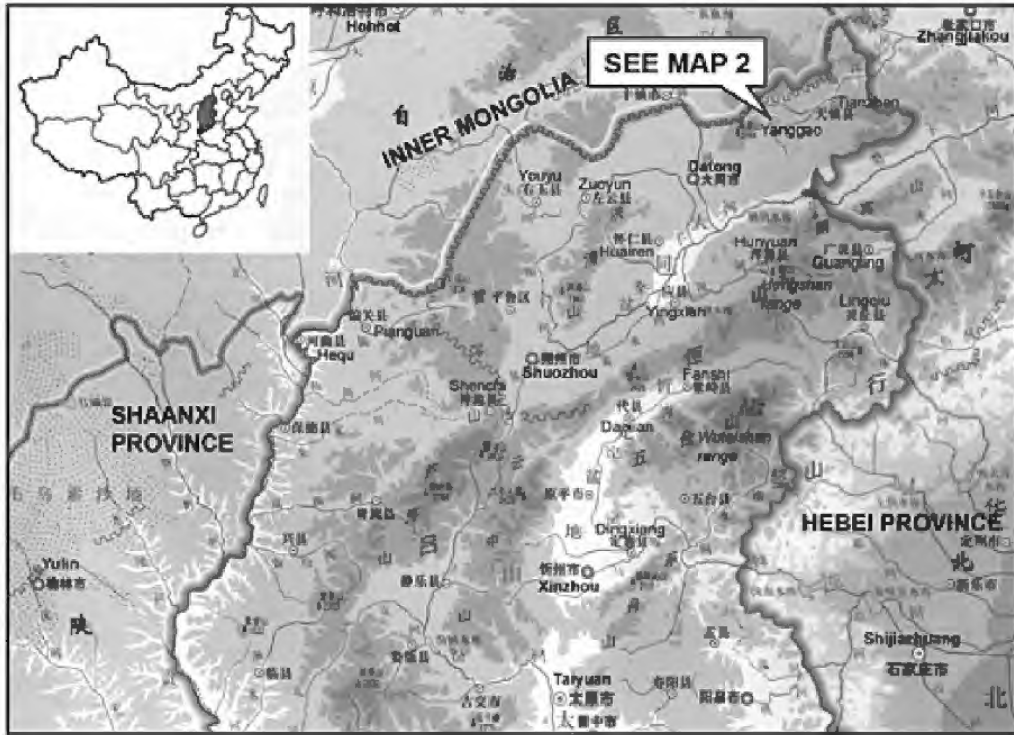
**Currency:** 1 *yuan* (colloquially *kuai*) equals 10 *jiao* (colloquially *mao*); 1 *jiao* equals 10 *fen*. Around 2000 there were c15 *yuan* to the pound sterling.

**Distances:** 2 Chinese *li* (*huali*) = 1 kilometre.

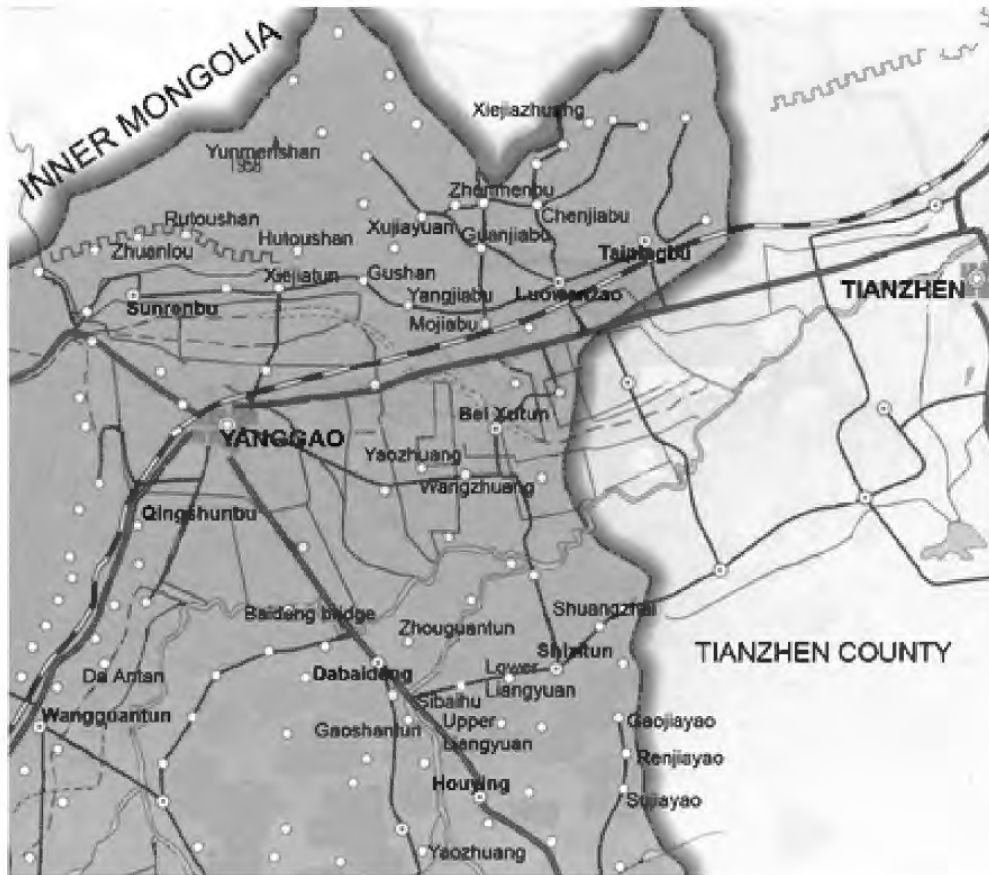
**Land:** 1 *mu* = 1/6 acre (1,000 sq.m., 1/15 hectare).

**Weights and measures:** 1 *dou* = 10 litres; 1 *dan* = 100 litres.





[Map 1](#) Northern part of Shanxi province, with inset showing Shanxi within People's Republic of China



[Map 2](#) Yanggao county, northeastern area Based on Shanxi 2001: 19. The routes of village tracks are approximate, varying somewhat from the map in the Yanggao county gazetteer (Yanggao 1993).

# Part One

## Lives of shawm band musicians

### 1.1 Musics of Shanxi province

Mountainous Shanxi province (with an official 2000 population of just under 33 million) is one of the most ancient centres of Chinese civilization, with a remarkable preponderance of ancient artefacts, excavated instruments, opera stages, temples, murals, and so on, from throughout the long imperial period.<sup>1</sup> But it is no museum: such material riches accompany a heritage of living folk traditions that were somehow maintained throughout the twentieth century through all the traumas of warlordism, invasion, and political campaigns.

Still, in modern times, despite partial industrialization based on its coal resources, and despite some gaudy urban modernization, the countryside remains poor. Shanxi's main claim to fame today, ubiquitous on the daily TV news, is coal-mining accidents. As good background, you may like to watch grittily realistic fictional films on north Chinese life such as those of Jia Zhangke on small-town hoodlums in Shanxi, Wu Tianming's *The Old Well* (*Laojing*), *Blind Shaft* (*Mangjing*) by Li Yang on a coalmine scam, and Zhang Yimou's *The Story of Qiuju* (*Qiuju da guansi*).

The living musical traditions of shanxi are extensive, under all the elementary categories (adopted by Chinese scholars) of folk-song, narrative-singing, opera, instrumental music, and dance. The great majority of all these genres are still performed for local life-cycle and calendrical ceremonials.<sup>2</sup> Regionally, the simple tripartite division of Shanxi into central, south, and north is only a start; local traditions of vocal music like *bangzi*, *daoqing*, and the song-and-dance genre *yangge* occupy much space in the Shanxi volumes of the massive *Anthology of folk music of the Chinese*



*peoples.*

As to instrumental music in Shanxi, percussion ensembles (as ever, ceremonial) are celebrated; string ensembles mainly serve vocal music. As in all the northern provinces, wind-and-percussion ensembles predominate: shawm bands, and the *sheng-guan* music of ritual specialists – though in some parts of shanxi the two may be combined.<sup>3</sup>

Recently two major projects have highlighted the musical castes from imperial times called *yuehu* ('music households'), whose descendants still continue to practise as shawm bands in several regions of China, notably Shanxi and in particular the Shangdang region of southeast shanxi.<sup>4</sup> Though clues to *yuehu* as such are sparse in Yanggao (the county under discussion here), the whole Datong area has clear links with the imperial system of musical castes. Throughout north China, even where shawm band musicians now know of no specific *yuehu* tradition, their history will have much in common with that of the *yuehu* – for instance, their outcast status is always apparent; but shawm bands were also regularly employed for official duties at the courts of the local administration. Moreover, since material on the fortunes of folk musicians under Communism is so rare, below I supplement my Yanggao notes by citing some detailed work on the modern fortunes of the Shangdang *yuehu*.

## [1.2 Musics of Yanggao county](#)

Northern Shanxi (known as Jinbei or Yanbei) has as its regional capital the sprawling modern coal-mining municipality of Datong (see [Map 1](#)). Yanggao county (2000 population c300,000) is just east of Datong, below the mountains and remnants of the 16th-century Great Wall which divide China from Inner Mongolia. The Zhangjiakou region of Hebei province lies just further east.

Yanggao is an officially-registered 'poor county', with barren soil and little viable industry. Since my first visit in 1991 the county-town has been divested of what remaining charm it had in

the interests of glossy new shops, lending it a patina of modernity which never disguises its poverty or that of the surrounding countryside.

This study concerns just a small area in northern Yanggao county on the plain around the county-town, including several dozen villages and three or four townships in a predominantly rural setting (see [Map 2](#)). Here genres belong to a homogeneous style; further afield in Yanggao county rather different repertoires are performed. The county extends quite a long way further south, where there has been little fieldwork, though Gucheng district is said to be rich in tradition. This confirms the findings of other studies on China, where cultural areas, based on traditional markets, temple cults, and limited mobility, extend only within a small radius of around 20 kilometres.<sup>5</sup>

As ever, the officially-compiled county gazetteers offer a starting point for relating culture to social and political events. The first was completed in 1728; unusually, none was compiled here in the 1930s. More valuable for our purposes is the 1993 gazetteer (Yanggao 1993), which contains material for all periods, though it is just as laconic on rural ceremonial as the 1728 volume.

Public order has declined since the dismantling of the Maoist commune system. Since the 1980s the sale of women has again become common in China, and is widespread in Yanggao;<sup>6</sup> Yangjiabu village, home of the distinguished Hua band, has several dozen women bought from still poorer provinces like Sichuan to be sold to men otherwise unable to attract or afford a bride. The town is evidently learning modernization fast: knifings are common over money, and gambling scams can lead to intimidation, as at least one musician has learnt to his cost.

Other town entertainments, hardly less innocent, include karaoke bars or 'song-and-dance halls' (*gewuting*: two in 2001), cinemas, video games halls, and internet cafes. An *erhu* fiddle teacher in town has a few pupils. A teacher from the Yanggao town 'folk opera troupe' had a steady flow of pupils on the small *suona* shawm in the 1990s, teaching them the pop pieces which were then catching on.

Before the 1950s, Buddhist and Daoist temples permeated the



landscape of both towns and countryside, although very few had resident priests. While there are now fewer temples, religious devotion is still common, sometimes mediated by lay Daoist priests, spirit mediums, or sectarian leaders;<sup>7</sup> temple fairs are still a major context for expressive culture (see [Part Two](#) below). Apart from advising on *fengshui* and auspicious days, the Daoists perform a sequence of rituals for funerals and temple fairs, with vocal liturgy, ritual percussion, and melodic instrumental music (see below).

There are two protestant churches in Yanggao county-town, and further groups in townships such as Luowenzao. Backing their evangelist preachers are choirs who lead the singing of hymns notated in cipher notation in hymn books, sometimes accompanied by keyboard or Western brass instruments.

Several kinds of vocal and instrumental music are performed in this part of Yanggao county – mainly for life-cycle and calendrical ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> Popular are vocal items from local operas, notably the majestic *Jinju* (Shanxi opera, specifically the northern style, *beilu bangzi*) and the smaller-scale *Errentai*.<sup>9</sup> The county-town has two state-funded troupes, one for *Jinju*, one for *Errentai*, the latter called ‘folk opera troupe’ (*minjian gejutuan*).<sup>10</sup> With state funding drying up since the 1980s, the members of both, apart from performing for temple fairs, now supplement their living by performing pop music for weddings and funerals, and by other non-musical means. *Daoqing* vocal music is now performed mainly by beggars for life-cycle rituals.

As to instrumental music, one part of the Daoists’ ritual performance is an exquisite ensemble led by *guan* double-reed pipes and *sheng* mouth-organs. Also commonly hired for funerals and calendrical rituals are shawm-and-percussion bands, known here as *gujiang* ‘drum artisans’. Both Daoists and shawm bands consist of ordinary peasants who are hired when their services are needed, but they are busy performing for much of the year. Their activities are known as ‘seeking (or doing) household business’ (*xun/xing menshi*). These two forms of wind ensemble are the most common instrumental music for ceremonies throughout north China, complementing each other magnificently (e.g. ☉



A1).<sup>11</sup>

Since the early 1990s all these genres, vocal and instrumental, have been progressively eclipsed by national Chinese pop music as heard on TV and in karaoke bars. Pop is now performed commonly at funerals and temple fairs by groups with singers based in the county opera troupes, and the *gujiang* further perform instrumental versions (see §3 below, and ◻ A5, B7).

### 1.3 Shawm bands in China

Shawm-and-percussion bands are common throughout the Islamic world, including north Africa and Eastern Europe, and were common until the 17th century in Western Europe.<sup>12</sup> The shawm-and-percussion band is surely the most common form of instrumental music-making throughout China,<sup>13</sup> dominating village ceremonial which accounts for the majority of Chinese music-making.<sup>14</sup> The bands, and musicians, are called by a variety of names, of which *guyue ban* ('drum music band') and *chuigushou* ('blowers-and-drummers') are most common; in the area of this study, the musicians are called *gujiang* ('drum artisans').

The *bili*, ancestor of the *guan* double-reed pipe still widely played in north China (and indeed in Yanggao), is clearly documented as taking root in Chinese ensembles by the 6th century CE. But the shawm (historically, and officially, called *suona*: see §11.1) – a wooden pipe with a small double-reed enclosed in the mouth, with a pirouette and a flared metal bell – appears to be a much later arrival. Like the *bili*, the shawm came to China by way of Central Asia, but despite several claims based on early murals (apparently as far back as the Han dynasty), evidence before the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) is isolated and dubious.<sup>15</sup> While wind-and-percussion ensembles are documented in early Chinese regional administrative courts and armies, the first reliable literary and iconographic evidence for bands with shawms and percussion is from the Ming.

If early evidence is piecemeal, we can trace some living Chinese shawm traditions back to around the 18th century. Imperial sources suggest that shawm bands were introduced into China by way of the armies. Though the musicians were always low class, even outcasts, officials throughout the vast empire required their services for ceremonies both at their local courts and for their life-cycle ceremonies; shawm bands soon also took root among the common people for life-cycle and calendrical ceremonies. This imperial heritage is the background of living traditions.

## [1.4 Yinyang and gujiang traditions in north Yanggao](#)

As elsewhere in Shanxi and northern China, the Daoists are what I call ‘ritual specialists’. Known here, unusually, as *yinyang*, they are folk Zhengyi Daoists of the Lingbao scriptural tradition, living as ordinary peasants. They earn their living both as a group from performing public rituals, and individually (like *fengshui* or *yinyang* masters elsewhere in cCina) by doing geomancy and calendrical consultations for *fengshui* and auspicious days.<sup>16</sup>

Thus Daoists in this area cite two common summaries of their skills: ‘first looking [choosing auspicious days], second reciting [scriptures], third wind-and-percussion’ (*yikan ernian sanchuida*); or ‘wind, percussion, writing, reciting, looking’ (*chuidaxieniankan*) – this latter phrase in reverse order of importance. ‘Looking’ (*kan rizi* or *ze rizi*) refers to choosing auspicious days, a practice which they all perform often; ‘writing’ refers to the many complex documents prepared for funerals and other rituals (☉ A2, [Illustration 1.1](#)). Individual ‘looking’ and group ‘doing household business’ (performing public rituals) occupy about the same time for them monthly, but the latter takes longer, and ‘looking’ is quick and well paid. They also officiate for raising the roofbeam, writing an auspicious diagram of the eight trigrams (*bagua tu*) to be pasted on the beam.





[1.1](#) From Daoist ritual manual, copied by Li Qing's uncle Li Peisen, early 20th century, with text of memorials required for funerals, and, on left, talismans.



[1.2](#) Eighth-generation lay Daoist Li Qing (right), with his son Li Manshan, 1991.

A 2003 name-card of one *yinyang* shows local concepts of their spheres of activity, advertising:

### ***Funerals and major assemblies***

*Choosing days, selecting graves, seeking ley-lines (longbu), settling the burial and establishing the orientation, moving the earth when work begins, mending construction, marriage partners, moving home, choosing auspicious days for celebrations of setting up in business*

*Wreaths, oil and goods, paper artefacts, everything for the funeral, yinyang rituals of deliverance (chaodu)*

*The complete sequence of funerary services such as repaying kindness and filial scriptures*

Another senior village *yinyang*, Wang Fngcai, advertises:

*Funerals, delivering the souls of the deceased, burial processions, wreaths and funerary paper artefacts, choosing auspicious days for weddings, funerals, and disturbing the earth for house-building.*

*Specialities: the 8 nodes and 3 mysteries, the 28 constellations, and the 8 gateways and 9 stars.*

On the public ritual outings of the *yinyang*, apart from 'writing' and ritual actions (including cosmic steps, sacred hand gestures, and the depicting of talismans), they perform vocal liturgy (chanting, singing hymns and incantations), ritual percussion, and *sheng-guan* wind ensemble music. The latter uses two *sheng* mouth-organs, *guanzi* large and small double-reed pipes

([Illustration 1.3](#)), *yunluo* frame of three gongs, and sometimes *mei* flute, accompanied by *bian'gu* small hand-held drum and *cha* small cymbals.

It was this instrumental music, led by the master Daoists Li Qing (☉ A1, [Illustration 1.2](#)) and Liu Zhong, that became deservedly – if ephemerally – famous in Chinese musical circles around 1990; but since their demise, while *yinyang* bands are still very much active, ritual expertise has continued to decline. A thorough study still deserves to be made of the Yanggao *yinyang*, both their practice today and as much as we can reconstruct of their former ritual repertory,<sup>17</sup> but here I focus instead on the *gujiang*.



[1.3](#) Some of the instruments of the *yinyang* Daoists: large and small *guanzi* oboes and reeds, *sheng* mouth-organs, *mei* flute and *mahao* small curved trumpet. Wax from the candle is used to tune the reeds of the *sheng*.





[1.4](#) Some of the instruments of the *gujiang*: three sizes of shawm, lower section of *hao* long trumpet, *mahao* small curved trumpet, *sheng* mouth-organs, drum, cymbals, small *gouwa* gong and large opera gong.

The *gujiang* also perform almost exclusively for ceremonial: though their music has no liturgical function, it always serves life-cycle and calendrical rituals.<sup>18</sup> Their core repertory uses two shawms and at least four percussionists ([Illustration 1.4](#)); a subsidiary repertory adds other melodic instruments, notably *sheng* mouth-organ, as well as *mei* flute, *yangqin* dulcimer, and *huhu* fiddle.

Though Chinese scholars have made much of the early history of the area in relation to the music of the *yinyang*, its relevance to the Yanggao *gujiang* has not yet been explored. Datong nearby was capital of the ‘foreign’ Northern Wei (386– 534) and Liao (916– 1125) dynasties. But shawm bands, in Yanggao as elsewhere in China, only became common by the Ming dynasty. By the 17th century, Shanxi, including the Datong area, had long been a major centre for the professional outcast musical families called *yuehu*, and some shawm players in Shanxi still claim *yuehu* descent,<sup>19</sup> but none around Yanggao today seem to trace any such connections. Still, Yanggao was a centre for military defence against the Mongols, visible in the shape of the remnants of the Great Wall



which still marks a boundary with Inner Mongolia. Hence the military connections of shawm bands in Yanggao are often trumpeted.

For all this, data on the early history of shawm bands in Yanggao are scant, and I have found no firm evidence for their activities before the 20th century. By late imperial times, Yanggao county-town was relatively prosperous, situated on the route from Beijing to Datong, and we may be sure that *gujiang* performed not only for the armies and the imperial *yamens*, but also for life-cycle and calendrical rituals among both well-to-do families and the common people. Until the 1930s, before the Japanese invasion and the Communist take-over, temples were everywhere, in both towns and villages, and *gujiang* were also busy performing for temple fairs.<sup>20</sup>

Though both *gujiang* and *yinyang* are paid when their services are needed, their relative status is evident from the terms used. Inviting *yinyang* is called ‘requesting the scriptures’ (*qingjing*), whereas the lowly *gujiang* are ‘hired’ (*gu*); the *yinyang* are ‘a hall of scriptures’ (*yitang jing*), whereas shawm bands are ‘a band of drums’ (*yiban gu*).

In Yanggao, as elsewhere in north China, shawm bands are more common than bands of ritual specialists: in the early 1990s in the northern part of the county there were at least a dozen *gujiang* bands but only five or six groups of *yinyang*.

As ceremonial performers on the eve of the Communist take-over, Buddhist priests were most respected, next to the Daoists; *gujiang* were just despised. Their relative status is further shown in the way that the *gujiang* are exposed to the elements outside the gate or to one side of the courtyard, always performing (and walking, and resting) to one side,<sup>21</sup> whereas the *yinyang* occupy the prestigious central space before the altar, and are given a comfortable room (temporarily called ‘scripture hall’ *jingtang*) in which to rest and prepare the complex written documents needed for their rituals (☉ A2).

Yanggao has an expression ‘*gujiang* can’t have enough to eat; *yinyang* can’t have enough to drink’ (*chibugoude gujiang*,

*hebugoude yinyang*). The *gujiang* were fed six times a day just so they'd have the strength to play – hence the expression ‘blow [the shawm] when you're full, sing when you're hungry’ (*baochui echang*). Indeed, they were often given opium by the host for this reason too. The Daoists had constant oily and sugary snacks and sugar water ready in their ‘scripture hall’, so they got more liquids than solids. The *gujiang* had to stop playing promptly as soon as the Daoists arrived to escort the scriptures (☉ A2), or else they'd get beaten up.

The *yinyang* were paid twice as much as the *gujiang*: ‘one for the *gujiang*, two for the *yinyang*’ (*yigu eryin*). But after the Cultural Revolution, the status of the religious activities of the *yinyang* remained sensitive for some time, and the two groups have since been paid similarly.

Both *gujiang* and *yinyang* make a rather better living than ordinary peasants (and always did), but the choice to become a *yinyang* or a *gujiang* is largely to do with family background. However, since the late 1990s people lament that anyone can become a *gujiang* just by learning a few pop pieces, whereas the art of the *yinyang* (despite a concomitant decline) is still mainly transmitted within the family, and requires a more in-depth study period.

The expression ‘bastards, opera actors, and blowers-and-drummers’ (*wangba xizi chuigushou*) is common here as throughout north China, denoting the lowest of the low. At least until the 1950s, both opera actors and *gujiang* were very low in status, but here, unlike in Shaanbei, there was no firm connection between *gujiang* and the opera troupes. If *gujiang* are still quite lowly today, we have to imagine how much worse their status was before Communism; often blind or disabled, they were opium-smokers and beggars, virtually untouchables.<sup>22</sup>

## [2.1 The Hua band](#)



In [Part Two](#) we will look at the performing contexts of the *gujiang*; here we introduce their lives. Until the 1950s *gujiang* bands were common both in the towns (the county-town and the nearby townships) and the villages. There is a broad similarity in context with shawm bands in Shaanbei further west<sup>23</sup> – where, incidentally, far fewer bands of ritual specialists like the *yinyang* seem to have survived.

My main subject is the Hua family band in Yangjiabu village, perhaps the most admired *gujiang* band in the area since the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> By 2003 Yangjiabu, just northeast of Yanggao county-town, had a population of around 2,000. It is a multi-surname village, but has long lacked any of the Yangs whose name the village bears. A typically unprepossessing village, its only distinction is a few crumbling Ming-dynasty ramparts, which are not uncommon in the area (cf. ☉ C, ending). As in other villages in the area, one finds little sign of material progress since my 1991 visits.

The material below is mainly based on regular talks with the brothers Hua Yinshan and Hua Jinshan. Their grandfather hHa sSengtang (c1884–1957) was the first in the family to ‘learn to be a *gujiang*’ (*xue gujiang*). He was the fifth child; following the local custom of naming children after the first thing the father saw after the birth, his nickname was ‘Fifth Donkey’ (Wulü). He learnt shawm from his father-in-law Luo Cunwen (d. 1940s) from Zhenmenbu village just east. Luo Cunwen is remembered as an outstanding player, but Hua Shengtang only played the lower part, never graduating to leading his own band on the upper part (cf. §12.2 below).



[1.5](#) *Gujiang* Hua Fa (1917–87), late in his life. Photo courtesy Hua Yinshan.

If Hua Shengtang was a mediocre player, his son Hua Fa (1917–87; sign Snake; [Illustration 1.5](#)), father of Yinshan and Jinshan, was to be much admired as a *gujiang* throughout the area. His nickname was ‘Heavenly dragon’ (Tianlong); soon he was simply known as ‘Great *gujiang*’ (*Da gujiang*). He was also known as ‘Sighted Fifth brother’ (Zhengyan wugar) or ‘False Fifth brother’ (Jia wugar), by contrast with another famous blind *gujiang* in Zhenmenbu village just further east called ‘Blind Fifth brother’ (Xia wugar, surnamed Xue) or ‘True Fifth brother’ (Zhen wugar) – ‘true’ and ‘false’ alluding to the fictional character Monkey. There was no love lost between rival bands: ‘True Fifth brother’ was murdered by a rival *gujiang* while they were performing for a funeral in the 1940s.

Hua Fa had a moustache, and, like his son Hua Yinshan, was tall and thin. Like most *gujiang*, he smoked opium – the funeral host often provided opium for the *gujiang* to help them play with energy till late. Though opium was virtually impossible to find after the revolution, Hua Yinshan recalls the surge it gave him



when his father managed to find some for him one day early in the 1960s when he was feeling ill while they were doing a funeral.<sup>25</sup>

Hua Yinshan's second uncle Hua Yi, known as 'Second *gujiang*' (*Er gujiang*), also smoked opium. Their drummer was a blind man – Hua Fa was also a fine drummer. Another celebrated *gujiang*, nicknamed Little (Xiao) Jinxi (surnamed Wang, from nearby Qingshunbu – see below) sometimes played in Hua Fa's band. The Hua band had a long-standing feud with the Xiejiatun band, though some Xiejiatun men preferred to come over to Hua Fa's band, like blindman Duan Guanming, long a regular recruit. Another disciple of Hua Fa was known as 'Second Dragon' (Erlong), from Yaozhuang village just east.

Local scholar Chen Kexiu recalls that when he recorded Hua Yinshan's suites in 1985, Hua Fa kept time with his hands, supervising his son. Afterwards Hua Fa commented, 'His melody (*yun*) is great, but the tempos (*chicun*) aren't so good; it has to be refined (*ya*).' Hua Yinshan is aware that his father's generation played 'with fewer notes' (*zishao*), that is with fewer ornaments, sounding very 'spacious'. Perhaps Hua Fa was already aware of this.

As Hua Fa pointed out, only the *gujiang* on the plain north of Yanggao, 20 or 30 (Chinese) *li* (10–15 kilometres) around the county-town, can play the repertory of 'eight great suites' which have attracted scholars. Aware of the antiquity of the suites, Hua Fa had a sense of responsibility for handing them on, and realized their difficulty: 'You can learn to fly a plane in three years, but not to play the shawm!' Like many *gujiang* from the older generation, Hua Fa knew the suites in *gongche* solfeggio. Though *gongche* is now virtually obsolete among *gujiang* in this area, some older musicians who can still sing *gongche* yield some important clues (see [Part Three](#)).

In some other parts of north China (like the Northeast, or Shandong) shawm bands have long and prestigious hereditary traditions, but here, as in Shaanbei, few bands can trace their history back more than three generations. Note that few *gujiang* live to old age; until the 1950s many were blind, smoked opium, and died young, and it is still quite unusual to find *gujiang* still

playing in their 60s; anyway, opium-smoking blindmen from a despised caste found it hard to set up a family. Today senior *gujiang* are happy to take disciples, but as it is a low-status occupation, they don't necessarily encourage their own sons to learn, hoping they will get an education and a proper job instead. If this is true today, there was less choice in the past, with education even more rare and job opportunities fewer.

By comparison, *yinyang* Daoists are fewer, and as we saw, the training is harder; the trade is largely maintained within families. But again, today there is less appeal in taking it up. Though eighth-generation master Li Qing managed to transmit his Daoist arts to his son under Maoism and to his grandson after the reforms, today the grandson, a bright young *yinyang*, doesn't want his son to learn, though he doesn't mind taking disciples from outside the family.

## 2.2 The Hua brothers

By the 1980s the brothers Hua Yinshan (b. 1947) and Hua Jinshan (b. 1941) made a formidable and musically much admired team on shawm and drum (e.g. on the pan CD, and ⑤ C). Apart from an older sister, there were four brothers. The oldest brother Jinshan was given the 'small name' Tongshi: his parents weren't happy together before he was born, so it means something like 'the affair is consummated' – and it worked: the parents got along better afterwards. Jinshan began 'doing household business' with the family band (then including his father, uncle, and grandfather) from the age of 7 or 8 (c1947–8); Yinshan when he was a bit younger, from age 5 or 6 (1951–2). Yinshan was called Sanban, Third plank – being the third brother, and terms such as *ban* (plank) and *gan* (trunk) being common metaphors for hopefully tough males.

Alarmingly, the brothers' main memory of their youth, right through the 1950s to the late 1970s, was of constant hunger. In some areas of China the famine was only severe from 1959 to 1961;



here, and in many more remote areas, severe shortages lasted over two decades, only alleviated by the long slow dismantling of the commune system after 1977.<sup>26</sup>

Jinshan recalls his early years with the band. Times were tough, transport rudimentary, so they often had to get up at 4am to arrive in time for the *an'gu* funerary overture around 8am. *Gujiang* were despised and poorly fed; they were paid in *gaoliang* grain plus three pouches of tobacco between six men. Hua Fa's band earned a bit more than most *gujiang*, and indeed than most peasants, but it was still little.

Hua Jinshan began attending the village school when he was 8, but if the family band had a job to play for, he had to skive off school. He reckons he attended school roughly on alternate days; the teacher used to swear at him and beat him, but the family had to do business, and after a mere four years of sporadic attendance he gained no further formal education.

At first the youngsters played the subsidiary percussion instruments, later the more crucial small cymbals and knobbed gong; only by his early teens did Yinshan pick up the melodic instruments shawm and *sheng*. Jinshan learnt the shawm for a while, but gave up; he started playing the drum when about 10 – for funeral processions, still not the complex drumming of the lengthier suites played while seated.

Typically, the brothers articulated no clear cultural break upon the Communist 'Liberation' of 1949; their performing contexts were limited mainly by patrons' means, which had anyway been strained for many years. No-one we met cared to dwell on the severe restrictions on traditional 'feudal superstition' that took place wherever the Communist Party came to power, but I have a couple of examples. Zhenmenbu village had a custom of electing a 'lantern official' (*dengguan*) to collect 'fines' for the expenses of the New Year's rituals; in a deliberate ritual inversion, this official was chosen from the village down-and-outs. But in 1950 cadres came to forbid the custom. A ritual battle called 'raising the dirt' (*yangtu*) in nearby Cenjiabu was also proscribed at this time.<sup>27</sup>

Despite such cultural impoverishment, the local Communist leadership either didn't attempt to eradicate all traditions or didn't



succeed in doing so, and the *gujiang* continued to do ceremonial business, going out to do weddings and funerals. After Liberation the Hua family was classified as 'poor peasants' and given land, for which they thanked the new Communist leadership.

Before the Communist Liberation Hua Fa worked land for a rich peasant in Yangjiabu. He had a big family with little land, but later, with money saved from doing ceremonial business, he bought a paltry 2 or 3 *mu* of land for 4 million old *fabi* (estimated by the Hua brothers at about 400 *yuan* today).

But all too soon the process of communization began, and Hua Fa was only able to till his own land for a few years before private land was collectivized from around 1954. *Gujiang*, the lowest of the low, were not direct objects of attack during Communist campaigns, but suffered indirectly from social change. For many years to come, campaigns were to stress communal labour and attack selfish wasteful individual projects. Families might still hope to perform imposing funerals, *gujiang* might still want to accept invitations to perform for them, and indeed local cadres might seek to dilute central edicts; yet pressure was pervasive and cumulative. Apart from ideological pressure, the more affluent of the old patrons had disappeared.

From 1954, as collectivization began to be implemented and the local economy went into crisis, many craftsmen took refuge further north in Inner Mongolia – including tailors, carpenters, and some *gujiang*. But most *gujiang* continued to perform. They found no new avenues: no *gujiang* joined the army, and few served as cadres. Some *yinyang* – but again quite few – served as cadres, like Yan Mei, who became accountant of the Wangzhuang village committee – later, in the Cultural Revolution, he was to be subjected to public criticism.

Political campaigns became frequent, featuring parades, commonly with *yangge* dancing. When Jinshan was 14 or 15 (c1955) he joined the commune 'propaganda team' (*xuanchuandui*). By 1958 he was playing *sanxian* plucked lute and *erhu* bowed fiddle in the amateur peasant '1st August opera troupe' (*Bayi jutuan*) in nearby Luowenzao township. Such troupes accompanied the vast militarized campaigns of the Great

Leap Forward. But Jinshan returned home in winter 1958 – he claims to have been playing the suites on drum by this time. As political pressure mounted, the last temple fairs were held in 1958, not to revive until after 1978.

Also in 1958, aged only 11, the younger brother Yinshan briefly entered the state-funded county opera troupe. He had picked up a bit of the drumming of the local opera *Jinju*, and a teacher from the troupe now invited him to join, having heard him playing drum with the family *gujiang* band. But Yinshan missed home and he too returned after only four months. So far in his father's band he was mainly playing the *sheng* mouth-organ for the subsidiary repertory of 'small pieces' (*xiaoqu*). In the Great Leap Forward the band played for mass meetings to 'report joy' (*baoxi*), as compulsorily inflated production achievements were announced; once when they were summoned to the county-town to play 'small pieces', Hua Fa insisted young Yinshan come along too.

By now food shortages were desperate, but Hua Fa was demanding; even when Yinshan was too hungry to play in the band, his father would beat him if he didn't. In 1959, along with many members of the 1st August opera troupe, Jinshan went off to a railway arts-work troupe (*tielu wengongtuan*) in Datong, playing *sanxian* banjo and *huhu* fiddle to accompany opera – then still in traditional style, not the modern items which were being performed by some state troupes around this time. In 1961, aged 21, Jinshan married a girl from Mojiabu village nearby. A band of *gujiang* – led by a disciple of his father Hua Fa, and also including a long-term colleague, blindman Duan Guanming – was invited to perform, receiving as payment two slabs of the nutritious *yougao* deep-fried cake served at ceremonies.

In 1959 still more Yanggao inhabitants fled to Xinghe over the mountains in Inner Mongolia, and 'beyond the eastern pass' (*dongkouwai*) to Zhangjiakou. There are still many *yinyang* from Yanggao in Xinghe. Daoists were under pressure; their ritual business was dwindling. Li Qing (1926–99) was the eighth generation of *yinyang* Daoists in his family. His father had been shot dead by mistake in 1947 during the civil war, aged only 32. Li Qing was one of six children; three of the boys became *yinyang*. Li

## [2.3 Other gujiang](#)

We can refine the picture by comparing the experiences of some other *gujiang* who learnt their art under Maoism, notably three blind *gujiang* based in the town.

Elderly inhabitants recalled six *gujiang* bands based in Yanggao town before Liberation. Here we heard of no public front like the ‘drum households’ (*gufang*) common before Liberation in many parts of north China; here musicians just transmitted their art to family and disciples at home without such public advertisement. By 1958, Yanggao town had three bands, led by Chen Gang, Zhao Zhen, and blindman Song Chengxin. But town players were reluctant to accept disciples from outside their own family, and two of the blind players we met sought their apprenticeship in Xiejiatun village.



[1.6](#) Blind *gujiang* Liuru (left) and Yin san, 2003.





[1.7](#) Blind *gujiang* Erhur, 2003.

As we have seen, blind *gujiang* were common.<sup>28</sup> I saw a group at a village funeral in 1991, and there were still three blind *gujiang* in Yanggao town in 2003. But along with slight but significant improvements in healthcare, there are now fewer younger blind men and thus fewer blind *gujiang*. Although the senior Erhur and Yin San still manage to lead bands today by dint of their seniority and support network, other blind *gujiang* are less likely to be able to keep up with the times, and it is now a less likely profession for blind boys.

By 2003, the most senior blind *gujiang* in the town, Li Liuru (known simply by his given name Liuru, c.1931–2007; [Illustration 1.6](#), with Yin San), was pitiable. His eyes went bad when he was 4. His poor family was always on the move, renting rooms. He ‘did nothing’ at home till learning *gujiang* around 18 (c1948), but he really liked listening to *gujiang* before he took it up. He learnt with the band in Xiejiatun just north of the town, a distinguished band whose most famous player in modern times was Yu Fucai (c1925–68). Liuru studied as an apprentice in the Xiejiatun band for three years, then did another three years for free (‘studying three years, repaying three years’), as tradition prescribed; when there wasn’t much business, he played for other bands too, but Yu Fucai’s band was most in demand.

Liuru stopped playing in the Great Leap Forward ‘because the officials wouldn’t let us play’, and he apparently then played little until after the Cultural Revolution. He only played the lower part, and was not regarded as an outstanding *gujiang*. He did manage to find a wife, though, when he was almost 30 – also blind, she was a water-seller. Liuru had four brothers and sisters, but they were ‘all useless’, and the family had no contact.

Yet another young blindman who apprenticed himself to Yu Fucai was Erhur (real name Wang Hui, b.1946; [Illustration 1.7](#)). A wonderful man, he has a deep knowledge of the ‘old rules’ and an exceptional love for music: his face becomes a pool of adoration when he recites *gongche* solfeggio.

Like Liuru, Erhur’s family lived in Yanggao town. He went blind at the age of 3. When he was 12 his mother took him to a hospital in Datong; realizing his sight couldn’t be cured, he resolved to seek a way of making a living. They then bought a *dizi* flute for 36 *fen* at a Datong stationery shop (there were no instrument shops then). ‘It took me ages to get a note out of it, but once I did, I didn’t dare take it from my lips,’ he recalled. ‘I played anything I heard, popular folk-song melodies like *Anbanshang kaihua*.’

Neighbours knew Erhur played well, so one New Year the neighbourhood committee asked him to represent them for a secular county festival. He was a bit apprehensive, but played. There were also an *erhu* player and a *banhu* player who played a version of the popular folk-song *Wuge fang yang*. He tried to play along with them but found he couldn’t. The *erhu* player explained it was all to do with tuning! Still, he won a prize of 20 *jin* of frozen radishes, then worth the princely sum of 2.5 *yuan*.

This strengthened his resolve to take up music, so he bought an *erhu* in Yanggao town, made from a tin and a stick, costing 4 *mao*. He soon picked it up, and began getting the hang of scales. He still wanted to learn more instruments. Around 1959, when he was 14, he bought a decrepit *sheng* for 10 *yuan*. After taking it home and glueing it together, he began practising ‘small pieces’ like *Shifan*. All this, remember, at the height of the Great Leap Forward and famine, which were not part of Erhur’s account.

Erhur first spent some time learning with a *gujiang* called Siban (surname Zhang) in Jinzhuang village – for whom the outstanding *yinyang* Liu Zhong also played occasionally when ritual business was sparse around the Cultural Revolution. But after hearing Yu Fucai's band doing a funeral in town, Erhur asked his parents if he could switch over to Yu as 'disciple transferring to another household' (*guomen tudi*). By this time Yu Fucai was the 'main beam' of the Yu family band in Xiejiatun village. His fees to take a disciple were 100 *yuan* a year. Erhur lived at Yu's house around 20 days a month – the learning process naturally involves taking on the whole *gujiang* lifestyle. Masters had no way of teaching, pupils just picked it up as they went along; Erhur could only hear his master playing when they performed for ceremonials. He learnt along with his master's oldest son; they got along well at first, but then when Erhur learnt faster, the son was always getting criticized, so their relationship deteriorated. Every morning the son was reluctant to get out of bed and go with Erhur into the fields to practice; while Erhur practised, the son would go and look for firewood to make a fire to keep warm.

Yu Fucai's *gujiang* father was a hard case, always conning, robbing, and beating people up. He spent some time in prison and eventually, in the 1940s, got his head smashed in with a hammer. Before liberation *gujiang* were commonly given opium to smoke by the host family to help them play better. But Erhur knew that addiction was a danger – he had heard of *gujiang* who had to sell their roof-beams or demolish their outhouse in order to get a fix. Yu Fucai himself had been locked up in an opium-prevention cell for a year soon after Liberation, still only in his teens, and by the time Erhur was studying with him opium was hard to come by.

As we saw, as collectivization began to be implemented from 1954, many craftsmen took refuge further north. Two of Yu Fucai's uncles fled to Shangdu in Inner Mongolia, and there are still many Yanggao craftsmen in Hohhot and Baotou.

Yu Fucai had eight children, a heavy responsibility. Erhur had to ask him to recite the *gongche* solfeggio in the evenings after he got back from the fields. In the mornings after he had practised, he would do chores for his master like milling, fetching water, and



ploughing. There were so many mouths to feed that all the flour you milled in a morning was only enough for one meal. In 2003 Yu Fucai's sons Quan (58), Chi (43), and Lu (40), as well as a nephew, Yu Haibing (36), were still active as *gujiang* in Xiejiatun.

If the Hua family is not all sweetness and light, *gujiang* relations in Xiejiatun sound still more fraught. Several *gujiang* from Xiejiatun have apprenticed themselves to the Hua family: one Erxianr (surname Xie) from Xiejiatun got into a feud with the Yu family, so he went over to Hua Fa as 'disciple transferring to another household', making a point of antagonizing the Yu family. Another blindman, Duan Guanming (b. c1927, known as Liuzhi 'Six fingers' as he has an extra finger on one hand), also came from Xiejiatun, but has long got on better with Hua Yinshan than with the Yu family – we found him playing in Hua Yinshan's band in 1991 (photos: CD notes pp. 12, 16). In 2003 we found another young *gujiang* disciple, Xiaohai ('Xiuhei'), who preferred to learn with Hua Yinshan than with Yu Quan in his home village.

Hua Jinshan told me a famous story that shows how tough local loyalties can be. In 1953 two *gujiang* bands were hired for a big funeral in Zhuanlou village: the Yu band from nearby Xiejiatun, and the fine band of Shi Ming (see below) from Wangguantun, further southwest. The bands got into competition, and however brilliantly Shi Ming played, the Zhuanlou villagers sided with the local band. In the end they threw stones at Shi Ming's band. After the burial procession, Shi Ming packed up his instruments, knelt down outside the village, and swore, 'I'm never going to play in this village again!'

Erhur came back to the county-town when he was 18 (c1963) to set up his own band, taking disciples. Again, Hua Yinshan didn't mention this, but in his teens he sometimes played for Erhur's band these next couple of years; he only played *sheng* at first, but was beginning to get the hang of the shawm too. There was also a great player in Erhur's band called Little Jinxi, from Qingshunbu. For the operatic pieces played in the afternoon of funerals, he used to play two *kouqin* whistles at once, making a big sound that drew the crowds. He died on the eve of the Cultural Revolution aged only 41, coughing up blood in the middle of playing – an

alarming common and prestigious way for shawm players to die.

Meanwhile, another blindman was 'learning *gujiang*' in the town. Yin San (b. c1947; [Illustration 1.6](#), with Liuru), like Erhur, played a bit of *dizi* flute when young. He began learning shawm when 16 ( c1962) with the blind town *gujiang* Song Chengxin ( c1921–76), who was a disciple of Chen Gang in Anjiaxiang lane. Yin San also studied at some stage with a *gujiang* in Wangguantun township, learning the *gongche* solfeggio of the shawm pieces from him, which he later forgot.

Yin San and Erhur both had town registration, and were blind, so they did not have to apply for leave of absence from any production-team or hand over any money to them, unlike village-registered *gujiang*. Moreover, their ceremonial activities were tolerated more readily by cadres; blindmen could put all their energies into being *gujiang*, so they could do well. Yin San recalled that in the early 1960s a band got around 5 *yuan* for an afternoon, 8 *yuan* for playing all day, 10 *yuan* including the burial procession next morning. Erhur claimed that while most bands could earn about 12 *yuan* a day, his own band was so admired that he could charge 22 *yuan*. In fact payments were only calculated in terms of cash, they were still paid in food: peanuts or *gao* paste, 1 *jin* or half a *jin* each per day – Yu Fucai's sack was tough from the oil.

But as we saw, even sighted village bands could still get permission from their production-team to go out on business. The Xiejiatun band earnt a dozen *yuan* a day then, and had to give the commune 1.5 *yuan* each day they were away, in return for one whole work-point each. The band boss Yu Fucai got 15 shares of the fee plus 10 shares for providing the instruments, while everyone else got 10 shares. Yu only used one or two musicians from outside his family, so it was worth it. Doing funerals they got to eat out for free too, and didn't have to till the communal fields all the time, so it was a better life than being a peasant.

But I can't quite build a consistent picture from such accounts of *gujiang* business before the Cultural Revolution. As we saw, they articulated no clear distinction between the various periods from 1949 to 1966, though I surmise that business must have been easier

before collectivization around 1954, and again briefly during the lull in campaigns from around 1961 to 1964. Yin San claimed rosily, 'Before the Cultural Revolution business was even better than today, around 20 days a month – there weren't so many *gujiang* then, so there was more work to go round.' But he only took part in the life from the early 1960s.

Conversely, Liuru, who was trying to make a living through the 1950s, said times were tough. Erhur pointed out that there was less business under Maoism than either before Liberation or since the 1980s reforms, because people had less money; one death provided no more than three days' work in all, whereas now it may provide up to ten days' work (see §8.1). He reckoned that in the 1950s, bands might go out on business seven or eight times a month, or 'every three days or so'.

They agreed that despite all the famine deaths around 1960, there wasn't so much business then – if people had any money at all, they'd buy something to eat, not invite *gujiang*. Liuru recalled that for funerals during the famine years, people could only put out a couple of *mantou* steamed buns on the altar table before the coffin; whenever there was a death, work-teams turned up to stop *gujiang* playing and stop the family burning paper spirit-money, on pain of a fine. Indeed, in Yanggao the famine continued until at least 1965, and people were hungry right into the late 1970s. Still, I think we have to assume a slight and temporary improvement in people's lives in the early 1960s when Erhur and Yin San set up in business.

Apart from the county-town and Yangjiabu and Xiejiatun villages, Guanjiabu just northeast was another *gujiang* base. The senior *gujiang* Shi Youtang (d. c1998) had a blind disciple called Shi Zhengfu, a distant relative of his (though their surnames were different Shi characters); he was known as Errenr 'Two people'! Both led bands into the 1980s. Another blindman from Guanjiabu, called Yinhur (surname Li), became a disciple of Hua Fa. At a 2001 funeral I found a *gujiang* from Guanjiabu working with Hua Yinshan: Erhousheng, originally a disciple of Errenr, who had left Errenr and gone over to Hua Yinshan's uncle Hua Yi as 'disciple transferring to another household', and later set up his own band



in Guanjiabu.

Yet another blind *gujiang* was based in Yaozhuang village in Shizitun township, south of the county-town. Li Zhonghe (c1908–88) went blind at the age of 5 or 6 after an itinerant doctor tried to cure his ailing eyes by putting eggshell over them. Li Zhonghe learnt *sheng* and shawm from 15, sometimes making up a band with an outstanding *gujiang* called Wantai (surnamed Cui) from Zhouguantun village nearby. Li had two younger colleagues (*shidi*) in his village, the brothers Fan Liang and Fan Gao.

Around 1952, after the death of Li Zhonghe's first wife, he married a widow who already had a son and daughter. The son, Li Bin (b. 1945), whom we meet below, played percussion in his stepfather's band from around 1955, and began learning *sheng* and shawm, as well as *gongche* solfeggio, with him about four years later. Li Bin claimed his stepfather's band didn't stop playing through the Great Leap Forward or the famine. Unusually for a *gujiang*'s son, Li Bin was also doing quite well in school.



[1.8](#) Session with the band of hereditary *gujiang* Shi Ming, 2001, with his grandson Shi Qiang on drum.

In Wangguantun township just west, Shi Ming (c1932–2003, known as Mingwa; [Illustration 1.8](#)) was the fifth generation of

*gujiang* in his family. He recalled having to stop playing in the 1952 ‘Three Antis’ (*Sanfan*) campaign,<sup>29</sup> and remained inactive right until he entered the state-funded regional Yanbei arts-work troupe in Datong city in 1958, along with master Daoist Li Qing (see above). Dismissed with the state cuts in 1962, along with musicians throughout China,<sup>30</sup> he then went back to folk business for a few years.

However piecemeal these accounts, we can see how the present senior generation all learnt their art in the first 17 years of Maoism from 1949 to 1966 – an art based on ceremonial which managed to resist the political pressures of the day, maintaining pre-Communist traditions. As we see next, while some played little from 1966 until 1977, others were inactive only for two or three years, and the transmission has basically been continuous – notwithstanding a long-term impoverishment of context and sound under the pressures first of politics and lately of pop music.

While urban and rural ceremonial drew from the same pool of tradition, a cultural gulf has opened up between the two during the twentieth century, particularly since the advent of Communism. Cremation was beginning to be prescribed in the towns, but land burial has remained universal in the villages; the ‘superstition’ of the *yinyang* ritual could not be invited for town funerals from the 1940s until the 1990s. However, *gujiang* remained active for both rural and urban funerals.

The variation in these accounts is itself a lesson, warning us against accepting a simple centralized version, or applying the experiences of one area (or even one band) to another; activity always depended on local networks and the willingness of local cadres to turn a blind eye, so to speak. But it is clear that ceremonial and musical traditions were maintained, however painfully, right through to the mid-1960s.

## [2.4 A comparison](#)

Detailed material on the fortunes of Chinese folk musicians



through the 20th century is so rare that it is worth citing here some impressive recent material on hereditary castes of 'music households' (*yuehu*) in the Shangdang area of southeastern Shanxi;<sup>31</sup> though some aspects differ from Yanggao, it shows broad similarities and suggests areas for further study. Here the institutionalized class segregation is even more apparent.

The livelihood of *yuehu* families barely changed from the late imperial period around 1900 until the 1940s revolution. In this area their reliance on the land remained far less than other peasants; many had no fixed abode, and they largely rejected the land awarded them on land reform. In the early 1950s they still relied on performing ceremonial, but business was drastically limited, causing them to lament: 'Our status has been raised, but our income has dwindled!' The process of absorbing them into the agricultural labour-force was beginning. I haven't explored this angle in Yanggao: clearly, they were going to rely more on agriculture under Maoism, but I believe they had long had more roots in the land than the *yuehu* in Shangdang.

After 1949, some of the *yuehu* entered mainstream society: nine men from the eleven *yuehu* families in Lingquan county gained jobs in the army or opera troupes, or as village cadres. Before the 1937 outbreak of the War against Japan, a band of *yuehu* could do around ten ceremonials a month, earning over 4 *dou* of *xiaomi* grain for each, totalling around 40 *dan* per annum. After Land Reform their income dwindled by a third or a half. With no experience of agriculture, they were reluctant to convert to it, often renting their land out. During collectivization, the livelihood of the *yuehu* was even more attenuated. The income of the eleven *yuehu* households in Changzi county dwindled successively after Land Reform and during collectivization.<sup>32</sup>

Under the communes, collective labour and the work-point system were implemented; the *yuehu* had little choice. Some adapted, others didn't. At first ceremonial activities had to be treated by local cadres as 'feudal superstition', but soon they were conceded as a type of 'supplementary production'. Though the *yuehu* had to request leave of absence from their production-team, and work-points had to be totted up, they continued to perform.



One *yuehu* recalled,

By 1958 grain wasn't worth any money. We could earn 2 *dan* of grain for a ceremony, but we had to hand over a whole day's work-points to the brigade [the village administrative committee], worth over 10 *yuan*. If we couldn't afford that, we would do business on the quiet. Later on the brigade chief confiscated my equipment, and forced me to go back to my old home for two years. Later still, Wu Guangtang, deputy provincial mayor, sent someone to call me back, telling me not to play shawm music any more, but to do something else. I said, I can't do anything else! The brigade wanted me to hand over 7 *yuan* in exchange for a day's work-points, but I could only earn 4 or 5 *yuan* a day, so I couldn't pay enough – that's why they didn't give my family any grain rations.

Another *yuehu* commented,

The brigade sent someone to follow us *yuehu* around on ceremonials. He would tot up the bill with the host family at the end of the ceremony; the fee would go to the brigade, and each of the *yuehu* was given one work-point, the host giving a pouch of tobacco and two meals.

Yet another:

The brigade chief fixed a contract with me: I was to hand over 900 *yuan* a year, then I could go out on business any time I wanted. I only handed over two or three hundred *yuan*, and the brigade didn't give my family any grain rations.

In Changzi county, as the ceremonial income of the *yuehu* fell to around 200 *yuan* per annum, they were increasingly tied to the collectively-farmed land, a shift which was both painful and forced. Many families declined in size; apart from traditional reasons for their lack of lineage prosperity, such as consumption of opium and alcohol, their dwindling income was a more important factor.

Again, such material is piecemeal, but it points out the kind of direction we need to pursue if we are to understand the real fortunes of folk musicians under Communism. While many musicians had to give up, others managed to do business, either openly or on the quiet.

## 2.5 The Cultural Revolution

Though we saw the Hua brothers absorbing new repertory through their occasional participation in opera troupes and propaganda teams, other *gujiang* didn't bother to mention new repertory at all; their livelihood was still dominated by funerals, for which the traditional repertory was irreplaceable. To be sure, for campaigns they also played 'anything that was demanded', such as revolutionary songs on small *suona* and *sheng*.

In Yangjiabu in 1964, just as the young Hua brothers would have come into their own as interpreters of their father's suites, work-teams implementing the Four Cleanups ( *iqing*) campaign (prelude to the cultural Revolution) began interfering. 'In 1964, the cadres wanted to transform customs (*yifeng yisu*), and weddings and funerals were to be simplified (*congjian*), so *gujiang* were no longer allowed to play.' Later Hua Yinshan told me, 'We were doing a funeral at Gushan when local troops threatened us with guns and confiscated our instruments.' Although *gujiang* families have at least two sets of instruments, they didn't dare play for over a decade; the confiscated instruments were kept at the village brigade office, and they couldn't get them back.

In this village they could only seek ceremonial business again after the overthrow of the Gang of Four in 1976 – the village was relatively accessible from the county-town, and its cadres were cautious. So the Hua brothers had to put the traditional repertory to one side.

By 1968 the Yangjiabu village opera troupe became a propaganda team. Yinshan recalled, 'In the Cultural Revolution I took part in the commune arts-propaganda team (*wenyi xuanchuandui*), and the "In-agriculture-study-Dazhai" arts-propaganda team' – the model commune of Dazhai, not far south of Yanggao, was now an ubiquitous rallying cry. Though Yinshan points out that he never stopped playing the shawm, throughout this period the revolutionary and vocal-derived repertory he was mainly playing on the small *suona* and *sheng* was very different from the traditional repertory of the large shawm.

Yinshan married when 22 (c1968), to a girl from Wangzhuang village just south, whose father was a *yinyang* Daoist (also, of course, now out of work); it was 'free love'. The wedding was very simple. People were still starving, and ate anything they could get their hands on. The couple finally got their wedding certificate in the 8th moon of 1969, as Yinshan entered the local 'Prepare-for-war troupe' (*Zhanbei tuan*), a militia propaganda team – at last they were entitled to food rations and could just about get enough to eat. While the team built a new reservoir, the troupe rehearsed programmes. But after a few months Yinshan came home to till the communal fields, also serving as village militia lieutenant. By 1976, when Mao died and the days of the commune system were numbered, he was again playing for the commune arts-propaganda team.

The picture from other *gujiang* is more complex. Amazingly, some *gujiang* in the county-town were able to continue going out to the countryside to perform the traditional funeral music until it was forbidden in the summer of 1970.

Blind *gujiang* Erhur kept playing in the Four Cleanups, but he recalls an incident in the hot summer of 1966. Doing a funeral at Yangjiabu, there was no problem – though the village's own *gujiang* had already been forbidden to play, people could still invite the blindman's band. But as Erhur returned to town, his senses sharpened by his blindness, he felt something was wrong. There were people everywhere crowding round big-character posters pasted on the walls, and Erhur sensed a feeling of danger. When he got home he learnt that the Red Guards had come, confiscated some of their instruments, and ordered them not to play.

Erhur didn't take this lying down: he went off to find a Red Guard from his production-team for an explanation. Erhur reasoned that they couldn't confiscate their instruments as long as they were still available for sale in the shops, and anyway they had been 'handed down from ancient times' – still apparently a forceful argument. The Red Guard meekly returned his instruments.

Erhur reckons he was only inactive for just over two years. 'But



actually we could always play in remote mountain villages like Shitun in Changcheng commune – you could do four or five jobs a month there, no-one interfered. You just left home early in the morning and came home late at night so no-one would notice, carrying your little bag of instruments.’

Blind Yin San concurred that he and other town *gujiang* had no problem in the Four Cleanups, playing right until 1970, including the old pieces – ‘You couldn’t play “Socialism is good” for funerals!’, he chortled. But even he had to stop from 1970, because the authorities didn’t allow them to play. Before that you could go and do business anywhere, but afterwards you couldn’t even go to the more remote villages. From 1970 to 1978 he got by doing petty trade, making *doufu*, and running a snack stall selling melon seeds and *zongzi* rice cakes, earning about 1 *yuan* a day. Meanwhile two of the brightest *gujiang*, Yu fucai and Little Jinxi, had died long before their time.

In Wangquantun township west of the county-town, Shi Ming was forced into silence for another period. Further south, Li Zhonghe’s band kept playing through the Four Cleanups. He had to stop briefly in 1966 and 1967; some commune cadres controlled ritual activity, others didn’t. We saw how Erhur dared take issue with a Red Guard, perhaps encouraged by his status as a blindman; Li Zhonghe’s son Li Bin also confronted a cadre, by dint of his cultural confidence, having been doing well in the village school. Both sought to bring Mao quotes to bear on the argument, but Li Bin was adept, asking the cadre polemically, ‘OK, go on then, where in the Little Red Book does it say that *gujiang* are ox-demons and snake spirits?!’ Li Bin kept on doing ceremonial business right until 1968, staying busy by taking refuge in remote mountain villages like Sujiayao, Renjiayao, and Gaojiayao, on the border of Yanggao and Tianzhen counties.

Until this period, *gujiang* still often learnt to recite the repertory in *gongche* solfeggio, although no scores have come to light. When Li Bin was at primary school under the commune system, his teacher, a graduate of Teachers’ Training College, taught him the rudiments of the modern Chinese system of cipher notation; in the Four Cleanups, he was able to continue studying it with students

from shanxi University who were rusticated to their village. Few *gujiang* have such literacy, but Li Bin was later able to transnotate the *gongche* solfeggio he had learnt from his stepfather into cipher notation. By 1970 he was able to find a job in the coal-mines in Datong municipality, putting aside his shawm for over 20 years.

To compare the Shangdang *yuehu* again, during the Cultural Revolution their traditional income was severely reduced. Only three of the eleven *yuehu* families in Lingquan county could do a couple of ceremonies a month, earning 3–10 *yuan* each time, always converted to work-points. In Changzi county three of the eleven *yuehu* families living further from central control could do business three to eight times a month, for 5–6 *yuan* a time. Now mainly dependent on the work-points allotted at the end of the year in grain and cash, they were increasingly resigned to communal agriculture.

Through the Cultural Revolution, the amount of grain the *yuehu* received never amounted to as much as a subsistence income. They were still more desperate than ordinary peasants. The society which had enabled them to survive no longer existed. Still, during this period their population increased, and they gained minimal education. By 1970 in Lingquan county, 34 children from *yuehu* families were attending primary school, and seven were attending junior secondary – no obvious achievement until you consider their total outcast status before the revolution.

If the countryside still seems alarmingly poor today, we have to imagine significantly greater poverty not just before the 1950s but right until the reforms of the 1980s. A sporadic supply of electricity only reached the villages in 1974; diet, healthcare, and transport were even more rudimentary than today. ‘Feudal’ constraints were yet more powerful; these constraints both limited the assimilation of *gujiang* into society and helped buffer their performing contexts against any modernizing agendas the central state might seek to impose.

## [2.6 The reform era](#)

The overthrow of the Gang of Four in 1976, and the gradual dismantling of the draconian commune system, once again transformed people's lives. In the town, Yin San recalls clearly being the first to start playing again, at New Year 1978. He didn't exactly reckon his blindness gave him any exemption: 'You couldn't say the county authorities looked after me (*zhaogu*), but at least they didn't control me (*guan*).' A *yinyang* in East Great Street called Grandfather Yang (*daye*) had mentioned wanting to have *gujiang* play for his funeral, so when he died and his family came to ask Yin San if he dared play, he was very keen. It was the 22nd of the 1st moon 1978. Yin San hasn't made *doufu* since 1980, concentrating on working as a *gujiang*.

Older blind *gujiang* Liuru soon started performing again, sometimes working with Yin San. Blindman Erhur started playing again too. He married in about 1977, aged 32. His bride was introduced by her brother, who had long been a close friend of Erhur; her father was a cook, often meeting Erhur at weddings and funerals, and was happy at the match.

As we saw, Hua Yinshan had played percussion for the traditional repertory from young, and on the eve of the Cultural Revolution was about to master it on shawm, but then for over a decade he could only play short 'revolutionary' pieces on small *suona* and *sheng*. So he considers that he only started formally as *gujiang* in 1978, relearning the old melodies on large shawm from his father Hua Fa. Hua Fa, now in his 60s, became active as a *gujiang* again, and used to assess Yinshan's playing keenly. Yinshan recalled, 'Just as well I still had my father – from 1977 he taught me the eight great suites with dedication. I'm the youngest of the three brothers, the only one who learnt shawm – my father put all his hopes in me, hoping the suites wouldn't 'go black' (*heile*: be lost) in our generation.' He was being disingenuous here, as it turned out that he had played with other bands before the Cultural Revolution, and could indeed have continued refreshing his memory by playing with other bands afterwards; but he doubtless meant that the family environment enabled him to consolidate his playing.

Their first work was a funeral in Yangjiabu in 1978. Hua Fa had



no problem, but Yinshan had to latch onto his dad's fingerings for the complex melody of *Shuilongyin*. Yinshan's older brother Jinshan also settled on drum, becoming an utterly dependable anchor of the rhythm section; he still likes to take his hand to any of the melodic instruments for 'small pieces', a great enthusiast for all types of music. But, as in many *gujiang* families, the respective choice of shawm and drum was to condemn the two to an unequal and uneasy relationship thereafter: the leading shawm player, as band boss, takes a much higher share of the band's fees. Though Yinshan's house, where our sessions have been held, is by no means affluent, it was a shock when we finally got to visit Jinshan's poor house, and this immediately explained his troubled soul.

Also beginning to learn on the restoration in 1978 were the next generation, Hhua Yun (Chengxianr, b. 1963) and Hua Pu (Xianhai, pronounced Xiehei, b. 1964), both the oldest of three children. Hua Pu is son of drum master Hua Jinshan; Hua Yun is son of the middle brother Yushan (d. 1996, aged 54; also a shawm player). As usual, Hua Yun and Hua Pu began by following the band round and playing percussion for funerals – though they now attended primary school a bit more often than Jinshan and Yinshan had in the desperate 1950s. By about 1982 they were playing shawm, first learning the processional 'small pieces', eventually taking up the suites. Both make fine second shawm players (on the Pan CD Hua Yun is heard in the 2001 pieces, Hua Pu on the 1991 sessions, as well as on 'C).

Hua Pu recalls with nostalgia hearing his grandfather Hua Fa on the top part, Hua Yinshan on the lower part: 'it was just so comfortable to listen to'. But family relations don't always run smooth. By 1982 Hua Jinshan preferred to play drum for other bands, working with six or seven bands over the next few years – mainly with blindman Yin San, also with blindman Erhur, even with the hated Xiejiatun band – 'Sure, relations weren't great, but at that time they weren't as bad as with Sanban [Yinshan]!' Hua Fa, now taking a back seat to his son Yinshan, scolded Jinshan for going off with other bands, but to no avail.

Hua Yinshan's main drummer in this period was Hua Yun's

father Yushan; Yinshan's uncle Hua Yi was still active. A Yangjiabu villager called Zhu Jun was also playing in the band, but he was not an outstanding musician. Yinshan wanted Jinshan to come back for a recording in 1989, but Yin San was reluctant to let Jinshan go.

Hua Jinshan recalls fierce competition in those days. Once around 1984, the Hua band was competing with the Xiejiatun band at a funeral in Zhuanlou; they had to play four or five hours for the Report to the Temple ritual. Hua Jinshan was so busy, and having to put so much energy into his drumming, that he was having to replace his drum skin every seven or eight months.

A precious recording was made by local cultural officials in September 1985. It came to light along with the 1989 recordings for the *Anthology* (see §5.1 below), which we discovered in 2003. It features Hua Yinshan on the top part, his uncle Hua Yi on the lower part, Hua Jinshan on drum, Hua Yun's father Hua Yushan on cymbals, and Hua Fa himself on gong. The erstwhile tough brothers cry to hear such a fine recording featuring their dead forebears.

They recall the recording conditions. After attempting to record in Hua Yinshan's house, too many people crowded in; they tried to record outside, but it was windy. In the evening they tried recording in the village schoolroom but too many people rushed in, so before dawn next day they went to the village brigade storehouse, locking out any other curious villagers.

Hua Fa died in 1987. For his funeral the fine *gujiang* Shi Ming played, a Hua family friend. Around 1990 the Hua band performed for the biggest funeral they recall in modern times, a three-day event for the mother-in-law of a mine boss in Xinghe county just across the mountains in Inner Mongolia. The Hua band, plus another local *gujiang* band, and a local band of *yinyang* were booked. On the first evening the Report to the Temple (itself a ritual rarely performed since the early 1960s) lasted five hours, and the next evening it took over seven hours. The shawm bands had to play throughout; the host managed to find some opium to help Hua Yinshan play through the night – after the seven-hour marathon, they rested for a few minutes and then had to go

straight into the Transferring Offerings ritual for a further one-and-a-half hours.

My first visit to Yanggao, with local scholar Chen Kexiu, was in 1991 (see §5.2 below). Soon after that Hua Pu and Hua Yun were more often going off to work with other bands, partly because they were unhappy with Yinshan's way of dividing up the fees. There is another Hua band in Yangjiabu too, led by Hua Yi's sons Fushan (b. c1955) and Guishan (b. c1959), using percussionists from nearby villages.

Another major three-day funeral was held in 1995 in Wangtun (Shizitun district) for a *gujiang* who had joked with his sons before he died, 'Don't bother to hold a grand funeral for me – just four or five *gujiang* bands will be fine!' In the event, apart from Li Qing's *yinyang* band, three bands of *gujiang* were hired. Apart from standard rituals like Fetching Water, Summoning Relatives, Transferring Offerings, Returning the Treasuries, Raising the Pennant, and Judgement and Alms (see [Part Two](#)), the *yinyang* performed a substantial set of rituals that have been performed less and less often, like Opening the Five Quarters (*Kai wufang*), Releasing the Pardon (*Fangshe*), and Beholding the Lanterns (*Guandeng*).

Since pre-Communist traditions were revived openly around 1977, business (mainly funerals and temple fairs) for *gujiang* and *yinyang* was good – though one change was that people now rarely invited *gujiang* for weddings. The Hua band's livelihood was at a peak when we visited them in 1991. Busy mainly around the plain just east of the county-town, they have played to the north over the border in Inner Mongolia, to the east in Hebei, and west and south of Datong, all within a radius of about 50 miles.

To compare the Shangdang *yuehu* again, they were among the greatest beneficiaries of the reforms. Now with their own land, they were once again free to perform, earning a lot of money from ceremonials that were now thriving as they had not for decades. By 1995 the Lingquan *yuehu* earned five or six times as much grain as they had in 1956, and 30–50 times as much cash.

But as scholar Liu Guanwen observes, though the 1980s reforms appeared to have restored their traditional lifestyle, it was never to



be the same as that before Maoism; music had become a lucrative sideline for families now fixed on the land.<sup>33</sup> They became largely reliant on agriculture; they were gradually accepted as citizens, taking part in the state machinery; some began attending secondary and even tertiary education. The social base for musicians has expanded, no longer being monopolized by the *yuehu*, and their sphere of activity has broadened. Finally, a very large part of their repertory is now pop music – a subject to which we now turn in Yanggao.

### [3.1 Following fashion](#)

From the open restoration of traditional culture around 1977 right until the early 1990s, *gujiang* accompanied ceremonials with the traditional style, as they had done throughout the years of Maoism and before, notwithstanding a certain impoverishment in repertory. But from the early 1980s, alongside the revival of tradition, Chinese pop music was heard for the first time throughout China on TV, radio, and cassette, influencing shawm bands quite soon in some regions.<sup>34</sup> Though pop made little impression on Yanggao folk music until around 1990, by 2000 it looked set to obliterate the tradition as Maoism had been unable to do. The tradition will be considered in more detail in [Parts Two](#) and [Three](#), but consideration of the incursion of pop music belongs here.

At funerals and temple fairs since the mid-1990s, pop bands with two or three singers, electronic keyboard, and drum-kit commonly set up on a stage at the back of a truck covered with tarpaulin, with microphones and large speakers. *Gujiang* bands also perform a pop programme with small or large shawm, sax, electronic keyboard, and drum-kit (☉ A5, B7).

Around 1990 electronic keyboards, drum-kit, and sax, as well as some Western brass instruments, were beginning to catch on in Yanggao, spreading from the towns to the countryside. Such instruments were available in shops in nearby Datong city.

four beautiful daughters, Hua Yinshan and his wife finally got the son that Chinese villagers long for: Hua Lei (b. 1982), known as Wugar. When we first met the band in 1991 Wugar was a willowy 10-year-old who had already been playing percussion in his father's band for several years. By 1992 I heard him at a funeral playing simple processional pieces on the shawm, 'dragging out the bass' for his father (☉ A6) or his older cousin Hua Pu (☉ A3).

With an ear to fashion and money, Hua Yinshan had bought his son a trumpet as early as 1990. Wugar joined the county *Errentai* opera troupe when 14. When he married a singer from the *Errentai* troupe of neighbouring Tianzhen county, Hua Yinshan borrowed 60,000 *yuan* to buy them a house in town. The couple had a baby boy in 2002. As we saw, the state salary of the members of such state troupes is increasingly inadequate, and they are all doing all kinds of sideline activities, of which pop, for folk ceremonial such as weddings and funerals, is among the most lucrative. Wugar plays trumpet, his wife sings.

Through the 1990s, band bosses like Hua Yinshan, Erhur, and Yin San invested in modern equipment, including sound-system, drum-kit, and electronic keyboard. So far the pop programme of the *gujiang* is a poor relation to that of the troupe bands. They rarely use a singer, but in addition to electronic keyboard, drum-kit, and one or two saxes, they generally incorporate some of their traditional instruments: the band is led by one small *suona* or one large shawm, and two (unamplified) *sheng* flanking it as in the traditional style for 'small pieces', as well as cymbals and gong.

The instrumentation is still consolidating. The sax is a confirmed member, but the trumpet is generally considered too strident. Li Bin's band hasn't used trumpet or trombone since about 1998; he doesn't reckon they go well with the *suona*, and we didn't hear other bands using them. Erhur's band used trumpet around 1998 when they added keyboard, but stopped using it after a couple of years. So Wugar's trumpet is only heard accompanying the singers of the town band.<sup>35</sup>

Though the *gujiang* play a purely instrumental pop programme, when a band with singers comes from the town opera troupe, there is usually some connection (familial or personal), and some



worldwide combine with local instruments, repertoires, and tastes to make an authentic hybrid – whatever that is. The pop fusion styles of West Africa and East Europe are appreciated by world music fans in the West, and we, impertinent pundits, tend to applaud what we see as fusions of modern instruments with local styles. Sure, it's not my problem, I'm just trying to tell you what happens in Yanggao. But I can't help anticipating your disappointment at this style: why can't it be like Ali Farka Toure or Ivo Papasov?

If the material seems immensely unpromising, it is potentially an interesting moment in Chinese music history, to be present at the development of a new style – if only we could have been there when the shawm was introduced to Yanggao in the Ming dynasty and its repertory developed. Zhang Zhentao makes a spirited and provocative defence of the choices of shawm bands in combining traditional Chinese and modern Western instruments.<sup>40</sup> After all, China has a long history of assimilating foreign elements. The absorption of music of the 'Western barbarians' (including the shawm itself) has around 2,000 years of history in China. The shawm was a foreign invader in the Ming, just like the sax today; even the sax was adopted into the (albeit frankly 'colonial') genre of Cantonese music by the 1940s, and soon became 'traditional' there.

So shawm bands have a perfect right to experiment, and it is not the place of urban scholars to pontificate whether the sounds of the two types of outdoor instruments can blend appropriately in the contexts of rural Chinese music-making. Nor is it exactly our business if people prefer new tunes to old; China, like everywhere else, has constantly modified its repertoires.

Still, I tend to follow conservative Chinese scholars in being concerned for local traditions when faced by the incursion of Western-influenced pan-Chinese pop style. It is not that I oppose new taste – more that it is disturbing to see complex ancient traditions being rapidly obliterated. I long for good new music, good new tunes with funky new combinations of instruments – it's just that the sound doesn't appeal to me yet. But it apparently appeals to their audiences, so what more need we say?



the band. She then joined the county opera troupe, where she met her future husband. A lot of people knew about her *sheng* playing – she gets all nostalgic thinking about it – but after she married and had children, her husband wouldn't let her play, thinking that after marriage women should stay home and not be seen in public. Cuifang obviously loves making music, and is terribly sad to have had to give up; she is disturbed to hear my female colleagues from Beijing telling her of successful female musicians there.

But she can't just ask her father to let her come back to the band: 'it's so complicated once you have a family'. Now she claims it's 'not good' going out on business with the band; she declines to say why not. When she did go out on business with the band in her teens, gender segregation demanded that she sleep in a separate room. Hua Jinshan's grand-daughter Xiaojiao (b. c1991) also tried learning briefly, but it looks dubious if the new generation will see any significant change.

At the Xujiayuan temple fair in 2003 enterprising female Beijing student Wu Fan finds it hard to break the ice with the macho Hua band. Having done so by teaching teenage *gujiang* Bobo to play a Richard Clayderman piece on electronic keyboard (a brilliantly non-PC introduction), she asks him to teach her the drum-kit while he leads a pop medley on small *suona*. He enjoys this, as he attracts more of an audience – even if they're watching her, not listening to him! But Eryuanqing, a young disciple of Hua Yinshan, reckons it's bad to have a woman in the band, as people may come and 'stir up trouble' (*qihong, naochangzi*). But a woman in the band – 'even if they're hopeless' – gets the audience going, whereas the men have to be able to play! The other young disciples agree, adding that no-one would let their sons marry a female *gujiang*, as it's shameful (*diuren*) – after all, it's hard enough for male *gujiang* to find wives.

Women very rarely become *yinyang* either. One *yinyang* in Xiejiazhuang has recently taught his twin daughters to play 'small pieces' on *sheng-guan*, but the band is not in much demand. Female opera singers were also thought to offend the gods, females being 'impure' – they only started performing after the 1937 Japanese invasion.

three years' before claiming one's share of the fee, after Tiantian's three-year apprenticeship he 'graduated from the master' (*chushi*), starting to earn immediately. This gave him the possibility of going off to work with other bands and eventually, perhaps, set up his own band, although for now he is happy continuing to work with Hua Yinshan, whose band is relatively busy.

By 2003 he was playing both processional pieces and the lengthy sequences for the funerary Transferring Offerings ritual with confidence on both lower and upper parts, including the suites *Jiangjun ling* and *Shang qiaolou*. Meanwhile he had been playing *sheng* since 2001; he puts on a fine act for the more popular repertory (§13.4), and takes to pop naturally. He also picked up the sax (♣ B3). At the Xujiayuan temple fair in 2003 he acted as sound engineer for the Buddhist ritual in the temple. He has done this two or three times, having picked it up through his acquaintance with the sound-system of the *gujiang*, though not interested in the ritual at all.

Tiantian isn't religious, but has drawn divination sticks<sup>44</sup> at the Xujiayuan temple; he hasn't done so since he drew one of the most auspicious ones, afraid he'll go on to get an unlucky one – young people are afraid of that. Maybe he'll draw lots again after he gets married, as many people do, especially women.

Tiantian realizes he still needs several more years' experience before he can start his own band. He earns 400–500 *yuan* a month now as a *gujiang*, much more than he could earn by tilling the fields. He keeps 100 *yuan* a month, and gives the rest to his parents for them to save towards his wedding – by 2003 they had saved 5,000 *yuan*, still a long way off. Though traditionally *gujiang* are not popular marriage partners, girls fancy him because he looks quite cool as a pop *gujiang*, with his shades, moustache, and husky voice. Of the 100 *yuan* he keeps for himself, he pays 60 a month for his mobile phone, and spends the rest on cigarettes: he used to smoke cheap cigarettes which destroyed his lips (as he put it), but now he's buying better cigarettes and smoking less.

*yuan* a day. Also they are mainly family traditions, so there is less competition, and the host family fears the *yinyang* calling evil influences into play, so they treat them well. These days *gujiang* Hua Pu sometimes even plays *sheng* in *yinyang* bands – the traditional social gulf between the two has been relaxed in recent decades. As we saw, besides their group officiation at public rituals, trained *yinyang* gain further income by performing individual consultations.

But the Yanggao *yinyang* tradition is also in severe decline. *Yinyang* bands are still in demand, but there is much less ritual expertise compared to the depth of knowledge of master Daoists Li Qing, Liu Zhong, Li Yuanmao and Kang Ren, veteran *yinyang* still active in the early 1990s.

This is even evident in their costumes: whereas before the 1950s, even lay Daoists wore magnificent costumes with complex embroidery depicting their cosmos, few of these survived the Cultural Revolution, and costumes made since the 1980s are sadly basic. Moreover, younger *yinyang* show a casual attitude to their costumes today: it is indeed terribly hot during the August temple fair we attended (see [Part Two](#)), but the younger *yinyang* wear their costumes loosely, showing T-shirts underneath. Their leader Li Manshan, son of the late great Li Qing ([Illustration 1.2](#)), declines to order them around, saying that it's a question for their own conscience. But as he realizes, his father's generation was much more conscientious about everything, from ritual sequences to costumes. Society is to blame!

As we saw, Li Qing (1926–99) was the eighth generation of *yinyang* Daoists in his family. He had three sons and three daughters. Li Manshan (b. 1946) is the oldest; the second son Yushan is also a *yinyang*, mainly a *sheng* player, still living in Upper Liangyuan; Yunshan (b. c1969) learnt the Daoist ritual well from his early teens, but later found a secular job in town. Li Qing was universally respected as a *yinyang* and a virtuous man; Li Manshan still does well from his reputation as Li Qing's son. Manshan recalls fondly how they were often invited to perform rituals over 100 *li* away, several days' walk.

Li Qing often worked with Liu Zhong (1930–93), perhaps the



most outstanding Daoist *guanzi* player of modern times – although they taught a disciple who is now in the same league. The sweet Wu Mei (b. 1970, older brother of the blind boy who had begun learning shawm with Li Bin’s father, see p. [47](#) below) fourth child of a family from the poverty-stricken village of Renjiayao, became a disciple of Li Qing and Liu Zhong while in his mid-teens.

Since around 2000, with the boom in mobile phones, many *gujiang* and *yinyang* have their own mobile phones – which helps them do business, and certainly helps us find them. They do business throughout the countryside, riding motor-bikes along the treacherous roads.

Today the sons of *gujiang* don’t want to learn, and *gujiang* don’t want them to. One can already see upward mobility in *gujiang* families. Impressively, Hua Yun’s daughter is at Teachers’ College in Hunyuan county just south, for which he has to pay 10,000 *yuan* a year. He is not encouraging his son (b. 1990) to play in his band.

In 2000 Hua Yun invested 13,000 *yuan* to buy the new equipment (drum-kit, keyboard, sound-system, as well as a complete set of traditional instruments including those for playing opera like *erhu*, *banhu*, *ban'gu*, and so on) and become a band boss, setting up as a band with his cousin Hua Pu; Xi Lei (known as Guoqing), son of Hua Jinshan’s younger sister, also plays in the band. They borrow a truck from Hua Yun’s younger brother.

Older *gujiang* lament that now you can become a *gujiang* just by learning a few pop pieces; even Hua Yun, barely 40, said ‘you can’t call that being a *gujiang*, that’s just a “drum music band” (*guyue ban*)’ – the latter expression being a common term for shawm bands in many parts of China, this also reveals his lack of a more modern vocabulary. Becoming a *gujiang* no longer involves such a rigorous training.

Indeed, since around 1995 when pop music took off, the traditional suites have gone into a steep decline. By 2003 the only suites regularly needed were *Jiangjun ling* and *Shang qiaolou*, both still played for the morning overture and the evening Transferring Offerings ritual. I became aware of the extent of the

decline when the Hua band came to the UK in 2005 (see below). Hua Pu and Hua Yun, both magnificent musicians who learnt the suites since the early 1980s by playing them daily in rituals, have only played *Da Yanluo* and *Baiheyuan* a couple of times these last few years, and *Shuilingyin* is even more rare now, certainly the version in *bendiao* scale. I had programmed the latter for their concerts, but when the band tried playing it they got lost each time. Hua Pu voiced their sadness: 'We played it *all the time, every day*, around 1991.' They soon retrieved it, and played all the suites magnificently, but it shows how fragile the repertory is; some of these pieces have already been virtually silent for longer than they were through the Cultural Revolution.

Since Hua Yun and Hua Pu went off to do business on their own, Hua Yinshan has lacked a regular family member to play second shawm to him. He had seven or eight disciples in 2003, a pool of players learning the ropes on the job by playing percussion, setting up the equipment, and trying out their hand on *sheng*, sax, and electronic keyboard. Sometimes he has recourse to his son Wugar, a less than ideal second shawm player who is busy playing trumpet for pop music, but his disciples are more reliable, playing large shawm for the traditional repertory as well as pop.

Still, Hua Yinshan's own grandson is promising, though his path looks like combining traditional upbringing and upward mobility. Yinshan's oldest daughter lives in Datong city, and her son, Bobo (Li Bo, b. 1987), is brilliant, thoughtful, and trendy. He and his equally gifted little sister are rare in Yanggao in being able to speak standard Chinese, sometimes acting as translators for me and my Beijing colleagues. After leaving junior secondary when 15 *sui*, Bobo was helped by a Yanggao contact to attend a school of arts (*yixiao*) in Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei province just east, where he learnt shanxi opera *Jinju*. After one year there he transferred to a school of arts in his home city of Datong, graduating in 2005 after two and a half years there.

For now Bobo has had to return to Yangjiabu to work with his grandfather's band, though we would all like him to escape from the life and find a comfortable job with urban registration. He mainly plays percussion and pop pieces on small *suona* (\* B7:

‘Long live Chairman Mao’ [*Wansui Mao zhuxi*]), but can also play such pieces on large shawm as are still required for ceremonial. He can play traditional drum brilliantly too, apart from the drum-kit. He might take naturally to the traditional suites, but will always be in demand for more popular styles.

Another young musician who might illustrate a shift in values is Shi Qiang (b. c1980, [Illustration 1.8](#)), winner of a 2001 county contest on small *suona*. Grandson of distinguished hereditary *gujiang* Shi Ming (§3.3), he is ‘*suona* soloist’ in the Datong municipality arts-work troupe. Though he learnt the traditional repertory in his grandfather’s band, he too is more in demand for the modern popular repertory on small *suona*. Note that the traditional repertory is never performed in the state-funded urban troupes.

One might suppose that such a background in tradition, leading to a more modern urban life in state troupes, might be typical of Chinese music since the 1940s. But only very few rural musicians could or can ever follow this path. As we saw, those few *gujiang* who took part in state-funded troupes under Maoism did so only briefly, and since the reforms *gujiang* have continued to be recruited from those with little hope of escaping village life, continuing to look forward to a livelihood based on rural ceremonial. If I showed optimism that Hua Yinshan’s grandson may combine his father’s old art with more ‘civilized’ modern behaviour, Hua Yinshan’s son, bless him, combines the vices of the traditional and modern *gujiang*: he keeps bad company, his health is suffering, and he makes the most of his living from pop music.

Generational differences are also clear in musical repertory. Hua Yinshan’s generation, learning before the Cultural Revolution, know a fuller set of contextual pieces, including most of the suites in a wider range of scales. Hua Pu and Hua Yun, learning on the eve of the reforms, before the onslaught of pop, also learnt a rather large traditional repertory. Hua Yinshan’s son Wugar, much younger, can play the lower part to the suites, which he accompanied daily on cymbals and gong when young, but soon preferred playing pop, though he has an impressive repertory of local vocal-dramatic pieces on small shawm. Still younger *gujiang*



little room, his eyes vacant yet placid as he speaks with dignity and insight of his days as *gujiang*, will be an upsetting experience for the most hardened fieldworker.



[1.9](#) Liuru's shack in Yanggao town, 2003

Li Bin is an exceptional case. As we saw, though intermittently active as *gujiang* through the early years of the Cultural Revolution, in 1970 he went off to work in the coal mines of Datong city, becoming a cadre there, only resuming *gujiang* business again when he retired in 1996. His stepfather Li Zhonghe had taken up as a *gujiang* again after the reforms, and was still playing right until his death in 1988. He had a blind disciple (younger brother of talented young *yinyang* Wu Mei) who showed great promise as a *gujiang*, but he had only been learning for a few months when Li Zhonghe died. Li Bin now wanted to complete his stepfather's mission in helping him learn. Though the disciple later decided against becoming a *gujiang*, Li Bin soon found another promising disciple, as we see below.

Li Bin is at a remove from the tradition, far more educated than most *gujiang*, and quite articulate. Living in Yanggao county-town, his house is comfortable, and the family is quite well-off. His wife became a Protestant around 1993; Li Bin was still at the mines, and she had a tough time having to look after their three

been outside their locality once to perform on stage: any such 'concerts' will remain entirely incidental to their daily ritual duties in the countryside. And the *gujiang* still attracted no outside attention.

## 5.2 Our visits and the role of cultural officials

I first visited Yanggao in 1991, with local scholar Chen Kexiu and Beijing scholar Liu Shi; Zhao Fu, then head of the county Bureau of Culture, made a benign guide (Jones 1992). I passed through briefly in 1992 with Beijing scholar Xue Yibing and Shanxi musicologist Jing Weigang, meeting up again with Zhao Fu to attend more funerals and hear the Hua band again (☉ A3, A6, C). These two visits were part of general explorations for my book on Han Chinese instrumental ensembles (Jones 1998).

Busy thereafter with research on ritual groups in Hebei, I did not return to Yanggao until December 2001, having been asked to find a good shawm band to take part in Yoyo Ma's Smithsonian Festival of the Silk Road in Washington DC the following summer. Apart from accompanying the Hua band round several funerals, we had another great recording session in the family courtyard. Chen Kexiu reckoned that Yinshan was playing even better than before; I wasn't so sure, but I could tell the band still played more beautifully than any other I had heard in the region. My 1991 and 2001 recordings of the Hua band can be heard on the Pan CD *Walking ShriII* (2004). The Washington visit and its aftermath are described below.

I returned in summer 2003 to do further research for this project with my long-term fellow-fieldworker Zhang Zhentao, Director of the Music Research Institute in Beijing, and two bright young students of his, Wu Fan and Wang Yingrui. On another visit in December 2003 I was accompanied by Wu Fan and Jing Weigang.

Not long before our visit in 2001 the Yanggao county Hall of



Culture had held a contest for shawm bands in the county, of which I and scholar Chen Kexiu were shown a video. We were both most disappointed, as it turned out to have been a highly mediated affair where virtuosity on the national style of small *suona* was prized far above the traditional local style. Hua Yinshan's band still won second prize, the first prize going to Shi Qiang (grandson of the fine old *gujiang* Shi Ming), who is adept in the slick modern repertory.

First it needs mentioning that local cultural offices are chronically impoverished, their bare offices still retaining the squalor of Maoist times, and cadres having many other more pressing duties than music or traditional culture, however amenable they may be personally. Don't start imagining some grandiose cultural project in comfortable modern surroundings.<sup>49</sup>

Over lunch, Chen and I protest to the nice people at the Hall of Culture that they should encourage the traditional style of 'eight great suites'. One benefit of the Silk Road festival invitation, Chen believes, is that it should lend prestige to this style. I am less sanguine: the style will survive if locals need it, whether or not officials begin to value it. The depredations of pop music are all too clear. On the other hand, contests like this may have a certain influence on folk style, so perhaps it is worth trying to share our taste with local cadres.

In 2003 the Yanggao Hall of Culture held a 'family music contest' in the county-town, won by the Hua band; another contest, this time for the traditional suites, was cancelled due to the SARS scare, and no more contests are currently planned. The Datong regional Bureau of Culture talks of inviting the Hua band to perform for tourist occasions, which would worry me if I thought it was a serious concern, but their main business remains funerals and temple fairs, with pop music dominating their repertory more and more.

## [5.3 Washington 2002](#)



The trip to Washington DC eventually came to fruition in June–July 2002. Five musicians of the Hua band were accompanied by the affable Li Hengrui, deputy head of the Datong Bureau of Culture, who had done much work over the previous months to complete the paperwork for the trip. This was far too earthy a style for Chinese officials themselves ever to promote, but thankfully the Shanxi authorities accepted my recommendation, and did not attempt to modify the Hua band’s music. The Bureau of Culture’s main contribution was what looked like a set of gaudy yellow pyjamas for the band to wear on stage, and black hats for the two senior brothers. The musicians had no scruples about this, and my own reservations were soon forgotten, as I came to feel it was quite distinctive – particularly when we dedicated a piece to Ronaldo and the Brazilian football team the day they won the World Cup, kitted out in the same colour.

By the way, costume for such bands for their rare appearances on the concert stage is a difficult area: I now tend to think that they should wear smart Western suits, since these are quite common in Yanggao. Too artificial a peasant outfit will merely look silly (no-one except me wears traditional cotton jackets any more), though it may pander to foreign audiences’ expectations.

The band gave two 45-minute programmes daily for ten days. They were happy to trust my judgement about the daily programme, always based on the classic suites, with an interlude of more popular pieces leading into some ‘fooling around’ (see §13.4 below). We sought to ring the changes and elicit some of the less common repertory while stressing the most powerful pieces: the majestic *Jiangjun ling*, the plaintive *meihuadiao* version of *Shuilongyin*, and either *Baiheyuan* or *Da Yanluo*, proving the audience’s ability to remain spellbound by the irresistible build-up of the long suites, and refuting the official Chinese myth of feeding audiences a diet of short catchy little melodies. The only sign of adaptation I could detect in their playing style was Hua Yinshan’s somewhat more frequent raising of his bell for high notes, but this never became excessive. They were delighted by the audiences’ enthusiasm – for their daily business back home their music is not greeted by applause – and put more into their playing every day. I

was thrilled, and relieved.

This was the Hua band's first trip outside China, indeed outside their immediate vicinity. The hotel was great, they got used to the food, and though it was incredibly hot we all had a wonderful time. I hope they don't think this is typical of life abroad. At the hotel we were with 300 other musicians from different parts of the Silk Road, and they were curious and happy to meet new people – particularly the amazing Rajasthanis. Whacky Hua Jinshan got his day on drum-kit at the end of the festival when they did a set in a jam session, having been invited to sit in on a piece with Kazakh folk-rock band Roksonaki, which they did with no problem.

Cadre Li Hengrui gave a refreshing perspective on this prestigious festival – held in tents on the vast National Mall, with day-to-day organization pleasantly chaotic – finding it to resemble a Shanxi temple fair! Even if this is a disparagingly humorous comment, at least the musicians feel at home: it is hot, dusty, and sweaty, as they lug their instruments round.

As my contribution to globalization and the world music bazaar, in 2001 I had given young trumpet-player Wugar a compilation tape of world brass and jazz (including Miles, Bird, and Papasov) which I had recently, no less cavalierly, given to a few shawm bands in Shaanbei further west. He didn't seem very excited about it, but in DC he loved the blues in a bar where I took him and Tiantian, and went home with more jazz CDS.

As a disciple, Tiantian realized he probably had no right to claim his \$500 fee which was handed out to all the five *gujiang* who performed in the USA. So he didn't dare buy any souvenirs at all in the USA, or even in Beijing on the way home – when they got home he just bought a few cheap items of stationery in Yanggao county-town for his younger sister. He handed his whole fee over to his master, who repaid the compliment by giving him 1,000 *yuan* (c \$120), which Tiantian then handed over to his parents. None of the *gujiang* spent a single cent of their fee in the USA.

The trip was the most memorable event in their lifetime; they talk about it constantly, and their photos are worn from use. They claim the USA visit has enhanced their reputation so that they are

now more in demand locally, but by 2004 this seemed to be far from the case: indeed, their reputation was suffering from their poor relationships both within the family and with customers. There are now very occasional invitations to perform for tourist festivals in Datong or the ancient Yungang grottoes, and they can't wait to be invited for another foreign trip (frustratingly elusive). Indeed, they set great store by official events, whether it's the festivals of the 1950s or the recent contests and performances; but such events are rare, and they are likely to remain dependent on local ceremonial business.

## 5.4 UK and Holland 2005

It was not until June 2005 that I had another opportunity of inviting the hua band to tour abroad. In the UK, the Asian Music Circuit agreed to put on a few concerts – at a time when promoters were sadly cautious about programming anything other than Afro-Latin pop – and at SOAS, AHRC funding enabled the band to coach my own band of teachers and students over a 17-day period. The experience was a delight for the Hua band and for all who heard them. To their great satisfaction we presented them with fine certificates composed in the sonorous clichés of official Chinese language.

At SOAS I also led three public workshops; we were working well together. The band also played outside for a Music Open Day, and enjoyed other performances like our SOAS silk-and-bamboo ensemble, as well as the splendid *sarangi* playing of Morgan Davies, a keen member of our SOAS shawm band, and some jazz. Later we took youngsters Tiantian and Bobo to a rowdy blues bar – after a sax lesson for Tiantian.

The band's first real gig was in Portesham Village Hall in Dorset, for a delightful audience of jazz aficionados. After cadre Li Hengrui's comic take on the 'temple fair' of the National Mall in DC, he was amused again: 'We come all this way and end up in a pathetic village brigade office!', using the quaint language of local



Maoist administration. After the kitsch of the yellow pyjamas in DC, I had thoughtfully asked Li Hengrui to provide them with Western suits, without a tie, a most successful concert outfit.

After a splendid session in the village pub and wonderful hospitality, the next day we returned to London to do a concert in LSO St Luke's, when they played their hearts out. Hua Yinshan had been seriously car-sick, and had barely eaten for two days. Before the gig, when I advised him not to blow too hard, he exclaimed 'I've been to USA, I've been to the UK, I don't care if I die now!', and indeed he was evidently trying to breathe his last by playing the shawm. In the interval I reminded him that 'it's only music', and he relaxed a bit, but it was a magnificent gig. The following day they played on parade in the Cowley Road Carnival in Oxford, a familiar kind of context.

The main gain for us all is that they transpire to be dedicated musicians, not mere mercenaries: they really care about their music. Even tough cookie Hua Jinshan exclaims, 'I've heard these pieces all my life, I can never tire of them [*bufan*]!' They burst into tears on hearing the 1985 recording. Now that the suites are endangered by the invasion of pop, we often discuss remedies. Over beer and fags in the hotel bar, they listen politely to my ideas about the transmission of the suites, though I fear these ideas are more idealistic than practical.

'You can't rely on the occasional trip abroad to play the suites for foreigners, nor on the occasional tourist gig at the Yungang Buddhist grottoes or in Beijing – this problem can only be resolved in the Yanggao countryside. OK, Yanggao peasants don't want the suites now, but you guys have to take a lead! I'm not saying you shouldn't play pop, just that you can't play it all bloody day long! Sure, in the afternoon you can play pop, opera, tricks, all that, but first you *must* play *Shuilongyin* in *meihuadiao* scale! And some of the suites in the morning too!'

I go on (and on): 'OK, even if you can't play the suites much these days when you're doing ceremonial business, then you must get together as a family [what?!] for fun [what?!] once or twice a year, just to play through the whole repertory, just to keep the suites alive in your hearts and fingers. And lastly, you must teach

the whole repertory to youngsters like Tiantian and Bobo (not to mention Wugar), even if they'll have no use for it!

Oh well, at least I said it. ...<sup>50</sup> However much they enjoyed playing the traditional suites for foreigners, the band returned to Yanggao in time for the Xujiayuan temple fair on the 18th of the 5th moon, when the suites would once again take a back seat to pop music.

In October 2005 I had the opportunity to invite both the Hua band and Li Manshan's group of *yinyang* from Yanggao to perform at the magnificent Tropical Museum for the Amsterdam China Festival. My recommendation that the two groups should perform alternately in a day-long version of a temple fair proved unworkable, so in the end the two groups performed for separate concerts on stage.

The Daoists did three concerts; despite the inevitable compromise of presenting complex rituals in brief staged versions, we devised a programme featuring not just their *sheng-guan* instrumental music but their vocal liturgy and processions with ritual percussion. They also made a TV appearance and took part in the opening ceremony in the square in front of the Concertgebouw. Though I lament never having had the opportunity to invite Li Manshan's father the great Li Qing along with brilliant *guanzi*-player Liu Zhong, it was delightful to be able to sit down with Li Manshan, learning from his reflections and discovering how he has inherited his father's wise and calm nature; and young Wu Mei is no less outstanding than Liu Zhong on the *guanzi*.

Later the Hua band did one amazing concert, for a packed and enthusiastic, if deafened, audience in a beautiful hall. While several of the pieces have hardly been required in Yanggao since the 1990s, the excitement of the occasion now makes them play with all their heart, perhaps as they would have done in the old days when competing with another band for a wealthy patron.

By now the irony was plain: the band now plays the old pieces not for Yanggao ceremonies, but only for foreign tours. They clearly love them, and still play them magnificently; but without foreign tours, they won't play them! This time the band were

or in the West), where we are exposed to ritual in new (and convenient) conditions. However, we should not suppose that this is a dominant or inevitable tendency in world musics: most music-making in the world still takes place far from the concert stage.

Folk music is never entirely isolated from change or official involvement. We have seen how *gujiang* have taken part in propaganda teams, how they take on board revolutionary repertory and maintain casual contacts with cadres, very occasionally participating in officially-organized contests in the county-town. Yet their daily 'food-bowl' remains ceremonial – albeit a ceremonial which is always changing with society. The Hua band's continuing reliance on local folk ceremonial since their brief international fame is the starkest illustration of this, as will become still more clear in [Part Two](#).

On one hand, *gujiang*, and their local audiences, have remained resistant to central official policy, sticking to their traditional contexts and repertories; and opportunities to commodify themselves on the national or international stage are strictly limited. On the other hand, now our taste in encouraging the traditional repertory has no influence on them whatsoever: their local audiences, who were so resistant to state-imposed repertory under Maoism, now only want to hear pop music. This almost suggests a charmingly obstinate resistance to authority: when cadres wanted them to play revolutionary pieces, they played traditional ones; now scholars want them to play traditional pieces, they play pop! Of course, we might also surmise that the indignities inflicted upon traditional culture under the Maoist period prepared people for its wholesale jettisoning under the new wave of pop.

Even if we take the early 1990s, before the invasion of pop, as a point of comparison with the pre-Communist period, the apparent similarity is only superficial. Social relations had been transformed; for instance, whereas before the 1950s the majority of *gujiang* were blind, often unmarried opium-smokers, by the 1990s most were sighted men with families. Ceremonial life seemed vibrant, but was only a pale shadow of activity before Liberation. The lifestyle of *gujiang* was still held in low esteem, but the Maoist



legacy whereby all were now tied to the land, besides significant new factors like their earning power, meant that they were now firmly absorbed into society. Still, as we will now see in [Part Two](#), ceremonial life has retained many elements of pre-Communist traditions.



[2.1](#) Funeral, Zhuanlou village, August 1992. The oldest son of the deceased leads the procession to the well for the Fetching Water ritual, followed by the *gujiang* (Hua Yinshan and his son Wugar on shawms) and Li Yuan's band of *yinyang* Daoists.

- [1](#) See e.g. Shanxi vols. of the *Anthology* (listed under Zhongguo ...) and Zhongguo 2000b.
- [2](#) See Wen and Xue 1991.
- [3](#) Apart from Zhongguo 2000a, see also Wu, Wang, and Xue 1991. The ceremonial wind ensembles of central Shanxi around Wutai became famous in Chinese musicology in the 1950s (the so-called 'Eight great suites of Shanxi'), but distinct traditions abound throughout Shanxi. For recordings, Hugo 1997 (for central, not northern, Shanxi, despite the title); Jones 1998, CD.
- [4](#) See the works of Xiang Yang (including 2000, in English), and Qiao Jian 2002.
- [5](#) See e.g. Dubois 2004: 24–9; Jones 2004: 15; studies in the C.K. Wang *Minsu*

*quyi congshu* series; and Dong Xiaoping's comments on Lagerwey's Hakka series, in Overmyer 2002: 347–50, 352–7.

- [6](#) As candidly admitted in the recent county gazetteer, Yanggao 1993: 122, 592.
- [7](#) For the typically sparse notes of local Communist scholars on religion in Yanggao, see Yanggao 1993: 606–15; for temples in imperial times, see 339–40. For fine surveys of temple buildings (alas not ritual practice!) just west and east of Yanggao in the early 1940s, see Grootaers 1945, 1995. For the meagre institutional base of religion in north China, see Dubois 2005: ch. 4.
- [8](#) For a very elementary introduction see Yanggao 1993: 467–70.
- [9](#) For the local *Errentai*, see Chen Kexiu and Wang Yuan 1983.
- [10](#) Zhongguo 1990a: 512, 519.
- [11](#) See Jones 1998: 154–5 and chs. 10–12.
- [12](#) See Poche 2000 for some citations to regional traditions.
- [13](#) Jones 1998, ch. 10; Liu Yong 2006. Some ethnic minorities also use similar bands.
- [14](#) This is now clear from the provincial volumes of the vast recent Chinese *Anthology of folk music of the Chinese peoples* (for which see Jones 2003), some of whose volumes for instrumental music (such as those for the northeastern provinces) are almost entirely taken up with shawm pieces.
- [15](#) See Liu Yong 2006: 12–37, Jones 1998: ch. 10. For folk wind-and-percussion bands, see Qiao and Xue 1999; for early sources, note Zhang Zhentao's list on pp. 478–503. Note also work on *yuehu* 'musical families', n. 7 above.
- [16](#) In Yanggao – I believe unusually – there are few *yinyang* masters who are not Daoists, but there are some known as 'draftsmen' (*huajiang*), who make the paper houses and paper artefacts for funerals, as well as selecting auspicious days and siting of houses and graves, but do not act as Daoist priests or perform public rituals (cf. Grootaers 1945: 171). The *yinyang* are also known as *erzhai* 'two dwellings', apparently referring to their officiation over *yin* and *yang* dwelling places for the living and the dead.
- [17](#) For material in English on the Yanggao Daoists, see Jones 1992 and Jones 1998: ch. 12, citing works in Chinese of Chen Kexiu and Jing Weigang. Also in Chinese, see Zhongguo 2000: 1769–73, 2032, transcriptions 1775–1918. The major project on Daoist musical traditions edited by Cao Benye



unfortunately did not include them. Incidentally, from casual clues, lay Daoist activity seems common throughout Shanxi, even if northern Daoist ritual may transpire to be less complex than that described for Taiwan and Fujian.

- [18](#) For Shanxi shawm bands and ceremonial, see Zhongguo 2000: 28–33. For shawm bands in nearby Shaanbei, see Tian Yaonong 2005, and Jones forthcoming.
- [19](#) See n. 7 above.
- [20](#) For examples elsewhere in Shanxi, see Johnson 1994.
- [21](#) For historical stipulations, see Xiang Yang 2001: 30, 118. The *gujiang* are given a room to sleep in, but it is invariably less comfortable than the scripture hall of the *yinyang*.
- [22](#) For nice perspectives on the common world phenomenon of low-status musicians, see Merriam 1964: 134–44.
- [23](#) Zhang Zhentao 2002; Tian Yaonong 2005; Jones forthcoming.
- [24](#) I first introduced this band briefly in a 1992 article; for the traditional repertory of the hua band, consult also the CD *Walking Shri!ll* (Pan 2004). The kind of overview I attempt here resembles that of my book Jones 2004, which, discussing one village, is more detailed, though still only a partial account of modern history; that book concerns an amateur ritual group, whereas here we turn to a professional shawm band. Otherwise, the most detailed material on the fortunes of village musicians is Qiao Jian 2002: ch. 9. Biographies for Shanxi musicians in Zhongguo 2000: 2033–47 offer slender clues.
- [25](#) From Yanggao 1993: 590–91, it appears that it was not stamped out immediately upon Liberation.
- [26](#) For the communes and famine, see Yanggao 1993: 23–31, 66–75. Cf. Jones 2004: 95–169, esp. 112–15.
- [27](#) Chen Kexiu 1991 interview with *yinyang* Yan Erba, kindly copied for me in 2001.
- [28](#) For itinerant blind singers further south in Shanxi, see the harrowing Liu Hongqing 2005; for a brilliant evocation of blind narrative-singers' adaptability in Shanxi under Maoism, note a scene in Wu Tianming's 1987 film *The Old Well* (*Laojing*). For blind bards in Shaanbei, see Jones 2007.



- [29](#) A campaign officially aimed at opposing financial corruption among cadres; Yanggao 1993: 58–9.
- [30](#) Cf. Jones 2003: 311.
- [31](#) Liu Guanwen in Qiao Jian 2002: 326–40; cf. 81–4. For a classic study of the political fortunes of one village in this area, from which expressive culture and ritual are notable by their absence, see Hinton 1966, 1983. Apart from shawm bands, Daoists are also active in this area.
- [32](#) Qiao 2002: 329. Liu gives tables of comparative earnings and education for *yuehu* under the three periods. Cf. Tian Yaonong 2005: 169–74, for shawm bands in Shaanbei. Such statistics, if accurate, are not easy for outsiders to interpret, but the trend is clear.
- [33](#) Qiao Jian 2002: 338; note a fine biography of one *yuehu*, Qiao Jian 2002: 338–40.
- [34](#) See e.g. Jones 1998: 59–60, from Hejin in southwest Shanxi; the Shangdang *yuehu* material also suggests that pop music took over early in southeast Shanxi.
- [35](#) Though I haven't sought data on the earlier history of brass instruments here, they were used for the Model operas in the Cultural Revolution. In 1990 a 'Female brass band' was formed in the county-town.
- [36](#) A. Jones 1992, worthy for including the early days of *tongsu* music; de Kloet 2001; Baranovitch 2003; for a good summary of the post-Mao urban cultural scene, see Dujunco 2002.
- [37](#) Craig and King 2002: 7; Cf. Nettl's paradigms for responses to Westernization and modernization, 1983: 345–52.
- [38](#) Craig and King 2002: 5.
- [39](#) Craig and King 2002: 10.
- [40](#) Zhang Zhentao 2002: 93–5.
- [41](#) Cf. Jones 2003: 245; and my work on Shaanbei (Jones forthcoming).
- [42](#) Cf. Jones 2004: 193–6.
- [43](#) Cf. Merriam 1964: 145–63.
- [44](#) Cf. Chau 2003: 61–6.
- [45](#) For more on Yanggao 'black talk', see Wu Fan 2007: 119–25; for that of

shawm bands elsewhere, see Liu Yong 2006: 129.

[46](#) For a review of the *Anthology*, see Jones 2003.

[47](#) Bands on the 1989 tapes, apart from the Hua band, include Yu Chi and Yu Quan from Xiejiatun (whom I also recorded with Erhur in 2003), Shi Yutang and Shi Zhenfu from Guanjiabu, Shi Ming from Wangguantun (whom I also recorded in 2001), Sheng He (?), and Yang Deshan (with Ma Zhenying) from Lower Liangyuan. Recordist Jing Huan also recalled bands from Luowenzao township, Qingshunbu, and Da Antan.

[48](#) See my remarks in Jones 2003: 323.

[49](#) For local cultural offices, see e.g. Schimmelpenninck 1997: 41–2.

[50](#) Cf. our debate in Gaoluo: Jones 2004, esp. 229, 349–55.

[51](#) Despite Bell's fine comments on the apparatus of new state ritual in the USSR (1997: 225–9), local rituals appear to have been tenacious in China, and the pre-1949 period not so rosy: Jones 2004: 344–54.

# Part Two

## Shawm bands and Daoists in performance: funerals and temple fairs

### 7 Introduction

So both *gujiang* shawm bands and *yinyang* ritual specialists – indeed, most other kinds of musician in the Chinese countryside – perform almost solely for ceremonial, both life-cycle (for individual households) and calendrical (for the community). They call this ‘seeking/doing household ceremonies’ (*xun/xing menshi*) or just ‘performing ceremonies’ (*banshi*, literally ‘doing things’, hence the title of the DVD). The most common contexts are funerals (‘white ceremonies’ *baishi*) and (through the summer months) temple fairs (*miaohui*); both groups are busiest in the winter doing funerals.

*Gujiang* have rarely been hired for weddings in Yanggao since the 1960s; the Hua band now does only three or four a year. Since the 1980s weddings have consisted mainly of banquets, only using audio and video cassettes and often karaoke – not even a live pop band.

For weddings in Yanggao town before the Communist ‘Liberation’, on procession to the bride’s home the *gujiang* repeated the short piece *Ersi ju*; on arrival back at the groom’s home they played the sectional suite ‘*Jiangjun ling* for worshipping in the hall’ (*Baitang Jiangjun ling*; for more on some of these pieces, see [Part Three](#)). Blind *gujiang* Erhur recalled that, even in the early 1960s, they used to play seated for the *an’gu* overture, as they do for funerals, performing some of the same



suites – though only the bright *bendiao* and *liuzidiao* scales were used, not *fanzidiao* or *meihuadiao*. For the banquet ( *anxi*), *gujiang* played excerpts from *Jinju* opera; beggars also ‘spoke joy’ (*shuoxi*) by singing *Errentai* excerpts.<sup>1</sup>

Within living memory *gujiang* were also occasionally invited to perform for other life-cycle ceremonies: first-moon and 100th-day celebrations for a new-born baby, the opening of the lock on the 6th of the 6th moon when a child reached the age of 12 (*yuansuo*), and longevity celebrations (‘celebrating 80’, *qing bashi*). But now people rarely invite *gujiang* for these ceremonies, or for the completion of a new house, as they still sometimes do in shaanbei further west. The Hua band still does two or three 80th-birthday parties a year, playing *Jiangjun ling* as morning overture, then a sequence of ‘great’ and ‘little’ opera (*Jinju* and *Errentai* respectively), and also playing while the guests are given lunch, finishing around 2–3pm.

The tradition of posthumous marriage ( *minghun*) was proscribed under Maoism, but has revived; the Hua band now plays for such occasions around twice a year. Within five years after the death of an unmarried male over the age of 15 *sui*, a suitable dead unmarried female is found – not the other way round. Thus for a bachelor who died around the age of 50, they identify a dead spinster roughly the same age. A set of clothes and coffins are made. Only one *yinyang* is hired, to perform tasks such as writing talismans and the brick for the tomb, but *gujiang* usually play, doing the morning *an’gu* sequence, the afternoon opera sequence, and accompanying the joint reburial of the couple on the second day. Sometimes the ritual only takes a single evening; though not secret, it is expensive – though there is no need to buy a new house for the couple, other expenses are almost as great as those for a real wedding.

Whereas in Shaanbei since the 1990s shawm bands often play for the opening of a new business (*kaiye*) in town, here this is rare. they may be required for special occasions: once an opera troupe from distant hunan came to the county-town, and invited *gujiang* to play to advertise them – in sShaanbei, a shawm band played on

a victory parade after police caught an embezzler.

So the main performance occasions now for both *gujiang* and *yinyang* are funerals and temple fairs.<sup>2</sup> The ritual sequence for both contexts is similar, both revolving around offerings to gods, ghosts, and ancestors. *Gujiang* and *yinyang* perform alternately: basically, in the morning the *gujiang* do four sets, the *yinyang* three; in the afternoon both do four sets; both take part in further rituals in the evening. At both funerals and temple fairs, the *gujiang*, as well as performing at their base to one side of the main arena, accompany processions – a job usually allotted to the younger members of the band, as the repertory is less demanding. At both funerals and temple fairs, the *yinyang* perform rituals in a wider public arena as well as before the coffin or in the temple.

There is no evident audience reaction to the performance of either the *gujiang* or the *yinyang*, even for pop music. The only obvious enthusiasm is for the ‘fooling around’ with instruments in the afternoon, when audiences sometimes laugh and cheer (A4, B8). Watching the DVD you may be struck by the high proportion of young children observing the public rituals of the *yinyang*. Partly, of course, younger people have more energy to accompany some of the processions, and are curious. But apart from reminding us that one-child families are rare in rural china, and that the countryside is depleted of people of working age, this suggests that the ritual drama of the *yinyang* has a distinct entertainment value even today. It may warn us too against undue pessimism about the future of such rituals.

The ‘old rules’ (*lao guiju*) for both ceremonial and music have become simplified since the Cultural Revolution, especially since the 1990s when pop music began to dominate. Still, there is all too much tradition to document in the funerals and temple fairs that we have observed recently. The ritual repertory of the *yinyang* Daoists richly deserves a whole separate book, and my notes also inevitably touch on the activities of the opera troupes, beggars, spirit mediums, etc. Though this account is mainly limited to outlining the ritual sequences from the perspectives of the *gujiang*, the DVD gives an impression of the vibrant diversity of rural ceremonial.

5th, and 7th days. Traditionally, they may also play at intervals through the second and third seven-day periods after the death, and at the grave for the 100th day and the first and third anniversaries, but today rarely do so – the Hua band now plays about one third-anniversary ceremony a year. still, one death may provide several days' employment for the *gujiang* apart from the two days of the main public ceremonies.

Before the 1950s the full ritual sequence was observed more often in the county-town, where more affluent families were to be found; village ritual tended to be simpler. Since the 1980s reforms, modern thinking tends to make town funerals more condensed, whereas in the surrounding countryside tradition is more persistent, and rather more money is available.

Apart from the *gujiang*, the other main performance at funerals is that of the *yinyang* lay Daoists. While one *yinyang* is closely involved right from the death, selecting an auspicious site and timing ('selecting the days' *kan rizi*) for the burial, the full *yinyang* band usually only performs rituals on the day before and the day of the burial. They perform vocal hymns (*zantan*), accompanied sometimes by ritual percussion, sometimes by *sheng-guan* wind ensemble; suites for the wind ensemble are also performed separately – all in prescribed sequences.

Firecrackers are let off deafeningly at liminal moments, an indispensable part of the festive soundscape. Women (less often men) perform funeral wailing while leaning on the side of the coffin as paper is burnt (•A1); their wails have a descending cadence, but are not very melodic. In recent years a pop band with singers often also performs pop songs (•A5); apart from national hits as heard on TV, they may sing pop arrangements of the local *Errentai* dramatic music. A small-scale traditional opera troupe performing *Errentai* may also be hired for the evening before the burial.

In addition, a group of itinerant beggars (*maichangde*, 'sellers of singing') may arrive to sing short auspicious songs, called 'wailing for the soul' (*kuling*). I saw such groups at funerals in 2001 (•A1). one group was part of a larger band of nine peasants from Inner Mongolia just north, who have spent most of their time in



Yanggao these last ten years singing for weddings and funerals. They used to go on the road only in the winter, coming back every year for the spring planting and going back out again after the autumn harvest, but with the severe droughts of the last few years they have been on the road all year round.

Their leader told me: 'We earn a really good living. We have motor-bikes and mobile phones – the motor-bikes to do the rounds, the mobile phones to get in touch with people. Villagers always want an auspicious day for their ceremonies, so in the whole county on one day there might be a dozen or even several dozen families putting on a ceremony. So we try and do the rounds of all of them, and can earn a lot. We get 2 or 3 *kuai* for singing a section, and richer families might ask for several sections, so if we sing well we might get 10 or 20 *kuai*. Then each day we divide it all up between us.'

Relatives of the deceased are dressed in costumes and hats of white hemp, and clasp funerary sticks; the hats and sticks are decorated with different coloured paper indicating degrees of relation to the deceased.

### Sonic elements at funerals

firecrackers

*gujiang*:

shawms and percussion

mixed ensemble

*yinyang*:

vocal liturgy (sung, chanted)

ritual percussion

*sheng-guan* ensemble

wailing

*beggars*:

singing

*erhu* fiddle, clappers

opera:

## 8.2 The first day

We attended a relatively opulent funeral at Wangzhuang village on 25th–26th November 2001. The group of *yinyang* comes from the home village. Two *gujiang* bands have been invited, both related to the deceased's family: our Hua band (seated outside the gate), and a young band (seated to one side in the courtyard) based in nearby Luowenzao town, led by *sihur*, a former disciple of Shi Yutang in Guanjiabu.

The morning sequence of suites from the two seated *gujiang* bands is traditional. After the *an'gu* overture of *Shang qiaolou* and *Jiangjun ling* (cf. CD tracks 1 and 9), the Hua band plays *Baiheyang* in *liuzidiao* scale (♩A1, cf. CD track 6), and the Luowenzao band plays *Da Yanluo* in *fanzidiao* (cf. ♩C, and CD track 7), as prescribed, alternating with visits of the *yinyang* 'escorting the scriptures' to the altar.

As we saw above, the *gujiang* also have to accompany processions to 'fetch offerings'. The DVD (♩A3) first shows a procession in 1992, with Hua Yinshan's nephew Hua Pu and the 11-*sui*-old Wugar, just finding his feet (or rather his fingers) on the lower part, on shawms. On arrival at the funerary home, the ritual gifts are unloaded onto the altar table; cloth offerings are already hanging outside the house. Relatives kowtow in sequence, shawms still accompanying.

Back in 2001, later in the morning, after the first 'fetching offerings' procession, the *yinyang* play *sheng-guan* music for offerings to the kitchen (*Qinggong*), proceeding back to their scripture hall with a tray of hot dishes.

Throughout the day there are several rounds of 'fetching offerings' processions, culminating in a spectacular offering headed by two sheep – unlike the local custom of offering a pig's head, the sheep are offered here after the custom in nearby Inner Mongolia, where the dead woman's younger sister lives. Both *gujiang* bands play 'small pieces', first alternately and then together; for this rather grand procession the Hua band plays the sectional suite *Baitang Jiangjun ling*, formerly for weddings.

6pm the Hua band and the village *yinyang* band accompany the Burning the Treasures procession to the village temple. The young disciples of the Hua band play *Huadaozi* in *bendiao* and *fanzidiao* scales; the village's own *yinyang* follow behind, playing *sheng-guan* pieces. On arrival at the temple, firecrackers are let off at the old opera stage opposite, the mourners kowtow, and the treasures are burnt.

Back in Sibaihu village, after the communal evening meal (in the village schoolroom, as the family courtyard is too small), the *yinyang* rest in their 'scripture hall', smoking, chatting, and tuning their *sheng* mouth-organs. Meanwhile skittish local drama *Errentai* is performed on a small stage set up in the open space outside the gate of the funeral house, with one male and two female singers in costume, using mikes and accompanied by drum-kit and keyboard. This performance continues during the following Transferring Offerings ritual.

## 8.4 Transferring Offerings

To remind ourselves of the geography of the funeral site, the coffin is directly inside the open main central door of the funeral house. Before it is a small altar table; before that, on the floor, is a bowl for burning paper spirit-money. Outside the house, directly in front of the coffin, is a large altar table, laden with offerings, under an awning. The relatives kneel before this altar table.

The lengthy Transferring Offerings (*Zhuanxian*) ritual (⊙A8) in the evening is a 'feast for the ghosts, the dead ancestors', as Hua Jinshan put it. It consists of three sections (*ji*), during which offerings (tea, food, liquor, etc.) are transferred from the large altar table to the smaller altar table directly in front of the coffin. Meanwhile two grand-daughters, kneeling before the coffin, burn paper spirit-money in the bowl on the floor, while the oldest son kneels before the large altar table, and other relatives kneel on both sides and kowtow in turns. Kowtowing is said to signify relieving the deceased of sin, begging forgiveness from the Yama



Such costumes are rare in funerals I have observed, even in this area, though sets are available for hire in the county-town and even in Yangjiabu. Little yellow paper talismans ( *fulu*) are distributed to avert evil; as I video, one is lodged in my ear to protect me too.

As the coffin is raised and the procession starts, the *gujiang* play *Huadaozi* again, and female relatives wail on cue, continuing to do so at intervals throughout the procession to the grave. Firecrackers are set off at the head of the procession; *gujiang* and *yinyang* (the latter now in their red costumes) follow, playing alternately; then helpers bearing soul pennant and paper offerings; then the male relatives in single file, linked together by a long hemp rope over their shoulders; then the coffin, and lastly the female relatives wailing behind it.

The procession first goes as far as the main village square, where the coffin is put down before a large crowd of villagers. The two *gujiang* bands take up places to one side at some distance, while *yinyang* and relatives 'circle the soul' (*raoling*), the *yinyang* playing a free selection of fast pieces (*peiqu*) including pop in their keys of E or A. Firecrackers are let off, the large assembled crowd is showered with candies, while the two bands of *gujiang* play, alternately, pop – in the key of F. Eventually the male and female relatives kneel in two rows facing each other to burn paper spirit-money, and the soul pennant is waved as the son smashes a second bowl (*jiao zhipen*), the female relatives wailing on cue.

Thus two bowls are smashed: the first, privately, by the chief *yinyang* as the coffin is taken out of the house, to show the end of food for the deceased; the second (in which incense and paper spirit-money were burnt) by the son in the public square.<sup>2</sup>

The procession sets off again towards the grave in the fields outside the village, the *gujiang* and *yinyang* accompanying only as far as the edge of the village. While the other members of the *yinyang* band return to their scripture hall, only the senior *yinyang* attends at the grave, performing necessary rituals such as checking the *fengshui* alignment with his *luopan* compass.<sup>10</sup>



[2.3](#) Lower Liangyuan temple fair, August 2003, showing the three main temples and the square in which Raising the Pennant and Judgement and Alms rituals will take place

## [9.1 Temple fairs](#)

Apart from their funeral business, *gujiang* and *yinyang* are in demand through the summer months for local village temple fairs (*miaohui*). Apart from their role in communal identities, temple fairs are among the most important manifestations of Chinese popular culture.<sup>[11](#)</sup> Like funerals, temple fairs exhibit a range of expressive culture: religious ritual, opera, and various kinds of instrumental ensemble – not to mention social intercourse and commerce. Markets thrive during temple fairs – indeed, on a smaller scale, stalls may set up during funerals too.

Although today these temple fairs still seem quite impressive, many elders reminded us that before Liberation (indeed, before the Cultural Revolution, some said), notwithstanding poverty and disruption through changing economic and social conditions, temples were everywhere, in the county-town, townships, and villages, many with several fairs annually, making for a far more extensive network of temple fairs than today.<sup>[12](#)</sup>



Again, temple fairs vary in scale, depending partly on their reputation (the perceived efficacy of their gods) and partly on their economic means (a related factor). In Yanggao county few temples have, or had, resident priests, but if the temple, or the village, has resident ritual specialists (such as the Buddhist priests at Xujiayuan, or the lay Buddhist sect at Gushan), then they perform rituals inside the main temple; a band of *gujiang* and a band of *yinyang* lay Daoists are usually invited (☉B1), and an opera troupe performs on the stage opposite the temple (☉B2).

The sequence for both *gujiang* and *yinyang* is similar to that of funerals. This study again focuses on the activities of the *gujiang*, who are based outside the temple gateway or in a courtyard. The temple committee pays the *gujiang* a basic fee, but again they earn substantial extra sums when pilgrims invite them to play while they present offerings to the gods, mainly of ritual food and clothing for the god statues.

Like funerals, temple fairs last two or three days; in conversation, the period is identified by the 'main day' (*zhengrizi*), but the fair begins one or two days earlier. Temples generally hold two or three such fairs annually. Apart from such calendrical occasions, temples may serve as a venue for special rituals over two or three days requested by an individual family to fulfil a vow (*huanyuan*).

Temple fairs are organized by a committee of village elders.<sup>13</sup> The large force of voluntary helpers (cooks, scribes to record donations, etc.) includes attendants to look after the performing groups such as *gujiang* and the opera troupe. The major expense is inviting an opera troupe. The programme, agreed in advance with the temple committee, should not consist of items considered too 'red' (*hong*), implying celebratory, such as those about marriage.

One occasion for temple fairs is rain prayers,<sup>14</sup> which have remained important in the north Chinese countryside despite attempts at prohibition under Maoism. In this area they were held until 1958 when political control became even stricter. Delegations from villages such as Lower Liangyuan make the procession to the Yunmenshan temple, exposing their own god statue to the sun as punishment or threat. The rain procession at Xujiayuan is



of the 1st moon, for ‘avoiding illness’ (*baibing*) – with *gujiang* but no *yinyang* – and for the ‘Dragon raises its head’ (*Long taitou*) ceremonial on the 2nd of the 2nd moon.

Most village temples in the area are understaffed (and were so even before the 1950s), but this temple now has about eight resident Buddhist priests. Miaoyun (b. 1975), the able young abbot, became a monk at the age of 15, against the wishes of his parents, although his aunt’s belief had influenced him. At 16 he studied at the Buddhist Academy in Lushan, later spending time in Shanghai temples. He came to be abbot here in 2002; he has ambitious plans for the temple’s renovation. Miaoyong, splendid *shangzuo* chief celebrant in the complex ‘Releasing Flaming Mouth’ ritual on whose rendition he prides himself (☉B5), has spent time in temples all over China.

For the 7th-moon fair this year, one *gujiang* band (our Hua band) and the county *Jinju* opera troupe are invited. In previous years a group of *yinyang* Daoists has also been invited; the resident Buddhist priests have no ideological objections to this, but no *yinyang* have been invited this year. The priests perform rituals throughout the day in the main temple, advertised on a written paper inscription pasted on the wall. The Hua band has played at the Xujiayuan temple fair for around 15 years. They only receive around 100 *yuan* per day from the temple, in addition to their lodging and food, but earn good extra money from the processions of individual groups of pilgrims who ask them to play. Hua Yinshan proudly shows us his receipt for his donation of 150 *yuan* to the temple.

The opera troupe performs three operas on each of the three days, earning 800 *yuan* for each three-hour performance (*chang*): one is ‘offered’ (*songde*) for free, so they are paid for eight of the nine performances. But as the money is split up within the troupe, even the highest-paid performers only earn around 50 *yuan* per day.

Outside the main temple is a constant throng of visitors making donations (recorded by scribes) and having their fortunes told. People also enter the temple to draw lots (*chouqianr*),<sup>18</sup> kowtowing in front of the Hulaoye statue. On the first day, individual

The opera troupe is in full swing today. After supper, as the opera troupe performs again, the resident Buddhist priests perform an impressive 'Releasing Flaming Mouth' (*Fang Yankou*) salvation ritual inside the main temple, lasting around five hours, the chief celebrant performing all the complex Tantric mudras and incantations while scattering food for the hungry ghosts ( :B5).

On the third day, the 'main day', at 4.30am, before daybreak, the *gujiang* perform 'rising at the fifth watch' (*qi wujing*) as a kind of alarm call for the gods. They begin as usual with *Shang qiaolou*, this time with a lengthy percussion introduction called *da paigu*, leading into *Jiangjun ling*. Meanwhile four singers from the opera troupe in costume, accompanied by one shawm player from the troupe, sing a ritual song in the main hall for the gods.

Then, exceptionally, the *gujiang* play the *meihuadiao* version of *Shuilongyin* – because they know I like it! It is so early that I am still the sole willing mortal audience. The *gujiang* rest a few minutes between pieces, smoking and chatting. Then they play the suite *Da Yanluo*. At 6am, before breakfast, they 'pack up the drum' (*shougu*) with the short piece *Da Bamen*. My presence is irrelevant to the use of traditional pieces: they realize that this alarm call is for the gods, not for mortals, and have to play the traditional repertory.

Still before breakfast, another group of pilgrims asks Hua Yinshan to accompany them on another *xian'gong* offering procession; he asks me to play *sheng* with the band, processing from the opera stage up the main steps to the main hall. Though the piece is a simple pop tune repeated again and again, my ears and fingers can't follow it, and I feel useless. The pilgrims donate 500 *yuan* to the temple, and 150 to the *gujiang* for their brief contribution.

As if my self-disgust at letting my *gujiang* master down isn't enough, I have cut my arm rather seriously after falling headlong into a deep ditch on the previous evening, I've had even less sleep than usual (not just from the pain and the late finish of the opera troupe, but with huge moths and bits of ceiling constantly falling on our heads as we lie on the *kang* brick-bed in one of the newly-

built side-rooms off the busy courtyard), the *gujiang* are at each other's throats arguing about money, and with the rain the tracks are muddy and slippery. I won't go into the state of the public latrines, and indeed it was largely because I didn't want to go into them that I had sought a more private spot outside the temple grounds the night before and fell into a ditch in pitch darkness. But maybe you don't need to know all this ...

Anyway, after breakfast, at 8am the *gujiang* play a pop set on their truck. Meanwhile a separate pop band from the county opera troupe, with one male and one female singer (Wugar's wife; Wugar is playing trumpet in this band) perform pop in the main arena before the opera stage (• B7: 'Embrace tomorrow' [*Yongbao mingtian*]). This is sponsored by a local *baijiu* liquor company, a glitzy affair. Light aircraft fly over with streamers advertising the *baijiu*, and a man swings from a trapeze below an air-balloon. By now the crowd is dense.

At 8.30am the Buddhist priests begin a *Jixiang puFo* ritual in the main temple. At 9am the opera troupe begins a new performance. We leave at 10am to catch the temple fair at Gushan village nearby. The *gujiang* are still performing the rest of the day, and will play again next morning, returning home at midday.

## ***Rising at the fifth watch***

'Rising at the fifth watch' makes a nice example of the impoverishment of tradition. For temple fairs it should be performed for the second of three days, or the third of four days (as in fairs like Xujiayuan), or the first of two days (as in Zhenmenbu). They used to do it for funerals too. According to the Hua brothers, the traditional sequence, beginning around 3.30am, and alternating as ever with visits of the *yinyang*, begins with a short overture (known as *da paigu*) using only *hao* long trumpet, gong, and drum, replacing the pieces *Jiangjun ling* and *Shang qiaolou*. Then the sequence is the same as their regular morning seated programme: *Shuilongyin* in *bendiao*, *Baiheyuan* in *liuzidiao*, *Da Yanluo* in *fanzidiao*, *Da Yanluo* in *meihuadiao*, and *Baiheyuan*



in *fanzidiao*. The *Baiheyuan* suite would include (*dai*) the piece *Haiqing na e* ('The vulture captures the swan') signifying that the host must provide noodles for the band. As we see in [Part Three](#), strictly the piece prompting noodles should be *Xiao Yanluo*, played as if drowsy, as a hint to the host; but since this piece became obsolete, the anguished sounds of the swan have served just as well. After noodles are served around 5am, they rest a while, play *Jiangjun ling* as the sun comes up, and then start afresh with the whole *an'gu* sequence.

But how often did they really do this? The Hua brothers say 'rarely': they did it until 1958 at the Xujiayuan fair, and three or four times a year for funerals before then. They still do a simplified version for temple fairs, as we saw, but haven't done it for funerals since 1958.

## [9.3 Gushan](#)

The 'Nunnery' (Guzi miao) or 'Granny temple' (Nainai miao), at Gushan village just southwest of Xujiayuan, and only 3 *li* away from the Hua band's home of Yangjiabu, is formally called 'Temple of the Holy Mother of the Five Dragons' (Wulong shengmu miao).

The temple's main fair is on the 8th of the 4th moon, the birthday of the female deity; we have come for the smaller fair on the 3rd of the 7th moon, the day she became a deity, and it inevitably attracts fewer visitors since this is the main day of the more grandiose Xujiayuan fair nearby. Still, it is surprisingly busy. since the main function of this temple is to guarantee the health of children and encourage fertility, dolls to guarantee fertility are much in evidence (◉B1), placed in the side halls. The fair lasts two days, the 2nd and the 3rd of the 7th moon.

Again, legends concerning the founding of the temple are widely known. One version goes that while her parents were out, the daughter of a rich man in Yanggao town received a visit from a beggar, really a spirit; when she refused to open the door for

village, unlike others in the area, has not implemented the *chengbao* system of individual responsibility, so they are still poor, and people say the brigade is corrupt. This year three villagers have collected money to invite a group from the county ‘folk opera troupe’ to perform *Errentai* (a comedown from the prescribed ‘great opera’) for one day only, the afternoon and evening of the 7th. The troupe lowered their price from 1,500 to 1,000 *yuan* – more or less the amount the temple has received in donations.<sup>21</sup>

The *gujiang* band is that formerly led by Li Bin (see §4.5). The group of seven *yinyang* is led by Li Qing’s son Li Manshan, from Upper Liangyuan nearby, with Li Qing’s magnificent disciple Wu Mei on *guanzi* double-reed pipe. On both days, as for funerals, the sequence is that in the morning the *gujiang* perform four sets, the *yinyang* three sets, in the afternoon both do four sets, as well as more public rituals – though this time, unusually, the latter seem to count within the sets. Their final set of the second morning is an Offering to the Kitchen ( *Shanggong*).

This and other *gujiang* bands stopped observing the traditional afternoon sequence around 2000: now they mainly play pop, apart from the morning overtures and processions, where the traditional pieces are still prescribed. The band is led by the young star Bobo on small *suona*, and occasionally large shawm (*erhao*, also in F), flanked by two *sheng* and a sax, with *erhu*, keyboard, drum, and cymbals. They have brought their sound-system, but have not bothered to bring their drum-kit, making do with a traditional drum.

The *yinyang* alternate rituals in which they only sing the vocal liturgy with accompaniment of the ritual percussion, and *sheng-guan* melodic instrumental suites; some rituals use both. Verses of the vocal liturgy, and sections of the suites, are linked by interludes using *nao* and *bo* large cymbals. The *sheng-guan* suites of the *yinyang* are also ‘holy pieces’ (*shenqu*), para-liturgical suites played for the gods in prescribed sequence. Most of the *yinyang* hymns and instrumental suites are performed in the temple, seated before the main statue, wearing black costumes, but some major public rituals are performed outside the temple, in red costumes,

6.55-7.20 pm	<i>songjing</i>	in temple	<i>Yaozhang suite</i>
supper			

9.15pm	<i>Guandeng</i>	before temple	<i>yinyang ritual</i>
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**Day 2**

Time	event	venue	<i>yinyang</i>	<i>gujiang</i>
4am	ram sacrificed			
4.30am	<i>qi wujing</i>	courtyard		<i>gujiang</i>
breakfast				
8am	<i>an'gu</i>	courtyard		<i>Shang qiaolou, Jiangjun ling</i>
	<i>kaijing</i>	in temple	<i>Zhuma ting, peiqu</i>	
		courtyard		<i>Baiheyuan, Da Yanluo, Fangbian zan</i>
	<i>Yangfan</i>	square outside temple	<i>yinyang ritual</i>	( <i>gujiang</i> )
		courtyard		<i>Errentai, Jinju, pop</i>
11.40	<i>Shanggong</i>		<i>yinyang ritual</i>	
		courtyard		<i>Errentai, Jinju, pop</i>
lunch				
3pm		courtyard		<i>Da Bamen (or Shuilongyin in meihuadiao)</i>
	<i>kaijing</i>	in temple	<i>Wu gongyang</i>	
		courtyard		<i>Errentai</i>
	<i>songjing</i>	in temple	<i>Gandongshan</i>	



		courtyard	<i>Jinju</i>
		square	
5pm	<b>Panhu</b>	outside	<i>yinyang ritual</i>
		temple	
		courtyard	free choice

Today the *gujiang* band plays the short processional pieces *Huadaozi* (in *bendiao* and *fanzidiao* scales alternately) on the outward procession and *Yijuban* on the return procession. The older generation of *gujiang* chose from a wider range of pieces such as *Shifan* (in *fanzidiao* scale) – Li Bin’s stepfather also played pieces such as *Qiansheng Fo*, now little known.

As the procession nears the well, the *gujiang* stop at the foot of the slope which leads to the well, while the *yinyang* climb the slope and then stop too; the pennants are stuck in the ground. The elder, with helpers, goes to the well, where they set the tray down on the ground, light three sticks of incense and place them on the tray, burn the yellow paper petition in front of the tray, break the biscuit and disperse it, kowtow, and then fill the vase with water from the well. Usually they only fill the vase a third full, so as to attract a reasonable amount of rain, not a flood, but since 2000 there has been a serious drought, so today they fill it to the brim – something of a metaphor for modern Chinese history?

As the elder returns from the well, he sets the tray down before the *yinyang*, who, standing facing each other, with one chief reciter facing the tray, perform the hymns *Taishang song* and *Wu gongyang*, each with several verses, accompanied by the *sheng-guan* instruments, with the incantation *Jingzhi zhou* (accompanied only by the ritual percussion) in the middle.

As the procession returns towards the temple the *gujiang* and *yinyang* again play instrumental pieces alternately. On arrival, the vase is placed between the large and small statues of Hulaoye, where it stays until the next rainfall, when it can be poured away. The *gujiang* disband while the *yinyang* stand in double file at the entrance to the temple, performing another sequence of hymns, some with *sheng-guan* accompaniment, in praise of water and the

*guan* suite, switching to large *guanzi* for a fine medley of pop pieces, in authentic Daoist style, including ‘The galloping stallions protect the frontier’ (⊙B8, opening; cf. §3.3 above), an often-heard favourite.

Wu Mei next leads a Daoist version of ‘fooling around’ (*shuashua*), switching between large and small *guanzi* and *mahao* small curved trumpet. He performs all kinds of effects, dismantling his instruments, placing them on the heads of the two stooge *sheng* players on either side of him, whistling with his fingers, playing two *guanzi* alternately and at once, doing a superb train effect, and using silly false eyes. Meanwhile one of the *yinyang* plays two *sheng* at once. The audience laps this up; children are spellbound.

The tricks in this ‘fooling around’ (also known as ‘catching the tiger’, *zhuo laohu*) are remarkably consistent between all the *gujiang* and *yinyang* bands I have seen in Yanggao. They perform very similar tricks, although one might expect them to expand their repertory with greater exposure to diverse national types of entertainment, as they are doing with pop music. Even here the ‘old rules’ persist.

Finally the children scramble for the dough offerings which are released from the bundle of *gaoliang* stalks – again symbolizing food for the hungry ghosts – before the temple elder lights the paper petitions and places them beneath the bundle, setting fire to it. Over the other side of the square the opera continues throughout the ritual. These are the final performances of the temple fair.

## [10 Conclusion: ritual and musical impoverishment](#)

Looking at ceremonial in Yanggao since the 1980s’ revival, while ritual expenditure and ostentation have remained considerable, indeed increased, the decline of the ‘old rules’ is widely lamented.

ritual. For funeral variation in north China before 1949, see Naquin 1988. For funerals in Shanxi, see *Zhongguo* 2000: 30–32, 1770–73.

- [8](#) For treasury rituals in Taiwan, cf. Lagerwey 1987: 188–9 and 186, Hou Ching-lang 1975 (esp. 49–54); and in Fujian, Dean 1988: 39–40, 57–8. The funerary programmes they describe show rather few similarities with north Chinese funeral practice. See also Seidel 1978.
- [9](#) Much could be, and probably has been, written about smashing the bowl in Chinese funerals: for just one example from old Beijing, see Chang Renchun 1993: 403–6.
- [10](#) for detailed notes on the activities of *yinyang* geomancers in neighbouring Shaanbei, see Guo Yuhua 1992: 198–217.
- [11](#) See e.g. Gao Zhanxiang 1992; articles by Luo Hongguang and Liu Tieliang in Guo Yuhua 2000; Liu Xicheng 1995, Zhao shiyu 2002. For southeast China, cf. Dean 1992 and vols. in Lagerwey 1996–. for shaanbei, see Chau 2004, 2005. See also Naquin 1992, and cf. other articles in Naquin and Yu 1992; articles in Hansson, McDougall, and Weightman 2002. Wu Fan 2007 is a detailed study of the place of *yinyang* and *gujiang* in Yanggao temple fairs. For music in shanxi temple fairs, see *Zhongguo* 2000: 32–3. Broadening the subject, for festivals in Morocco, Sardinia, and Romania, see Lortat-Jacob 1994.
- [12](#) for temple fairs before Communism see Johnson 1994 (south shanxi) and vols. in Lagerwey 1996– (southeast China).
- [13](#) cf. Chau 2004.
- [14](#) For a thorough introduction based on Shaanbei, see Xiao Mei 2003.
- [15](#) For a similar case in suburban shanghai, see Yang 2003: 187–212. For spirit mediums in Shaanbei, see Chau 2003: 57–9; in Hebei, Dubois 2005: 65–85. See also Anagnost 1987.
- [16](#) Other fairs include those of the Pusa miao temple south of Dabaideng and Longfengshan at Kangyaocun in Wangguantun on the 9th of the 9th moon. For further clues, apart from our notes, see Wu Fan 2007, and Yanggao 1993: 607.
- [17](#) This local deity appears to be related to the deity Hudu around Xuanhua not far east: see Grootaers 1995: 7–9, 109–10.
- [18](#) For this most common religious behaviour, cf. Chau 2003: 61–6.



- [19](#) For similar modern morality tales, cf. Jones 2004: 153; Chau 2003: 72–3; Dubois 2005: 66–8. From the legend’s remarkable similarity to that of the Black Dragon Temple in Shaanbei (Chau 2006: 87–8), I wonder if it is a common topos for dragon temples in China.
- [20](#) For *baojuan* in north Chinese ritual performance, see Jones 2004: 268, 363–4, and index.
- [21](#) For lists of expenses from 1987 to 1991, see Wu Fan 2007: 283, 293–8.
- [22](#) The pennant should be decorated with ‘Our Lady Earthworm’ (Qushan niangniang), with the head of a woman and body of a snake, sometimes equated with Xu Xian. An eminent *yinyang* from nearby Tianzhen told local scholar Chen Kexiu that the furled cloth should contain *paiwei* inscriptions for all the gods, as well as red dates, walnuts, and candies. Two poles should have Nüwa niangniang (he regarded the Yanggao Qushan niangniang as incorrect), representing a dragon with dog claws. Thanks to Chen Kexiu for copies of his former interviews with several eminent *yinyang*.
- [23](#) cf. Jones 1992: 14–15; this description of a 1991 funeral includes a Pardon ritual with ‘fooling around’ as described in this section.
- [24](#) Cf. Jones 2004: 352; the whole discussion on pp. 344–55 is relevant.

## Part Three

# It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing

Some of the material below has already been hinted at, but this section looks in a bit more detail at the music performed by the *gujiang* for ceremonials.

### 11.1 Instrumentation

Traditionally the core repertory of the *gujiang* is for two large shawms and percussion; but for the subsidiary repertory, played for entertainment in the afternoon, they use a more diverse instrumentation, and since the 1990s their pop repertory further adds electronic keyboard, drum-kit, and sax (see §13.4).

For the classic 'suites' played seated, the traditional quorum is six players:

- 2 large shawms (for chinese names, see below)
- 1 drum *gu*
- 1 pair of small cymbals *cha*
- 1 small gong *gouwa*
- 1 large gong *luo*, doubling on natural trumpet *hao* and small gong *dangdang*.

With more family members and disciples usually available to play extra percussion instruments for some of the classic suites, as well as other melodic instruments for the subsidiary repertory, the whole band may consist of more players – as many as twelve *gujiang* may take part.

By the 1990s, the *gouwa* small gong became rarer, so bands

often ‘made do with’ another pair of small cymbals instead: at first an expedient when they hadn’t got the full band with *gouwa* and *dangdang*, two pairs of cymbals have since become the rule. nonetheless, in comparison with some other shawm bands in north china, the two pairs of cymbals sound impressive, playing antiphonally in syncopated hocket (see §13.3 below). The large gong should be a knobbed gong (*gedaluo*), but recently bands often make do with an ordinary large opera gong, whose higher pitch is less ideal. a *bangzi* woodblock may also join in for the fast finales of some pieces.

The *hao* long natural trumpet should be sounded for the two suites *Shang qiaolou* and *Jiangjun ling*, but was virtually obsolete in this area by the 1990s. the hua band still included one *hao* at the beginning of *Shang qiaolou* in our 1991 session (CD track 1), but since then bands sustain a long note (E, the lowest note on the shawm, the ‘tonic’) on the shawm instead, a poor compromise. A pair of *hao* were also sounded on procession, as they still are elsewhere in north china.

For the traditional repertory a pair of shawms is used; for the subsidiary repertory of vocal-derived pieces, a single shawm plays, supported by one or two *sheng* mouth-organs. *Gujiang* play three sizes of shawm according to repertory:

- no. 1 (*yihao*), lowest note e, used in pairs for the traditional repertory;
- no. 2 (*erhao*), in F, for the afternoon vocal-derived ‘small pieces’ and now pop, matching modern wind instruments like sax and trumpet;
- no. 3 (*sanhao*), in G, for pieces from *Jinju* opera.

Even larger shawms in D or E flat called *chuhao* were sometimes played for the suites until the 1960s, but have hardly been played since then – though I have recordings from the late 1980s which use them.<sup>1</sup> the *chuhao* was tiring to play, and hard for younger players to get their fingers round. Some bands use shawms in F for the traditional repertory, dispensing with shawms in e.



SCALE	E	F $\sharp$	G $\sharp$	A	A $\sharp$	B	C $\sharp$	D	D $\sharp$	E
<i>liuzidiao</i>		F $\sharp$	G $\sharp$		(A $\sharp$ )	<b>B</b>	C $\sharp$		D $\sharp$	
↑									♮	
<i>bendiao</i>	E	F $\sharp$	G $\sharp$	(A)		B	C $\sharp$		(D $\sharp$ )	E
↓			♮							
<i>fanzidiao</i>	E	F $\sharp$	(G $\sharp$ )	A		B	C $\sharp$			E
↓							♮			
<i>meihuadiao</i>	E	F $\sharp$	(G $\sharp$ )	A		B	(C $\sharp$ )	<b>D</b>		E

The tonic of the basic scale *bendiao* is now E, like that of the *yinyang*, but if the large *chuhao* shawm was commonly used before the 1960s, then their basic pitch was D, a tone lower than that of the *yinyang*, whose pitch has not changed in living memory.<sup>5</sup>

Since at least the 1950s, the traditional *gongche* solfeggio system has been little used by the *gujiang*, apart from featuring in the names of the scales. Whereas *yinyang* still learn their instrumental music from *gongche*, few *gujiang* today can sing many pieces in *gongche*; senior *gujiang* know *gongche* pitches, but can only use it to sing a few ‘small pieces’ like *Shifan* and *Huadaozi*, recited fast. While I had never been able to visualize the suites in *gongche*, we gained clues in 2003 when we heard Erhur, liuru and li Bin recite *gongche* for some of them. Although *gongche* is of little practical use to *gujiang*, studying, or recreating, it can help us understand the system on which their music is based. [Table 3.2](#) shows how scales match up with *gongche*, reading upwards from the lowest note on the shawm.

[Table 3.2](#) Scales and *gongche* in Yanggao shawm music

SCALE	TONIC	GONGCHE PITCH
<i>meihuadiao</i>	D	(yi)
( <i>sizidiao</i> )	C $\sharp$	(si)
<i>liuzidiao</i>	B	<i>liu</i>
<i>fanzidiao</i>	A	<i>fan</i>

pieces, mentioned by senior *gujiang* but now rarely heard, are also part of the ‘accompanying pieces’ (*peiqu*) repertory of the *yinyang*.<sup>16</sup>

*Huadaozi* is the first piece for novices, played for many processions (such as for *jiexian* offerings, Fetching Water and Burning the Treasuries), or as the coffin is taken out (⊙A9). Though it is one of the few pieces for which senior *gujiang* can still sing *gongche* (the other most common one being *Shifan*, now rarely heard in performance), younger *gujiang* have no need of *gongche* for this or any other pieces. They hear it played regularly at funerals and gradually learn to play a simple version of the lower part, eventually filling it out and learning where to add ornaments; meanwhile they gradually absorb the ornaments of the top part. Having learnt the *bendiao* version, *gujiang* also learn to play it in *fanzidiao*, which to my ears sounds very different. Still more different is an ornate version played by Hua Yinshan, which I doubt if younger *gujiang* will learn. *Huadaozi* is a good example of a short piece which is still quite complex, unlike modern vocal-derived four-square pieces. In performance it is seamless, like *sheng-guan* music, seeming to purposely erase any clues to phrasing.

On procession Li Bin’s band often plays the piece *Yijuban* (‘One and a half phrases’; ⊙A7). This appears to be a rather recent addition to their repertory, and I have not heard other bands use it. It is common further south in Shanxi, and indeed in *Jinju* opera, but the version I have heard in Yanggao is rather simple, as if it has not yet been absorbed into the local *gujiang* style.

Since the introduction of pop instruments, a single shawm is sometimes accompanied on procession by sax and two *sheng*, substituting *Errentai* or pop pieces for traditional ones (⊙B3) – although this has not yet become common.

Apart from short processional pieces, some other short pieces played while seated, not part of the so-called ‘suites’, belong here stylistically. Traditionally they were used for specific contexts, but again fewer of them are now played. Even Hua Yinshan feels sad hearing pieces from 1980s’ recordings that his pupils don’t want to



learn any more. these pieces include *Liuhuangyan*, announcing lunch. *Da Bamen* is traditionally played as a finale (*shougu*, ‘packing up the drum’) at the end of an afternoon sequence of popular ‘small pieces’; at the Xujiayuan temple fair in 2003 the Hua band played it as *shougu* finale before breakfast. *Xiao Bamen*, according to Erhur, should accompany the mourners burning spirit-money in the morning.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, during the course of the Transferring Offerings ritual the *gujiang* play a series of many short ‘small pieces’ which they are unable to name. The traditional repertory is far more extensive than the so-called eight great suites.

### 13.3 The 'eight great suites'

Many wind ensembles in china (both *sheng-guan* and shawm bands) have a tradition of eight (or thirteen) ‘great suites’ (*datao* or *daqu*), their most prestigious repertory. These are all distinct local repertories – the so-called ‘Shanxi eight great suites’ which gained a certain national fame in the 1950s are in fact those played by *sheng-guan* ensembles around Wutai in central Shanxi. Even within Shanxi, other areas have their own traditions, including our *gujiang* on the plain around Yanggao county-town; not far south and west the repertories are quite distinct.

If the melodies differ by region, the macro-structures of such suites in north china are rather similar. They generally open with a slow prelude, a series of slow ‘main pieces’, followed by a series of ‘small pieces’, all linked by percussion interludes. But in Yanggao, the surviving ‘suites’ show several different structures. Here the term may have originally been *daqu* (‘large piece’) rather than *datao* (‘large suite’), but both terms commonly denote suites with many pieces linked by percussion interludes, so the term is still inaccurate: only *Baiheyan* and *Da Yanluo* are ‘suites’ in the common Chinese definition of a linked sequence of named pieces. Thus in Yanggao the term *daqu* simply denotes the lengthy and prestigious pieces played while seated, as opposed to shorter



*Jiangjun ling* – sometimes dispensing with the *chudui* ostinatos of the first piece. For other contexts such as Transferring Offerings the two pieces are played separately.

If the title is a classic *qupai* labelled melody, the melody itself is anything but a classic through-composed melody such as we know from *sheng-guan* music: apart from the evidently ostinato-like *chudui* section which comprises the second half of the piece, even the first half is based on short repeated motifs. This first section has a nice ambiguity between the basic scale and that a fifth above it, *liuzidiao*. The opening descending phrase is clearly in *bendiao*, tonic E, but it then quickly lurches to *liuzidiao*, tonic B; at the end of the section *bendiao* is abruptly restored, cadencing on the *la* of *bendiao*. After the long ostinato section, the brief final *Baichang*, with the two shawms playing in unison in the lower octave, is unambiguously in *bendiao*.

## *Jiangjun ling*

This is the most valued and rousing piece of the *gujiang*, performed most often. Though they learn this piece early, its melodic material, and its fast yet varying tempi, make it mesmerizingly complex for the outsider. The title, probably understood as ‘The general’s command’, is ubiquitous in Chinese wind bands, evokes the martial origins of shawm band music.<sup>18</sup>

Hua Jinshan told me that the title refers to the long first section; the second (from about 4’ on track 9 of the CD), with its repeated ostinato phrases mostly in *liuzidiao*, is ‘Bringing out the drum’ (*Chugu*), and the short third section has the suspiciously recent-sounding title of *Qidianban* (which he himself interpreted as ‘7.30am’, when the battle commences). Erhur claimed that you can play *Jiangjun ling* with repeats ‘all day long’, but the version commonly played today is that heard on the Pan CD.

As we saw, *Shang qiaolou* is often followed directly by *Jiangjun ling*. The two pieces are broadly similar in style, partly by virtue of their lengthy ostinato sections, by contrast with the sectional and

more melody-based *Baiheyuan* and *Da Yanluo*, but they are quite distinct. The ostinato sections of the two pieces are different: they are not interchangeable.

The opening section of *Jiangjun ling* is melodically distinct from that of the other suites. In a fast 4/4, it contains one short repeat early on and then a longer repeat; the melody is neither so easily divisible into phrases as the opening of *Shang qiaolou*, nor as organic as *Shuilongyin* or the sections of *Da Yanluo* and *Baiheyuan*. Though it may sound at first like short motifs being thrown around, this is not like the ostinato style. One might adopt the military metaphor and hear it as a succession of fanfares, based on a dazzling sequence of rhythmic variations on the progression from *mi* to *re*.

A separate piece called *Baitang* ('for worshipping in the family hall') *Jiangjun ling* is sectional, divided by percussion interludes. Until the 1960s it was played to fetch the bride (*jie xifur*) – recently the Hua band sometimes plays it on funeral processions. It begins with two short melodies in *bendiao* scale, followed by one short section of *Jiangjun ling* repeated several times; the later fast movements, in *fanzidiao*, are from the final sequence of *Da Yanluo*, to be played as the procession arrives back at the groom's house. This appears to be the only processional piece requiring the gong, freeing the cymbals to play zany syncopations.

## ***Shuilongyin***

This piece is stylistically unique in the repertory, a long through-composed melody, distinct both from the sectional *Baiheyuan* and *Da Yanluo* and from the ostinato-dominated *Shang qiaolou* and *Jiangjun ling*. It is not a 'suite' in the usual Chinese sense, but nor is it a typical labelled melody: whereas the latter generally maintain a fairly constant tempo, *Shuilongyin* accelerates gradually through all the tempi of a suite.

*Gujiang* today can play *Shuilongyin* in *bendiao* and *meihuadiao* scales (CD tracks 2 and 3). Surprisingly, the latter version – played

in the afternoon, as we saw above, as a prelude to remind people that they are 'civilized' before they launch into the jocular 'small pieces' – is more commonly played than the *bendiao* version.

The title itself ('Chant of the water dragon') is ancient, and is common throughout northern wind bands, but I have found no relation (yet) with shorter versions played in local opera or other genres.<sup>19</sup> As a long through-composed piece firmly in *do* mode, it reminds me very much of the common melody *Da Kaimen* played by shawm bands in Shaanbei, but it is much longer, played without repetition.

You are forgiven if you can't immediately hear any relation between the *bendiao* and *meihuadiao* versions; in fact they are identical, the *meihuadiao* version being effectively a tone lower. The listener is magnificently thrown off the scent by the fact that the *meihuadiao* version of the melody (from the first main beat, after the opening three notes in free tempo), begins only from the eighth gong beat (8/4 measure) of the *bendiao* version (CD track 2, 1'19"). When after several years I finally worked this out (no-one thought of telling me, but why should they?), the rest was plain sailing. Erhur explained that you can't play the 'hat' (*mao*) for the *meihuadiao* version, it would be 'awkward' (*bieniu*) – 'there's no way you could play it'; he pointed out that it has always been like this in living memory.

The 'hat' is like a composed *alap* in the slow 8/4 metre, magnificently displaying the main pitches and their relationships, almost like chord sequences. Note the rhythmic subtlety even of this simple version: pitches are delayed over main beats. In bar 6 the motif is first announced which will become a prominent theme of the following section.

This piece most simply illustrates the typical metrical sequence, opening with the recurring 8/4 pattern on the drum punctuated by one gong stroke and four cymbal clashes every measure; through a long and carefully graded *accelerando* the drum eventually adds more free syncopated patterns.

But the piece has few obvious signposts. The 4th degree (a) is stressed twice in the *bendiao* version – becoming an even more striking and ambiguous G, a sharp 4th, in the *meihuadiao* piece.



of cipher notation, used to notate more precisely – though if pressed I think they might agree with me that the strength of *gongche* is that it makes the musician add flesh to the bones of the score.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Baiheyán***

The meaning of the title is obscure, not least because there is no consensus on how to write it. We can choose between

- *bai*: hundred/white (the former is the generally preferred form);
- *he*: harmonies/rivers/cranes/lotuses;
- *yan/ye*: banquet/geese/leaves (the latter ‘*ye*’: *yan* and *ye* are hard to distinguish in local dialect)!

Common choices by local literati are ‘Banquet of the hundred harmonies’ or ‘Banquet of the hundred rivers’; I surmise that it may once have been ‘Banquet of the white crane’, but I know of no obvious historical exemplar.

*Baiheyán* consists of around 11 melodic sections linked by drum interludes. We heard phrases of the bright *liuzidiao* scale in *Shang qiaolou*, but *Baiheyán* is the only entire suite they can play in *liuzidiao* (CD track 6; ㊦A1). As we saw, the *gongche* versions we have heard of *Baiheyán* are in *liuzidiao*, and the *liuzidiao* version is indeed the primary one; the *fanzidiao* version is secondary, reached by playing the original piece a tone lower, just as *meihuadiao* is a tone lower than *bendiao*. For the tonic B the three top finger-holes are covered; the note below that, an A natural in the other scales, here becomes A<sub>♯</sub>, a sharp 7th, used mainly as a passing note; E, the lowest note on the shawm, now a *fa*, is hardly used. Though the *liuzidiao* version is effectively just one tone higher than the *fanzidiao* version, modal variants and embellishments create a quite different affect.

Considering the *fanzidiao* (tonic A) version of *Baiheyán*, the opening section mostly sounds like *bendiao* on E: the note A is

rarely heard after the very opening, and with phrases commonly descending from G to E, A tends to sound like a *fa* rather than a *do* – to me, but not to Chinese people? Sections 1 and 2 share melodic material, but section 2 begins to confirm *fanzidiao*, as the note A becomes more established. The fast part of section 1 revolves around F#, the fast part of section 2 around B, the same notes as their final cadences. Central sections of *Baiheyuan* settle on A (a *do* mode on A); the later sections are shared with *Da Yanluo*.

The Hua band sometimes inserts a piece called *Haiqing na e* ('The vulture captures the swan') into this suite. This ancient title is common in northern wind music, and indeed in the elite *pipa* and *qin* repertoires. In Yanggao it is a fast piece in *bendiao*. In a rare programmatic moment, the shawm imitates the anguished noises of the swan as the vulture sinks its talons into it. However, Erhur said it should be part of *Xiao Yanluo*, while Liuru said it should be part of *Zhong furong* – neither of which is now played (see below).

## *Da Yanluo*

I am relieved to be able to announce that the title *Yanluo* ('Geese landing'; the common version of the title in vocal and instrumental traditions since the Yuan dynasty is *Yanrluo*) relates to the ancient *Pingsha luoyan* 'Geese landing on the sandbank', common in meditative literate solo traditions like that of the *qin* zither; though the contrast in mood seems extreme, the melody is far more complex than *qin* versions, and probably just as ancient. The *Da* ('Great') of the title distinguishes it from another suite called *Xiao* ('Lesser') *Yanluo* (see below).

*Da Yanluo* is the only other suite clearly divided into sections linked by percussion interludes – the full version has 14 melodies. As the tempo quickens, the cumulative effect is exhilarating. The Hua band usually plays this suite in *fanzidiao* scale. Section 2 is a variant of section 1, with a fast interruption in the middle, both cadencing on C#, perhaps *mi*; section 4 is a longer variant of

fieldwork, performed by Shi Youtang's band from Guanjiabu, which confirms the spectacularly dozy nature of the suite. As we saw, the hua band includes the piece *Haiqing na e* in the *Baiheyuan* suite, but Erhur confidently stated that it belongs in *Xiao Yanluo*.

- *Zhong furong* 'Medium hibiscus', a suite including *Xiao furong* ('Small hibiscus') and several 'small pieces'. This was an optional extra suite if lunchtime hadn't yet come. It must have included the piece *Yu furong* ('Jade hibiscus', a common title) too, transcribed in the *Anthology*,<sup>23</sup> but I can't find who played it then, or a recording. Again, the terms 'Medium' and 'Small' apparently refer to the structure of the piece, rather than the size of the hibiscus!
- *Daochunlei*: once played for the burial procession, and also sometimes on the first afternoon, with four shawms. This, said Erhur, was the only one of the suites apart from *Jiangjun ling* which could be repeated several times.

Erhur may be the only *gujiang* who can still play these three suites, but he hasn't played them for a long time, and by late 2003 I was beginning to doubt his ability to recall them.

Li Bin and Erhur mentioned ' *daishuan*' versions of *Xiao Yanluo*, meaning with transitional sections played on the shawm, not percussion interludes. This tallies with Liuru's comment that *Xiao Yanluo* could be played either *zhengchui* (without drum breaks) or *dajie* (sectional).

One other sectional suite, *Fangbian zan*, is still played by Li Bin's band, though not considered part of the 'eight great suites'; according to Li Bin, it should also be played in the morning. Its melodies are very four-square. Unusually in the *gujiang* repertory, this is a Buddhist title, meaning 'Hymn to the *Upaya*' (worldly 'expedients'). Another Buddhist title, *Pu'an zhou*, was sometimes played by *gujiang* in our area but is no longer common – though it is part of the *yinyang* Daoists' repertory!

A suite recorded by the Guanjiabu band in 1989, called *Suanpanzi* ('The abacus') is a free medley (hence the title, the melodies strung together like beads), including the melodies



*Qiansheng Fo* and *Yumeiren*, and ending with a sequence of fast *jiabanqu* pieces. Such melodies are now rarely performed.

### 13.4 Vocal-derived 'small pieces'

Distinct from both the seated repertory of suites and the processional repertory are the afternoon sequences from local opera. *Gujiang* bands play two very distinct types: 'small pieces' (*xiaoqu*) from colloquial *Errentai* drama, and the majestic medleys from the 'greater opera' *Jinju*. Both are popular, but the *Jinju* medleys in particular have all the tragic grandeur of their vocal models. In 2005 UK audiences marvelled at the Hua band's renditions of two moving classic *Jinju* dramas, *Minggong duan* and *Da Jinzhi*, with their morality tales of abandoned wives and righteous suicides. Again we note the versatility and musicianship of the *gujiang*. While both types of drama are traditionally performed in the afternoon, since around 2000, a new tradition has emerged of playing the *Jinju* medley in the late morning.

One solo shawm player alternates on several instruments, imitating the vocal parts of opera: shawm (for the *heitou* warrior role, or for a righteous female), *mahao* small curved trumpet (for the *huadan* female role, or for Judge Baogong), *kouqin* hefty whistle in the mouth (for children's roles), and *guanzi* double-reed pipe (for the *housheng* scholar role). This is accompanied by two *sheng* mouth-organs, *huhu*, *zhonghu* and *erhu* fiddles, and *mei* flute, as available; an operatic percussion section led by the drummer on *ban'gu* clappers-and-drum, with large and small gongs, small cymbals, and *bangzi* woodblock; and since the mid-1990s, an electronic keyboard, replacing the *yangqin* dulcimer, as it has done in the fully-fledged band accompanying opera troupes. The shawm technique here is quite different from that of the classic suites, with a lot of tonguing and virtuoso effects associated more with the modern conservatories, but it has an utterly authentic local flavour.

The *Errentai* sequence leads into ‘fooling around’ (*shuashua*, or *zhuo laohu*, ‘catching the tiger’), dismantling and reassembling the shawm at breathtaking speed (⊙A4). Another popular trick item is playing two shawms, one in each nostril (using a special attachment), as well as a cigarette in the mouth, with another *gujiang* playing two *sheng* at once – itself possible thanks to the ancient slender curved mouthpiece of the *sheng* here. As we saw, the *yinyang* also perform ‘fooling around’ for major public rituals (⊙B8).

The two styles of opera repertory are still quite extensive, unlike the dwindling core repertory for two large shawms, but are likely to suffer similarly at the hands of pop music. The pop repertory (§3 above) is led by large shawm in F or small *suona*, with sax, electronic keyboard, and drum-kit. As we saw, if it appears disappointingly national, gradations may be observed, such as ‘old’ revolutionary songs, hits from MTV, film, and TV, or from Hong Kong-Taiwan; moreover, pop versions of *Errentai* still maintain some local colour.

## 14 Conclusion: ritual sound

Before some sober reflections on ritual sound, I hope you can put this brief musical introduction to one side and just rejoice in the sheer creative exuberance of the Hua band’s playing on the CD and part C of the DVD, with their heterophony (not least Hua Yinshan’s wild ‘walking shrill’ right up at the top of the shawm), swing, timbre, the varied and intense drum and cymbal patterns, and sheer technical mastery.

I don’t hesitate to make this request even if I realize it may not seem like an insider’s view. Returning to the theme of ritual sound, though I seek to analyse the music of the *gujiang* and thus reveal its ‘merits’ and complexity, yet in its local setting it is hardly considered ‘music’ (*yinyue*). Locally, in Yanggao and throughout the Chinese countryside, the concept of such music, *guyue* ‘drum music’, hardly includes our concept of music, for the ‘drum’ here



implies ritual sound, while the *yue* seems to imply not so much the *yue* of *yinyue*, but rather its ancient meaning of ceremonial. One must relate this *yue* to the ancient binome of *liyue* ‘ritual and music’.

The music of the *gujiang* occupies a place in ritual not unlike that of firecrackers. They are a challenge for the ears as much as for a recording machine: the shawm melodies too become quite hard to hear live, competing with the percussion. Indeed, this imbalance does not disturb them: a *gujiang* saying prescribes ‘70% percussion, 30% wind’ (*qifen da sanfen chui*). While the music is an indispensable part of the ceremonial soundscape, fulfilling the necessary demand for a ‘fiery’ event,<sup>24</sup> yet however loud it is, it serves as aural background while social and ritual activities are going on, melodic ‘content’ being secondary. It is not even as respected as the local *sheng-guan* music of the Daoists: the paraliturgical *sheng-guan* music is indeed called ‘music’ (*yinyue*), and its performers have prestige; but actually the melodies are similar, the shawm melodies are just less distinguishable, often much faster. Still, audience appreciation of either type of melody, rather than the sound, is minimal – or is that typical of ritual music?

So why do the *gujiang* play such old complex melodies? Partly because that’s the way they learnt, that’s the tradition. Not so much from a sense of pride, I suspect (unlike the amateur *sheng-guan* musicians of Hebei), more just because that’s what they do. Having been considered a necessary adjunct to ceremonial for several centuries, the sound is finally becoming considered obsolete, pop music partially offering a valid replacement; yet aspects of the sound are still considered necessary at certain stages of ceremonials, to accompany specific actions.

Though the core repertory of classical pieces on two shawms remained basic until the 1990s, the band has long been a kind of folk conservatory, in which disciples learn diverse percussion instruments, *sheng*, small *suona* and *huhu*, playing opera, small pieces and now pop. All these remain dependent on their audiences’ requirements for ceremonial. Again, such is the current dominance of pop that it will not be long before the traditional repertory seems a minor irrelevance; but the old pieces survived



Xiejiatun seems to use shawms in Eb

- [2](#) See photo, Jones 1998: 98.
- [3](#) For this point, cf. Jones 2004: 243–4.
- [4](#) Although see n. 6 in Part Two above.
- [5](#) Indeed, possibly not since the Tang dynasty. There may well be an arcane clue here relating to the early origins of the music on one or other side of the boundary between the Han Chinese Song dynasty and the ‘barbarian’ Liao and Jin dynasties, as in the scales of Wutaishan just south; for this, see chen Kexiu 1999.
- [6](#) This is what Chinese theorists call ‘solfege system’ (*shoudiao changmingfa*), not ‘fixed-pitch system’ (*guding changmingfa*). for the points in this whole section, the work of Yuan Jingfang (1987) remains standard.
- [7](#) Most *gongche* traditions (including the *Yanggao yinyang*) distinguish between lower and upper octaves for the two degrees *he/liu* and *si/wu*; but here, though *gujiang* use the term *liuzidiao*, they know only the pitch degree *he*, not *liu*, and only *si*, not *wu*.
- [8](#) see Jones 1998: 115–21.
- [9](#) cf. Jones 1996: 385, 387.
- [10](#) My analysis of the suites is to be published in the *Musiké* series. apart from limited work on the repertory of the *qin* zither and *Nanguan* (Wang 1992), the actual structures of melodies in extensive repertories such as shaanbei or Liaoning shawm music, or *sheng-guan* music (Jones 1989) have still been little studied.
- [11](#) cf. Jones 1998: 146–8.
- [12](#) See Chau 2006: 146–68.
- [13](#) cf. Jones 2004: 257–8.
- [14](#) cf. Jones 2003: 306–9.
- [15](#) cf. the *Jiangnan sizhu* repertory: Witzleben 1995: 58–69 – albeit a very different case, of course, being an amateur chamber ensemble for entertainment.
- [16](#) these include *Qiansheng Fo*, *Pu'an zhou*, *Kan dengshan*, *Xitousheng*,

*Yumeiren*, *Jin dongfang*, *Gun luzhou*, *Diaobangchui* and *Shifan*; the *yinyang* also play *Xiao Bamen* and *Yu furong* (see also §13.3).

- [17](#) 1989 *Anthology* recording, shi Youtang from Guanjiabu. *Bamen* is a local version of the common title *Baimen*.
- [18](#) For a very preliminary overview of this title, see Jones 1998: 138–40. The *ling*, common to several other melodic titles, might properly refer to the poetic form, but I believe most Chinese would understand it as ‘command’ by association with the ‘General’. Now that we have the *Anthology*, it would be fun to compare all the transcriptions of *Jiangjun ling* pieces for the whole country; however, I suspect it would still be pretty futile without access to the recordings.
- [19](#) The title *Shuilongyin* is said in Beijing opera shawm pieces to be the same as *Fadian* and *Kaimen* (Ma Yuxi 1982: 147–50; cf. *Kunju* 1956: 35–6), which may support my intuition of some deep relation with the *Da Kaimen* of Shaanbei. The Hua band doesn’t recognize a version I recorded in 1992 from a shawm band in Hunyuan just south. Nor can I yet detect connections with versions in local opera (*Zhongguo* 1997: 657), *Errentai* (Hequ 289) or *sheng-guan* music of Wutaishan lamas (Tian Qing 1989, tape 5B) (the title seems to be quite rare in *sheng-guan* music).
- [20](#) See Jones 1998: 148–52.
- [21](#) Jones 1998: 127–8.
- [22](#) cf. Jones 2004: 261–4.
- [23](#) *Zhongguo* 2000a: 50–92. I have found the *Anthology* transcriptions of the Yanggao suites (50–193) none too accurate.
- [24](#) See n. 12 to Part Three above.
- [25](#) Small 1998: 39, citing Lipsitz.

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# Glossary-Index

Alphabetization is by word, not by letter; thus e.g. *Fang Yankou* precedes *Fangbian zan*, and *Wu Mei* precedes *wufang*; *Da Zouma* precedes *Dabaideng*, but *daqu* and *datao* follow *daoqing*. Titles of melodies are cited in the forms given by local informants, not always ‘standard’. Though early sources (and often current ritual texts) use full-form characters, here simplified characters, the lingua franca of modern China, are given.

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*anxi* 安席 banquet [57](#), [62](#)

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*baishi* 白事, see [funerals](#)

*Baitang Jiangjun ling* 拜堂将军令 suite [57](#), [65](#), [74](#), [107](#)

*ban* 板 drum, see [ban'gu](#)

*ban, gan* 板, 杆 plank, trunk: as personal name [13](#)

*ban'gu* 板鼓 opera drum [44](#), [91](#), [113](#)

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*banhu* 板胡 fiddle [18](#), [44](#); see also [huhu](#)  
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*Zhuanxian* 转献 Transferring Offerings ritual [29](#), [45](#), [64](#), [66](#), [68-9](#), [79](#), [103](#),   
     A8  
*Zhuma ting* 住马听 Daoist melody [81](#)  
*zhuo laohu* 捉老虎 ‘catching the tiger’, see [shuashua](#)  
*zishao* 字少 ‘with fewer notes’ [12](#)