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Music motifs in Six Dynasties texts

Eleanor Laura Lipsey

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**Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures
China & Inner Asia Section
SOAS, University of London**

Abstract

This is a study of the music culture of the Six Dynasties era (220–589 CE), as represented in certain texts of the period, to uncover clues to the music culture that can be found in textual references to music. This study diverges from most scholarship on Six Dynasties music culture in four major ways. The first concerns the type of text examined: since the standard histories have been extensively researched, I work with other types of literature. The second is the casual and indirect nature of the references to music that I analyze: particularly when the focus of research is on ideas, most scholarship is directed at formal essays that explicitly address questions about the nature of music. My approach, in contrast, is to look at stories about behavior or casual remarks made in passing that are more indirect indications of ideas about music. The third difference is the nature of the theory applied: while much of the scholarship focuses on how to put our knowledge of Six Dynasties music practices and ideas into historical and cultural perspective, I apply theory from a number of disciplines to try to add some perspective from other regions and eras. The final point of methodological divergence builds on this theory to suggest perspectives that expand beyond an existing emphasis by scholars on the development of aesthetics; this study shows that the texts indicate a richer view of music than is implied by a narrow focus on aesthetics.

Most of the material underlying the analysis in this study comes from *Shishuo xinyu*, *Yanshi jiaxun*, and *Jinlouzi*. These texts were produced roughly within the two-hundred-year period from the late fourth century to the late sixth century CE, subsequent to the fall of the Western Jin dynasty, and within the latter half of the Six Dynasties period.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

夫樂者。樂也。人情之所必不免也¹

Now, music is joy, what man's emotional nature cannot avoid.

— *Xunzi* 荀子, 3rd century BCE

Music, to me, is the joy, right? I love my kids most of the time, and I love my wife most of the time. Music I love all the time.²

— Keith Richards, 1992

Two millennia and a great physical distance divide *Xunzi* from the Rolling Stones, but the two descriptions of what makes music important are surprisingly similar. There are two possible explanations for the resemblance between the two quotations: one is that human beings respond to music in a similar manner no matter where they are or when they live, because the response is driven by physiology and the inherent nature of music; the other possible explanation is that the modern interpretation of a third century BCE text is heavily influenced, perhaps to the point of distortion, by current ideas about music. Both explanations probably have some truth to them. The ambiguities that complicate the picture include the interpretation of the term *yue* 樂 (music), which did not mean the same thing to the compilers of *Xunzi* as the word “music” does to Keith Richards. Similarly, *le* 樂 (joy) in *Xunzi* is unlikely to be an identical concept to “joy” in the mind of Keith Richards. Addressing the question of what these two quotations have in common – other than several identical English words – requires an examination of the historical and cultural context of the two statements as well as a methodology for comparing them across time and distance.

¹ Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 379 (“Yuelun”).

² Sean Egan, *Keith Richards*, 217.

The context of a music culture³ can be approached from a variety of angles, including fieldwork, textual study, and an analysis of musical instruments. The term “cultural context” includes questions of who plays the music and when, where, and for what purpose it is played; the social status of musicians; the way music is transmitted between generations; the degree of separation, if any, between those who play and those who listen to the music; the values and aesthetics associated with the music; the inspiration for and the effects music is believed to have; and connections between music and religion, politics, and science. Fieldwork—which generally includes listening to live music, interviewing musicians, and playing music with the musicians that know the music best—entails the most vivid experience of the music but offers access to only part of its cultural context; the complex historical layers underlying the music are not always readily apparent. In the case of Chinese music culture, the musical roots go back several millennia, but the Chinese have helped us to navigate their extended and complex music history with an abundant output of written work that offers textual clues to their musical past.

This study explores references to music in texts of the Six Dynasties (220–589 CE) to uncover clues to the music culture of the time that can be found in the texts. My emphasis is more on the ideas held about music than on its day-to-day practice, since there are no extant music scores and scholars have written large volumes on music practices.⁴ Hence, the central question underlying this study is, “How does music work, in the eyes of Six Dynasties Chinese as represented by

³ For a discussion of what “culture” includes in a general sense not limited to music, see Roy G. D’Andrade’s volume, *The development of cognitive anthropology*, chapter 6, and his earlier article, “The cultural part of cognition.”

⁴ See, for example, Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*; and Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*.

certain texts?" "Represented" in this context does not necessarily mean ideas that are explicitly articulated in the texts, but rather beliefs that are implied in the texts by references to music in the abstract, to musical instruments, or to music performance. The texts I explore to address this question, and the reason for the choice of those texts, are discussed in chapter 2.

1.1 What is music?

There is no clear Chinese equivalent of the English word "music" in the Six Dynasties texts examined in this study. Each of *sheng* 聲, *yin* 音, and *yue* 樂 roughly represents the English term "music" in various places in the texts, with no consistency as to how they are differentiated from one another. *Yue* is sometimes used to refer specifically to refined, court music, as distinct from popular music which is more likely to be called *yin*, *sheng*, or *yinsheng*. *Sheng*, *yin*, and *yue* also have other meanings; for example *sheng* often means "sound," and *yin* sometimes means "tone." For the purposes of this study, the English word "music" is used as a translation of any of these three terms when they are used to mean sounds produced by musical instruments – other than tones produced for tuning purposes for example – or to refer to singing.⁵

Does the absence of an early medieval⁶ Chinese expression that is a consistent equivalent of the modern term *yinyue* 音樂 (music) render meaningless a modern question of what ideas the Chinese had about music? It might, if there were evidence that the medieval Chinese separated what we now call music into clean categories that they did not believe were closely related. An example might be a

⁵ For more detailed discussion of the meanings of *sheng*, *yin*, and *yue*, see Scott Cook, *Unity and diversity in the musical thought of Warring States China*, 48-61.

⁶ I use the terms "Six Dynasties" and "early medieval" interchangeably in this study. Other terms for this period often used are Nanbeichao 南北朝 (Northern and Southern Dynasties) and "the Period of Division."

distinction between the refined music at court (*yue*) and other types of music. However, the textual evidence does not indicate clean distinctions within our modern concept of music. As early as the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of rites), there is a story that suggests that *yue*, while sometimes used to denote court music, could also mean varied types of music:

魏文侯問於子夏曰：「吾端冕而聽古樂，則唯恐臥；聽鄭、衛之音，則不知倦。敢問古樂之如彼何也？新樂之如此何也？」⁷

Lord Wen of Wei⁸ asked Zixia (507-420 BCE), saying, “When, in ceremonial robes and cap, listening to ancient music, I am only afraid of falling asleep; when I listen to Zheng and Wei music, I do not know fatigue. Dare [I] ask why ancient music (*guyue* 古樂) is like that, [and] why new music (*xinyue* 新樂) is like this?”

In this passage, *yue* does not refer only to refined, court music. Although the admired men of the past are represented in the texts as having taken pains to remind others of the distinction between salubrious music and vulgar music, the necessity of the reminders suggests that medieval Chinese may have had a general concept of music that included both high culture and popular versions.

Another potential way in which a partitioned concept of music could have been manifested is in the way in which musical instruments were viewed. The *qin* 琴 (zither) is often seen as distinct from other Chinese musical instruments because of its association with literati (*shi* 士) self-cultivation or escape from worldly threats.⁹ The literature in *Wenxuan* 文選 (*Selections of refined literature*) suggests, however, that, while the *qin* had a special status, it was seen as part of a

⁷ Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu*, 38: 19a [686] (“Yueji” B).

⁸ Lord Wen of Wei (?-?; r. 445-396 BCE) was a ruler of the state of Wei during the Warring States period (475-221 BCE).

⁹ See, for example, Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 308-311, and Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*, 339-341.

general category similar to the modern term *yueqi* 樂器 (musical instruments).

For example, the *Wenxuan* section on music includes language that indicates that various types of musical instruments were seen as closely related enough to warrant many lines of poetry to make a distinction between them. For example, Ma Rong's 馬融 (79–166 CE) preface to his “Changdi fu” 長笛賦 (Rhapsody on the long flute) refers to odes (*song* 頌) written on the *xiao* 簫 (panpipes), *qin*, and *sheng* 笙 (mouth organ), and presents his Rhapsody (*fu* 賦) to address the absence of odes on the flute. The Rhapsody describes the flute as unique in its fixed structure, cut from bamboo rather than constructed in the more artificial manner used for the *qin*, the *se* 瑟 (large zither), the *huang* 簧 (reed pipe), and the *xun* 埙 (ocarina). In the first line of Ma Rong's preface, he states,

性好音，能鼓琴吹笛¹⁰

I was by nature fond of music (*yin* 音), able to play the *qin* and the flute

This comment also supports the idea that the *qin* was viewed together with other instruments as part of a general category.

1.2 Methodology

Our knowledge of Six Dynasties music culture is limited by the absence of scores and the lack of evidence of continuity of musical sound from the Six Dynasties into the present. The curious researcher can only search for clues in texts and archaeological artifacts to try to assemble a plausible picture of the music culture. Making sense of that picture entails for the modern observer a kind of trans-temporal encounter through which to try to place textual or

¹⁰ Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.1 [807] (“Yinyue” B).

archaeological evidence into historical context, and into the more general context of music at other times and places.

This study diverges from most scholarship on Six Dynasties music culture in four major ways. The first concerns the type of text examined: since the standard histories have been extensively researched, I work with other types of literature. The second, which is directly related to the first, is the casual and indirect nature of the references to music that I analyze: particularly when the focus of research is on ideas, most scholarship is directed at formal essays that explicitly address questions about the nature of music. My approach, in contrast, is to look at stories about behavior or casual remarks made in passing that are more indirect indications of ideas about music.

The third way in which my methodology is atypical is the nature of the theory I apply: while much of the scholarship focuses on how to put our knowledge of Six Dynasties music practices and ideas into historical and cultural perspective, I apply theory from a number of disciplines to add perspective from other regions and eras and to try to tilt the discourse on Six Dynasties music away from a currently overweighted focus on cultural context. A richer picture of Six Dynasties music culture can be achieved by combining an analysis of cultural context with an examination of common features of music across cultures and invariant aspects of music. Moreover, including the physiological (including cognitive) aspects of music draws attention to the drivers of similarities in music cultures across time and place.

The final point of methodological divergence builds on this theory to suggest perspectives that extend beyond an existing emphasis by scholars on the

development of aesthetics; this study shows that the texts indicate a richer view of music than is implied by a narrow focus on aesthetics.

The motivation behind my use of these approaches is detailed below.

1.3 The texts

Musicologists have provided us with descriptions of music genres, musical instruments, and ideas about music in the Six Dynasties, based primarily on the standard histories and formal essays written during and after the period, with limited reference to other Six Dynasties texts. Examples are Qin Xu 秦序's volume on Six Dynasties music,¹¹ and general music histories such as the oft-quoted volume by Yang Yinliu 楊蔭瀏 (1899–1984). These studies include considerable information on Six Dynasties musical instruments and the genres of music practiced during that era.¹² To inquire into ideas held at the time, scholars have focused on the two major essays on music that were written at the beginning of the period, by Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263 CE)¹³ and Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262 CE),¹⁴ and on the connections between ideas about music and the major religious or philosophical traditions then dominant in China.¹⁵ As mentioned above, my approach is to draw on clues in literature other than standard histories, and to explore music practices and ideas about music that are mentioned in passing rather than being an explicit subject of investigation. The value of the more casual references is analogous, I think, to the rewards of listening to musicians or music audiences talk about music, compared with

¹¹ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*.

¹² Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 138-190.

¹³ "Yuelun" 樂論 (Essay on music).

¹⁴ "Sheng wu ai le lun" 聲無哀樂論 (Essay on music having neither sadness nor happiness).

¹⁵ See, for example, Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, chapter eight; and Kenneth DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*.

reading only the formal analyses of musicologists or music critics. Although these casual references depict the behavior and the views of the same small, well-educated segment of the population that is represented in the standard histories and the formal music essays, the texts examined in this study represent a much larger number of figures, performing or talking about music in many more, varied contexts. Moreover, the formal music essays, especially those included in the standard histories, were written at the behest of the court, presumably with the objective of pleasing those in power. Even the essays that were published outside the standard histories may have been written with practical purposes in mind that are not transparent to the modern reader but that steered the music analysis in a particular direction. Casual references in texts that are only peripherally related to music hence have the potential to offer a different perspective.

The advantages of exploring literature other than the standard histories are lucidly outlined by Van Gulik:

History was [...] kneaded and remoulded until it became literature. This fact becomes evident when one tries to study some subject in its historical frame; when comparing archaeological and ethnological data with their descriptions as transmitted in literary documents, we cannot fail to realize that these describe life and its phenomena from a particular and narrow angle: the point of view of the literary class. We are constantly confronted with what might be called a revolving process [...] A certain phenomenon is observed and recorded.... Other literati quote the passage, but before doing so they test it by literary traditions, and make the necessary alterations to harmonize it with these. Moreover they will link it up with some appropriate classical quotation, and add that this was the phenomenon as it has appeared since ancient times.¹⁶

¹⁶ Van Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*, 36-37.

1.4 Theoretical layers

This study draws on theoretical work on performativity, rhetoric, power, identity, symbolism, and the link between music and emotion, to help to put Six Dynasties music into a broader context of themes of music culture that are not confined to one era or geographical area. Relevant theory includes work concerning the performative aspects of music making, connections between rhetoric and music performance, power relations between different social strata, the expression and the creation of identity, the cultural significance of symbolism, and the expressiveness of music. This work falls within a number of different fields, including (ethno)musicology, anthropology, political science, and linguistics. Some remarks follow in the next section on the ways in which theory is applied in this study, including the relationship of the methodology to that of musicology, the issue of whether it is appropriate to apply Western theory to Chinese music culture, the choice of which type of cultural context is relevant to the purpose of this study, and, finally, the question of how useful the concept of aesthetics is to the subject under study.

1.4.1 Musicology for a 1500-year-old music culture?

This study is positioned at the intersection of musicology and sinology, with musicology defined in its broadest sense as the study of all music in all its contexts from the point of view of any disciplinary approach.¹⁷ In the modern academy, ethnomusicology is often treated as a distinct subdiscipline, even though one might argue that any dividing line between musicology and

¹⁷ See Richard Parncutt's discussion of the definition of musicology in "Systematic musicology," 1.

ethnomusicology is outdated and unproductive.¹⁸ Particularly in the earlier years of the discipline of ethnomusicology, a study of Chinese music culture would have been viewed as positioned squarely within ethnomusicology since its focus is non-western music, but geography no longer defines ethnomusicology as it once did.¹⁹

A distinction is sometimes made between ethnomusicology and historical ethnomusicology to distinguish between research on current music practice and that on past music traditions. Historical ethnomusicology has received increased attention in recent years.²⁰ Although a study of Six Dynasties music culture is clearly historical, some ethnomusicologists might view the analysis in this study to be at most a cousin to any form of ethnomusicology given the absence of ethnographic fieldwork practiced by ethnomusicologists. Many ethnomusicologists consider one of the key elements of their discipline to be fieldwork: during Keith Howard's interview of John Blacking in 1989, for example, Blacking spoke of the "long exposure in the anthropological style [...] needed to learn the language, social structure and cultural context behind the music."²¹ Almost twenty years later, Bruno Nettl stated in his forward to the 2008 volume *Shadows in the field*, "[...] ethnomusicologists think of fieldwork as the defining activity of their endeavor."²² In 2012, Richard Widdess expressed a similar view:

[...] participant observation is an essential methodology. Through learning to sing or play music—a complex skill that is normally transmitted non-

¹⁸ See Nicholas Cook, "We are all (ethno)musicologists now."

¹⁹ Ibid., 48, 63–66.

²⁰ Keith Howard refers to this development as a "historical turn" in ethnomusicology. See "Foreword," ix.

²¹ Howard and Blacking, "John Blacking," 58. Blacking is generally considered the father of British ethnomusicology.

²² Nettl, "Foreword," v.

verbally—and by taking part in musical performances, the ethnomusicologist starts to become directly aware of the rich context of meanings that musical sound elicits for members of the society concerned.²³

Fieldwork is also considered a core aspect of historical ethnomusicology. For example, a collection of essays on theory and method in historical ethnomusicology published in 2014²⁴ presents six case studies illustrating how, for example, investigations of historical texts, notation, and musical archives can illuminate current music practice. The use of the adjective “historical” does not imply an emphasis on the study of past music practice for its own sake; all the case studies in the volume describe the use of historical research to enhance the study of current musical practice. Moreover, the one reference in the book to a study of past music that was pursued for its own sake, without reference to the present, is cited as a negative example.²⁵ The position that weaves through the volume is that the study of current performance culture—including fieldwork—is critical to the practice of historical ethnomusicology. The editors in particular advocate the view that historical research is important to the discipline, but side-by-side with fieldwork and the study of present music practice.

The importance of recognizing connections between the music of the present and that of the past is also highlighted by Joseph Lam, in the context of his study of five Yuan (1271-1368) court tunes which he examines using music notation from a fourteenth century court ceremony manual.²⁶ Lam discusses the reliability of extant written information about Yuan era music that might shed light on the authenticity of the notation, and examines the musical information

²³ Widdess, “Music, meaning and culture.” 88.

²⁴ McCollum, Jonathan, and David G. Hebert, *Theory and method in historical ethnomusicology*.

²⁵ See Keith Howard, “Contested contextualization.” 343-348. He is referring here to Laurence Picken’s work; see below.

²⁶ Joseph Lam, “There is no music in Chinese music history.”

provided by the notation such as pitch and phrasing, and the evidence of minority ethnic group influence.

Lam suggests that those that focus on the dearth of details of how the tunes were performed in the fourteenth century may be researching meaningless questions: "Traditional Chinese music masters always reconstruct and/or adjust pre-existing musical works to suit contemporary needs."²⁷ This traditional practice is based on the idea that a work of music represents a kind of "essence" rather than an immutable structure; as long as the essence is expressed, musical structures can change over time but still represent the same musical essence. Musicians who have grasped the essence of a tune from earlier centuries may be pragmatic about filling in details missing from written documents without threatening the integrity of the transmission of the tune, at least from the perspective of a traditional Chinese musician. Modern music scholars may be more likely than traditional musicians to seek ways to identify what music sounded like in the past; Lam concludes that perhaps an ideal approach would combine the points of view of the traditional musicians with those of the music scholars, but he does not specify how this fusion could be achieved. Lam's analysis is clear, however, with respect to the significance of current music practice in the history he is studying; he is not advocating analysis that is undertaken independent of current music practice and moreover explicitly rejects a methodology that is detached from contemporary Chinese music practice.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., 182.

²⁸ Ibid., 187, note 55.

A final illustration of the value of observations of modern practice is in Stephen Jones' discussion of the work of a family of lay Daoist musicians who perform music rituals at public ceremonies: Jones describes a gap between, on the one hand, the performance practice that he observes, and, on the other, the content of ritual manuals that are assiduously maintained by the family.²⁹ An analyst depending only on ritual texts to investigate ritual performance might not think of questioning the relationship between text and practice. While there is no reason to assume that the text-practice relationship in the past was the same as that in the present, observation of the present can at least raise possibilities that might not be considered otherwise.

One of the most prominent musicologists to investigate historical Chinese music for its own sake was the zoologist-turned-musicologist Laurence Picken. His focus was primarily on the Tang, Yuan, and Song dynasties,³⁰ and on the analysis of written music notation and the recreation of the music reflected in the written records. Unlike modern ethnomusicologists, Picken was not concerned with the social aspects of the music. He is probably best known for his analysis of the Japanese ritual music *Tōgaku*³¹ and his hypothesis that this music, which is still played in modern Japan, is an outgrowth of Tang dynasty banquet music (now played at a much slower pace).³²

This study explores textual references to music from an era with no extant music notation; neither an examination of notation nor the fieldwork valued by

²⁹ See Stephen Jones, *Daoist priests of the Li family*, 203–254.

³⁰ See, for example, "Secular Chinese songs of the twelfth century," and "Some Chinese terms for musical repeats, sections and forms, common to T'ang, Yüan and Togaku scores."

³¹ The Japanese term *Tōgaku* means *Tangyue* 唐樂 (Tang music)

³² This research, undertaken by a team led by Picken, was published in a seven-volume series titled *Music from the Tang court* that was edited by Picken and others. Also see Picken's obituary, written by his student Richard Widdess: "Laurence Ernest Rowland Picken 1909–2007."

many historical musicologists is involved. However, I view the application of modern theory to an analysis of early medieval texts as consistent with the spirit of historical ethnomusicology in the sense that modern theory is informed in part by observation of current music practices. These observations, reflected in the theory, can broaden the range of interpretations and analytical frameworks available to the researcher; they can also help the researcher to avoid the wrong questions, as demonstrated by Joseph Lam.

One additional approach to musicology worth mentioning in connection with this study – and which is sometimes identified as a distinct subfield – is “systematic musicology.” Richard Parncutt describes systematic musicology as a multi-disciplinary exploration of general attributes of music: “[...] what is music, what is it for, and why do we engage with it?”³³ He contrasts it with other subfields such as ethnomusicology, which he describes as concerned with specific manifestations of music, a “bottom-up” approach in contrast to the “top-down” view of systematic musicology. He further divides systematic musicology into scientific systematic musicology, which is data-oriented, and humanities systematic musicology, which relies on methodologies of the humanities. This study does not lend itself to neat characterization within a “data-oriented” or a “humanities” label, but the texts explored herein are, like music scores and recordings, part of the data required for an analysis of the “what” and “why” questions of systematic musicology. The multidisciplinary methodology used in this study is also consistent with the approach of systematic musicology.

³³ Richard Parncutt, “Systematic musicology,” 3.

While interpretations of textual data are put forward here to help assemble clues to Six Dynasties music culture, the goal is not to generalize about what the early medieval Chinese – or even the Chinese literati – thought about music. It is not possible to establish with any certainty what ideas about music were prevalent in Six Dynasties culture, since the opinions written down at any given time bear an unknown relationship to the ideas in circulation at the time, and furthermore the texts that have completed the lengthy path into later scholars' hands are likely to be a small fraction of all the texts produced in the Six Dynasties. That said, references to music in extant Six Dynasties texts can acquaint the modern reader with ideas held by at least some of the elite at the time the texts were written. This approach has something in common with that of ethnomusicologists or ethnographers, who also depend on a limited number of informants:

Statements in the classic ethnographic style beginning with such phrases as 'The Basotho believe...' or 'Among the Basotho, men's choral dance songs enjoy the highest prestige,' have been undermined by the recognition that ethnography can make no claim as a comprehensive account. It is at best a dialogue and a discovery process among particular subjects and particular observers, and any statement can only apply to social actors with specific perspectives in given interactional contexts.³⁴

In a sense, the modern scholar researching music culture of the past is like an ethnomusicologist for whom the informants have been chosen for him through a process in which the rules are obscure and the informants talk only about the subjects they have chosen and do not answer questions. One pitfall of the ethnomusicologist's trade that is not applicable to text-based research is that there is no risk of the text scholar's presence altering the information he receives.

³⁴ David B. Coplan, "The meaning of tradition," 39-40.

However, his or her interpretation of the text is equally subject to distortion driven by modern habits of thought.

1.4.2 Applying theory across cultures

The theory applied to this study reflects primarily work of American and Western European academics. This might invite questions about whether it is legitimate to apply theory originating from outside China to a culture that existed in China more than 1500 years ago. This study makes the case that the theory can assist the modern observer to peer across the millennium-wide temporal chasm. For example, theory that is not tied to one geographical region can help identify musical behavior or ideas that are shared between cultures and hence possibly less suited to purely culture-based explanations.

Comparisons across music cultures run the risk of exhuming the ghosts of the “comparative ethnomusicology” of the past, in which scholars from the West spoke of “primitive” music outside the West,³⁵ and research “detached itself from the object of study.”³⁶ The “detachment” was seen partly as a failure to recognize the significance of local culture when analyzing music from a geographical distance, and partly as a process of benefiting from academic research on populations that had no voice in, or anything to gain from, the academic discourse.³⁷ The accusation of “decontextualization,” leveled at Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Otto Abraham in particular, pointed to the use of their research by others who made connections between music and race in an effort to put both

³⁵ See Keith Howard, “Contested contextualization: the historical constructions of East Asian music,” 339-344, for the history of comparative ethnomusicology and the reasons for its negative connotations.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 341. Howard is quoting José Maceda, who made this comment with respect to the field of anthropology. See Maceda, “A search for an old and a new music in Southeast Asia,” 161.

³⁷ José Maceda, “A search for an old and a new music in Southeast Asia,” 161.

on a hierarchy from primitive to civilized.³⁸ The field of ethnomusicology arose in part to enable scholars to distance themselves from the colonial undertones of comparative musicology.

Ethnomusicology – and its predecessor disciplines – have grappled with the relative merits and drawbacks of cross-cultural comparisons for a long time, and there is currently no consensus within the field as to the value of cross-cultural comparison. Beginning in the early twentieth century, comparative musicologists saw part of their purpose as steering scholarship away from a focus on common characteristics among different music traditions.³⁹ Interest in what musicologists call “invariants” (or “universals”) returned to respectability in the 1960s, with care to avoid ethnocentrism. By the 1990s, John Blacking, for example, wrote about the biological basis of music making.⁴⁰ Music invariants suggested by the ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl include a conception of musicality, the existence of repertoires of children’s music, and agreement within a culture about what constitutes music.⁴¹ A proposal to revitalize comparative musicology was published in 2013 by Patrick E. Savage and Steven Brown,⁴² covering acoustic attributes as well as cultural aspects of music. In 2015 Michael Tenzer eloquently described the hesitation faced by some practitioners:

Though many of us [...] embrace scientific explanations as a foundation for our beliefs about physical reality, we remain conflicted when it comes to whether its universalizing method should it [sic] be applied to the human affairs under our professional purview [...] We have been gathering data on musical practices and values [...] deep among the leaves and branches of people and local practices, able (with effort) to look up through the trees of their social formations, but immobilized by fear of losing sight of the leaves

³⁸ Benjamin Steege, “Between race and culture,” 364.

³⁹ Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 43.

⁴⁰ John Blacking, “The biology of music-making.”

⁴¹ Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 46.

⁴² Patrick E. Savage and Steven Brown, “Toward a new comparative musicology.”

if we try to see the forest of humanity as a whole—even if we think one day we ought to.⁴³

Some comments from the ethnomusicologist Kofi Agawu, in a passage he labels “Embracing Sameness?” may also be relevant here. In a discussion of ethnomusicology methodology, he talks about how “differencing has produced such distorted, ideologically one-sided”⁴⁴ analysis. He continues, “The idea would be to unearth the impulses that motivate acts of performance and to seek to interpret them in terms of broader, perhaps even generic cultural impulses.”⁴⁵

1.4.3 Which context?

As illustrated in the above description of the criticism of von Hornbostel’s work, the risk of “decontextualization” is generally associated with the detachment of analysis from the cultural context of the matter under investigation. In this study, while I discuss the historical and cultural context of the textual material reviewed, I focus less on breaking new ground in the examination of cultural context than on demonstrating the contributions of a different angle of analysis that considers concepts that straddle cultures. I view the application of non-culture specific concepts to the analysis not as decontextualization, but as a way of deepening the contextualization by focusing on a less thoroughly explored type of context.

Using a textual passage describing a music performance as an example, the context of the passage comprises at least the following four elements. This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

⁴³ Tenzer, “Meditations,” 4.

⁴⁴ Agawu, *Representing African music*, 168.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

- i. The textual context, which includes the text that precedes and succeeds the passage, the purpose of the chapter it is in, and the purpose of the book it is in.
- ii. The historical context, which includes ideas expressed about the same or similar music performances in the eras preceding the compiling of the text that includes the passage. Some aspects of the major historical, political, social, and economic trends of the time would also be relevant.
- iii. The cultural context, which includes knowledge, beliefs, customs, and habits of a society or segment of a society that may influence ideas about music performance.
- iv. The cross-cultural and cross-historical context, which highlight how ideas implied in a description of a music performance are similar to or different from that present in other cultures and time periods. If ideas expressed or implied about a music performance are similar to those expressed in other cultures, they are less likely to be driven primarily by unique historical or cultural factors than ideas that appear to be uncommon elsewhere. An example is the concept of musical modes, which much music around the world shares, including Chinese music and Indian music. Hence, it is likely to be unproductive to search within Chinese tradition for the reason Chinese use musical modes, and more likely that there is something inherent within the nature of music that makes musical modes useful in many cultures. There will, of course, be differences in the details of the modes used, and the ways in which they are used; those differences might lend themselves to more culture-specific explanations.

Elements ii and iii in this list overlap; culture has a history and cannot profitably be analyzed independent of it. Historical and cultural context can be viewed as a kind of vertical analysis focused on one culture over time; element iv may be

seen as a kind of horizontal analysis across cultures albeit not necessarily within one limited time period.

An analysis of music practices or ideas ideally combines all four of the above elements, and more if there are others that are relevant. Many musicologists such as Yang Yinliu and Qin Xu have done a thorough job of what I am calling the vertical analysis, describing centuries of Chinese music in the context of its historical and cultural backdrop; as a result, the influences of Ruist, Daoist, and Buddhist thought have been analyzed in detail, benefiting readers with a rich appreciation of the cultural environment in which musical developments evolved. I take their work as a starting point. In this study, I do add some thoughts on element i and, in some cases, elements ii and iii as well. However, given the large volume that has already been written on the vertical view, I endeavor less to add to that volume and more to explore the less well-trodden path of the horizontal analysis.

The horizontal analysis is supported both by theory and by comparison with examples from cultures outside China. Certain topics covered herein lend themselves more readily to these comparisons than others, and hence there is an uneven distribution of cross-cultural comparison across the chapters. I was also cautious in my choice of examples for comparison, mindful of the risk of drawing superficial or misleading comparisons with music cultures I am less informed about. The primary support for my arguments about common features of music across cultures is the theory outlined in each chapter. Cross-cultural comparisons are used selectively where they are appropriate.

1.4.4 The relevance of aesthetics

In this study, I veer off the path of much scholarship about the arts in the Six Dynasties, which emphasizes the emergence of a concept of aesthetics. This point of view about aesthetics arose in twentieth century China as part of a drive to establish aesthetics as a discipline.⁴⁶ Various scholars have applied this position on aesthetics to music specifically: in Kenneth DeWoskin's survey of music in China, he states that concepts of music aesthetics emerged in the Six Dynasties;⁴⁷ similarly, Ronald Egan suggests, "What is new in Ruan Ji's formulation [about visual pleasures and music] is the centrality of aesthetics."⁴⁸ Addressing the broad question of to what extent a concept of aesthetics first emerged with respect to music during the Six Dynasties is beyond the scope of this study, but evidence of that emergence is intriguingly absent in the texts I examine. The passages dealing with music in these texts support the contention that those writing and reading the texts were interested in the affective and performative aspects of music; there is little in the texts to suggest that attention to music aesthetics materially strengthened at that time in comparison to previous eras.

Modern discussions of early medieval Chinese aesthetics often group together various art forms such as painting, calligraphy, and music and assume they can be adequately analyzed using analogous aesthetic concepts.⁴⁹ However, grouping music together with visual art forms may obscure ways in which music is performed and heard, and the ways in which people think about performance and listening; music is entangled with physiological processes such as

⁴⁶Zong-qi Cai, "Prologue," 18.

⁴⁷ DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 157.

⁴⁸ Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 297.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 277-309.

attunement⁵⁰ in ways that distinguish it from visual arts. Hence in this study I apply theoretical concepts that are specific to music.

The remainder of this introduction outlines the organization of this study.

1.5 Organization of the study

Chapter 2 is an overview of the historical and cultural background of the Six Dynasties, including an outline of what we know about its music and the literature on music from the period. Chapter 3 is a review of the secondary literature pertaining to general aspects of Six Dynasties music culture. The secondary literature that is specific to the topics covered in each chapter, including theoretical work that is not focused on China, is not included in chapter 3 but instead is reviewed at the beginning of the chapter to which the theory relates. The purpose of scattering the literature review in this manner is to place the discussion of the secondary literature alongside the analysis of the related textual passages. The secondary literature relevant to each chapter overlaps in some cases, but much of it relates only to one chapter and hence keeping it close to the relevant subjects of analysis seemed to be the most rational approach.

The main body of this study is in chapter 4 to chapter 8. Each of these chapters focuses on one theme of Six Dynasties music culture, as follows.

Chapter 4: Stirring and stilling explores how the texts relate music to emotion. The wording of the texts suggests that their compilers and readers believed that music could elicit emotions but also could calm them. I placed this

⁵⁰ An example of attunement is the body responding to music by moving rhythmically. Children as young as one-year-olds instinctively sway with music; see Carolyn Drake et al., "The development of rhythmic attending in auditory sequences," 258.

chapter first because this belief in the affective capacity of music underlies the ideas discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Performance as persuasion examines how the texts represent performative aspects of music such as the behavior of musicians as they are performing, as well as the reactions of audiences. This chapter also explores the persuasive capacity of music and, in its resemblance to rhetoric, its overlapping functions with language.

Chapter 6: Performance as protest concerns the use of music as a tool of protest against power. Anecdotes about music performance are examined for the ways in which they describe the use of music as indirect resistance to attempts at domination.

Chapter 7: Identity and image analyzes the various ways in which music is represented as being used to create and to project an image or identity. An association with certain kinds of music was important for a ruler's image and legitimacy, and the identity of a literatus as a respected member of his peer group was partly a function of the type of instrument he played.

Chapter 8: Sonorous symbolism delves into the ways in which bells were used in the texts as symbols. The sound of bells was used as a metaphor, for example for influence and fine writing. A reference to bells was also a way of invoking the past to enhance the authority and persuasiveness of arguments.

All the chapters have a section on methodology pertaining to the subject of the chapter, a review of literature specific to the chapter topic, some comments on the cultural background to the questions discussed in the chapter, a section

containing illustrations from the texts, and a conclusion. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 each have an additional section addressing definitions.

The division of the body of the study into five chapters, and the choice of topic for each one, was driven by my observation of how the textual references to music seemed to cluster into motifs. The borders between the motifs are fluid; the separation between them implied by the division into chapters was driven less by the existence of neatly self-contained topics than by a desire to present the analysis in an organized manner. Many of the textual passages used in the analysis could have been placed in different chapters from those in which they appear, and some of them are used in more than one chapter.

Moreover, the analysis is not intended to be comprehensive; my focus is on the salient themes, mentioned above. Although the purpose of this study stated at the beginning of the introduction is quite broad, I do not attempt to look at a large number of aspects of music; an exhaustive investigation would require more than one dissertation and may well be an infinite task.

1.6 Notes on translations, numbering of textual passages, and referencing

All translations from Chinese into English are mine. The translation of *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (A new account of tales of the world) anecdotes was greatly assisted by Richard B. Mather's translation,⁵¹ and the translation of *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (Family instructions for the Yan clan) was much aided by Teng Ssu-Yü's translation.⁵² In both cases, there were certain places where I disagreed with their interpretations of the text, or preferred a more literal translation.

⁵¹ Mather, Richard B. *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: a new account of tales of the world*.

⁵² Teng Ssu-Yü. *Family instructions for the Yen clan*.

Most Chinese musical terms are translated to English, with the exception of two types of zithers, the *qin* and the *se*, which I leave untranslated since there is no way of distinguishing between them in English without a clumsy explanation in each case. Their appearance (including the number of strings) changed over time, but the *se* was the larger type of zither and probably ceased to be used after the Six Dynasties.

The presentation of the names of Chinese authors reflects the manner in which the names appear on their publications. In the footnotes and in the body of the study, the surname precedes the given name as is standard for Chinese names, unless the given name is shown first on the publication cited.

Please note that, in all references to *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* and to *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, the first number indicates the page, and the numbers in the parentheses indicate chapter number followed by anecdote number.

Chapter 2: Historical and cultural backdrop

The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different.

—Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun*¹

The fall of the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) was followed by a lengthy period of political turmoil which is often called the Six Dynasties. Three states succeeded the Han: Wei 魏 (220–265 CE), Shu 蜀 (221–264 CE), and Wu 吳 (222–280 CE), together forming what is often called the Sanguo 三國 (Three Kingdoms) era. These states were briefly reunified under the Western Jin 西晉 (265–317 CE), until its overthrow after waves of attacks first launched by the Xiongnu 匈奴 chieftain Liu Yuan 劉淵 (d. 310).² The scholar-official Chinese elite, who were concentrated in the north of China, fled south during the upheavals of the last years of the Western Jin. From about 318 CE to 589 CE, China was divided roughly into northern dynasties and southern dynasties, and was finally reunified in 589 CE when the last of the southern dynasties, the Chen 陳 (557–589 CE), was defeated by the Sui 隋 (581–618 CE) which had earlier unified the north.

¹ Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun*, 259.

² The Xiongnu were nomads that formed a conglomeration of varied political and ethnic groups covering shifting geographical areas over time but with its heartland in northern Mongolia and Transbaikal. There had been a long history of interaction between the Xiongnu and the Chinese, in part involving repeated Xiongnu invasions and efforts by the Chinese to keep the Xiongnu at a distance. Especially at the beginning of the Han dynasty, when political power was still being consolidated, Han rulers sought peace through intermarriage and tributes. During the Western Jin, a large number of Xiongnu lived in the Northwest region of the empire in enclaves that did not assimilate into the larger Chinese communities and were often used as conscript laborers and drafted into the military. Hence, when Liu Yuan launched an overthrow of the Jin rulers, he found support within the Xiongnu population. See William Honeychurch, *Inner Asia and the spatial politics of empire*, 1, 221–222; Rong Xinjiang, *Eighteen lectures on Dunhuang*, 19–20; and Dominik DeClercq, *Writing against the state*, 130–131.

From the Eastern Jin (318–420 CE) to the Sui, the North was governed by a series of rulers tied more by language and traditions to inner Asia than to Han dynasty China. They represented a variety of ethnicities, among which one of the most prominent was the Sārbi or Xianbei 鮮卑. The Xianbei comprised an assortment of tribes who lived near the northern and the northwestern borders of China and had been ruled under the Xiongnu during the Han dynasty. The various ethnic groups at China's borderlands were known as the Wuhu 五胡 (five barbarians)³ to the Chinese.

As the Xiongnu empire disintegrated during the latter years of the Han, the Xianbei became increasingly powerful, and there was an expansion of economic, military, and cultural interaction with the Chinese. After the Western Jin court and much of the Chinese elite fled south, the Xianbei and others competed for power in northern China during the period generally known as the Sixteen Kingdoms 十六國 (304-439 CE). The North was partially unified under the Northern Wei 北魏 dynasty (386–534 CE), and then was ruled by four additional dynasties before the Sui prevailed over all of northern China by 581 CE.

In southern China, the remnants of the Jin dynasty ruled until 420 CE when Liu Yu 劉裕 (363–422; r. 420–422 CE) pushed out the last Jin ruler and established the Liu Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479 CE). The three post-Jin dynasties were all short lived, none remaining in power more than sixty years, before the Sui rulers added the South to their empire.

³ The five were the Xiongnu, the Xianbei, the Jie 羯, the Di 氐, and the Qiang 羌. There were actually many more ethnic groups represented in Northern China at this time, including Sogdians, Turks, and Koreans. See Wendy Swartz et al., "Introduction," 2.

One of the major intellectual currents of the early Six Dynasties was Xuanxue 玄學, which can be roughly translated as the study of the mysterious or abstruse. Xuanxue focused on *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and their reinterpretation, along with new ways of reading *Zhouyi* 周易 (Changes of Zhou) and *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects). Xuanxue followers were also associated with unconventional behavior that flouted the dominant social norms of the time concerning, for example, drinking, mourning rituals, and the treatment of one's parents.⁴ The two preeminent music theorists of the Six Dynasties, Ruan Ji and Xi Kang, were closely associated with Xuanxue. Another notable theme of the period was the significance of nature; calligraphy and poetry, including poems on musical instruments, abounded with references to plants, mountains, animals, and insects.⁵

An additional key characteristic of the Six Dynasties was the volume of interaction between diverse populations as a result of migration, trade, and the spread of Buddhism and other religions. For example, as of the latter years of the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE), under a quarter of the Chinese population had lived in the South; by the beginning of the Sui, about forty percent of the population lived there.⁶ The movement of northern populations into the Yangzi river valley – in large part driven by the large-scale migration at the end of the Western Jin – transferred the center of gravity of Chinese culture into an area that

⁴ Xuanxue is sometimes called "Neo-Daoism." See Paul J. D'Ambrosio, "Wei-Jin period Xuanxue 'Neo-Daoism': re-working the relationship between Confucian and Daoist themes." Also see Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, *The poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, 5: they characterize Xuanxue as "a disparate aggregate of interests and values: serious philosophical thought, fashionable mumbo jumbo, legends of immortals, strange beasts, and worlds that lay beyond the constraints of gravity, mortality, society, and other inconveniences of this world."

⁵ Ronald Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 277-280; 291-292.

⁶ Mark Edward Lewis, *China Between Empires*, 2, 7.

previously had been considered a relative backwater. Efforts by the northern émigrés to maintain their dominant position in their new surroundings – and to compete for power and status with those with established roots in the émigrés’ adopted homelands – included the display of knowledge about the Western Jin court rituals that signaled their legitimacy as successors to Han imperial rule. Court music figured prominently among these key, symbolic rituals. The southerners, in turn, felt their status threatened by the newcomers who in many cases assumed powerful posts previously held by southerners.⁷ Migration took place not only from north to south but also between frontier areas and the Chinese heartland, and continued until well into the fifth century.⁸

Trade with merchants outside Chinese borders brought clothing, food, and other items including musical instruments that were absorbed into the local culture. Religions, most importantly Buddhism but also Islam, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity, were additional imports.⁹ Buddhist temples in particular became major features in the life of urban populations by the late fifth century, in both the north and the south. The temples were open to all, including common people, and attracted crowds on a daily basis to worship or just to converse. Wealthy families flaunted their wealth through their donations of Buddhist images. Music, including music from the region that is now India, formed part of the temple festivities.¹⁰

⁷ For a discussion of the competition and conflicts between the established southern elite and the northern émigrés, see *ibid.*, 39-49.

⁸ Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 19-20.

⁹ Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 158.

¹⁰ Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 108-110, 112-113.

One result of the lively trade in goods and ideas was a sizeable number of foreign residents in China, primarily merchants and Buddhist monks. These merchants traded along the silk roads, which ran through Central Asia from Syria, Persia, Samarkand, and India, at volumes that were multiples of Han era trade.¹¹ In northwest China in particular, foreign music was introduced to the Chinese along with the significant movement of people; both Turfan and Kucha (in modern Xinjiang) were two large settlements in which Chinese and Sogdians lived together, enjoying Sogdian music and dance.¹²

Buddhism came to China in the latter years of the Han but did not become widespread in China until well into the Six Dynasties. From India, Buddhism traveled to Gandhara (modern Eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan), and from there through various routes that converged on Dunhuang. From the Eastern Jin onward, Buddhist themes increasingly appeared in literature, including poetry and *zhiguai* 志怪 (accounts of anomalies).¹³ While Buddhism was kept at a distance at court in the early Six Dynasties, by the Liu Song period Buddhism became an integral part of court life, and many of the literati of the time became devotees.¹⁴

Salient features of the Six Dynasties also included new genres of poetry and the birth of literary criticism and landscape painting, despite the frequent warfare and economic hardship. These developments reflected the rise of an elite that defined itself less by the landed wealth and political power that determined

¹¹ Ibid., 162-164.

¹² Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: a new history*, 83. The Sogdians are thought to be from present-day Uzbekistan; see Mariko Namba Walter, "Sogdians and Buddhism," 3.

¹³ Zhang Zhenjun, *Buddhism and tales of the supernatural in early medieval China*, 75-81.

¹⁴ See Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 211-215; and Zhang Zhenjun, *Buddhism and tales of the supernatural in early medieval China*, 62-65.

one's status in Han times and more by cultural and literary activities.¹⁵ The importance of literature was also reflected at court: the Wei dynasty rulers included literary talent as one of the prerequisites for public office.¹⁶ Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226 CE; r. 220–226 CE), the first Wei emperor, is generally considered China's first literary theorist. His younger brother Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232 CE) was an accomplished lyric poet. The Jin dynasty in particular was known for the dominance of literati clans, and is often characterized by scholars as an era in which social standing was more important than the political office held.¹⁷

A late Six Dynasties innovation in literature was the use of tonal prosody, in which poetry adhered to new types of complex rules related to the four tones of the spoken language. While prosody had previously been a subject of interest in Chinese poetry, systematic rules for the use of tones in poetry were first advocated only in the late fifth to early sixth century, by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513 CE). Prior to the introduction of tonal prosody, the dominant form of poetry had been pentasyllabic verse in which prosodic rules were applied to syllables but not tones. Pentasyllabic poetry was chanted, unlike Han and pre-Han poetry which was sung and accompanied by musical instruments.¹⁸ It was only during the Six Dynasties that poetry had become a genre on its own, independent of music; at the beginning of the period, there did not seem to be a clear demarcation between music and poetry.¹⁹ The enhanced attention to tonal prosody in the second half of the period could be seen as a way of putting a form

¹⁵ Mark Edward Lewis, *China Between Empires*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷ See, for example, Wendy Swartz et al., "Introduction," 4.

¹⁸ Victor H. Mair and Tsu-Lin Mei, "The Sanskrit origins of recent style poetry," 379-385.

¹⁹ Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 230-231.

of musical sound back into poetry.²⁰ The poets most associated with tonal prosody at the time were known as the Yongming poets, and they included Wang Rong 王融 (468–493 CE), Shen Yue, and Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499 CE).

The heightened interest in prosody may have reflected the growth of Chinese Buddhism and consequent familiarity with Sanskrit as Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese. Sanskrit was observed to have euphonic effects, and Chinese translators of the Buddhist sutras endeavored to reflect these effects in their translations.²¹ The translation challenges were expressed in the biography of the Buddhist monk Kumārajīva (344–413 CE) in *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of eminent monks): Kumārajīva is recorded as lamenting that, while Chinese translations adequately captured the general meaning of the Sanskrit originals, the beauty and the substance of the Sanskrit was lost because its euphonic effects could not be incorporated into the translation. Kumārajīva is also recorded in the biography as stating that one of the standards of excellence for verse was its suitability for string accompaniment.²² Chinese translators sought a way to reflect Sanskrit cadences, and poetic prosody, with its attention to the tones of the Chinese language, was identified as part of the solution.

Not all literati were drawn to Sanskrit euphony. Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469–530 CE), for example, was more interested in maintaining ancient literary standards.

²⁰ Meow Hui Goh argues that Yongming poetry is best approached from the perspectives of both the sound of a poem and its semantic meaning; see *Sound and sight*, 6, 24–39.

²¹ See Victor H. Mair and Tsu-Lin Mei, “The Sanskrit origins of recent style poetry,” 379–383; Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 119–121; and Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 229–232.

²² Huijiao, *Gaoseng zhuan*, 2.53. *Gaoseng zhuan* was compiled by Huijiao (497–554 CE) and completed around 530 CE. It includes 257 major biographies and over two hundred subordinate biographies appended to the major ones. John Kieschnick (“*Gaoseng zhuan*,” 76) describes it as “the most popular and admired collection of monastic biographies in Chinese Buddhist history.”

In his *Songlüe* 宋略 (Outline of the Song dynasty), he was critical of ornate language and held up the *Shijing* as the timeless model for all to follow.²³ Pei Ziye had an ally in Fan Zhen 范縝 (c. 450–515 CE), who was known for his opposition to Buddhism. Pei Ziye and Fan Zhen represented a larger backlash against foreign influence through Buddhism and the literary innovation of Shen Yue and his circle.²⁴

The first works of literary criticism also appeared in the later Six Dynasties. *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The literary mind and the carving of dragons), a comprehensive evaluation of the Chinese literary tradition, was written by Liu Xie 劉勰 (fl. 460–480 to early 6th century CE). Only limited information about Liu Xie is available, including his place of birth near present-day Nanjing into a distinguished but poor family, and his decade-long stay at a Buddhist monastery for unclear reasons.²⁵ *Wenxin diaolong* includes discussions of history, literature, humor, prosody, the Ruist literary tradition, and many other topics. Cai Zong-qi describes Liu Xie as “a scholar of no great distinction in his own day;”²⁶ however, by the Tang dynasty, *Wenxin diaolong* had become an admired text, and it remains much studied today.²⁷

²³ Ping Wang, *The age of courtly writing*, 64–70. Pei Ziye intended his *Songlüe* to be a superior alternative to Shen Yue’s history. Pei Ziye was a great-grandson of Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451), who wrote well-known commentaries on the *Sanguo zhi*, and a grandson of Pei Yin 裴駙 (fl. 438), an important commentator for the *Shiji*; see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part one*, 716.

²⁴ Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 114.

²⁵ Antje Richter, “Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍,” 389–390.”

²⁶ Cai Zong-qi, “Introduction,” 1.

²⁷ See Antje Richter’s introduction to the text, in “Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍.”

Zhong Rong's 鍾嶸 (469?–518 CE) *Shipin* 詩品 (Grades of poetry) was the first significant work of criticism to focus entirely on poetry.²⁸ Zhong Rong's family was originally wealthy and influential but lost its status after fleeing to the south in the early fourth century.²⁹ *Shipin* applies three categories—upper, middle, and lower—to rank 123 poets and their poetry. Some of the rankings, for example of Tao Yuanming as a mid-ranked poet, have been controversial.³⁰ *Shipin* also provides a history of pentasyllabic poetry and normative comments on prosody, allusions, and balance between poetic devices.

There was also a large volume of history writing during this time; Albert Dien compares a Han dynasty bibliography that lists eleven works of history comprising forty-five scrolls with a Sui dynasty bibliography that lists 875 works of history consisting of 16,558 scrolls.³¹ Dien suggests that the reasons for the dramatic increase in volume include the replacement of paper for bamboo and silk, the expansion of government bureaucracy despite the repeated political disruptions of the period, constant changes in ritual and regulations as power transferred hands, and a desire to preserve things in writing at a time of frequent destruction of manuscripts.³²

There are five extant standard histories from the early medieval period: Chen Shou's 陳壽 (233–297 CE) *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Record of the Three Kingdoms); Fan

²⁸ See Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste poetik*, for background information on the text, and a complete translation. Pages 7–9 discuss the possible connections between the work of Zhong Hong, Liu Xie, and Shen Yue. See Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 148–153, for comments on Zhong Rong's contribution to the debate on prosody in poetry.

²⁹ See the description of Zhong Rong's background in Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste poetik*, 28–30.

³⁰ See Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste poetik*, 324–329; and John Timothy Wixted, "Shi pin 詩品," 276–277.

³¹ Albert Dien, "Historiography of the Six Dynasties period (220–581)," 511.

³² Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 342–343.

Ye's 范曄 (398–446 CE) *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han); Shen Yue's *Songshu* 宋書 (Book of the Song), which covers the Liu Song dynasty in southern China; Xiao Zixian's 蕭子顯 (489–537 CE) *Nanqishu* 南齊書 (Book of the Southern Qi), covering the dynasty of the same name (479–502 CE); and Wei Shou's 魏收 (507–572 CE) *Weishu* 魏書 (Book of the Wei), which is the history of the Northern Wei.

2.1 Music in the Six Dynasties

Concomitant with the massive migrations of the period, music practices and ideas flowed in all directions and across political borders. The eras immediately following the Six Dynasties were mostly ones of consolidation as far as music was concerned: the music of bordering areas – as well as of farther-flung Central or South Asian regions – that became widespread during the Sui and Tang had already become mixed into Chinese music practices during the Six Dynasties. Most of the important musical instruments of the Sui dynasty and the Tang dynasty, moreover, had appeared by the end of the Six Dynasties. The major musical instruments that made their way into China at this time included the *quxiang pipa* 曲項琵琶 (bent-neck lute), the *wuxian pipa* 五弦琵琶 (five-stringed lute), the *bili* 箏箎 (wooden wind instrument with a reed), the *fangxiang* 方響 (16-piece chimestone set), the *luoban* 鑼 (gong), the *konghou* 箜篌 (angular harp), and various types of drums and other percussion instruments.³³ Several came from India – such as the lutes and some percussion instruments – and probably

³³ See Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 168-169; and Albert Dien, "Music and musical instruments," 342-343.

traveled with traders and Buddhist monks. The *konghou*, in particular, was understood to be an important instrument in Buddhist music.³⁴

The music of the early medieval era falls roughly into the categories of refined music for ritual (*yayue* 雅樂), in which bells and chimestones played a prominent role, popular music for entertainment (*suyue* 俗樂), and Buddhist music. There was no clear border between these categories; popular music was played at court, and music scholars at court debated the nature of suitable music for court ceremonies. Similarly, Buddhist influence on court music varied according to the religious inclinations of the rulers. The term “popular music” in the context of the Six Dynasties does not mean the same thing that popular music means today; *suyue* literally means “common” or “vulgar” music, but certain types of *suyue* – *qingshangyue* 清商樂³⁵ for example – were literati pursuits, and the term *suyue* was used to differentiate the music from *yayue*.³⁶

Music was a serious and core aspect of court life; an official music bureau – established as a successor to the Han dynasty equivalent³⁷ – operated from the early years of the Sanguo period through the Western Jin, overseeing the management of music at court. Its music scholars concerned themselves with

³⁴ Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 342–343.

³⁵ *Qingshangyue* literally means “clear music;” the middle character of this three-character phrase is the first note on the traditional Chinese musical scale. See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 88–89; and Charles H. Egan, “Reconsidering the role of folk songs,” 56–59.

³⁶ Popular music was regulated by the court during the Six Dynasties until the Jin court fled south in 317 (see Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 266–274; and Charles Egan, “Reconsidering the role of folk songs,” 57, note 27).

³⁷ The Han music bureau was traditionally believed to be established by the Han emperor Wu (Liu Che 劉徹, 156–87; r. 141–87 BCE), who was the dynasty’s seventh emperor. He was said to have revitalized court music and poetry, and to have used the music bureau to do so by collecting and composing music based on existing songs from within and outside the empire. The traditional view is controversial; some scholars believe that the music bureau dated to the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), and that there is no evidence that Emperor Wu presided over any song collecting. The existence of a music bureau, managing court music life, during the Qin and the Han is not generally questioned. See Anne Birrell, “Mythmaking and *yüeh-fu*,” Charles Hartman, “Poetry,” 63–66.

music theory and the regulation of court music.³⁸ They steered the court to play the music deemed to be most appropriate for establishing political legitimacy and for communicating effectively with the ancestors and the supernatural. These scholars often disagreed with each other and vied for influence with the emperor.

The structure of music officialdom varied along with the changes in dynasties and rulers, and the durability of officials' positions ebbed and flowed through eras of greater and lesser political stability. For example, the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534 CE) – the longest of the early medieval dynasties – had one of the most established music bureaucracies, benefiting from the migration of many of the Western Jin court musicians at the fall of the dynasty. In addition, the Northern Wei Xianbei emperor Yuan Hong 元宏 (467–499, r. 471–499 CE), had a particularly strong interest in Han culture; he adopted a Han surname and Han dress and ordered everyone else to do the same. He was also said to be fond of Han literature.³⁹ In the context of this adoption of Han culture, he presided over an analysis of the music inherited from conquered kingdoms and the establishment of various officially recognized musical genres.⁴⁰

Court music was organized to appear to contemporaries as a continuation of ancient music customs, much of which revolved around the partnership of music and ritual. The tradition of the music-ritual connection had a lengthy history and reached as far back as the Zhou dynasty. Music, combined with dance and

³⁸ See Wang Xiaodun, Sun Xiaohui, and Chang Shijun, "Yuebu of the Tang dynasty," 53-54. While the authors' focus is on the Tang dynasty, they also discuss the development of court music subsequent to the Han dynasty.

³⁹ See biography in David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part three & four*, 2056-2057.

⁴⁰ Wang Xiaodun, Sun Xiaohui, and Chang Shijun, "Yuebu of the Tang dynasty," 57.

poetry, was used in conjunction with sacrifices to ancestors and supernatural beings, both of which were believed to have power to affect human life.⁴¹ These musical rituals were viewed to be an integral part of governance, and their smooth implementation was considered to be a sign of an emperor's power and virtue as well as a way to ensure peace and stability. The scale of the sacrifices from Zhou times through the Han waxed and waned with changes in rulers and financial resources.⁴²

After the Han dynasty disintegrated, the relationship between political stability, financial resources, and ritual music continued. For example, as Cao Cao consolidated power within the decaying dynasty, he was constrained by the expense of frequent warfare and presided over simplified sacrifices. When Cao Pi established the new dynasty, he still faced limited financial resources but also, perhaps for symbolic reasons to mark the beginning of his dynasty, changed the names of many music rituals as well as the content and manner of use of some of them. Subsequent Wei rulers continued to require the composition of new ritual music, with increasing extravagance over time. Only when Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179-251 CE) wrested power away from the Cao family did the scale of the sacrifices diminish.⁴³

The early Jin emperors were less enthusiastic about lavish rituals than their Wei predecessors.⁴⁴ They did, however, take an interest in the details of the

⁴¹ Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 30-37.

⁴² Kevin A. Jensen's "Wei-Jin sacrificial ballets," 13-99, includes a detailed description of the changes in Zhou, Qin, and Han era music and dance ritual as new rulers assumed power and financial resources varied.

⁴³ Kevin A. Jensen, "Wei-Jin sacrificial ballets," 104-110.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

music used, requiring the rewriting of certain ritual songs and setting off debates among their music specialists about the ideal structures for the songs.

With the collapse of the Western Jin, court ritual music was dormant for a time before it was gradually reintroduced along with political stability.⁴⁵ There was significant migration of court musicians, and their instruments, after the fall of the Western Jin. Some went north, bringing their music to the new Northern Wei rulers. Others fled west to Liangzhou in the Sixteen Kingdoms (present-day Wuwei in Gansu), where they were joined by musicians from western regions of China as well as those from outside China. When the Northern Wei unified northern China, these two groups of musicians became the court musicians of the Northern Wei and successor regimes in the north.⁴⁶ A third group migrated south, to Jiangling (present-day Jingzhou in Hubei) or to Jiankang (present-day Nanjing); these musicians helped to re-establish ritual music in the Southern Dynasties.⁴⁷ The court ritual music cultures of the north and the south were brought together in the Sui dynasty.⁴⁸

Emperor Liang Wudi (Xiao Yan 蕭衍; 464–549, r. 502–549 CE) made particularly notable strides to reinstate ritual music as an essential aspect of court life, but with adaptations to fit the new political and social environment.⁴⁹ His reign began after a period of weak and decentralized rule, and one of the ways in which he endeavored to recreate the centralized rule of the past was by through ritual and music. While Liang Wudi's interest in ritual reflected the legacy of the

⁴⁵ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 266-274.

⁴⁶ Wang Xiaodun, Sun Xiaohui, and Chang Shijun, "Yuebu of the Tang dynasty," 54-55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁹ See Andreas Janousch, "The reform of imperial ritual," 4.

past, his court was the first to produce a comprehensive codification of ritual, which its compilers claimed to include all past imperial ritual. Liang Wudi expressed the belief that a well-governed state is built on ritual and music, based on their ancient attributes, working together.⁵⁰ This emphasis on ritual was part of a broader renewal of interest in Ruist ideas and a relative waning of Xuanxue influence compared to the early Six Dynasties.⁵¹

Alterations that Liang Wudi made to court rituals included a reworking of ritual hymns to remove references to sacrificial victims, along with an abandonment of meat in line with his Buddhist beliefs.⁵² The hymns were a celebration of the emperor, his rule, the feast, and the significance of food for an orderly empire. In all, twelve classes of hymns were reworked in connection with the vegetarian reforms.⁵³ The Buddhist influence on traditional Chinese ritual music was accompanied by traditional influence on Buddhist practices; for example *yayue* became a part of Buddhist assemblies.⁵⁴

Buddhist music was identified in early Chinese Buddhist literature as comprising Tianyue 天樂 (music of heaven) – confined to heaven and including the sounds of birds and trees – and Fanbei 梵貝 (Buddhist chanting). Fanbei comprised the bulk of daily monastic musical practice and periodic ceremonies.⁵⁵ Buddhist chanting originated in India as an oral record of the Buddha's

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15, 47–53.

⁵¹ Ibid., 73.

⁵² Ibid., 106.

⁵³ Ibid., 116–123.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁵ Li Wei, "The duality of the sacred and the secular in Chinese Buddhist music," 81–82.

teachings. Monks were entrusted with the memorization of the canon, and the human voice was viewed as a key aspect of Buddhist ritual.⁵⁶

Sacred chanting was new to the Chinese,⁵⁷ but was adapted into *Fanbei* as an equivalent of Sanskrit chants that were not directly accessible to the Chinese. Chanting was viewed as functioning in a different way from secular music; the *Gaoseng zhuan*, for example, compares the music of the ancient sages with Buddhist chanting and points out that, while the purpose of the music of the sages was to exert positive influence on others, chanting was aimed at the beneficial effects on oneself.⁵⁸

Buddhist music and secular folk music were not isolated from one another. In theory, music enjoyed purely for entertainment was not permitted to Buddhists: one of the *Ba jiezhai* 八戒齋 (Eight commandments) proscribes indulging in dancing or music.⁵⁹ In practice, however, there was substantial mixing of religious and secular musicians and music.⁶⁰ For example, folk music was often incorporated into Buddhist ritual in order to attract people into the temples. An additional transmission route for folk music into Buddhist music practice was through female entertainers from the court or from wealthy households. Because of advancing age or the death of the head of a household, material numbers of them were sent to live in the temples where they would be taken care of but also continue to be supervised. They were largely accomplished practitioners of folk music and applied their skills to broaden the music of the temples. In addition,

⁵⁶ Sean Williams, "Buddhism and music," 172-173.

⁵⁷ Victor Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of Written Vernacular in East Asia," 719.

⁵⁸ Huijiao, *Gaoseng zhuan*, 13.507; also see Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 145-146.

⁵⁹ Zhang Zhenjun, *Buddhism and tales of the supernatural in early medieval China*, 170.

⁶⁰ Li Wei, "The duality of the sacred and the secular in Chinese Buddhist music," 83-85.

the function of the temples as gathering places for the community to converse and to play music served to further blur lines between Buddhist music and secular folk music.⁶¹

Music that was tied neither to court nor to temple, but shared more generally, included ensemble music such as *qingshangyue* and *guchuiyue* (鼓吹樂).⁶² *Qingshangyue* used wind and string instruments, often accompanied by singing and dancing, and is believed to have been in widespread use only after the fall of the Han although it was related to certain older music forms. *Guchuiyue* had been in common use since at least the Han dynasty, and is thought to have originated in the Northern borderland region of China and to have non-Han Chinese origins.⁶³ Non-ensemble music included the *qin*, which figures prominently in Six Dynasties literature as an accessory of the literati.⁶⁴ Additional musical instruments of the time included other, larger zithers, including the *se* 瑟 and the *zheng* 箏, as well as various types of flutes (transverse or vertical) and drums, the *konghou*, the lute (*pipa* 琵琶), panpipes (*paixiao* 排簫), and mouth organs (*sheng* 笙 and *yu* 箏). The harp and the lute in particular were used in Buddhist rituals.⁶⁵ Two instrumental pieces that are played by modern musicians are traditionally traced to this period: *Jieshi diao youlan* 碣石調幽蘭 (Orchids, based on a stone tablet melody) and *Jiu kuang* 酒狂 (wine madness).⁶⁶ However, there is no

⁶¹ Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 162-164.

⁶² *Guchuiyue* literally means “drum [and] blown music” and refers to music of percussion and wind instruments.; see Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 88.

⁶³ See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 76-93, for a description of Six Dynasties non-ritual music practices.

⁶⁴ See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 293-308; and Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 339-341.

⁶⁵ Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 342-343.

⁶⁶ Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 153-155.

documentation that unambiguously links the modern pieces to the early medieval names.

2.1.1 Texts on music

This section introduces the major texts on music that were written during the Six Dynasties. The section begins with a brief description of key, music-related texts from prior periods, to provide historical and cultural context to the later texts. Also included, towards the end of the section, is a discussion of the reasons for the choice of texts for this study.

2.1.1.1 Texts predating the early medieval era

Traditional ideas about music are generally traced to three early texts: the chapter “Yuelun” in *Xunzi*, the chapter “Yueji” in *Liji*, and the “Daxu” 大序 (Great preface) to the Mao version of *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of songs).⁶⁷ The main ideas associated with each text are summarized below.

Xunzi includes discussions of cosmology, human nature, music, ritual, and governance. The dating and authorship of the various sections of *Xunzi* is controversial, but the “Yuelun” is largely accepted by scholars as being the work of a man generally referred to as Xunzi 荀子 who lived in the latter half of the Warring States (475-221 BCE) period.⁶⁸ The “Yuelun” expresses the idea that music, along with ritual, is an essential tool of governance, guiding man’s emotions through constructive outlets and in doing so avoiding an unmoored society in which people do not know how to behave towards one another. Music

⁶⁷ *Shijing*, a collection of songs which was probably compiled between roughly 1000 BCE and 600 BCE, was recognized in three versions as of the former Han period (206 BCE-9 CE), which did not include the Mao 毛 [亨] (fl. 2nd C. BCE) version. The Mao version replaced them by the later Han (25-220 CE) and became the only fully extant version of the *Book of Songs*.

⁶⁸ Michael Loewe, “Hsün tzu 荀子,” 179-180.

(*yue*) in the context of *Xunzi* refers not only to singing and instrumental music but also to poetry and dance, and includes only the refined, court-sanctioned style of music (*yayue*) that is considered to have the requisite moderating influence on people and to lead to a harmonious social order. The function of music as governance tool is related to the inexorable link between music (*yue* 樂) and pleasure (*le* 樂); music is best placed to guide the emotions to their healthy manifestation. A state that is successful in employing music to guide its subjects is not only well governed but also attracts the loyalty of people outside its borders.⁶⁹

Liji is a collection of essays about early Chinese rituals. The provenance of the essays, and their relationship to each other, are obscure, but the extant text was probably compiled no later than the first century CE from earlier material.⁷⁰ The relationship of the *Liji* chapter “Yueji” to the *Xunzi* chapter “Yuelun” is similarly unclear; there is a fair amount of overlap between “Yueji” and “Yuelun,” and it has not been possible to trace which came first. The “Yueji” is a much longer, detailed treatise on music and ritual than the brief “Yuelun.” Topics in “Yueji” include the distinction between *sheng*, *yin*, and *yue*; music and ritual as essential tools of governance; the role of music in influencing people; the relationship of music and ritual to heaven and earth, and to nature; and the process by which a person’s affective reactions to stimuli give rise to *sheng*, *yin*, and *yue*.

⁶⁹ For additional background on the “Yuelun,” see John Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 74-80; and Scott Cook, *Unity and diversity in the musical thought of Warring States China*, 372-456.

⁷⁰ See Jeffrey K. Riegel, “Li chi 禮記,” 293-296.

The “Daxu” of *Shijing* is most immediately a commentary on the first poem in *Shijing* but it extends this specific commentary to a general discussion of the attributes and the purpose of poetry, and outlines a poetry classification system. The date and authorship of the “Daxu” are uncertain, but it is likely to date from no later than the first century CE.⁷¹ Although the subject of the “Daxu” is poetry, it also touches on music since there was no clean separation between poetry and music before the Six Dynasties. The “Daxu” concerns the function of speech (poetry), singing, and dancing as a manifestation of what is on one’s mind (*zhi* 志), as well as a sign of the health of a state and a way of influencing those in power.

2.1.1.2 Early medieval texts

There are two broad categories of Six Dynasties texts that could be said to be “on music.” One category comprises those that were written for the express purpose of discussing music, and the other includes those that shed light on the music of the Six Dynasties – or ideas about music – not because music is the main subject of the texts but because the texts include descriptions of music performances or conversations about music or musicians. The following two subsections introduce Six Dynasties texts falling into each of these two categories.

2.1.1.2.1 Texts explicitly focused on music

This category includes, most importantly, the “Yuezhi” (Monograph on music) chapters of *Songshu*, written by Shen Yue. *Songshu* is one of the major sources of information about music in the Six Dynasties, along with histories written in later periods that look back to the Six Dynasties. These later histories

⁷¹ See Michael Loewe, “Shih ching 詩經,” 416-7.

include Fang Xuanling's 房玄齡 (579–648 CE) *Jinshu* 晉書 (Book of the Jin), written during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), and *Suishu* 隋書 (Book of the Sui), which was compiled by various scholars including Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643 CE).

“Yuezhi” is the only extant comprehensive history of music that was written in the Six Dynasties. Shen Yue was engaged by the newly established Qi dynasty (479–502 CE) to compile the standard history of the Liu Song period. The finished work was a combination of material that had been written earlier by Liu Song era scholars, and items, including “Yuezhi,” that are believed to have been written by Shen Yue himself.⁷² *Songshu* is made up of one hundred *juan* 卷 (scrolls) and includes historical annals, biographies, and monographs. “Yuezhi” comprises four chapters, the first of which contains a history of music; the subsequent chapters include the lyrics of songs performed from the Han to contemporary times. The source of the song lyrics may have been partly oral transmission, since their provenance is unclear.⁷³

Shen Yue's history of music begins with a reference to the traditional, ancient sage-kings and their sacrificial music as a timeless standard for later generations to aspire to. He describes how music standards deteriorated along with the decay of the Zhou dynasty, and how later court music scholars endeavored to revive old music practices and to use their understanding of ancient music to justify recommendations to the court.⁷⁴ For the early medieval period, the monograph covers not only factual detail of which instruments were played and how music

⁷² See Howard Goodman, *A history of court lyrics*, 65; and David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part two*, 1003–1004.

⁷³ Charles Egan, “Reconsidering the role of folk songs,” 69.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Shen Yue, *Songshu*, 19: 533–538.

pieces and dances were named, but also accounts of the roles of court music scholars and the debates that took place between them. Subjects of concern to these scholars included questions of which music and dances were suitable for court sacrifices, and to what extent foreign music should be incorporated into court music.⁷⁵ The changing attitudes of the rulers towards court music, as well as the correct way of determining standard pitches, were also topics of interest.⁷⁶ In addition, Shen Yue describes the negative effects of periods of political dislocation on the continuity of court music traditions.⁷⁷

Much of “Yuezhi” is focused on music life at court, but it is not merely a history of ritual music. It also includes comments on banquet music, and on the relationship between banquet music and ritual music. However, it is not a history of all types of music, or a comprehensive social history of music. With respect to music practices and ideas about music outside court life, other texts discussed in the next section below fill some of the gaps.

Pei Ziyue’s “Yinyue lun” 音樂論 (Treatise on Music), was, like Shen Yue’s music monograph, a section of a larger Liu Song history. It is not possible to compare the two texts, because only a fragment of Pei Ziyue’s “Yinyue lun” is extant.⁷⁸ This fragment is reminiscent of the traditional Ruist view of music, that the political and social health of an age is reflected in its music; once the ancient golden age of music had passed, decadence ensued and there was no interest in

⁷⁵ Ibid., 19: 538.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19: 540.

⁷⁷ For example, *ibid.*, 19: 533, 19: 541.

⁷⁸ It is recorded in the music section of Du You, *Tongdian*, 141.3600–3601; the “Quan Liang wen” 全梁文 section of Yan Kejun, *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 53:21.b [3265]; and the music section of Li Fang, *Taiping Yulan*, 569:7a [2950]. See Thomas Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China*, 274–276, for a list of texts that include fragments from Songlüe.

distinguishing good music from bad music. Since so little of “Yinyue lun” has survived, we have no way of knowing whether, like Shen Yue, Pei Ziyue considered music outside of court ritual music worth preserving and discussing.

The category of music texts that were written for the explicit purpose of discussing music also includes essays by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang.

Ruan Ji lived during the waning days of the Han, into the Sanguo period in the state of Wei.⁷⁹ He was a poet and an essayist, known for his collection of *Yonghuai* 詠懷 (Singing my feelings) poems which were unusual at the time in their direct expression of the personal thoughts of the poet.⁸⁰ Reflections on immortality was a favored theme,⁸¹ as well as criticism of fawning subservience or hypocrisy.⁸² He was also said to be a whistler and an accomplished *qin* player.⁸³ Much of his poetry is often interpreted as social satire or veiled commentary on the conflict-ridden political environment of his time.⁸⁴ In addition to his work on music, he wrote essays on *Zhouyi*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*. He is also known for his “Da ren xiansheng zhuan” 大人先生傳 (The account of the great man), a mixture of prose and poetry.

Ruan Ji’s “Yuelun” echoes Ruist views on music to a large extent. For example, he articulates the belief that, when the musical scale is properly tuned, people will know their places and society will be orderly. He summarizes the history of music, starting with the invention of music by the earliest sages, and

⁷⁹ Ruan Ji’s biography is in *Jinshu* 49: 1359-1369.

⁸⁰ Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 1.

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 149-166; and Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, *The poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, 16.

⁸² Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, *The poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, 19.

⁸³ Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 49: 1359; Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 91, 137, 150-152.

⁸⁴ Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 7-33; also see Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, *The poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, 9-13, who are skeptical of the connections to politics often read into Ruan Ji’s poetry.

describing how music later became corrupted as the sages disappeared and new music reflected the immorality and collapse of social hierarchy within the populace. Music is seen to release emotion while regulating it. He also outlines the critical place of music within the natural universe and the correlation of music with phenomena in nature.⁸⁵ A departure from Ruist thinking is his contention that the best music leads people to shed their desires and to achieve tranquility.⁸⁶ Ruan Ji is also known for his argument that sad music is not really music, since the effect of genuine music on people is to calm them and to make them happy.⁸⁷

Ruan Ji is, in addition, famed for his unconventional behavior, including the flouting of social taboos and the failure to observe established rites; this conduct perhaps reflected a genuine interest in Taoism combined with a desire to project the image of Taoist eccentric in order to avoid potentially life-threatening political entanglements.⁸⁸ His whistling was also an aspect of his nonconformist image. In Ruan Ji's era, whistling was often treated as a type of music, or a sound that resembled that of musical instruments.⁸⁹ It seemed to function as a symbol of nonconformity and dissent,⁹⁰ and may also have been a demonstration of breath control and a practice that was closely connected to nature. Since nothing but the

⁸⁵ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 78-89; also see Howard Goodman, *Xun Xu and the politics of precision*, 154; Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 93-95.

⁸⁶ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 95. Also see Ronald Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 294-298. Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 111-112, 161-162, interprets this as an embryonic concept of transcendence as a musical ideal.

⁸⁷ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 95-100. Also see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 92.

⁸⁸ Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 75-85.

⁸⁹ See examples cited in Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 223-224.

⁹⁰ Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 192-195.

human body was required for whistling, it could be seen as closer to nature than any man-made musical instrument.⁹¹

The apparent contradictions between the mostly Ruist views of his “Yuelun” and the Taoist flavor of his nonconformist behavior including his trademark whistling highlights the limited usefulness of describing Ruan Ji with a simplistic Taoist or Ruist label.⁹² The “Yuelun” was not necessarily an early work of his, so its relatively Ruist flavor cannot be explained as a product of youth that did not represent his later ideas.⁹³

Xi Kang was thirteen years younger than Ruan Ji. He was born shortly after the first Wei ruler established the dynasty and died at age 39 just before the Jin victory. He was known as a poet, an essayist, a musician, and a skilled debater.⁹⁴ Sixty of his poems and thirteen of his essays are extant. Topics of interest to Xi Kang included physical and spiritual health, immortality, and music.⁹⁵

Xi Kang’s essay on music is an argument against the contemporary belief that specific emotions could be identified in music, even instrumental music, by an auditor. He maintains that affect generated by music is limited to *zao* 躁 (disquiet) or *jing* 靜 (stillness), and that other emotions may be drawn out by music but are not intrinsic to it. For example, sad people might be further saddened by music, and happy people, further cheered. Moreover, similar to

⁹¹ Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 152, and Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 145-146.

⁹² In any case, during the Six Dynasties there was no clear border between the ideas and the behavior that these two labels represent. See Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and argumentation in third-century China*, 4-6.

⁹³ See Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 88; and Julie Gary, “Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale,” 77.

⁹⁴ Xi Kang’s biography is in *Jinshu* 49: 1369-1374.

⁹⁵ Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and argumentation in third-century China*, 9-15.

modern-day musicologists,⁹⁶ he observes that people in different regions might react differently to the same piece of music. He suggests that music originated in nature, and hence is beyond prosaic human emotions.⁹⁷

“Sheng wu ai le lun” is the earliest extant essay on music that explicitly treats music as independent of politics or morality. Moreover, in its assertion that there is no necessary connection between music and happiness – in direct contradiction of earlier texts on music – it is also the earliest extant essay to pointedly sever the fixed link between music and happiness.

Literature dating from after the Six Dynasties mentions additional music texts that are no longer extant. These include Zhang Yong’s 張永 *Yuanjia zhengsheng jilu* 元嘉正聲技錄 (Catalogue of correct music skills of Yuan Jia), from the Liu Song period; Wang Sengqian’s 王僧虔 *Daming sannian yanyue jilu* 大明三年宴樂技錄 (Record of banquet music skills of the third year of Daming), from the Qi era; and Shi Zhijiang’s 釋智匠 *Gujin yuelu* 古今樂錄 (Record of ancient and contemporary music), from the Chen dynasty (557–589 CE).⁹⁸

2.1.1.2.2 Texts with passing references to music

The second category comprises texts in which music is mentioned in passing but is not the focus of the texts. Six Dynasties literature genres include – in addition to the standard histories – poetry, encyclopedias, accounts of ghosts and anomalies, Buddhist texts, biographies, character appraisals, literary criticism, and individual and collected essays. Much of the literature mentions music at

⁹⁶ See, for example, Judith Becker’s discussion of the influence on an audience of place, time, personal biography, and the shared context of culture, “Exploring the habitus of listening,” 130.

⁹⁷ Dai Mingyang, *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 345-359.

⁹⁸ David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature part three & four*, 2096-2097.

least briefly, often to note that musical entertainment is part of a particular political or social event. In many of these instances, the references to music are too brief for an analysis of what they might suggest about music practices or ideas about music.

Three texts have a particularly large number of informative references to music – and to ideas about music – including *Shishuo xinyu*, *Yanshi jiaxun*, and *Jinlouzi* 金樓子 (Master of the golden tower). There are thirty-six anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* that refer to music, and ten to fifteen passages in each of *Yanshi jiaxun* and *Jinlouzi*. These numbers include only those that appear to involve primarily musical instruments; for the purposes of this study, passages that clearly refer mainly to vocal music are not included, to avoid attributing to music ideas that may have had more to do with poetry.

The many references to music in other texts of the period include those in numerous poems as well as in prose such as Ge Hong's 葛洪 (ca. 283–343 CE) works. In *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (Master embracing simplicity),⁹⁹ for example, transcendents are described as listening to music in heaven (鈞天之樂).¹⁰⁰ In addition, in some *zhiguai* (accounts of anomalies),¹⁰¹ the tales mention music in passing as an aspect of the spirit world.¹⁰² The musical references in these texts

⁹⁹ Ge Hong is understood to have completed *Baopuzi* in 318 but possibly to have made later revisions. It is a collection of essays on varied topics included medicine, immortality, religion, and politics. See Robert Ford Campany, "Baopuzi 抱朴子," 6-10.

¹⁰⁰ Ge Hong, *Baopuzi*, 256.

¹⁰¹ *Zhiguai* are stories of strange events or creatures. Robert Ford Campany, in *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, 24–32, describes *zhiguai* as brief prose, non-canonical narratives or descriptions of what was considered anomalous phenomena using common stylistic features in the titles and bodies of the work.

¹⁰² See, for example, Gan Bao's (d. 336) *Quanben soushenji pingyi*, 310, and the discussion in Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing*, 383.

are generally more informative about beliefs about supernatural beings than about music.

Most of the music Rhapsodies survive only in fragments, but a number are intact and several of them date from the Six Dynasties, including Xi Kang's "Qinfu" 琴賦 (Rhapsody on the *qin*) and Pan Anren's "Shengfu" 笙賦 (Rhapsody on the mouth organ).¹⁰³ Some of the music Rhapsody poets may be seen as early musicologists in the sense that their poetry suggests a view of how music reflects and elicits emotions or enlightens its listeners, or how music is used at events held by powerful people. The Rhapsodies are also replete with ornate descriptions of the instruments and the materials that they were made of, treating the instruments as a general class of objects rather than as particular possessions. In certain respects, these Rhapsodies have something in common with *Yongwu shi* 詠物詩 (poems on objects), which became popular in the fifth century and contained similarly detailed descriptions of objects such as candles and lamps.¹⁰⁴

2.1.1.2.2.1 Texts included in the study

As discussed in the introduction, the texts selected for this study all belong to the category of texts that treat music in passing rather than those that focus exclusively on music.

One of the drivers of the choice of texts was a preference for informative music references clustered in a limited number of texts rather than smaller numbers of references from each of a larger number of texts. The concentration

¹⁰³ Lu Qingbin, "Wenxuan yueqi fu zhi neirong yu jiegou shuyao," 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ For a comparison of Rhapsodies with *Yongwu* poetry, see Xiaofei Tian, "Illusion and illumination," 17-21.

within a limited number of texts facilitates contextualization of the music references within the texts and within the circumstances under which the texts were produced and read. The usage of scattered music references from a larger number of texts makes it challenging to fully take into account the context of each reference and increases the risk of drawing conclusions from passages that are taken out of context, especially since any one analyst is likely to have more expertise in some subjects than others. At the same time, some inclusion of material from different genres and time periods helps to identify coexisting, contrasting opinions and changes in ideas over time.

For the reasons outlined above, this study focuses on a small number of texts in which there are numerous, casual but informative references to music – and to ideas about music – including *Shishuo xinyu*, *Yanshi jiaxun*, and *Jinlouzi*. An additional attraction of *Shishuo xinyu* is that it contains many descriptions of music performances that lend themselves to an examination of the performative aspects of music, and the use of music as rhetoric, which are topics that have not received much attention from scholars. Most of the remaining material is from *Yanshi jiaxun* or *Jinlouzi*, which not only contain a reasonable amount of music-related material but also provide valuable context and contrast to the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes. In view of the observation noted above about the value of including some material from other genres and time periods, this study also includes some material from *Wenxin diaolong* and excerpts from two musical instrument Rhapsodies and poetry of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427 CE) as additional data points. An electronic search and a brief review of additional available physical texts was performed to try to rule out, to the extent possible,

any textual evidence that might conflict with the generalizations or conclusions reached based on the texts analyzed in depth. Of course it is not possible to review all Six Dynasties texts, even superficially, and all conclusions must be tentative and based only on the texts that are investigated.

An additional decision to be made in choosing the texts for the study was to identify a definition of music that was both appropriate to Six Dynasties culture and, in addition, not too broad to be adequately addressed within the constraints of a dissertation. As outlined in section 1.1, this study defines music as sounds produced by musical instruments, or singing: a broader definition could have included all sound with any musical component, including whistling and even prosodic poetry. This broad-brush approach was not pursued, on the grounds that the volume and the breadth of material involved would have been likely to lead to a shallower analysis of a larger number of superficially related topics. Most of the study deals with instrumental music rather than singing, to avoid confusing the analysis with observations that are more relevant to the language of poetry than to musical sound.

Additional detail on the three main texts explored in this study is provided below. These texts were produced roughly within the two-hundred-year period from the late fourth century to the late sixth century CE, subsequent to the fall of the Western Jin, and within the latter half of the Six Dynasties period.

Shishuo xinyu

Shishuo xinyu is a collection of anecdotes concerning the literati of the period from the second century to the early fifth century. Altogether, 626 historical personalities are mentioned in the anecdotes. The text was compiled by Liu

Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444 CE) – a Liu Song prince – and his staff and completed around 430 CE. The commentator, Liu Jun 劉峻 (462–521 CE), lived in the period just subsequent to the completion of *Shishuo xinyu* so was a near contemporary of Liu Yiqing. Some of the material in the commentary is as informative about the music culture as the text itself, and hence is also used in this study.

Each of the thirty-six chapters represents one category of human character, such as “Rudeness and arrogance” or “Precocious intelligence” and consists of anecdotes describing behavior considered to be typical of the character category. These categories reflect the practice of the time of *qing yi* 清議 (pure critique), which was a way of classifying human character types, originally for the purpose of selecting scholars for public service.¹⁰⁵ In addition, within each chapter, anecdotes are often grouped together when they share a theme such as a geographical region or a famous person. This structure is helpful to the researcher in the sense that the position of an anecdote in a chapter provides some hints as to its meaning in the eyes of the compilers.

Yanshi jiaxun

Yanshi jiaxun is part of a genre of advice to young members of a family, written by Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–?591 CE), a scholar-official. In addition to providing advice to family, the author criticizes certain aspects of contemporary culture. Yan Zhitui was an official at the Liang (502–557 CE) and Northern Qi (550–577 CE) courts, and because he had lived in both north and south was

¹⁰⁵ See Li Wai-yee, “*Shishuo xinyu and the emergence of aesthetic self-consciousness*,” 238-240 for a discussion of *qing yi*.

known for his breadth of experience.¹⁰⁶ Some of his comments reflect on life at northern courts, and are of particular interest for that reason.

The text comprises twenty chapters, including subjects such as “Jiao zi” 教子 (Teaching children), “Zhi jia” 治家 (Managing the family), and “Yang sheng” 養生 (Nourishing life). There is also a chapter on Buddhism, which advises his sons on the reasons to disregard the objections that have been made against it. The chapters include accounts of personal experiences, from which lessons are expected to be learned, as well as more theoretical arguments about the proper way to conduct oneself.

Jinlouzi

Jinlouzi was written by Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–554; r. 552–554 CE), posthumously Liang Yuan Di 梁元帝. Xiao Yi was the fourth of six Liang emperors, and was a writer and an avid book collector. *Jinlouzi* did not survive as a complete text, but fourteen chapters comprising six *juan* were reassembled by Qing dynasty (1644–1911) scholars from an encyclopedia (*Yongle dadian* 永樂大典) which in turn was based on a Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) edition.¹⁰⁷ The chapters include thoughts on book collecting and writing, accounts of anomalies, and advice to the author’s sons, much of which is paraphrased from earlier, canonical texts. *Jinlouzi* is one of a small number of surviving works of *zishu* 子書 (masters literature) from the Six Dynasties era.¹⁰⁸ The text includes numerous references to music, concentrated in

¹⁰⁶ See Albert Dien, “Yanshi jiaxun 顏氏家訓,” 436.

¹⁰⁷ Background on Xiao Yi and the authorship and transmission of *Jinlouzi* is discussed in Beatrice Spade, “*Jinlouzi* 金樓子.” Her dissertation, “The life and scholarship of Emperor Yuan,” also includes a translation into English of sections of the text.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of masters literature in the Six Dynasties, see Xiaofei Tian, “The twilight of the masters.”

six of its chapters. Most are general references to music or to the *qin*, but various other musical instruments are mentioned as well.

Xiao Yi is described by Ping Wang as having committed “what is arguably the greatest single crime against scholarship in all of Chinese history:” when he fled from the Liang capital in Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing) to Jiangling 江陵 (in modern Hubei) in 549 CE as a result of a rebellion, he burned all seventy thousand *juan* of texts in his collection, on the basis that he wanted to prevent them from falling into the hands of invaders.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Ping Wang, *The age of courtly writing*, 59.

Chapter 3: Review of secondary literature

All literature is gossip¹
– Truman Capote

This chapter summarizes the secondary literature on music in the Six Dynasties. The literature that is more narrowly related to the topics of each of the chapters of this study is covered within the relevant chapter.

The literature covered in this chapter may be roughly classified into five categories: general music history; musical instrument description; Rhapsodies on music; ideas about music and aesthetics; and biographies.

3.1 Music history

Among the numerous general Chinese music history books, one of the most useful in terms of transparency of references to primary sources is Yang Yinliu's history of pre-modern Chinese music which has a chapter devoted to the Six Dynasties.² Yang provides historical background on the movement of population groups, accompanied by the mixing of music cultures as outlined in the previous chapter. Much of Yang's chapter on the early medieval period is devoted to folk songs, but there are also sections on musical instruments and on ideas about music. Yang describes how musical instruments were used both for vocal music accompaniment and for standalone instrumental music, and mentions various instruments that were introduced to China from different ethnic groups and foreign states. The chapter also includes sections on court music, the influence of Buddhism on Chinese music, and ideas about pitch and tuning. The section on tuning methods and research explains in some detail the methods of tuning used

¹ Beverly Gary Kempton, "After hours: books," 337.

² Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 138-190.

and the ways in which they differed from equal temperament tuning, as well as the focus that tuning problems received from music theorists of the time such as Xun Xu 荀勗 (ca. 221-289 CE). The chapter also includes a discussion of the essays on music philosophy by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang.

This chapter in Yang Yinliu's volume is a useful source for historical background, musical genres, and the material aspects of the musical culture of the time as represented in the standard histories and Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's essays; it is only one chapter in a book that covers the vast sweep of pre-modern Chinese music history so is necessarily brief. Most relevant for this study is Qin Xu's volume, which covers only the Six Dynasties.³ There are chapters on the historical and the cultural background of the Six Dynasties and how they influenced music culture, and detailed chapters on musical instruments, music genres, and ideas about music (*yinyue sixiang* 音樂思想). Much of the information comes from standard histories. The differences between music practices inside and outside of court are outlined, as well as distinguishing features of each historical period within the Six Dynasties, including the Three Kingdoms era, the Jin dynasty period that briefly re-unified China, and the various post-Jin years when the North and the South were governed separately.

In the chapter on ideas about music,⁴ Qin Xu discusses the significance of Xuanxue, the ebb and flow of Ruist influence, the essays on music by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang, the development of Buddhist music, and the treatment of music in Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* and in the poetry of Tao Yuanming. Although Qin Xu introduces the chapter with comments on the mixing of ethnic groups and their

³ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 427-501.

music during the Six Dynasties, most of the content of the chapter pertains to the influence of Han Chinese traditions and Buddhism.

3.2 Description of instruments

There are a number of books and articles that describe musical instruments,⁵ some of which include details of the materials used to make the instruments and changes over time in how the instruments were played. For example, a volume on the history of the lute⁶ outlines in some detail the origins, physical characteristics, construction, and musical attributes of the several types of lute, including what is currently known as the *pipa* 琵琶 (pear-shaped lute) and the *ruan* 阮 (round lute). The entire history of the lute in China is covered, from the earliest Chinese textual references of the Han dynasty to the twentieth century. Origin myths and controversy over whether the lute was invented by the Chinese or foreigners are addressed, with some discussion of who the modern reader should consider to have been “Chinese” during the Han and the Six Dynasties periods. Standard histories, Rhapsodies, and artifacts are cited to support the descriptions in the volume, although the connection between the sources and the descriptions is not always transparent.

There is a similar volume on panpipes,⁷ which provides a brief history of panpipes in China as well as a description of their types and structures and the way in which bamboo is used in construction of the instruments, a discussion of how pitches were determined and changed over time, and a comparison of Chinese panpipes with those in other countries. Both textual sources and artifacts

⁵ See for example Jin Jie, *Chinese music*.

⁶ Han Shude and Zhang Zhinian. *Zhongguo pipa shigao*.

⁷ Chuang Pen-li, *Zhongguo gudai zhi paixiao* (Panpipes of ancient China).

are used to support the descriptions presented, but, as in the case with the lute volume, the links between the evidence and the conclusions are not presented in a systematic manner.

More detail of references to musical instruments in early texts is provided by Laurence Picken,⁸ who analyzes the references to the lute in the *Shiming* 释名 (Explanation of names), the *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (Meanings of customs and habits), the *Songshu*, and the *Suishu*. Picken offers some suggestions as to the origins of the *ruan* and the pear-shaped lute, the source of the name *pipa*, and some speculation as to the sophistication of the musicians involved. Unfortunately, little of the original text and translation is included in the analysis provided.

Robert Van Gulik⁹ provides more context to his presentation, exploring the social and religious backdrop to the role of the *qin* in literati society. One of the drawbacks of his approach is that he describes Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist influences on the way in which the *qin* was viewed and played, but only sporadically ties his descriptions to textual sources; the book was not intended as a scholarly product but rather as an engaging introduction to the *qin* for English speakers.

3.2.1 Archaeological evidence

Albert Dien's volume¹⁰ is a summary of findings from archaeology related to the Six Dynasties. His book has chapters on furniture, clothing, armor, music, and other subjects. The chapter on music, which contains a great deal of

⁸ Laurence Picken, "The origin of the short lute."

⁹ Robert H. Van Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute: an essay in the ideology of the qin*.

¹⁰ Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*.

information on what post-1949 archaeology tells us about Six Dynasties musical instruments, discusses the archaeological evidence, mostly from tombs, of musical influence from non-Han cultures. The evidence consists not only of murals and models of instruments but also some preserved instruments. Models of instruments include those of a *se* zither, drums, a mouth organ, bells, and lithophones. Dien describes what was found on the Dunhuang murals as follows:

In the early period the musical performances shown in the Dunhuang murals are usually solo rather than ensemble events, but rows of instrumentalists appear in niches over the Buddha. Toward the end of the Six Dynasties period flying *apsaras* came to be portrayed playing the angular harp and pipa. Donors, bodhisattvas, and even yakshas¹¹ also occurred as musicians.¹²

Dien also summarizes some of the evidence from standard histories; for example the *Suishu* describes how “Emperor Yang established nine orchestras, only one of which played traditional Chinese music. The others presented music of the Western Liang, Kucha, India, Samarkand, Kashgar, and Parthia,” indicating how much foreign influence on music there was by the time China was reunified under the Sui.¹³ Dien’s references to the texts contain only summaries of the content in English, with no original language or translations.

Additional descriptive material on archaeological finds includes work by Bo Lawergren which describes how depictions of the *qin* over time—found on terracotta, stone reliefs, and bronze mirrors—demonstrate how the instrument has evolved.¹⁴ Lawergren also provides archaeological evidence of how *konghou* accompanied the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road.¹⁵ Ingrid Furniss describes two tomb murals from the fifth century depicting the Seven Worthies

¹¹ Yakshas are a kind of nature spirit.

¹² Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 343.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 340. Emperor Yang (569-618; r. 604-617 CE) was the second Sui emperor.

¹⁴ Bo Lawergren, “The metamorphosis of the qin,” 35.

¹⁵ Bo Lawergren, “Angular harps through the ages,” 265.

of the Bamboo Grove, including Ruan Xian 阮咸 (ca. 250-280 CE)¹⁶ playing the *ruan*; as well as a number of ceramic bricks depicting the *ruan*, but no musicians, from tombs dated within the fourth century to sixth century.¹⁷

3.3 Music Rhapsodies

Despite the large volume of analysis of Rhapsodies in recent scholarship, only a small proportion focuses on the implications of the references to musical instruments. Those that do discuss musical instruments focus on Rhapsodies that are specifically about music; I did not identify any papers that included references to musical instruments in other Rhapsodies.

A 2011 master's dissertation¹⁸ focuses on music Rhapsodies of the Han dynasty and the Six Dynasties period; a paper by Lu Qingbin¹⁹ analyzes the six musical instrument Rhapsodies in *Wenxuan*, which span the Han dynasties and the Six Dynasties; and a paper by Wang Jianhong²⁰ discusses musical instrument Rhapsodies of the Six Dynasties. These papers touch on topics pertinent to this study, including what the Rhapsodies say or imply about views on the nature of musical sound, concepts of harmony (musical and otherwise), and the analogies made between musical sound and ethics. The focus of the papers, however, are the Rhapsodies themselves so there is less analysis of the meaning of, or the reasons for using, the musical references than there is about the structure of the Rhapsodies and the relationship of the Rhapsodies to poetry that came earlier or

¹⁶ The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢 was the name given to a group of literati men that were said to have fraternized together in the third century CE. The name Seven Sages did not emerge until the early fourth century, and it is not known to what extent the seven men were actually close associates. Ruan Xian was a nephew of Ruan Ji, and they were both traditionally members of the Seven Sages, along with Xi Kang. See Lo Yuet Keung, "The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove," 425-448.

¹⁷ Furniss, "Round-bodied lute," 28-29, 32-34.

¹⁸ Huang Yunru, *Han Wei Liuchao yinyue fu yanjiu*.

¹⁹ Lu Qingbin, "Wenxuan yueqi fu zhi neirong yu jiegou shuyao."

²⁰ Wang Jianhong, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao chuantong yueqi fu yanjiu," 97-102.

later. That said, these papers include some background information on music in the Six Dynasties, including references to primary sources, so are useful not only for information on Rhapsodies but for guidance on where to look for references to musical instruments.

3.4 Ideas about music

Literature on ideas about music (*yinyue sixiang* 音樂思想) includes work focusing on political philosophy as well as that more concerned with aesthetics. The former generally compares what is perceived as a fading emphasis in the Six Dynasties on music as a political tool with the dominance of political themes in discussions of music in prior dynasties.

An example is Kenneth DeWoskin's volume, which traces changes in ideas about music from ancient China through the early Six Dynasties.²¹ He focuses primarily on aesthetics, and endeavors to pull together prior scholarship that up to that time had addressed relatively narrow questions of interest to those within the disciplines of the history of science, ethnomusicology, or the history of culture.²² In his discussion of the Six Dynasties, he describes how interest in cosmology and its connection to music gave way to greater emphasis on the links between music and the natural world. DeWoskin devotes a chapter to the *qin*, in which he suggests that the early Six Dynasties literature on the *qin* reflects developments in aesthetic theory.²³

A volume focused on aesthetics of the Six Dynasties, but not specifically music, is a collection of essays edited by Cai Zong-qi.²⁴ The book includes

²¹ Kenneth DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁴ Cai Zong-qi, ed., *Chinese aesthetics*.

chapters on painting, calligraphy, gardens, and literature, but only one that specifically deals with music. This chapter, by Ronald Egan,²⁵ compares Six Dynasties discussions of music with those on calligraphy to draw out how views on aesthetics of the time were applied across different art forms. Images from nature, for example, come up frequently in discussions of calligraphy as well as those of music. Egan also discusses Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's essays on music, noting areas in which their views differed from the classical emphasis on music as tool of social control and, in Xi Kang's case, disagreement with the classical assumption that there is emotion intrinsic to musical sound. Egan analyzes Xi Kang's Rhapsody on the *qin* to support his description of Xi Kang's views on aesthetics.

Julie Gary's dissertation is an exploration of the ideology, debates, and practices of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang. Since her focus is not only the ideas of these two prominent music theorists, but also on their lives as musicians, she examines the interplay between their theories – primarily as expressed in their essays on music – and their musical outlook as practitioners. In addition to the essays on music, Gary also references passages from Ruan Ji's "Da Zhuang lun" 達莊論 (Essay on Understanding *Zhuangzi*), "Qingsi fu" 清思賦 (Rhapsody on pure thought), and "Daren xiansheng zhuan" 大人先生傳 (Biography of master great man); and Xi Kang's "Qinfu" 琴賦 (Rhapsody on the *qin*), "Yangsheng lun" 養生論 (Essay on nourishing life), "Shisi lun" 釋私論 (Essay on elucidating self-interest), and poetry. Moreover, stories about Ruan Ji's whistling and Xi Kang's *qin* playing are included.

²⁵ Ronald Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 277-309.

Gary discusses the concepts of aesthetics expressed in Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's essays and the connection between these concepts and their way of life. The extent to which Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's ideas represent a continuation with, or a break from, earlier Ruist texts is also explored. In addition, the contradiction between the Ruist values in Ruan Ji's essay on music and his famous whistling are examined, in the context of the history in China of the practice of whistling. Gary concludes that there is no tidy way to resolve this apparent contradiction.²⁶ With respect to Xi Kang, Gary suggests that, unlike Ruan Ji, Xi Kang proposes theories that are consistent with his music practices. She points out that Xi Kang substitutes new, pragmatic implications of music – such as its effect on physical health – in place of the classicist focus on social harmony.²⁷ She also describes his outlook as representing a new, amoral treatment of music.²⁸

3.5 Biography

Donald Holzman's volume on Ruan Ji comprises translations and interpretations of Ruan Ji's poetry, which contains quite a number of references to music. Ruan Ji also wrote about the implications of pitch standards for social harmony as well as the virtues of simple music and is considered to have helped to set the standards for music against which musicians and poets were measured.²⁹ The *qin* figures most prominently in Ruan Ji's writing, but flutes and various percussion instruments are also mentioned. Holzman makes passing reference to some of the instruments, but his main interests are clearly elsewhere and there is limited discussion of why the instruments are mentioned or what

²⁶ Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 239.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 425.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 495.

²⁹ Howard Goodman, *Xun Xu*, 154.

they might symbolize in the poems, or what their presence in the poetry might imply about how the instruments were used or thought of by Ruan Ji or his contemporaries.

Howard Goodman's volume *Xun Xu and the politics of precision in third-century AD China* is a biography of Xun Xu,³⁰ a scholar of metrology and musical pitch and harmonics. The volume describes debates concerning musical pitch and the ways in which politics informed the debate. Since flutes played a central role in Xun Xu's efforts to improve the precision of the pitch standards of court instruments, there is some discussion of the structure and the history of flutes in the book.

3.6 Conclusion

The secondary literature has been written, for varied audiences, by a diverse collection of writers: Chinese musicologists, Western (ethno)musicologists, music historians, sinologists, art historians, and other observers of Chinese culture such as diplomats. Hence, the focus of the writing – and the manner in which the topics are presented – varies widely. Some of this literature is narrowly focused, with limited reference to the context of the music under discussion, and some work spans the entire history of music in China and hence can devote only minimal attention to music of the Six Dynasties. References to primary sources are often made without extensive direct quotations or transparent translations with explanatory notes. As DeWoskin comments, despite the erudition and facility with various languages he demonstrates in his book, “One delves into

³⁰ Ibid., 73.

primary sources only with trepidation because of the considerable demands they make in terms of language and technical knowledge.”³¹

My approach is to maintain a narrower time focus than much of the literature reviewed above – to allow for a more concentrated analysis – but to apply a relatively wide lens in terms of the context in which observations on the texts are analyzed. As discussed in the introduction, I consider the social, political, intellectual, and cultural backdrop of the texts, as well as theory that lends itself to comparison with other eras and regions. I also quote extensively from the texts, to let them speak for themselves as much as possible.

³¹ Ibid, 113.

Chapter 4: Stirring and stilling

其見歡戚為聲發，而謂聲有哀樂，猶不可見喜怒為酒使，而謂酒有喜怒之理也。

If after observing how music releases cheer and sorrow, one infers that music contains sadness and happiness, one must similarly, after observing how wine leads to delight and anger, infer that wine contains delight and anger.¹

— Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262)

Music can [...] whisper, rage, and rustle. But love and anger occur only within our hearts. The representation of a specific feeling or emotional state is not at all among the characteristic powers of music.²

— Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904)

Xi Kang's and Eduard Hanslick's comments are eerily similar despite the distance in years and geography between the writers. Their statements were both responses to popular, contemporary views that musical works could contain specific emotions.³ The relationship between music and emotion remains mysterious today: the question of how music – even instrumental music – although not sentient, can express emotion has “dominated philosophical discussions about music and emotion over the past three decades.”⁴

¹ Dai Mingyang, *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 349. The Chinese text, which is based on a Song woodblock print, omits the *you* 猶 at the beginning of the third phrase. The commentator, Dai Mingyang, advises that the *you* is present in other versions and should be re-inserted. The commentator's advice seems reasonable given the flow of the sentence. A literal translation of the text is, “Is it possible, observing that happiness and sorrow are released by music, to say that music contains grief and joy; yet not be able, observing that delight and anger are caused by wine, to say that wine has in it the principles of delight and anger?” Robert G. Henricks translates the text as “To see that happiness and sadness are released by music and say that music has grief and joy in it, is like seeing that delight and anger are caused by wine and saying that wine has in it the principles of delight and anger.” Henricks argues that the line “makes better sense” without the 不可 in 猶不可見喜怒為酒使 even though all extant versions include the 不可, and leaves it out of his translation, but the text flows logically with the 不可 included and see no reason to assume it should be ignored. See Henricks, *Philosophy and argumentation*, 81. Robert Ashmore takes an approach similar to that of Henricks: “Seeing cheer or despondency being released because of sounds, and saying that the sounds possess sadness or joy is just like seeing how pleasure or anger come about because of wine and saying that wine possesses some principle of pleasure or anger in it.” See Ashmore, “The art of discourse,” 213.

² Eduard Hanslick, *On the musically beautiful*, 9.

³ Ulrike Middendorf provides a detailed comparison of Xi Kang's and Eduard Hanslick's ideas about music in “Music without emotion,” 41-67.

⁴ Stephen Davies, “Emotions expressed and aroused by music: philosophical perspectives,” 20.

In this chapter, I examine ideas about the relationship between music and emotion that are expressed or implied in passages in *Shishuo xinyu* and in other texts from the Six Dynasties. In addition to exploring how these ideas might reflect the influence of earlier writing about music, I consider whether modern theories about the connection between music and emotion, as well as comparisons of ideas of Six Dynasties Chinese with those of other times and places, might yield a fresh perspective.

4.1 What are music and emotion?

The question of whether Six Dynasties Chinese had a concept close to what we mean by the term “music” was discussed in chapter 1, but some additional comments are warranted with respect to this chapter in particular. The term that in modern times is most associated with music, *yue* 樂, appears only once in the passages examined in this chapter. *Sheng* 聲 and *yin* 音 appear more often, sometimes together; in the context of these passages, *sheng* and *yin* are roughly equivalent to the English term “music,” but there is no consistency as to how *sheng* and *yin* are differentiated from one another.

I use the English term “emotion” to refer to general expressions such as *qing* 情 and *huai* 懷, as well as to specific emotions such as *you* 憂 (worry), *ai* 哀 (sorrow), and *le* 樂 (happiness). My focus on the general concept denoted by the modern English term “emotion,” rather than on specific Chinese terms in the texts of the period, rests on a conviction that there is sufficient connection

between the Chinese terms to justify treating them as a class of emotion-related words.⁵

4.2 Methodology

The approach of this chapter is broader than that of musicologists such as Yang Yinliu and Qin Xu, who focus on how passages such as those presented below reflect their historical and cultural backdrop. The passages examined in the following pages suggest that ideas about music had much in common with those in other geographical regions and at other times; I contend that these similarities raise questions about some of the conclusions scholars have made about the characteristics of early medieval ideas about music and emotion and the trends in these ideas over time. Furthermore, I bring in observations from music theorists in various academic disciplines, as well as music therapists, to add perspectives that are not tied to any one geographical region.

In addition, while much modern scholarship focuses primarily on Ruan Ji's "Essay on music" and Xi Kang's "Essay on music having neither sadness nor happiness" – which explicitly discuss the music-emotion link – this chapter explores passages from *Shishuo xinyu*, *Jinlouzi*, and poetry of Tao Yuanming. These texts mention the music-emotion relationship in passing or suggest ideas in an indirect fashion, for example through accounts of music performances or casual conversations about music.

Before proceeding to the discussion of textual passages, I summarize below the relevant secondary literature.

⁵ In this respect, my approach is similar to that of Curie Virág; see her explanation of her use of the term "emotion" in *The emotions in early Chinese philosophy*, 7-9.

4.3 Literature review

An example of modern scholarship addressing ideas about music and emotion in early medieval Chinese texts is Ronald Egan's chapter on calligraphy, music, and painting in the volume on Chinese aesthetics mentioned in chapter 3 of this study.⁶ Egan's chapter compares developments in calligraphy, music, and painting, covering primarily Han dynasty Rhapsodies and Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's essays. A similar focus is found in Yang Yinliu's treatment of ideas about music and emotion; his discussion deals almost entirely with Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's ideas.⁷

In the article, "The controversy over music and 'sadness,'" Ronald Egan traces changing conceptions of the *qin* in the medieval period, starting from an idea often expressed in the Han era that sadness (*bei* 悲) was of primary importance in music, especially *qin* music.⁸ This idea was at odds with the apparent equivalence between music and pleasure in the pre-Han era, illustrated by the use of the same graph (樂) for both. Egan describes how Ruan Ji and Xi Kang reject the idea of the primacy of sadness in music, and, in particular, how Xi Kang argues against the idea of emotion being intrinsic to music. Egan's analysis extends to the Song dynasty, to the writings of Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072). The scope of his study is narrower than that covered in this chapter in that it focuses on the *qin*, but broader in its coverage of a longer historical period.

⁶ Ronald Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 277-309.

⁷ Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 178-196.

⁸ See Ronald Egan, "The controversy over music and 'sadness,'" 9, for a discussion of the possibility that translating *bei* as "sad" may overdetermine the meaning of *bei*. Egan does not suggest a better translation, and I use "sad" here given the lack of a preferable alternative.

Kenneth DeWoskin's *A song for one or two* is primarily about the music of earlier eras, but he does provide some limited comments on the relationship between music and emotion in the Six Dynasties. He notes that, during the Six Dynasties, "Music and the other arts are still treasured for their influential and expressive potentials," referring to the Ruist view of the practical use of music as emotional outlet and moral restraint on the emotions.⁹ DeWoskin provides a few examples of discussions of music and the arts in the Six Dynasties: one anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu* in which Wang Dao 王導 (276-339) expresses admiration for Xi Kang's ideas,¹⁰ as well as material in the *Qinqu jicheng* 琴曲集成 (Compendium of *qin* tunes). This compendium was published in 1963¹¹ and contains *qin* notation and instructions that date no earlier than the Tang dynasty so is not a good source from which to draw conclusions about early medieval thought in particular.¹²

Qin Xu's chapter on ideas about music discusses the role of emotion in music. His chapter summarizes Xi Kang's and Ruan Ji's ideas, in the context of traditional Chinese philosophies, and highlights the influence of Xuanxue. In addition, he cites some of Tao Yuanming's poetry as an illustration of the view that music is a means of freeing oneself from pain and worry. As mentioned

⁹ DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 106.

¹⁰ This anecdote reads as follows: 舊云：王丞相過江左，止道聲無哀樂、養生、言盡意，三理而已。然宛轉關生，無所不入。(An old saying is [as follows]: [When] Prime Minister Wang crossed to the south of the Yangzi River, he only spoke of the "[Essay on] music having no sadness or happiness," "Nourishing life," [and] "Words fully express meaning," three matters only. That being so, [if something relevant] arose in a meandering [conversation], there were no places where he didn't chime in.) See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 162 (4.21).

¹¹ Zhongyang yinyue xueyuan, *Qin qu jicheng*.

¹² See Yang Yuanzheng, "A tale of two manuscripts," for a discussion of the earliest sources of *qin* notation, which date from the seventh century.

previously, Qin Xu's analysis is focused primarily on how ideas about music grew out of the major strands of Chinese philosophical traditions and Buddhism.

4.3.1 Modern musicologists and philosophers

I include the most influential modern musicologists and music philosophers in this summary, despite the lack of direct connection with early medieval Chinese music. As discussed below, their theories are surprisingly relevant to the ideas expressed in early medieval texts.

Leonard B. Meyer (1918-2007) and Deryck Cooke (1919-1976) were two of the most prominent musicologists of the mid-twentieth century who weighed in on the subject of emotion in music.¹³ More recent treatments of the topic include the work of Peter Kivy, Stephen Davies, David Huron, and Jenefer Robinson. One of the most recent updates of the subject is presented in the interdisciplinary *Handbook of music and emotion*, which includes contributions from musicologists, psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, and those in other fields.¹⁴

Meyer's 1956 volume explores the nature of, and the reasons for, emotional responses to music. Much of his discussion revolves around the expectations of auditors that are products of their familiarity with particular genres of music. His thesis is that emotions are aroused when expectations about the music are inhibited or blocked.¹⁵ For Deryck Cooke, music is the language of the unconscious, and "the expression of man's deepest self."¹⁶ He suggests that particular notes and melodic patterns have distinct types of emotional character that elicit specific responses in auditors.

¹³ See Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and meaning in music*; and Deryck Cooke, *The language of music*.

¹⁴ Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of music and emotion*.

¹⁵ Meyer, *Emotion and meaning in music*, 31.

¹⁶ Cooke, *The language of music*, x-xi.

Juslin's and Sloboda's *Handbook of music and emotion* as mentioned above approaches the subject from a wide variety of vantage points. The book's philosophy section,¹⁷ for example, poses the question of why those listening to certain types of music should feel sad when they have no feeling that anything unfortunate has taken place. A number of philosophical theories that attempt to address this question are discussed, including expression theory, arousal theory, and contour theory.

Expression theory posits that the expressive power of music is driven by artists articulating their emotional states through the music they compose or perform. This view has not had much support from the academic community over the past few decades,¹⁸ partly because the connection between the artist and the musical work is more complex than expression theory allows: a composer or a performer might or might not share the emotions that a musical work seems to express. Despite the doubts of the academic community, a form of expression theory has endured in popular culture:

[...] the popular view remains essentially that...music evokes emotion because it expresses emotion. Music is the middle term in an act of emotional communication, and it is by virtue of that role that music acquires its value.¹⁹

Jenefer Robinson updates the basic form of expression theory from its roots in the Western Romantic period of the late eighteenth century. To explain the mechanism by which a composer's or a performer's emotions are communicated to, and then felt by, an auditor, she emphasizes the physiological aspects of responses to music. She cites various studies that measure physiological

¹⁷ Stephen Davies, "Emotions expressed and aroused by music: philosophical perspectives," 15-43.

¹⁸ See Peter Kivy, *Music alone*, 174, and Robinson, *Deeper than reason*, 229.

¹⁹ Nancy Kovaleff Baker, Max Paddison, and Roger Scruton, "Expression," in *Grove music online*.

changes – involving mostly arousing or sedative effects – in connection with listening to music.²⁰ The physiological aspect of the process accounts for our continuing to respond to the same piece of music even if we have heard it many times. She also goes a step further to discuss how someone listening to music interprets the physiological reaction to music:

In particular, music, more than any of the other arts, has a powerful effect on our physiology. Music arouses mood states from which we readily enter into emotional states. Once in a suitable bodily state, we label it with a tag from the folk psychology of emotion.²¹

Arousal theory defines music's expressiveness by its ability to elicit emotion. Some theorists explain this as the auditors' imagining a persona who is the subject of the emotions evoked by the music. Arousal theory has been criticized for its focus on the auditor rather than the music, and on the assumption that affect in response to music requires imagining a persona.²²

Contour theory maintains that expressiveness is a property of music itself, and is a product of the sound of the music and does not depend on the composer's or the performer's emotions that are occurring at the time the music is composed or played. Stephen Davies argues that contour theory is the most convincing: "[...] when we attribute emotions to music, we are describing the emotional character it presents, just as we do when we call the willow sad or the car happy."²³ Davies also suggests that expressiveness may have some aspects that are invariant and some that are culture specific, and notes that cross-cultural studies have been inconclusive on this point.²⁴ The views of the musicologist-

²⁰ Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than reason*, 394-396, 407.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

²² Davies, "Emotions expressed and aroused by music: philosophical perspectives," 30-31.

²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

philosopher Peter Kivy also fall within contour theory: he argues that the contour of music resembles expressive human utterances and gestures, and, because we are hard-wired to animate ambiguous patterns, we experience music as emotive.²⁵

David Huron, similarly, argues that the shape of a piece of music can evoke certain emotions, emphasizing the musical drivers of an auditor's response:

[...] *tragedy* can be evoked by using predominantly minor chords played with rich sonorities in the bass register. *Suspense* can be evoked using a diminished seventh chord with rapid tremolo. *Surprise* can be evoked by introducing a loud chromatic chord on a weak beat.²⁶

Huron's volume is an exploration of the role of expectations in and beyond music, building on the work that Leonard Meyer did before modern developments in psychology could be leveraged to fill the gaps that Meyer did not have the tools to address. In addition, he puts forward a general theory of expectations, exploring why they evoke certain feelings and how they might be useful from a biological standpoint. Expectations and responses to them are presented as a function of both biology and culture.

Huron suggests that the reason that music can successfully elicit emotional reactions despite the auditor's knowledge that no real-life events are unfolding is that many human responses are instinctive and uncontrollable. An example is a startle reflex when a door slams even if we see the door starting to close and know the loud bang is coming.²⁷ Huron furthermore explains that the reason that surprises in music are experienced as pleasurable is that, for example, people are wired to react with more pleasure to an unexpected positive stimulus than to an

²⁵ Peter Kivy, *Music alone: philosophical reflections on the purely musical experience*, 176.

²⁶ David Huron, *Sweet anticipation*, 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

expected one. The musical equivalent is a long, dissonant passage which leads the auditor to expect more dissonance; when the passage is followed by a more consonant sound, auditors respond with more pleasure than they would if they had been listening to the consonant sound all along.²⁸

The musicology chapter in the *Handbook*²⁹ traces the development, within the Western music tradition, of the idea of music as *mimesis* to the modern idea of music as self-expression. During the Baroque period, musical expression was generally treated as a representation of specific types of emotion one could observe in society. In contrast, starting in the nineteenth century, musical expression began to be understood as the expression of private emotions of an artist. The chapter grapples with the difficulty of analyzing the structural and expressive aspects of music in a unified way; most musicological analysis treats these two aspects of music in parallel and maps one onto the other. The purpose of a musicological analysis is not necessarily to explain the way music works, as a philosopher might, but to change how auditors experience the music; more intervention than description. Musicology can be seen as performative in the sense that its influence has formed part of the history of ideas about the music-emotion link.³⁰

The *Handbook* also includes a chapter by psychologists that summarizes recent attempts to collect empirical data on the relationship between music and emotion.³¹ These studies provide some evidence of a link between specific

²⁸ Ibid., 22.

²⁹ Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, "Emotion in culture and history: perspectives from musicology."

³⁰ Ibid., 66-67.

³¹ John A. Sloboda and Patrik N. Juslin, "At the interface between the inner and outer world."

characteristics of Western music and the emotions listeners report feeling in connection with the music, as well as some similarities between characteristics of speech and music that evoke similar emotions. There is an additional chapter by the psychologist Donald Hodges that deals with the measurement of physiological responses to music, covering twelve types of responses to music that psychologists associate with changes in emotion: pulse rate, biochemical responses, skin conductance, respiration, blood pressure, muscular tension, temperature, chills, blood volume, gastric motility, blood oxygen, and pupillary and startle reflex.³² No firm conclusions have yet been drawn from studies of this nature, which have had some conflicting results, but according to Hodges the majority of studies support the position that music induces measurable physiological responses that indicate emotional arousal.³³

An additional vantage point from which to view the physiological aspects of music's connection to emotion is through the neurologist Oliver Sacks' volume *Musicophilia*. His tales of the ramifications of brain damage on patients' musical abilities and perceptions include descriptions of effects on their ability to respond emotionally to music. An example is a patient with chronic temporal lobe seizures who found music merely irritating until she began taking medication for the seizures. Once on medication, she became transfixed by music, describing it as "emotion-charged."³⁴

A perspective from anthropology and ethnomusicology is provided in the *Handbook* by Judith Becker.³⁵ She starts her chapter with a discussion of the

³² Donald A. Hodges, "Psycho-physiological measures," 282.

³³ *Ibid.*, 296.

³⁴ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, 11.

³⁵ Judith Becker, "Exploring the habitus of listening."

tendency of scholars in either discipline to fall into one of two categories:

“universalists,” who focus on what cultures have in common, or “particularists,” who are more interested in the differences between cultures.³⁶ Becker suggests that a way to dissolve the “intractable dichotomies” between the two, as well as between the related dichotomies of “nature versus culture” is to view the relationship between music and emotion as a “supra-individual biological processes,” an example of which is linguistic accents which are a function of biology within one individual but develop because of interactions with others.³⁷ An emotional response to music can similarly be seen as a biological process – arousal of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) – within one individual, whose interpretation of the arousal is influenced by his or her culture.³⁸ A strength of Becker’s analysis is that, unlike most of the work of psychologists mentioned above, she has extensive experience studying non-Western music cultures. She describes elements of Sufi religious practice, Balinese rituals, and Pentecostal church services as examples of ANS arousal through music, accompanied by culture-specific interpretations of the feelings aroused. David Huron also raises the question of how transcultural his observations about music might be. His conclusion is that only empirical experimentation can shed light on how people actually experience music.³⁹ Some drivers of emotional responses to music appear to be common to many cultures, such as the enjoyment of surprise.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., 127.

³⁷ Ibid., 150-151. Becker is referring to a paper by Rafael E. Núñez in which he introduces the concept of supra-individual biological processes; see Núñez, “Eating soup with chopsticks,” 154-156.

³⁸ Becker, 137-138.

³⁹ David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 379.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21.

Given the biological basis of certain responses to music that Huron identifies, it would not be surprising if they underpinned invariant aspects of music.

As will be discussed below, the merging together of what Becker refers to as “universalism” and “particularism” is especially relevant to an analysis of early medieval Chinese ideas about the relationship between music and emotion.

4.4 Cultural backdrop

The cultural background to beliefs about the link between music and emotion is largely contained within the early texts that were introduced in section 2.1.2.1, as well as in the essays by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang that were discussed in section 2.1.2.2.1. The dual role of the cultural background to the subject of this chapter – serving not only as an introduction to this chapter but also doubling as a general introduction to beliefs about music in the Six Dynasties – demonstrates the importance of ideas about music and emotion to early medieval Chinese music culture.

4.5 Illustrations from texts

Presented below are excerpts from Six Dynasties texts in which there are either implicit or explicit connections made between music and emotion. Section 4.5.1 groups together passages that describe music as an activity that helps to dispel uncomfortable emotions. Section 4.5.2 discusses passages that depict music as an activity that elicits emotion. Section 4.5.3 raises the question of whether music, like poetry, was viewed as a means to deliberately express one’s emotions.

4.5.1 Dispelling emotion

The first passage is a *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote about Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (?303–?361)⁴¹ talking about using musical instruments to unburden himself of intense sorrow or happiness.

4.5.1.1 Wang Xizhi's route to tranquility

謝太傅語王右軍曰：「中年傷於哀樂，與親友別，輒作數日惡。」王曰：「年在桑榆，自然至此，正賴絲竹陶寫。恆恐兒輩覺，損欣樂之趣。」⁴²

Grand Mentor Xie [An]⁴³ said to Right Adjutant Wang [Xizhi], “In middle age, I am [easily] impaired by sadness or happiness; parting with relatives or friends leaves [me with] several days of ill feeling.”⁴⁴ Wang said, “Our years are at the mulberry and elm stage,⁴⁵ [so] naturally we have come to this; it's appropriate to depend on stringed instruments and flutes⁴⁶ to lift the spirits (*tao xie* 陶寫) and to dispel [the sadness]. [I have been] persistently fearful of the next generation finding out and losing their inclination to enjoy this pleasure.”⁴⁷

⁴¹ Wang Xizhi was a scholar-official generally considered one of China's most eminent calligraphers. He is also said to have arranged a gathering at Lanting 蘭亭 (in modern Zhejiang province) that resulted in a poetry collection. His biography is in Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*: 80.2093-2108.

⁴² Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 95 (2.62).

⁴³ Xie An 謝安 (320-385 CE) was a scholar-official who served in a high capacity in Sima Yao's 司馬曜 (362-396; r. 373-396 CE) court. His biography is in Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu* 79.2072-2092.

⁴⁴ Emotions linked to intimacy and friendship were a recurring theme in early Chinese texts, often raised in connection with music. Michael Nylan discusses this in the second chapter of *The Chinese pleasure book*.

⁴⁵ This expression refers to old age; the mulberry tree and the elm tree were understood to catch the rays of the setting sun. The *Jiu Tangshu* states 至若筋力將盡，桑榆且迫 (at the point that [one's] strength is about to be exhausted, old age is nearly upon [us]). Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 2.35.

⁴⁶ Stringed instruments and flutes may be a reference to *qingshang yue*.

⁴⁷ It is unclear whether the subject of “losing [...] inclination to enjoy this pleasure” is Wang Xizhi or the next generation; an alternative translation could be, “The persistent fear of the next generation finding out has diminished my inclination to enjoy this pleasure.” Mather's translation is, “But the continual fear lest the younger generation will find out about it has spoiled my zest for this pleasure” (Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 64); Ronald Egan's translation is, “Yet I constantly worry that the younger generation will realize this, and that it will diminish their own enjoyment [of music]” (Egan, “The controversy over music and ‘sadness’,” 61). My choice of “the next generation” as the subject of “losing” is based on the version of the anecdote in *Jinshu* 80.2101, which has the pronoun *qi* 其 in front of *huan le* 歡樂: 恆恐兒輩覺，損其歡樂之趣。

The anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* are grouped into chapters according to themes, each of which focuses on a personality type. The above anecdote is in the *Shishuo xinyu* chapter called “Yan yu” 言語 (Speech and conversation). The inclusion of the anecdote in the book probably has more to do with the unexpected final line than the reference to musical instruments; most of the anecdotes in the chapter are examples of witty rejoinders. It is curious that Wang Xizhi, who is most famous for his calligraphy, is represented as speaking of music as the best way to dispel negative feelings.⁴⁸

The meaning of *tao xie* 陶寫 is ambiguous. In Six Dynasties texts, *tao* meant “to mold” or “to nurture” and also at times meant “in good spirits.”⁴⁹ The context of this passage suggests that *tao* refers to a short-term consequence of playing stringed instruments and flutes rather than a long-term molding of character, hence my interpretation as “lift the spirits.” The context also implies that *xie* means “to disperse”; the passage starts with a reference to an uncomfortable emotion and continues to describe the means employed to counter it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Perhaps Wang Xizhi and others were more likely to associate calligraphy with abstract concepts such as *yi* 意, which was a somewhat abstruse standard of achievement for calligraphers at the time (see Ronald Egan, “Nature and higher ideals,” 286-291).

⁴⁹ An example of *tao* as “to mold” or “to nurture” is in *Shipin*, where there is the expression 而詠懷之作，可以陶性靈 ([Ruan Ji’s] “Expressing feelings” poems can nourish the spirit). See Cao Xu, *Shipin jizhu*, 123. *Tao* used to mean “to enjoy, to delight in” is in the Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433 CE) poem “Chou congdi Huilian” 酬從弟惠連 (Replying to my younger cousin Huilian): the line reads, 共陶暮春時 (together delight in late spring); see Xie Lingyun, *Xie Kangle shi zhu*, 3.19b [138]. An additional example is the expression 揮茲一觴，陶然自樂 (brandishing our wine cups, happily cheering ourselves) in the poem “Shi yun” 時運 (Seasons revolve) by Tao Yuanming (see Gong Bin, *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 7-13).

⁵⁰ Ronald Egan translates *tao xie* as “give shape and expression” to the emotions (see “The controversy over music and ‘sadness’,” 59), but interpreting *tao xie* as merely describing or revealing the emotions without dispersing them would seem to render into a non-sequitur the line following “Our years are at the mulberry and elm stage, [so] naturally we have come to this.” For another reading of *tao xie*, see Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 64. Mather translates *tao xie* as “dispel our melancholy”; this seems to omit the *tao*. “Melancholy” suggests a feeling of vague sadness with no specified source, so I prefer the more direct “sadness” given the speaker’s clear description of the reason for the ill feeling.

This anecdote about Wang Xizhi was not the first to describe musical instruments as a way to dispel unwelcome emotions. Xi Kang expresses a similar idea in the preface to his “Qin fu” 琴賦 (Rhapsody on the *qin*):

可以導養神氣，宣和情志，處窮獨而不悶者，莫近於音聲也。⁵¹

[Music (*yinsheng* 音聲)] can guide and cultivate one’s spirit (*shen* 神) and vital breath (*qi* 氣), [and] free and harmonize emotions and feelings. To be in a position of adversity but not feel dispirited, nothing comes close to music.

The representation of Wang Xizhi’s thoughts in anecdote 4.1 above seems to be consistent with – and perhaps influenced by – the ideas about music that Xi Kang expresses in this passage.⁵² It is not completely consistent with Xi Kang’s position that music can only release feelings that are already in the auditor; Wang Xizhi is expecting the music to reverse his emotional state rather than just intensify feelings that are already there. The sentiments in this anecdote are also consistent with Ruan Ji’s view, mentioned above, that one effect of music is to calm people.

⁵¹ Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.2 [836] (“Yinyue” B).

⁵² An alternative interpretation of Wang Xizhi’s comments is provided by Ronald Egan (see page 62 of “The controversy over music and ‘sadness’”), who suggests that Wang Xizhi’s position as expressed in the above *Shishuo xinyu* passage represents a contrasting tradition to that of Xi Kang. Referring to Xi Kang’s “Rhapsody on the *qin*” he states that Xi Kang’s focus is on the ability of the *qin* to “elevate the mind” rather than to release feelings. Xi Kang’s preface to the “Qin fu,” which is about music in general rather than the *qin* specifically does state, however, that music is the best way to manage being in a position of adversity without feeling dispirited. An additional point made by Egan (page 62) is that Xi Kang’s Rhapsody refers to the release of emotions only on the part of listeners, not those playing the music. However, in the descriptions of *qin* playing in the Rhapsody there is only one place in which listening – rather than playing – is specified: 懷戚者聞之 (the sorrowful hear it). See Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.2 [847] (“Yinyue” B). In the rest of the Rhapsody there is no clear differentiation between listener and player and hence the distinction made by Egan may not hold for the entire Rhapsody. An example is the line 更唱迭奏，聲若自然。流楚窈窕，懲躁雪煩。(Alternately sung and played, the sound is what it is in itself. Flowing and clear, gentle and graceful; averting disquiet and dispelling gloom): the subject of “averting” is the sound, and there is nothing in the text to imply that the effect is specifically on the listener rather than musician and listener alike. See Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.2 [846] (“Yinyue” B).

Some of the poetry of the period also articulated the desire to dispel burdensome emotions by playing musical instruments. An example is the poem “Gui qu lai ci” 歸去來兮辭 (Returning home) by Tao Yuanming, who was roughly a contemporary of the compilers of *Shishuo xinyu*.

4.5.1.2 Tao Yuanming’s musical escape from anxiety

The middle section of the poem reads,

歸去來兮。請息交以絕遊。
世與我而相違。復駕言兮焉求。
悅親戚之情話。樂琴書以消憂。⁵³

Returning home, may [I] suspend social ties and cease wandering.

The world and I have parted ways; in resuming travel what is there to seek?

Contented with family’s intimate conversation, enjoying the *qin* and books to dispel worry.

Poetry itself was also described during the Six Dynasties as a vehicle to deal with emotions associated with parting from friends: for example, the following is from the first of Zhong Rong’s three prefaces to *Shipin*.

嘉會寄詩以親，離羣託詩以怨。⁵⁴

Festive gatherings use poetry to bond together; dispersing groups use poetry to grieve.

In the above *Shipin* passage, poetry seems to be valued as a way to respond to emotions and to put them into words. The passage goes on to say,

使窮賤易安，幽居靡悶，莫尚於詩矣。⁵⁵

In leading the impoverished and humble to be readily contented, and those living in isolation to avoid low spirits, nothing is as valued as poetry.

⁵³ Gong Bin, *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian*, 391.

⁵⁴ Cao Xu, *Shipin jizhu*, 1.47. See Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste Poetik*, 129.

⁵⁵ Cao Xu, *Shipin jizhu*, 1.47. See Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste Poetik*, 135.

Zhong Rong's depiction of one of the key functions of poetry is quite similar to the role of music described in the passages shown above.

A concept related to the use of musical instruments to dispel worry and to achieve a sense of calm – as expressed in the above Wang Xizhi passage and Tao Yuanming poem – is a more indirect route to tranquility through escape from worldly entanglements in favor of engagement with music. An example is the following passage from the “Shuo fan” 說蕃 (Discussing regional princes) chapter of *Jinlouzi*. This chapter relates tales of regional princes' successes and failures, and strengths and weaknesses, as examples to be followed or avoided.

4.5.1.3 Liu Mu's escape from worldly engagement

劉睦少好學，博通書傳。光武愛之，數被延納。顯宗在東宮，尤見幸，入則諷誦，出則執轡。中興初，禁網尚闊，而睦性謙恭好士，千里交結，自大儒宿德莫不造門，由是聲價益廣。永平中，法憲頗峻，睦乃謝絕賓客，放心音樂。⁵⁶

When Liu Mu⁵⁷ was young, he liked studying, and was proficient in calligraphy and commentaries. [Emperor] Guangwu [Liu Xiu]⁵⁸ was fond of him, and frequently engaged him. When Xianzong [Liu Zhuang]⁵⁹ was at the eastern court, [Liu Mu] had particularly favorable treatment. At court, he provided subtle guidance; during excursions, he was at [Xianzong's] side. At the beginning of the restoration [of the Han dynasty], the [legal] restrictions were still relaxed, and [Liu] Mu's nature was that he was modest, courteous, and a good man. People came from great distances to deal with him. From renowned scholars to aged worthies, there were none that failed to visit. From this, his reputation

⁵⁶ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 442 (8.13).

⁵⁷ Liu Mu (d. 74 CE) was known as a poet, a skilled calligrapher, and a *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and autumn) scholar. None of his writings have survived to the present.

⁵⁸ Liu Xiu 劉秀 (5 BCE–57 CE; r. 25–57 CE) was the first ruler of the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) dynasty.

⁵⁹ Xianzong was the temple name of Liu Zhuang 劉莊. He was the second Eastern Han emperor (also known as Mingdi 明帝; 27–75; r. 57–75 CE).

increasingly broadened. During the Yongping reign period (58-75 CE), laws and regulations [became] quite severe, [and Liu] Mu thereupon turned away his disciples, putting his heart into music.

In this anecdote, Liu Mu's use of music to dispel emotions is not as direct as the approach Wang Xizhi or Tao Yuanming describe above; while Wang Xizhi and Tao Yuanming are specifically targeting their emotions, Liu Mu seems to be targeting the cause of negative feelings rather than the feelings themselves.

We now turn to the question of why Six Dynasties literati took an interest in the connection between music and tranquility. Qin Xu, in his chapter on ideas about music, presents Tao Yuanming as mainly a product of Ruist and Daoist influences, and his poems that mention music as a reflection of the Xuanxue flavor of his ideas about music.⁶⁰ The examples that Qin Xu provides as elements of Xuanxue influence include, most importantly, a desire for a carefree, tranquil outlook. The importance of tranquility within Xuanxue thought is illustrated in this passage from Xi Kang's "Yangsheng lun" 養生論 (Essay on nourishing life):

[君子] 修性以保神，安心以全身，愛憎不棲於情，憂喜不留於意，泊然無感，而體氣和平。⁶¹

[A cultivated man⁶²] polishes his nature to protect his spirit, calms his heart to preserve himself. Love and hate are not among [his] emotions; worry and delight do not linger in [his] thoughts—[he is] tranquil, unmoved, and his body and his vital energy (*qi* 氣) are harmonious and still.

⁶⁰ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 475.

⁶¹ Dai Mingyang, *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 253.

⁶² Some have translated *junzi* as gentleman or exemplary person; the meaning is closest to "cultivated man," since he must be not only well educated but also morally unblemished.

Ronald Egan's exploration of Xi Kang's ideas about music invokes the same cultural influences that Qin Xu cites to explain the reasons for the way in which Tao Yuanming writes about music. Referring to Xi Kang's involvement in Xuanxue thought, Egan states, "Xi Kang's understanding of music thus follows from a general philosophical orientation."⁶³ There is a common aspiration expressed in this passage from Xi Kang's "Yangsheng lun" and in the above excerpt from Tao Yuanming's poem – as well as in the above passage from *Shishuo xinyu* – to dispel uncomfortable emotions.

The relationship implied in the texts between Xuanxue and the expression of emotion was not straightforward, however. In the world of *Shishuo xinyu*, the value placed on tranquility – whether or not inspired most importantly by Xuanxue – was accompanied, somewhat contradictorily, by high regard for those who felt and expressed strong emotions. On the one hand, the Wang Xizhi anecdote shown above indicates a desire to shed emotions to achieve quietude. On the other hand, the following anecdote suggests that in some contexts the possession of deep feelings (*qing* 情) was a valued attribute, akin to the demonstration of talent (*cai* 才).

4.5.1.4 Xu Xun's eloquent sensibility

許掾嘗詣簡文，爾夜風恬月朗，乃共作曲室中語，襟懷之詠，偏是許之所長，辭寄清婉，有逾平日。簡文雖契素，此遇尤相咨嗟；不覺造膝，共叉手語，達于將旦。既而曰：「玄度才情，故未易多有許！」⁶⁴

⁶³ Ronald Egan, "The controversy over music and 'sadness'," 26.

⁶⁴ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 370 (8.144)

Clerk Xu [Xun]⁶⁵ once called on Jianwen [Sima Yu].⁶⁶ That evening, the breeze was gentle and the moon was bright, and together they had a talk in an out-of-the way chamber. The verbal expression of deep feelings tended to be one of Xu [Xun's] strengths: his words were conveyed with lucidity and subtlety, to a greater extent than usual. Jianwen, although long a confidant, at this time was especially full of sighs [at Xu Xun's words]. They found themselves knee-to-knee, together clasping hands, talking, until it was almost dawn. Soon afterwards [Jianwen] said, "Xuan Du's (Xu Xun's) talent and feeling assuredly is not easy to find in quantity, alas!"

This anecdote is in the *Shishuo xinyu* chapter "Shang yu" 賞譽 (Appreciation and praise). Each of the anecdotes in this chapter points out a positive attribute of a particular scholar. One can only speculate about the reason for the contrast between Wang Xizhi's desire to unload emotions and Xu Xun's expression (and Sima Yu's appreciation of the expression) of deep feeling; Xu Xun was famous as a recluse, and Sima Yu was a Buddhist who was known for his calm disposition. Wang Xizhi, Xu Xun, and Sima Yu were contemporaries so variations in point of view cannot be explained by their having lived in different eras.

The most significant weakness in the focus on Xuanxue in the context of music is that, if interest in the role of music in dispelling emotion is most importantly a reflection of Xuanxue views, one must wonder why this aspect of music also seems to attract attention in other cultures, ancient and modern, that have never heard of Xuanxue. Perhaps one of the reasons that Xi Kang's essay

⁶⁵ Xu Xun 許詢 (fl. mid-fourth century CE), a poet, was known for his principled resistance to court appointments.

⁶⁶ Sima Yu 司馬昱 (320-372; r. 371-372 CE) had various high-level court appointments before his short reign as emperor which ended in his death from illness. He had a reputation as a skilled writer, but his only extant writing consists of court documents. He was also known for his interest in Xuanxue and Buddhism. See David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part two*, 993.

achieved the fame that it did, or that it lasted to the present day, and that the Wang Xizhi anecdote was understood and enjoyed by the compilers and the readers of *Shishuo xinyu*, was that the audience for these works was familiar with and interested in Xuanxue thought. Suggesting that Xi Kang or Wang Xizhi believed in or valued the calming attributes of music because of their Xuanxue orientation – without reference to any other possible sources of this view – is difficult to justify given the geographical and temporal spread of the belief in that attribute of music.

Examples of other locations and eras in which music has been appreciated for its power to dispel unwelcome emotion range from ancient Greece to modern life. Aristotle, for example, is described by Andrew Ford as believing that certain types of music had a “natural pleasantness which is at the same time an ability to put an end to care.”⁶⁷ This conviction is expressed in the context of Aristotle’s discussion of the uses of music in civic life. In addition, Ford describes Aristotle’s support for certain types of music as deriving from his belief that the music could lead to a kind of constructive *katharsis*, which Ford explains as “a feeling of relief accompanied by pleasure.”⁶⁸ According to Ford, “both [Plato and Aristotle] stress the ability of art to drive out care.”⁶⁹

Similar ideas are also evident in modern culture in various continents. For example, the sociologist Tia DeNora points out that music is used “for entraining and modulating mood and levels of distress” not only by music therapists but

⁶⁷ Andrew Ford, “The power of music in Aristotle’s *Politics*,” 316.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 328. While Aristotle at times used the term *mousikē* to refer to both music and poetry, Ford argues that Aristotle was speaking mostly of music in its narrower sense in most of the passages that Ford examines.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 336.

also in non-professional settings.⁷⁰ As part of an investigation of the role of music in modern social life, she conducted a series of interviews with women of varying ages in multiple locations in the United Kingdom and in the United States. One of the interviews was undertaken with a fifty-year-old woman in the process of moving house who described Schubert Impromptus as a means to achieve a sense of inner calm in the midst of her stressful activities.⁷¹

A similar finding is described in one of the psychology studies that Juslin and Sloboda cite: the ability of music to soothe and calm was one of the most common associations with music reported by the participants in the study.⁷² Moreover, music therapists seem to take for granted the existence of “sedative” music and use it in their clinical practice.⁷³ Another example from the United States is blues music, an African-American genre. *The Harvard dictionary of music* describes blues as “entertainment whose function is to dispel blue feelings.”⁷⁴ Related sentiments were expressed by a British cellist, Steven Isserlis, after his wife died in 2010: “I played immediately afterwards [...] It was the best way, better than sitting at home moping. I’m lucky. I have an outlet.”⁷⁵

A final example is from India, provided in a 1977 paper by Edward Henry that explores the ways in which Northern Indians thought about music. Henry, a social anthropologist, based his paper on sixteen months of fieldwork in which

⁷⁰ DeNora, *Music in everyday life*, 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷² Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, “At the interface between the inner and outer world,” 83.

⁷³ See, for example, Myra J. Staum and Melissa Brotons, “The effect of music amplitude on the relaxation response,” and Joseph Lingham and Tores Theorell, “Self-selected ‘favourite’ stimulative and sedative music listening – how does familiar and preferred music listening affect the body?”

⁷⁴ Don Michael Randel, *Harvard dictionary*, 104.

⁷⁵ Grice, Elizabeth. “Steven Isserlis, Britain’s greatest cellist: ‘What I’m about to do is absolutely terrifying’.” *The Telegraph*, 8 February 2016.

thirteen months were spent in one small village with limited financial resources, literacy, or access to media. In Henry's interviews with the villagers, they described their music mostly in religious terms. However, in response to questions from Henry about how they felt when hearing Harikirtan,⁷⁶ the response was the worryless state of mind attained.⁷⁷

All the above examples from outside China arose in circumstances different from those of early medieval Chinese texts, and it would be impossible to demonstrate that descriptions of a feeling of being calm, worry-free, or tranquil – all expressed in different languages – refer to the exact same feelings. That said, a theme is evident in these examples, and while they may not point to identical points of view, it does seem likely that there is a significant overlap in ideas about the capacity of music to help people achieve a sense of tranquility.

The common theme in ideas about music and emotion expressed in certain Six Dynasties texts, ancient Greek texts, and by modern musicians in the West and in Asia does not disprove cultural explanations for early medieval ideas, but it does suggest that those explanations are incomplete. There may be something intrinsic to the nature of music that works alongside culture; if those intrinsic characteristics – intertwined with the physiology described by Huron, Robinson, Becker, and others – are ignored in an analysis, too much credit is attributed to cultural explanations.

There is an additional drawback to the claim that Xuanxue was the primary inspiration behind the focus on the connection between music and tranquility: in

⁷⁶ Harikirtan is a kind of devotional hymn typically sung by groups of men in villages. See Ellen Koskoff, *Garland encyclopedia*, 1024-1025.

⁷⁷ Edward O. Henry, "Music in the thinking of north Indian villagers," 7.

the period after the fall of the Han dynasty there was a great deal of intermixing of cultures including musical genres and musical instruments.⁷⁸ Qin Xu himself points this out in the introduction to his chapter on ideas about music.⁷⁹ It is likely that ideas about music crossed borders in all directions. Especially given the evidence noted above of the multiple appearances, across time and regions, of the concept of music inducing a feeling of calm, it may well be that this idea had multiple sources both within and outside the borders of early medieval China.

4.5.2 Eliciting emotion

A second theme concerning the relationship between emotion and music that arises in early medieval Chinese texts is the capacity of music to elicit emotion. The passages shown below make a point in a more indirect fashion than those in section 4.5.1 above, demonstrating rather than explicitly stating beliefs about music. In addition, the use of music to dispel emotions is described as a deliberate act in the section 4.5.1 passages. In contrast, the capacity of music to elicit emotions is described in varying ways: in most passages the intention of the musician is ambiguous; it is unclear whether he is deliberately attempting to move the audience, or whether the emotional response of the auditors is related to the musician's intentions.

Shown below are four anecdotes from *Shishuo xinyu*, two about *qin* players and two about drummers. The first anecdote is from the *Shishuo xinyu* chapter "Shang shi" 傷逝 (Grieving for the departed).

⁷⁸ A description of this intermixing is in Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, volume 1, 143, and Albert E. Dien, *Six dynasties civilization*, 339-346.

⁷⁹ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 427.

4.5.2.1 Gu Yanxian's heightened grief

顧彥先平生好琴，及喪，家人常以琴置靈床上。張季鷹往哭之，不勝其慟，遂徑上床，鼓琴，作數曲竟，撫琴曰：「顧彥先頗復賞此不？」因又大慟，遂不執孝子手而出。⁸⁰

Gu Yanxian⁸¹ all his life had been fond of [playing] the *qin*. When he was buried, one of his family members put a *qin* on the spirit bed. Zhang Jiying⁸² went [to Gu Yanxian's home] to lament his loss, and was unable to overcome his grief-stricken weeping. [He] thereupon directly climbed onto the bed and played the *qin*. When [he] had finished playing a few tunes, while still holding the *qin* [he] said, "Gu Yanxian, do you quite enjoy this as before, or not?" Having said that, he again wept in grief and thereupon, without clasping the hand of the son in mourning, he left.

In this passage, playing the *qin*, feeling it in the hand, and speaking about it seemed to only intensify Gu Yanxian's grief, to the point of his forgetting to follow the prescribed social ritual. His response may also have reflected an association between his circumstances and the well-known story of Boya's 伯牙 (fl. pre-221 BCE) destruction of his *qin* in response to the loss of an intimate friend who had a unique grasp of Boya's *qin* playing.⁸³

A similar anecdote later in the same chapter of *Shishuo xinyu* suggests, even more strongly than this one, that the main driver of the overpowering emotion was the *qin* itself, since in this anecdote the musician tries but fails to play the *qin*.

⁸⁰ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 489-90 (17.7).

⁸¹ Gu Yanxian (270-322 CE) was chancellor in the state of Wu, and later served in the court of the founder of the Eastern Jin.

⁸² Zhang Jiying (fl. early 4th century CE) was a poet from the state of Wu who had a brief stint as grand marshal.

⁸³ See Lü Buwei, *Lüshi chunqiu* 14.2a [102].

4.5.2.2 Wang Ziyou's anguished parting

王子猷、子敬俱病篤，而子敬先亡。子猷問左右：「何以都不聞消息？此已喪矣！」語時了不悲。便索輿來奔喪，都不哭。子敬素好琴，便徑入坐靈床上，取子敬琴彈，弦既不調，擲地云：「子敬！子敬！人琴俱亡。」因慟絕良久，月餘亦卒。⁸⁴

Wang Ziyou [Wang Huizhi] and [Wang] Zijing [Wang Xianzhi]⁸⁵ were both critically ill, but [Wang] Zijing died first. [Wang] Ziyou asked his attendants, "Why [do I] hear no news? This [means he is] already dead." When speaking [he] showed no sadness. [He] immediately sought a sedan chair and came to offer condolences, without weeping. [Wang] Zijing had all along been fond of the *qin*; [Wang] Ziyou went directly in and sat on the spirit bed. [He] picked up [Wang] Zijing's *qin* and plucked [it]. The strings were already out of tune, [so he] threw it on the ground saying, "Zijing! Zijing! Man [and] *qin* have died together." He was then grief-stricken for a long time [and] a little more than a month later he too was dead.

The implication of playing the *qin* in these passages seem to be very different from that implied in the Tao Yuanming poem discussed above; in these passages, the *qin* not only fails to still the emotions but perhaps even intensifies them. In addition, the *qin* players appear to respond as much to their associations with the physical instrument as to the sound of the *qin*. Their reactions seem to be consistent with Xi Kang's description of the emotions of sad people being intensified by music. The emotions aroused perhaps had more to do with symbolism and identity than with musical sound.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 494 (17.16).

⁸⁵ Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386 CE) and Wang Huizhi 王徽之 (338?–386 CE) were brothers, and sons of Wang Xizhi (see anecdote 4.1 above). Both were writers, and Wang Xianzhi was also known as a calligrapher.

⁸⁶ Music as symbolism and identity will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this study.

In the following two anecdotes, also from *Shishuo xinyu*, the musicians are drummers who elicit a strong emotional response from their audiences. The first anecdote is about a scholar-official who was demoted to serve as court drummer for Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220 CE). It is from chapter 2 of *Shishuo xinyu*, for which the general theme is witty ripostes – in many of the anecdotes, the ripostes are thrown at powerful people by those with less clout. Clever retorts are scattered throughout *Shishuo xinyu*, but chapter 2 is the one with the highest number and highest concentration; other chapters have different salient themes. Twelve of the 108 anecdotes in chapter 2 involve quick-tongued children showing up their superiors.

4.5.2.3 Mi Heng drumming

禰衡被魏武謫為鼓吏，正月半試鼓。衡揚枹為漁陽參撻，淵淵有金石聲，四座為之改容。孔融曰：「禰衡罪同胥靡，不能發明王之夢！」魏武慙而赦之。⁸⁷

Mi Heng⁸⁸ was degraded by [Emperor] Wu of Wei [Cao Cao] to become a court drummer. In the middle of the first month, at the time of the review of the drums, [Mi] Heng lifted his drumsticks and played the “Yuyang⁸⁹ drumbeat.” [The drums] resounded deeply,⁹⁰ like the sound

⁸⁷ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 48 (2.8).

⁸⁸ According to Mi Heng’s (ca. 173-198 CE) biography in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 110.2652). He was born in Pingyuan 平原 (modern northwest Shandong) and was recognized for his talent. The biography also explains the reason for his being appointed court drummer: Cao Cao heard of Mi Heng’s talent and requested to see him, but Mi Heng refused, feigning illness. Despite the insult, Cao Cao did not wish to execute him given his famed talent; hence, having heard of Mi Heng’s skill as a drummer, Cao Cao appointed him court drummer. Eventually Mi Heng was executed by Huang Zu 黃祖 (d. 208 CE) who was angered by Mi Heng’s having insulted him in public.

⁸⁹ Yuyang was in present-day Hebei. *Canzhua* 參撻 in this edition of *Shishuo xinyu* is an amended version of the graphs 摻撻 that are shown in the Song woodblock edition of the text. The decision by Yang Yong, the editor of the 1969 edition of *Shishuo xinyu*, to make the amendment was guided by the *Hou Hanshu* version of this anecdote (ibid., 110.2655). The commentary by Li Xian 李賢 (654-684 CE) states 參撻，是擊鼓之法 (*Canzhua* is a method of beating a drum).

⁹⁰ *Yuanyuan* alternatively can be translated as an onomatopoeia, the sound of the words resembling a deep sound made by drums. Mather uses the romanization “*yuanyuan*” in his translation to represent the imagined sound (Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 30). I decided against this approach since the modern sound, “*yuan*” would not be meaningful to the reader as the sound of

of bronze [bells] and stone [chimes], and all in attendance were moved⁹¹ by it. Kong Rong⁹² said, “[Although] Mi Heng has been punished in the same way as someone in a chain gang,⁹³ he has not been able to manifest [himself] in an enlightened king’s dream.”⁹⁴ [Emperor] Wu of Wei was ashamed, and pardoned him.

The description of the reaction of the audience indicates that they were deeply affected by Mi Heng’s drumming. In the case of the emperor, not only was he moved by the performance, but, after one of his court officials chimes in, is persuaded to pardon Mi Heng. Through a drum performance, Mi Heng transforms his image in the eyes of the audience from that of nameless lowly court drummer to a talented, recognizable literatus.

The line in the above passage, 四座為之改容 (all in attendance were moved by it) is ambiguous with respect to the pronoun *zhi* 之 (it, or, possibly, him): was the audience moved by the sound of the drums; or the sound of, or associations with, the *Yuyang canzhuo* 漁陽參搥 (the Yuyang drumbeat); or the manner of the

a drum. The best guess for the pronunciation of 淵 is ?iwen, according to Schuessler’s MC (Middle Chinese) reconstruction (*Minimal old Chinese*, 319).

⁹¹ The literal meaning of this line is that the facial expressions of all in attendance changed.

⁹² Kong Rong (153–208 CE) was a poet and essayist and held various military and administrative posts. He was an outspoken critic of Cao Cao, who tolerated his criticism for a long time in view of his reputation and influence at court but finally executed him and his family. See Rafe de Crespigny, *Biographical dictionary*, 391–393.

⁹³ My translation of *xu mi* 胥靡 is based on the commentary by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645 CE) in *Hanshu* 聯繫使相隨而服役之，故謂之胥靡，猶今之役囚徒以鎖聯綴耳 (linkage leading to the performance of hard labor together, hence known as “mutual leaning”: similar to today’s forced labor prisoners that use chains to form a line [of prisoners]). See Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 36.1924.

⁹⁴ Liu Jun 劉峻 (462–521) states in his commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* that the dream refers to a story in *Diwang shiji* 帝王世紀 (Record of reigns of emperors and kings); see Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 49 (2.8), footnote 2. According to Liu, the *Diwang shiji* said that the Shang dynasty ruler Wu Ding dreamt that heaven had granted him a virtuous man to assist him and he sent his men out to look for someone who fit the description in the dream. His men searched all over, and found him in a chain gang. *Diwang shiji* was written by the literatus Huangfu Mi (215–282 CE), who was known for his military and diplomatic skills, as well as his teaching of the *Zhouyi* and *Shijing*. The historical records in the ten-chapter *Diwang shiji* covered the distant past including the legendary Chinese rulers. Only fragments of it are extant. See Dominik Declercq, *Writing against the state*, chapter 5, and Monique Nagel-Angermann, “Diwang shiji.”

performance, or something else about Mi Heng himself? Another version of this anecdote – which according to the commentator, Liu Jun, is from the *Wenshi zhuan* 文士傳 (Traditions of literati)⁹⁵ – is more transparent, and suggests that all the above factors were viewed as significant to those listening. The anecdote suggests that there was some association with Mi Heng (perhaps his reputation as a skilled drummer) that combined with the sounds and the performer's emotion-laden appearance and behavior to move the audience.

衡擊鼓為漁陽摻搥，躡地來前，躡駁腳足，容態不常，鼓聲甚悲，音節殊妙，坐客莫不慷慨，知必衡也。⁹⁶

[Mi] Heng beat the drums, playing the “Yuyang drumbeat.” [He] stepped forward, tapping and stamping his feet, with an unusual expression and bearing. The sound of the drums was very sorrowful; the tone and rhythm, strange and wonderful. Of those watching, none lacked [a response of] intense feeling. They knew [the drummer] must be [Mi] Heng.

An additional anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu*, about Wang Dun 王敦 (266-324 CE)⁹⁷ playing the drums, also describes an emotional reaction of an audience elicited by a musician's performance. The anecdote is in chapter 13, which is titled “Hao shuang” 豪爽 (Boldness and vigor) and comprises thirteen anecdotes. Five of the anecdotes are about Wang Dun, perhaps because of his military career and a connection seen between military activity and “boldness and vigor.”

⁹⁵ *Wenshi zhuan* was probably compiled in the fourth century and contained biographies of literati living during the Eastern Han (206-220 CE) and Western Jin (265-316 CE). It exists today only in reconstructions. See David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature: a reference guide, part two*, 1357.

⁹⁶ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 48 (2.8), note 1.

⁹⁷ Wang Dun married one of Sima Yan's 司馬炎 (236-290; r. 265-290 CE) daughters. In 324 CE, he led an unsuccessful revolt against the Sima clan and died after hearing of his failure. For his biography see Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 98.2553-2568. Sima Yan was the first ruler of the Jin dynasty (265-420 CE).

4.5.2.4 Wang Dun drumming

王大將軍年少時，舊有田舍名，語音亦楚；武帝喚時賢共言伎藝事，人人皆多有所知，唯王都無所關，意色殊惡，自言知打鼓吹。帝即令取鼓與之，於坐振袖而起，揚槌奮擊，音節諧捷，神氣豪上，傍若無人。舉坐歎其雄爽。⁹⁸

When Generalissimo Wang [Dun] was young, he was known as a country bumpkin, and the sound of his speech was also coarse. Emperor Wu [Sima Yan] summoned the respected gentlemen of the time to discuss craftsmanship and artisanship. Most of the [guests] had some knowledge of [these matters]; only Wang [Dun] was unengaged, and his mood and countenance were especially dark. Since he said he was able to play the drums and wind instruments, the emperor ordered someone to obtain a drum and to give it to him. At his seat, Wang [Dun] shook out his sleeves and stood up. Lifting the drumsticks he strenuously beat [the drum]. The sounds and tempo were harmonious and lively. His spirit and energy surged with boldness, as if no one else was there. All present exclaimed in admiration of his forceful vigor.

The audience is not described as commenting on Wang Dun's drumming skills in an analytical or detached manner, but as exclaiming or sighing (*tan* 歎) in response to the performance. As in the case of the Mi Heng anecdote, the audience seems to respond to a combination of sound and other performance attributes. The connection between the attributes of the performance that are not strictly auditory and the reaction of the listeners is consistent with Xi Kang's view that emotional response to music is not purely a function of the sound. That said, the descriptions of the performances seem to diverge from Xi Kang's views in the sense that they do not seem to be eliciting responses that grow out of the emotional states of the audience; on the contrary, in both drumming anecdotes

⁹⁸ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 322 (13.1).

the audience seems to be surprised by the drummers' performances and to be moved in unexpected ways by the performances. The auditors' reactions are tied explicitly to the behavior of the drummers, and are described as a uniform group response hence suggesting no connection with individual auditors' feelings prior to the performances.

Earlier examples of descriptions of responses to musical instrument performances are the musical instrument rhapsodies that were included in the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of refined literature), compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531 CE). *Wenxuan* appeared well after *Shishuo xinyu*, but its musical instrument rhapsodies all pre-date *Shishuo xinyu*. The responses to musical instruments depicted in these musical instrument rhapsodies were a kind of reflexive, predictable reaction to the musical sounds, in contrast to these later drumming anecdotes where the performative aspects of the drumming seem to combine with the music to elicit a subtler and less predictable auditor response. An example of a description of a seemingly reflexive reaction to a music performance is the following passage from Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247-300 CE)⁹⁹ "Sheng fu" 笙賦 (Rhapsody on the mouth organ).

初雍容以安暇，

中佛鬱以佛憫。

[...]

樂聲發而盡室歡，

悲音奏而列坐泣。¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Pan Yue held various official positions and retired temporarily but later served as magistrate first in Heyang 河陽 (in present-day Henan) and later in Chang'an and also held various other official posts. He was executed, along with the rest of his family, as a result of a claim by a competitor that he was plotting political rebellion. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part one*, 698-709.

¹⁰⁰ Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.3 [858] ("Yinyue" B).

At first, [the musician] is poised, gentle, calm, at ease;
 In the middle, [the musician] seems despondent, anxious, disturbed.
 [...]

 Happy sounds emerge, and all in the room are joyful;
 Sad tones are played, and all present weep.

The passage describes, first, the musician's responses to the music, and then, an almost mechanical-sounding reaction on the part of the audience: when the sounds are happy, the audience is happy; when the sounds are sad, the audience again responds accordingly.

Xi Kang's "Qin fu" similarly focuses on the evocation of two opposing emotions in connection with *qin* performance: misery (*canqi* 慘悽) or elation (*huanyi* 懽釋). Xi Kang also gives his Rhapsody the added twist – consistent with his essay on music – that the driver of the elicited emotion is the pre-existing sentiments of the auditor rather than the music itself.¹⁰¹ It may be that, in the roughly two hundred years between Pan Yue and Xi Kang in the third century, and Liu Yiqing in the fifth century, the understanding of musical performance evolved from one in which auditors' responses to music revolved around a narrow set of possibilities, to one in which auditors' responses entailed more complex emotions that were more subtly related to the circumstances of the performance.

At the same time, the difference in literary genres may have played as big a role as the passage of time in accounting for the diverging ways of depicting responses to music. Both Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the mouth organ" and Xi Kang's "Rhapsody on the *qin*" followed in the footsteps of an earlier musical

¹⁰¹ Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 18.2 [847] ("Yinyue" B).

instrument Rhapsody by Wang Bao 王褒 (84-53 BCE). His “Dongxiao fu” 洞簫賦 (Rhapsody on the panpipes) set the stage for the later musical instrument rhapsodies by describing the way the instrument was constructed from natural materials and then continuing on to describe how either happiness or sadness ensued when people listened to the instrument.¹⁰² The later rhapsodies had similar structure and content. The compilers of *Shishuo xinyu*, writing in a different genre and for a different purpose, included no content specifically devoted to musical instruments and had no reason to attempt consistency with previous literary work.

In section 4.5.1 above, I applied some observations from non-Chinese cultures and from music theorists to broaden the perspective on how the textual passages might be understood. I suggested that drivers of early medieval Chinese beliefs about music and emotional tranquility were likely to have included Chinese cultural influences – such as immersion in Xuanxue and the views of earlier music essayists – as well as factors unrelated to Chinese culture. Similarly, the depiction in the passages presented in section 4.5.2 of the ability of music to elicit emotions are likely to reflect influences that were not confined to Chinese history and culture.

A belief that music by its intrinsic nature has the capacity to move the emotions has been embraced at various times and places. Andrew Ford describes how Aristotle spoke of the natural powers of rhythms and *harmoniai* to move the soul.¹⁰³ These particular rhythms and *harmoniai* belonged to ancient Greek music,

¹⁰² Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 17.1 [782-790] (“Yinyue” A).

¹⁰³ Andrew Ford, “Power of music,” 324.

and the “soul” had a specific meaning to the Greeks. That said, a belief that there was something in music – whether represented by Greek rhythms and *harmoniai*, or by the music produced by the Chinese mouth organ, *qin*, or drums – that had power to elicit feelings was expressed in texts of ancient Greek as well as those of early medieval China.

A similar idea from the modern world is articulated by a character in an Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) play, who states, “After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own. Music always seems to me to produce that effect.”¹⁰⁴ About sixty years later, the musicologist Leonard Meyer focuses on the auditor: as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Meyer believed that listeners’ pre-existing expectations of music are the primary determinants of their reactions to it. Meyer’s theory seems to be applicable to the two drum performances: the description of the reactions of their audiences suggests that elements of the performances took them by surprise. While the specifics of pre-existing expectations about a musical work might be unique to a culture, the role of expectations in music may be less so. David Huron’s analysis of the physiological basis of expectation and for human responses to surprises explains why surprise may be a transcultural, even invariant, driver of emotional responses to music.

The above examples of how a belief in the power of music to arouse emotions span varied eras and locations are all from Western culture. These beliefs are not confined to the West; an example is traditional Indian music, which also treats

¹⁰⁴ This is a statement by Gilbert, a character in Oscar Wilde’s “The Critic as Artist,” 127.

music's power to elicit emotions as a critical aspect of music. The significance of affect is illustrated by the importance to music of eight distinct emotions (*sthāyibhāvas*). In the Indian context, however, the highest form of affective response is not one that stops at an individual's emotions but one that merges with those of a unified community.¹⁰⁵

The above examples illustrate some of the ways that ideas represented in the texts about music's capacity to stir emotions differed from those in ancient Greece, modern Western Europe, and India. The purpose of the above comparison is not to demonstrate that these ideas were uniform across geographies and eras, but that many shared a conviction that music had the power to arouse emotion, and that this power is a significant aspect of music.

4.5.3 Expressing emotion

The thought process leading to the inclusion of the material in this section was the reverse of that for section 4.5.1 and section 4.5.2. In these previous two sections, I first identified textual passages that linked music and emotion in some way and then observed that most of them could be grouped together either as those that illustrated a connection made between music and tranquility and those that depicted a link made between music and emotional arousal. Hence, the identification of two themes that seemed to weave through the texts underlay the choice of section topics. In the case of section 4.5.3, the choice of topic and textual passages to examine was based on the observation of something that I had expected to see but did not: music as tool of self-expression, as medieval Chinese

¹⁰⁵ See Lewis Rowell, *Music and musical thought in early India*, 328-329.

poetry seemed to be, or as music is often assumed to be in modern, cosmopolitan culture whether in Europe, North America, or Asia.

Section 4.5.3 begins by revisiting the two drumming anecdotes from section 4.5.2 to see whether they might be interpreted as examples of musicians expressing emotion. Then, three additional textual passages are explored: the first is an excerpt from “Lanting jixu” 蘭亭集序 (Preface to poems from the Orchid Pavilion), which is generally attributed to Wang Xizhi.¹⁰⁶ It illustrates one way in which the role of poetry was differentiated from that of music. The next two passages are examples of excerpts from Six Dynasties texts that have been interpreted – erroneously in my view – by some modern scholars to depict musicians deliberately expressing emotions through their music. The first example is from one of Tao Yuanming’s poems, and the second is a line from the “Yuefu” 樂府 (Music bureau songs) section of *Wenxin diaolong*.

4.5.3.1 The drumming anecdotes

Possible early cultural influences on the depiction of the *Shishuo xinyu* drumming performances are the “Record of music” of *Liji* (Record of rites) and the “Great preface” to *Shijing*. The “Record of music” (37.4a) includes the following line.

凡音者，生人心者也。情動於中，故形於聲。聲成文，謂之音。¹⁰⁷

All music (*yin* 音) arises in the minds of men: emotion is stirred within, hence takes form in sounds (*sheng* 聲); [when] sounds form patterns, they are called music (*yin* 音).

The “Great preface” has a similar passage:

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of the preface, see Wendy Swartz, “Revisiting the scene of the party.”

¹⁰⁷ Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu* 37.4a [663] (“Yueji” A).

情動於中。而形於言。言之不足。故嗟歎之。嗟歎之不足。故永歌之。
永歌之不足。不知手之舞之。足之蹈之也。¹⁰⁸

Emotion is stirred within, and takes form in speech (*yan* 言). [If] speaking of it is inadequate, then [one] sighs over it. [If] sighing over it is inadequate, then [one] sings about it. [If] singing about it is inadequate, then [one] instinctively uses hands to gesture and feet to dance about it.¹⁰⁹

There has been a great deal of discussion of the differences between these two texts and the possible reasons for these differences.¹¹⁰ For the purposes of this study, suffice it to observe that “Record of music” sets out a distinction between sound (*sheng* 聲) and more complex music (*yin* 音) in the above passage (in another passage also adding the most refined type of music – *yue* 樂 – which only the most educated gentlemen can appreciate). The “Great preface” inserts speech (*yan* 言) as an intermediate step between the stirring of emotions and the production of musical sound,¹¹¹ and introduces a hierarchy of expressive tools extending from speech (*yan* 言) at the most basic level, to dance as the means to be used when speech and singing are insufficient. Both the “Record of music”

¹⁰⁸ Kong Yingda, *Mao Shi zhengyi* (Mao [tradition of the] Songs, with correct meanings), 1A.5a [13].

¹⁰⁹ The three lines I have translated as conditional statements can also be interpreted without conditionality: for example, Haun Saussy translates the line beginning *yan zhi bu zu* 言之不足 as, “It is not enough to speak, so one sighs [the words]” (*The problem of a Chinese aesthetic*, 77). Similarly, Steven Jay Van Zoeren translates the same line as, “Words are not enough, and so one sighs it” (*Poetry and personality*, 95). Stephen Owen, on the other hand, interprets these lines as conditional: “If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs” (*Readings in Chinese literary thought*, 41). The commentaries to the “Great preface” do not provide clarity on whether these lines should be read as conditional statements.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Van Zoeren, *Poetry and personality*, 109; Saussy, *The problem of a Chinese aesthetic*, 86-102.

¹¹¹ Haun Saussy explains the insertion of *yan* as reflecting the difference in purpose between the “Great preface” and “Record of music;” the “Great Preface” is a commentary on poetry while “Record of music” is a discussion of music. See *The problem of a Chinese aesthetic*, 86.

and the “Great preface” passages contain the idea that emotions lead instinctively to outward display through sound.

The descriptions in the two drumming anecdotes of Mi Heng’s and Wang Dun’s gestures, and Mi Heng’s stamping, could be interpreted as references to the “Record of music” and the “Great preface;” feelings are stirred within the two drummers, and those feelings emerge in the form of music-making and gestures. The more explicit aspect of the description of the performances is their effect on the emotions of the audiences; the reaction to the performance seems to be the main point of the passages given the importance of the audience in the punch line of both anecdotes.

The next illustration is the preface to a collection of poems said to have been composed during an outing to Guiji¹¹² 會稽 Commandery (near modern Shaoxing, in Zhejiang). It suggests that music can elicit feelings that in turn can inspire poetry. Note the division of labor between music and poetry, in which the music seems to have been expected to arouse the emotions – similar to the examples in section 4.5.2 above – but the emotional self-expression took the form of poetry.

4.5.3.2 Wang Xizhi chanting poetry

永和九年，歲在癸丑，暮春之初，會于會稽山陰之蘭亭，脩禊事也。羣賢畢至，少長咸集。此地有崇山峻嶺，茂林脩竹；又有清流激湍，映帶左右；引以為流觴曲水，列坐其次。是日也，天朗氣清，惠風和暢；娛

¹¹² The transliteration of 會稽 is somewhat controversial; my choice is based on a Tang dynasty *fanqie* gloss for 會 (Lu Deming, *Jingdian shiwen*, 1165) as interpreted in historical context by James M. Hargett in “會稽: Guaiji? Guiji? Huiji? Kuaiji?” 27. David Knechtges also uses the *guiji* transliteration in his translation of line 126 of Zhang Heng’s 張衡 “Si xuan fu” 思玄賦 (Rhapsody on contemplating mystery), in *Wen xuan*, volume III, 114.

目騁懷，信可樂也。雖無絲竹管弦之盛，一觴一詠，亦足以暢敘幽情矣。

113

In the ninth year of the Yonghe era (353)—the year *guichou*—at the beginning of late spring, [we] gathered at the northern slope of the Orchid Pavilion in Guiji [Commandery] to perform the spring purification ceremony. The group of worthies had all arrived, young and old all together. This place had lofty mountains and towering peaks, luxuriant forests, and tall, tapering bamboo; there were also clear streams rushing and billowing, setting off [the scenery] left and right, leading [us] to use it as a winding waterway for floating wine goblets; everyone present took a turn. On this day, the sky was bright, and the air, clear; the gentle wind, pleasing. Indulging our eyes and giving free rein to our emotions—truly enjoyable. Even though [we] did not have the luxury of musical instruments,¹¹⁴ one cup for each chanted poem was still sufficient to freely convey our innermost feelings.

The absent musical instruments that Wang Xizhi mentions here is a reference to a gathering in 296 CE described by Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300 CE)¹¹⁵ in a preface to a poetry collection which preceded the Lanting collection. As described in the Shi Chong preface, “Jingu shixu” 金谷詩序 (Preface to the Golden Valley collection), the participants in the gathering listened to music, performed along with the musicians, and then wrote poems to convey their feelings:¹¹⁶

時琴、瑟、笙、築，合載車中，道路並作；及住，令與鼓吹遞奏。遂各賦詩以敘中懷，或不能者，罰酒三鬥。

¹¹³ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 483-84 (16.3, note 1).

¹¹⁴ Literally, silk, bamboo, pipes, strings, referring to what various musical instruments were made of.

¹¹⁵ Shi Chong had numerous military and administrative posts and is thought to be one of the wealthiest men of his era. David Knechtges describes Shi Chong as “the most famous garden owner of the Western Jin.” See Knechtges, “Estate culture in early medieval China,” 529-531.

¹¹⁶ Shi Chong’s preface is in Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 401 (9.57, note 1); the connection between the two prefaces is discussed in Yu Jiayi, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu*, 631 (16.3, note 2) and Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 345.

At times, *qin*, *se*, *sheng*, and *zhu*¹¹⁷ accompanied our carriage, playing along our route. When we stopped, instructions were given to play with the musicians, taking turns. Then each one composed poetry to convey his inner feelings; those who were unable to were punished with three *dou* (about six liters)¹¹⁸ of ale.

Wang Xizhi seems to be saying in his preface that, even without the benefit of the music that inspired the participants at Shi Chong's gathering and drew out their emotion, Wang Xizhi and his companions managed to compose their poetry. Early medieval views on the relationship of music to poetry are discussed further in chapter 6 of this study.

The final two illustrations in this chapter are modern interpretations of passages in Six Dynasties texts that portray musicians as purposefully using their music to express emotion although – in my view – the intention to express something is not evident in the text. In these two passages, the text is followed by my own translation, after which I provide a published translation for comparison.

The first example is an excerpt from Tao Yuanming's poem "Xianqing fu" 閑情賦 (Rhapsody on stilling the passions).

4.5.3.3 A lady's *qin* as diversion

悲晨曦之易夕。
感人生之長勤。
同一盡于百年。
何歡寡而愁殷。
褰朱幃而正坐。

¹¹⁷ These were all musical instruments. The *se* 瑟 and the *zhu* 築 were types of zithers; the *sheng* 笙 was a kind of mouth organ (see "Rhapsody on the mouth organ" above).

¹¹⁸ At that time, 1 *dou* was equivalent to about 2 liters; see Luo Zhufeng, *Hanyu da cidian suoyin*, 11.

汎清瑟以自欣。¹¹⁹

Saddened by dawn's transforming into dusk,
 Moved by man's prolonged hardship.
 All similarly go within a hundred years,
 Why is joy rare and trouble abundant.
 Opening the vermilion drapery and sitting upright,
 Playing unaccompanied *se* to cheer herself.

James Hightower translates *zi xin* 自欣 from the last line above as “express her feelings.”¹²⁰

The second example is a line in the “Yuefu” 樂府 (Music bureau songs) section of *Wenxin diaolong*:

4.5.3.4 Folk songs

音聲推移，亦不一概矣。匹夫庶婦，謳吟土風；詩官採言，樂盲被律¹²¹

The development of music has not proceeded in a uniform way. Ordinary people sing folk songs; official poetry collectors gather lyrics, blind music masters set [the lyrics] to music.

Vincent Yu-chung Shih's translation is as follows.

There is no general rule for the development of musical patterns. Ordinary men and women express their feelings in local folk songs; these songs were gathered by official poetry collectors and set to music by blind music masters.¹²²

The singing of folk songs may or may not have entailed the expression of feelings, but the meaning of *ouyin* 謳吟 in *ouyin tufeng* 謳吟土風 is not “express their feelings.” The official poetry collectors may have been interested in feelings

¹¹⁹ Gong Bin, *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 377.

¹²⁰ James Robert Hightower, *The poetry of T'ao Ch'ien*, 264.

¹²¹ Zhan Ying, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 2 [223-226].

¹²² Vincent Yu-chung Shih, *The literary mind and the carving of dragons*, 53.

revealed in the songs, but note that the passage specifies that they collected the lyrics (*yan* 言), not the music.

It is possible that the interpretation of these passages is influenced by modern discourse on music; as Cook and Dibben point out in the article cited above, in contrast to the Baroque custom of treating musical expression as a representation of familiar types of emotion, musical expression began to be understood from the nineteenth century as self-expression by an artist. The association of music with self-expression has permeated Western discourse since then.¹²³ Modern discourse on music – whether in the West or in the East – is saturated with references to self-expression, in part because of the prominence of Western Romantic music in the contemporary concert repertoire.

Students of the “Record of music” and the “Great preface” may also see music as being inextricably linked with self-expression. As discussed in connection with the two drumming anecdotes, the gestures and the music making of the drummers could be interpreted as reflecting the descriptions of music in the “Record of music” and the “Great preface” as the outward manifestation of inner feelings. That said, purposeful self-expression is a large step removed from the instinctive release and display of feelings described in the earlier Chinese texts. I have not identified any textual passages that linked music with the expression of emotions in as clear a manner as music is linked to the calming or the eliciting of emotions.

¹²³ Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, “Emotion in culture and history: perspectives from musicology,” 49-50.

4.6 Conclusion

Passages from texts of the Six Dynasties were explored in this chapter to see what ideas are expressed about the relationship of music to emotion. Previous research has focused mostly on essays that specifically address the topic, such as those written by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang; I have approached the subject from a different angle, examining whether casual references to music in a broader selection of material can shed light on early medieval ideas. Some passages describe aspirations to dispel burdensome emotions, and others depict musicians eliciting strong emotional reactions in their audiences. Language in the texts that is sometimes interpreted by modern scholars to describe the deliberate expression of emotion was also examined.

The question of what might have driven the observed beliefs about music-emotion links was also considered. The possible historical and cultural drivers have been investigated in detail by musicologists and sinologists, and I have attempted to build on their work by exploring conceivable connections between the material in Six Dynasties texts and that in earlier texts on music such as the "Record of music," the "Great preface," and Xi Kang's "Essay on music having neither sadness nor happiness." I have also raised the question of whether modern music-related theory, and comparisons across time and cultures, can bring out perspectives that might be missed by an analysis that concentrates on one culture alone.

Section 4.5.1 argued that the attribution to Chinese concepts such as Xuanxue of an interest in, and a belief in, the role of music in dispelling emotion is incomplete, given the presence of similar ideas in other cultures. From ancient

Greece, to musicians and audiences in modern society, many examples can be cited to demonstrate the widespread recognition and valuing of the calming capacity of music. An analysis that omits evidence from outside China risks implying that there is something unique about the early medieval Chinese linkage of music to tranquility; although much of the vocabulary used in the passages cited above would not be understood by those in other cultures, the differences in vocabulary exaggerate the cultural differences in the nature of the connection made between music and a feeling of calm.

In section 4.5.2, the concept of music eliciting emotion was examined. A number of the passages in the texts imply that the nature of one's engagement with music, or a musical instrument, is more important than the sound of the music itself. Some of the anecdotes, for example the two *qin* anecdotes, seem to suggest ideas that are consistent with Xi Kang's views about music intensifying pre-existing emotions. Others seem to break from Xi Kang: the emotions aroused in the listeners do not seem to be limited to disquiet or stillness. Moreover, the drumming anecdotes, for example, imply a belief in the capacity of music to leave the auditor with feelings that differ considerably from those held before the music performance. These anecdotes also differ from earlier language, for example that of Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the mouth organ," in the suggestion that music elicits complex feelings that are not seemingly reflexive happy or sad reactions to happy or sad music.

Do these contrasts between the ways music is described as eliciting emotion in Xi Kang's essays, Pan Yue's Rhapsody, and the drumming passages suggest a historical trend in ideas about music running from Xi Kang and Pan Yue to the

later material in, say, *Shishuo xinyu*? Possibly. On the other hand, there is some evidence that ideas about music go through fashions rather than following any linear trends; while technical knowledge of acoustics and musical instruments has undoubtedly improved over time, ideas about the functions of music seem to come and go. In *Jinlouzi*, for instance, the role of music in governance is highlighted, a view that seems at home in the Warring States (475 BCE-221 BCE) text *Xunzi*. In the *Jinlouzi* chapter “Xing wang” 興王 (The emergence of the kings), which is a description of achievements and behavior of dynasty-founding kings, roughly one-third of the entries contain references to music. In addition, some of the similarities or contrasts in points of view expressed in the texts may reflect to some extent the differences in the purposes of the texts, and the reasons they have survived to be combed over.

In section 4.5.3, I raised the question of whether the texts demonstrate a belief in emotional self-expression through music. Some scholars have reflected an assumption of the existence of this belief in their translations of Six Dynasties texts. As outlined in the literature review above, emotional self-expression in music has been a dominant theme in modern discourse on music. Given the current worldwide reach of Western Romantic music in concert halls and music conservatories from Shanghai to New York – and assumptions about the self-expression function of music that has accompanied the enduring influence of Romantic music – there is a risk of unrecognized premises about music creeping into an analysis performed in any location. A comparative approach to analysis of ideas about music, including those in one’s own culture, may help avoid this pitfall. This position may appear to conflict with many contemporary

ethnomusicologists' aversion to cross-cultural comparison. This distaste is, in part, a way for modern ethnomusicologists to distance themselves from the disgraced practices of the past in which some scholars valued a researched culture only in the context of comparison with their own culture, but it brings problems of its own into an analysis.

Certain of the textual passages highlighted in this chapter – the drumming anecdotes in particular – can be interpreted as reflecting the position of the “Record of music” and the “Great preface” that emotions are instinctively expressed in music. Any such connections that might have been made by the texts' compilers seem to be secondary to the punch line of both anecdotes which emphasize the auditor response to the drumming. There is nothing in any of the textual excerpts that suggests a deliberate effort by a musician to use music – as distinct from poetry – to express inner sentiments. Especially since the deliberate expression of emotion through poetry is articulated so clearly in so many places, the absence of similar descriptions of the function of music is notable.

Modern music-related theory can shed some additional light on the above, despite its distance from the Six Dynasties Chinese. There is no consensus among scholars about how music stirs or stills emotion – or why it is perceived to do so – but the theories outlined at the beginning of the chapter, including frustrated auditor expectations in the way a work of music unfolds (Meyer and Huron), patterns within the music (Cooke), the contour of the music (Davies, Kivy), and the influence of emotions of the composer or the performer (Robinson) are all possible general features of music that could apply across cultures. While the expectations of educated auditors of Indian music are different from those

listening to Western baroque music, for example, the significance of expectations to the auditor response to the music can still be a common aspect of both genres.

In the textual passages shown above, there is little description or discussion of the sound produced by the instruments, except in the drumming anecdotes, and hence insufficient support for an assertion that any one of the theories is a good fit for early medieval Chinese music, or ideas about music and emotion held at the time. The value of the theories in the context of this study is that they are possible explanations for why the ideas of early medieval Chinese overlap with those in other eras and places.

One of the reasons that it is not preposterous for a music theory born in, say, twentieth century New York to have something to say about ideas about music in the Eastern Jin (317-420 CE) capital Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing) is that music has direct physiological effects as noted in the summary of the work of music therapists, psychologists, and neuroscientists early in this chapter. While the matching of physiological changes to emotions is a part art and part science at this stage, the preponderance of evidence seems to be on the side of music having a strong biological component. The particular musical patterns – whether of timbre, rhythm, melody, or other aspects of music – that stir or still emotion will vary from place to place and over time, but the repertoire of emotional responses may depend more on physiology than culture. The ideas expressed in a text are likely to be a function of a combination of observations of physiological reactions to music – a possibly invariant phenomenon – as well as cultural habits and constraints governing the ways these observations are articulated, and the circumstances of the production of the text.

This way of looking at the drivers of ideas about music expressed in the texts explored in this chapter can be viewed as an application of the concept of a supra-individual biological process: the “individual” part of “supra-individual” applies to responses to music on the part of the characters in the textual passages, as perceived and described by the compilers of the texts; the “supra” refers to the cultural influences on the music responses and on the way the responses are represented in the texts; and the biology drives emotional responses to music, which in turn interacts with cultural influences to affect the discourse in the texts. Examples of the “individual” component from the texts explored in this chapter are the ideas about music attributed to Wang Xizhi, and the responses of individual audience members to the performances of Mi Heng and Wang Dun. The “supra” cultural drivers include audience members’ influences on each other, Ruan Ji’s and Xi Kang’s essays, perhaps early classics on music, aspects of early medieval music culture that were introduced by non-Chinese during the post-Han era of accelerated cultural intermixing, and other circumstances that might have affected the way the compilers of the texts chose to represent ideas about music, such as what they expected their readership to find amusing. The biological aspects are those we all share, and they are mediated through similarly potentially invariant (or at least common) musical mechanisms that scholars are still struggling to identify: these might take any of, or a combination of, forms described by musicologists and music philosophers such as those outlined above. As Judith Becker has suggested, this framework is a way to bridge the gap between the “universalists” and the “particularists.” It is also a way to step

beyond the limitations of an analysis of ideas that draws only on the influence of narrowly bounded cultural features.

The theory invoked in this chapter relates primarily to the auditory aspects of music. Certain non-auditory features of music performance and musical instruments were touched on briefly in this chapter, illustrated in the two drumming anecdotes and in the two *qin* anecdotes in section 4.5.2. The remaining chapters in this study all focus on non-auditory, music-related topics treated in the texts, which have additional implications for ideas about the relationship between music and emotion.

Chapter 5: Performance as persuasion

He who wants to persuade should put his trust, not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense.¹
—Joseph Conrad

Chapter 4 examined passages from Six Dynasties texts that suggest a belief in certain capacities of music, both to stir emotions and to still them. The possible mechanisms that were discussed in the chapter to explore what might underlie these capacities related mostly to musical sound. In the next several chapters, I explore ideas reflected in the texts that do not focus on musical sound, but rather the performative aspects of music. These include the ability to persuade, to exercise power, to protest against the powerful, and to project an image that enhances identification with the upper class. These ideas are represented in textual passages that describe music performances. I also consider how observations of modern musicologists, performance theorists, and other scholars about the intersections between musical and other types of performance might assist us in making sense of ideas implied in the texts.

This chapter focuses on one particular performative feature of music, which is its function as rhetoric. Each of the next several chapters explores beliefs about additional performative aspects of music. Chapter 6 examines music in expressions of power and protest, and chapter 7 is concerned with how music is used to promote identity and image. All these performative dimensions of music are related to persuasion in some way: altering judgments through rhetoric, enhancing respect for power, undermining respect for power, or changing impressions of someone's character. Persuasion in these contexts is not a topic

¹ Joseph Conrad, *A personal record*, 4.

that is independent of that of the previous chapter; persuasion and emotion are closely linked. The political theorist James Martin, for example, writing about the relationship between cognition and emotion in political rhetoric, describes “cognitive judgement as one moment in a wider, *affective* process.”² There is some physiological evidence that emotions influence cognition, including the interpretation of social behavior and the formation of impressions about people.³

5.1 What is a music performance?

Shishuo xinyu – defined broadly to include its fifth-sixth century commentary – contains a number of anecdotes that either describe a music performance or that include a conversation about a performance. No Chinese equivalent of the English term “performance” appears in these anecdotes. Nevertheless the term “music performance” seems to best capture what a musician is doing in the anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* in which a musician plays an instrument for something other than a limited, entirely practical purpose such as ringing a bell to summon someone, and either (a) plays for the purpose of being heard by at least one listener; or (b) plays for unspecified reasons, and there is at least one listener who reacts to what he hears. The significance of the audience in all these anecdotes is what ties them together as music performances.

The concept of “performance” in the context of the following discussion does not include all the connotations of a music performance that modern cosmopolitan concert audiences take for granted. For example, while modern pop or art music culture generally assumes a distinction between composer and performer – other than when improvisation is involved – there is no evidence of

² J. Martin, “A feeling for democracy? 462.

³ See Douglas Derryberry, “Emotion, attention, and temperament,” 139-141, which outlines some of the possible physiology involved.

that distinction in early medieval China. The anecdotes about Xi Kang presented in section 7.4.3.4, for example, mention a *qin* tune being passed down from teacher to student, but there is no concept of ultimate composer mentioned. Moreover, as discussed by Joseph Lam (see the introduction to this study), a tune traditionally represented a kind of “essence” rather than a fixed work of music associated with a specific composer. While the relationship between music of the Six Dynasties and the traditional practices identified as such by today’s musicians cannot be demonstrated, there is nothing that supports the idea that Six Dynasties music culture included the concept of composer that we know today.⁴

5.2 Methodology

The concept of music performance applied in this chapter includes material that traditional musicologists would consider extra-musical aspects of a performance⁵ – such as musicians’ gestures and listeners’ reactions – and the idea that when musicians perform they do many things in addition to producing musical sounds. In including this material, I leverage on many scholars’ work on performance in general and performative aspects of music. A brief summary of this work is provided in the next section.

Some may object to the application to medieval Chinese texts of the concept of performative aspects of music, on the grounds that there is no explicit

⁴ With respect to Western Europe, it is generally accepted that the concept of composer as we use it today did not exist prior to the nineteenth century. Those who produced musical compositions shared their material more freely with one another than would be an accepted practice now, and they worked towards specific performances, rather than a finished, standalone musical work that only one musician-composer had privileged access to. See Lydia Goehr, *The imaginary museum of musical works*, 179–185.

⁵ See Nicholas Cook, “Bridging the unbridgeable?” 72, for a description of traditional musicologists’ view that music performance is best analyzed by distinguishing musical from “extra-musical” aspects of performance.

reference to this concept in the texts. The counterargument that this study rests on is that, just as we can talk meaningfully about ideas about music and emotion in medieval China, despite their being no explicit reference to music as a general concept or emotion as a general concept, descriptions in the texts of music performances can imply a belief in performativity;⁶ an exploration of how that implied belief may have informed the description of the music performance in the text can tell us something about the description that we might miss otherwise.

Music performance anecdotes are found primarily in *Shishuo xinyu*, which contains eleven anecdotes that directly describe the playing of musical instruments or that refer to someone having heard a musician playing. Musical instruments in these anecdotes include drums, in five anecdotes; a *qin*, in four anecdotes; a bamboo flute; and a lute. Not all the musical instrument playing fits the definition of performance for the purposes of this study: three of the drum anecdotes are descriptions of practical uses of drums for limited, narrowly defined purposes such as war rituals, a summons to attend a hearing, or the production of noise to attempt to rattle someone's nerves⁷ and hence are not music performances as defined herein. Of the remaining eight, five are discussed in this or the following two chapters, along with several passages from other texts that highlight various performative aspects of music.

⁶ I am using the term "performativity" to refer to the performative aspects of any activity including music. The term has its roots in theories of language. J. L. Austin was one of the earliest to analyze performative speech acts, which perform a function in addition to stating something. An example is the utterance "I do" at the altar; see J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, 5. Judith Butler examined the performative functions of hate speech, exploring its power to inflict injury; see Butler, *Excitable speech*.

⁷ See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 280 (6.25), 425 (10.13), and 462 (13.13).

The other three performance anecdotes – all involving the *qin*⁸ – do not have performative aspects, in the sense that either the audience is an insignificant aspect of the anecdote, or there is no description of the behavior of the musician. Two of these anecdotes are deathbed scenes in which a visitor plays (or tries to play) the dead man’s *qin*, but the visitor is playing to himself; the third is a story about someone overhearing someone’s *qin* playing but there is no description of the behavior of the musician. It is probably not a coincidence that these three, non-performative tales of instrument playing involve the *qin*, which has customarily been viewed in a class by itself with its own, distinctive traditions that revolve around self-cultivation.⁹

The depictions of music performances in *Shishuo xinyu* suggest that the compilers of the text knew¹⁰ about performativity more than a millennium before modern theorists coined the term; the anecdotes refer not only to the sounds produced by the musicians, but in many cases also describe the musicians’ gestures, facial expressions, or physical movements, as well as the responses of the audience. In addition, music performance is portrayed as involving persuading, protesting, creating or expressing identity, or displaying self-possession.

Music performance appears in *Shishuo xinyu* as one of many forms of what could be termed Six Dynasties “cultural performance,” if we use the term

⁸ See *ibid.*, 489 (17.7), 494 (17.16), 558 (23.22).

⁹ For discussions of *qin* traditions see Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue*, 293-311; Van Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*; DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 101-124.

¹⁰ This is not intended to suggest that the compilers of *Shishuo xinyu* had any explicit concept of performativity, but only that their attention to what scholars now call performativity implies that they thought those performative activities were significant enough to be a focus of an anecdote about someone playing a musical instrument.

“performance” in its broad sense of culturally encoded behavior.¹¹ A cultural performance might include, for example, a display of rhetoric such as Pure Conversation (*qingtan* 清談), a show of composure in the face of danger, or a demonstration of witty riposte. Many of the anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* are accounts of performances of these skills; *Shishuo xinyu* is in a sense a collection of descriptions of cultural performances, of which music performance was one type.

As discussed below, modern scholars often describe these references to cultural performances as evidence of an emerging concept of aesthetics, broadly defined. In this chapter I argue that the concept of performativity is more useful than that of aesthetics in making sense of the textual references to music performance.

5.3 Literature review

Major scholarship on performance and aesthetics that is applicable to Six Dynasties writing on music performance is summarized here. Section 5.3.1 pertains to performance, 5.3.2, to rhetoric, and section 5.3.3, to aesthetics. The section on performance and the section on rhetoric focus on scholarship that is not closely related to Chinese music or texts but that comprises theory that is relevant to the material treated in this study. The reason I draw on this scholarship is that, unlike ideas about the relationship between music and emotion – which have been examined in depth by scholars – early medieval ideas about the performative aspects of music have not been extensively explored by

¹¹ The idea of music as one many possible means of performing a cultural ideal is discussed by Dana Gooley in a description of an 1848 concert by the pianist Sigismond Thalberg. She considers Thalberg’s performance in the context of cultural ideals such as “aristocratic grace, of royal ceremony, and of national patriotism” (Gooley, “Enacting the revolution,” 102).

scholars. The literature review on aesthetics pertains mostly to scholarship on Chinese aesthetics, since that subject has received a great deal of attention.

5.3.1 Literature review: performance

Traditional musicologists analyze printed musical scores and view performance as a fleeting representation of the score that demonstrates varying levels of brilliance or lack thereof. The emergence of this type of musicological analysis is explained by Tobias Janz as a reflection of the late nineteenth-century shift from a music culture in which distinguished composers performed their own work to one in which great performers played the work of famous dead composers.¹² The techniques of philology were then applied to music texts to try to replicate the kind of analysis that had been employed for literary texts; one of the side effects of this development was that music began to take on the identity of a written text.¹³

In recent decades, musicology has undergone what is sometimes described as a “performative turn,” in which music has increasingly been analyzed as performance rather than as a collection of unchanging music texts.¹⁴ Tobias Janz defines the performative dimension of a music performance as those elements that include

[...] the voice, the body and the real-life presence of the performers and their actions, the actual sounding and operating of musical instruments, the actual environment in which the performance is taking place, and even the reaction of the audience¹⁵

The 2013 volume *Taking it to the bridge: music as performance*, aiming for an interdisciplinary approach to performance, presents some of the ways in which

¹² Tobias Janz, “Performativity and the musical work of art,” 6.

¹³ Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁴ Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, “Editors’ preface,” viii.

¹⁵ Tobias Janz, “Performativity and the musical work of art,” 3.

the performative aspects of music have been examined: there are chapters on “Guitar Hero,” Michael Jackson, The Grateful Dead, Italian opera, and a nineteenth century piano concert in Vienna.¹⁶ In the introduction to the volume, Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill sum up the view from performance theory that could not be more different from that of traditional musicologists: “Take away the act, take away the performance, and you take away the music.”¹⁷

In Elisabeth Le Guin’s foreword to the volume, she points out that during much of human history text and performance were viewed as more closely related than they are now: texts were recited rather than read; “reading *was* performance,” and writing was essentially “the preparation of a score for that performance.” St. Augustine’s *Confessions* is one of the first written Western references to silent reading.¹⁸ In connection with Le Guin’s point about reading as performance, a paper by Jack W. Chen is worth mentioning here although it is not specifically about performance or about music. In his description of reading practices in medieval China, Chen states, “vocalized reading was the dominant mode.”¹⁹ As Le Guin does, he identifies possible early written references to reading silently – in the third and the fourth centuries – around the same time as St. Augustine’s *Confessions*.²⁰ In China, as well as the West, text and performance were once assumed to be closely integrated activities.

Modern scholarship on performative aspects of music has been influenced by performance theory. One of the early performance theorists was Richard Schechner, a theater director whose 1985 volume analyzes the nature of

¹⁶ Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, eds., *Taking it to the bridge: music as performance*.

¹⁷ Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Le Guin, “A backward-looking foreword,” xii.

¹⁹ Jack W. Chen, “On the act and representation of reading in medieval China,” 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

performance from a broad, anthropological perspective. He includes in the definition of performance seven phases, which include training, workshop, rehearsal, preparations, performance, cool-down, and aftermath – each of which is emphasized to varying degrees in different cultures – as well as audience participation.²¹ Schechner views performance theory as comprising two aspects: the study of individual or social behavior as performance, and the study of art performance as personal or social interaction.²²

Scholars who have written about performance aspects of music include the musicologist Christopher Small, the sociologist Simon Frith, and the musicologist Nicholas Cook. Christopher Small coined the word “musicking” to reflect his view that there is no such thing as a musical work divorced from performance, but only an activity called “to music” or musicking:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.²³

Small believes that an analysis of a music performance should not be limited to the activities of the performer or the composer, but should treat the performance as “an encounter between human beings that takes place through the medium of sounds organized in specific ways.”²⁴ He points out that there are many cultures that have no concept of a musical work, but only singing, playing, listening and probably dancing.

²¹ Richard Schechner, *Between theatre and anthropology*, 16, 22.

²² *Ibid.*, 296.

²³ Small, *Musicking*, 8-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Simon Frith devotes a chapter to performance in his volume on popular music.²⁵ He explores various aspects of pop music performance such as gestures, facial expressions, and clothing and, like Small, includes listening as an aspect of performance. Frith talks about the “double enactment” of pop musicians, in their simultaneous performance of a song personality particular to a given act, and a star personality (image) that has to continue to be projected throughout and between each act. Pop stars “continuously register their presence” as a physical body performing a physical sound.²⁶

Nicholas Cook discusses the contribution that an examination of video recordings, aided with empirical analysis, can make to an understanding of performative aspects of piano performance.²⁷ He provides an example of how various pianists’ use of phrase arching²⁸ as demonstrated in video performances can yield quantifiable differences in how the same musical work is played by different musicians. While someone observing the videos would perceive the difference between the musicians’ approaches, the empirical analysis clearly identifies what those differentiating performance factors are.

5.3.2 Literature review: rhetoric

Scholars in disparate regions and at varied times have noted the links between music and rhetoric. A recent example is a 2013 essay by Nicholas Cook

²⁵ Frith, *Performing rites*, 203-225.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁷ Nicholas Cook, “Bridging the unbridgeable?” 78-83.

²⁸ This is a common practice in which the beginning of a phrase, and the ending segment of a phrase, are played slow and soft compared to the middle of the phrase. This is generally considered to make a phrase more expressive.

and Nicola Dibben, who discuss the music-rhetoric link in the Baroque era²⁹ in the West (ca. 1600-1750) in the context of emotion in music:

[...] baroque musicians borrowed wholesale from contemporary thinking about language, seeking to understand even instrumental music as a form of discourse and, in particular, applying to it the principles of classical rhetoric.³⁰

Cook and Dibben suggest that the reason for the musicians' interest in language was that, at the time, music was viewed as a representation of reality (*mimesis* to the Greeks), similar to language. The authors state,

[...] in each case the aim was persuasion: just as legal or political orators would seek to persuade their listeners of the case being presented, so musicians sought to convince audiences of their emotional veracity.³¹

Greek and Roman ideas about rhetoric were reflected in baroque music treatises, which advised composers how to move their audiences. The treatises covered not only music composition but also gestures used in opera.³²

In an exploration of the relationship between composer, dedicatee, performer, music score, and instrument in Haydn's music, Tom Beghin describes the connections between music of eighteenth-century Western Europe and concepts of rhetoric. He describes the similarities between principles of rhetoric and the considerations taken when composers and modern musicologists and performers decide how to compose, analyze, and perform the music: the ruminations of the musicologist are like *elocutio* (expression of ideas through words); the thought process of the eighteenth-century composer resembles *inventio* (the development

²⁹ Baroque era music theorists were known for their interest in the relationship between music and rhetoric, especially in Germany and England; see Dietrich Bartel, *Musica poetica*, 59-61. An example is the German musicologist Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), who describes his work as taking "the *loci topici* of rhetoric and apply[ing] them to musical composition, where they can be uncommonly useful." (Translated from German by Hans Lenneberg in "Johann Mattheson on affect and rhetoric in music (I)," 83.)

³⁰ Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, "Emotion in culture and history: perspectives from musicology," 47.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

³² *Ibid.*, 53.

of ideas); and the process of performing, *actio* (the delivery, including body and gestures).³³ The performer is a kind of musical orator whose performance choices are informed by his judgment of the likely responses of his audience. He has to understand the rhetorical underpinnings of the piece performed, for example, where the composer creates suspense or surprise, and to deliver them in the most persuasive manner.³⁴

Beghin draws an analogy between British parliamentarians' "Rising to speak" and pianists raising their arms before beginning to perform. He furthermore points out that Haydn's compositions, like parliamentary speeches, embed oratorical questions into the narrative to establish sympathetic contact with the listeners.³⁵

Patrick Saint-Dizier devotes an entire volume to the connection between music and rhetoric, using computational linguistics to analyze the rhetorical nature of music.³⁶ He focuses on western music from 1600 to 1850 (hence including Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music). Saint-Dizier defines rhetoric as "a discipline that uses any type of discourse, e.g. spoken, written, gestural, with the aim of persuading an audience to approve a fact, a decision or an attitude." He then states,

[...] a discourse aimed at convincing an audience clearly needs to combine language, which conveys the main elements of meaning, with non-verbal means of persuasion. These non-verbal means are essentially visual or are based on the use of appropriate sounds and music.³⁷

³³ Tom Beghin, *The virtual Haydn*, 4-5.

³⁴ Beghin discusses this in a section called "'Orating' Haydn's keyboard sonatas;" see *ibid.*, 63-70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 237-242.

³⁶ Patrick Saint-Dizier, *Musical rhetoric*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xi.

Saint-Dizier analyzes the similarities between language and instrumental music, for example detailing the resemblance between attributes of spoken questions and responses and musical questions and responses, in a chapter titled “A rhetoric analysis of musical works.”³⁸

A limitation of Beghin’s and Saint-Dizier’s analyses, especially for the sinologist, is that they are focused on Western languages and Western music. The quantification of the degree to which language and music around the world share rhetorical features would require the use of a great deal more musical and linguistic data, and possibly more knowledge of the brain than we currently have.

5.3.3 Literature review: aesthetics

Many scholars invoke the concept of aesthetics in their investigations of *Shishuo xinyu*. Their analyses are muddled somewhat by the mingling of different definitions of aesthetics, which – although rarely specified – include ideas about what constitutes beauty, opinions about what is valuable in art, and more general notions extending outside the realm of art, about what behavior and values are to be sought after. This scholarship is summarized below.

In Wai-Yee Li’s essay on aesthetics in *Shishuo xinyu*, she describes the text as primarily about “the compass of beauty,” defined to include physical, moral, and other types of beauty.³⁹ Aesthetics in this context represents values that are divorced from political life, as contrasted with the discourse of previous eras in which political and social considerations were always the focal point.⁴⁰ Li

³⁸ Ibid., 150-155.

³⁹ Li Wai-ye, “*Shishuo xinyu* and the emergence of aesthetic self-consciousness,” 237.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 240.

sometimes includes performativity within her definition of aesthetics; for example, her depiction of Pure Conversation (*qingtan*) in *Shishuo xinyu* reads,

Accounts of Pure Conversation in *Shishuo* dwell more on the contexts of performance; the ranking and evaluation of the participants; the speaker's style, appearance, wit, and eloquence; and the audience's reaction than on the content of arguments (which more often than not is passed over in silence.) Pure conversation is an aesthetic spectacle.⁴¹

Li does not use the word performativity or refer explicitly to performance theory, but this portrayal of accounts of Pure Conversation in *Shishuo xinyu* sounds much like a description of performativity. If the word "performative" were substituted for "aesthetic" in the above passage, it would sound much like a passage out of something from Small, Frith, or Cook given her observation of interest in context, style, appearance, and audience reaction. In *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, the relationship between music performance and sound parallels the relationship Li describes between Pure Conversation and the content of the conversations: in the passages concerning music performances, there is less said about the nature of the sound produced than about the context of its production, just as there is little emphasis on content in the passages involving Pure Conversation.

Ronald Egan's discussion of aesthetics in the Six Dynasties focuses on Ruan Ji's and Xi Kang's essays about music, especially the relationship between music and nature, music and emotion, and the lofty status of soundless music. Interpreting *mei* 美 as "beauty," Egan sees evidence of a new belief in the "centrality of aesthetics"⁴² in Ruan Ji's "Qingsi fu" 清思賦 (Rhapsody on purifying thoughts),

⁴¹ Ibid., 242.

⁴² Egan, "Nature and higher ideals," 297.

余以為形之可見，非色之美；音之可聞，非聲之善。⁴³

I believe that the forms that can be seen are not the most excellent (*mei* 美) sights; the tones that can be heard are not the finest sounds.

Egan's translation reads, "I maintain that forms that are visible are not the most beautiful of sights, and notes that can be heard are not the finest music." The interpretation of *mei* as "excellent" seems to fit better than "beauty," since the position of *mei* is parallel to that of *shan* 善 in the sentence, and *mei* and *shan* are near-synonyms if *mei* is taken to mean "excellent."

In addition, Li and Egan may be overstating the interest in beauty demonstrated in these texts; for example, in the *Shishuo xinyu* passage, 共嗟詠二家之美，不辯其理之所在⁴⁴ (All sighed and lauded both men's excellence, not distinguishing between the strength of their logic), Li interprets *mei* 美 to mean beauty, and, as a result, reads the passage to mean that beauty was the most important standard applied to the debate. Her translation reads, "together they [i.e., the audience] marveled and lingered over the beauty of the performance from both sides, without the slightest discrimination regarding the content of their respective arguments."⁴⁵ However, *mei* does not always mean beauty. *Mei* appears in *Shishuo xinyu* thirty-seven times, and, while it seems to clearly mean beauty in certain places, in most cases it appears to mean something closer to "excellent." The anecdotes in which *mei* most plainly means beauty are concentrated in chapter 14, which is a collection of anecdotes about human beauty. With respect to the *Shishuo xinyu* passage above, the audience may have

⁴³ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 29.

⁴⁴ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 176 (4.40).

⁴⁵ Li Wai-yee, "Shishuo xinyu and the emergence of aesthetic self-consciousness," 243.

been responding to the men's cleverness with words, which could have more to do with skill than beauty.⁴⁶

Kenneth DeWoskin uses a broader definition of aesthetics, referring to its meaning as a philosophy of art. DeWoskin states that, although texts of earlier eras indicated appreciation for "aesthetic value," aesthetic values themselves became fundamental to thinking about art only in the Six Dynasties. Key aesthetic values discussed by DeWoskin in connection to music performance are restraint and an emphasis on effort rather than outcome. He cites the stringless *qin* as an example of how "mere going through the motions" is highly valued.⁴⁷

Li Zehou 李澤厚 defines the field of Chinese aesthetics (*huaxia meixue* 華夏美學) particularly broadly, to include for example questions about the relationship between art and ethics.⁴⁸ He describes the early Six Dynasties period as marked by an increased emphasis on an appreciation of beauty (*shenmei* 審美), citing the focus on beauty in character evaluations (*shenmeixing pinzao* 審美性品藻) in *Shishuo xinyu* as replacing an emphasis on evaluations driven by practical considerations related to political life (*zhengzhixing pinzao* 政治性品藻).⁴⁹ These early Six Dynasties character evaluations include the valuing of strong emotion and wisdom, combined together as a key aspect of character. In addition,

⁴⁶ Richard Mather translates this line as, "But in every case they were filled with admiration for the forensic skill of the two performers, without the slightest discrimination regarding the content of their respective arguments." See Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 120.

⁴⁷ DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 157-160. Also see Shen Yue's biography of Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming) in *Songshu*, 93.2288: 潛不解音聲，而畜素琴一張，無絃 ([Tao] Qian did not understand music, but kept one plain *qin* that had no strings). Descriptions of Tao Yuanming's musical habits varied from text to text and it is not clear that the stringless *qin* accurately represented his music habits or values; see Wendy Swartz, "Rewriting a recluse," for a description of how Tao Yuanming's image, including his reputation as a *qin* player, evolved over time.

⁴⁸ Li Zehou explains the defining characteristic of Chinese aesthetics as follows: [...]不是美與真的問題，而在情感形式（藝術）與倫理教化的要求（政治）的矛盾或統一（it is not a question of beauty or truth, but of the contradictions between, or reconciliation of, the forms of affect [art] and the demands of ethics teaching [politics]) See *Huaxia meixue*, 52.

⁴⁹ Li Zehou, *Huaxia meixue*, 172.

according to Li Zehou, in the early Six Dynasties aesthetics began to downplay concern with adherence to Ruist ethics.⁵⁰ Julie Gary argues, along similar lines, that, in Xi Kang's view, aesthetics replaced the tight link between music and Ruist ethics that had been assumed up to the early medieval period. However, she tempers this conclusion with the observation that there is a pragmatic angle to Xi Kang's view as well.⁵¹

Jack Chen makes a distinction between practical judgments and aesthetic (in the sense of beauty-focused) judgments in his comments about the *Shishuo xinyu* chapter "Pin zao" 品藻 (Gradations of excellence): "While the most memorable character evaluations tended toward an aesthetic remove, some that also portray the reactions of those being evaluated point to the underlying differentials of power and prestige."⁵² In Wendy Swartz's introduction to Chen's and others' essays, she ties his point about aesthetic characterizations to performativity, but like Wai-Yee Li tying performativity to aesthetics:

The way in which the literary vignettes in *Recent Anecdotes* [*Shishuo xinyu*] are constructed point to an aesthetic interest in the personalities at play: the level of narrative detail, the sophistication of the descriptive language, the fully developed dialogues, and the snappy remarks all enable the complex, interesting, and dynamic aspects of the characters to enfold. In *Recent Anecdotes*, the performative element of human personality is put on display.⁵³

5.4 Cultural backdrop

Parallels between music and persuasive language have been a longstanding theme of discourse on music and poetry in China. For example, Chen Kui's 陳騏 (1128-1203 CE) *Wenze* 文則 (Principles of literature) – which has been described

⁵⁰ Ibid., 176.

⁵¹ Julie Gary, "Esthétique de la musique en Chine médiévale," 496.

⁵² Jack W. Chen, "Classifications of people and conduct," 364.

⁵³ Wendy Swartz, "Imaging self and other," 327.

by scholars as “China’s first systematic account of rhetoric”⁵⁴ – uses a musical analogy to discuss language: 夫樂奏而不和，樂不可聞；文作而不協，文不可誦⁵⁵ (Now, [if] music is played without harmony (*he* 和),⁵⁶ it cannot be heard; if writing is composed without consonance, it cannot be recited).

Although there may not have been “systematic” analyses of rhetoric as a specific topic of study prior to the twelfth century, early Chinese texts referred to poetry (or speech) and music as analogous or interdependent sources of influence and persuasion. Examples include the early Ruist texts *Lunyu* and *Xunzi*, as well as the “Great preface” to the *Shijing*.

In the case of *Lunyu* (15.11), language is represented not by poetry but by speech. The persuasive effects of music and speech, used to promote moral behavior, are discussed in contiguous lines and analogous terms:

樂則韶舞。放鄭聲，遠佞人。鄭聲淫，佞人殆。⁵⁷

[Refined] music is that of the Shao dance. Abandon the sounds of Zheng, distance oneself from glib talkers. The sounds of Zheng are depraved, and glib talkers are dangerous.

Xunzi also refers to music as a kind of persuasive language. Speaking of a method used by ancient sages to guide people from the disorder that can result from lack of restraint, *Xunzi* states,

先王惡其亂也，故制雅頌之聲以道之⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See Andy Kirkpatrick, “China’s first systematic account of rhetoric: an introduction to Chen Kui’s *Wen Ze*,” 103; and Christoph Harbsmeier, “The rhetoric of premodern prose style,” 893.

⁵⁵ Chen Kui, *Wenze* 1.3 [8].

⁵⁶ The precise meaning of *he* 和 (harmony) here is not clear from the context, but one of Chen Kui’s contemporaries, Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073 CE), was known for his ideas about harmonious music, which he believed had a calming influence. In the context of Zhou Dunyi’s writing, the meaning of “harmonious” seemed to be closer to the non-technical modern English meaning than to any technical musical term. Perhaps Chen Kui’s comment was in this spirit. See Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shi gao*, volume 2, 249–250.

⁵⁷ Cheng Shude, *Lunyu jishi*, 15.11 [1399–1400].

⁵⁸ Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 379 (“Yuelun”).

The ancient kings disliked this disorder. Therefore [they] established the sounds of odes and hymns in order to guide them.

In *Shijing*, words and music are closely linked in the sense that what we now see as poetry in the written text is believed to have been sung rather than read.⁵⁹ The “Great preface” to the *Shijing* comments on the persuasive effect of poetry as music:

風，風也，教也。風以動之，教以化之。⁶⁰

The “Airs”⁶¹ are influence and teaching. Influence is used to stir people; teaching is used to transform people.

The Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) scholar Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648 CE), commenting on the “Great preface” more than a millennium after the *Shijing* poems were likely to have been composed, also referred to the close relationship assumed in the “Great preface” between music and words: 詩是樂之心。樂為詩之聲 (poetry is the mind of music; music is the sound of poetry).⁶²

Certain early imperial forms of poetry or prose that flourished long after the Ruist texts and *Shijing* poems were composed also functioned as instruments of persuasion. Martin Kern describes Rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), for example, as “a performative genre of rhetoric, entertainment and moral instruction.”⁶³ Hellmut Wilhelm, similarly, discusses Rhapsodies in the context of the custom of “reciting

⁵⁹ Lu Xing, *Rhetoric in ancient China*, 73.

⁶⁰ Kong Yingda, *Mao Shi zhengyi*, 1A.4b [12].

⁶¹ *Shijing* consists of four sections: “Guo feng” 國風 (Airs of the states), “Xiao ya” 小雅 (Minor odes), “Da ya” 大雅 (Major odes), and “Song” 頌 (Hymns).

⁶² Kong Yingda was commenting on the statement in the “Great preface,” 先王以是經夫婦，成孝敬，厚人倫，美教化，移風俗。(The ancient kings used this [poetry] to regulate [the relationships between] husbands and wives, to achieve filial respect, to deepen human relations, to refine transformational teaching, [and] to alter mores and customs). Kong Yingda’s commentary points out that poetry and music, since ancient times, have worked together (*xiang jiang* 相將) to achieve these aims. See Kong Yingda, *Mao Shi zhengyi*, 1A.9a [15].

⁶³ Martin Kern, “Western Han aesthetics and the genesis of the *fu*,” 389.

poetry in order to make a point by indirection.”⁶⁴ There is a direct comparison of Rhapsodies with music in *Shiji*:

楊雄以為靡麗之賦，勸百風一，猶馳騁鄭衛之聲，曲終而奏雅，不已虧乎？

65

Yang Xiong [53 BCE – 18 CE] believed that extravagant and beautiful Rhapsodies offered one indirect criticism for every hundred instances of encouragement, similar to hurriedly galloping among the sounds of Zheng and Wei, [and], once the tunes are finished, playing the “Ya” odes; is that not exceedingly deficient?

I will argue below that, in some respects, music performance seemed to be a musical equivalent of Rhapsodies in its function as a means of persuasion.

An example of prose as persuasive device is the *Zuozhuan*: focusing on speeches in the text, Jeffrey Tharsen analyzes the acoustic patterns used, arguing that euphony and phonetic devices were used to enhance the rhetorical effectiveness of the language: “[...] ancient Chinese orators used highly patterned language and ‘artistic prose’ to express deep truths, and to persuade others.”⁶⁶

As of the Six Dynasties, when Xuanxue became popular, rhetoric continued to be considered an important aspect of discourse: “Almost without exception, the scholars later recognized as major Xuanxue proponents were virtuosi in the art of argumentation.”⁶⁷ An aspect of Six Dynasties rhetoric that had significance for musical performance was its form: “Many of the written discourses adopted the structure of the dramatic dialogue, in which a ‘host’ and a ‘guest’ argue a topic in

⁶⁴ Hellmut Wilhelm, “The scholar’s frustration,” 313.

⁶⁵ Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 117.2161-2170, “Sima Xiangru liezhuan” 司馬相如列傳 (The biography of Sima Xiangru). The “sounds of Zheng and Wei” refers to alluring music that leads people down the wrong path.

⁶⁶ Tharsen, Jeffrey R. “Chinese euphonics: phonetic patterns, phonorhetoric and literary artistry in early Chinese narrative texts,” 285.

⁶⁷ Alan K.L. Chan, “Introduction,” 5.

numerous rounds.”⁶⁸ As shown in the illustrations in section 5.5 below, the music performances described in *Shishuo xinyu* were analogous to the host-guest structure – the musician playing the part of host, and the audience, the part of guest.

One aspect of Xuanxue culture that employed the host-guest structure was Pure Conversation. The following *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote about Pure Conversation suggests a belief in a close relationship between language and sound: Pure Conversation expertise required the skilled use of not only spoken language but also the sound of the voice, which seemed to be viewed as something between music and speech:

劉尹至王長史許清言，時荀子年十三，倚床邊聽。既去，問父曰：「劉尹語何如尊？」長史曰：「韶音令辭，不如我；往輒破的，勝我。」⁶⁹

Governor Liu [Tan]⁷⁰ once went to Chief Clerk Wang [Meng's]⁷¹ mansion for pure conversation. At that time, Kouzi [Wang Xiu]⁷² was thirteen years old and was leaning on the side of a couch, listening. Once Liu [Tan] had left, Kouzi asked his father, “How does Governor Liu [Tan's] conversation compare with yours, Father?” Chief Clerk [Wang Meng] replied, “For brilliance of tone and excellence in choice of words, he's not my equal; for consistency in striking [the mark], he surpasses me.”

The significance attributed to *yin* 音 (tone) here suggests that the speaker considered the sound of the words and of the voice to be a critical aspect of the art of Pure Conversation, a bit like the sound generated in a music performance.

⁶⁸ Wendy Swartz, “Trading literary competence: exchange poetry in the Eastern Jin,” 6.

⁶⁹ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 398 (9.48).

⁷⁰ Liu Tan 劉惔 (ca. 311- 347 CE) is described in *Jinshu* as having come from a poor family and remaining relatively unknown for some time. Later he became known for his eloquence. See Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 75.1990.

⁷¹ Wang Meng (309-347 CE) held modest administrative posts and was known for his quick wit and skill at *qingtan*. He is understood to have produced both prose and poetry, but only the poetry is still extant. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part 2*, 1203-4.

⁷² Kouzi was the baby name of Wang Meng's oldest son, Wang Xiu 王脩 (ca. 335-358 CE).

5.5 Illustrations from texts

In this section, passages from texts that suggest a belief in the persuasive power of music – working in a similar manner as skillful rhetoric – are presented. These passages are compared to displays of clever speech in the same texts, to highlight the features they hold in common. The overlapping language used to describe different types of performance – musical and spoken – and parallels in the reactions to these two kinds of performance suggests a belief in similarities between musical and spoken performance.

In the first part of this section, I revisit the two drumming anecdotes from chapter 4, to highlight the performative aspects of the descriptions of the drum performances, and also to show how the performative aspects of the drumming seem to have a kind of rhetorical function which overlaps with that of speech. The drumming passages are followed by an anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu* about a lute player. In the final part of this section, I examine some passages from *Jinlouzi* and *Wenxin diaolong*, in which the functions of music are explicitly compared to those of speech.

5.5.1 Drumming as rhetoric in *Shishuo xinyu*

The drumming anecdotes that appeared in the previous chapter are reproduced here for convenience. For explanatory footnotes please see chapter 4, section 4.5.2.3.

5.5.1.1 Mi Heng drumming

禰衡被魏武謫為鼓吏，正月半試鼓。衡揚枹為漁陽參搥，淵淵有金石聲，四座為之改容。孔融曰：「禰衡罪同胥靡，不能發明王之夢！」魏武慙而赦之。 Mi Heng was degraded by [Emperor] Wu of Wei [Cao Cao] to become a court drummer. In the middle of the first month, at the time of the review of

the drums, [Mi] Heng lifted his drumsticks and played the “Yuyang drumbeat.” [The drums] resounded deeply, like the sound of bronze [bells] and stone [chimes], and all in attendance were moved by it. Kong Rong said, “[Although] Mi Heng has been punished in the same way as someone in a chain gang, he has not been able to manifest [himself] in an enlightened king’s dream.” [Emperor] Wu of Wei was ashamed, and pardoned him.

And the *Wenshi zhuan* version:

衡擊鼓為漁陽摻搥，蹋地來前，躡駁腳足，容態不常，鼓聲甚悲，音節殊妙，坐客莫不慷慨，知必衡也。

[Mi] Heng beat the drums, playing the “Yuyang drumbeat.” [He] stepped forward, tapping and stamping his feet, with an unusual expression and bearing. The sound of the drums was very sorrowful; the tone and rhythm, strange and wonderful. Of those watching, none lacked [a response of] intense feeling. They knew [the drummer] must be [Mi] Heng.

The musician’s role in both versions of this anecdote is confined to the music performance; only those in the audience exchange words. The anecdotes’ emphasis on Mi Heng’s expression, appearance, and behavior, and on the reaction of the audience, suggests an interest on the part of the compilers of the texts in the performative aspects of the drumming.

Using Tobias Janz’s definition of performativity, we see that many elements of his definition are present in these anecdotes, including “the body and the real-life presence of the performers and their actions, the actual sounding and operating of musical instruments, the actual environment in which the performance is taking place, and even the reaction of the audience.” Moreover, the only part of the two passages that might be interpreted as a reference to aesthetics in the sense of beauty is the comment about the tone and rhythm being “strange and wonderful;” the emphasis of most of the language is elsewhere.

Even if we use the broader definition of aesthetic used by Jack Chen—in its sense of denoting a contrast with the political or practical—the passages do not seem to point towards the aesthetic side of the contrast. If anything, they seem to be more about the practical outcome of the performances, in their implications for the audience and their change of attitude toward the drummer. There is more to observe about the symbolism of the passages, and the drummer's shifting identity; these will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The persuasive effect of Mi Heng's drum performance is reminiscent of the statements from early texts noted above about the influential power of music, the rhetorical efficacy of poetry, and the close relationship between words and music. It is possible that the drumming anecdotes deliberately reflect these traditional ideas in implying that musical performance has persuasive and even rhetorical power. That said, the anecdote does not reflect the Ruist emphasis on proper behavior and social ramifications. Mi Heng is not using music to guide people's morals, as the compilers of *Lunyu* or *Xunzi* might have expected; his music was more like certain types of Rhapsodies in its "ostentatious self-defense."⁷³ In this respect, the anecdote illustrates Li Zehou's point about early medieval distancing from Ruist ethics.

There is an additional sense in which the drum performance as described in the texts has features that overlap with those of rhetoric, including Rhapsodies. As mentioned above, much of the argumentation in Six Dynasties writing was in the form of "dramatic dialogue;" while there is no repeated back-and-forth between Mi Heng and Cao Cao, the point of the description of the performance is not so much the details of what Mi Heng did as the interaction between

⁷³ See Martin Kern, "Western Han aesthetics and the genesis of the *fu*," 405.

performer and audience. The drum performance is similar in this respect to a recitation of early Han dynasty Rhapsodies in the sense that “most Western Han *fu* are ostentatiously modeled on spoken rhetorical exchanges.”⁷⁴

Cultural influences such as the early Chinese traditions of rhetoric, including the use of a kind of “dialogue” and other attributes of Rhapsodies, are likely to be only one driver of the nature of the drumming anecdote; there are certain aspects of the drumming performance that seem to straddle time and place. For example, the absence of speech from Mi Heng, and the persuasive effect on Cao Cao, seem to echo the abovementioned Baroque view of “instrumental music as a form of discourse.” Moreover, the description of Mi Heng lifting his drumsticks is intriguingly reminiscent of Tom Beghin’s reference to pianists’ rhetorical gesture of raising their arms before a performance. The element of surprise—one of the instruments of rhetoric Beghin explores—also makes an appearance here; Mi Heng’s performance is notable because he surprises his audience with gestures and sounds that are not normally heard in a routine drummers’ exercise at court. The treatment of surprise as a form of rhetoric is similar to David Huron’s point about the physiological effects of surprise: Beghin and Huron are making essentially the same point about the function of surprise in music, but from different analytical angles.

In addition, there are a number of characteristics of the two portrayals of Mi Heng’s performance that fit into Saint-Dizier’s description of typical features of rhetoric. The anecdotes contain explicit descriptions of what Saint-Dizier presents as the three main features of rhetoric, which are the speech (or music performance) itself, the speaker including his physical appearance and behavior,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 404.

and the audience.⁷⁵ The latter two elements can be seen as the performative aspects of the Saint-Dizier's three features.

Furthermore, Saint-Dizier divides rhetoric into three genres: judicial, which "charges or defends," "deliberative," which focuses on the future and helps the audience to make decisions, and "epideictic," which is for blame or congratulations.⁷⁶ The depiction of Mi Heng's drumming fits into the judicial genre in the sense that he defends himself – through a music performance – against his demotion and charges those in power with ill treatment. Saint-Dizier also mentions the importance of metaphors, which "can have a strong impact on listeners in just a few words."⁷⁷ Mi Heng's drumming is described in metaphorical terms, comparing the sound of his drums to bronze bells and stone chimes. Possible reasons for the effectiveness of this metaphor are discussed in chapter 8 of this study. A final point Saint-Dizier makes that is relevant to the drum performance is that "One of the foundational facts of rhetoric is that it is designed to persuade an audience via argumentation and emotion: a combination of rational and psychological factors."⁷⁸ Mi Heng is admired by the audience for his drumming skill – evidenced by his ability to produce the sound of bronze bells and stone chimes – which is analogous to skillful argumentation, and he is also effective at eliciting an emotional reaction from his audience, as discussed in chapter 4.

Some cultures view speech and music as being fundamentally less distinct from each other than modern cosmopolitans usually do. In Anthony Seeger's

⁷⁵ Patrick Saint-Dizier, *Musical rhetoric*, 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8; for Aristotle's original three-fold division of rhetoric genres, see C.D.C. Reeve, *Aristotle: rhetoric*, 11-54.

⁷⁷ Saint-Dizier, *Musical rhetoric*, 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

ethnomusicology classic *Why Suyá Sing*, Seeger describes *Suyá* “verbal art,” which encompasses “everyday speech, myth telling, recitative, invocation, oratory and two different kinds of song.”⁷⁹ While an observer can distinguish between these types of performances, Seeger found that *Suyá* themselves struggled to articulate the boundaries between them. Seeger suggests that, with respect to certain cultures, considering speech and music as points in a continuum helps to identify aspects of music performance that might remain obscured otherwise.⁸⁰

The similarities between music performance and speech are demonstrated in an anecdote closely following the Mi Heng passage in sequence in *Shishuo xinyu*. This next anecdote also refers to a scholar who was punished for insulting the emperor. This scholar, Liu Zhen 劉楨 (ca. 170 - 217),⁸¹ was known for his wit, and was said in the *Wenshi zhuan* to have secured a pardon through a performance but a purely verbal one.⁸² As mentioned in chapter 2, the position of an anecdote in *Shishuo xinyu* provides some hints as to its meaning in the eyes of the compilers; not only are the anecdotes grouped into thematic chapters, but shared attributes appear in contiguous anecdotes. For example, in the second chapter of *Shishuo xinyu*, where the Mi Heng passage is located, anecdotes including clever children’s retorts to adults tend to follow each other,⁸³ and there are five anecdotes in a row with some connection to the state of Wu.⁸⁴ Hence, the

⁷⁹ Seeger, *Why Suyá sing*, 44.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸¹ Cao Pi’s “Lunwen” 論文 (Essay on literature) states that Liu Zhen was from Dongping (modern Shandong) and names Liu Zhen one of the *Qizi* 七子 (Seven masters of Jian’an), a group of literati brought to court by Cao Cao. See Li Shan, *Wenxuan* 52 [2270] (“Dianlun lunwen”). Ten of Liu Zhen’s twelve extant poems were also included in *Wenxuan*.

⁸² See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 52 (2: 10), note 1.

⁸³ See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* 43-46 (2.2-2.6) and 85-87 (2.49-2.51).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-63 (2.20-2.24).

placement of anecdotes near each other suggests that the *Shishuo xinyu* compilers saw common features in them.⁸⁵

The Liu Zhen anecdote in *Shishuo xinyu* states,

劉公幹以失敬罹罪。文帝問曰：「卿何以不謹於文憲？」楨答曰：「臣誠庸短，亦由陛下綱目不疏。」⁸⁶

Liu Gonggan [Liu Zhen],⁸⁷ having been remiss in demonstrating respect,⁸⁸ was punished. Emperor Wen [Cao Pi]⁸⁹ asked, “Why were you not careful with the written rules?” [Liu] Zhen replied, “I am indeed mediocre and deficient; [my situation is] also owing to your majesty’s [regulatory] net mesh not having been set wide apart.”

This anecdote leaves the reader uncertain as to the reaction of the emperor to the witty comeback, but a similar verbal exchange between Liu Zhen and Cao Cao quoted by Liu Jun from the *Wenshi zhuan* in his commentary concludes with Cao Cao’s being so amused by Liu Zhen’s wit that he pardons him the same day:

武帝問曰：「石何如？」楨因得喻已自理，跪而對曰：「石出荊州懸巖之巔，外有五色之文，內含卞氏之珍；磨之不加瑩，雕之不增文，稟氣堅貞，受之自然。顧其理枉屈，紆繞而不得申。」帝顧左右大笑，即日赦之。⁹⁰

Emperor Wu [Cao Cao] asked, “How are the rocks?” [Liu] Zhen took the opportunity to make an analogy with his position and defend himself.

Kneeling, [he] replied, “The rocks are from the Jing [modern Hubei] cliff

⁸⁵ There is no way of knowing for sure that the order of anecdotes in the chapters has remained unchanged since the initial version of the text, but there is no reason to believe that the order has changed; the order of anecdotes in the oldest surviving fragment of the text from the Tang dynasty (which includes all anecdotes from Chapter 10, anecdote 4, through the end of Chapter 13, roughly equating to *juan* 6) is the same as that in the Yang Yong edition used for this study. The Tang fragment is included in Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu*. Also see Mather, *Shih-shuo hsün-yü*, xxxi.

⁸⁶ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 52 (2.10).

⁸⁷ Liu Gonggan was Liu Zhen’s courtesy name.

⁸⁸ Liu Jun quotes the no longer extant *Dianlüe* 典略 as stating that, when Cao Pi’s wife made an appearance at a gathering, 坐上客多伏，而楨獨平視 (the seated guests almost all prostrated themselves, but [Liu] Zhen alone looked straight at her). See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 52 (2.10).

⁸⁹ Cao Pi (187-226; r. 220-226 CE) was the first ruler of the Wei dynasty (220-265 CE) and was known as Emperor Wei Wendi 魏文帝.

⁹⁰ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 52 (2.10), footnote 1.

summits. Their exterior has quintuple-colored patterns; their interior holds the Bian family gem.⁹¹ Polishing it does not add luster; carving it does not augment the pattern. Its unique character is that it is firm and steadfast, having received it from the naturally-so. See its pattern twisting and winding, with no means of untangling.”⁹² The emperor looked back at his attendants and laughed out loud, and that same day pardoned him.

This longer, *Wenshi zhuan* version of the encounter between Liu Zhen and Cao Cao, like the Mi Heng anecdote, features descriptions of the speaker’s behavior and a “judicial” genre of rhetoric. It is also similar in its use of metaphors and surprise. Mi Heng’s drumming and Liu Zhen’s witty remarks seem to have served the same function of disarming someone holding the lion’s share of power and indirectly persuading him to do something in the performer’s interests.

5.5.1.2 Wang Dun drumming

(For explanatory footnotes please see chapter 4, section 4.5.2.4.)

王大將軍年少時，舊有田舍名，語音亦楚；武帝喚時賢共言伎藝事，人人皆多有所知，唯王都無所關，意色殊惡，自言知打鼓吹。帝即令取鼓與之，於坐振袖而起，揚槌奮擊，音節諧捷，神氣豪上，傍若無人。舉坐歎其雄爽。

When Generalissimo Wang [Dun] was young, he was known as a country bumpkin, and the sound of his speech was also coarse. Emperor Wu [Sima Yan] summoned the respected gentlemen of the time to discuss craftsmanship and artisanship. Most of the [guests] had some knowledge of [these matters]; only Wang [Dun] was unengaged, and his mood and countenance were especially dark. Since he said he was able

⁹¹ This refers to a story from *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 about a piece of jade found on a mountain by someone named Bian He 卞和 from Chu 楚. He offered the jade to three successive kings, but the first two only saw an unpolished stone and had Bian He’s feet cut off. Only the third king discovered the quality of the jade. See Liang Qixiong, *Hanzi jianjie*, 13.1 [98].

⁹² Alternatively, “See justice (理) twisted and winding, with no means of vindication (伸, equivalent to 申),” referring to Liu Zhen’s predicament. Liu Zhen’s skill with puns was presumably part of the source of Cao Cao’s amusement. My thanks to Liu Yangruxin 劉陽汝鑫 for pointing out the pun.

to play the drums and wind instruments, the emperor ordered someone to obtain a drum and to give it to him. At his seat, Wang [Dun] shook out his sleeves and stood up. Lifting the drumsticks he strenuously beat [the drum]. The sounds and tempo were harmonious and lively. His spirit and energy surged with boldness, as if no one else was there. All present exclaimed in admiration of his forceful vigor.

This passage is similar to the Mi Heng anecdote in the way that it focuses on the relationship between the musician and his audience, who were persuaded about characteristics of the musician that were not directly related to musical skill. In addition, as is the case with the Mi Heng anecdote, the description of Wang Dun's performance contains information about the performer's appearance and gestures, indicating interest in the performative aspects of the drumming. Like Mi Heng lifting his drumsticks, a pianist raising his arms, or the British parliamentarian rising to speak, Wang Dun shakes out his sleeves and stands up. The sound of the drumming is also noted, but the punch line is about the audience being impressed with the drummer's vigor.

There are additional features common to both the Mi Heng and the Wang Dun anecdotes: the drumming in both can be viewed as belonging to the "judicial" genre of rhetoric – Wang Dun was defending himself against a sense of marginalization by the elite – and both resemble Rhapsodies in their "ostentatious self-defense" and resemblance to dramatic dialogue. In both cases, the music was a replacement for spoken dialogue; Mi Heng was not in a position to speak his mind directly to Cao Cao, and Wang Dun was unable to participate in the discussion taking place among the respected gentlemen.

The resemblance of the music performance to dialogue is illustrated in a comparison with another anecdote in the same chapter as the Wang Dun

drumming tale that has a similar structure to the Wang Dun passage: Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373), another military official, inspires his officers and the local gentry with a kind of spoken performance, as follows.

桓宣武平蜀，集參僚置酒於李勢殿，巴、蜀縉紳，莫不悉萃。桓既素有雄情爽氣，加爾日音調英發，敘古今成敗由人，存亡繫才。奇拔磊落，一坐讚賞不暇。坐既散；諸人追味餘言。于時尋陽周馥曰：「恨卿輩不見王大將軍！」馥曾作敦掾。⁹³

Once Huan Xuanwu [Huan Wen]⁹⁴ had pacified Shu [western modern Sichuan], he called together his aides and officers and served wine in Li Shi⁹⁵ palace. Of the gentry of Ba and Shu, none failed to assemble. Huan [Wen] had always had a forceful character and vigorous air; in addition, on that day the sound and inflection [of his voice] resounded in noble [tones] as he recounted how, from antiquity to the present, success or failure have depended on men, and survival or extinction have been tied to human talent. [He was] uncommonly outstanding, rugged and flint-like, and all present sighed with appreciation without pause. When the gathering had dispersed, everyone was still savoring the flavor of the lingering sounds [of his speech]. At that time, Zhou Fu (fl. 4th c.) of Xunyang [modern northern Jiangxi] said, "I regret you never met Generalissimo Wang [Dun]." Fu had served as [Wang] Dun's aide.

The reason for the appreciation of the audience is a combination of Huan Wen's appearance, the content of his speech, and the sound of his voice. The description of the tone and inflection of his voice, his vigorous manner, and the reaction of the audience is reminiscent of the depiction of Wang Dun's drumming performance. The major difference is the substitution of speech for

⁹³ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 458 (13.8).

⁹⁴ Huan Xuanwu was the posthumous title of Huan Wen, a high-ranking official from a military family. His biography is in Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu* 98.2568-2583.

⁹⁵ Li Shi 李勢 (d. 361; r. 343-347 CE) was the last ruler of the state of Cheng Han 成漢, one of the Sixteen Kingdoms (304-439 CE). Li Shi's rule ended with Huan Wen's capture of Chengdu 成都 in 347 CE.

drumming. It is also different from all the above anecdotes in that it fits Saint-Dizier's description of "deliberative" rhetoric rather than "judicial;" Huan Wen is trying to inspire his audience with respect to the future.

Mi Heng's and Wang Dun's drumming, Liu Zhen's witty remarks, and Huan Wen's rhetoric – which all can be viewed as varieties of Six Dynasties cultural performances – had similar persuasive effects on their audiences, with the function of music performance overlapping with that of clever speech.⁹⁶

5.5.2 Lute playing as rhetoric in *Shishuo xinyu*

An additional illustration of music performance as rhetoric is the following anecdote from *Shishuo xinyu*, which describes a reaction to a lute (*pipa*) performance.

5.5.2.1 Xie Shang strumming

或以方謝仁祖不乃重者。桓大司馬曰：「諸君莫輕道，仁祖企腳北牖下彈琵琶，故自有天際真人意！」⁹⁷

Some consider [being compared] with Xie Renzu [Xie Shang]⁹⁸ as indicating no great esteem. Grand Marshal Huan [Yi]⁹⁹ said, "Gentlemen, don't underestimate him. [When] Renzu puts one foot up

⁹⁶ Overlapping functions of drumming and speech also pop up in modern life: a performance of *xiangsheng* 相聲 in Singapore in August 2017 comprised eight acts, of which seven were spoken dialogues and one was a drumming routine of seven performers, none of whom said a word. The interaction between the silent drummers was similar to that between those delivering the spoken dialogues in their blend of stylized movements and competitive comedy. *Xiangsheng* literally means "face and voice" and is a kind of comedic art form in China combining humor, satire, and quick, competitive banter. See Perry Link, "The genie and the lamp: revolutionary *xiangsheng*."

⁹⁷ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 477 (14.32).

⁹⁸ Renzu was the *zi* 字 (courtesy name) of Xie Shang 謝尚 (308-357 CE), who held various government posts and, according to his biography in the *Jinshu*, was known to be a skilled musician. Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 79.2069.

⁹⁹ Huan Yi 桓伊 (d. 392 CE) had a reputation for talent in military matters. His biography in the *Jinshu* includes a description of him as a skilled musician, similar to Xie Shang. He was also an accomplished flute and *zheng* zither player. See Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 81.2118.

and plays the lute¹⁰⁰ beneath the north window, [he] naturally has the feel of an authentic person¹⁰¹ from the edge of heaven.”

As in the case of the two drumming anecdotes, the musician does not speak, and solely through his music performance influences the listener to alter his impression of the musician in ways that extend beyond his music skills. Xie Shang starts off the anecdote with a weak public image, like Mi Heng and Wang Dun in his youth, and ends the account of his performance as someone associated with heaven. As is the case with the previous anecdotes, the musician’s gestures are part of the description of the performance, and the audience (in this case, a single auditor) is an important part of the tale. He begins his performance with a gesture, raising a foot rather than a drumstick or his arms to shake his sleeves. The rhetoric is “judicial,” using Saint-Dizier’s terminology, in its defense of a reputation, in terms of its effects if not necessarily the musician’s intentions. Finally, like the Mi Heng anecdote, this passage contains a metaphor.

The following *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote about Ruan Ji is similar to the Xie Shang tale in that the way Ruan Ji speaks convinces a listener of certain character traits:

晉文王稱阮嗣宗至慎，每與之言，言皆玄遠，未嘗臧否人物。¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ The lute referred to in this anecdote is a round-bodied lute now known as a *ruan* 阮, because Ruan Xian 阮咸 (234-305 CE) was believed to have been a skilled player of the instrument. The modern lute now called a *pipa* is pear-shaped. The *ruan* was called a *pipa* until the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE); see Han Shude and Zhang Zhinian, *Zhongguo pipa shigao*, 16.

¹⁰¹ *Zhenren* 真人, which I have translated as “authentic person,” refers to a Daoist ideal which Roger Ames describes as a “person of pervasive 德 *de*,” a kind of “consummating person” who embraces the *de* of the natural as well as the human environment.” See Ames, “Knowing in the *Zhuangzi*,” 220-225. Ames translates *de* as “potency.” An alternative translation often used is “power;” see, for example, Arthur Waley, *The way and its power*, 32. Eric Hutton translates *de* as “a kind of power to sway others”: *Xunzi*, 345.

¹⁰² Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 13 (1.15).

King Wen of Jin [Sima Zhao]¹⁰³ called Ruan Sizong [Ruan Ji] extremely prudent; every time he spoke to him his language was in all cases about the abstruse¹⁰⁴ and distant, never about evaluating others' qualities.

Ruan Ji, unlike Xie Shang in the previous passage, is not introduced with negative associations at the beginning of the anecdote. The two anecdotes are similar, however, in that Ruan Ji's habits of speech, even on abstruse topics, create a favorable impression of Ruan Ji's character – and not just his verbal skills – in the mind of Sima Zhao, much as Xie Shang's lute performance projects an image that extends beyond his music skills.

The above passages from *Shishuo xinyu* suggest that music and speech were viewed to have similar value in terms of their rhetorical effectiveness. There is nothing in the text to suggest that either music or speech had an advantage over the other. There are passages in later texts however – *Jinlouzi* and *Wenxin diaolong* – that directly compare words and music. One excerpt from each of these texts is shown below.

5.5.3 Contrasting view from *Jinlouzi*

In the following passage, Xiao Yi compares two types of performance involving sound: spoken language and music. While the passage repeats some lines from *Xunzi*, and hence does not express original ideas of Xiao Yi's, its inclusion in *Jinlouzi* implies that he concurred with the points made. The passage comes from the chapter "Li yan" 立言 (Establishing words), which contains Xiao Yi's reflections on literature and political matters, and observations about nature.

¹⁰³ King Wen of Jin was the posthumous title of Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211-265 CE), a Wei dynasty military official who helped install his son, Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236-290; r. 265-266 CE), as first emperor of the Jin dynasty.

¹⁰⁴ This is a reference to Xuanxue.

The following extract seems to express a different view from the above *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, in which music is described as something that can have effects comparable to those of spoken language. At first glance, the “Li yan” passage seems to imply that Xiao Yi does not think highly of music as a source of moral guidance, implying that words deliver the most valuable, persuasive impact.

5.5.3.1 Xiao Yi on morals and music

與人善言，暖於布帛；傷人以言，深於矛戟；贈人以言，重於金石珠玉；
觀人以言，美於黼黻文章；聽人以言，樂於鐘鼓琴瑟。¹⁰⁵

Words of approval are warmer than cloth or silk; wounding words [cut] deeper than a spear or a halberd. To bestow [morally guiding] words is more valuable than gold, gems, pearls, or jade. To allow others to see [morally guiding] words is more beautiful than embroidered patterns [on ceremonial robes].¹⁰⁶ To allow others to hear [morally guiding] words is more musical¹⁰⁷ than musical instruments.¹⁰⁸

This passage combines parts of chapter 4 and chapter 5 of the received version of *Xunzi*. It is not clear whether Xiao Yi deliberately combined passages from two sections of *Xunzi*, used a different version of *Xunzi* from what is now

¹⁰⁵ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 580.

¹⁰⁶ Each of 黼黻文章 literally refers to a different type of embroidered pattern: *fu* 黼 were white and black patterns; *fu* 黻, black and blue-green (青); *wen* 文, blue-green and red; and *zhang* 章, red and white. See Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 84 (“Fei xiang”).

¹⁰⁷ 樂於 in this passage has been translated in different ways, because of the difficulty of distinguishing between its two possible meanings of music or happiness. Knoblock translates 樂於 as “more enjoyable” (Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 208), and Eric L. Hutton translates it as “more musical” (Hutton, *Xunzi*, 37). None of the commentaries shed any light on how to interpret 樂於; I chose “more musical” since that seems to have a relationship to musical instruments that is similar to the relationship between “warmth” and “cloth or silk” and to that between “more valuable” and “gold, gems, pearls, or jade.” The expression “more enjoyable,” on the other hand, has no special connection to musical instruments so its use would be less consistent with the rest of the passage than “more musical” is. The “Yuelun” chapter of *Xunzi* has many instances of ambiguous use of 樂於, perhaps implying that there is no material difference between “music” and “happiness.”

¹⁰⁸ *Zhong gu qin se* 鐘鼓琴瑟 literally means “bells, drums, *qin* zithers, and *se* zithers,” but four-word lists of musical instruments are often used to represent musical instruments in general, or music in general.

the received version, or used a different source altogether that repeated some of the content of *Xunzi*.

The first part of the *Jinlouzi* passage – up to *mao ji* 矛戟 (spears or halberds) – repeats, using the same words, an observation from chapter 4 of *Xunzi* about the strength of words in comparison to the power of physical comforts or threats.¹⁰⁹ Chapter 4 is titled “Rong chi” 榮辱 (Honor and disgrace) and discusses how behavior including choices of words leads to either honor or disgrace. The remainder of the *Jinlouzi* passage repeats, word for word, some lines from *Xunzi*’s chapter 5. Chapter 5, titled “Fei xiang” 非相 (Against physiognomy), argues that physiognomy is an ill-guided pursuit and that attention to appearance should be replaced by an interest in morally appropriate behavior. Towards the end of chapter 5, there is a section stating how important it is that cultivated men (*junzi*) speak out to promote correct attitudes. It is in this context that the statements cited above about the value of words arise.

This passage from *Jinlouzi* can be viewed as a string of references to performativity. As mentioned above, Judith Butler explores in her volume *Excitable speech* the performative functions of hate speech, examining its power to

¹⁰⁹The statement from *Xunzi* is, 與人善言，暖於布帛；傷人之言，深於矛戟； see Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 53 (“Rong ru”). The minor difference between the *Jinlouzi* version and the *Xunzi* version is that the *Xunzi* version reads, 傷人之言 instead of 傷人以言. The *Xunzi* commentator Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744-1832) states that the meaning of 傷人之言 here is the same as that of 傷人以言 (ibid., 53). The structure of the phrase 觀人以言 and the next similar four-character phrase (聽人以言) – which I will describe for the moment as the phrase X 人以言, where X represents either *guan* 觀 (see) or *ting* 聽 (listen or hear) – is glossed by the editor Wang Xianqian as, 我言之而人 X 之 (I use words to express it and people X it), with “it” referring to morally sound words from a scholar. In these two phrases, the person using the words is not the same person that is X-ing. The previous similar four-character phrase (贈人以言) is not explicitly addressed in the commentary, but the verb *zeng* 贈 (to give, bestow) does not seem to lend itself to the same structure. 傷人以言 and 贈人以言 seem to share a slightly different X 人以言 structure where X and *yan* 言 (using words) are verbs performed by the same actor. However all four X 人以言 phrases are similar in the sense that the *ren* 人 (person) is the recipient of the *yan* 言 (use of words). For alternative translations, see Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 186 and 208, and Hutton, *Xunzi*, 23 and 37.

inflict injury. In this *Jinlouzi* passage, Xiao Yi similarly refers to the potential of speech to wound, as well as its power to provide warmth. Moreover, to Xiao Yi, written or spoken language is not just a collection of words to be considered from a scholarly perspective; these words perform as instruments of moral guidance.

Since there is an entire chapter in *Xunzi* about the importance of music as a tool of governance (chapter 20, “Yuelun”), the emphasis on words in the above passage, and the comparison with music, might appear to conflict with “Yuelun.” The type of music referred to in the two chapters is different, however; the music of “Yuelun” is *yue*, the serious and refined music of the literati played in court and at rituals, while *zhong gu qin se* 鐘鼓琴瑟 is a more general reference to music and is likely to include music used for entertainment. The items in the paragraph that are compared with words – gold, gems, pearls, and jade; and embroidered patterns – are appealing because of superficial features, so the *zhong gu qin se* at the end of the list is likely to be an example of something with attractive outer features, such as music for entertainment, rather than solely music used for a serious purpose. That said, other parts of *Jinlouzi* suggest that Xiao Yi did think some types of music had a serious purpose; see chapter 7 of this study.

5.5.4 *Wenxin diaolong* on music and rhetoric

Liu Xie’s views on the connections between music and rhetoric are expressed in the chapter “Yuefu” 樂府 (Music bureau [songs]¹¹⁰), which is one of twenty that examine the genres of literature Liu Xie identified and includes a history of

¹¹⁰ The label “Yuefu” was applied in the Six Dynasties to songs that were said at the time to have been collected or composed by the Han dynasty music bureau. The earliest known use of the label is in *Songshu*, but Liu Xie was the first to use it systematically to refer to a literary genre. There is no evidence to conclusively link the songs identified as Yuefu to the Han music bureau, however. See Anne Birrell, “Mythmaking and *yüeh-fu*: popular songs and ballads of early imperial China,” 232–235; Martin Kern, “Early Chinese literature, beginnings through Western Han,” 96–97; Charles H. Egan, “Reconsidering the role of folk songs.”

each genre and examples of works belonging to the genre. The first passage below is from the beginning of the chapter, where Liu Xie introduces the genre and refers back to the traditional Ruist idea of music as an integral aspect of governance and influence:

5.5.4.1 Liu Xie on poetry and music

夫樂本心術，故響浹肌髓，先王慎焉，務塞淫濫。敷訓胄子，必歌九德；故能情感七始，化動八風。¹¹¹

Now, the root of music is the depths of the mind. Therefore, its sound penetrates the muscles and the marrow. The ancient kings exercised caution with respect to it, endeavoring to restrain excess. There was broadly applied instruction for descendants, requiring the singing of the nine virtues,¹¹² and as a result [they] were able to feel and to be moved by the Seven Beginnings,¹¹³ transforming and stirring the Eight Winds.¹¹⁴

This paragraph is an example of how rulers were represented as using music to help coax the populace within behavioral norms, taking advantage of the manner in which music influences emotions. Moreover, Liu Xie implies that there is something particularly effective about music in how it penetrates the human body and how its influence spreads.

A few paragraphs later, Liu Xie states,

¹¹¹ Zhan Ying, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 2 [229].

¹¹² The “nine virtues” is a reference to *Shangshu*, and is a list of essential virtues; see Kong Yingda, *Shangshu zhengyi*, 4.19a [61]. The virtues listed are 寬而栗，柔而立，愿而恭，亂而敬，擾而毅，直而溫，簡而廉，剛而塞，彊而義 (Tolerant but serious; mild but firm; direct but respectful; efficacious but reflective; reassuring but resolute; straightforward but gentle; benevolent but irreproachable; bold but sincere; and strong but righteous).

¹¹³ “Seven beginnings” is the name of a musical tune, and refers to heaven, earth, the four seasons, and man. See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 22.1046.

¹¹⁴ The meaning of *ba feng* 八風 evolved over time. As of the *Zuozhuan*, the Eight Winds were associated with different wind directions, each of which had different characteristics; see Kong Yingda, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 3.26a-b [61]. By the time of *Wenxin diaolong*, interest in complex cosmologies had waned, and *ba feng* is likely to have had a more prosaic meaning and to refer to a person’s surroundings and prevailing customs.

故知詩為樂心，聲為樂體，樂體在聲，瞽師務調其器；樂心在詩，君子宜正其文。¹¹⁵

Hence [we] know that poetry is the mind of music, sound is the body of music. The body of music is in sound; [hence] blind musicians work to tune their instruments; the mind of music is in poetry; [hence] cultivated men (*junzi*) appropriately rectify their writing.

Cai Zong-qi interprets this as an example of how “Liu Xie openly places poetry over music,” and how Liu Xie’s “comparison of sounds to the body means a relegation of music itself to a secondary status.”¹¹⁶ Cai supports this contention by highlighting the following line from the same chapter:

季札觀辭，不直聽聲而已。¹¹⁷

[When] Ji Zha contemplated the lyrics, [he] did not just listen to their sound only.

Ji Zha was the protagonist of what David Schaberg calls “the greatest episode of cultured performance known from the Spring and Autumn period” (770–481 BCE).¹¹⁸ A story in *Zuozhuan* describes Ji Zha as observing a performance of *Shijing* Songs in 544 BCE and, based on what he hears and sees, remarking upon what the Songs reveal about the quality of governance of the states represented by the Songs.¹¹⁹

Cai may be overstating his case: the first *Wenxin diaolong* passage shown above suggests that music is uniquely powerful in some respects, even to the extent of “transforming and stirring the Eight Winds.” Lie Xie does link poetry to the highest status individuals (*junzi*), and music to lowly blind musicians, but his

¹¹⁵ Zhan Ying, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 2 [251].

¹¹⁶ Cai Zong-qi, “The making of a critical system,” 46.

¹¹⁷ Zhan Ying, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 2 [251].

¹¹⁸ David Schaberg, *A patterned past*, 86.

¹¹⁹ See Kong Yingda, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, 37.8b-39.18a [667-672], “Xianggong ershijiu nian” 襄公二十九年 (The twenty-ninth year of Lord Xiang). Ji Zha (ca. 590-ca. 510 BCE) was the prince of the state of Wu 吳.

doing so does not represent a change compared to the past; *Xunzi* and *Liji* extolled the virtues of music at a time when professional musicians also had modest social status. Moreover, the reference to Ji Zha merely makes the point that music and poetry were viewed as intertwined.

5.6 Conclusion

Three *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes about music performance were discussed in this chapter, to highlight their performative elements including descriptions of facial expressions, gestures, behavior, and the reaction of the audience. The anecdotes exemplified one particular performative aspect of music: its function as rhetoric. Music performance and various types of speech seem to have been perceived as having overlapping functions, in terms of their capacity to persuade, to inspire, or to impress. Cultural performances – whether music or speech related – secured performers' freedom from punishment, transformed their public images, or enhanced the respect they were accorded.

Excerpts from *Jinlouzi* and *Wenxin diaolong* – both compiled about one hundred years later than *Shishuo xinyu* – were included to show a range of viewpoints about the persuasive aspects of music and words. The passage from *Jinlouzi* in particular is crammed with implicit references to performativity. Xiao Yi was concerned primarily with his legacy as established by poetry and prose; while some *Jinlouzi* passages suggest agreement with the classical view of music as key to governance, his focus was on the power of words.

Liu Xie, similarly, echoes classical beliefs about the importance of music in governance, while focusing nevertheless on the primacy of poetry as the appropriate central concern of cultivated men. In view of the purposes of Xiao

Yi's and Liu Xie's work, it is not surprising that the influence of the written word was of primary significance for both men.

Performativity and aesthetics, and the connection between music and rhetoric, were explored for their applicability to the textual passages examined. The concepts of performativity and music performance as rhetoric were useful in drawing out features of the music performance passages that might remain unnoticed otherwise. The anecdotes about Mi Heng, Wang Dun, and Xie Shang all include detail about the musicians' appearances and positions of the body in addition to the nature of the sound they produce with their instruments.

While the descriptions of the phases of the music performances are not as detailed as those of modern performance theorists such as Richard Schechner's seven phases of performance, the descriptions have something in common; the performance anecdotes examined here could be viewed as having three phases rather than seven. All three anecdotes start with a phase one that is an introduction to the circumstances or the significance of the performance, proceed to a phase two that is a brief description of the musical sound and the appearance of the musician while he is performing, and then end with a phase three that talks about the reaction of the audience to the performance. If aesthetics were key to the recounting of the performance, only phase two would be of interest. The compilers of the texts could have confined their comments to the quality of the musical rendering, even if as reported by others; the details of the audiences' sighs or change of heart about the performer as a person – rather than as the performer of one particular musical work – would not have been relevant.

These performance anecdotes suggest a twist on Simon Frith's description of the way in which popular music performers project two personas simultaneously: a song persona confined to the way in which the song is performed at any one event, and a more general persona that contains the song persona but also includes the behavior that precedes and follows the performance of a song. A major difference between Frith's depiction of popular music and the music performance anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* is that Frith is concerned with musicians' deliberate management of artificial public images, while *Shishuo xinyu* is focused on men's intrinsic character and how the performances reflect their character and change observers' assessment of it. Despite this difference, Frith's analysis of pop musicians' "double enactment" – which blends song personality and star personality in one performance – does help to highlight how the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes also depict a double enactment. There is firstly the drum or the lute personality, which is the personality that produces a particular drum or lute performance and is the equivalent of Frith's song personality. There is also a character personality, the equivalent of Frith's star personality, which exhibits traits that *Shishuo xinyu* compilers and readers recognize from their lexicon of character types.

With respect to rhetoric and influence, the views illustrated in the five passages discussed in this chapter to some extent echo those in early Chinese classics: *Shijing*, *Lunyu*, and *Xunzi* all contain references to the capacity of music to persuade, and *Shijing* and *Lunyu* directly compare the influential power of music with that of language. Moreover, music is represented in the passages as having certain parallels with Rhapsodies of an earlier era. Kern's description of

Rhapsodies as “a performative genre of rhetoric, entertainment and moral instruction” could apply to early medieval music as described in the texts; the music performance anecdotes all include characteristics of rhetoric, the passage from *Jinlouzi* highlighted the role of music as entertainment, and, while the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes did not demonstrate a connection between music and moral instruction, the passage from *Wenxin diaolong* did do so.

The previous chapter suggested that tradition is likely to be only a part of the driver of beliefs about music and emotion, given similar connections made between them in other cultures and at other times. The same can be said of beliefs about the relationship between music and rhetoric or music and language: the work of Nicholas Cook, Nicola Dibben, Tom Beghin, and Saint-Dizier exploring music as a form of persuasive discourse in Western Europe in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, and Anthony Seeger’s observations about the unclear border between music and speech among the *Suyá*, suggest that the phenomenon of overlapping roles for language and music has not been confined to any one cultural tradition.

A possible reason for the music-language overlap is a correspondence between physical attributes of language and music, such as the resemblance between spoken questions and responses and musical questions and responses in Western music noted by Saint-Dizier. It is also worth returning to Judith Becker’s concept of a supra-individual biological process, and the physiological effects of music on emotion noted by music therapists, psychologists, and neuroscientists summarized in the previous chapter. James Martin’s observation about rhetoric involving cognitive judgment as only one element of an affective process

suggests that the physiological components of affect may play a role in persuasive language that is similar to the physiological role of affect in music that music therapists and others have described. The effects of surprise are highlighted both by David Huron in connection with emotional responses to music and by Tom Beghin who treats it as a form of rhetoric. In addition, Douglas Derryberry's reference to the effects of rhetoric on the interpretation of social behavior and the formation of impressions about people could apply to the reaction of the audiences to the music performance in the three anecdotes discussed in this chapter.

This chapter also raised the question of whether aesthetics is a useful concept in examining the depiction of music performances in the texts explored in this study. A number of scholars have suggested that *Shishuo xinyu* in particular is an example of emerging interest in aesthetics. However, the concept of aesthetics does not seem to shed much additional light on the music anecdotes, once their performative features are examined. Beauty – as distinct from skill or persuasiveness – is not mentioned in the passages. DeWoskin's generalization about a new emphasis on effort rather than outcome does not seem to fit, either: all the music performance anecdotes shown above describe musicians putting forth maximum effort and being appreciated by their audiences partly for that reason.

Finally, in view of the role of character evaluation in the music performance passages, is there support for Li Zehou's point about character evaluations in the early Six Dynasties becoming more guided by appearances and less driven by ethics questions and practical considerations related to political life? Possibly;

none of the three performance anecdotes refers to ethics. Towards the end of the Six Dynasties, Xiao Yi and Liu Xie were clearly concerned with ethics and referred back to discussions of ethics in early texts. The difference between *Shishuo xinyu* and the two later texts may have reflected changing literati priorities over the hundred years between them. An equally likely possibility is that the compilers of *Shishuo xinyu* had different motivations from those of Xiao Yi and Liu Xie, and hence chose different material to include in their text.

Additional music performance anecdotes from *Shishuo xinyu*, as well as observations about performance from Yan Zhitui and others, are explored in the next two chapters. The question of what these music anecdotes imply about the importance of appearances as opposed to practical matters such as political concerns will be revisited in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Performance as protest

禮、樂、刑、政，其極一也，所以同民心而出治道也。¹
 Rites, music, punishment, and governance; they ultimately are one, the
 means to unify the hearts of the people and to bring forth the well-ruled way.
 –“Yueji,” *Liji*, 1st century CE

In the previous chapter, passages from Six Dynasties texts were explored in the context of implied beliefs in the performative dimensions of music, and, in particular, in the connections between music and rhetoric. The topics of the first two chapters were intertwined in the sense that the capacity of music to function as rhetoric is related to its ability to elicit emotional responses. In this chapter, another aspect of musical performativity is examined: music performance as a means of protest against power. Some aspects of music as protest can be viewed as a subcategory of the musical rhetoric discussed in the previous chapter; similar to spoken or written rhetoric, a music performance that seeks to challenge power aims at influence that is often sought through spoken language.

In early China and in the Six Dynasties era, music and power were considered to be strongly interconnected. Scholars' examination of early Chinese views on music and power focuses mostly on discussion of the role of music in governance and in upholding social hierarchy.² For much of the Six Dynasties, political instability disrupted court ceremonial life along with its music traditions, and modern scholarship does not focus to a great extent on the relationship between music and power during this era. Nevertheless, Six Dynasties texts suggest continued belief in a close relationship between power

¹ Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu*, 37.3b [663] (“Yueji” A).

² See, for example, Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 19, 29, 55-57; Scott Bradley Cook, *Unity and diversity in the musical thought of Warring States China*, 41-87; and Erica Fox Brindley, *Music, cosmology, and the politics of harmony in early China*, 43-61.

and music. This chapter aims to fill some gaps in the secondary literature by examining how that relationship is represented in a number of texts, particularly with respect to music as protest.

6.1 Methodology

The *Shishuo xinyu* music performance anecdotes that were not discussed in the previous chapter are examined here, to draw out ways in which music is represented as an instrument of protest. The analysis also includes some further observations about the drumming anecdotes from the previous chapters, to add some color inspired by theory on political protest. These *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes are supplemented with an excerpt from *Yanshi jiaxun* that provides some additional context.

This chapter continues to engage the question raised in the previous chapter as to whether descriptions of music performances point to an interest in aesthetics, whether in its meaning of beauty, in a focus on effort rather than outcome, or in the valuing of appearances at the expense of practical concerns such as ethics or political skills. In addition, as in the preceding chapters, theory that can apply to multiple cultures and eras is brought to bear on the texts, in order to put the analysis into a broader context that is not confined to one culture or time period.

6.2 Literature review

The general relationship between music and power has received a fair amount of scholarly attention from musicologists and political scientists.³ For example, the musicologist Arnold Perris surveys music used as propaganda as

³ For a summary, see Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous tunes*, 38-41; and Arnold Perris, *Music as propaganda*, 103-105.

well as music employed for protest, touching on popular music, the role of the music in nationalism, and the use of music as an instrument of political control in the Soviet Union and China. He views music as a means of persuasion: “[...] propagandizing is an ancient use for music; not to deceive, necessarily, but to *persuade*.”⁴

Ethnomusicologists such as Bruno Nettl and Timothy Rice have also addressed the connections between music and power. Bruno Nettl, for example, describes the ways in which music performs unequal power relationships; there are unequal distributions of power between genders, classes, and ethnic groups, and music reflects and performs these inequalities. Examples Nettl gives are the disappearance of Native American music repertoires and the challenges faced by Western female composers in gaining recognition.⁵ Timothy Rice describes music as a means of literally giving “voice to the powerless to label themselves [...] in contexts where the powerful either do not acknowledge their existence or label and identify them in ways they find objectionable.”⁶ An illustration that Rice provides is the role of oral music traditions in societies that reward literacy and education.

Mark Mattern, a political scientist, puts forward the concept of “acting in concert” to refer to the use of music by a community to achieve political goals. Mattern identifies three types of acting in concert: deliberative, pragmatic, and confrontational.⁷ Deliberative action entails the use of music to debate a community’s identity or commitments, or to negotiate a relationship with

⁴ Arnold Perris, *Music as propaganda*, ix.

⁵ Bruno Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 227.

⁶ Timothy Rice, “Reflections on music and identity in *Ethnomusicology*,” 31.

⁷ Mark Mattern, *Acting in concert*, 4-7.

another community. Mattern cites rap music as an example. Pragmatic use of music is the promotion of shared interests, involving power sharing and collective problem solving. An example is Sting's use of music to encourage action on the environment. Confrontational employment of music refers to a community's expression of resistance through music against another, usually dominant community, for example through protest music. These three forms of acting in concert sometimes overlap. Mattern focuses on three groups in particular – Chileans, Cajuns, and American Indians – to illustrate how popular music is employed to bring together individuals to work as communities towards common goals.

The political scientist James C. Scott does not discuss music specifically, but his ideas nevertheless are applicable to an analysis of the role of music as protest. Scott aims to rebalance the discourse on power relations from a focus on what he calls "public transcripts" – the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate – to greater study of "hidden transcripts":

Every subordinate group creates...a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of both hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination.⁸

Hidden transcripts are not necessarily confined to private spheres; they may be aired in indirect ways, in a manner that allows for deniability: "a partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript is always present in the public discourse of subordinate groups."⁹ His subject is not music

⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*, xii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

or other art forms, but his analysis is relevant to the performance of music in that music can be a kind of aired “hidden transcript.” Scott’s language overlaps with discourse on performance arts: his term “transcript” includes gestures and actions in addition to speech, and he refers to hidden transcripts as something kept “offstage”¹⁰ and to public transcripts as something “performed.”¹¹

An example of music as hidden transcript aired in disguised form is protest music. Katherine In-Young Lee, an ethnomusicologist, describes how traditional Korean music became a “sonic expression of resistance at scenes of protest.”¹² P’ungmul – percussion music generally performed by drums, gongs, and a shawm,¹³ and generally believed to be one of Korean’s oldest extant musical traditions – became “a kind of Morse code for movement or action” among student activists in the 1980s when Korea was ruled by an authoritarian government.¹⁴

The relationship between music and power in Six Dynasties China has received limited attention, even in secondary literature devoted to that period. The volume *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm*,¹⁵ which focuses on the Six Dynasties, is concerned overwhelmingly with literature. Qin Xu, relying on the *Jinshu*, describes efforts in the mid-third century to resurrect court ceremonial music. As described in the next section, music was a traditional way for rulers to project power. Although some revival of court music took

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² Katherine In-Young Lee, “Drumming of dissent.”

¹³ Ibid., 185.

¹⁴ Ibid., 198.

¹⁵ Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, eds. *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200-600*.

place, it was limited in scope, not approaching its former Han dynasty scale.¹⁶

Qin Xu also relates stories of elites using music as one of many tools of power to abuse female entertainers.

6.3 Cultural backdrop

As illustrated by the quotation from the “Yueji” that begins this chapter, the use of music as a governance tool is discussed in early texts. A similar example is from the “Yuelun” of *Xunzi*:

樂者，聖王之所樂也，而可以善民心，其感人深，其移風易俗。故先王導之以禮樂，而民和睦。¹⁷

[Refined] music is what the sage kings took pleasure in, and were able to use to make virtuous the minds of the people. Its emotion penetrates deeply, and it alters mores and transforms customs.

Hence, the former kings guided them using ritual and music, and the people were harmonious and peaceful.

Later on, during the Han dynasty when attention to metrology became particularly pronounced, the identification of and control over correct musical pitches was an important component of rulership. This concern for precise and correct measurement was not confined to music; pitches were only one of many types of measurement—including number, weight, capacity, and length—that received intense focus because of the critical role in governance they were assumed to hold.¹⁸ At the time, these measurements were believed to demonstrate correlations involving human behavior and natural phenomena on earth and in the heavens. All measurement standards were based on the

¹⁶ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 127.

¹⁷ Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 381 (“Yuelun”).

¹⁸ Hans Ulrich Vogel, “Aspects of metrosophy and metrology during the Han period,” 137-139. Also see Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, “Lüli zhi shang” 律曆志上 (Treatise on harmonics and chronometry), 21.955-989.

huangzhong 黃種 (literally, yellow bell, but actually a pitch-pipe), which according to legend originated with the Yellow Emperor.¹⁹ One of the ways in which rulers established legitimacy, and enhanced their power, was to demonstrate their adherence to principles set down by the Yellow Emperor and other sage kings. Because of the importance of identifying and applying the correct musical pitches, certain court officials were tasked with their administration.²⁰

Some of these early views about the role of music in governance were echoed in the third-century essays on music by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang. Ruan Ji, for example, states that the playing of music leads to a peaceful populace without the use of reward or punishment.²¹ Xi Kang, as well, reaffirms the importance of music in promoting social harmony, even if the thrust of his argument was less about governance than about the attributes of music.²²

Also worth mentioning as cultural context are the parallels between music and poetry discussed in the previous chapter. *Shijing* songs have often been interpreted as veiled protest, for example.²³ *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) poetry, similarly, includes a sub-genre that comprises expressions of resentment and protest against the powerful.²⁴ Rhapsodies (*fu*), as well, are frequently described as an indirect form of protest: Hellmut Wilhelm states, “[...] almost without exception they can be and have been interpreted as voicing criticism – either of the ruler, the ruler’s behavior, or certain political acts or plans of the ruler [...] In

¹⁹ Vogel, “Aspects of metrosophy and metrology during the Han period,” 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

²¹ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 79 (“Yuelun”). Also see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, 88-91.

²² Dai Mingyang, *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 357-359 (“Sheng wu ai le lun”).

²³ See, for example, Hellmut Wilhelm, who states that the *Shijing* songs “complain frequently about political oppression and social injustice”: “The scholar’s frustration: notes on a type of *fu*,” 311. Also see Michael Nylan, *The five “Confucian” classics*, 84-85.

²⁴ See discussion of *Chuci* in David Hawkes, *Classical, modern, and humane*, 127.

short, almost all *fu* have a political purport.”²⁵ Martin Kern and David Knechtges view Rhapsodies as more varied,²⁶ but there is general agreement that many Rhapsodies, if perhaps not as many as Wilhelm suggests, did serve a political purpose.

6.4 Illustrations from texts

6.4.1 Drummers revisited

The two drumming anecdotes discussed in previous chapters are examples of music as performance of protest; both Mi Heng and Wang Dun seem to use their music as a kind of protest of their treatment and social status. Mi Heng’s performance has something in common with what Wilhelm describes as the protest function of Rhapsodies, in which criticism of the ruler or the ruler’s behavior is voiced. In addition, there are certain aspects of Mi Heng’s performance that are reminiscent of the *Chuci* poem “Li Sao” 離騷 (Encountering sorrow), in which Qu Yuan 屈原 (trad. 340-278 BCE) protests his treatment by the ruler and others.²⁷ In the first lines of “Li Sao,” Qu Yuan identifies himself,²⁸ just as Mi Heng does by playing something from his region of origin. In addition, there are lines in “Li Sao” describing his attempt to enter the heavens,²⁹ just as Mi

²⁵ Hellmut Wilhelm, “The scholar’s frustration: notes on a type of *fu*,” 311.

²⁶ Martin Kern, “Western Han aesthetics and the genesis of the *fu*,” 397; David Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, 14.

²⁷ The author of “Li Sao” is traditionally believed to be Qu Yuan, a minister to King Huai of Chu (328-299 BCE) who was banished from the court after being stabbed in the back by rivals. It is unclear how much of the traditional stories behind Qu Yuan, including the authorship of “Li Sao,” is true. See Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 84.2481-2504, David Hawkes, *The songs of the south*, 51-65, and David Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, 15-18.

²⁸ 帝高陽之苗裔兮，朕皇考曰伯庸。(Descendant of Lord Gao Yang, my illustrious deceased father was called Bo Yong): see Tan Jiefu, *Qufu xinbian*, 271.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 276.

Heng seems to be communicating with the heavens by producing with his drums the sound of bronze bells and stone chimes.³⁰

Mi Heng's drumming is also a type of masqueraded protest. Scott's concept of a performance "transcript" is useful in this context: the drum performance may be seen as a public expression of what Scott terms a "coded version of the hidden transcript." At the court's review of the drums, Mi Heng conforms to the behavior Scott describes as broadly representative of subordinates, in which they ostensibly perform the tasks required of them.³¹ While superficially adhering to what is expected of him, Mi Heng also uses his music – his code – to make a point and, ultimately, to outmaneuver Cao Cao and secure a pardon, without saying a word.

Mi Heng's appearance on stage is a literal example of Scott's description of a hidden transcript that "leapt onto the stage to declare itself openly."³² Scott uses this allusion to the stage in a figurative sense, to describe a rebellion by Burmese against British colonial rule. Mi Heng's stage appearance is a rebellion on a much smaller scale, but Scott's terminology is still an apt depiction of Mi Heng's public airing of his grievances, even if it was in coded form. It may be that the sense of "storming the stage" in the face of power is one of the reasons that the *Shishuo xinyu* remains an enjoyable read even 1500 years after its creation; the witnessing of the courageous – and witty – airing, even in coded form, of hidden transcripts is something everyone can respond to, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, and even more than a millennium after the event.

³⁰ See chapter 8 of this study for a more detailed discussion of the significance of bronze bells and stone chimes.

³¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*, xi.

³² *Ibid.*, 15.

The manner in which the performances give each drummer a voice to fight back against powerlessness is also an illustration of Timothy Rice's observation about the way "music can literally give voice to the powerless to label themselves." The pre-performance labels of Mi Heng and Wang Dun—*gu li* 鼓吏³³ (court drummer) and *tianshe* 田舍 (country bumpkin)—applied by those in positions of power or high social status give way to relabeling as a result of the drumming performances.

The two drummers' performances can also be seen as illustrations of overlapping forms of acting in concert under Mattern's schema. While the protest element (confrontational, under Mattern's analysis) is the most obvious interpretation of the drumming, there is also a deliberative angle in which Mi Heng and Wang Dun seem to be negotiating their relationships with others. Mi Heng is perhaps representing the community of literati—relatively powerless in dealing with the court—in negotiating better treatment at the hands of the most powerful decision-makers. Wang Dun, at a gathering in which he feels set apart from the assembled community, successfully negotiates his relationship with them through his music. While the anecdote is focused on Wang Dun only, he may be seen as representing others in his position—perhaps facing prejudice from mainstream communities because of birth origin or a way of speaking—and achieving some opening of minds through his music.

It is unclear whether there was something about the nature or symbolism of drums that made them an especially suitable instrument for a non-verbal protest against one's treatment or public image. Drums were associated primarily with

³³ *Li* 吏 literally means low-ranking official.

military matters at the time, as illustrated in two of the other anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* that mention drums.³⁴ They were generally played along with wind instruments, and were used to boost the morale of troops or to signal a military advance. Perhaps the loud volume and forcefulness of the sound of drums make them natural instruments to convey the sense of advancing on an adversary, whether through military projection of state power, or, alternatively, through protest by the powerless. There is some evidence that drums have played this dual role in other cultures. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art drum collection includes two types of drums that are similarly decorated with symbols of the British empire but have contrasting uses. One of them is a set of eighteenth-century kettledrums that was used for state occasions. The other is a mid-twentieth century wooden Ashanti drum from Ghana that has carvings associated with proverbs and images that suggest resistance to British colonial masters. The Met blog describes the two types of drums thus:

The political message on this Ashanti drum is that with strength and patience, the British will be pushed out. So while these very different drums—separated by more than a century and a half in date of creation—are both decorated with an image of British royalty, they have opposite intentions: the kettledrums express the power of the state, and the breasted drum carries an explicit message of resistance against the state.³⁵

The next anecdote is from chapter 6 of *Shishuo xinyu*, titled “Ya liang” 雅量 (Cultivated tolerance). The chapter contains anecdotes about men remaining calm in the midst of disturbances or threats.

³⁴ See Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 300 (7.13) and 462 (13.13).

³⁵ Jayson Dobney, “Drums of power and resistance.”

6.4.2 Xi Kang strumming

嵇中散臨刑東市，神氣不變；索琴彈之，奏廣陵散。曲終曰：「袁孝尼嘗請學此散，吾靳固未與；廣陵散於今絕矣！」太學生三千人上書，請以為師，不許。文王亦尋悔焉。³⁶

[As] Xi Zhongsan [Xi Kang]³⁷ approached [the date of his] execution in the eastern market, his spirit and manner remained unchanged. He asked for his *qin* and plucked it, playing the tune “Guangling.”³⁸ At the end of the tune, he said, “Yuan Xiaoni³⁹ once asked to learn this tune, but I stingily [and] stubbornly did not [teach him]. The ‘Guangling’ tune is now finished!” Three thousand students from the Imperial University submitted a petition requesting that he become their teacher; it was not permitted. Prince Wen [Sima Zhao]⁴⁰ for his part was soon after remorseful.

This anecdote is similar to the other music performance passages discussed thus far in its focus on the performative aspects of the story rather than the sound produced by the musical instrument. The passage not only states that he plays a *qin* tune, but includes the detail of his first asking for it and then plucking it. The critical points of the anecdote seem to be Xi Kang’s unruffled manner as he approaches his execution, as well as the close association between him and his *qin*, to the point that a *qin* piece dies with him.

There is an additional version of the anecdote in *Wenshi zhuan*, which is cited by Liu Jun in the commentary. In that version, the points made about Xi Kang’s

³⁶ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 265 (6.2).

³⁷ *Zhongsan* was the title of a sinecure Xi Kang (223-262 CE) received as a result of marriage to a member of the Cao family. He was executed after getting on the wrong side of the political maneuvering of the tail end of the Wei dynasty. Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 49.1369-1374.

³⁸ Guangling is in modern Yangzhou, Jiangsu.

³⁹ Xiaoni was the style name for Yuan Zhun 袁準 (fl. mid 3rd century CE). He was known to be close friends of Xi Kang’s and Ruan Ji’s and served as palace steward under Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236-290 CE). See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part three & four*, 2081-2082.

⁴⁰ Sima Zhao 司馬昭, (211-265 CE) ordered Xi Kang’s execution.

calm manner and his *qin* also appear; neither Sima Zhao nor the students' petition is mentioned. The *Wenshi zhuan* version reads as follows. The *qin* tune is different from that in the *Shishuo xinyu* passage, but the point about the tune dying with Xi Kang is the same:

臨死，而兄弟親族，或與共別，康顏色不變；問其兄曰：「向以琴來不邪？」兄曰「以來。」康取調之，為太平引；曲成，歎曰：「太平引於今絕也！」⁴¹

Near the date of [Xi Kang's] death, [his] brothers and close kin all at once got together to say farewell. Kang's facial expression did not change. [He] asked his elder brother, "Have you brought the *qin*?" [His] elder brother said, "[I] brought it." Kang took [the *qin*], tuned it, and played the "Taiping" tune. [When he] finished the tune, [he] sighed, saying, "The 'Taiping' tune is now finished!"

In this version, the performative references are similar but not identical to those in the *Shishuo xinyu* passage: Xi Kang's facial expression is noted, and the physical specifics of his handling of the *qin* – picking it up and, in this case, tuning it before playing – are again described. There is no comment in either version of the anecdote about the sound of the *qin* or the musical nature of the *qin* pieces that are played; the focus is on the way the pieces were passed from one musician to another and on the close association between Xi Kang and the pieces. Hence, there is no support in these passages for an increased interest in aesthetics in its meaning of beauty. The emphasis on Xi Kang's unruffled manner – a performance of equanimity in the face of death – reflects the practice of character

⁴¹ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 266 (6.2), footnote 1.

evaluations that was prevalent at the time and that underlies the division of *Shishuo xinyu* chapters into character types.⁴²

Xi Kang's dispassionate manner attracts a fair amount of commentary from modern scholars. For example, Jack W. Chen describes it as an example of how the selection of anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* seems to indicate that men with "rigidly unchanging character" are valued, and that the text is "profoundly concerned with irreducible natures and personalities."⁴³ The differences between the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote and the *Wenshi zhuan* version support Chen's observation to some extent: the sigh (*tan* 歎) from Xi Kang that concludes the *Wenshi zhuan* version is absent from the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote. Perhaps the reason is that *Shishuo xinyu* compilers thought the sigh was incompatible with Xi Kang's unflappable image; references to sighing in early medieval texts were not generally an indication of equanimity.

However, Xi Kang's performance involves more than a demonstration of an immovable character type. In both versions of the anecdote, he deliberately chooses a *qin* tune that has special significance in his sole knowledge of it and in its imminent demise along with his execution. In Xi Kang's choice of *qin* tune and accompanying comments, his performance includes aspects akin to earlier poets' use of Rhapsodies. Just as those who wrote or recited Rhapsodies maintained an outer appearance of propriety and loyalty, but expressed criticism and complaint, Xi Kang maintains his outer composure – as befitting his character – but chooses *qin* tunes that reflect his specialized knowledge and superior musicianship, much as Mi Heng and Wang Dun addressed and swayed their

⁴² See Nanxiu Qian, "Spirit and self in medieval China," 3-14, for a discussion of character evaluation in *Shishuo xinyu*.

⁴³ Jack W. Chen, "Classification of people and conduct," 362.

audiences with musical symbols of valued personality characteristics. The performance is also reminiscent of *Chuci* poetry, in its expression of resentment against the politically powerful: Xi Kang's exclamation about the demise of the *qin* tunes reads like a coded remonstrance belying the veneer of equanimity.

If there were more information available about "Guangling" or "Taiping," it might be possible to identify whether there were aspects of those tunes in particular that resembled the wording of Rhapsodies for example in their expression of protest and resentment. Later versions of "Guangling" are, intriguingly, associated with a story of revenge against ill-treatment by the politically powerful,⁴⁴ but there is no way of knowing how strong the connection was between the "Guangling" of Xi Kang's time and the "Guangling" known to later *qin* scholars.

Another *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote describes how a musician with little power to assert his interest avoids being forced by a politically powerful person into a demeaning music performance. His non-performance is in itself a kind of performance. The passage is from chapter 5 of *Shishuo xinyu*, which is titled "Fang zheng" 方正 (Proper and correct); the anecdotes in that chapter are primarily descriptions of appropriate or inappropriate behavior in the context of certain well-defined relationships, for example between pupil and teacher, subject and emperor, or friend and friend.

⁴⁴ The story is about the assassin Nie Zheng 聶政 (ca. 375 BCE) as recorded in *Qin cao* 琴操 (Playing the *qin*): Nie Zheng stabs the king of the state of Han to avenge his father's death. See *Qin cao*, 20-21, in Yan Yiping, *Han Wei yishuchao*, 4-14. Also see Bell Yung, *Celestial airs of antiquity*, 15-16, for a discussion of the relationship between post-Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) versions of "Guangling" and the Nie Zheng story. We have no information about the content of "Guangling" prior to the Tang dynasty.

6.4.3 Xi Shao's non-musical performance

齊王冏為大司馬輔政，嵇紹為侍中，詣冏咨事；冏設宰會，召葛旃、董艾等共論時宜。旃等白冏：「嵇侍中善於絲竹，公可令操之。」遂送樂器。紹推卻不受。冏曰：「今日共為歡，卿何卻邪？」紹曰：「公協輔皇室，令作事可法；紹雖官卑，職備常伯。操絲比竹，蓋樂官之事。豈可以先王法之服，為伶人之業？今逼高命，不敢苟辭；當釋冠冕，襲私服。此紹之心也。」旃等不自得而退。⁴⁵

The prince of Qi, [Sima] Jiong,⁴⁶ was serving as grand marshal and was in charge of the government (in 301). Xi Shao⁴⁷ served as personal attendant [and] went to visit [Sima] Jiong to consult on a matter. [Sima] Jiong had prepared an officials' feast and had invited Ge Yu, Dong Ai,⁴⁸ and others to together discuss matters appropriate to the times. [Ge] Yu and the others said to [Sima] Jiong, "Personal Attendant Xi [Shao] is good at [playing] silk and bamboo [musical instruments]. Your Excellency may command him to play them." Thereupon they handed him a musical instrument. [Xi] Shao declined [and] would not accept it. [Sima] Jiong said, "Today together [we're] especially cheerful. Why do you decline?" [Xi] Shao said, "Your Excellency's aid and management of the imperial house makes your conduct of affairs something to be emulated. Although my official position is humble, I'm attending, undeservingly, to the duties of a personal attendant. To play stringed instruments or bamboo flutes is undoubtedly the business of the music officers. How can I use the former kings' prescribed attire while performing the

⁴⁵ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 232 (5.17).

⁴⁶ Sima Jiong 司馬冏 (d. 302 CE) was a nephew of Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236-290; r. 265-290 CE), the first emperor of the Jin dynasty. He was one of the many princes installed in an effort of the emperor to put his relatives in power to control various regions of the empire.

⁴⁷ Xi Shao (253-304 CE) was the son of Xi Kang. His official posts included governor of Runan 汝南 (in modern-day Henan), regional inspector in Xuzhou 徐州 (in present-day Jiangsu), and later personal attendant at court as mentioned in the anecdote. He was killed trying to protect the emperor against Sima Ying's 司馬穎 (279-306 CE) forces. Xi Shao's courage in standing up to the powerful was also expressed in his poetry; for example, when he was regional inspector in Xuzhou he sent a poem to his superior admonishing him for his behavior. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part two*, 1422-1424.

⁴⁸ Ge Yu (d. 302 CE) and Dong Ai (d. 302 CE) were both assistants to Sima Jiong. Ge Yu and Dong Ai died along with Sima Jiong when he was killed by a rival prince.

duties of court musician? Now that I'm constrained by your eminent command, [I] dare not lightly decline; [I] ought to remove my official cap and put on my everyday clothes. These are my feelings." [Ge] Yu and the others, uneasy, withdrew.

The main point of this passage is Xi Shao's cleverly indirect way of delivering a message to a powerful prince without risking life and limb by confronting him directly. It also indicates a belief that music performance could be used as a weapon by the powerful, to take advantage of the musical skill of a palace official to press him into a position that is associated with a low-status profession. In this anecdote, social power is in the hands of Sima Jiong's guests given their relationship with Sima Jiong; they have insider knowledge of the music tradition – expressed by their recognition of Xi Shao's musical skill – and try to leverage that knowledge to secure entertainment for themselves and to exert power over someone with limited freedom to control the way his music talents are applied.

In addition to illustrating the manner in which music was used to exert power over others, this anecdote indicates a belief that someone in a disadvantageous position is able to outwit those much more powerful than he is. An indirect refusal to perform, combined with a quick tongue, enables Xi Shao to maintain control over his dignity. Xi Shao's delicate but effective response to Sima Jiong sounds much like the "partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript" that Scott suggests is a feature of life for those with little power. In addition, like Mi Heng and Wang Dun, Xi Shao uses music – in this case the withholding of music – not only as protest but also as a negotiation tool. He negotiates not only his relationship with the

powerful at court, but perhaps helps others in a similar position through his example.

The anecdote is also a counterexample to Li Zehou's contention that character classifications at this time demonstrated an increased valuing of appearances over practical considerations; while Xi Shao could be admired for his clever choice of words, the point of the anecdote is as much the practical value of his performance, which was to sidestep the demands on him.

The delicate balancing act required of musician-literati is described in more explicit terms in the passage shown below. This is an excerpt from *Yanshi jiaxun*, chapter 2, which is titled "Jiao zi" 教子 (Instructing sons).

6.4.4 Yan Zhitui on pitfalls of musical talent

禮曰：「君子無故不徹琴瑟。」古來名士，多所愛好。洎於梁初，衣冠子孫，不知琴者，號有所闕；大同以末，斯風頓盡。然而此樂愔愔雅致，有深味哉！今世曲解，雖變於古，猶足以暢神情也。唯不可令有稱譽，見役勳貴，處之下坐，以取殘盃冷炙之辱。戴安道猶遭之，況爾曹乎！⁴⁹

The *Rites* says, "Cultivated men do not give up [their] zithers without reason."⁵⁰ In ancient times, many well-known scholars have been fond of them. At the beginning of the Liang [dynasty], offspring of officials who did not know [how to play] the *qin* were declared to have some deficiency; towards the end of the Datong (535–546 CE) [period], this custom suddenly ended. However, this music was serene and elegant. It had such deep significance! Today's musical passages, though different from those of the past, are still sufficient to

⁴⁹ Wang Liqi, *Yanshi jiaxun jixiang*, 56.

⁵⁰ The text of *Liji* actually states, 君無故玉不去身。大夫無故不徹縣，士無故不徹琴瑟。(Cultivated men are never, without reason, without their jade. High officials do not give up, without reason, [their musical instrument] frames. Officers do not give up, without reason, [their] zithers.) See Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu*, 4.16b [77], "Quli" 曲禮下 (Summary of rites).

relax one's demeanor and feelings.⁵¹ Only do not let [yourself] be said to have a reputation [as a musician], you will be seen serving the nobles, seated in a humble position and having the disgrace of drinking the dregs and eating the cold leftovers. Even Dai Andao⁵² encountered this, even more is it thus for all of you.

On the one hand, literati were expected to play musical instruments as part of their refined way of life, along with producing poetry, painting, and calligraphy; on the other hand, they did not want to blur the distinction between musician-literatus and professional musician, the latter of which suffered low social status. Nettl's comments about music performing unequal power relationships are relevant here: the relationships between court officials, favored literati, and literati-musicians had a strong influence on the circumstances under which music was played. Some of the methods used by musicians to claw back some control over their lives despite lacking leverage to challenge the unequal power relationships are described by Yan Zhitui in the above passage, and illustrated by Xi Shao in the above *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote.

The final music performance anecdote for this chapter is another example of performance as protest, from *Shishuo xinyu*, chapter 23, titled "Ren dan" 任誕 (Willful and unrestrained). Many of the anecdotes in this chapter describe unconventional behavior by literati. The unconventional nature of Huan Yi's 桓

⁵¹ Taking *shen* 神 and *qing* 情 to refer to outer appearance and inner feeling respectively.

⁵² Dai Andao (?330–396 CE) was a painter, musician, and writer who declined public office. An example of what Dai Andao "encountered" is in a story about Dai Andao in the music section of the *Yiwen leiju* (Anthology of art and literature) quoting the (no longer extant) *Jin zhongxing shu* 晉中興書 (History of the Jin restoration): 晉中興書曰。戴逵。字安道。少有文藝。善鼓琴。太宰武陵王晞。聞其能琴。使人召焉。逵對使者前。打破琴曰。戴安道不能為王侯伶人。The *History of the Jin restoration* says, Dai Kui, courtesy name Andao, was a cultured youth, skilled at playing the *qin*. The Grand Steward Prince Xi of Wuling heard that he was able to play the *qin* [and] sent someone to summon [him]. Dai Kui, facing the messenger, broke his *qin* and said, Dai Andao is unable to be the prince's performer. See Ouyang Xundeng, *Yiwen leiju*, 44.7a-7b [782].

伊⁵³ conduct in this passage is his use of his flute as his sole source of communication.

6.4.5 Huan Yi on flute and zheng

王子猷出都，尚在渚下。舊聞桓子野善吹笛，而不相識。遇桓於岸上過，王在船中，客有識之者云：「是桓子野。」王便令人與相聞云：「聞君善吹笛，試為我一奏。」桓時已貴顯，素聞王名，即便回下車，踞胡床，為作三調。弄畢，便上車去。客主不交一言。⁵⁴

Wang Ziyou [Wang Huizhi]⁵⁵ left the capital, [and] was still at the riverbank. [He] long ago had heard that Huan Ziye [Huan Yi] was skilled at playing the flute, but had never become acquainted with him. [Wang Huizhi] happened upon Huan [Yi], who was passing by on the shore, [while] Wang [Huizhi] was on his boat. Among the passengers there was someone who knew him, and [he] said, "That is Huan Ziye." Wang [Huizhi] then sent someone to convey [a message], saying, "I hear you are skilled at playing the flute. Try playing a piece for me." Huan [Yi], at the time, was already honored and distinguished, and had long been aware of Wang [Huizhi]'s reputation, so then turned back and dismounted from his carriage. He squatted on a folding stool and played three tunes for [Wang Huizhi]. When he had finished, he then mounted his carriage and left. Guest and host did not exchange a word.

It is not clear why Huan Yi and Wang Huizhi did not speak to each other, but most likely it reflected the low status of professional musicians. Huan Yi, an amateur musician as befitting the literati of the time, was presumably unhappy at having been detained to perform for someone and, while mindful enough of

⁵³ Huan Yi (d. 392) had a reputation for talent in military matters. His biography in the *Jinshu* includes a description of him as a skilled musician. He was an accomplished flute and *zheng* zither player. See Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 81.2115-2119.

⁵⁴ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 574 (23.49).

⁵⁵ Wang Huizhi 王徽之 (338?-386 CE) was a son of Wang Xizhi. He held some minor official posts. Only two of his poems are still extant. See Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 80.2103-2104.

Wang's reputation to stop and play a few tunes, walked off in silence as soon as he finished, as a kind of protest.

A similar anecdote included in *Xu Jin yangqiu* 續晉陽秋 (Sequel to the Jin annals),⁵⁶ quoted by Liu Jun in his commentary, is clearer about Huan Yi's sentiments about being asked to perform:

左將軍桓伊善音樂，孝武飲燕，謝安侍坐，帝命伊吹笛；伊神色無忤，既吹一弄，乃放笛云：「臣於箏乃不如笛，然自足以韻合歌管。臣有一奴，善吹笛，且相便串，請進之。」帝賞其放率，聽召奴；奴既至，吹笛，伊撫箏而歌怨詩，因以為諫也。⁵⁷

General of the Left Huan Yi was a skilled musician. Xiao Wu [Sima Yao]⁵⁸ held a drinking banquet, and Xia An was in attendance. The emperor commanded [Huan] Yi to play the flute. [Huan] Yi's countenance showed no defiance. Having played one tune, [he] thereupon put down the flute, saying, "I don't play the *zheng* [zither] as well as the flute; that said, I am good enough to accompany songs or wind instruments. I have a servant who is a skilled flutist and [we] are used to playing together. May [the servant] come in. The emperor appreciated his candidness and agreed to call in the servant. The servant, having arrived, played the flute, and [Huan] Yi played the *zheng* and sang a poem of resentment. In this way, he used [the poem] as a remonstrance.

Huan Yi, like Mi Heng and Xi Shao, is not in a position to flatly refuse to play for the powerful person who requests the performance. While Huan Yi, unlike Mi Heng, does speak directly to the emperor, he expresses his dissatisfaction only through the music performance, which, again following Scott, can be seen as

⁵⁶ *Xu Jin yangqiu* is a history of poetry from the Jian'an period (196-220 CE) to the early fifth century. The text was compiled in the fifth century by Tan Daoluan 檀道鸞 (fl. 5th century CE) and hence originates from the same period as *Shishuo xinyu*. It survives only in fragments.

⁵⁷ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 574 (23.49), footnote 1.

⁵⁸ Sima Yao 司馬曜 (362-396; r. 373-396 CE) started his reign as a child and had a reputation for dissipation in later years. See Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 9.224-247.

a kind of airing of a hidden transcript in coded form. Huan Yi's veiled protest through music is similar to the way that Mi Heng brought attention to his predicament. In Huan Yi's case, he combines music with spoken language. The story does not specify the nature of the protest poem, but, like Mi Heng, Huan Yi chooses a form of protest that has roots in poetry of the past.

Huan Yi, like the other performers referenced above, conducts a musical negotiation. The request that he play the flute is offensive to him, but he is not in a position to refuse outright. In the first anecdote, the compromise conclusion is that he plays a few tunes and then walks off in silence. In the second anecdotes, he plays one tune on the flute and then accompanies himself on the *zheng* to sing a protest song.

6.5 Conclusion

Various textual passages were examined to explore beliefs about the connection between music and power as represented in Six Dynasties texts, especially with respect to the use of music performance as an instrument of protest. The performance anecdotes introduced in this chapter, similar to those discussed in the previous chapter, exhibit attributes that suggest a belief in performative aspects of music. In these anecdotes, there is a fair amount of description of the gestures, manner, and behavior of the musicians, but no reference at all to the sound of the musical instruments. Only the *Yanshi jiaxun* passage mentions the serene and elegant sound of the *qin*.

The texts suggest that literati known for their music skills had to be cautious about how and when they demonstrated their craft, and that those in power could impose performance obligations on literati-musicians that stripped them of

their dignity. The *Yanshi jiaxun* passage speaks directly of the ways in which those in a position of power used music to exert power, and advises Yan Zhitui's sons how to continue to benefit from and enjoy *qin* playing while at the same time eluding the demands of the powerful whose notice might mean that *qin* skills become a liability that forces a musician to entertain those in power.

Xi Shao and Mi Heng are depicted in *Shishuo xinyu* as finding indirect means of persuasion – in Xi Shao's case through non-performance – to secure release from musical servitude, and Huan Yi is described as using non-musical aspects of his performance to limit the amount of entertainment he is pressed into providing. The performers have characteristics in common with earlier poets who used their work as indirect protest, suggesting a parallel with the longstanding tradition of using poetry as an instrument of political remonstrance. Rhapsodies as well as *Chuci* poetry served as a means of indirect protest and complaint long before the Six Dynasties. One of the distinctive features of the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes is the way in which musical performance – by the drummers and the flutist discussed in this chapter, and the lute player in the previous chapter – “speaks” on its own without accompanying poetry.

Ethnomusicologists provide a general perspective on the use of music as protest that highlights aspects of the textual passages that might otherwise be less readily identified. The general observation of music culture as reflecting the distribution of political and social power – what Nettl calls the performance of unequal power relationships – applies to the interconnections described in the above passages between the musicians and their more powerful adversaries.

Nettl's generalization encompasses a wide variety of musical consequences that are unrelated to the Six Dynasties texts examined here, such as the weakening of minority music traditions; each music culture may be unique in the specifics of the musical ramifications of power relations and the ways in which those in subordinate positions fight back against the powerful. That said, the general principle of music as a mirror of power relations is consistent with the views reflected in the Six Dynasties texts discussed above, and highlights a feature of music common to many (if not all) music cultures.

In addition, the music performances, including accompanying dialogue in some cases, can be seen as a public airing of what James C. Scott describes as "hidden transcripts." Through that airing – obscured by varying degrees of coding – those who are not in a position to directly challenge the powerful can express themselves without explicitly violating the norms of behavior required of them. All the musicians portrayed in the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes in this chapter found ways of speaking up, some (Mi Heng, Wang Dun, and Huan Yi) using only their musical instruments, one combining a music performance with speech (Xi Kang), and one (Xi Shao) using speech to avoid playing the music at all. The performers also illustrate what Mattern terms concert in action. They not only use music as a confrontational means of protest – similar to what Arnold Perris describes in the Soviet Union and modern China, and Katherine In-Young Lee in Korea – but also employ it as a deliberative tool of negotiation.

In the previous chapter, the question was raised as to whether descriptions of music performances in these texts evidence an interest in aesthetics, whether in its meaning of beauty, in an interest in effort rather than outcome, or in the

valuing of appearances at the expense of practical concerns such as ethics and political matters. There is no evidence of a focus on beauty; only the *Yanshi jiaxun* passage refers to the sounds of the musical instruments. While there is a fair amount of description of the appearance of the musicians, the emphasis is on their gestures and facial expressions and what those signify, rather than on anyone's outward appearance in itself.

There also is no indication of an interest in effort at the expense of outcome. Each musician who performs is described as performing in earnest, and the outcomes of all the music performances are critical to the dignity of the musicians. All the musicians are depicted as taking their musicianship seriously.

The final point to be addressed in this chapter is whether the passages treat practical considerations of ethics and politics as relatively minor concerns, compared to aesthetics. The answer seems to be no: the question of what behavior is appropriate between powerful men and literati musicians is a recurring theme in the music performance anecdotes. Moreover, the entirety of chapter 5 of *Shishuo xinyu* is devoted to tales of appropriate or inappropriate behavior in the context of the social and political status of the characters and the relationships between them; clearly the compilers of the text thought they were tales worth telling.

The significance of practical aspects of political life to the compilers and the readership of the texts is demonstrated by the relevance to this chapter of all but one of the five *Shishuo xinyu* music performance anecdotes, because of their connection to the exercise of, and resistance to, power. All four anecdotes – as well as the Xi Shao non-performance tale – illustrate serious points about how

political power is exercised and resisted. The depiction of music performances in the Six Dynasties texts examined does not reflect notable attention to aesthetics – using any of the definitions mentioned above – at the expense of practical matters of ethics or political life.

Chapter 7: Identity and image

雖琴瑟之畢存兮，豈聲由之復舒？¹

Even if [my] zithers all remain,
How can sounds emerge from them again?
— Ruan Ji

Chapter 5 examined descriptions of music performances in certain Six Dynasties texts that suggest that music has the capacity to function as non-verbal rhetoric. One of the reasons for the persuasiveness of Mi Heng's, Wang Dun's, and Xie Shang's performances was the musicians' ability to project an identity – through music – that contrasted with their apparent pre-performance identity in the eyes of the audience. This chapter delves into more detail as to how music was depicted as a means to express, to create, or to maintain an identity or public image. The definition of “identity” used in this chapter is that used by Thomas Turino: “Identity is the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others.”² Specifically with respect to group identity, Turino uses the following definition: “Group identities are the recognition, selection, and sometimes conscious creation of common habits among varying numbers of individuals.”³

The connection between music and identity is related to the concept of performativity discussed in the last two chapters; musicians may create or alter a

¹ Chen Bojun, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu*, 15. This is from Ruan Ji's “Dongping fu” 東平賦 (Dongping Rhapsody). Dongping is in modern-day Shandong.

² Thomas Turino, “Introduction: identity and the arts in diasporic communities,” 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 8. There are many other definitions of identity used by modern scholars, but Turino's is particularly useful for an analysis of music culture in the Six Dynasties. An example of a related but not identical concept of identity is squarely focused on modern life: Charles Taylor uses the expression “modern identity” to refer to a belief in moral autonomy and the right to develop one's personality according to one's own values (*Sources of the self*, 11-14). Taylor's concept of modern identity is concerned more with an individual's sense of autonomy than with his or her relationship to a group; it is the latter that, as will be shown below, is more applicable to Six Dynasties music culture.

public image by performing identity through their music. They might do this by performing a type of music that is associated with a certain region or a particular governing or social class, or by playing a musical instrument or by displaying musical knowledge that has those associations.

7.1 Methodology

While the connections between music and identity in general have been extensively explored by ethnomusicologists, there has been limited examination of the topic with respect to early medieval Chinese music culture. The observations that have been made to a large extent involve the role of the *qin* in literati life.⁴ This chapter aims to broaden the focus beyond the *qin* to explore three ways in which music is depicted in Six Dynasties texts as creating, altering, or maintaining identity: section 7.4.1 concerns the significance of music for the identity or public image of rulers; section 7.4.2 is about the performance of regional identity; and section 7.4.3 pertains to the connection between literati identity and music or musical instruments. Both personal identity and group identity are explored with respect to these three categories. The theory of musicologists and ethnomusicologists summarized in the literature review below is applied to the material in the texts.

7.2 Literature review

Studies of the connection between identity and music are summarized in Bruno Nettl's overview of ethnomusicology, where he describes the significance of identity for music and for ethnomusicology as a discipline: "[...] in the history

⁴ See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 293-295; Kenneth DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 110-113.

of ethnomusicology after around 1970, the issue of identity [...] takes on significance as the main function of music.”⁵ He touches on the role of music in nationalism, in the expression of ethnicity, class, or other types of group identity including those of social minorities, as an “emblem of personal identity,” and as a mechanism for integrating people of different backgrounds.⁶ Nettl’s subject is primarily music culture of the past few centuries; nationalism is a modern concept and does not apply to pre-modern societies. Nettl’s other categories of group identity do apply, however, as I will show below.

Thomas Turino, discussing the question of why music and dance appear to be universal human activities, suggests that they are essential for human survival in part because of the way they promote a sense of belonging, through a group identity:

The performing arts are frequently fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance.⁷

Simon Frith is similarly focused on music as a social activity. Arguing against the common assumption that popular music reflects or represents people in some way, he suggests that music is best understood as an experience of the self-in-process rather than as a static representation of a person or a group. Social groups get to know themselves as groups through cultural activity including music; in this manner music constructs group identity.⁸

Music as an expression of regional identity has also been a subject of study. Examples from Western art music are Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies as well as

⁵ Bruno Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 247.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 255-6; 402-3; 421-6.

⁷ Thomas Turino, *Music as social life*, 2.

⁸ Simon Frith, “Music and identity,” 108-111.

musical passages he included in other work; Shay Loya notes the “blunt statements of identity” in the form of *verbunkos* elements in his Mephisto Waltz, which is otherwise stylistically German.⁹ *Verbunkos* refers to a genre with roots in Hungarian folk and popular music which according to Loya “dominated Hungarian national culture” until recently.¹⁰ In addition, Sibelius, Chopin, and Smetana all composed music that is associated with statements of regional identity. As discussed below, music associated with certain regions was also a characteristic of medieval Chinese culture.

7.3 Cultural backdrop

Although there is no explicit concept in early medieval Chinese texts that is identical to the modern concept of identity, the practice of character typology is a close cousin. If Turino’s definition of group identity is paraphrased as “the recognition of common habits among individuals,” it comes close to describing the character typology of the early medieval Chinese. The organization of *Shishuo xinyu*, each chapter titled with a description of a character type, vividly illustrates the interest of Six Dynasties Chinese in the practice. Some character types represented in titles refer to emotional categories, such as “Fen juan” 忿狷 (Anger and irascibility), the title of chapter 31; others refer to behavior, such as “Pai tiao” 排調 (Taunting and teasing), the title of chapter 25.

Character evaluation is generally understood to date from the Han dynasty, when the systematic assessment of character began to be applied to the selection of political office holders. The practice continued beyond the demise of the Han,

⁹ Shay Loya, *Liszt’s transcultural modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy tradition*, 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xvii.

and the third-century *Renwu zhi* 人物志 (Treatise on personalities) by Liu Shao 劉劭 (ca. 186-245 CE) is a record of how personalities were classified and assessed at the time. *Renwu zhi* is a practical work, to be used to aid a ruler in decisions about choosing talent at court, but it also includes more theoretical discussions of the nature of human character.¹¹ *Shishuo xinyu*, on the other hand, while organized according to character type, reads as a series of entertaining anecdotes rather than a handbook for decision-making.

The type of identity that mattered for political power in early medieval China continued to be linked to the past as represented by the classical texts, in whatever way the texts were reinterpreted over time. Rulers claimed authority in part through a demonstrated connection to the past.¹² Aspirants for public office continued to compete for appointments through a classics-based examination system during much of the Six Dynasties, although it is unclear how exam results were weighed against recommendations from families of high social status.¹³ Because of the weakness and the relatively short-lived nature of each dynasty following the fall of the Han, during much of the Six Dynasties literati either had to choose between competing power factions, risking their lives in the process, or had to attempt to steer clear of politics and power struggles entirely. Ping Wang suggests that, as a result, literati's choices of whom to associate with became more important for one's identity than whom one served.¹⁴

¹¹ For a discussion of *Renwu zhi*, see Jack W. Chen, "Classifications of people and conduct," 349-352; and Licia Di Giacinto, "The art of knowing others."

¹² See Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, "Introduction," 10-14, for a discussion of the enduring authority of the classics despite the political and social turmoil of the Six Dynasties period.

¹³ See Albert E. Dien, "Civil service examinations," for a discussion of the process of public official selection in the Six Dynasties.

¹⁴ Ping Wang, "Making friends with the men of the past," 82.

Among literati peers, there were certain skills expected for acceptance as a member of the group, such as knowledge of the classics; competence in prose and poetry writing, painting, calligraphy, and music; as well as expertise in Xuanxue and facility with Pure Conversation. On the lighter side, activities such as excursions, banquets, drinking, and popular music were markers of literati group identity.¹⁵ Other than Xuanxue and Pure Conversation, the significance of these activities for the literati represented a continuation from previous eras: David Pankenier, for example, describes certain types of Rhapsodies as reaffirming a sense of solidarity within a select group.¹⁶

In addition, there was increased interest in regional identity during this period: regional variations that had been viewed as barbaric in the past became subjects of study.¹⁷ Moreover, whereas in the past most literature had revolved around the cultural center at the capital, in the early medieval era there was an increase in literature focused on the regions.¹⁸ At the same time, the differentiation between center and region was fluid; those in the North, in particular, were increasingly living in a culturally hybrid environment in which divisions between Han and non-Han customs became more and more blurred.¹⁹

The topic of individual identity is controversial among modern scholars, who disagree about the extent to which a self-conscious crafting of an identity is new to the early medieval period or was mostly a continuation of existing cultural practice. For example, Nanxiu Qian describes *Shishuo xinyu* as having developed

¹⁵ See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 428-432; Albert E. Dien, "Custom and society," 495; and Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 19, 52.

¹⁶ David Pankenier, "'The scholar's frustration' reconsidered," 437.

¹⁷ Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires*, 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ See discussion of intermixing of Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups during this period in Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, "Introduction," 3-7 and 14-23.

out of the Wei-Jin era (220-420 CE) “growth of self-awareness.”²⁰ She describes the practice of character comparison in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, in which speakers compare their own behavior and characteristics with those of others in a competitive spirit,²¹ as an illustration of “self-fashioning”:

[...] each gentry member struggled to remain true to his or her self and to express that authentic self. This self-fashioning required a constant, often painful process of identification with and differentiation from others, along with intensely personal comparisons and competitions.²²

An alternative view is expressed by Wendy Swartz, who provides examples of prominent men such as Qu Yuan and Sima Qian who demonstrated in their writing that they “experienced self-awareness as unique individuals.”²³ Similarly, Jack W. Chen suggests that the self-awareness that some scholars see as arising in the early medieval period is more accurately described as an “expansion of typological models” used in the longstanding practice of character classification.²⁴ An analysis of the history of self-consciousness or a sense of personal identity in China is outside the scope of this study; what is pertinent to the rest of this chapter is the assessment, as described above, that a sense of individual identity, as well as group identity – as assigned by oneself or others – was a facet of life in the early medieval era. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the connections between identity and music.

²⁰ Nanxiu Qian, *Spirit and self in medieval China*, 6-7, 44, 60.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 44-52.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ Wendy Swartz, “Imaging self and other,” 323.

²⁴ Jack W. Chen, “Classifications of people and conduct,” 350.

7.4 Illustrations from texts

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the connection between identity and music follows three major themes in the texts: the significance of music for the identity or public image of rulers; the performance of regional identity; and the connection between literati identity and music or certain musical instruments.

7.4.1 Regal identity

The close relationship between music and power before and during the early medieval era was explored in the previous chapter. The Six Dynasties texts analyzed in this study suggest that, even by the latter half of the Six Dynasties, when the relative orderliness enjoyed during the Han dynasty was distant history, the connection between rulers and music was still in the cultural memory. Engagement with music seemed to be, using Turino's concept of identity, a habit selected in the context of public court rituals to define oneself in the public realm. This enduring connection is evident in the "Xing wang" 興王 (The emergence of the kings) chapter of *Jinlouzi*. "Xing wang" is a description of achievements and behavior of founding kings, starting from Pao Xi 庖犧, one of the mythical creators of the world, and ending with the founding emperor of the Liang dynasty (502-557 CE). The significance of music is evident in the number of references to music; roughly one-third of the entries in "Xing wang" contain references to it. "Xing wang" consists of excerpts from various older texts, and Xiao Yi's decision to include many of the music references in the excerpts he chose speaks to the importance he attached to them.

An example is the paragraph in “Xing wang” on Shun 舜²⁵ (according to tradition one of the three earliest Chinese sovereigns), which is a paraphrase of several *Shangshu* passages.²⁶ The Shun paragraph refers to Kui 夔 as Shun’s manager of music (*dian yue* 典樂), and to a ritual performance of *xiao shao* 簫韶 (music of Shun). An additional example is the section on King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (?-?; r. ?1046–?1043 BCE), which states, 太師疵、少師彊抱其樂器而奔周。(The grand preceptor, [named] Ci, and the junior preceptor, [named] Jiang, were forced to take their musical instruments and flee to Zhou);²⁷ the reference to musical instruments sounds extraneous to the modern ear, but their inclusion here suggests that the instruments were inseparable from the preceptors, a part of their identity.

A final example is a paragraph about Han Liuxiu 漢劉秀 (6-57; r. 25-57 CE), the founder of the Eastern Han (25-220 CE). The text lists the king’s admirable habits, including his refraining from listening to the music of Zheng or Wei.²⁸

The passage is taken almost entirely from three sections of *Hou Hanshu*. There is

²⁵ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 63-65.

²⁶ These passages are “Shundian” 舜典 (Canon of Shun) and “Yi Ji” 益稷 (Yi and Ji), from the section “Yushu” 虞書 (Book of Yu); see Kong Yingda, *Shangshu zhengyi*, 3.1a-3.30b [34-48] and 5.1a- 5.18b [66-74] respectively. We do not know what version of *Shangshu* Xiao Yi had access to, but it may have been a text known as *Kong Anguo Shangshu* 孔安國尚書, a version of *Shangshu* said to have been discovered by Kong Anguo (d. ca. 100 BCE). This text was the orthodox version of *Shangshu* from the fourth century CE and the basis for *Shangshu zhengyi*, published in 653 CE, which in turn was the basis for the *Shisanjing zhushu* version that I consulted for this chapter. In view of the link between the fourth century version and the *Shisanjing zhushu* version, it seems likely that the content of “Shundian” and “Yi Ji” in the *Shisanjing zhushu* version is not significantly different from the version Xiao Yi used. The material in the *Shisanjing zhushu* version suggests that Xiao Yi collapsed passages from “Shundian” and “Yi Ji” and combined them to form an abbreviated version of the *Shangshu* material. In Xiao Yi’s paraphrase, he retained the references to music shown above. For a discussion of the textual history of *Shangshu*, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Shang shu 尚書 (Shu ching 書經),” 380-383.

²⁷ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 104-5. This line is identical to one in the *Zhou benji* 周本紀 (Annals of Zhou) chapter of *Shiji*; see Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 4.121. King Wu of Zhou was the first king of the Zhou dynasty (1046 BCE–256 BCE).

²⁸ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 122-123.

little in these *Hou Hanshu* sections about music, but Xiao Yi did choose to include the reference to Zheng and Wei music in his paraphrase, indicating the importance he attached to the reference.²⁹

The manner in which the dynasty-founding kings engaged with music seemed to be a common “emblem of personal identity,” as Nettl expressed it. Perhaps, in the context of Chinese rulers, “emblem of kingly identity” would be more appropriate. For the kings mentioned above, certain associations with music signified membership in an elite circle, a kind of group identity. While references by Nettl and other ethnomusicologists to group identity generally refer to groups of people that are near-contemporaries, in the case of *Jinlouzi* a long line of kings with certain admired habits are treated as having a group identity for which connections with music are one emblem.

A more detailed example of how the significance of music is represented in *Jinlouzi* is the following passage from “Xing wang.” It implies that the biographers of the warlord Cao Cao believed that written language on its own did not have the same symbolic power as language combined with music; Cao Cao’s membership in the group of most admired rulers seems to have been incomplete without the reference to music.

²⁹ The three *Hou Hanshu* sections are 循吏列傳 (Biographies of upright officials), 光武帝紀上 (The era of Emperor Guangwu, part 1), and 光武帝紀下 (The era of Emperor Guangwu, part 2). See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 76.2457-2486; 1.1-46; and 1.47-94 respectively.

7.4.1.1 Cao Cao's winds and strings³⁰

魏武帝曹操，用師大較依孫、吳之法，而因事設奇，量敵制勝，變化如神。自作兵書十餘萬言，諸將征伐，皆以新書從事。臨時又手為節度，從令者克捷，違教者負敗。與虜對陣，意思安閒，如不欲戰，然及至決機乘利，氣勢盈溢，故每戰必克。取張遼、徐晃於亡虜之中，皆佐命立功，列為名將；其餘拔出細微，登為牧守者，不可勝數。是以創造大業，文武並施。御軍三十餘年，手不捨書，晝則講軍策，夜則思經傳。登高必賦，被之管弦，皆成樂章。³¹

Emperor Wu of Wei, Cao Cao, when using troops as a rule followed the methods of Sun [Wu]³² and Wu [Qi],³³ to use uncommon strategies in accordance with the circumstances; to take the measure of³⁴ the enemy, achieving victory; [and] so adaptable and versatile as to resemble spirits. [He] himself wrote a military text of more than a hundred thousand words. [When] the various generals advanced and attacked, they all used the new text to carry out their missions. At the time [of battle], [Cao Cao] personally acted as commander: those who followed [his] orders triumphed; those who deviated from [his] direction were defeated. [When] facing villainous enemies in battle, [his] thoughts and feelings

³⁰ This passage is almost identical to a paragraph quoted in Pei Songzhi's (372-451 CE) commentary to *Sanguo zhi*, which Pei attributes to the no longer extant *Weishu* 魏書 [History of the Wei] compiled by Wang Chen 王沈 (d. 266 CE). Pei Songzhi's commentary was published in 429 CE, one year earlier than *Shishuo xinyu*. See Rafe de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, 469-471, for an introduction to Pei Songzhi's commentary.

³¹ Chen Zhiping *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 130-133.

³² Sun Wu 孫武 is often referred to as Sun Zi 孫子 (Master Sun; sometimes Romanized as Sun Tzu); He is traditionally believed to be the author of the book *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (The art of war of Master Sun). He was from the state of Qi 齊 and lived during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BCE). Cao Cao wrote an important commentary to *Sunzi bingfa*. See 孫子吳起列傳 (Biographies of Sun Tzu and Wu Qi) in Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 65.2161-2169.

³³ Wu Qi 吳起 was from the state of Wei 衛 and lived during the Warring States period (475-221 BCE). He was also known as a military strategist.

³⁴ Pei Songzhi's version has *jue* 譎 instead of *liang* 量 in this phrase. Chen Zhiping (132, footnote 4) makes note of this difference, commenting that *jue* and *liang* have similar meanings of *chuai du* 揣度 (speculate; appraise) or *kao liang* 考量 (consider; deliberate). Paul Kroll's translation of Pei Songzhi's commentary interprets *jue* as "to deceive," which is consistent with the basic meaning of *jue*; he translates the phrase as "deceive the enemy and decide victory" (Kroll, "Portraits," 119). De Crespigny, similarly, translates the phrase as "he achieved success by deceiving the enemy" (*Imperial warlord*, 445). The major differences between Kroll's and De Crespigny's translation of this phrase is that De Crespigny takes Cao Cao to be subject of "deceive" while Kroll interprets Cao Cao's strategies to be the source of deception.

were calm and relaxed, as if not wishing to go to war; however, once the critical point arose to impose defeat, [his] spirit and power were overflowing. Hence, every battle was invariably a victory. He chose Zhang Liao and Xu Huang³⁵ from among the defeated villainous enemy; both assisted the new ruler, had great achievements, [and] became renowned generals. Others, whom [he] plucked from minor positions, rose to be regional governors or commandery governors, were so many as to be uncountable. This is why, [when] initiating grand undertakings, the cultural and the military are both to be practiced. Directing the military for more than thirty years, [Cao Cao] did not abandon books. During the day, [he] discussed military strategy; at night, [he] reflected on the classics and their commentaries. When climbing high [he] inevitably recited verse and overlaid it with wind and string [music], in all cases forming musical pieces.

I included the entire passage leading up to the reference to musical instruments, so that the reader can see the context; music seems to appear out of nowhere in the middle of a discussion of military achievement. There are another five lines in the passage subsequent to the last line shown here; these final lines praise Cao Cao's physical strength, skill with people, and lack of extravagance despite his position.

There is an echo of older texts here, which links the idea of climbing high and writing verse with accomplished men. The following line appears in the *Han Shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (Han [Ying's]³⁶ outer commentary on the *Shijing*).³⁷

孔子遊於景山之上，子路子貢顏淵從。孔子曰：君子登高必賦

³⁵ Both Zhang Liao (165-222 CE) and Xu Huang (d. 227 CE) served as major-general under Cao Cao and were known for their success in military campaigns. See Rafe de Crespigny, *A biographical dictionary*, 1063-5 and 905 respectively.

³⁶ Han Ying 韓嬰 (fl. 200-120 BCE) was the founder of the Han school of the *Shijing*.

³⁷ Han Ying, *Han Shi waizhuan jishi*, 268. *Han Shi waizhuan* is a collection of anecdotes each of which is linked to a poem from the *Shijing*. James Robert Hightower describes the *Han Shi waizhuan* as "the textbook of the Han school" ("The Han-shih wai-chuan and the San chia shih," 263). *Han Shi waizhuan* is the only surviving text from the Han school.

Confucius was rambling on a high mountain, accompanied by Zi Lu, Zi Gong, and Yan Yuan. Confucius said, [when] a cultivated man (*junzi*) climbs high, he must compose verse

There is also similar wording in the Mao commentary to the *Shijing* song, “Ding zhi fang zhong” 定之方中 (When [the asterism] Ding was centered). The song describes the rebuilding by Wei Wengong 衛文公 (Lord Wen of Wei; ?-635 BCE, r. 659-635 BCE) of the capital city in 658 BCE after it had been destroyed by enemies.³⁸ In connection with Lord Wen’s able handling of the rebuilding of the city – including taking into account the information provided by the asterism – Mao’s commentary lists the nine necessary virtues for cultivated men (*junzi*), of which one is *sheng gao neng fu* 升高能賦 (climbing high, being able to write verse).³⁹

It is not clear why the phrase “overlaid it with wind and string [music], in all cases forming musical pieces” was tacked on to “When climbing high [he] inevitably recited verse.” Cao Cao was understood to have been particularly fond of music; he is believed to have re-established much of the court music that had faded as a result of political instability after the fall of the Han.⁴⁰

Moreover, although he was generally known as a poet, he was as much a

³⁸ The position of the asterism in the sky is understood to have assisted with the measurements required for the rebuilding. See David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 127-129.

³⁹ Kong Yingda, *Mao Shi zhengyi*, 3A: 16b [116]. Kong Yingda, in his subcommentary to the Mao commentary, wrote, 升高有所見，能為詩賦其形狀，鋪陳其事勢也。(Climbing high, there are things to see; [one can] compose verse on its appearance [and] narrate in detail its circumstances.). *Mao Shi zhengyi*, 3A: 17b [117]. Hellmut Wilhelm believes that Kong Yingda’s interpretation is anachronistic in the sense that, although in Kong Yingda’s time climbing a mountain and describing the view was a popular subject for Rhapsodies, in Mao Heng’s time this type of Rhapsody had not yet appeared. Hence Wilhelm suggests that Mao was referring to climbing up to a platform where state business was conducted. See Wilhelm, “The scholar’s frustration,” 399 note 9. However, the *Han Shi waizhuan* version does explicitly mention that Confucius had climbed a mountain. My translation “climbing high” in the Cao Cao passage above could be taken literally or figuratively and hence retains the ambiguity of the Chinese.

⁴⁰ See Rafe de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, 339.

musician as a poet; he wrote a great deal of *xianghe* 相和 *yuefu* 樂府 poetry,⁴¹ using popular music as accompaniment.⁴²

Although the reference to Cao Cao's use of wind and string music is consistent with what we understand about Cao Cao's personal interests, there remains the question of why the reference was included; insertion of a phrase just to reflect Cao Cao's hobbies seems unlikely since the rest of the passage consists of nothing but praise for Cao Cao with no extraneous information about him that does not make a point about his admirable character. Hence it seems reasonable to surmise that Cao Cao's addition of music to his poetry had some implications, originally in the context of the *Weishu*, and later for Xiao Yi and his readers.

I would argue that the highlighting of Cao Cao's musical accomplishments was similar to the inclusion of music-related detail in many of the other passages in "Xing wang;" the appearance of music items across the lengthy sweep of history covered in "Xing wang" illustrates the importance of music to Chinese governance. The inclusion of a description of Cao Cao's musical achievements was perhaps for Xiao Yi and previous Cao Cao biographers one tool in promoting his stature as equal to earlier admired rulers.

The reference to Cao Cao's music skills can be viewed as an example of what Nettl calls an emblem of identity. Cao Cao's musicianship as described is

⁴¹ *Yuefu* poetry was a genre that developed in the Han dynasty. The name *yuefu* means "music bureau" and it comes from the music bureau that was set up during the Han to collect and to compose music for performance at court. The name *yuefu* was later applied to a broadly defined genre that included songs and poetry ranging from before the Han through the Tang dynasty. See Charles H. Egan, "Reconsidering the role of folk songs" for a history of the genre including controversy over its origins. The term *xianghe* refers to one type of *yuefu*; the meaning of the term *xianghe* is unclear, but the genre involved singing to musical instrument accompaniment. See Egan, 56-57.

⁴² See Kroll, "Portraits of Ts'ao Ts'ao," 57.

also an expression of class, using Nettl's terminology, if "class" is defined broadly as a class of praiseworthy rulers; by describing those skills, Xiao Yi places Cao Cao within a recognizable group that has an identity tied to music.

The above passages from *Jinlouzi* were all concerned with the ways in which music affects the identity and image of founders of dynasties. In the next section we turn to the literati to see some of the means by which the literati performed their identities.

7.4.2 Regional Identity

An example of a performance of regional identity is Mi Heng's drumming. He is said to have come from the medieval equivalent of modern northwest Shandong; to Mi Heng and his audience, the Yuyang drumbeat might have been viewed as a kind of local music representing his region of origin. Cao Cao's court, where Mi Heng was playing the drums, was in Xucheng 許昌 (present-day Henan). The reference to Yuyang appears in the versions of the anecdote in *Shishuo xinyu*, *Hou Hanshu*,⁴³ and *Wenshi zhuan*; hence it seems likely that the reference had some significance at the time and perhaps was viewed as a marker of regional identity. As mentioned above, during the early medieval era region-focused literature became more common; perhaps music performance developed in a parallel manner, also drawing more attention to regional variations. Mi Heng's distance from his region of origin may have inspired an expression of regional identity in his one extant poem: "Yingwu fu" 鸚鵡賦 (Rhapsody on the parrot).⁴⁴ The Rhapsody is ostensibly about a parrot but reads like a lament for a

⁴³ Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 110.2655.

⁴⁴ Li Shan, commentator, *Wen xuan*, 611-615 ("Niaoshou").

distant home.⁴⁵ Perhaps the performance of the Yuyang drumbeat was a musical equivalent of the “Yingwu fu.”⁴⁶

Another example of how the texts illustrate the connection between regional identity and music is the following excerpt from the *Yanshi jiaxun* chapter “Jiao zi” 教子 (Educating children). As mentioned in chapter 2, Yan Zhitui was an official at the Northern Qi court and hence had a broader perspective than those whose experience was confined to Southern courts.

7.4.2.1 The lute at court

齊朝有一士大夫，嘗謂吾曰：「我有一兒，年已十七，頗曉書疏，教其鮮卑語及彈琵琶，稍欲通解，以此伏事公卿，無不寵愛，亦要事也。」⁴⁷

The Qi⁴⁸ court had an official who once said to me, “I have a son who is already seventeen years old. He knows something about writing letters and memorials and is being taught the Xianbei language⁴⁹ and lute playing, hoping to master [these skills]. In this way he will be able to serve the ministers and officials, among whom none will not dote on him; this is an important matter.”

In this passage, language and music are lumped together as practical skills that will help an official’s son to be successful in his career at a Northern dynasty court. There is likely to be more behind the strategy than just practical skills, however, in view of the emotional content of the description of the official’s motivations. The official does not say merely that his son will have useful skills

⁴⁵ See Knechtges’ translation and interpretation in *Wen xuan or selections of refined literature, volume III*, 49-57.

⁴⁶ Shay Loya makes a similar point about regional elements in Liszt’s music; Loya interprets them as, in part, a representation of a lost home and childhood. See his *Liszt’s transcultural modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy tradition*, 92.

⁴⁷ Wang Liqi, *Yanshi jiaxun jixiang*, 36.

⁴⁸ This refers to the Northern Qi dynasty (550-577 CE).

⁴⁹ The Xianbei were a northern Chinese ethnic group. The Northern Qi rulers were of partially Xianbei origin.

that will earn the respect of the ministers, but that the ministers will have affection for him and hence dote on him (*chong ai* 寵愛). The emotional content of the expected reaction from the Xianbei ministers suggests that, by speaking the Xianbei language, and by playing a non-Han musical instrument liked by the Xianbei,⁵⁰ the official's son is able to gain entrée into a group that is bound together by more than just official relationships.

Playing the lute in this context is an example of Turino's description of how selected habits are emphasized in certain contexts to define oneself for others; it is a way of constructing an identity that eases membership into a coveted group. Frith's point about the self-in-process is also relevant here; the lute may have been seen by Han Chinese as representing Xianbei culture, but it also gave aspirants to Northern court appointments a means to alter the way they were viewed by others in order to fit in with the dominant power. To the extent that lute playing was done in concert with others, the act of performing together – according to Turino and Frith – would strengthen group identity and a sense of community.⁵¹

The third and final topic in this chapter is the relationship between musical instruments and identity. After an introductory passage from *Yanshi jiaxun* on the importance of music in literati identity, this section includes one passage on the lute and three on the *qin*. Van Gulik,⁵² DeWoskin,⁵³ and others have written

⁵⁰ The lute was originally from Central Asia and was a relatively new instrument for the Han Chinese at this time; for background information on the lute and additional evidence of connection to the Xianbei court, see Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 342-3; Charles Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese history," 31; and Ingrid Furniss, "Round-bodied lute."

⁵¹ Over time, the lute became increasingly integrated into Han Chinese music culture.

⁵² Van Gulik, Robert H. *The lore of the Chinese lute: an essay in the ideology of the qin*.

⁵³ Kenneth DeWoskin, *A song for one or two*, 101-124.

extensively about the significance of the *qin* for the literati, but less attention has been directed at the lute. In addition, this section deals with aspects of the *qin* as marker of identity that are less often discussed in the secondary literature.

7.4.3 Music, musical instruments and literati identity

The first passage is from the *Yanshi jiaxun* chapter titled, “Sheng shi” 省事 (Simplifying matters). Yan Zhitui came from a distinguished family,⁵⁴ and the advice to his sons was likely to have included requirements for continuing the distinguished image of the family. In this excerpt, he is criticizing people of the current generation whom today we might disparage with the epithet “Jack of all trades.”

7.4.3.1 Essentiality of music

經不足以待問，史不足以討論，文章無可傳於集錄，書跡未堪以留愛翫，卜筮射六得三，醫藥治十差五，音樂在數十人下，弓矢在千百人中，天文、畫繪、棋博，鮮卑語、胡書，煎胡桃油，鍊錫為銀，如此之類，略得梗概，皆不成熟。⁵⁵

[Their knowledge of the] classics is insufficient to deal with questions; [their knowledge of] history is insufficient for discussion; [their] essays are unfit for transmission in anthologies; [their] writing is unsuited to appreciation. [As for] divination three out of six [are successful]; [as for] medicine, five out of ten are cured; [as for] music, [they are] below many tens of people; [as for] archery, [they are] among thousands of hundreds. [As for] astronomy, painting, chess, and the foreign languages; decocting walnut oil;⁵⁶ turning tin into silver, these sorts of things: [they] grasp the general idea, in all cases failing to master [anything].

⁵⁴ Albert E. Dien, “Custom and society,” 495.

⁵⁵ Wang Liqi, *Yanshi jiaxun jixiang*, 301.

⁵⁶ Walnut oil may have had a combination of medicinal and artistic uses; see Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 295, and Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica; Chinese contributions to the history of civilization in ancient Iran*, 254.

This passage puts music skills in the context of other types of expertise that were part of the literati identity for Yan Zhitui and his peers; music was as important as writing and knowledge of the classics and history. Some transcultural perspective is provided by Turino's discussion of music and other arts as a kind of nucleus around which a sense of identity is built: the above passage suggests that music, writing, and knowledge of the classics – and the shared cultural knowledge and style embedded in them – allowed people to feel entrenched in the literati community. Turino suggests that one of the reasons for the role of music in deepening feelings of common identity is that it fosters a sense of sameness with others, driven for example by rhythm felt the same way by performers and auditors. During musical activity, differences among people fade into the background, crowded out by what is shared among them.⁵⁷

The remaining illustrations in this section are all examples of how specific musical instruments – the lute and the *qin* – are depicted in the texts as performing literati identity.

The lute performance in *Shishuo xinyu* by Xie Shang discussed in chapter 5 (repeated below for convenience) is a kind of performance of literati identity. For explanatory notes for this anecdote, please see section 5.5.2.1.

7.4.3.2 Xie Shang's lute

或以方謝仁祖不乃重者。桓大司馬曰：「諸君莫輕道，仁祖企腳北牖下彈琵琶，故自有天際真人意！」

Some consider [being compared] with Xie Renzu [Xie Shang] as indicating no great esteem. Grand Marshal Huan [Yi] said, "Gentlemen, don't underestimate him. [When] Renzu puts one foot up and plays the

⁵⁷ Thomas Turino, *Music as social life*, 18-19.

lute beneath the north window, [he] naturally has the feel of an authentic person from the edge of heaven.”

Partly because there are less frequent references to the lute in Six Dynasties literature than, for example, to the *qin*, there are fewer clues to help us discern what the lute meant to Six Dynasties literati. *Shishuo xinyu* has only one reference to the lute, shown above, compared to eight for the *qin*. Similarly, *Yanshi jiaxun* also has only one reference to the lute, compared to four for the *qin*. *Jinlouzi* has no references at all to the lute, but nine for the *qin*. Comments in the secondary literature suggest that, unlike *qin* players, who were found only among the literati, lute players came from literati as well as non-literati circles. For example, Qin Xu describes lute music as a genre that never qualified as *yazheng zhi yue* 雅正之樂 (refined and proper music) but, at the same time, as one that enjoyed a degree of popularity among the literati second only to the *qin*.⁵⁸ Similarly, the ethnomusicologist Frederick Lau describes the lute as an instrument played by literati as well as musicians of low social status.⁵⁹

As discussed in section 7.4.2.1, the lute was a relatively new instrument to the Han Chinese in the early medieval period and was originally associated with border regions. It seems to have gradually gained popularity among Han Chinese over time. Depictions of the lute played at that time (what is now known as a *ruan*) appear in tomb artifacts associated with literati; their presence strengthens the impression that Six Dynasties literati valued the instrument. Ingrid Furniss interprets her findings from tomb murals and ceramic bricks to

⁵⁸ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue*, 293.

⁵⁹ Frederick Lau, *Music in China*, 51.

mean that the *ruan* may have been valued primarily because of its association with Ruan Xian.

The combination of the above *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote and the archaeological evidence cited by Furniss suggests that the lute, while not imbued with the same symbolism as the *qin*, became a part of literati identity and, for the musician, a means of identity creation and a way of performing membership in a select group of people. For Xie Shang, his lute playing performed a dual identity as musician-literati and Daoist “authentic person” (*zhen ren* 真人).

The following three passages are about various aspects of the connection between the *qin* and literati identity. The first two depict a merger of identities between the musician and the *qin* or *qin* music. The first *qin* anecdote is from chapter 17 of *Shishuo xinyu*, “Shang shi” 傷逝 (Grieving for the departed). This passage also appears in chapter 4; see 4.5.2.2 for explanatory notes.

7.4.3.3 The *qin* and merged identities – Wang brothers

王子猷、子敬俱病篤，而子敬先亡。子猷問左右：「何以都不聞消息？此已喪矣！」語時了不悲。便索輿來奔喪，都不哭。子敬素好琴，便徑入坐靈床上，取子敬琴彈，弦既不調，擲地云：「子敬！子敬！人琴俱亡。」因慟絕良久，月餘亦卒。

Wang Ziyou [Wang Huizhi] and [Wang] Zijing [Wang Xianzhi], were both critically ill, but [Wang] Zijing died first. [Wang] Ziyou asked his attendants, “Why [do I] hear no news? This [means he is] already dead.” When speaking [he] showed no sadness. [He] immediately sought a sedan chair and came to offer condolences, without weeping. [Wang] Zijing had all along been fond of the *qin*; [Wang] Ziyou went directly in and sat on the spirit bed. [He] picked up [Wang] Zijing’s *qin* and plucked [it]. The strings were already out of tune, [so he] threw it on the ground saying, “Zijing!

Zijing! Man [and] *qin* have died together." He was then grief-stricken for a long time [and] a little more than a month later he too was dead.

The anecdote establishes Wang Zijing's and Wang Ziyou's status as members of the *qin*-playing elite. There is an additional twist to this anecdote, in its depiction of a kind of merger of identities of Wang Zijing and his *qin*. This merger of identities is also present in the following *qin* anecdote, which describes the merger of musician and *qin* tune. This passage was discussed in chapter 6 in connection with musical performance of protest; the anecdote is shown again here for convenience. For explanatory notes, please see section 6.4.2.

7.4.3.4 The *qin* and merged identities – Xi Kang

嵇中散臨刑東市，神氣不變；索琴彈之，奏廣陵散。曲終曰：「袁孝尼嘗請學此散，吾靳固未與；廣陵散於今絕矣！」太學生三千人上書，請以為師，不許。文王亦尋悔焉。

[As] Xi Zhongsan [Xi Kang] approached [the date of his] execution in the eastern market, his spirit and manner remained unchanged. He asked for his *qin* and plucked it, playing the tune "Guangling." At the end of the tune, he said, "Yuan Xiaoni once asked to learn this tune, but I stingily stubbornly did not [teach him]. The 'Guangling' tune is now finished!" Three thousand students from the Imperial University submitted a petition requesting that he become their teacher; it was not permitted. Prince Wen [Sima Zhao] for his part was soon after remorseful.

The description of merged identities in these two *qin* anecdotes can be seen as a musical equivalent of Pankenier's description of the Rhapsody as reaffirming a sense of solidarity within an exclusive group; only a select few have the musical skill to meld so decisively with their instruments. Similarly, the blending of personal and musical identity reads as a musical dramatization of Charles

Hartman's statement that skill at poetry is not a polite accomplishment but a requirement; only a convergence of musician and music cements one's identity as an accomplished literati-musician.

The unique bond with "Guangling" that is attributed to Xi Kang is reflected in the following passage from Xi Kang's biography in *Jinshu*:

康嘗游于洛西，暮宿華陽亭，引琴而彈。夜分，忽有客詣之，稱是古人，與康共談音律，辭致清辯，因索琴彈之，而為廣陵散，聲調絕倫，遂以授康，仍誓不傳人，亦不言其姓字。⁶⁰

[Xi] Kang once traveled west of Luoyang and at nightfall stayed at Huayang Pavilion. He took out his *qin* and played it. At night, suddenly there was a guest visiting him, [who] said he was from ancient times. With [Xi] Kang, he discussed music theory. His words were clear and precise. [He] then took the *qin* and played it, calling [it] the "Guangling" tune. The sound and the tone were peerless. [He] thereupon taught [the tune to Xi] Kang, [but] still made a pact [with Xi Kang] not to pass it on to anyone [else]. In addition, [he] did not say what his surname or courtesy name was.

The musicologist Jin Jie offers a less imaginative explanation of the origin of the piece: she describes it as an adaptation of folk instrumental music from the Guangling area (modern Yangzhou, in Jiangsu).⁶¹

An additional aspect of Xi Kang's *qin* playing worth noting is the way it performs self-possession. One of the emblems of literati culture was the display of self-possession, of which there are many examples in *Shishuo xinyu*. Xi Kang's *qin* music serves as a performance of calm continuation of normal activity despite his impending catastrophe. The anecdote shown below immediately follows the

⁶⁰ Fang Xuanling, *Jinshu*, 49.1374.

⁶¹ Jin Jie, *Chinese music*, 21.

Xi Kang passage in the *Shishuo xinyu*, supporting the idea that self-possession was considered by the *Shishuo xinyu* compilers to be demonstrated by Xi Kang's *qin* performance; as mentioned previously, the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes tend to be grouped together by theme.

Writing and self-possession

夏侯太初嘗倚柱作書，時大雨，霹靂破所倚柱，衣服焦然，神色無變，書亦如故。賓客左右，皆跌蕩不得住。⁶²

Xiahou Taichu (Xiahou Xuan)⁶³ once was leaning on a tree stump, writing. At that time, it began raining heavily, [and] a bolt of thunder snapped the stump he was leaning on. [His] clothes were singed and burned. [His] writing still [continued] as before. The guests who had been present all randomly scattered, unable to remain.

Xiahou Taichu's continued writing despite nearly being struck by lightning appears to be the equivalent of Xi Kang's calmly playing the *qin* on the eve of his death in the previous anecdote. Displays of self-possession, like skilled *qin* playing, were part of the literati group identity.

The final *qin* passage is from the *Yanshi jiaxun* chapter "She wu" 涉務 (Dealing with practical matters). This excerpt provides a glimpse of the varied nature of early medieval associations with the *qin*: not all gentlemen's *qin* playing was to be admired.

7.4.3.5 The frivolous *qin*

士君子之處世，貴能有益於物耳，不徒高談虛論，左琴右書，以費人君祿位也。⁶⁴

⁶² Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 267 (6.3).

⁶³ Taichu is the courtesy name of Xiahou Xuan 夏侯玄 (209-254 CE). According to the *Sanguo zhi*, he became well known at a young age and held a rank of 黃門侍郎 (Gentleman Attendant at the Palace Gate) but was later demoted to the 羽林 (Palace Guards) after having earned the displeasure of Cao Rui (204-239; r. 227-239 CE). Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi*, 9.295.

⁶⁴ Wang Liqi, *Yanshi jiaxun jixiang*, 290-291.

A scholar's life in this world should value being able to be of benefit to others, and that is all. (His life) is not only merely lofty talk and empty discussion, with a *qin* on the left and a book on the right, by doing so wasting the salary and the position granted by the ruler.

Although Xiao Yi does not mention Pure Conversation here, he may have been referring to the practice even though by the sixth century it was a less prominent feature of literati life than it had been earlier in the Six Dynasties. In this passage, the *qin* still functions as an emblem of literati group identity, but one with more complex connotations than in the other passages quoted in this chapter.

7.5 Conclusion

Various textual references to music that depict the expression or the creation of identity have been discussed in this chapter. The passages from *Jinlouzi* that describe rulers' engagement with music were part of lengthier descriptions of the achievements of dynasty-founding kings, and music appears to be one element of a collection of attributes that established the kings' identity as someone deserving of his position and worthy of veneration. Xiao Yi seemed to be engaged in "the recognition, [and] selection [...] of common habits," as described by Turino, to establish the parameters of regal identity.

Ways in which the literati are described as performing identity, through drumming, lute, or *qin* playing, were also explored. Mi Heng performs his regional identity, in the process enhancing the audience response to his drumming. Xie Shang creates a new identity with his lute playing. Xi Kang, calmly strumming the *qin* on the eve of his execution, performs an act of self-possession that appeared to be a required personality trait for Six Dynasties elite.

The identities of the Wang Zijing and his *qin* seem to merge on Wang's deathbed, and, similarly, the identities of Xi Kang and a *qin* tune blend together on the eve of Xi Kang's execution. Several passages from Yan Zhitui add some cultural context to the anecdotes, including a view from a Northern court. Finally, the last *qin* passage brings out the ambiguous image of the *qin*, which could denote frivolity instead of seriousness of purpose.

Ethnomusicologists are generally focused on contemporary music that can still be heard, or older music that lives on through recordings, but the textual references to music discussed above are also consistent with ethnomusicologists' contentions about the role of music in expressing or creating identity. Turino's description of music as "fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style" seems to be as applicable to Six Dynasties musical culture as to the modern culture that he focuses on.

These observations of modern ethnomusicologists are not as remote from early medieval Chinese traditions as one might assume given the temporal and geographical distance between them. David Pankenier's description of Rhapsodies as reaffirming a sense of solidarity within a select group is quite similar to Turino's description of music. The textual passages analyzed above suggest that Pankenier's characterization of Rhapsodies, as well as Charles Hartman's point that skill at poetry is a "requirement for admission" to elite status, could also apply to musical achievement.

Group identity figures prominently in the above textual passages. The meaning of "group" in this context is broad, and includes shared attributes

across long time periods in the case of the *Jinlouzi* passages concerning regal identity. The other groups implicitly referenced include the literati class, especially the subset that comprised accomplished *qin* players, migrants from specific regions remote from court, and well as Northern court officials. All the music performances and other references to music examined above referred in some way to group identity; even Xie Shang, playing the lute on his own, seemed to be aspiring to belong to a group of Daoist “authentic” people. To the extent that personal identity is involved, it is in the sense of judging oneself to belong to a particular group, or of taking steps to ensure that one is identified by others as belonging to a particular group. There is no reference in these texts to musicians using music to demonstrate their uniqueness as individuals. Xi Kang may have drawn attention to his specialized knowledge of one *qin* tune, but there were probably many literati-musicians that were known to have specialized knowledge of particular *qin* tunes, and the anecdote reads as a representation of Xi Kang’s membership in that accomplished class of literati rather than as an expression of personal uniqueness.

Chapter 8: Sonorous symbolism

Condense some daily experience into a glowing
symbol and an audience is electrified.¹
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Music as an instrument of persuasion has been a subtext of this study: textual passages have been examined that depict the persuasiveness of the musical stirring of emotion, of music performances that resemble spoken rhetoric, of musical protest, and of performances or connections to music that alter identity or that enhance a public image. This chapter explores an additional musical source of persuasiveness – the use of music symbols and, in particular, the use of bells as symbols. Bells have a long history in China and were used for practical, ritual, and entertainment purposes. As will be demonstrated below, while their use diminished in the Six Dynasties, the texts of the time suggest that they continued to hold rich symbolic meaning.

8.1 Methodology

Alan P. Merriam's ethnomusicology classic, *The anthropology of music*, devotes a chapter to symbolic meaning in music.² He states, "There is no question but that music serves a symbolic function in human cultures on the level of affective or cultural meaning."³ In some cases, music may symbolize something specific; in others, musicians and auditors might agree on only a broad category that a musical work or performance represents, such as "sadness." In this chapter I

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative men, society and solitude*, 77.

² Merriam, *Anthropology of music*, chapter XII ("Music as symbolic behavior"). The study of symbols in connection with music has a complex and controversial history, most of which is not directly relevant to the subject of this study. Hence for the purposes of this chapter, I include only the aspects of the topic of symbolism that are most relevant to early medieval Chinese texts, as discussed by Merriam and several other ethnomusicologists. For additional detail, including the history of the study of symbolism and semiotics in connection with music, see Bruno Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 302-318.

³ Merriam, *Anthropology of music*, 246.

extend Merriam's point to textual references to music, to argue that references to bells have a culturally specific symbolic function in the texts.

The subject of music symbolism, like the topics discussed in the previous chapters of this study, touches on aspects of music that have been observed to be both common to many music cultures and also to have aspects that are specific to one culture. Some of the music symbolism around the world relates explicitly to particular musical instruments; Merriam cites examples from Western music as well as, for example, a harp played by the Bambara of West Africa which has culture-specific meaning associated with its appearance and sound.⁴ Bruno Nettl points out that musical instruments throughout the world are covered with visual symbols, which he speculates may reflect the legacy of beliefs in musical instruments as tools of communication with the supernatural.⁵

References to bells in *Shishuo xinyu* and *Jinlouzi* are presented below to demonstrate the various types of symbolism appearing in the texts. Bells as metaphors, suggesting strength and durability – as well as more abstract concepts such as fine writing and strong character – are one aspect of their representation in the texts. In addition, bells seem to allude to the past – to traditional ritual, earlier texts and the sages associated with them, and the Way (*dao*). These allusions denote high culture and seriousness of purpose and in doing so lend bells a kind of rhetorical effectiveness in making a point. To illustrate the allusions, excerpts from earlier texts are provided that highlight the connections between the early medieval texts and their canonical predecessors.

⁴ Merriam, *Anthropology of music*, 246. Merriam is citing here a study by Viviana Paques: *Les Bambara*, 106-7.

⁵ Nettl, *The study of ethnomusicology*, 382.

8.2 Literature review

The secondary literature on the music of the Six Dynasties does not devote a great deal of attention to bells, perhaps because the political and social significance of bells had diminished as of that era. Qin Xu's discussion of Six Dynasties court music provides some factual information about the usage of bells over time, gleaned for the most part from standard histories.⁶ Lothar von Falkenhausen's tome about bells⁷ covers primarily the period up to the Qin dynasty. Albert Dien's chapter "Music and musical instruments" in his volume on the Six Dynasties has some, limited information about bells: Dien mentions models of bells found in a tomb⁸ and, in his introduction, briefly summarizes their history and points out that they made way for "a lighter sound produced by a mixture of strings, wind instruments, and small drums" between the Han Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE).⁹ Discussion of musical instrument symbolism is generally focused on the *qin*; Robert van Gulik, for example, devotes a three-part chapter to symbolism in his volume on the *qin*, covering the symbolism of technical names, timbre, and finger technique.¹⁰ In this chapter I supplement what is provided in the above literature by focusing on texts other than standard histories, and on the symbolism of bells rather than the more practical aspects described by Qin Xu.

The bell symbolism in these Six Dynasties texts echoes that appearing in earlier texts. This reflection of earlier symbolism can be seen as an illustration of Timothy Rice's concept of "historical construction," which he defines as the

⁶ Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 270-4.

⁷ Falkenhausen, *Suspended music*.

⁸ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 342.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰ Van Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*, chapter five.

process of “reencountering and recreating the forms and legacy of the past in each moment of the present.”¹¹ Rice is referring here to the ways in which the musical forms of the past are reflected in the present; I am broadening his concept to apply to the ways in which music symbols of past texts are reflected in later texts. In the textual passages shown below, the authors or compilers of the texts and their readers reencounter ancient texts – and the sages of the past associated with those texts – through the symbolism of bells, and in doing so, give the earlier symbolism new purpose.

The musicologist Edward Arthur Lippman describes symbolism as entailing “a relation between two different kinds of experience, one somehow pointing to the other.”¹² Lippman’s definition is useful in the context of this study, with the caveat that the symbols involved are culture-specific: they are “pointing to” matters that are fully appreciated only by participants in the culture of the early readership of *Shishuo xinyu* or *Jinlouzi*. This chapter teases out a picture – from a temporally distant vantage point – of what the symbols might be pointing to, and what purposes the use of the symbolism might serve.

8.3 Cultural backdrop

Zhong 鍾 (alternatively, 鐘) is a general term for bell but represents a large number of types of early Chinese bells, including varieties of clapper-bells and mallet-struck bells. Musical bells – as opposed to those with limited, noise- or

¹¹ Rice, “Toward the remodeling of ethnomusicology,” 474. Rice added the concept of historical construction to Alan Merriam’s three-tiered model of ethnomusicology, which focused on sound, concept, and behavior: “we hear a song; it is made of sound ordered in certain ways. Human beings produce this song and in so doing they behave, not only when actually singing the song, but also in their way of life, either as musicians or as people listening to music and responding to it. Since they are musicians, or non-specialists responding to music, they conceptualize the musical facts of life, which they then accept as proper to their culture.” Merriam, *Anthropology of music*, 34.

¹² Lippman, “Symbolism in music,” 554.

signal-creating purposes – were cast to produce distinct pitches that could be sounded together with other bells to produce a melody. Bells were manufactured to an accomplished standard, with a high quality of casting and a sophisticated understanding of pitch production.¹³ They were key elements of classical court ensembles, which were serious undertakings that communicated with the all-important ancestors. Bells remained a sign of legitimacy to rule in northern courts even when, as described below, they fell silent after the end of the Western Jin. In addition, there were numerous allusions to bells in early texts; they were mentioned as early as *Shijing*,¹⁴ and continued to appear in later canonical texts.

From the Zhou dynasty to the Han dynasty, bells had prominent roles in musical ceremonies at court and among the aristocracy, marking the most significant occasions such as military engagements and ritual sacrifices. They were generally played along with other instruments, such as zithers and flutes, and were also used to establish pitch standards. Bells, along with stone chimes, were closely associated with *Shijing*, the songs of which were accompanied by bells, drums, and stone chimes. Chinese bells are believed to have developed earlier than bells anywhere else in the world and were the first to be produced as tuned instruments.¹⁵ Traditional bell manufacture seems to have peaked prior to 400 BCE,¹⁶ possibly continuing on a smaller scale into the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE).¹⁷ There is some evidence of additional bell construction – of a poorer

¹³ For a detailed account of the history of bell manufacture and use, from the late Western Zhou dynasty (starting around 885 BCE) through the Six Dynasties, see Falkenhausen, *Suspended music*, 158-190.

¹⁴ For example, the last lines of “Guan ju” 關雎 read, 窈窕淑女。鍾鼓樂之。 (Delicate, demure, gentle lady; bells and drums celebrate her): Kong Yingda, *Mao Shi zhengyi*, 1A:24a [22].

¹⁵ Falkenhausen, *Suspended music*, 14. According to Falkenhausen, the earliest “bell-like metal object” dates from around 2000 BCE and was excavated in Shanxi province.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

quality – during the Han dynasty, possibly because “the trappings of Zhou court music remained icons of cultivation and status.”¹⁸ After the end of the Han dynasty, bells became less commonplace even at court.¹⁹ The final blow – at least for a time – came when court musicians fled south in 316 and had to abandon their instruments. For the next seventy years or so, bells existed mostly as textual references and symbols of cultural refinement in the south and as mute artifacts in the north. Later, by the time *Shishuo xinyu* was compiled in the early 5th century, bells had begun to make a comeback.²⁰

As discussed in connection with the topics of previous chapters of this study, there is a parallel between the manner in which music is represented and the way in which other literary forms, especially Rhapsodies, are understood. For example, in David Knechtges’ notes to the preface to *Wenxuan*, he describes certain types of Rhapsodies as evoking “the manifold emotional and symbolic qualities associated with a particular object or subject.”²¹

8.4 Illustrations from texts

Anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* that mention bells are unique among passages in the text that involve musical instruments; the anecdotes never describe anyone playing bells, unlike the many other passages mentioning the playing of zithers, the flute, or the lute for example. Moreover, the references to musical bells are all metaphors; the reason no one is described as actually striking bells is perhaps

¹⁸ Ibid., 190.

¹⁹ One sign of the reduced status of bells was the transition to the use of flutes to set pitch standards; see Howard Goodman, “Tintinnabulations of Bells,” 40-42.

²⁰ See Qin Xu, *Liuchao yinyue wenhua yanjiu*, 270-4, for an outline of the history of court music during the Eastern Jin (265-420 CE) and Nanbeichao (420-589 CE).

²¹ Knechtges, *Wen xuan or selections of refined literature, volume I*, 76, note to line 49.

that, at the time the text was compiled, bells were more symbols of the past than common aspects of current music practice.

The word *zhong* appears only in some of the passages discussed below; in the first three, *jin* 金, which can also mean metal or bronze, is used to represent a bell. *Jin* sometimes occurs together with *shi* 石 (stone): *jin shi* means bronze [bells] and stone [chimes].²² Similarly, the word *qing* 磬 (chime) appears only in the fifth passage below; in the first four, *shi* is used to mean chime. *Jin* and *shi* are two of eight materials considered in ancient China to be basic building blocks of musical instruments,²³ and names of the eight materials are sometimes used to stand in for what are considered representative instruments of those materials. In addition, *jin shi*, combined with *si zhu* 絲竹 (silk and bamboo) is used as a general term for musical instruments, *si* referring to string instruments and *zhu* referring to wind instruments.

The first four passages shown below are from *Shishuo xinyu*, two from the chapter titled “Yan yu” 言語 (Speech and conversation), and two from the chapter titled “Wen xue” 文學 (Letters and scholarship). As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* are grouped into chapters according to themes. The general theme of “Yan yu” is witty ripostes—in many of the anecdotes, the ripostes are thrown at powerful people by those

²² The use of *jin* 金 to mean bells occurs in many earlier texts: an example is in *Mencius* 5B.1; see Jiao Xun, *Mengzi zhengyi*, 672. The term *jin shi* 金石, referring to bronze bells and stone chimes, appears in *Xunzi*: 故樂者，所以道樂也。金石絲竹，所以道德也 (Hence, music is what we use to express happiness; bronze [bells], stone [chimes], silk [strings], and bamboo [pipes] are what we use to express moral power); see Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 382 (“Yuelun”). Bells, chimes, strings, and pipes collectively refer to musical instruments; there is similar usage in the “Pianmu” 駢拇 (Webbed toes) chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, where 金石絲竹 means musical instruments; see Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 4A:2a [314].

²³ The other materials are silk, bamboo, wood, earth, gourd, and skin. See Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for one or two*, 52, for an introduction to the eight materials.

with less clout. Clever retorts are scattered throughout the *Shishuo xinyu*, but “Yan yu” is the one with the highest number and highest concentration; other chapters have different salient themes. Twelve of the one hundred eight anecdotes in this chapter involve quick-tongued children showing up their superiors. In over half the anecdotes in the chapter, the retorts entail a reference to an ancient classic or a sage, perhaps to intensify the emotional impact and persuasiveness of the retort, but also to sound as clever as possible.²⁴ The anecdotes analyzed below from “Yan yu” describe the use of musical instruments – or a reference to them – as a kind of retort, and the musical instruments seem to fulfill the role that an ancient classic or sage plays in the other anecdotes in “Yan yu.”

“Wen xue” consists mostly of amusing tales about famous figures such as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE) and Sun Chuo 孫綽 (fl. 330-365 CE), and conversationalists such as Yin Hao 殷浩 (306-356 CE) and Wang Yan 王衍 (256-311 CE). Roughly the first sixty-five of the one hundred four passages in the chapter describe encounters between famous men who are competing to dominate as debaters or interpreters of classic texts.²⁵ The second half of the chapter is more focused on writing skill, for example the ability to compose poetry or prose quickly.²⁶ The last thirty or so anecdotes comprise mostly conversations in which one scholar comments on the literary skill of another. A

²⁴ Examples are references to respected ancient rulers, in anecdote 6; to *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and autumn), in anecdote 7; to *Lunyu*, in anecdotes 17, 50, 57, 60, and 103; to respected Zhou rulers, in anecdote 35; to *Zhuangzi*, in anecdotes 61, 66, 75, 106 and 108; to *Zuozhuan*, in anecdote 68; to the “Lisao” 離騷 (Encountering sorrow) from *Chuci*, in anecdote 96; and to *Zhouyi* 周易 (Changes of Zhou), in anecdote 99.

²⁵ Examples are anecdote 2, a discussion between Zheng Xuan and Fu Qian 服虔 (d. ca. 190 CE); anecdote 6, a debate between Ho Yan 何晏 (ca. 190-249 CE) and Wang Pi 王弼 (ca. 226-249 CE) on unspecified matters; and anecdote 19, a debate between Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312) and Pei Xia 裴遐 (fl. ca. 300 CE).

²⁶ See, for example, anecdotes 66, 67, 95, and 96.

number in this last category involve metaphors, for example, comparing someone's writing to brocade²⁷ or calling it overgrown with weeds.²⁸ The two passages from "Wen xue" discussed below are in this last section of the chapter and use bell metaphors.

The two "Wen xue" anecdotes are shown first, followed by the two from "Yan yu."

8.4.1 Ringing Rhapsodies

孫興公作天台賦成，以示范榮期云：「卿試擲地，要作金石聲。」范曰：「恐子之金石，非宮商中聲？」然每至佳句，輒云：「應是我輩語。」²⁹

Sun Xinggong [Sun Chuo]³⁰ finished writing the Tiantai Mountains Rhapsody,³¹ [and] showed it to Fan Rongqi [Fan Qi],³² saying, "Sir, try throwing it on the ground; it will produce the sound of *jin*³³ (bronze bells) and *shi* (stone chimes)." Fan Rongqi said, "Perhaps your *jin* and *shi* are not within the sounds of the *gong shang*³⁴ scale?" That said, every time he came to a fine passage, [he] immediately said, "This should be our language!"

²⁷ See anecdotes 84 and 93.

²⁸ See anecdote 89.

²⁹ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 205-206 (4.86).

³⁰ Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314-371 CE), who held posts in the military and at the imperial university, is known as a commentator on the *Lunyu* and a highly skilled writer of *xuanyan* 玄言 poetry, a genre popular in the fourth century that was infused with ideas from *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. Sun Chuo was a Buddhist but in his writing he attempted to reconcile his Buddhist beliefs with Ruist traditions—especially filial piety—and Daoist ideas. Kroll describes Sun Chuo as "widely regarded as the foremost writer of the age" as of the mid-fourth century (Kroll, "Poetry on the mysterious," 230). See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part two*, 1045-1050, for general biographical information on Sun Chuo.

³¹ The full name of this Rhapsody is 遊天台山賦 (Rhapsody on roaming the Tiantai Mountains), and it is in the "Youlan" 遊覽 (sightseeing) section of *Wenxuan*; see Li Shan, *Wenxuan*, 11:4a-10a [493-500]. The Tiantai mountains are in present-day Zhejiang province.

³² Fan Qi 范啓 (fl. mid-4th c. CE) was a minor court official (黃門郎—Gentleman of the Palace Gate). There are several anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* quoting his cleverly worded jabs at his peers. See He Fasheng, *Jin zhongxingshu*, 7:37b.

³³ I retain the Chinese terms *jin* and *shi* within the English translation of this passage and in certain passages that follow, in order to make it easier for non-readers of Chinese to follow the connection between *jin* (metal or bronze) and *jin* (bronze bells), and between *shi* (stone) and *shi* (stone chimes).

³⁴ The *gong shang* scale is the name of the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale. *Gong* and *shang* are the names of the first two notes on the scale, and they represent relative positions on the scale rather than absolute pitches.

The presence of culture-specific lingo that is shared by the speakers – or at least the book’s compilers and readers – is evident in this passage from “Wen xue.” Sun Chuo’s comparison between Rhapsodies and the sound of bells and chimes is understood immediately by Fan Qi, who counters with a further comparison with the *gong shang* scale that Sun Chuo (and readers) are expected to grasp without difficulty. The symbolism of *jin*, *shi*, and *gong shang* functions as a kind of shorthand for cultural insiders.

Sun Chuo uses the sound of bells and chimes as a metaphor for a high standard of writing. He may also have been suggesting that his writing was spot-on, like perfect pitch; Fan Qi then refines Sun Chuo’s metaphor further to imply that the standard is equivalent to accurately sounding the pitches of the *gong shang* scale, and that Sun Chuo’s pitch may be perfect to Sun Chuo but is not part of the standard scale hence not perfect at all. Fan Qi’s reference to the *gong shang* scale deepens the link to an absolute, lofty standard in the sense that music in ancient China was a serious business entailing constant striving for perfect pitches. The reference to bells and chimes may have been a way of comparing the endurance, precision, and influence of high standards of writing with the durability, immutability, and long-range audibility of bronze bells and stone chimes.

The connotations for the compilers and the readers of *Shishuo xinyu* of bell and chime symbols mostly likely went beyond the physical properties of bells and chimes. As mentioned above, bells had a critical role in early ritual ensembles and great care was taken in their manufacture. In addition, early texts used bells and chimes as symbols, of durability and immutability but also of

more abstract concepts as will be illustrated below. *Shishuo xinyu* compilers and readers – who were probably highly educated consumers of early Chinese texts – were likely to be familiar with symbolism used in the past and hence to read echoes of connotations from early texts into *Shishuo xinyu* references to bells and chimes. The more the symbolism implied propinquity to ancient, revered texts – or sages or concepts associated with them – the more effective the point being made. The frequency of references in Six Dynasty literature to canonical texts attests to the importance of textual allusions. “Importance” in this context meant usefulness in convincing someone of a point or of one’s merit as a scholar, and – in the case of *Shishuo xinyu* in particular, where humor and besting one’s debate counterparty was key – usefulness in winning a verbal exchange that had no practical consequences. Hence, a scholar invoking Ruist images, for example, did not necessarily hold a strong commitment to Ruist traditions; the scholar’s cleverness in summoning a vivid image or symbol would have been noted and taken into account in any judgment of his debating skills and general merit.

An example of an earlier textual association of bells (and chimes) with an immutable, lofty standard is in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, “Fan lun xun” 汎論訓 (Boundless discourses) section, where there is the following passage comparing bells and chimes to the Way (*dao*):³⁵

故聖人所由曰道。所為曰事。道猶金石。一調不更。事猶琴瑟。每絃改調。³⁶

³⁵ The meaning of the term *dao* has changed over the many centuries of its use, but Donald Holzman’s simple description should suffice for the purposes of this study: “The Daoism of Laozi and Zhuangzi is a mystical philosophy preaching that everything in the world is transient and relative, but that an absolute, unchanging, undifferentiated *dao* underlies this world. It is only by modeling our lives on the *dao* that we can make those lives full and meaningful.” Holzman, “A dialogue with the ancients,” 91.

³⁶ Liu An, *Huainanzi*, 13.5a [214].

Therefore, what sages follow is called the Way; what [they] do is called day-to-day matters. The Way is like *jin* (bronze bells) and *shi* (stone chimes); once tuned, [their sound] does not change. Day-to-day matters are like *qin* and *se*; at any time, the strings' tuning may change.

Perhaps Sun Chuo – or the storytellers who crafted the tale of Sun Chuo's comparison of his Rhapsody to the sounds of bells and chimes – had in mind the Daoist nature of his poetry. The Rhapsody by Sun Chuo mentioned in the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote is a description of a climb up a mountain, and there are a number of Daoist references in the description. The “sound of bronze [bells] and stone [chimes]” that Sun Chuo boasts of for his Rhapsody is perhaps the achievement of accord with the Daoist Way.

An additional reference to *jin shi* (although not in its meaning of bells and chimes) is in the “Daoxu” 道虛 (Daoist falsehoods) section of *Lunheng* 論衡 (Discourses in balance), a text from the first century CE written by Wang Chong (27- c. 100 CE). In this passage, *jin* and *shi* are compared to a Daoist “authentic person.” The short excerpt shown below is part of an argument put forth by Wang Chong to explain his doubts about a story about a physician, Wen Zhi 文摯 (fl. 4th C. BCE), who faced a dilemma when attempting to cure King Min of Qi 齊湣王 (323–284 BCE; r. 300–284 BCE). The only cure was to make the king angry, but Wen Zhi knew that doing so would mean that he would lose his head. He angered the king as required for the cure, and then was boiled alive in a cauldron. At first, the cauldron was not covered, and Wen Zhi did not die, but once the lid was placed on the cauldron, he died. Wang Chong questions the claim that Wen Zhi's at first remaining alive meant that he was a Daoist. One of the points made

against the claim is that the lid's presence would not have made a difference to a Daoist:

既能烹煮不死，此真人也，與金石同。金石雖覆蓋，與不覆蓋者無以異也。³⁷
 If [Wen Zhi] could be boiled [but] not die, he was an authentic person, the same as *jin* (bronze) or *shi* (stone). *Jin* or *shi*, whether covered or uncovered, is without difference [in outcome].

The *jin shi* reference here is to metal (or bronze) and stone, but the close connection between *jin shi* (bronze and stone) and *jin shi* (bronze bells and stone chimes) suggests that the comparison made in this *Lunheng* passage between *jin shi* and the Way may have extended to an association between bells and chimes and the Way (as in the *Huainanzi* passage above).

Early *jin* and *shi* symbolism can also be found in discussions of traditional ritual. The following passage in the “Yueji” of *Liji* closely associates *jin* and *shi* with the correctness and the fixed nature of ritual:

中正無邪，禮之質也；莊敬恭順，禮之制也。若夫禮樂之施於金石，越於聲音，用於宗廟社稷，事乎山川鬼神，則此所與民同也。³⁸

Precision and correctness, without any deviation, are the substance of ritual. Solemnity, reverence, expression of respect, and submission are the rules of ritual. As for ritual and music being carried out with *jin* (bronze bells) and *shi* (stone chimes), transcending sound and [musical] notes, being used in the ancestral temple and the village shrine,³⁹ serving the mountain and river spirits; [this] conforms to the people.

Hence the symbolism of *jin shi* in anecdote 8.4.1 above seems to have multiple reference points: to endurance, precision, and influence, as well as to the Way and to traditional ritual. While it might seem at first glance odd that one set of

³⁷ Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, 8b [71].

³⁸ Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu*, 37:16b [669] (“Yueji” A).

³⁹ *She ji* 社稷 literally means gods of the soil and of grains.

symbols could have Daoist as well as Ruist associations, a mixing of philosophical approaches was characteristic of the period; Six Dynasties literati are understood to have been comfortable with a blending of what is now generally divided into distinct Ruist, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions.⁴⁰ *Shishuo xinyu* readers would also have been familiar with Sun Chuo's mixing of Daoist and classical images in his poetry; the musical symbolism attributed to him in anecdote 8.4.1 echoes the symbolic language used in his poetry.⁴¹

The following anecdote, also from "Wen xue," is similar to anecdote 8.4.1 in its use of the sound of bronze bells as a metaphor for a desirable abstract quality, in this case good character.

8.4.2 Ringing reputations

庾闡始作揚都賦，道溫、庾云：「溫挺義之標，庾作民之望；方響則金聲，比德則玉亮。」庾公聞賦成，求看，兼贈贖之。闡更改「望」為「雋」，以「亮」為「潤」云。⁴²

[When] Yu Chan⁴³ first wrote the "Yang Capital Rhapsody,"⁴⁴ [he] spoke of Wen [Qiao]⁴⁵ and Yu [Liang],⁴⁶ saying, "Wen projected the standard of rectitude, Yu [Liang] was an exemplar for the people. [An apt] comparison to their reputation is the sound of bronze [bells]; [a befitting] match for their moral power is the brightness of jade." Yu [Liang] heard the Rhapsody was

⁴⁰ See Holzman, "Dialogue with the ancients," 97-98, for a description of Six Dynasties scholars' interest in blending different traditional schools of thought as well as newer ideas.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the eclectic symbolism in Sun Chuo's poetry, see Kroll, "Poetry on the mysterious."

⁴² Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 201 (4.77).

⁴³ Yu Chan (ca. 286-347 CE) was a scholar-official who wrote both poetry and prose, samples of both of which are still extant, including fragments of eight Rhapsodies. He held administrative posts and also served as court historian. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature: a reference guide, part three & four*, 1976-1979.

⁴⁴ This Rhapsody is no longer extant. Yang capital was present-day Nanjing.

⁴⁵ Wen Qiao 溫嶠 (288-329 CE) held various military and administrative posts including general and provincial governor and was a prose writer. He was also understood to be drawn to the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part two*, 1309-1312.

⁴⁶ Yu Liang 庾亮 (289-340 CE) was a military commander and held various posts at court including of curator of the palace library. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature, part three & four* 1994-1997.

completed, [and] asked to see it while bestowing gifts on him. [Yu] Chan successively changed “exemplar” to “paragon,” “brightness,” to “luster” and so on.

In this passage, the comparison of the sound of bronze bells with an abstract concept—in this case the strong reputation of a scholar-official—is explicit. As in anecdote 8.4.1, the reference to bronze bells may be related to their durable and unchanging nature. In anecdote 8.4.2, the sonority of bells is particularly relevant in the sense that they are heard over a large area and hence have something in common with a well-established reputation. In addition, as discussed with respect to anecdote 8.4.1, the compilers and readers of *Shishuo xinyu* would have been likely to have associated remarks about bells with earlier, venerated texts.

An extant early reference to the sound of bronze bells ringing is the following passage from *Wuxing* 五行 (Five conducts), a text on silk manuscripts discovered in a tomb in 1973. The original text may date to the fourth century BCE.⁴⁷

金聲而玉振之，有德者也。金聲，善也；玉音，聖也。善，人道也；德，天道也。唯有德者然後能金聲而玉振之。⁴⁸

Bronze [bells] ringing and jade [chimes] resonating with them [represent those with] moral power. The sound of the bronze [bells] is goodness; the tone of the jade [chimes] is sageliness. Goodness is the Way of mankind; moral power is the Way of heaven. Only when there are those with moral power can bronze [bells] ring and jade [chimes] resonate with them.

In both the *Shishuo xinyu* passage (anecdote 8.4.2) and the above *Wuxing* passage, the bell is a symbol of admirable character. The reference to bronze [bells] ringing and jade [chimes] resonating with them is similar to a passage in *Mencius*, in which the character of Confucius is likened to the sound of bells

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the dating of *Wuxing*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material virtue*, 62-64; and Scott Cook, “Consummate artistry,” 116-117.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

followed by the ring of chimes.⁴⁹ The reason for the pairing of bronze bells and jade chimes is not clear; Mark Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the resonance between bells and chimes refers to “the transforming influence of one virtuous person upon another person.”⁵⁰

The above two anecdotes from *Shishuo xinyu* are examples of the use of bells and chimes as metaphors and as echoes of earlier texts, and, furthermore, as illustrations of how bells symbolize high standards, whether in written work or in personal character. The references to bells and chimes, as well as *gong* and *shang*, have culture-specific meanings, functioning in a manner similar to that described by Merriam and Nettl in their discussion of music or musical instrument symbols: for example, a particular musical motif, or musical instrument decoration, might be commonly viewed as a symbol of a culture’s values. Rice’s concept of historical construction is also relevant to these anecdotes: a musical motif might be generally associated with a theme from earlier music,

⁴⁹ The passage in *Mencius* 5B.1 reads, 孔子之謂集大成。集大成也者，金聲而玉振之也。(Confucius is said to have achieved a complete musical work. A complete musical work is [one in which] the *jin* (bronze bells) ring and the jade [chimes] resonate with them). See Jiao Xun, *Mengzi zhengyi*, 672. I base this translation on the commentary by Zhao Qi 趙岐 (d. 201 CE), who wrote the earliest extant commentary on *Mencius*. Zhao Qi states, 振，揚也。故如金音之有殺，振揚玉音，終始如一也。(Zhen 振 [means] to stir up; hence, resembling the fading of the sound of bronze [bells] stirring the jade [chimes] to sound, [so that] the end and the beginning are as one): Jiao Xun, *Mengzi zhengyi*, 672. Some translators have assumed that the reference to bells and chimes refers to early Chinese ritual ensembles beginning with a bell and ending with chimes (see translations below), but Falkenhausen suggests that there is minimal evidence for this (*Suspended music*, 216-7).

This passage from *Mencius* has been translated many ways, including the following.

- “In Confucius we have what is called a complete concert. A complete concert is when the large bell proclaims the commencement of the music, and the ringing stone proclaims its close.” (Legge, *Mencius*, 87). This interpretation seems to follow that of Jiao Xun.
- “Confucius was the one who gathered together all that was good. To do this is to open with bells and conclude with jade tubes.” See D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, 150; he appears to be following Jiao Xun’s interpretation.
- “Confucius may be said to have ‘assembled the great symphony’ ... ‘Assembling the great symphony’ means to ‘[possess] the tones of bronze and [instill] them [with] the resonance of jade.” See Scott Cook, “Consummate artistry,” 17; he explains that his interpretation follows that of the commentator Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123–1195), in Jiao Xun, *Mengzi zhengyi*, 673.

⁵⁰ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material virtue*, 183.

and be interpreted as a cultural symbol even if there is no definitive evidence of the original use or meaning of the earlier music. Those interpreting the musical motif are reencountering their past through their music and overlaying contemporary meaning onto it. In an analogous manner, readers of Six Dynasties texts reencounter the music or musical instrument symbols of the past, interpret them in new ways, and apply them to new uses.

The following two anecdotes, also from *Shishuo xinyu*, have similar attributes to the above passages. In addition, they also suggest that references to bells—perhaps because of their symbolic value and resonance for readers of earlier texts—serve as a kind of rhetorical device that makes a point more persuasive.

In anecdote 8.4.3 below, from “Yan yu,” we revisit the performance by Mi Heng to explore the symbolism of the reference to bells and chimes. The anecdote is repeated here for convenience. For explanatory notes, please see anecdote 4.5.2.3.

8.4.3 Drumming bells

禰衡被魏武謫為鼓吏，正月半試鼓。衡揚枹為漁陽參搥，淵淵有金石聲，四座為之改容。孔融曰：「禰衡罪同胥靡，不能發明王之夢！」魏武慙而赦之。 Mi Heng was degraded by [Emperor] Wu of Wei [Cao Cao] to become a court drummer. In the middle of the first month, at the time of the review of the drums, [Mi] Heng lifted his drumsticks and played the “Yuyang drumbeat.” [The drums] resounded deeply, like the sound of bronze [bells] and stone [chimes], and all in attendance were moved by it. Kong Rong said, “[Although] Mi Heng has been punished in the same way as someone in a chain gang, he has not been able to manifest [himself] in an enlightened king’s dream.” [Emperor] Wu of Wei was ashamed, and pardoned him.

At first glance, it seems puzzling that the sound of drums would be compared to that of bronze bells and stone chimes. The sound of bells and chimes seems to

be a metaphor for high quality, as it was in anecdotes 8.4.1 and 8.4.2, but in this case it refers to an enthralling drum performance rather than a fine piece of writing or a strong personal reputation. The resonance of bells may also have been a reason for the comparison with the drums. A similar metaphor, this time with a human voice compared to bells and chimes, appears in *Zhuangzi*. Zengzi 曾子,⁵¹ a disciple of Confucius known for his lack of interest in public office, is described as wearing ragged clothes and shoes. Despite his humble circumstances, he sings with vigor:

曳縱而歌商頌，聲滿天地，若出金石。⁵²

Dragging his feet, [he] sang Songs of Shang; the sound filled heaven and earth, as if from bronze [bells] and stone [chimes].

In this passage from *Zhuangzi*, the singing is so resonant that it reaches heaven; perhaps one of the reasons for the audience reaction to, and the persuasiveness of, Mi Heng's performance was the sense that his music was reaching beyond the human sphere. Falkenhausen summarizes the significance of early Chinese percussion instruments thus:

Ancient Chinese ritual performers [...] employed percussion instruments to make audible the transition between the human and the divine spheres. Among those instruments, bell-chimes were foremost.⁵³

The association of bells and chimes with long-range communication echoes the connection made in the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes above between bells and chimes and the achievement of high standards, which has the potential to lead to a strong reputation and influence over others. Bells were also a symbol of upper-

⁵¹ Zengzi 曾子 (505–435 BCE) was also known as Zeng Can 曾參. Authorship of *Daxue* 大學 (Great learning) was traditionally attributed to him, but modern scholars believe that the text was probably written during the Western Han. See Andrew H. Plaks, "The *Daxue* (Great learning) and the *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the mean)," 140-141.

⁵² See "Rang wang" 讓王 (Yielding the throne) in Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi*, 9b [977].

⁵³ Falkenhausen, *Suspended music*, 23.

class status. Falkenhausen states, “The elites defined their political power and social ranks in terms of access to, and possession of, ritual paraphernalia made of bronze, such as vessels, weapons, chariots, and bells.”⁵⁴ Hence, Mi Heng’s performance transforms his drum from a piece of prosaic military equipment into musical instruments that were symbols of high social status and temple ritual. His performance – which earns him a pardon and his freedom – appears to be rendered more persuasive by the symbolism he generates.

An explicit connection between bells and persuasiveness is made in the next passage from *Shishuo xinyu*. This anecdote from “Yan yu” immediately follows the Mi Heng anecdote in *Shishuo xinyu*; anecdotes with similar elements are often placed together, not only in the same chapter but also in sequence in the chapter.

8.4.4 Striking bells

南郡龐士元，聞司馬德操在潁川，故二千里候之。至，遇德操采桑，士元從車中謂曰：「吾聞丈夫處世，當帶金佩紫；焉有屈洪流之量，而執絲婦之事？」德操曰：「子且下車。子適知邪徑之速，不慮失道之迷。昔伯成耦耕，不慕諸侯之榮；原憲桑樞，不易有官之宅；何有坐則華屋，行則肥馬，侍女數十，然後為奇？此乃許父所以慷慨，夷齊所以長歎！雖有竊秦之爵，千駟之富，不足貴也。」士元曰：「僕生出邊垂，寡見大義；若不一叩洪鍾，伐雷鼓，則不識其音響也。」⁵⁵

Pang Shiyuan [Pang Tong]⁵⁶ of Nan Commandery [in present-day Hubei province] heard that Sima Decao [Sima Hui]⁵⁷ was in Yingchuan [Commandery],⁵⁸ so [travelled] two thousand *li*⁵⁹ to visit him. Arriving, [he]

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵ Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 50 (2.9).

⁵⁶ Pang Tong 龐統 (179-214 CE) was a county magistrate and a military commander and strategist. See biography in Rafe de Crespigny, *A biographical dictionary*, 689.

⁵⁷ Sima Hui 司馬徽 (d. 208 CE) was famous as a hermit and as an excellent judge of character. See biography in Rafe de Crespigny, *A biographical dictionary*, 746-7.

⁵⁸ Yingchuan Commandery was in present-day Henan province.

⁵⁹ A *li* was a measure of distance: 1 *li* = 300 *bu* 步. 1 *bu* = 6 *chi* 尺. 1 *chi* = 2.45 centimeters during the *Shishuo xinyu* era. Hence 1 *li* would be equivalent to slightly over 4.4 km and the two

found [Sima] Decao picking mulberries. [Pang] Shiyuan said, from his carriage, “I have heard that a gentleman conducting himself in the world should wear a gold [seal] and be girded with a purple [ribbon].⁶⁰ How can it be that [you] suppress [your] overflowing capacities [only] to do the work of a silkworm girl?” [Sima] Decao said, “[If] you will alight from your carriage: you only know the speed of a shortcut, but have not considered the confusion of losing your way. In the past, Bocheng⁶¹ plowed [with his wife] as a couple, and did not aspire to the glory of the titled lords. Yuan Xian’s mulberry doorposts⁶² [he] would not trade for an official’s mansion. Why must it be that sitting [entail] splendid rooms, or that travel [entail] burly horses, or that female attendants be numerous before [things are] considered remarkable? This is why Xu [You] and [Chao] Fu⁶³ were indignant and why [Bo] Yi and [Shu] Qi⁶⁴ sighed at length. Even the appropriation of a noble rank from Qin⁶⁵ or the wealth of a thousand four-horse teams⁶⁶ is insufficient cause for honor.” [Pang] Shiyuan said, “I was

thousand *li* that Pang Tong traveled would have been roughly 882 km. See Luo Zhufeng, *Hanyu da cidian suoyin*, 4.

⁶⁰ A gold seal and a purple ribbon were worn by those who held high office. See Li Xian’s 李賢 (654–684 CE) commentary in Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 40.3674.

⁶¹ Bocheng zigao 伯成子高 (?-?) was said in the *Zhuangzi* to have been a minister to the sage-king Yao and to have taken up farming once Yu 禹 (r. trad. 2205-2197 BCE) became sovereign. Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 5:7b-8a [423].

⁶² Yuan Xian, often called Zisi 子思 (fl. early 6th-late 5th c. BCE), was a disciple of Confucius. He was said to have lived in a basic hut with grass walls and doorposts made of mulberry branches. Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 9: 17b-18a [975].

⁶³ Xu You 許由 was said to have been a recluse during the reign of Yao 堯 (trad. 2356 – 2255 BCE), and described as having declined Yao’s request to succeed him as ruler and then to have washed out his ears in the river to purify himself after hearing Yao’s request. Chao Fu 巢父 was a cowherd who saw Xu You washing his ears and led his ox upstream to drink water that had not been tainted by Xu You. See Huangfu Mi, *Gaoshi zhuan*, 1:4a-4b.

⁶⁴ Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 were brothers who were said to have lived during the time of the transition from the Shang dynasty (ca. 1570-1045 BCE) to the Zhou dynasty (1045-221 BCE). They were considered models of moral principle: they castigated the first king of the Zhou dynasty for unfilial conduct and lack of loyalty to the sovereign and later starved to death because they did not want to eat the grain of the Zhou dynasty. See Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 61.2123-2123. Also see Alan J. Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, 42, for additional context to tales about Xu You, Chao Fu, and Bo Yi.

⁶⁵ This refers to a story about Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (291–235 BCE), who engineered a successful scheme to intervene in the selection of an heir to the throne in the state of Qin 秦 during the Warring States period (771-221 BCE) and was given a noble title as a reward. See Sima Qian, “Lü Buwei lie zhuan” 呂不韋列傳 (The biography of Lü Buwei), *Shiji* 85.2505-2514.

⁶⁶ This is a reference to *Lunyu* 16.12: 齊景公有馬千駟，死之日，民無德而稱焉。(Lord Jing of Qi had a thousand four-horse teams, [but] on the day he died there was no moral power that people could praise him for). See Cheng Shude, *Lunyu jishi*, 1496.

born on the frontier and have rarely seen great principles [in practice]. If I don't strike the vast bell or pound the thunderous drum, then I will not know their sound."

The literary allusions are more obvious in this anecdote than in the previous three, and the placement of the allusions at the end of the anecdote, as a debate-ending riposte, suggests that the literary reference added weight and influence to the encounter. Punch lines comprising a clever retort occur in many of the anecdotes in "Yan yu," and a large number of them involve an explicit or an implicit reference to sages or texts of the past including Yao 堯 (r. trad. 2356-2255 BCE), Laozi 老子 (trad. 6th c. BCE), Zhuangzi 莊子 (4th c. BCE), and disciples of Confucius; several involve comments similar to, or a parody of, something from *Zhuangzi*⁶⁷ which serves to make the retort sound even more clever and persuasive. Anecdote 8.4.4 fits into this pattern.

Pang Tong's retort was reminiscent of the following passage from the "Tiandi" 天地 (Heaven and earth) section of *Zhuangzi*:

夫子曰：「夫道，淵乎其居也，濇乎其清也。金石不得，无以鳴。故金石有聲，不考不鳴。」⁶⁸

The Master said, "The Way: how immeasurable is its dwelling, how rarified its purity. Bronze [bells] and stone [chimes] without it would have no means of making a sound. Therefore, even if bronze [bells] and stone [chimes] have [the capacity to make] sounds, if they are not struck, they will not sound.

Pang Tong's comments may also have been alluding to the following passage from the "Xueji" chapter of *Liji*.

⁶⁷ See anecdotes 45, 50, 51, 61, 66, 75, 78, 106, 108.

⁶⁸ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 5:2b [411].

善問者如攻堅木，先其易者，後其節目，及其久也，相說以解；不善問者反此。善待問者，如撞鐘，叩之以小者則小鳴，叩之以大者則大鳴，待其從容，然後盡其聲；不善答問者反此。此皆進學之道也。⁶⁹

Skilled questioning is similar to workmanship applied to solid trees: first the easy parts are [addressed], afterwards the knotty segments. After a long time, [the pupil and master] talk together to resolve [the matter]. The unskillful questioner does the opposite. The master who skillfully awaits questions is like a bell that is struck. Strike it with a small [hammer], [and] it emits a small sound. Strike it with a great [hammer], and it emits a great sound. Use [the hammer] calmly and unhurriedly, [and] hence maximize its sound. Those who are not skilled in replying to questions are the opposite of this. This all describes the way to make progress in learning.

Anecdote 8.4.4 begins with the visitor (Pang Tong) on the back foot, looking outsmarted by his counterpart. However, Pang Tong successfully elbows aside the initial dominance of Sima Hui by summoning the imagery of the Way giving life to the vast bell and by implying that his questioning demonstrates his command of *Liji* and *Zhuangzi*. The persuasiveness of Mi Heng and Pang Tong is enhanced by their invocation of symbols, perhaps because the symbols were believed to have affective qualities as Merriam suggests in his description of symbolism in music.

The following passage, from *Jinlouzi*, is this chapter's final example of how the symbolism of bells was used in Six Dynasties literature. It is from the chapter titled, "Shuo fan" 說蕃 (Discussing regional kings). This *Jinlouzi* chapter relates tales of regional kings' successes and failures, and strengths and weaknesses, as examples to be followed or avoided.

⁶⁹ Kong Yingda, *Liji zhushu*, 36:15a-15b [655].

8.4.5 Alarming bells

劉餘之封為淮陽王，吳楚反破後，徙王魯。好治宮室苑囿狗馬，季年好音。口吃難言。初，壞孔子舊宅以廣其宮，聞鐘磬琴瑟之聲，遂不敢壞，於其壁中得古文經傳。⁷⁰

Liu Yu⁷¹ was instated as king of Huaiyang (in 155 BCE).⁷² After the rebellion of [the states of] Wu and Chu⁷³ (in 154 BCE) was quashed, [he] was transferred to rule Lu.⁷⁴ He liked to manage the palace, the animal enclosure, and the dogs and the horses. In the final years [of his reign], he was fond of music; [he] stuttered and struggled to speak. [He] began to ransack Confucius' old residence in order to extend his [own] palace. [He] heard the sounds of bells, chimes, *qin*, and *se*, and thereupon did not dare ransack [any further]. In the walls [he] found classical texts written in ancient script.

For this passage, Xiao Yi paraphrased several longer passages from *Hanshu*,⁷⁵ retaining the main points of Liu Yu's appointment as Prince of Huaiyang, the rebellion of Wu and Chu, and his attempted ransacking of Confucius' old residence.⁷⁶

The *qin* and the *se* are lumped together here with bells and chimes, bringing to mind a Chinese ritual ensemble. The symbolism of bells (and other ritual instruments) in pointing to early ritual and texts is quite explicit here; the texts seemed to be producing ritual ensemble sounds from their hiding place. As in the first few anecdotes, the readers seem to be expected to understand the culture-specific images and symbolism. The earlier, *Hanshu* biography on Liu Yu

⁷⁰ Chen Zhiping, *Jinlouzi shuzheng jiaozhu*, 531-2 (8.43).

⁷¹ Liu Yu (d.128 BCE) was the fifth son of the Han Emperor Jing 漢景帝 (188-141; r. 157-141 BCE).

⁷² Huaiyang was in modern Henan province.

⁷³ The state of Wu was in the area of modern southern Jiangsu, and the state of Chu was roughly in modern northern Jiangsu.

⁷⁴ The state of Lu was in present-day Shandong province.

⁷⁵ Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 53.2414 ("Jing shisan wang zhuan" 景十三王傳). This chapter relates stories of the regional kings of the sixth Han emperor, Emperor Jing.

⁷⁶ This comparison between *Jinlouzi* and *Hanshu* assumes that the version of *Hanshu* known to Xiao Yi was not radically different from the modern received version; the earliest complete extant version of *Hanshu* dates to 1035 CE. See A.F.P. Hulsewé, "Han shu," 129-136.

includes the same reference to the musical instruments using very similar wording; however, because the purpose of the *Hanshu* biography is not as explicitly didactic as that of this *Jinlouzi* chapter, the ghostly orchestra does not ring quite as menacingly in the *Hanshu*. The moralistic context to the *Jinlouzi* passage is established by the surrounding passages of similar tone, and as a result the unexpected musical sounds take on a slightly threatening aura.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, references to bells in *Shishuo xinyu* and *Jinlouzi* were explored to see how they function as symbols in the texts. The quoted passages use bells as metaphors, pointing not only to the physical properties of bells – strength, durability, and sonority – but also to less obvious comparisons of the sound of bells with that of other musical instruments, or with human behavior, drawing on connotations of long-range communication and influence. In addition, bells are used as symbols of abstract concepts such as high standards, strength of character, the Way, and the precision and correctness of traditional ritual.

References to bells in earlier texts were also noted: the bells and chimes in *Huainanzi*, for example, are symbols of the Way in their immutability. In *Liji*, the role of bells and chimes are symbols of ritual, and, by extension, precision and correctness. In *Mencius*, the sounds of bells and chimes are metaphors for goodness and sageliness. Some or all of these earlier references to bells would have been familiar to Six Dynasties literati, and a source of the *Shishuo xinyu* and *Jinlouzi* allusions.

Many of the metaphors and textual allusions serve as rhetorical devices. In the first and the fourth *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes in particular (8.4.1 and 8.4.4),

there is a competitive back-and-forth between two characters in which cleverness with word choice is the major determinant of who wins the verbal match. The skillful use of metaphors and allusions is represented in the texts as a favored tool of debate. In the case of Mi Heng's drumming (8.4.3), the metaphors and allusions are performed with music rather than language; the rhetorical effect was discussed in previous chapters.

The symbolism of bells in these texts is an illustration of Alan Merriam's reference to music's "symbolic function in human cultures on the level of affective or cultural meaning," and this chapter's extension of Merriam's concept to the symbolic function of textual allusions to bells. The symbolism used in the above passages functions as a kind of shorthand among those who share an understanding of the culture-specific images. Moreover, the connections made between bells and early, revered texts, seem to render more convincing the points being made, or, at least, to score rhetorical points by invoking early textual references in a clever way. These culture-specific connections between old and new are similar to the recognition by a musical audience of musical themes or structures from older musical works or performances, and the meanings read into them that change over time.

The "affective" aspect of Merriam's description of music symbolism is related to the point made in chapter 5 of this study about the emotive aspect of rhetoric; one of the reasons for the effectiveness of rhetoric is that it appeals to the emotions as well as to the intellect. The passages in this chapter depict the use of music symbols as just as (or more) important than logic in the winning of arguments, illustrating Merriam's contention about the significance of affective

aspects of music symbolism. It is perhaps with respect to these affective features that music symbolism most resembles Rhapsodies in their evocation of symbolic qualities of a particular object or subject that David Knechtges refers to.

Returning to Timothy Rice and reencounters with the past, we have seen that, through the symbolism of bells, the compilers and the readers of the passages discussed above reencounter ancient texts along with the sages of the past associated with those texts. In the hands of literati in the world of *Shishuo xinyu*, allusions to early texts and sages – and to the musical instrument symbolism used in the early texts – are one of various tools of performance, along with Pure Conversation, witty riposte, and a display of composure in the face of danger. The bell symbolism in *Jinlouzi* had less to do with clever rhetoric or performance and more to do with adaptation for new, didactic purposes.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify clues to Six Dynasties music culture by examining texts of the period that have been only infrequently perused by scholars for this purpose. My motivation came from two directions: one was to build on the research of scholars specializing in early medieval Chinese music, and the other, to contribute to musicologists' studies of music cultures from all parts of the world.

It is not possible to establish whether the ideas represented in the texts are typical of the population of the time, or were even standard for the literati population. Similarly, the texts may or may not be representative of the entire corpus of texts from the same two-hundred-year period as the texts examined in this study. The researcher can safely say only that the content of the texts reflects ideas that were present in some part of the population at the time the texts were written. These ideas might have reflected those of the authors or compilers, or might have been ideas they thought their likely readership would want to read about. Hence the cautiously chosen word "clues" in the first sentence of this conclusion, and in the introduction.

While musicologists have compiled a great deal of factual information about Six Dynasties music practices from standard histories, these facts relate mostly to music theory and the types of songs and musical instruments that were sung and played. Discussions of ideas about music have been mostly limited to the essays on music by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang. The musicologists' analysis of the factual information and the essays has been focused primarily on their historical and

cultural context and the ways in which this context explains why and how Six Dynasties music practices and ideas developed as they did.

In this study, I have built on this scholarship by drawing on additional perspective from texts other than standard histories and essays specifically addressing ideas about music. In doing so, I have identified beliefs about music that have received little attention in current scholarship. Most of the analysis was applied to *Shishuo xinyu*, supplemented by material from *Jinlouzi*, *Yanshi jiaxun*, and other texts.

I also raised questions about two characterizations of Six Dynasties music culture that modern scholars typically adhere to in their studies of the period: one is that the music culture reflects the emergence of a concept of aesthetics; the second, which is an outgrowth of the first, is that political and moral considerations play a negligible role in the music culture especially compared to previous eras. In this study, I demonstrated that the textual passages on music suggest that the emergence of aesthetics is not as useful a concept as performativity in describing the development of beliefs about music in the Six Dynasties. In addition, I provided counter-evidence from the texts to the claim that political and moral considerations play a negligible role in discussions of music.

A third observation made by some scholars that is questioned here is that the desire expressed by figures such as Tao Yuanming to use music to dispel burdensome emotion is a product of immersion in Xuanxue. The cross-cultural comparisons and theory employed in this study suggest that this interpretation of the drivers of the use of music to instill tranquility is too narrow.

The following sections include a review of the clues to Six Dynasties music culture identified in the texts, an assessment of the methodology used, a recap of the contributions of the theory used in the study, some comments on the differing roles of the three main texts used, and brief remarks on some of the items that were not covered in this study.

9.1 What clues were uncovered?

My observations about Six Dynasties music culture were allocated into five categories, with each category explored in one chapter. These categories include affect, performativity and rhetoric, protest, identity, and symbolism.

Music is represented in the texts as stirring or stilling emotion, but not as a romantic, purposeful expression of a musician's innermost feelings. The performative aspects of the music described indicate that associations with music performances are not necessarily primarily about the sounds they produced; the personalities and the behavior of the musicians, and the responses they provoke in their audiences, are also important aspects of music performances. Moreover, the use of music to wield or to protest power or to create or alter one's identity, and the symbolism involved in the instruments played or evoked in a performance, are all aspects of music performance or statements about music that indicate that ideas about music were not limited to the sounds involved. The music performance anecdotes depict drummers and strummers as employing music as a mode of rhetoric that persuades their audiences to alter their opinions or decisions. Music performance duties at court or as demanded by the powerful are shown to be a way of dominating those who lack the leverage to refuse; at the

same time, musicians are represented as turning the tables on those with disproportionate power, to make a statement of dissent.

Kings are portrayed as closely associated with music, in order to project their virtue, and the musicianship of literati – especially as their identities merge with their *qin* – cement their social standing. The symbolism of certain musical instruments, particularly bells, seems to leverage the affective capacity of music – through its connection to sages and past cultural achievements such as revered literature – to function as forceful rhetoric that drives home a point of view, alters the public images of literati-musicians, or wins an argument that depends on skilled repartee.

The borders between the above five categories are porous; the category descriptions (which are also the chapter headings) just serve to organize the material. The categories are perhaps best seen as fitting together as a prism, with the names of the categories on the outside prism surface, and the content beneath the surfaces merging together to form a unified representation of answers to the question, “How does music work, in the eyes of Six Dynasties Chinese as represented by certain texts?” The center of the prism, where all sides intersect, is occupied by affect since it drives the effectiveness of rhetoric, symbolism, and the performance of protest and identity. Rhetoric, too, is situated near the center of the prism, underlying the force of symbolism and the performance of protest and identity.

9.2 An assessment of the methodology

9.2.1 Review of the methodology

The identification and the analysis of the textual clues to the music culture were aided by two main aspects of the methodology of this study: one aspect is the type of texts used, and the other is the theory applied from various disciplines. Because the texts consulted are not standard histories, or essays written specifically about music, the music passages examined are mostly casual references to music – in which something about music is mentioned in passing in the context of another subject – or descriptions or remarks about music performances. Casual comments or depictions of music performances are likely to cover different aspects of music than standard histories or formal essays; hence the information gleaned from those passages is bound to be different from what has been analyzed previously.

In addition, scholars' focus on Xi Kang and Ruan Ji has meant that research has generally been confined to the aspects of music that Xi Kang and Ruan Ji were interested in, which was largely the connection between music and emotion. The exploration of texts that have not been as thoroughly investigated for clues to music culture broadens the music subjects that can be examined. It also extends the time period studied, from the third century, when Ruan Ji and Xi Kang wrote their essays, to the fifth century and the sixth century when *Shishuo xinyu*, *Jinlouzi*, and *Yanshi jiaxun* were compiled.

The second aspect of my methodology that has lent itself to new observations is the application of theory from various disciplines. This theory facilitates the recognition and analysis of features in a music culture that have something in

common with music of other traditions. Without a perspective that crosses geographies and time periods, it is easy to interpret attributes of a music culture as products of a unique historical context – even if they are shared by other traditions – or to overlook some attributes entirely that might be more readily apparent to someone familiar with characteristics of other traditions. Especially in view of the lack of evidence for the existence of a culture that does not have some form of music – whether it be purely sung or instrumental, combined with dance, practiced in conjunction with speech, carried out with or without a concept of performer and audience – there is an argument to be made that music is as instinctive, and as much an integral part of human life, as language. If that is the case, it would not be surprising if some of the ways that music is practiced, and contemplated in the abstract, are similar in many cultures. Hence, the focus of many scholars on the historical and cultural context of music practices and ideas (the “vertical analysis” described in the introduction to this study) is too narrow and risks missing the potential illumination that a more global approach can offer. The five categories this study has used to describe early medieval ideas about music are all inspired by theories that have been or can be applied to many different cultures, as discussed in each chapter.

9.2.2 Evaluation of the methodology

By emphasizing the features of music represented in Six Dynasties texts that overlap with those of other cultures – and for which non-culture specific theories are applicable – is there a danger of exaggerating the common attributes shared across cultures and, in doing so, neglecting the features unique to the Six Dynasties Chinese? The position taken in this study is that every one of the five

categories of ideas about music that have been identified comprises an invariant and a culture-specific dimension.

The invariant dimensions are represented by the five category labels, which, according to the theory discussed in each chapter, apply to many cultures. The culture-specific dimensions consist of the details narrated in the texts and examined in the study, along with their historical context: the culturally specific manner in which Liu Mu turns away his disciples and immerses himself in his *qin* (chapter 4); Xie Shang convinces a bystander to his lute playing of his resemblance to an “authentic person” (chapter 5); Huan Yi registers a protest by substituting his *zheng* zither for his flute (chapter 6); Cao Cao overlays his poetry with wind and string music (chapter 7); and Sun Chuo compares his Rhapsody to bells and chimes (chapter 8). The high likelihood that no one lacking familiarity with Six Dynasties history and culture would be able to make sense of these five anecdotes without an explanation attests to their culture-specific nature.

The culture-specific dimensions of the passages also include context such as earlier philosophical texts as well as other types of literature such as Rhapsodies. The relationship between music and emotion is discussed at length in *Xunzi* and *Liji*, and the influence of Xuanxue has been noted by scholars. Moreover, early Six Dynasties essays such as those by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang had a lasting influence on ideas throughout the early medieval period. Parallels between music and persuasive language are mentioned in *Lunyu*, *Xunzi*, *Shijing*, and the “Great preface,” and echoed by Mi Heng, Wang Dun, and Xie Shang in their drumming and strumming. Veiled protest is often viewed as a key element of *Shijing* songs, *Chuci* poetry, and Rhapsodies; the two drummers and Xi Kang seemed to follow

in the footsteps of this early literature. The relationship between music and a ruler's identity reaches into early Chinese traditions and is reflected in Xiao Yi's decisions about which material to include in his paraphrases of older texts. References to bells in *Zhuangzi*, several chapters of *Liji*, and other texts are echoed by Yu Chan and Pang Tong.

By blending together the invariant aspects of the music culture represented in the texts side by side with the unique features depicted, this study attempted to dissolve the "intractable dichotomies" between the two, as Judith Becker suggests is necessary for a complete analysis. Drivers of specific aspects of a music culture may be particular to one culture, or may be a function of the intrinsic nature of music – which is whatever general characteristics allow us to apply the term "music" to vastly different musical genres around the world – and human biology. Most likely, most of any given music culture is driven by interactions between culture, the intrinsic nature of music, and biology.

If it were possible to collect data on all music cultures around the world across time, one could demonstrate which ideas are unique to a culture and which ones are widespread enough to suggest that the intrinsic nature of music and biology are the dominant drivers. Since comprehensive data of this nature is impossible to collect, the analyst can only fall back on the second-best solution of applying music-related theory to identify plausible (but not provable, at least with currently available tools) explanations of why music has the capacity, for example, to elicit emotion. The theory can then be combined together with cultural factors to try to weave together a multi-faceted analysis of what might drive specific beliefs about music.

The third-best solution, which I would argue has been implicitly chosen by scholars who analyze ideas about music only by examining their historical and cultural context, just ignores factors that apply across cultures and risks overstating the uniqueness of the ideas they are researching. By mixing the vertical analysis (focused on one culture) with the horizontal analysis (performed across cultures and eras), this study has integrated the four types of possible contexts applicable to a study of this nature that were identified in the introduction: textual context, historical context, cultural context, and cross-cultural and cross-historical context.

There remains the question of whether there might be some aspects of Six Dynasties music culture that developed in relative isolation from non-indigenous influences and minimal connection to any invariant music practices or ideas. The details of certain instruments, such as the appearance and the sound of the *qin* might be an example. The music culture represented in the extant texts reflects the cosmopolitan culture of the literati, which meant that they came in contact with a variety of people and traditions; the post-Han period was one of significant migration and intermixing of ethnic groups. The movement of people was accompanied by music instruments from Central Asia, and it is likely that ideas about music migrated along with the instruments. An additional point worth noting is that modern scholars do not have access to the music practices of uneducated, rural populations of the early medieval era; if there were a way to learn about the music culture of these communities, features might be uncovered that are less easily compared to music practices elsewhere.

An additional question worth considering is whether the method by which passages are selected from the texts for analysis affects the conclusions that are drawn from them. This question is particularly pertinent to *Shishuo xinyu*, from which most of the textual passages are drawn. For transparency, I have included an appendix that lists all the music references in *Shishuo xinyu*, with a brief note indicating what the reference is about. The table shows that the music-related anecdotes are concentrated in certain chapters; the last ten chapters have none. Since the chapters are organized by character attribute, this convergence of music references within certain chapters supports the idea that music is associated in *Shishuo xinyu* with certain themes as outlined in the body of this study. Some of the distribution of music references is related to the size of the chapters – the largest chapters tend to have the most music references – but the last ten chapters have a total of 95 anecdotes but no music references so size is not the only explanation for the distribution of music references. The references shown on the table that are not represented in this study include a number of topics that appear only once, such as music combined with ritual; that is a topic that is well represented in earlier texts but less so in the Six Dynasties texts examined here. There are some repeated topics in the table that might lend themselves to further analysis, such as musical instruments in connection with death; these topics do not seem to be closely related to the subjects of this study, and are listed in the last section of this chapter as possibilities for additional research.

9.3 Contribution of the theory to the findings

The theory outlined in each of the chapters facilitated several findings that would have been more difficult to identify without the theory. One is that the

ideas about connections between music and emotion that are represented in the texts have much in common with ideas in other cultures, suggesting that the culture-specific explanation for those ideas that has been put forward by scholars is too narrow. For example, while Xuanxue was a likely influence on the desire to dispel burdensome emotions, and surely part of the motivation to employ music to do so, the presence of similar ideas and uses for music in other cultures, and the existence of theory to explain why that might be the case, make a convincing argument that scholars have overstated the influence of Xuanxue on music.

David Huron and Tom Beghin, for example, offer some specifics as to the mechanisms through which invariant aspects of music operate, such as the power of frustrated expectations. Rafael Núñez's concept of a supra-individual biological process, as applied by Judith Becker to music, is a framework that takes into account both the invariant and the culture-specific aspects of the link between music and emotion.

An additional finding from the application of theory to the material in the texts pertains to the common assumption that ideas about music in the Six Dynasties reflect the emergence of a concept of aesthetics. Chapter 5 demonstrated that viewing the textual passages about music through the lens of aesthetics does not illuminate much about the ideas expressed in the texts. In contrast, exploring the performative aspects of the anecdotes, and the rhetorical function of many of the performances that are described, highlighted ideas about how music works that would not be apparent within a focus on aesthetics. The depiction in the texts of music as a vehicle for protest, and for the construction of

identity, also reflects a belief in performative aspects of music and its resemblance to spoken rhetoric.

Theory specifically about protest or identity furnished additional layers that enriched the interpretations of the texts: Mark Mattern's deliberative, pragmatic, and confrontational routes to acting in concert, and James C. Scott's notion of a public airing of hidden transcripts, offered intriguing new angles to the analysis of Mi Heng's and Xi Shao's behavior. In addition, Timothy Rice's concept of historical construction, in which one reencounters and recreates aspects of the past through music, provided an additional perspective on the use of musical symbols.

9.4 The significance of the texts

The three texts that were the source of most of the passages examined in this study contributed different types of information and hence complemented each other. The performance anecdotes are all in *Shishuo xinyu*, and these provided perspective on the early medieval Chinese perception of performative aspects of music and the implications of performativity for the use of music as rhetoric and for protest and the creation or the projection of identity and image. *Yanshi jiaxun* furnished cultural context, for example about the way music was seen to be used at court—both by those in power and those seeking power—and as a tool to exert power and to indirectly resist it. Yan Zhitui was also an unusual source of comments on life in Northern courts. *Jinlouzi* was a source of alternative viewpoints, for example appearing to value speech above music in persuasive capacity, unlike *Shishuo xinyu* which implies that speech and music have similar persuasive power. The didactic purpose of *Jinlouzi* also was helpful in

highlighting traditional ideas about music that have endured even through the latter years of the Six Dynasties: Xiao Yi's apparent interest in the connections between rulers and music attests to the continued interest in Ruist ideas about the role of music in morality and governance.

The above application of theories of musicologists and others to an exploration of 1500-year-old texts suggests that the analysis of the texts can benefit from modern theory, and that the perhaps surprising relevance of the theory to a very old music culture has positive implications for the usefulness of the theories. In addition, this study has supported the contention in the introduction that the application of theories of Western academics to Chinese music does not necessarily entail ethnocentrism; I have quoted extensively from the texts in order to let them speak for themselves as much as possible, and the theories have yielded many new angles through which to view the texts.

9.5 The scope of the study

This study did not attempt to be comprehensive; there are aspects of music culture that were not explored in this study that are represented in the texts. Connections between music and death, and drums and military activity; the role of female musicians; the relationship between music and whistling; the development of Buddhist music, and further comparison between music and poetry are possible additional subjects that could have been explored. I chose the topics that had the largest volume of relevant material in the texts, and that related to each other in some way. The other topics await further research.

Appendix

Shishuo xinyu references to music

1	2	3		4	5	6
Chapter number	Anecdote number	Name of chapter		# of anecdotes in chapter	# of music references identified	Description of references (section number)
1	35	德行	Virtuous Conduct	47	1	35. Drumming and dancing: death ritual scene
2	8, 9, 53, 62	言語	Speech and Conversation	108	4	8. Drums: Mi Heng (3.5.2.3), (4.5.1.1), (5.4.1), 7.4.3) 9. Bells and drums: Pang Tong (7.4.4) 53. Reference to music master Kui 62. Strings and flutes for mood: Wang Xizhi (3.5.1.1)
3		政事	Affairs of State	26	0	
4	1, 21, 77, 81, 86	文學	Letters and Scholarship	104	5	1. Reference to rites and music 21. Reference to Xi Kang's essays 77. Bell as metaphor for character: Yu Chan (7.4.2) 81. Drumming and piping: metaphor for literature 86. Bells and chimes as metaphor for fine literature: Sun Chuo (7.4.1)
5	17, 40, 59	方正	The Square and the Proper	66	2	17. Non-performance of music: Xi Shao (5.4.3) 40. Female performers
6	2, 25	雅量	Cultivated Tolerance	42	2	2. <i>Qin</i> : Xi Kang's execution (5.4.2), (6.4.3.4) 25. Horns and drums used to disturb
7	13	識鑒	Insight and Judgment	28	1	13. Drumming (in war)
8	8, 20, 39, 111	賞譽	Appreciation and Praise	156	4	8. Ceremonial instruments 20. Zithers as metaphor for character 39. Bell used as metaphor for voice 111. Reference to Xi Kang's music essay
9	48	品藻	Grading Excellence	88	1	48. Musicality of speech

1	2	3		4	5	6
Chapter number	Anecdote number	Name of chapter		# of anecdotes in chapter	# of music references identified	Description of references (section number)
10	13	规箴	Admonitions and Warnings	27	1	10. Drums used as protest
11		捷悟	Quick Perception	7	0	
12		夙惠	Precocious Intelligence	7	0	
13	1, 13	豪爽	Virility and Boldness	13	2	1. Drums: Wang Dun (3.5.2.4), (4.5.1.2), (5.4.1) 13. Drums and winds as symbols of war
14	32	容止	Appearance and Manner	39	1	32. Lute: Xie Shang (4.5.2.1), (6.4.3.2)
15		自新	Self-renewal	2	0	
16		企羨	Admiration and Emulation	6	0	
17	7, 11, 16	傷逝	Grieving for the Departed	19	3	7. <i>Qin</i> : Zhang Jiying mourning scene (3.5.2.1) 11. <i>Qin</i> : reference to Boya 16. <i>Qin</i> : Wang Ziyou mourning scene (3.5.2.2), (6.4.3.3)
18	7	棲逸	Reclusion and Disengagement	17	1	7. Flute playing while lying in bed (at leisure)
19	23	賢媛	Worthy Beauties	32	1	23. Female musicians
20	1	術解	Technical Understanding	11	1	1. Xun Xu: music technicalities
21	14	巧藝	Skill and Art	14	1	14. Small lute: painting of instrument compared to painting other items
22		宠礼	Favor and Veneration	6	0	0
23	22, 23, 49	任誕	The Free and Unrestrained	54	3	22. <i>Qin</i> playing: impetus for friendship 23. Drum playing in raid 49. Flute without conversation: Huan Yi (5.4.5)

1	2	3		4	5	6
<i>Chapter number</i>	<i>Anecdote number</i>	<i>Name of chapter</i>		<i># of anecdotes in chapter</i>	<i># of music references identified</i>	<i>Description of references (section number)</i>
24	4	簡傲	Rudeness and Arrogance	17	1	4. <i>Qin</i> as symbol of nonconformity
25		排調	Taunting and Teasing	65	0	
26	20	輕詆	Contempt and Insults	33	1	20. Flute breakage by female musician
27		假譎	Guile and Chicanery	14	0	
28		黜免	Dismissal from Office	8	0	
29		儉嗇	Stinginess and Meanness	9	0	
30		汰侈	Extravagance and Ostentation	12	0	
31		忿狷	Anger and Irascibility	8	0	
32		讒險	Slander and Treachery	4	0	
33		尤悔	Blameworthiness and Remorse	17	0	
34		訛漏	Crudities and Slips of the Tongue	8	0	
35		惑溺	Delusion and Infatuation	7	0	
36		仇隙	Hostility and Alienation	8	0	
				1129	36	

Key:

- Column 1: The number of the chapter in *Shishuo xinyu* where the anecdote appears.
Column 2: The number of the music-related anecdote as indicated in *Shishuo xinyu*.
Column 3: The name of the chapter in *Shishuo xinyu*, using Richard Mather's translations.
Column 4: The total no. of anecdotes in the *Shishuo xinyu* chapter, to put the number of music references into perspective.
Column 5: The number of music references found in the chapter, excluding those that refer to singing.
Column 6: A description of the music reference; for those included in the body of this study, the section numbers are shown.

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