A Contemporary History of the Chinese Zheng

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Preface

In May 2016, I visited a large old apartment in Beijing that was crowded with visiting American college students and their Chinese hostesses. After we finished a grand lunch of dumplings, pastries, and fruit, a young Chinese girl stood up near the kitchen and introduced herself in English. She explained that she would play a traditional piece on the "Chinese piano." A few minutes later, she sat down behind a worn, old zheng and proceeded to play *Battling the Typhoon* from memory. I identified the music as a well-known work for solo zheng composed in the 1960s by a female zheng student studying at the Shanghai Conservatory. From my studies, I knew that *Battling the Typhoon* had been praised by the wife of Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing, and was endlessly heard on the radio during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (ca. 1966–1976).

In 2017, a little less than a year after that memorable lunch in Beijing, I traveled to Greece for the first time. My sister and I solved some of our long-distance transportation problems by hiring a car and driver to take us through mountains and villages to our next destination. On these trips, the car radio played softly, broadcasting our driver's choice of what sounded like Greek-language traditional and popular music, news, and talk shows. One morning, the radio broadcast suddenly switched to *Practical Rhythmic Chinese*.[1] I recognized the recordings of Chinese sentences with looped synthesizer backbeats in the background from the text and disc I had bought and used in language study. To my amazement, *Battling the Typhoon*—the famous zheng piece—followed the speech exercises.

The radically different contexts in which I heard *Battling the Typhoon* on these two occasions struck me in several ways. First, the girl in Beijing attempted to cross several cultural gaps between her and her audience by identifying her instrument in a way that Americans might comprehend, as the "Chinese piano" and that the piece she would play was "traditional." The music was, however, actually composed by a specific person only fifty years earlier and the instrument was very little like the piano (at least to me). I spoke with her mother later and learned that the girl was ten

1. John Jing-hua Yin and Diana Yiqing Sun, *Shiyong jiezou hanyu* [Practical rhythmic Chinese] (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 2008).

years old and had studied the zheng for several years; she played it for a hobby and was not planning to make music her career.

Appending the same famous zheng piece to the end of a Mandarin lesson on Greek radio suggests that someone considered this music appropriate for the context; I suppose it "sounded Chinese." A Chinese person who witnessed the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution would almost surely remember the work, but the Greek Peloponnese in the spring of 2017 was far distant in time and place: surely the broadcast was aimed at non-Chinese speakers, namely, Greek listeners. For them, *Battling the Typhoon* surely signified something other than an iconic work celebrating the heroic work of Shanghai longshoremen facing a storm.

In both of these cases, I recognized the music as *Battling the Typhoon*: the sequence of melodies, rhythms, and harmonies aligned to allow me to conclude that the work I heard was none other. I heard a musical work whose origin I had studied; a piece that I considered to be "the same" despite the two widely dissimilar contexts where I heard it. The little girl, the American college students she played for, and the Greek radio listeners surely understood something very different about the music than I did. The contexts, connotations, and meanings of zheng music have great variety now; how, when, where, and how this plurality developed is the subject of this book.

This book analyzes and interprets the contemporary cultural history of the popular, modernized long zither indigenous to China known as the zheng (the word sounds like "jungle" without the l). It captures historical change from the vantage points of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan from approximately the 1920s to the present. Written histories, notated musical repertories, and information about non-notated repertories, interviews, and my roles in China as a researcher and student-observer served as sources for this work.

A microcosm of twentieth-century Chinese history, including modernization, preservation, political upheaval, and plural change can be observed through the modern history of the zheng. The radical changes in the zheng's repertory and use over the course of the twentieth century show how and why musical traditions and musical works are created and conceived as discrete items. Zheng music provides insight into how improvisation is defined and identified, and demonstrates how improvised, un-notated music differs from the processes of replication and interpretation associated with notated music. This study thus illustrates how music making is shaped and changed by social and political forces, and shows how history is produced and promulgated in modern life.

From a shared heritage on the Chinese mainland, the zheng arrived in Hong Kong well before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949; on Taiwan, a new stage in the zheng's history began with the arrival of the Nationalists in that year. For approximately three decades after 1949, communication between the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan was restricted, so zheng music developed rather independently in all three areas. In the People's Republic of China, an accepted

historiography of the zheng and a repertory were created, but evidence from Hong Kong and Taiwan indicates that neither this historiography nor the repertory developed necessarily had much historical precedent, particularly not as solo zheng music. The present study broadens the mainland perspective, challenging conclusions such as the zheng's long use by the rural masses or Chinese "folk." It pays close attention to distinctions between zheng art as it developed in the three locations.

The study is arranged in seven chapters. The central three (3, 4, and 5) focus on describing and analyzing zheng art as it existed and was practiced in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the period from 1949 to approximately 1979. Chapters 2 and 6 address zheng music in the three areas prior to 1949 and after 1979, respectively. Chapters 1 and 7 provide overall background as well as new theoretical perspectives and conclusions.

China had (and has) rich, diverse traditional music, some of it indigenous and some of it imported and absorbed from other lands over the course of time. In the early twentieth century, Chinese musical traditions were powerfully confronted with Western music. For a time, Western music threatened to supplant Chinese traditional music. During an era when concepts such as "modern," "progressive," and "scientific" were often associated with the West, some Chinese intellectuals suggested abandoning Chinese music in favor of Western types. Other Chinese intellectuals and musicians sought a modernized Chinese alternative as an antidote to purely Western music (perhaps best symbolized by the piano, the violin, and symphonic music). As a result, some forms of Chinese music and a number of traditional Chinese musical instruments were called on as potential sites for renovation and renewal. The zheng in particular ultimately melded both "Chinese essence" and "Western means" in such a way that it retained Chinese characteristics while becoming quite modern and notably versatile. The zheng provided a plausible, partial answer to a painful conundrum: How could Chinese music be modernized without becoming completely Westernized? In the process, the Chinese zheng and its music became something of a hybrid or hybrids.

The Chinese zheng is classified as a long bridged zither, and in its most common modern form, it is basically a long rectangular wooden box with a convex top. Twenty-one strings are stretched lengthwise over the top surface and suspended on bridges; each string has a separate bridge. The zheng's closest American relative is the Appalachian dulcimer, another zither featuring plucked strings stretched across a hollow resonating cavity; this distant cousin has only four strings. On the Chinese mainland, the zheng has roots extending back thousands of years, but the modern Chinese zheng is structurally quite different from those in use in China as recently as sixty years ago. The zheng is said to be indigenous to China, originating among the Han Chinese. Archaeological evidence supports the claim that the zheng was historically present in eastern and southern China. Documents show that the zheng was directly imported to Japan centuries ago, and it is said that it migrated to Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam over the course of time. Thus, the zheng is a member of a

family of similar musical instruments used throughout East Asia, and in fact in much of the world. In each place, the instrument has a distinct typology, history, repertory, and cultural significance. The putative relationship among the East Asian and Southeast Asian types is explored in Chapter 1 of this study.

In terms of organology, the zheng also fits into a group of three roughly similar Chinese zithers with parallel physical structures and playing techniques. The other two are the seven-stringed qin (with no bridges) and the twenty-five-string bridged se. Despite their general similarity, each instrument has a unique history in China. The qin (sometimes spelled ch'in) is relatively small, was historically prominent, and had a large notated repertory of solo music. The se was used primarily, if not exclusively, in Confucian ceremonies. Of the three Chinese zithers, the qin has been most heavily researched, and the se is the most obscure. Only the zheng was subject to modernization in the twentieth century. The qin and the zheng have some shared musical repertory, but the qin has traveled a much different road in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, largely because of its close association with the ruling elites of imperial China. This study contends that because the zheng had neither the elite social associations of the qin nor the se's connection with Confucian rites, its role and repertory were overall more malleable and more easily modified to suit modern needs.

Most of the zheng's so-called traditional solo repertory was created in the twentieth century and adapted from music collected in many areas of China. Some items were adapted from qin music, though this relationship was tenuous, especially on the Communist mainland. Along with the "traditional" solo repertory, a history linking the zheng to the laboring classes was construed for political purposes, although it conveyed a relationship that is at best arguable. The music currently played on the zheng includes a large and growing repertory of virtuosic concert solos and concertos, as well as works for zheng ensembles and mixed (multi-instrument) ensembles. Many zheng players nevertheless continue to emphasize the importance of the "traditional" repertory.

The zheng continues to represent Chinese tradition to Chinese people and to others, despite the fact that the instrument and the music it plays have changed tremendously over the past century. The zheng is heard live all over the world today and is also being integrated into many different types of musical ensembles. The instrument may one day be no more exclusively "Chinese" than the violin (or fiddle), which enjoys great status in Western classical music, in traditional Irish music, American bluegrass, and South Asian classical music, to name a few. Like the violin in the early eighteenth century, the zheng's structure was drastically changed to facilitate changes in musical context and style in the mid-twentieth century: the need for a louder solo instrument that could accommodate new techniques and musical demands was paramount.

Centuries ago, during the Tang era (618–907 CE), women entertainers played the instrument for male courtiers, but in the first half of the twentieth century, most zheng players were men. Since the 1960s, the zheng once again became identified as

a "feminine" instrument: that is, an instrument played largely by girls and women. At present, male zheng players are once again growing in numbers and prominence. This study provides insight into how and why the zheng's modern gender associations developed and changed.

Almost three decades after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949—and the exodus of the Nationalists to Taiwan—Mao Zedong died. Soon after, the "Opening Up and Reform" began. Led by Deng Xiaoping, these reforms opened up communication not only between the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, but also between mainland China and the world. Among the collateral results was a massive change and an increase in the plurality of types of zheng music everywhere. The zheng has become the traditional instrument of choice for thousands, if not millions, of Chinese people in recent decades. Among these are children—mainly urban girls—who adopt it as a hobby and potentially as a career option, professionals and teachers who undertake specialized study in zheng music at conservatories and universities, and adult amateurs who seek to make music in their leisure hours.

The zheng has traveled long and far in postimperial China. Today, wherever and whenever a critical mass of Chinese people has settled, the instrument is sure to be found. The zheng is so appealing in timbre and so readily adaptable to different styles of music that it will likely become more and more accepted in the West in mixed ensembles, in like-instrument ensembles, and as a solo instrument (with or without the accompaniment of other instruments). Zheng music is arguably one of the most inherently attractive types of Chinese music. It has been affected by universal cultural and musical processes in its contemporary life, and zheng solo music is essentially a modern art form, despite its ancient origins. This study argues that in the twentieth century, the zheng changed from an ensemble and accompanimental instrument with strong ties to vocal music and a minimally notated repertory to become a full-fledged solo concert instrument with magnificent, virtuosic capacity and a highly developed, large repertory of notated solos, ensemble music, and pedagogical works. The modernized instrument itself has antecedents in at least three zheng variants with regional connections in China.

In China, the art of playing the zheng is now known as "easy on the eyes, easy on the ears, and easy to learn." Its appealing sonic qualities allow it to function as an unusually user-friendly introduction to traditional Chinese music across cultural divides. Studying this art offers an excellent opportunity to study change in musical repertories as well as providing a means of studying how modernization works (or does not occur), considering why some musical traditions and music have more staying power than others and how history and tradition are assembled. This study ultimately considers the problems inherent in "constructed tradition"; the nature of improvisation; how musical works are identified as discrete items, transmitted, and categorized; and the effects of applying Western pedagogy and music notation to traditional Chinese music.

1

Cultural and Theoretical Context

First Lesson

Near the beginning of my first long stay in China, a graduate student played an important, famous piece of zheng music called *Evening Song from a Fishing Boat* (渔舟唱晚) for me in our teacher's studio at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music in northeastern China. It was my first day in the studio and my first lesson. I could scarcely follow the numeric cipher music notation in front of me as I listened to the sounds emanating from the zheng. The music began slowly and gently, melodic, tonal, consonant, with exquisite nuances of timbre, and then built to an energetic climax at the end of a thrice-repeated passage that moved faster and faster and suddenly stopped; a sweeping glissando down to a very low pitch followed. Then, a short slow section much like the beginning brought the music to a quiet conclusion.

After she played *Evening Song from a Fishing Boat*, Yuxin told me a legend. Long ago, she said, a master musician brought his instrument outdoors to a remote, quiet spot to play for his own enjoyment and spiritual edification. A peasant gathering firewood overheard the music and exclaimed, "As lofty as Mount Tai!"[1] Startled to find that a rustic had such a profound understanding of the music, the master musician played some more. The wood gatherer commented, "As flowing as the great seas!" The musician had indeed played an iconic piece in two sections called *High Mountain and Flowing Water*. Because the wood gatherer understood and appreciated the music so well, a strong friendship sprang up between the musician and his surreptitious listener. Much later, the musician returned to play for the wood gatherer, believing that no one else had an ear as sensitive as this man's. He arrived only to find that his favorite listener had passed away. Concluding that his music

1. The most famous of China's sacred mountains, Mt. Tai is located in Shandong, a province on China's northeast coast. It has been a place of worship for at least three millennia and has been climbed by luminaries and rulers including Confucius, the First Emperor of China (Qin Shihuang), and Mao Zedong.

would never again be so deeply understood, the musician picked up his instrument and smashed it to pieces, never to play again.[2]

The musical instrument involved in this story was the qin: the lofty emblem of China's imperial elites. Insensitive, ignorant, untutored, I had come to China to learn what I could about the qin's commoner cousin, the zheng. I made little sense of the music I heard, but fortunately, Yuxin gave no sign of despair. We took the roles of novice student and patient teacher that first day, sitting in the teaching studio of Yang Nani, a master female zheng pedagogue and performer who had been Yuxin's zheng teacher for several years. Little did I know that *Evening Song from a Fishing Boat* holds an important place in the zheng's repertory and is considered to be the first true zheng solo. I was taking a one-on-one zheng lesson on the campus of a Chinese music conservatory using notated music that I was expected to learn and replicate quite exactly; all of these factors are utterly obvious and unremarkable but also quite significant: the model is perfectly modern and undeniably Western. A hundred years ago, the men who typically played the zheng performed an unnotated repertory of remembered music, including song, in styles that called for considerable extemporaneous creativity, a far cry from the messages the modern pedagogy I confronted conveyed. The chapters that follow explain how, when, and why the former transformed into the latter.

Example 1.1: *Evening Song from a Fishing Boat*, beginning (in numeric cipher and five-line notation). Source: *Yang Nani guzheng jiaocheng* [Yang Nani's guzheng curriculum], 106; transcribed by the author.

2. The legend is retold in Zhou Yun, *Guzheng yinyue* [Guzheng music], Chinese Music Appreciation Series (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 2001), 75, and in many other sources.

This book studies the zheng's journey through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. It has three goals. First, the assembly of the zheng's solo repertory in the twentieth century yields insight into the problems inherent in employing music notation to capture repertoires held in aural/oral tradition. Like the narratives about the zheng's history, this repertory forms a precarious link between the past and the present. Despite their tenuous relationship to the past, the narratives and the notated zheng solo repertory are now so well accepted that they have largely overshadowed ideas that do not conform. Second, by examining how the zheng's musical repertory developed in the twentieth century overall, musicians may consider what a repertory is, how it is formulated, and how its contents may be differentiated; that is, how we know, identify, and distinguish between collections of music and individual musical works. Third, the study will show how narratives and nationalism can affect the art of music, not uncommonly suppressing or filtering materials that do not mesh with ideological and cultural premises. From 1949 to 1979, while the People's Republic of China and Taiwan were committed to mutual isolation from each other, the two locales developed distinct identities that shaped the role the zheng played culturally, socially, and politically. This factor provides a rare chance to conduct a comparative analysis of how these differences played out in zheng art.

Just as the borders of nations are drawn for political reasons, not cultural ones, even the idea of a cohesive, distinct "national" music culture is essentially synthetic: a modern, intentional construction rather than a natural or inevitable development. The zheng played a role in the process of creating a distinct national cultural life in accord with political policy in the People's Republic of China and also on Taiwan. Comparing materials from these two places during the three decades when communication between the areas was limited highlights how "new traditions" of zheng art were guided by ideology and politics. As such, these "new traditions" do not literally reproduce or transmit the music of the past; rather, they reformulate or reinvent older music as much as they emulate it. The colonial government of Hong Kong exerted less restraint on cultural processes among its Chinese citizenry, and this allowed for greater freedom in their exercise, and potentially for greater retention of diverse materials. The cultural porosity of Hong Kong and its unique governance perhaps even allowed a more genuine slice of older Chinese music featuring the zheng to be retained than was possible in the People's Republic of China and on Taiwan.

Narratives by nature leave out incongruent material. Whether spoken or written, histories inevitably select and present some data while ignoring others; the present study is no exception. The processes of seeking materials and the construction of narratives from these materials are organized by the author's thought process, deeply affected by access to materials, shaped by the nature of language, and subject to all types of external pressures, whether deliberately, consciously applied or simply part of the warp and woof of society and culture. Eventually, the resulting narrative may be further shaped as it is shared with others. There is nothing terribly unusual in

this. What is unusual or even aberrant is the opposite idea: that music or the past or just about any cultural construct is somehow objective, strictly factual, unchanging, and unchanged. The past on the contrary is malleable, sometimes fragile, and often endangered. Endangerment may result from a historian's conviction that their work represents the past accurately just as much as it might result from a narrative created to conform to a certain line of reasoning.

This study presents a critical analysis pointing toward a radical reevaluation of the zheng and its history. It argues that a narrative about the zheng's past and the instrument's "traditional repertory" were produced and promoted in the twentieth century. On closer examination, the generally accepted narrative seems to have resulted in a sort of "historical overshadowing": difficulty recognizing, understanding, and appreciating concrete evidence of the past precisely because of the influence of the historical narrative.[3] The data the study presents are inevitably incomplete, but provide sufficient grounds for suggesting a considerably different past for the zheng. While obtaining sufficient data to prove all points may never be possible, the study leads to a reconceptualization of Chinese traditional music and how research on it might fruitfully proceed.

An array of scholars in ethnomusicology, musicology, and history have written extensively about "invented tradition" and the way people in the present portray and use the past. In ethnomusicology, Judith Becker, Frederick Lau, Christopher Waterman, and Yu Siu-wah have all contributed to these discussions. Judith Becker discovered that the effort to preserve Javanese gamelan music was spurred by Westernization in the nineteenth century; the result was change in the content of the repertory she studied, its transmission, and its trajectory.[4] With the introduction of music notation, works became codified and stabilized and were transmitted as such. Music that had earlier been malleable and dynamic became replicated and static. Frederick Lau examined the twentieth-century creation of the solo flute (dizi) repertory in the People's Republic of China, discovering that although it was said to have a "traditional" repertory of solo music, it essentially was not a solo instrument in earlier times.[5] Yu Siu-wah researched Chinese music ensembles in Hong Kong and concluded that many of these groups have a questionable connection to Chinese music dating from centuries past.[6]

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3. J. W. Schooler and T. Y. Engstler-Schooler, "Verbal Overshadowing of Visual Memories: Some Things are Better Left Unsaid," *Cognitive Psychology* 22, no. 1 (January 1990): 36–71; this pathbreaking 1990 article describes how verbalizing a visual memory can interfere with accurate recall of the thing remembered.
4. Judith Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java: Gamelan in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980), 13.
5. Frederick Cheungkong Lau, "Music and Musicians of the Traditional Chinese *Dizi* in the People's Republic of China" (DMA thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991).
6. Yu Siu-wah, *Yue zai diancuo zhong* [Out of chaos and coincidence: Hong Kong musical culture] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In historical musicology, Katherine Bergeron, James Garrett, and Peter Jeffery have examined how sacred music from the distant past was perceived and recreated to serve later purposes in Western Europe. Bergeron examined the work of the French monks of Solesmes designing and producing editions of Gregorian chant that would suggest faithful reproduction of medieval manuscript sources in the nineteenth century.[7] The monks' work involved synthesizing materials from multiple sources and then printing this music for worldwide distribution in the modern world, processes quite unlike those in use in the Middle Ages. James Garrett considered the revival of Palestrina as an ideal type of polyphonic church music in nineteenth-century Germany.[8] Finally, Peter Jeffery advocated for the application of ethnomusicological method to the study of Gregorian chant, hoping to reach beyond the bounds of notated sources to earlier music held in aural/oral tradition.[9]

Historians including Eric Hobsbawm, David Lowenthal, and Terence Ranger have investigated how the past has been reified and reconstructed in a wide range of contexts. Hobsbawm realized that intentionally evoking and invoking the past to provide a sense of stability "invented traditions" that were new, despite being cast as "old" by their inventors.[10] In Africa, colonizing cultures celebrated their own past and created traditions for Indigenous peoples for the purpose of controlling them.[11] David Lowenthal's wide-ranging studies of the past consider the functions of personal memory in creating an individual's identity and sense of self as well as the social construction of history.[12] Historical process may be as intimate as a conversation between siblings in childhood or as public as the assembly and editing of history textbooks for use in public schools. It may include the precedents cited to support legislation and the rhetoric about the past commonly heard in the speeches of leaders.

Artifacts that are preserved may be said to be more constant than narratives about them, but the situation is much more complex when something that was not previously an artifact is made into one. Music held in oral/aural tradition and then notated is such an instance. When it is based on actual artifacts, the history of musical instruments is perhaps more concrete, but what is known about the distribution and use of instruments in the past is limited. With these ideas in mind, the remainder of this chapter introduces the physical structure and cultural role of the zheng and two other, rather similar Chinese zithers. It also provides an overview of the relationship

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7. Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
8. James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination: Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
9. Peter Jeffery, *Re-envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
10. Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.
11. Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–262.
12. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

between the zheng and related instruments in East and Southeast Asia. These details contextualize the zheng broadly and allow for comparison. Finally, current scholarship on the zheng is reviewed.

Chinese Zithers: The Zheng, the Se, and the Qin

The zheng is a member of a family of musical instruments known as long bridged zithers dispersed throughout Asia. Most zithers feature strings stretched across a hollow resonating cavity; the strings are plucked, struck, or strummed to produce pitched sounds. In the West, the zither family includes the Appalachian and hammered dulcimers, the autoharp, and the psaltery. There are dozens of types of zithers spread through cultures around the world, but in Central, East, and Southeast Asia, a subgroup of closely related zithers appeared over many centuries; these will be discussed briefly below. The Chinese zheng is arguably the archetype for these long bridged zithers. A long bridged zither is essentially a long, shallow, rectangular wooden box with an arched lid. Strings are stretched horizontally across the lid, and each string passes over a small support (or bridge) that suspends it above the soundboard. The strings are attached to the instrument at either end of the box; the instrument may feature a tuning mechanism that regulates the tension of the strings.

Mainland China, with its long history and shifting borders over the ages, is said to be the historic home of three prominent indigenous zithers originally strung with silk. These are the zheng, the se, and the qin. The zheng and the se are long bridged zithers; the qin has no bridges. Archaeological digs have uncovered early examples of each of these zithers, and each has a separate history and cultural context in China. While this study concentrates on the development of the zheng in modern times, situating it in the context of its nearest organological relatives permits comparison of how the zheng, the se, and the qin traveled through history. In short, while the zheng's structure, repertory, and cultural context changed greatly in the twentieth century, the se was untouched by modernization and fell into near obsolescence. There are signs that the se is now being revived in ceremonial contexts. In contrast, the qin (structurally unchanged, like the se) endured a long period of overall decline in the twentieth century but has become far better known in recent years. The terminology used to label these instruments and other Asian zithers is historically problematic, because in different times, dialects, and regions, their meaning may have changed.[13]

13. Lucie Rault-Leyrat attempts to sort out the filiation and posit the sequential evolution of numerous Asian zithers in her article "Autour du zheng: Un essai de filiation de quelques cithares d'Asie orientale," *Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* 2 (1989): 63–73. In modern China, the word *qin* is used as a suffix in the names of a number of musical instruments, including the yangqin (hammered dulcimer) and gangqin (piano). *Qinfang* is a term for a practice room on conservatory campuses, and I have heard the zheng referred to generically as a qin, along the lines of "Put your instrument (qin) over there."

The Zheng (Cheng, Chêng)

Typically, the modern Chinese zheng is about five and a half feet long and fourteen inches wide, tapering slightly from one end to the other. Its soundbox is approximately five inches deep at the crest of its curved top surface; at the edges, the soundbox is about three and a half inches deep. Most commonly, the zheng has twenty-one strings, but in the first half of the twentieth century and earlier, thirteen- and sixteen-string Chinese zheng were common. As for all bridged zithers, the strings of the zheng are supported by small pieces of wood or other material carved into triangular or V-shaped bridges. Two legs of the triangle rest on the soundboard, and a single string crosses the triangle's tip; the bridge is held in place by the pressure the string exerts. Tuned to the pitches of a pentatonic scale[14] by controlling their sounding length and tension, the zheng's strings are plucked with the fingers or picks (plectra) to make the instrument sound. Several types of zheng incorporated mechanisms allowing players to access the complement of chromatic pitches familiar in Western music by quickly retuning strings; they were initially designed and manufactured in the late twentieth century but are not in wide use.

The zheng has historically been identified as a Han Chinese instrument, associating it with the ethnic group that represents more than 90 percent of Chinese citizens today. The People's Republic of China officially recognizes fifty-five minority ethnic groups within its borders. Among these are Koreans, Miao, Mongolians, Naxi, Tibetans, Uighurs, and Yao. Many of the smaller ethnic groups have lived in southwestern China for centuries, concentrated in the modern province of Yunnan. While the Chinese government arguably continues to honor and respect the traditions of these peoples, conflict has sometimes resulted over religious practices, the maintenance of cultural identity, and over modernization more widely. Members of some minority populations have accused the national government of Han Chinese cultural imperialism. The culture of the Han Chinese, because they represent such a large slice of China's population, sometimes seems to be drowning out minority traditions.

Historically, China was not always ruled by Han Chinese: the Mongol Yuan dynasty ruled from the late thirteenth century CE well into the fourteenth century, before giving way to the final Han dynasty to rule China: the Ming (in power from 1368 to 1644). The Ming empire was overtaken by Manchurians, who established the Qing dynasty and governed China until 1912. Over the course of history, and particularly with the fall of the Ming dynasty, Han Chinese fled mainland China for other lands, including Vietnam and Taiwan, perhaps taking their musical culture and their instruments with them. This is important for several reasons. It suggests that Han musical culture was not necessarily confined to the Chinese mainland, and this raises the possibility that musical instruments (perhaps including the zheng) may have made their way to distant areas as Han people emigrated in centuries past. It is

14. Pentatonic scales contain five pitches within each octave. These pitches are commonly correlated with do re mi sol la in solfège syllables (scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6).

also possible that the shifting borders of China and the incursions and presence of non-Han peoples within China added to, influenced, and perhaps changed musical culture there. Finally, several other zithers closely related to the zheng are found in neighboring regions, and their existence may in part illustrate both the diaspora of Han culture and the interaction of Han and non-Han cultures in mainland China and beyond its borders.

The Se (Sê)

The se is a long bridged zither considerably larger than the zheng, with twenty-five strings. Drawings and photos of the se show a shape that is rectangular with square corners rather than tapered from end to end. Historically used in ritual Confucian music ensembles, the se is now rarely seen and even less frequently used. Specimens can be seen in museums, including the Temple of Confucius in Beijing, where the instruments on display are painted and otherwise heavily decorated. The collections of the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Art (Beijing), Henan Museum in Zhengzhou (a replica of an archaeological find), and the Confucius Temple in Tainan, Taiwan, also house one or more se.[15] Both the se and the qin were used in Confucian rituals.[16] The two instruments were considered to be intimately paired, to the point that phrases such as "like the qin and se" and "the qin and the se speak together" are used as metaphors for marital harmony.[17]

Yuan Jingfang notes that in the *Shangshu* (Book of history), the se, qin, and drum were used to accompany sung poetry; and in the Zhou dynasty, the se and qin accompanied "string songs"; Yuan also refers to the se as a "zither now obsolete."[18] Another reference book states that after the Tang dynasty, the se was seldom used, but in earlier times, it was used to accompany song.[19] Very little scholarship has yet been conducted on the se, but notated music for it is known to exist from as early as the fourteenth century.[20] Se notation was explored by Walter Kaufmann in his 1967

15. In the West, the Musical Instruments Museum (Brussels), Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) own se specimens.
16. A photo of the qin and the se positioned in a Confucian temple dating from the early twentieth century (c. 1925) is reproduced in Liang Mingyue, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, Paperbacks in Musicology, ed. Andrew D. McCredie (New York: Heinrichshofen Edition, 1985), photo 15, unpaginated. Liang also mentions that the "Cloud Gate" ritual in the Rites of Zhou featured a musical ensemble that included the se (58).
17. The phrase "Like the qin and the se" is also found in the Confucian philosophical text the *Doctrine of the Mean* in a quotation from the *Classic of Poetry*.
18. Yuan Jingfang, *Chinese Traditional Instrumental Music*, ed. Ching-wah Lam, trans. Boyu Zhang (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2016), 299.
19. Xue Liang, *Yinyue zhishi shouce* [Handbook of musical knowledge], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1996), 395.
20. Alan Thrasher notes the existence of an early fourteenth-century anthology of se music called the *Se pu* (Se notation). See Alan R. Thrasher, "China," in *Ethnomusicology: Historical and Regional Studies*, ed. Helen Myers, The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 314. Harriett Rosemary Ann Gaywood's master's thesis reproduces a score for a hymn to Confucius

4

The Zheng in Hong Kong, 1949–1979

This chapter describes and analyzes the zheng's history in Hong Kong from its earliest known appearance there to approximately 1979, with particular attention to the decades from 1949 to 1979, when communication with the People's Republic of China was restricted.

Zheng art has long been acknowledged as an import from mainland China in Hong Kong as well as in Taiwan, but the use, history, and repertory of the instrument in the latter locations contrast significantly with mainland practices. Hong Kong and Taiwan share the distinction of their colonial past: Hong Kong was under British rule from 1841 to 1997; Taiwan was ruled by the Dutch for a brief period (1624–1662) and by the Japanese for fifty years (1895–1945); in the intervening centuries, Taiwan belonged to the Manchurian Qing empire that ruled mainland China. Both Hong Kong and Taiwan have a long history of cultural intermingling with mainland China, other areas of Asia, and the West. Immigrants and their descendants have historically far outnumbered indigenous people in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the vast majority of these residents trace their roots to the Chinese mainland. Despite its connection to Britain and to international trade, the majority of Hong Kong's population—currently more than 92 percent—has consistently been Chinese.[1] Most Hong Kong Chinese trace their roots to the closest mainland province, Guangdong, and these citizens typically speak Cantonese (*Guangdong hua*). Immigrants to Hong Kong are much more likely than Taiwan arrivals to leave for another place, echoing the city's reputation as a trade entrepôt. Perhaps because of this, Hong Kong was historically not truly seen as a place with a distinctive heritage and resident population of its own. Hong Kong was a place to come to work, to trade, to serve, but not a place to reside for a lifetime, establish roots, and bring up future generations of one's family. This changed in the second half of the twentieth century.

Hong Kong almost surely had no zheng or zheng art in its time as a poor island fishing village close to Guangzhou. Fewer than 7,500 Chinese were living there in

1. Leung Chi-Keung, S.v. "Hong Kong," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 25, 2019, accessed June 1, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong/.

1841 when the British first laid claim to it.[2] Britain enlarged its territory in several stages following the Opium Wars, with the eventual result that Hong Kong Island and the surrounding islands and directly adjacent mainland areas were leased to the British for ninety-nine years in 1898. By 1900, Hong Kong's population had swollen to 300,000.[3] The continued rise of the area as a trading port and population center is legendary and need not be recounted further. Sometime during Hong Kong's colonial period, the zheng began to be heard among its Chinese population; determining a specific date seems impossible. Not until the twentieth century is there ample documentation that the zheng was played in Hong Kong.

Over the course of its rule, the British government of Hong Kong was generally ambivalent about Chinese cultural manifestations, sometimes choosing to repress certain aspects and sometimes supporting them. There was no concerted effort to replace Chinese culture with British models or convert Hong Kong residents to Christianity.[4] Hong Kong's British government also took a generally lax approach to immigration, with the result that insurrections, wars, and economic difficulties elsewhere brought waves of people to colonial Hong Kong; most came from mainland China, a majority from Guangdong.[5] The fall of the Qing dynasty in the early twentieth century and the decades of strife afterward moved some mainlanders to seek refuge in Hong Kong in the first decades of the twentieth century. In December 1941, the Japanese besieged and captured Hong Kong weeks after their attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor. The city's population declined sharply while Hong Kong remained in Japanese hands and began to shoot up once again after August 1945, when British troops returned to take control. As the People's Liberation Army and the Nationalists battled for control of the mainland in the late 1940s, Hong Kong once again functioned as a refuge; at the end of that struggle, hundreds of thousands of additional mainland Chinese arrived. The flow of Chinese mainlanders into Hong Kong was almost unrestricted prior to 1950, and the colony considered itself "a safe and well ordered sanctuary" that "welcomed all who sought asylum," although the government sought to ensure that arrivals would have a "visible means of subsistence, useful occupation," and "honest living."[6] Labor unrest and international politics helped spur efforts to restrict immigration into Hong Kong, but mainland Chinese continued to arrive in surges from 1949 through 1980.[7] At the end of the war in Vietnam in 1975, tens of thousands of Vietnamese fled their homeland and flowed into the colony.

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2. Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 16.
3. Leung, S.v. "Hong Kong," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
4. Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, 23.
5. Agnes S. Ku, "Immigration Policies, Discourses, and the Politics of Local Belonging in Hong Kong (1950–1980)," *Modern China* 30, no. 1 (July 2004): 326.
6. Ku, "Immigration Policies," 333, 339.
7. Ku, "Immigration Policies," 335.

With its generally freer atmosphere and cultural plurality, Hong Kong hosted several different types of zheng players and zheng music in the twentieth century. Several types of zheng art directly imported from the mainland continued to be practiced in the colony. During the three decades following the founding of the People's Republic of China, this variety continued and developed comparatively unimpeded by local political ideology, although a few important government initiatives influenced zheng music in Hong Kong. So Chun-bo and Jason Lau state that it was not until the 1940s and 1950s that zheng music was a factor in the city's cultural life.[8] Immigration, popular trends, and market forces were the most important controlling factors in the survival and shape of certain kinds of zheng music and the disappearance of others. The narrative of the history of zheng art during these years is less cohesive in Hong Kong than it is in mainland China or Taiwan: there was no parallel to Cao Zheng's effort to use the zheng to promote the Chinese Communist Party's ideology. It seems that notated zheng music was apparently not published in Hong Kong until the 1960s or 1970s; prior to this time, it was imported from the mainland, Taiwan, or elsewhere.

Between 1950 and 1980, the residents of Hong Kong began to develop a sense of local identity, in contrast to the "relatively open refugee society" subject to waves of immigration from the mainland that had prevailed earlier.[9] During these decades, the Hong Kong government sponsored activities honoring and promoting certain aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Among these were radio and television broadcasts of Chinese traditional music that included the zheng. Two men with diametrically opposite careers were selected to participate in this work. They were Dou Wun (1910–1979) and Chen Leishi (also known as Louis Chen, 1917–2010). Dou sang Cantonese narrative songs with zheng and clapper accompaniment on weekly radio broadcasts from the 1950s until the 1970s; Chen apparently appeared on radio and television programs playing the zheng (and perhaps the qin as well) in the 1940s and 1950s. These men were mainland émigrés who came from radically different backgrounds in mainland China, and the music they performed was utterly dissimilar but unified by one important characteristic: it featured the zheng.

Naamyam Accompanied by Zheng: Dou Wun's Life and Career

Naamyam, a traditional vocal form with instrumental accompaniment, was practiced in Hong Kong in the 1920s and had probably been heard in Hong Kong and the surrounding region for some decades; perhaps more. Dou Wun (Du Huan in Mandarin) was a blind *naamyam* singer who arrived in Hong Kong in the 1920s and plied his

8. So Chun-bo, *Zhongguo zheng yi daquan* [A complete guidebook of the arts of Chinese guzheng], part 1, rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Guzheng Academy, 2005), 39; Lau, "Zheng Music in Hong Kong," 15–17.
9. Ku, "Immigration Policies," 326.

trade in the colony for the next fifty years. His work provides a glimpse into a lost art and the lives of the musicians who practiced it.

Naamyam is a genre of Cantonese narrative song with accompaniment supplied by a pitched string instrument: the zheng, the two-stringed bowed fiddle yuehu, or the hammered dulcimer yangqin; wooden clappers serve as percussion.[10] *Naamyam* was possibly the most historic type of music involving the zheng heard in twentieth-century Hong Kong. It was performed mainly by blind men and women who were paid by their listeners. Singing *naamyam* was Dou Wun's chief means of making a living in Hong Kong. His performances were featured in regular Hong Kong radio broadcasts in the 1950s and 1960s, and he was asked to play in several prominent venues in the city afterward.

Dou's *naamyam* repertory ventured into poetic art and epic storytelling (Bell Yung compares Dou Wun to the blind epic poet Homer of seventh-century BCE Greece), but he also sang far less complex music. According to Bell Yung, Dou Wun sang three types of narrative song: *naamyam* (a term Bell Yung translates as "tea-house songs"); beggar's songs, or *long zhou*; and brothel songs, known as *banyan*. Yung notes that there is fourth type of Cantonese folk narrative song known as *yue ou*, which was sung by women courtesans (also called "sing-song girls"); thus, Dou Wun did not sing these. Of the types of Cantonese narrative song that Dou Wun recorded, only *naamyaam* featured the zheng. When he sang *naamyam*, he usually accompanied himself, playing the zheng with his right hand and wooden clappers with his left.[11] When singing beggar's songs, he played a gong and a drum; for brothel songs, a large bowed fiddle served as accompaniment.[12]

Naamyam are of two types: those with lyrical literary texts about love, and narrative songs that tell very long stories, often taking dozens of hours to perform. The most famous of the shorter, lyrical, literary type of *naamyam* is *Wayfarer's Autumn Lament* (*Ketu qiuhen*), which has a text about lost love reminiscent of the *yue ou* songs of women courtesans but from a male lover's perspective. Bell Yung provides this *naamyam* as an example of the genre, complete with a recorded example of Dou Wun singing it, a transcription of the vocal line, and lyrics with an English translation

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10. Bell Yung, "Narrative Song: Southern Traditions—Cantonese Narrative Song," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 7, *East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea*, ed. Robert C. Provine, Yoshiko Tokumaru, and J. Lawrence Witzleben (New York: Routledge, 2002), 269. Yung noted that the Cantonese term *naamyam* is more precise than *nanyin* (southern tone), which refers to a much broader repertory of music found over a wider geographic area, in his 2017 lecture on Dou Wun at the University of British Columbia. Bell Yung, "Hong Kong's Folk Music and Local Culture: The Art of a Cantonese Blind Singer" (lecture delivered at the University of British Columbia, September 21, 2017, UBC Hong Kong Studies Initiative), accessed June 2, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7__fH6RLWw. Dou Wun sang *de shui nan yin* (地水南音), the type local to the Pearl River delta region.
11. Yu Siu-wah mentions that Dou made recordings with a yehu player in the 1960s and 1970s; see Yu, *Yue you ruci* [Such are the fading sounds] (Hong Kong: International Association of Theatre Critics, 2005), 121.
12. Yung, "Hong Kong's Folk Music and Local Culture."

Figure 4.1: Dou Wun singing and playing zheng and clappers in a teahouse, 1975. Courtesy of Bell Yung.

in his article on Cantonese narrative song in the East Asia volume of *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*.[13]

Dou begins his performance of *Wayfarer's Autumn Lament* with a prelude lasting about thirty seconds on the zheng and clappers, ending with a tremolo and short glissando on the zheng. He sings the first line in free rhythm, with no accompaniment, and then proceeds to sing with both zheng and clapper for the remainder of the example. The performance is quite rhythmic, with the zheng and clappers knitting together the whole and the zheng filling in between words and vocal phrases. The zheng sounds repeated pitches, produces strumming effects, short glissandos, and small scalar passages in the first ten lines; the vocal part predominates and controls the accompanying instruments' appearances throughout. Most of Dou Wun's available recorded repertory of *naamyam* shares these characteristics.

The lyrics of *naamyam* are organized into an opening couplet followed by quatrains, with accents and a rhyme scheme that reflect the sound of Cantonese in rhymes as well as conveying the nine tones of the language.[14] The melody of the quatrain is the basic melodic structure used in all *naamyam*; the opening couplet is set to the melody used in the quatrain's second and fourth lines. Each line is seven syllables long, grouped into phrases of four and three syllables. Obviously, this is a complex structure. *Naamyam* singers improvise in performing long stories within this framework. Some short sections of the story are told in spoken prose, and others are communicated in longer sung passages in verse. Singers may modify the story's plot, improvising their choice of words and phrases. At times, Dou created new *naamyam* texts that reflected the news of the day and other events. Surely Dou Wun gained much respect for his mastery of all these techniques and their combination as well as for his memory of stories and texts. For blind musicians of Dou's era, learning how to perform *naamyam*, remembering its extensive repertory, and learning how to apply artistry in improvising and adjusting texts and music involved a combination of memory and creativity that could only by transmitted and absorbed through

13. Yung, "Narrative Song: Southern Traditions—Cantonese Narrative Song," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, 7: 267–273.
14. Yung, "Narrative Song: Southern Traditions—Cantonese Narrative Song," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, 7: 270–272.

oral/aural transmission. Dou Wun's *naamyam* singing was truly a prodigious feat. Dou's zheng playing to accompany his *naamyam* singing has a tenuous link with other forms of twentieth-century zheng music, but his work may be representative of music—song accompanied by the zheng or another pitched instrument—formerly in far wider use in mainland China, on Taiwan, and in other areas where Chinese people settled.

Pictures and videotape of Dou Wun playing at the Fu Long Teahouse in 1975 show that his zheng had thirteen metal strings, a moderately arched soundboard, and tuning pegs inserted directly into the soundboard vertically. The bridges were loosely connected to each other with a cord. This zheng is most like the third type of zheng Cao Zheng described and illustrated with photographs in his *Method for Playing the Zheng*, first printed almost twenty years before Dou made his *naamyam* recordings for Bell Yung. Cao showed one type with thirteen strings and two with sixteen; the last of these had vertical tuning pegs and metal strings. While Dou's zheng had vertical tuning pegs, it featured only thirteen metal strings. It was not much like the new zhengs being built on the mainland from the 1960s forward: his instrument lacked both the S-shaped tail nut and the newer tuning system with pegs inserted horizontally into the head of the instrument. Dou played with picks attached to the thumb and index finger of his right hand, and it seems that the tip of right little finger (pinkie) was pressed to the zheng's head, supporting and stabilizing his plucking fingers and perhaps orienting his hand position, helping him pluck strings in a limited ambit. Because Dou's left hand was occupied with playing wooden clappers, the nuances found in some other types of zheng music were not possible: the left hand could not "supplement the sound" (*busheng*) with vibrato or portamento, and so on, as found in most music for the solo zheng and shown and explained by Cao Zheng in his *Method for Playing the Zheng*. Ethnomusicologist Bell Yung recorded dozen of hours of Dou Wun's performances in 1975 and finally persuaded the musician to relate his life story as a *naamyam* performance. This autobiography provides important clues as to the nature and status of *naamyam*—and thus the use of the zheng as an accompanying instrument in traditional vocal music—in the Pearl River delta area, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong.[15]

Born into a peasant family near Guangzhou in 1910, Dou Wun began to lose his sight at age three. After flooding further destroyed his family's means of sustenance and his father died, he was given to a blind fortune teller when he was a small child. Three years later, he deserted the fortune teller and began learning to sing *naamyam* from a man named Suen Sang, apparently finding him among the blind singers of Guangzhou. Suen Sang refused to teach the boy how to play musical instruments,

15. *Shiming ren Dou Wun yiwang piaobo hongchen hua xiangjiang* [A blind singer's story: Blind Dou Wun remembers his past: Fifty years of life and work in Hong Kong], Bell Yung, producer, Ringo Tang, director, recorded in 1975 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, Leisure, and Cultural Services, 2004), DVD (notes by Bell Yung).

reasoning that singing *naamyam* was more refined. Should he learn to play, the boy might "forget about singing *naamyam*."[16] Functioning as an accompanist would leave him with leftover food only, as singers ate first. Learning to sing *naamyam* would allow him to work independently and provide a better living.

During the 1920s, with civil war affecting Guangzhou's stability and thus making it hard to find work, Dou joined some other blind musicians leaving Guangzhou for Macau and ultimately arrived in Hong Kong in 1926, when he was sixteen years old. His singing made him popular, but he also became an opium addict. He worked on the Kowloon Peninsula, in Yaumati, Mongkok, and finally on Temple Street in an entertainment area with numerous brothels and opium dens. In 1929, he met a professional singer, fell in love, and married her. Their children did not survive childhood. In 1935, the Hong Kong government banned prostitution, making it difficult for Dou to find work; his mother, who had joined her son in Hong Kong, passed away in 1940.

The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong during the Second World War brought Dou Wun new hardships: his wife died and food was scarce. To survive, he began to perform in a duet with a female Cantonese opera singer, a fate his *naamyam* teacher had warned him against. When peace arrived, Dou was able to resume singing *naamyam* to provide for himself for some time. Dou Wun reported that as tastes changed in the 1950s, it once again became difficult for him to find work. Although it is not possible to pinpoint exactly why musical tastes changed in Hong Kong, the influx of hundreds of thousands of mainland Chinese arriving from the People's Republic of China with the end of the Civil War in 1949 may not have been inconsequential. This and the arrival of radio broadcasts and recordings of Cantonese popular songs surely had some effect on the market for *naamyam*. The woman Dou accompanied singing Cantonese opera songs left him in 1953. In the autumn of 1955, Dou Wun was hired by Radio Hong Kong to perform on weekly broadcasts, which provided him with a stable living. The job lasted until 1970, when the program was abruptly cancelled. Dou found himself singing on the streets, which he found shameful.[17]

A businessman who had heard Dou on the radio invited him to sing privately on an ongoing basis, which was a great help to Dou. In the 1970s, scholars and officials began to take an interest in *naamyam*, and so Dou was invited to sing in venues such as the City Hall Concert Hall, the Goethe-Institut, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Bell Yung attended some of these performances and masterminded the project of having Dou sing and record many hours of *naamyam* in an old-fashioned teahouse similar to the authentic contexts where Dou had originally performed. Yung recorded dozens of hours of Dou Wun's *namyaam* singing at the Fu Long Teahouse in the spring of 1975, as well as other types of songs. Dou concluded this work by

16. *Shiming ren Dou Wun* [A blind singer's story], notes by Bell Yung, 9.
17. *Shiming ren Dou Wun* [A blind singer's story], notes by Bell Yung, 15.

singing his autobiography in *naamyam* form at the teahouse. Dou Wun died in 1979, marking the end of the type of *naamyam* he practiced as a living art.[18]

Dou's economic status rose and fell several times during his lifetime. He was extremely grateful to his teacher for insisting that he learn to sing *naamyam*, stating that he owed Suen Sang "ten thousand yards of gratitude."[19] He was generally able to make a living as a *naamyam* singer in familiar contexts until the 1950s. In the mid-1950s, he was still sufficiently admired for his *naamyam* singing to be hired to sing for radio audiences, possibly presenting this traditional Cantonese art as a novelty or respite to listeners otherwise inundated with other types of music. In the 1970s, Dou's music making was recorded and studied as one of the last living representatives of a vanishing art. Dou Wun's work, his life story, and his repertory indicate that *naamyam* accompanied by the zheng was heard in a broad spectrum of contexts in Hong Kong from the 1920s through the 1970s.

Chen Leishi, Literatus at Large

In the 1940s, about a decade before Dou Wun began his long series of *naamyam* broadcasts on Hong Kong radio, Chen Leishi (1917–2010, also known as Louis Chen) began to appear on Hong Kong broadcasts playing the zheng.[20] Other than playing the zheng, Chen Leishi's career as a musician was quite unlike Dou Wun's. Chen's long life began on the Chinese mainland and ended in Malaysia, with periods of residency in Hong Kong intervening. Biographical information about Chen is scarce; there is some evidence that he was born in Chaozhou, and he is often referred to as a Chaozhou zheng player.[21] According to Cheng Deh-yuan, Chen resided for a time in Nanyang (Henan) and advocated for folk music (*minzu yinyue*).[22]

Chen Leishi must have come from an open-minded family of considerable means that valued scholarship, as he studied Chinese history in Beijing at Yenching University, a selective, progressive university formed from the merger of several

18. Following on the heels of Bell Yung's work with Dou Wun, the *naamyam* master became something of a folk hero.
19. *Shiming ren Dou Wun* [A blind singer's story], notes by Bell Yung, 9.
20. Lau, "Zheng Music in Hong Kong,"16. Chen played on the radio as well as television; no precise dates for these broadcasts have yet been located.
21. Liner notes by Liang Tsai-ping to a recording he made with Chen indicate that he was born in Chaozhou and living in Malaysia c. 1978. Liang also styles Chen "the leader of the Southern school" centered in Chaozhou and Shantou. See *The Cheng: Two Masters Play the Chinese Zither*, Louis Chen and Liang Tsai-ping, performers, Lyrichord presents Outstanding LP Albums of Chinese Music (New York: Lyrichord Discs, Inc. [1978]). Lyrichord Stereo, LLST 7262 [liner notes by Liang Tsai-ping]. Other sources refer to Chen as a Chaozhou zheng player. See Zhongguo minzu guanxian yue xuehui, *Hua yue dadian guzheng juan*, 1:575; and So Chun-bo, *Zhongguo Zhengyi Daquan* [A complete guidebook of the arts of Chinese guzheng], part 2, rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Guzheng Academy, 2005), 39. Jason Lau refers to Chen both as a Chaozhou and as a Cantonese musician. See Lau, "Zheng Music in Hong Kong," 15, 18.
22. Cheng Deh-yuan, *Zhengyue lilun ji yanzou* [Cheng music of China], vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Bookstore, 1977), 59.

7
Conclusions

During the twentieth century, every aspect of the zheng and its music was transformed. Its context, repertory, structure, and players changed, as did the means of transmitting and teaching zheng music. While some vestiges of the instrument's earlier use and music were still present, by and large, the zheng and its music—solo music in particular—owe far more to twentieth and twenty-first century developments than they do to earlier times. This chapter demonstrates how the data supplied in the preceding chapters supports a new understanding of the zheng's development, history, and cultural roles. It returns to three themes mentioned in Chapter 1: first, the way new repertories of zheng music were created and the influence of music notation on the zheng's musical repertory; second, the significance of the contents of these repertories and how repertories and works are differentiated; lastly, the constructed nationalist narratives about the zheng developed in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. No competing narrative about the zheng was developed in Hong Kong. Instead, Hong Kong was the site of several different approaches to the zheng that provide valuable evidence countering the narratives stemming from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. The chapter closes by positing a new narrative about the zheng that incorporates these perspectives while suggesting a more critical approach to evidence that may encourage better future research on Chinese traditional music.

Creating New Repertories, Using New Notation

The People's Republic of China

Cao Zheng was a central figure in the creation of a cohesive sense and narrative of the zheng's repertory, pedagogy, and history on the Chinese mainland. He was the major figure in developing the instrument's pedagogy and establishing conservatory-level curricula and teachers for the zheng. Cao Zheng likely provided the main impetus behind the development of much of its notated solo repertory. The introduction to Cao's *Method of Zheng Playing* (1957) and its one-page history of the zheng give the impression that the instrument—or, more properly, various zheng-like

instruments—were historically widely known in mainland China and beloved among the laboring people: he states that it had become a "local" (*difang*, 地方) instrument in Henan, Shandong, Guangdong, Yunnan, Zhejiang, "and so forth," though he offered no specific proof of this. Somehow, the zheng had to be linked to the working classes—the laborers—and somehow it needed to have a repertory that reflected this background and could thus speak to and for the new nation as a whole. Writing in the first decade after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Cao Zheng had a sharp understanding of the new Communist order, and he must have known that a strong argument needed to be made to ensure the zheng's place in that new order. As a young man, Cao Zheng had gone to Beijing to study classical Chinese literature. Presumably, he knew the sources of the quotations he cited in his one-page history, which included references to the zheng being used in the ancient state of Qin, home of China's legendary First Emperor (in modern Shaanxi Province) and ancient poets.

It was no small thing to state that the laboring classes had long loved the zheng when there was little or no evidence of this, in documents or otherwise. The references to the "true music of Qin" that included the zheng said nothing about who those musicians were, though the ensemble described featured a variety of instruments and singing was part of the music making. The courtesan zheng players of the Tang and Song eras were soloists, but classifying them as "laborers" seems specious. The subtleties of just who would have owned a zheng, played it, and written about it in imperial China were too complex to include in Cao Zheng's précis of the instrument's history. He took the risk of embellishing the past of the zheng so that it could survive in the present and (potentially) be led into the future. With only one extant score specifically including the zheng from the nineteenth century (Rong Zhai's 1814 *Thirteen Suites for Strings*), numerous references to the instrument being "saved" or "rescued" by twentieth-century reformers, and no body of evidence indicating widespread use of the zheng in the nineteenth century, it seems clear that the zheng's actual history was quite different from Cao Zheng's portrayal and quite possibly did not involve much, if any, solo music. Lack of a specific, incontrovertible recent "past" was an advantage for the zheng in the twentieth century. It allowed the reformers to mold its repertory and alter its cultural role. This helped keep zheng art alive in the new People's Republic of China; otherwise, it stood to be rejected or perhaps marginalized as irrelevant. In contrast, the se became virtually obsolete, and the qin was comparatively left alone.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong was much more culturally and socially open and hospitable than the People's Republic of China or Taiwan from 1949 to 1979. The British government forced no particular cultural ideology on the colony's Chinese population. Because of this relative openness, zheng players as diverse as Dou Wun, Chen Leishi, So Chun-bo, and Choi Ngar-si made careers as musicians in the city, as did Xiang Sihua

after leaving the mainland (and before moving to Canada). The eldest of them, Dou Wun, was a mainland émigré blind from early childhood. The massive repertory of Cantonese narrative song specifically known as *de shui naamyam* became his particular area of expertise; he played the zheng and clappers as he sang these songs, flexibly combining specific musical and linguistic structures, arranging and rearranging texts old and new as he sang. Chen Leishi was from an utterly different walk of life: with at least some college education, if not a degree, he was described as a *wenren* (literatus) and taught at the college level, performed, recorded, lectured internationally, wrote about Chaozhou *ersipu* notation, and owned an impressive collection of qin and zheng. Chen contributed a number of transcriptions of qin music to the repertory of the zheng. So Chun-bo promoted the zheng extensively in Hong Kong, performing, teaching, and organizing concerts. One of the first Hong Kong composers of solo zheng music, So also led a zheng ensemble, wrote a comprehensive book and anthology of zheng music, and posited the existence of a Hong Kong zheng school, or *liupai*, in 2001. Choi Ngar-si learned multiple instruments in her youth, played recitals with her sister (who played the pipa), wrote a beginning method book for the zheng, and (like So Chun-bo) founded a successful zheng studio and a zheng ensemble; Choi also played in the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra.

Taiwan

On Taiwan, zheng music had two main features during the decades of separation from the mainland and Nationalist martial law; both are related to the career of Liang Tsai-ping, an immigrant to Taiwan and a member of the ruling minority who had come from the mainland in the wake of the Nationalists' defeat in 1949. Liang notated, collected, transcribed, and composed music for the zheng. He featured items that he had incorporated in his 1938 *Model Zheng Notation* anthology in *Music of Cheng: The Chinese Sixteen-String Zither*, a book that became a staple among Taiwanese students and went through numerous reprints in the 1960s and later. As the title of this work states, Liang played the sixteen-string zheng (with strings of steel), and he played this type of zheng throughout his life. These two elements—Liang's music and his advocacy of the sixteen-string zheng—lent zheng music a conservative aura on Taiwan. Mainland changes in technique and repertory, along with the new twenty-one string zheng, were forbidden, and began to be accepted only in 1980. Liang was a major figure in the transmission and pedagogy of zheng music in Taiwan and traveled abroad as a performer, lecturer, and teacher.

Content and Meaning of Repertories, Works, and Labels

The lack of a well-documented, obvious history for the zheng was a particular advantage for musicians such as Cao Zheng. Cao Zheng and his contemporaries were able to carve a new, safe path for zheng art through a variety of political and

cultural minefields in the twentieth century. Creating a colorful repertory of solo music from the traditional music of various regions of China and applying it to the zheng gave the instrument some credibility as a "folk" or "ethnic" instrument (民族乐器) reportedly beloved by the laboring class of Chinese people everywhere. This was an important step in keeping zheng art alive in the People's Republic of China; otherwise, it might be rejected or perhaps marginalized as irrelevant. Cao Zheng and his comrades reframed the role and history of the zheng to suit the ideological agenda of the Chinese Communist Party in the mid-twentieth century. On the Chinese mainland, music-collecting activities (*caifeng*), transcription, and adaptation of extant music for the solo zheng resulted in the compilation of a repertory of zheng music that was classified and labeled by the region where it was collected and presumably transmitted historically.[1] The resulting *liupai* repertories were the hallmark of the work of Cao Zheng and his followers.

When Cao Zheng wrote his *Method of Playing the Zheng*, he mentioned no "schools" or *liupai*. In his anthology, he included music from Chaozhou, Henan, Shandong, and the Hakka (*Kejia*) people. Conservatory zheng students and teachers began to notate music for solo zheng as curricula were instituted. Han Mei provides considerable information about the process.[2] Wang Xunzhi (at the Shanghai Conservatory) worked on developing notated solos and fingerings with his students. Xiang Sihua reported that she participated in *caifeng* activities at the Shanghai Conservatory in the summer of 1960.[3] *Caifeng*, literally "collecting the winds," has an old and important connotation in China: the term describes the process that led to the assembly of *The Book of Songs* (*Shi jing*, 诗经), one of the Confucian *Five Classics*. When students and teachers went out to find, learn, record, and transcribe songs and other music from among the "folk" of the New China, they were honoring their music, making it important, constituting the artistic canon of the new society. A large number of works were notated, classified by region, and finally ranked in order of difficulty at the 1961 Xi'an conference on zheng repertory and pedagogy.[4] At some point, around the time of the 1961 conference, the idea of regional zheng schools took hold. According to Cao Zheng, the choice of *liupai* and *pai* was a conscious application of terms designed to attach importance to these concepts in zheng music, but this further obscured the origins of zheng solo music:[5] it does not show the divergent types of music that the *caifeng* activities assembled.

1. The number of *liupai* varies depending on the writer. Most commonly, there are at least four: Chaozhou, Hakka (Kejia), Henan, and Shandong.
2. Han Mei, "The Emergence of the Chinese Zheng," 118–120.
3. Xiang Sihua, *Xiang Sihua yanzou Zhongguo zhengpu*, 118.
4. "*Guzheng jiaocai bianxuan zuotan hui jiyao*" [A synopsis of the guzheng teaching materials conference] appeared in *Qin Zheng* 25, no. 1 (2006): 5–9.
5. Han Mei, "The Emergence of the Chinese Zheng," 127–128. Han provides a translation of an excerpt of Cao Zheng's 1993 article exploring this issue.

Liupai means "school" or "sect," and the term is used in Beijing opera to indicate the interpretive composition and performance style of a master.[6] *Pai* connotes "style" or "school" and has been applied to various bodies of qin music organized by region.[7] To be sure, a fraction of the zheng's solo repertory came via transfer from the repertory of the qin, but this music was not among the works assembled from *caifeng* activities. Using the term *liupai* loosely in regard to zheng music understandably creates confusion. The problem with describing works collected within or originating from a region as a *liupai* is that it implies that there was a school of solo zheng players who shared repertory and performance techniques. In zheng music, *liupai* seems to function best as a means of grouping works from a certain region of China (or, in the case of the Hakka, a particular population).

Although mainland Chinese zheng experts used the term *liupai* to group music by region, the term was nowhere to be found in the descriptions and collections of Liang Tsai-ping (*Model Zheng Notation*, 1938; *Music of Cheng*, 1960s), Cheng Deh-yuan (*Cheng Music of China*, 1977), or in van Gulik's list of different types of zheng music.[8] In his 2006 Chinese University of Hong Kong thesis, Jason Lau argued that the mainland zheng *liupai* are a post-1949 development.[9]

Erroneous perceptions of the import of the word *liupai* and the relationship of these repertories to the history of zheng music does not mean that the process of collecting, notating, and recording the music or adapting it for performance on the solo zheng is or was bad or wrong. On the contrary, it is very likely that some or even most of this music would otherwise have vanished with the musicians who knew and performed it. The work Cao Zheng and the other zheng experts (along with their students) accomplished in collecting and preserving Chinese traditional music by converting it into zheng solo music was quite valuable. It was no more and no less destructive than the work of Béla Bartók, Frances Densmore, the Lomaxes, Cecil Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and John Wesley Work Jr., as they collected music held in aural/oral tradition and transferred it to music notation and recordings. At the 1961 Xi'an conference on zheng teaching materials, a great deal of the adapted traditional music that had been collected and notated for the zheng changed hands. The conference attendees also agreed on the need to distribute and teach this repertory nationwide. The conference leaders even worked out a means by which teachers could participate in exchange visits to other conservatories so that local faculty would not be burdened with teaching music they did not already know; students would benefit from interacting with an authentic "bearer" of this music.[10]

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6. Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), 169–170.
7. Van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, 82–83n170.
8. Van Gulik, "Brief Note on the Chinese Small Cither," 19–22.
9. Shui-Chung Jason Lau, "Zheng Music."
10. Han Mei, "The Emergence of the Chinese Zheng," 122.

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