

# Folk Ballads and the Aristocracy

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Ever since I first read them a number of years ago I was struck by the folk poetry called “Nanchao yuefu” (Ballads of the Southern Dynasties) and surprised at how easy they were to appreciate, even for a Westerner. Most pre-Tang poetry written by literary men has always seemed to me to be difficult to get into, difficult to feel what the author was getting at. These literary poems were so intimately tied up with the poet’s life, and his life so intimately tied up with the history of the times and in particular with the history of the court, with the life of the emperor, that the reader needs an enormous amount of historical baggage to be able to understand what is going on. Beginning with Qu Yuan in the fourth century B.C. and right down to the fourth century A.D. at least the vast majority of poetry that still subsists deals with the court and with the men who were at the center of the state and state politics seems to be almost all that interested the poets who wrote it.

With the Southern Ballads we are in another world — as far from the world of the court as it is possible to be and still be in China. These

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ballads are folk poetry, not court poetry, and the subjects they concern are every-day subjects: love mainly, forsaken women, merchants or sailors who must leave their lovers, young women engaged in raising silk-worms and who neglect their duties to indulge in amorous dalliance with their boyfriends, etc. Earlier poetry sometimes describes forsaken women or estranged lovers, but usually as allegories: the forsaken woman represents the poet who, like Qu Yuan, yearns to win back the good graces of his sovereign. But the Southern Ballads are not allegorical; they really describe human emotions experienced by ordinary people far from the court and the destiny of the nation. Or do they? Some of the ballads that seem most innocent, whose emotions seem simplest and most direct, are attributed to aristocratic authors, generals and princes of the blood who were in the center of politics and who were directly responsible for the destiny of the dynasty. How are we to interpret these unlikely attributions? I cannot pretend to have found the answer, but I think it is worthwhile to pose the problem and at least to attempt to imagine why these unlikely attributions have been made.

I would like to limit the corpus of poems I will discuss to one part only of these Southern Ballads: the “Xiqu” (Western Lyrics), a group of short poems almost all written in quatrains with lines of five syllables. I will leave aside a larger group of ballads called “Wusheng” (Wu Music), although they are probably the model for the “Xiqu” and are very similar to them. The “Wusheng” were written in or near the capital Jiankang (Nanking), the “Xiqu” in the middle basin of the Yangzi in what is now the province of Hubei and in its adjoining provinces. The “Wusheng” date, in their great majority, from the fourth century, and the “Xiqu” grew up after the waning of the “Wusheng” and date from the fifth century. There can be no doubt that the “Xiqu” grew out of the “Wusheng”; they resemble them very closely and are sometimes called “Wuge” (Songs of Wu) in old texts, but there are subtle differences in the poems that probably reflect the differences in geography and perhaps in society.<sup>2</sup> I

2 Most of the information I give here comes from Wang Yunxi, *Liuchao yuefu yu ming*, Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957, pp. 3-32.

will take most of my examples here from the “Xiqu” because they are much more often attributed to members of the aristocracy than are the “Wusheng.”<sup>3</sup> There remain today about 470 of these Southern Ballads, of which about 140 are “Xiqu.” They are all found in the most complete collection of ballads in existence, the *Yuefu shiji* of the late Northern Song scholar Guo Maoqian.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the best way to begin is to read a few of these poems in more or less literal translation so that you will be able to see why I put into doubt their attribution to aristocrats. Let us begin with the very first of the “Xiqu” that appears in Guo Maoqian’s collection; according to Wang Yunxi the poem is one of the earliest of the “Xiqu,” dating to around 430.<sup>5</sup> The poem is the first of five quatrains that bear the collective title of “Shicheng Music”:

I was born and raised near Shicheng  
And my window opens out to the  
    watchtower on the town wall.  
The young men in the town,  
As they pass in and out, come  
    and pay me a visit.<sup>6</sup>

生長石城下  
開窗對城樓  
城中諸少年  
出入見依投

There are two translations of this short poem and one commentary on it in Chinese. Suzuki Torao and Anne Birrell translate the text that is given in the *Yutai xinyong* 10<sup>7</sup> that contains two variants, “gate” (*men*) for

- 3 I have been enormously helped in my study by the excellent as yet unpublished thesis entitled “The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties (420-589) — A Critical Study” presented to the Australian National University in 1984 by Chan Man Sing. I would like to thank David Knechtges who very kindly sent me a photocopy of the thesis.
- 4 My examples will be quoted from the Peking edition (*Zhonghua shuju*, 1979).
- 5 Cf. Wang Yunxi, *Liuchao yuefu yu minge*, p. 11.
- 6 Text in *Yuefu shiji* 47, p. 689.
- 7 Cf. Suzuki Torao, *Gyokutai shinyô shû* 3, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975,

“window” in line 2, and “handsome” (*mei*) for the plural in line 3. They also understand the last line of the poem more or less as I have. Suzuki has “The handsome young masters in the town drop in to honor me with their patronage as they pass in and out of the city wall”; Birrell has “Drop in as they come and go.” The Chinese commentary by Zhang Houyu<sup>8</sup> understands the last line differently: “Every time the young men in the town pass before her window, they all gaze at it lovingly, unable to detach their eyes.” He has perhaps allowed himself liberties with the grammar of the last line so as not to shock his feminine readers (since he is being published by the Chinese Women’s Press). Such descriptions of sexual licence, of what certainly seems to be a woman selling or perhaps freely giving her charms to many men, are rare in the “Xiqu,” although they are not uncommon in the “Wusheng.” The four other quatrains under this title are delicate poems of sentiment and are more typical of the “Xiqu.” I would like to translate the second of these five poems before discussing their authorship. It is put into the mouth of a young woman:

In the warm spring when all the flowers bloom,	陽春百花生
I pick some to stick as a crown in my headdress.	摘插環髻前
Twisting my fingers and stamping my feet to [the tune of] “Forgetting Sadness,”	挽指躡忘愁
Together with [the one I love] we make the most of the years of our youth!	相與及盛年

The young lady in the poem (the vast majority of these poems, “Xiqu” and “Wusheng” alike, are spoken in the persona of women, and usually women in love) is in all probability participating in a spring festival, dancing on the green and perhaps participating in the stamping dances that are described in the first three of the four “Jiangling yue” (Jiangling

pp. 304-305; Anne Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 269.

8 Cf. *Gushi jianshang cidian*, Peking: Zhongguo funü chubanshe, 1988, p. 1179.

Music) poems that also are “Xiqu.”<sup>9</sup> The tune “Wang chou” (Forgetting Sadness) in line 3 is most probably another name for the tune “Mo chou” (Don’t Be Sad), which is said to be derived from “Shicheng Music” in the *Jiu Tangshu* monograph on music. The monograph also states that the refrain that was sung with “Shicheng Music” contained the words *wang chou*.<sup>10</sup> There are three other quatrains under the same title “Shicheng Music,” and all three depict scenes of parting between sailors (or perhaps river merchants) and their wives or lovers. There is a charming, naive freshness about all of them that sets them apart from literary poetry.

And yet, immediately before its remarks on the tune “Mo chou” the monograph on music of the *Jiu Tangshu* has this to say:

“Shicheng” was written by Zang Zhi (d. 454). Shicheng is in Jingling (the present Zhongxiang, Hubei). Zang Zhi was once prefect of the commandery of Jingling<sup>11</sup> and looked out from the town walls and saw groups of young people singing at the top of their voices. This occasioned his writing of this piece.

The *Jiu Tangshu* would thus have us believe that Zang Zhi, a soldier, hunter and gamester who is nowhere mentioned as being interested in literature was inspired by what he saw and heard on the town wall to compose or perhaps transcribe these folksongs. On the face of it there is nothing impossible about a soldier indulging in poetry, as Cao Cao proved two centuries earlier. It is quite probable that the majority of the peasants who sang these songs were illiterate and, if the songs have reached us, some literate person must have written them down. And almost all the Chinese who have written on these poems whose works I have read repeat these remarks from the *Jiu Tangshu* and consider Zang Zhi to be the author of these five quatrains: Yu Guanying,<sup>12</sup> the members

9 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 49, p. 710. See the *Yuzhu baodian* 10, p. 13a-b (Guyi congshu edition), by Du Taiqing (d. ca. 596), quoted by Chan Man Sing, “The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties,” p. 89.

10 Cf. *Jiu Tangshu* 29, p. 1065.

11 Some time around 430; see *Songshu* 74, p. 1910.

12 Cf. *Han Wei Liuchao shixuan*, Peking: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1979 (first

of the Department of the History of Chinese Literature of the University of Peking,<sup>13</sup> Zhang Yaxin,<sup>14</sup> Zhang Houyu,<sup>15</sup> and Chan Man Sing.<sup>16</sup> I have long since learned that it is dangerous to contest Chinese opinion on their literature, but I wonder if they are right in accepting the *Jiu Tangshu* attribution.

It would be relatively easy to accept the attribution to Zang Zhi of these poems if it were the only case in which a famous aristocrat is said to have created a category of Southern Ballads, but there are seven examples of this kind of attribution for the "Xiqu" and three for the "Wu-sheng," some of which are not at all easy to accept. The second "Xiqu" title given by Guo Maoqian is called "Wu ye ti" (The Crow Cried in the Night), and it is attributed to the famous literary patron, the Song prince Liu Yiqing (403-444) in the monograph on music in the *Jiu Tangshu* and to his cousin Liu Yikang (409-451) in the *Jiaofang ji* (ca. 760).<sup>17</sup> The latter attribution is accompanied by so many anachronisms and mistakes (some pointed out by Guo Maoqian) that it cannot be considered seriously. But there are also other attributions in other texts cited by Chan Man Sing. I would like to look into the various attributions in some detail because I think they will show us that it is impossible to know which,

published 1958), p. 241; it is true that Yu Guanying puts the fifth quatrain of the "Shicheng Music" (the only one he quotes) under the general rubric of "Anonymous," but he nevertheless repeats the *Jiu Tangshu* attribution to Zang Zhi in note 1 of his commentary.

13 Cf. *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenxue shi cankao ziliao*, Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1962, p. 366.

14 Cf. *Liuchao yuefu shixuan*, [Zhengzhou]: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1986, p. 56.

15 Cf. *Gushi jianshang cidian*. See note 8 above.

16 On pp. 24-25 of his unpublished thesis mentioned in note 3 above.

17 On this work see Robert des Rotours, *Histoire de Ngan Lou-chan (Ngan Lou-chan che tsi)*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962 (Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, vol. 18), pp. XIII-XIV. The *Jiu Tangshu* 29, p. 1065, and the *Jiaofang ji* are both quoted in the *Yuefu shiji* 647, p. 690.

if any, of these various attributions is accurate, and this negative information will be a first step in delimiting the question I asked at the beginning of this article: why have historians gone so far as to fabricate such highly improbable scenarios in order to attribute so many of these popular songs to aristocratic authors?

The *Jiu Tangshu* gives the following account of how the song “Wu ye ti” was written and by whom:

“The Crow Cried in the Night” was written by the Song Prince of Linchuan, [Liu] Yiqing. In 440 the Prince of Pengcheng, [Liu] Yikang, was transferred to Yuzhang (the present Nanchang, Jiangxi). Yiqing at the time was governor of Jiangzhou (the present Jiujiang, Jiangxi) and when [Liu Yikang] reached Mt. Lu<sup>18</sup> the two cousins met one another and wept. When Emperor Wen (Yikang’s elder brother and Yiqing’s cousin) heard about their meeting he was most unhappy and ordered [Yiqing] to return to his domicile [in the capital]. The latter became extremely frightened. One night a concubine heard a crow cry and she knocked on the door of his studio to say: “Tomorrow my lord will be amnestied.” Within a year he was appointed governor of Southern Yanzhou (the present Yangzhou, Jiangsu) and he wrote this song. Thus the refrain of the song goes:

He forces <sup>19</sup> the window, but to no avail,	籠窗窗不開
The crow cries at night,	烏夜啼
And night after night I await my lover’s coming.	夜夜望郎來

The song that has come down to us today does not seem to have anything to do with what Yiqing originally intended to convey in his song. [...]<sup>20</sup>

18 The text reads *zhen* one of whose meanings is “principal mountain of a province”; see the pseudo-Kong Anguo commentary to the *Shangshu* 3, p. 14a (of the *Shisan jing zhushu* of Ruan Yuan). Liu Yiqing’s capital was close to Mt. Lu, the most imposing mountain of the entire region.

19 Reading *long* 籠 for the *long* 籠 of the text.

20 *Jiu Tangshu* 29, p. 1065; this text is followed by the first of the eight poems contained under the title “Wu ye ti” in *Yuefu shiji* 47, p. 691. I have unfor-

To accept this explanation of the origin of the song one would first of all have to believe that the crow at this time in China was an auspicious bird. Certain legends do present the bird under more positive auspices than a reader of, for example, *Macbeth* or Edgar Allen Poe might expect. It was the symbol of the sun, the emblem of the Zhou dynasty and considered a bird that practiced filial piety by nourishing its mother, but it was also considered a bird of evil omen in both the *Shijing* 41 and 192 and the *Zhouli*.<sup>21</sup> The fifth poem in the series under this title would seem to describe its nocturnal cry as something sad and, one would have thought, unlucky:

Crows, at their birth, want to fly,	鳥生如欲飛
To fly and fly, each in its own direction.	飛飛各自去
Thus separated from their loved ones, they have no peace of mind	生離無安心
And cry through the night till dawn. <sup>22</sup>	夜啼至天曙

Neither this poem nor any of the seven others grouped under this title have any relation whatsoever with amnesties of any kind, and only Nos. 3-5 mention birds crying: No. 3 is put in the mouth of a woman separated from her lover who hurries to write an answer to his letter when she failed to hear a bird cry during the day (not at night), and No. 4,

fortunately not been able to consult the following article on "The Crow Cried in the Night": Fujii Mamoru, "U ya tei no seiritsu to sono denshō," *Shinagaku kenkyū*, 29, 1963, pp. 23-31.

21 See Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Customs of South and East China*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968, pp. 429-430, to which should be added Chenggong Sui (231-273), "Wufu," in *Quan Shangu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*, "Quan Jin wen" 59, pp. 7a-8a, which depicts the crow as a filial animal.

22 *Yuefu shiji* 47, p. 691; translations in Marilyn Jane Evans, "Popular Songs of the Southern Dynasties. A Study in Chinese Poetic Style," an unpublished thesis presented to Yale University in 1966, p. 156, and Chan Man Sing, "The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties," p. 170. There is a commentary by Zhang Houyu in *Gushi jianshang cidian*, p. 1181.

perhaps the most beautiful of the eight, is the poem of a lover frustrated by, not a crow, but a shrike (*wujiu*), literally a “crow mortar,” which gets its name from the tallow tree (*wujiu*) that is in flower at the time of the year the bird sings:

A fine bird indeed is the shrike	可憐烏白鳥
Who says he knows when the day	強言知天曙
will break!	無故三更啼
For no reason he cried at the third	歡子冒闇去
watch	
And my lover has left, braving	
the darkness. <sup>23</sup>	

In short, none of these poems is in the slightest relevant to Liu Yiqing's predicament and we are left wondering why it has been attributed to him. Chan Man Sing believes the attribution of this title to a musician-concubine in Liu Yiqing's household made by Xu Jian (659-729) in the *Chuxue ji* is more likely because the musician is said to have composed the song “beset with anguished thoughts.”<sup>24</sup> Perhaps to show the utter futility of looking for which among all these highly unlikely attributions is correct, there is yet another given in the *Qinshuo* by Li Mian (717-788) who believes it to have been written by the daughter of He Yan (190-249) when her father was imprisoned.<sup>25</sup> The idea that a ballad of this type that

23 *Yuefu shiji* 47, p. 691; there is a translation of this quatrain and an interesting discussion of the theme in Chan Man Sing, “The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties,” pp. 150-151, 196-198. There are commentaries by Zhang Yaxin, *Liuchao yuefu shixuan*, p. 57, and Zhang Houyu, *Gushi jianshang cidian*, p. 1181; see also Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian* 1, Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1979, p. 104, for a discussion of this theme in world literature.

24 Cf. *Chuxue ji* 16, p. 386 of the Peking edition (Zhonghua shuju, 1962); Chan Man Sing, “The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties,” pp. 26-30.

25 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 60, p. 872; Chan Man Sing, “The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties,” p. 26.

only appeared in the fourth century could be attributed to someone like He Yan's daughter who lived in the first half of the third century reduces the whole exercise to absurdity.

As I said earlier, seven of the prefaces to "Xiqu" songs in the *Yuefu shiji* attribute the creation of song titles to aristocratic authors. We have already seen two cases, one concerning Zang Zhi and the other Liu Yiqing (or others). I must admit that some of the five remaining cases seem quite plausible to me, in particular the poems attributed to two emperors, one to Emperor Wu of Qi (Qi Wudi), Xiao Ze (440-493), because the one rather prosaic poem ascribed to him corresponds in every respect to the conditions that are said to have inspired it,<sup>26</sup> and three to Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (Liang Wudi), Xiao Yan (464-549), because he was himself a poet and a man of letters and the historical background given corresponds to events in his life.<sup>27</sup> Of the three remaining titles, two are ascribed to men unknown elsewhere as poets and the poetry they are said to have written on the occasion said to have inspired it seems unrelated to it.<sup>28</sup> The poems by Liu Shuo (431-453), who has a dozen or so poems still in existence, correspond well to the description given to them and are quite possibly written by him.<sup>29</sup> Thus four, over half of the seven attributions given for "Xiqu," seem doubtful to me and require us to wonder why they have been attributed to such unlikely authors?

26 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 48, p. 699; there are translations of the poem by me, in Roderich Ptak and Siegfried Englert, eds., *Ganz allmählich (Festschrift für G. Debon)*, Heidelberg: HVA, 1986, pp. 92-93; and Chan Man Sing, "The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties," pp. 32-36.

27 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 48, p. 708; see the important discussion in Chan Man Sing, "The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties," pp. 40-43.

28 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 49, p. 703 ("Xiangyang yue"), and p. 722 ("Xi wu ye fei").

29 Cf. *Yuefu shiji* 49, pp. 719-720; his other poems can be found in Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, pp. 1213-1216.

The relation of popular and literary art is a complicated matter, in China as elsewhere in the world. It used to be said that many of the themes in Haydn's symphonies were copied by the composer from tunes he heard Croatian peasants singing as they worked in the fields around the Esterhazy estate in Hungary where he was the composer in residence, tunes that were still sung in the neighborhood a hundred years later. And then someone had the bright idea that it was the peasants who were singing tunes that Haydn had created and put in his symphonies. I suppose the thought behind this was that tunes good enough to have lasted so long must have been written by a genius and, as far as they knew, Haydn was the only one in the neighborhood. There is no way of proving these theories one way or another. The "Xiqu" and the "Wu-sheng" are obviously folk art; just as obviously, literate men have imitated them and, even in poems thought to be anonymous, lines taken word for word from literati poems can be found showing that in all probability some of these anonymous poems at least were written by literati.<sup>30</sup> Popular poems too have also been used by the literati for satirical or political purposes, so that extreme care must be made before an attribution is denied to be sure some hidden satire is not intended.<sup>31</sup> But I still believe I have shown that some at least of the attributions to aristocrats that one finds in the *Yuefu shiji* are erroneous. How can we account for this fact?

30 Among the "Xiqu," for example, the first line of the third of the "Qingcong baima" poems, *Yuefu shiji* 49, p. 711, is almost word for word from the famous "Fufeng ge" of Liu Kun and the third line of the second "Meng Zhu" poem, p. 714, is almost word for word from an imitation of Cao Zhi by Xie Lingyun.

31 In the *Nan Qishu* 26, p. 485, Wang Zhongxiong (*fl.* 500), the son of Wang Jingze, quotes No. 6 of the "Aonong ge" (*Yuefu shiji* 46, p. 668), to criticize his sovereign. There is no suggestion here that the poem was *written* by Wang Zhongxiong; he uses a ballad that in all probability dates from a century earlier and perhaps deliberately misquotes it so as not to offend the emperor.

The Southern Ballads, the “Xiqu” like the “Wusheng,” are revolutionary in the history of Chinese poetry. They represent something quite new, a kind of hedonism, an interest in aspects of every-day life that classical poetry and even earlier *yuefu* ignored completely. It should perhaps be remarked in passing that even earlier *yuefu* were published for the first time together with the Southern Ballads by Shen Yue (441-513) in the *Songshu* around 500. Before this period it was unthinkable that anyone would be interested in publishing any literature that was not concerned in some way with moral, social or political matters. The ballads we have been reading are precisely the kind of literature that was not considered worth preserving before Shen Yue’s times and, I would suggest, attributing some of them at least to aristocratic men, engaged in politics, and endowing them with satirical messages that show they were in fact not simply frivolous folk songs, but serious works by men seriously engaged in the service of the state, was a way of making them worthy of being read by gentlemen of the ruling class.

Chinese Characters

- Aonong ge 懷儂歌  
Cao Cao 曹操  
Cao Zhi 曹植  
Chan Man Sing (Chen Wancheng) 陳萬成  
Chenggong Sui 成公綏  
Chuxue ji 初學記  
Du Taiqing 杜臺卿  
Fufeng ge 扶風歌  
Fujii Mamoru 藤井守  
Gushi jianshang cidian 古詩鑒賞辭典  
Guanzhui bian 管錐編  
Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩  
Gyokutai shinyô shû 玉臺新詠集  
Han Wei Liuchao shixuan 漢魏六朝詩選  
He Yan 何晏  
Jiankang 建康  
Jiangling yue 江陵樂  
Jiangzhou 江州  
Jiaofang ji 教坊記  
Jingling 竟陵  
Jiujiang 九江  
Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書  
Kong Anguo 孔安國  
Li Mian 李勉  
Liang Wudi 梁武帝  
Linchuan 臨川  
Liuchao yuefu shixuan 六朝樂府詩選  
Liuchao yuefu yu minge 六朝樂府與民歌  
Liu Kun 劉琨  
Liu Shuo 劉鑠  
Liu Yikang 劉義康  
Liu Yiqing 劉義慶  
Lu 廬  
Lu Qinli 魯欽立  
mei 美  
men 門  
Meng Zhu 孟珠  
Mo chou 莫愁  
Nanchang 南昌  
Nanchao yuefu 南朝樂府  
Nan Qishu 南齊書  
Pengcheng 彭城  
Qi Wudi 齊武帝  
Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書  
Qinshuo 琴說  
Qingcong baima 青驄白馬  
Qu Yuan 屈原  
Quan Jin wen 全晉文  
Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文  
Ruan Yuan 阮元  
Shangshu 尚書

- Shen Yue 沈約  
Shicheng 石城  
Shijing 詩經  
Shisan jing zhushu  
十三經注疏  
Songshu 宋書  
Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄  
U ya tei no seiritsu to sono  
denshō  
烏夜啼の成立とそ  
の傳唱  
Wang chou 忘愁  
Wang Jingze 王敬則  
Wang Yunxi 王運熙  
Wang Zhongxiong 王仲雄  
Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenxue shi  
cankao ziliao  
魏晉南北朝文學史參  
考資料  
Wen 文  
Wufu 烏賦  
Wuge 吳歌  
wujiu (shrike, tree) 烏臼  
Wusheng 吳聲  
Wu ye ti 烏夜啼
- Xiqu 西曲  
Xi wu ye fei 西烏夜飛  
Xian Qin Han Wei Jin  
Nanbeichao shi  
先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩  
Xiangyang yue 襄陽樂  
Xiao Yan 蕭衍  
Xiao Ze 蕭贖  
Xie Lingyun 謝靈運  
Xu Jian 徐堅  
Yanzhou 兗州  
Yangzhou 揚州  
Yu Guanying 余冠英  
Yutai xinyong 玉臺新詠  
Yuzhang 豫章  
Yuzhu baodian 玉燭寶典  
yuefu 樂府  
Yuefu shiji 樂府詩集  
Zang Zhi 臧質  
Zhang Houyu 張厚餘  
Zhang Yaxin 張亞新  
zhen 鎮  
Zhongxiang 鍾祥  
Zhouli 周禮

## **Abstract**

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Among the Southern Ballads called "Xiqu" (Western Lyrics) there are a certain number of tune titles that are attributed to aristocrats princes of the blood, generals, and high officials. The fact that these unpretentious folk songs should be attributed to aristocrats is not in itself surprising since men of the ruling class in all probability imitated folk literature from earliest times in China. What is surprising is that some of these attributions are so improbable and many of them are so manifestly inaccurate that we should make an attempt to understand why they have been made. The following hypothesis is suggested: the Southern Ballads, in their hedonistic acceptance of the pleasures of life, break new ground in Chinese literary tradition that had been, until the appearance of the Southern Ballads towards the end of the fourth century A.D., interested exclusively in moral and political subjects; only by attributing them to men engaged in the center of political life could these unpretentious love songs be considered worthy of the attention of men of the ruling class.

## **Résumé**

Donald HOLZMAN : Les ballades populaires et l'aristocratie

Parmi les Ballades du Sud appelées « Xiqu » (Chansons occidentales), il y a un certain nombre de mélodies dont les titres sont attribués à des aristocrates, princes du sang, généraux ou hauts fonctionnaires. Le fait que ces chansons populaires soient attribuées à des aristocrates n'est pas en soi surprenant, puisque les hommes de la classe dirigeante ont, en toute probabilité, imité la littérature du peuple depuis les temps les plus reculés en Chine. Ce qui surprend, c'est que certaines de ces attributions sont si improbables et à l'évidence si incorrectes que nous devons faire un effort pour savoir pourquoi elles ont été inventées. L'hypothèse

suggérée ici est que les Ballades du Sud, qui célèbrent d'une façon hédoniste les plaisirs de la vie, innovent dans la tradition littéraire chinoise qui, jusqu'à leur parution vers la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, a été tout entière consacrée à la politique ou à la morale ; la seule manière de rendre ces chants d'amour dignes de l'attention des hommes de la classe dirigeante était de les attribuer à des personnages évoluant au centre de la vie politique.