

From Singing Ghosts to Docile Concubines: Elite Domestication of the Local in the Wu Songs

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This article examines the fascination of émigré elite literati with southern local songs known as the “Wu songs” in the early Southern dynasties. I argue that, through their cultivation of these songs, the émigré elite in the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song dynasties created an image of a “cultural other” and attempted to domesticate this other, experienced as southern, local, and feminine. A gender discourse—the ascription of femininity to the local—was employed as a crucial approach in this domestication. I also explore the unexpected outcome of this cultural encounter in the subsequent centuries, i.e., the merging of the northern elite and southern local music and cultural traditions.

The beginning of the fourth century marks a crucial period in the political and cultural history of China. The Western Jin dynasty (265–317) fell under a combination of civil disturbances and invasions of northern ethnic groups. The Jin court and its high officials fled to the south of the Yangzi River and established a new regime in 317, with its capital in the city of Jiankang 建康 (modern day Nanjing).¹ In their newly adopted homeland, northern elite émigrés discovered a world of southern local songs known as “sounds of Wu” (*Wu sheng* 吳聲) or “Wu songs” (*Wu ge* 吳歌) (hereafter Wu songs). These mostly short verses in five-syllable lines about the life and emotions of commoners often deliver a distinct “local flavor” marked by straightforward expression, lack of literary ornament, and colloquial elements. Originating in the area around Jiankang, they were collected by and performed at the southern courts, and passed down to later generations through their inclusion in official musical repertoires. Wu songs differ in many ways from Eastern Jin elite poetry, which, under the influence of Arcane Learning (*xuanxue* 玄學), valued philosophical reflection and sophisticated messages. Yet elite literati not only enjoyed the performance of Wu songs at parties and banquets, they even tried their hands at writing in this style. Scholars have explained this fascination of the émigré elite with changing political environments, indulgence in the descriptions of sensual beauty, and interest in the five-syllable poetic form.² Stephen Owen, who approached this issue from the perspective of cultural studies, suggested that the émigré elite’s interest in local songs originated from their need for a cultural other in order to define

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1. For detailed examinations of the social and political history during this period, see Tian Yuqing 田余慶 (1924–2014), *Dong Jin menfa zhengzhi* 東晉門閥政治 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1989) and Charles Holcombe, *In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai’i Press, 1994).

2. For example, Cao Daoheng 曹道衡, “Nanchao zhengju yu Wushengge Xiqige de xingsheng” 南朝政局與吳聲歌西曲歌的興盛, *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 1988.2: 268–95; Chen Qiaosheng 陳橋生, “Lun wanggong guiren dui Nanchao mingde de jieshou” 論王公貴人對南朝民歌的接受, *Beijing daxue xuebao* 1998.3: 92–97; and Cai Yanfeng 蔡彥峰, “Dong Jin qingtán yu Wushengge de liuxing jiqi shishi yiyi” 東晉清談與吳聲歌的流行及其詩史意義, *Wenxue yichan* 2016.2: 55–64.

their own cultural identity.³ Owen's study has drawn attention to the significance of social and cultural factors in the study of southern local songs. This article will adopt this approach and argue that, through their interventions with local songs, Eastern Jin émigré elite went further than merely creating an inferior other. They also attempted to domesticate this other and make it the servant or even concubine of their own culture. A gender discourse—the ascription of femininity to the local—was a crucial element of this domestication. The article will also explore the unexpected outcome of this cultural encounter in the subsequent centuries, i.e., the merging of the northern elite with southern local music and cultural traditions.

LOCAL ORIGIN AND ÉMIGRÉ ELITE INPUT IN THE WU SONGS

The earliest account about the origin of the Wu songs comes from the “Treatise on Music” (Yue zhi 樂志) of the *Song shu* 宋書 (completed in 488): “Wu songs and other tunes originated from east of the Yangzi River⁴ and have somewhat increased and expanded since the Jin and [Liu-] Song dynasties” 吳哥雜曲，並出江東，晉、宋以來，稍有增廣。⁵ This statement is quoted almost verbatim in the “Treatise on Music” of the *Jin shu* 晉書 (completed in 648).⁶ Guo Maoqian's 郭茂倩 (fl. 1084) *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 provides more details regarding the “increases and expansions” since the Eastern Jin:

《晉書樂志》曰：吳歌雜曲，並出江南。東晉已來，稍有增廣。其始皆徒歌，既而被之絃管。蓋自永嘉渡江之後，下及梁陳，咸都建業，吳聲歌曲，起於此也。

The “Treatise on Music” of the *Jin shu* says, “Wu songs and other tunes originated from east of the Yangzi River and have somewhat increased and expanded since the Eastern Jin.” At the beginning they were all merely lyrics [without accompanying music]. Later they were set to strings and flutes. From when they crossed the Yangzi River in the Yongjia reign (307–312) up to the Liang and Chen dynasties, all capitals were in Jianye [i.e., Jiankang]. The Wu songs probably originated from this region.⁷

According to this account, local songs had existed in the Jiangnan region before the migration of the Jin court to the south, but the latter historical event brought significant changes, expanding its size and altering its nature of performance. Yet it still does not address important issues, such as, what accounts for the growth of the local songs? What exactly is the relation between the origin of the Wu songs and the relocation of the Jin court to Jiankang?

Two factors probably contributed to the expansion of the Wu-song corpus. One is the active involvement of émigré elite literati in the collection and preservation of Wu songs, which accounts for their inclusion in the official repertoire listed in the “Treatises on Music.” Another reason could be the incorporation of literati compositions in the style of Wu songs.

3. Stephen Owen, “Gone South: Fantasies of the Eastern Jin Plebian,” talk delivered at the *Workshop on Eastern Jin* at Harvard Univ., May 6–7, 2005. A Chinese version of this paper titled “Xia Jiangnan: Guanyu Dong Jin pingmin de huanxiang” 下江南：關於東晉平民的幻想 was published in *Xia Jiangnan: Suzhou daxue haiwai Hanxue yanjianglu* 下江南：蘇州大學海外漢學演講錄, ed. Wang Yao 王堯 and Ji Jin 季進 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2009), 27–41.

4. Jiangdong (east of the river) is another term for Jiangnan 江南 (south of the river), since the Yangzi River flows to the north between Wuhu 蕪湖 and Nanjing 南京, making the south bank of the river in this region the “east.”

5. *Song shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 19.549.

6. The *Jin shu* uses “Jiangnan” instead of “Jiangdong” and “since the Eastern Jin” 東晉以來 instead of “since the Jin and [Liu-] Song dynasties.” *Jin shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 23.716.

7. Guo Maoqian does not provide his source for this information, but does quote the *Gujin yuelu* 古今樂錄, a sixth-century musical text, for specific examples of the transformation and expansion of the Wu songs. *Yuefu shiji* [hereafter *YFSJ*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979) 44.639–40.

The creation of several song titles is attributed to members of the émigré elite in the *Song shu* and other sources from the Southern dynasties including *Gujin yuelu*, *Yueyuan* 樂苑, and *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠.⁸ Scholars have used stylistic and linguistic evidence to demonstrate that several extant Wu songs, including most of the “Four Seasons of Ziyè Songs” (Ziyè sishi ge 子夜四時歌), were written or at least heavily edited by elite literati.⁹ The addition of musical elements to what was initially “merely lyrics” was also likely in order to meet the needs of performances in the elite circle.¹⁰

In sum, although details in the accounts of the origin of the Wu songs could be interpreted differently, we can be sure about the émigré elite’s active involvement in their collection, expansion, and transmission during the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song dynasties. In order to fully understand the elite’s role in the transformation of the Wu songs, however, one needs to address the profound differences between the culture of the Eastern Jin elite, the majority of whom are northern émigrés, and the local culture of the south in which the Wu songs are rooted.¹¹ This cultural encounter did not happen in a vacuum and has to be explored in its historical and cultural context.

CULTURAL CLASHES IN MUSIC AND SONGS

The cultural distinction between the north and south had existed since antiquity, yet gained certain political currency in the Jin dynasty.¹² In a study on regional identity in Western Jin literature, David Knechtges demonstrated the fundamentally different cultural identifications and the visible tension that arose when many upstart southerners came to Luoyang after

8. For example, the “Treatise on Music” in the *Song shu* lists Shen Chong 沈充, an Eastern Jin general, as the creator of the “Song of the Front Creek” (Qianxi ge 前溪歌); *Song shu* 19.549. The *Gujin yuelu* has Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386) as the creator of the “Song of Peach Leaf” (Tiaoye ge 桃葉歌); *YFSJ* 44. 664. The famous Eastern Jin literatus Sun Chuo is listed as the author of two “Songs of Green Jade” (Biye ge 碧玉歌) in the *Yutai xinyong*; *Yutai xinyong jianzhu* 玉臺新詠箋注 [hereafter *YTXY*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 10.470–71. There are also Wu songs attributed to elite members of the Liu-Song dynasty, including Emperor Shao 宋少帝 (406–424) and Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444); *YFSJ* 44.667 and 690.

9. Evidence of elite intervention often includes the incorporation of references or allusions to elite poetry or Confucian classics, as well as of expressions, topics, and imageries recurring in elite poetry. See, e.g., Wang Yunxi 王運熙, “Lun Wusheng yu xiqu” 論吳聲與西曲, in *Yuefu shi shulun* 樂府詩述論 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 452–86; Cao Daoheng 曹道衡, “Tan Nanchao yuefu mingge” 談南朝樂府民歌, *Wenshi zhishi* 1986.4: 11–16; Weng Qibin 翁其斌, “Wuge Xiqu wenren nizuo kao” 吳歌西曲文人擬作考, *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 1996.3: 23–27.

10. Wang Zhiqing 王志清 views Wu songs being “set to strings and flutes” as the beginning of their “gentrification” (*yahua* 雅化), a process completed in the Qi and Liang dynasties, when the Wu-song style became popular in elite poetry and was adopted by many court writers. See Wang, “‘Wusheng’ de yahua yu fengge yanbian” 吳聲的雅化與風格演變, in *Jinyang xuekan* 2010.6: 112–18.

11. One crucial factor, for example, is the difference between the southern dialects in which the local songs must have been performed originally, and the northern dialect most émigré elites spoke. For a study on the local dialect of the Wu area in the Southern dynasties, see Chen Yinke’s 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) “Dong Jin Nanchao zhi Wu yu” 東晉南朝之吳語, in *Jinming guan congkao erbian* 金明館叢稿二編 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2001), 304–9. Chen shows that despite their contempt for southern dialects, Eastern Jin aristocrats like Wang Dao 王導 (276–339) would sometimes speak the local Wu dialect to gain the support of the southern elite. Unfortunately, the historical record is too scarce to allow an in-depth look into this aspect of the elite’s reception of local songs.

12. Xiaofei Tian argues that the cultural distinction between the north and south was first established in the Northern and Southern dynasties as a result of the political and geographical division and the efforts to claim cultural authority and political legitimacy from both sides. See *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 310–66.

the Western Jin conquest of Wu.¹³ This cultural clash also left traces in the (more or less dramatized) memory of this period in anecdotal and historical sources. The fifth-century anecdote collection *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 includes the following conversation between Emperor Wu of the Western Jin (r. 265–290) and Sun Hao (r. 264–280), the last ruler of the Wu kingdom:

晉武帝問孫皓，聞南人好作爾汝歌，頗能為不？皓正飲酒，因舉觴勸帝而言曰：昔與汝為鄰，今與汝為臣。上汝一杯酒，令汝壽萬春。帝悔之。

Emperor Wu of Jin asked Sun Hao, “I heard that southerners like to sing ‘You-You Songs.’¹⁴ Could you sing one for us?” Hao was in the midst of drinking, and so raised his goblet to offer a toast to the emperor, singing, “In the past I was your neighbor; / Now I am your subject. / Let me toast you with a cup of wine; / May you live for ten thousand years.” The emperor regretted having asking him.¹⁵

This account is from the chapter “Taunting and Teasing” (Paitiao 排調), which collects witty or humorous anecdotes. Although a version appears in Zang Rongxu’s 臧榮緒 (415–488) *Jin shu* 晉書,¹⁶ the historical validity of the event is difficult to verify. I do not intend to treat it as a historical fact, but its interpretation sheds lights on how cultural differences between the (northern) Western Jin and the (southern) Wu state were perceived in the following centuries. Sun Hao, the last ruler of Wu, was taken to Luoyang and kept captive in Emperor Wu’s court after the Jin army had seized the Wu capital Jianye. This conversation is supposed to have taken place during his captivity. But how should we understand the emperor’s request of Sun Hao to sing a local song at a court banquet? What, then, in Sun Hao’s song made the emperor regret the decision? What in Sun’s response was particularly “taunting or teasing” for the anecdote’s fifth-century readers?

The conversation between Emperor Wu and Sun Hao can be understood as a conqueror’s failed attempt to humiliate the cultural heritage of the conquered and to impose a sense of control and superiority on him. Music and songs, with their rich political and cultural associations, played a prominent role in this confrontation. Emperor Wu’s request of a former king to perform a local song at a court banquet is an insult intended to render Sun Hao his entertainer and subordinator. But Sun ingeniously turned the situation to his own advantage and altered the hierarchy (hence the “taunting and teasing” effect in his response). He did sing the “You-You Song” in the voice of a commoner, but cleverly made the emperor his addressee, i.e., the *ru* 汝 (you) in the title, dragging the emperor into the world of local commoners with him. In general, it was socially improper to address the emperor with the intimate and even slightly condescending pronoun *ru*. And in particular, Sun Hao and the

13. “Sweet-Peel Orange or Southern Gold? Regional Identity in Western Jin Literature,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History: In Honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, Utah: Tang Studies Society, 2003), 27–79.

14. Both *er* 爾 and *ru* 汝 are second-person pronouns in classical Chinese. *Ru*, in particular, is frequently used in southern local songs. Fan Ziye 范子燁 argues that the title “You-You Song” 爾汝歌 is a mistake for “You Song” (Ru ge 汝歌), because there is no *er* in Sun Hao’s song, and the expression “You Song” or “You Speech” (*ru yu* 汝語) was used to refer to local songs in other sources. See “Shuo ‘Ru yu’: Wangguo zhi jun Sun Hao de yishou xueshi” 說汝語：亡國之君孫皓的一首謔詩, *Wenshi zhishi* 2007.12: 119–25.

15. *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, ed. Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 (1884–1995) [hereafter *SSXY*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 25.5.781. I consulted Richard Mather’s translation in *Shih-shuo Hsin-yu: A New Account of Tales of the World, Second Edition* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2002), 434.

16. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, ed. Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 390.5a.

emperor, both familiar with the southern music tradition,¹⁷ were clearly aware of the song's hidden message that the speaker is the social and cultural equal of the addressee. Contrary to his wish to be the master, the emperor was forced to play the role of a fellow commoner and lost this round of cultural collision.

The anecdote needs also to be read in its historical context. After ascending to the throne, Emperor Wu took extensive measures to restore and revive the “musical performances for imperial rituals” (*yayue* 雅樂) that had suffered loss and disorganization since the political turmoil at the end of the Han dynasty.¹⁸ Although the restoration of court music was standard practice at the change of dynastic rule and other times of great cultural change, Emperor Wu's attention to court music was probably motivated by specific political circumstances at the time. In addition to the threat from the southern Wu kingdom, the newly founded Jin dynasty also faced questions about its legitimacy as it usurped the throne of the Cao-Wei dynasty. The restoration of court music was an important political and cultural claim for legitimacy and supremacy.¹⁹ This idea is probably behind the following comment on Wu court music made by the Eastern Jin scholar He Chengtian 何承天 (370–447):

何承天曰：世咸傳吳朝無雅樂，案孫皓迎父喪明陵，唯云倡伎晝夜不息，則無金石登哥可知矣。承天曰：或云今之《神弦》，孫氏以為宗廟登哥也。

He Chengtian said, “People all say that the Wu court did not have music performances for imperial rituals. When Sun Hao performed the burial ritual for his father at the Ming mausoleum, [court records] only state that there were entertainers performing day and night without stopping. Thus we know that they had no ritual music played on bells or stones.” He said, “Some say that the ‘Songs of Divine Strings’ of nowadays were used by the Sun family as ritual music in the ancestral temple.”²⁰

He Chengtian's remarks show clear contempt for the Wu rulers' vulgar taste in music and their violations of social propriety. In traditional historiography, the decline of court music is a sign of troubled governance. These remarks therefore present the historical image of Sun Hao as a quintessential “decadent last ruler.” The above passage is quoted in Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513) *Song shu*, where it is followed by Shen's dispute of He's views, supported by evidence of the existence of *yayue* at the Wu court.²¹ Shen, a southerner, came to the defense of his native Wu culture against the accusation of being uncivilized and unrefined.

The circulation of the anecdote shows that the memory about the clash between northern Jin elite culture and southern local culture was still vivid in the fifth century. Local songs, once being brought into the émigré elite discourse, became a battleground as well as a weapon in such cultural confrontations. Therefore it is imperative that we explore the deeper cultural implications in the reception of the Wu songs by the Eastern Jin elite.

17. According to Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) commentary to Emperor Wu's biography in his *Jin shu* 晉書, after the conquest the emperor “took in five thousand musicians from Wu” 納吳伎五千. In Xie's opinion, Emperor Wu's indulgence in music “was the same as Sun Hao's weakness” 是同皓之弊, *Taiping yulan* 96.8a.

18. *Song shu* 19.539–40. For an in-depth study of Emperor Wu's restoration of court music, see Liu Huairong 劉懷榮, “Wei Jin yuefu guanshu yanbian kao” 魏晉樂府官署演變考, *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 2002.5: 98–102.

19. In a recent article in this journal, Xiaofei Tian discusses the cultural undertakings of Wu in the Three Kingdoms period. The making of ritual music, along with historical writing, Tian argues, constitutes a major part of Wu's claim of political legitimacy and cultural power vis-à-vis the rival states of Wei and Shu. Tian, “Remaking History: The Shu and Wu Perspectives in the Three Kingdoms Period,” *JAOS* 136 (2016): 705–31.

20. *Song shu* 19.541. The “Songs of Divine Strings” are Wu songs that were believed to be performed by southern local commoners to worship gods and spirits; *YFSJ* 47.683. For a study of this subject, see Wang Yunxi, “Shen xian ge kao” 神弦歌考, in *Yuefu shi shulun*, 169–84.

21. Shen quotes Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) and Wei Zhao 韋昭, a historian at the court of Emperor Jing 景帝 of Wu (r. 258–264), to argue that there were indeed music officers (*yue guan* 樂官) and refined music in the Wu court. *Song shu* 19.541. See Xiaofei Tian's discussion in “Remaking History,” 725.

SINGING GHOSTS AND SPIRITS IN THE WU AREA

Northern elite culture and southern local culture came face to face again after the fall of the Western Jin, this time with a changed power dynamics. Unlike Emperor Wu, the northern elite that arrived in the south after 317 took on the double role of both the defeated and the conqueror. As successors of the Western Jin regime, they maintained a sense of superiority of their own culture compared with their “uncivilized” southern rival. What had changed, however, was that they had by then lost their own homeland and had to stay in Wu as guests. An attitude of complacency in their own culture and contempt for the southern culture was complicated by the uncertainty and insecurity after the move south. The cultural pride of the émigré elite was also tarnished by the realization of the possible responsibility of their own culture—in particular Arcane Learning and the practice of Pure Conversation (*qingtan* 清談)—for the rapid demise of the regime.²²

The southern world, with its distinctive songs and music tradition, exerted a charm of novelty and exoticism for the new settlers from the north, whose expressions of appreciation, however, are often mixed with reservation. The following conversation from the *Shishuo xinyu* may reveal the émigré elite’s views of the local culture:

桓玄問羊孚：何以共重吳聲？羊曰：當以其妖且浮。

Huan Xuan (369–404) asked Yang Fu (ca. 358–403), “Why do you all value Wu songs?” Yang answered, “It must be because it is bewitching and frivolous.”²³

Both Huan Xuan and Yang Fu were northern émigrés. Huan was based in upriver Jingzhou 荊州, which is not in the Wu region (hence he did not understand the fascination with Wu songs), whereas Yang Fu was a member of the capital elite. Yang Fu’s choice of words is quite interesting. The word *yao* 妖 has connotations of charming, seductive, and bewitching, but also denotes elements of the strange, abnormal, and exotic. *Fu* 浮 as an adjective means superficial, frivolous, excessive, temporary, or hollow; all qualities pertaining to insubstantiality and falsity. Yang Fu’s remark, framed as an explanation for the appeal of the Wu songs, does not sound (entirely) positive. Neither *yao* nor *fu* would be a desirable quality to be applied to poetry of their own culture. Both qualities speak to the perceived anomaly of the Wu songs. *Yao* also inscribes Wu songs with a feminine quality. Although the word can describe abnormal and ominous occurrences in general, it tends to be associated with femininity.

22. Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373) blamed elite literati like Wang Yan 王衍 (256–311) for the decline of the Western Jin; *SSXY* 26.11.834. The *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋 records Wang Yan’s alleged confession before being killed by Shi Le 石勒 (274–333), “if our lot had not valued emptiness and abstruseness, it would not have come to this!” 吾等若不祖尚浮虛，不至於此。Although the credibility of such “last words” should always be questioned, the idea that indulgence in Arcane Learning had brought about dire consequences to the state was widespread. This subject has been discussed by many scholars, notably Chen Yinke, Tang Changru 唐長孺 (1911–1994), and, more recently, Jiang Fan 蔣凡. For a review of related scholarship, see Liu Ming 劉明, “Cong ‘qingtan wuguo’ dao wenhua yanjiu” 從清談誤國到文化研究, *Xueshu yuekan* 2005.10: 66–69.

23. *SSXY* 2.104.157. Without a clearer context, the phrase *Wu sheng* in this passage might have a broader reference than just Wu songs and could include the manner of speech in the Wu area. Either way the discussion here is certainly applicable to the local songs. Richard Mather understands the term *Wu sheng* to be “the speech of Wu,” that is, “the artificial court language used in the southern capital during the period of division, which attempted to preserve the old pronunciation of the Western Chin court at Lo-yang before its fall in 311”; Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yu*, 82. Yet, it seems strange and improper to describe the court language as “bewitching” and “frivolous.” Moreover, “Wu” as a modifier, usually in the phrase *Wu yu* 吳語, in Six-Dynasties texts, including *Shishuo xinyu*, most commonly refers to the local Wu dialect, often in contrast with the Luoyang dialect. See Chen Yinke’s discussion in “Dong Jin Nanchao zhi Wu yu.” I could not identify another case in which the phrase *Wu sheng* is used in the sense Mather proposes.

The feminization and alienation of the local in Yang Fu's comment resonates with the *Song shu* account of the origin of the "Ziye Songs," the most important subgroup of Wu songs:

《子夜歌》者，有女子名子夜，造此聲。晉孝武太元中，琅邪王軻之家有鬼歌《子夜》。殷允為豫章時，豫章僑人庾僧度家亦有鬼歌《子夜》。殷允為豫章，亦是太元中，則子夜是此時以前人也。

As for the "Ziye Songs," a girl named Ziye made these songs. During the Taiyuan reign of Emperor Xiaowu (376–396), a ghost sang "Ziye" in the household of Wang Kezhi of Langye. When Yin Yun was governor of Yuzhang, there was also a ghost singing "Ziye" in the household of Yu Sengdu, an émigré residing in Yuzhang. It was also during the Taiyuan reign when Yin Yun was governor of Yuzhang. Therefore Ziye must have lived before this time.²⁴

A similar account appears in the *Yi yuan* 異苑, a collection of anomaly accounts (*zhiguai* 志怪)²⁵ attributed to Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (d. ca. 468), an elite literatus of the Liu-Song dynasty:

晉孝武太元中，瑯琊王軻之家有鬼歌子夜。殷允為章郡，僑人庾僧度家亦有鬼歌子夜。During the Taiyuan reign of Emperor Xiaowu, a ghost sang "Ziye" in the household of Wang Kezhi of Langye. When Yin Yun was governor of Yuzhang, there was also a ghost singing "Ziye" in the household of Yu Sengdu, an émigré residing in Yuzhang.²⁶

This eerie account fits Yang Fu's characterization of Wu songs as *yao* and could be an analogy to how the Eastern Jin émigré elite felt about local songs: they are strange, bewitching, and somewhat chilling. They come from an utterly different cultural world and speak a different language or dialect. This world of the local is often embedded in the image of a bold and unabashed girl. For example, we see her reveal her "secret" romantic feelings in the following "Ziye Song":

朝思出門	I longed for you at dawn as I went out the front gate;
暮思還後渚	I longed for you at dusk as I returned to the back pond;
語笑向誰道	Speaking and laughing, no matter whom I am talking to—
腹中陰憶汝	In my belly I am secretly missing you. ²⁷

There is an almost deliberate avoidance of subtlety, or a performance of unsophistication. Similarly in a sensual scene like the following "Song of Reading Tunes in Silence" (Duque 讀曲歌):²⁸

攬裳躑	I wandered, lifting my shirt with my hands.
跣把絲織履	Barefoot, my silk-weave shoes in hand,
故交白足露	I show off my white feet. ²⁹

There is neither shyness nor moral restriction in the girl's open declaration of her intention to show off her body to the beholder(s). Songs such as this provide a type of female image contrary to what is often seen in elite poetry of the time. Their tendency to show or perform

24. *Song shu* 19.549.

25. *Zhiguai* are prose accounts of strange, supernatural, or abnormal objects or events; they were popular during the Southern dynasties. For a detailed study of this genre, see Robert F. Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996).

26. See *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 648.

27. *YFSJ* 44.642.

28. According to the *Gujin yuelu*, the song was created in the fourteenth year of the Yuanjia 元嘉 reign (440). Because of the death of Empress Yuan, officials were not allowed to enjoy music performances. They could only read music in silence and chant in soft voices at banquets (竊聲讀曲細吟而已); *YFSJ* 46.671.

29. *YFSJ* 46.672.

immediacy and spontaneity also contrasts with the value for intellectual reflection and rhetorical sophistication in contemporary elite poetry. Yang Fu's view of Wu songs being frivolous or shallow (*fu*) likely speaks to this quality. I do not intend to claim that these songs were actually written by local southerners or convey some kind of "local naivety or spontaneity." As discussed in the previous section, there is considerable elite intervention in these songs' selection and editing. What is important is that the appeal of this particular image of a local girl to the elite audience speaks to their perception or imagination of the local world as an unsophisticated or even uncivilized cultural other.

It is easy to understand the voyeuristic pleasure of the émigré elite in the perceived exoticism and eroticism of apparently unrestricted local girls. What is less expected, yet equally prominent is that the strange local world was also a source of anxiety, which is evident in the accounts of ghosts singing "Ziye Song" in someone's house. Other stories about supernatural beings singing local songs in the Wu area were in circulation in the Southern dynasties. Wu Jun's 吳均 (469–520) *Xu Qi xie ji* 續齊諧記 tells a story about one Zhao Wenshao 趙文韶, who served as attendant to the Crown Prince (東宮扶持) in the Yuanjia reign (424–453) of the Liu-Song dynasty. When Zhao once took lodging in the Wu area, his singing attracted a beautiful girl to stay the night. The girl performed several songs for him, along with her maids. The next day, Zhao visited the temple of Blue Creek, and only then did he realize the girl he met the previous night was a goddess, the Maiden of Blue Creek (青溪小姑). Zhao died on the spot (於是遂絕).³⁰ The story is associated with the famous Wu song, the "Song of the Maiden of Blue Creek." The *Yuefu shiji* quotes from two collections of *zhiguai* stories compiled in the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song respectively, to explain the identity of the goddess:

干寶《搜神記》曰：廣陵蔣子文，嘗為林陵尉，因擊賊，傷而死。吳孫權時封中都侯，立廟中山。《異苑》曰：青溪小姑，蔣侯第三妹也。

According to Gan Bao's (286–336) *Sou shen ji*, Jiang Ziwen of Guangling was the governor of Moling (modern day Nanjing). He died of injury while fighting bandits. Sun Quan enfeoffed him as the Marquis of Zhongdu and built his temple on Mount Zhong. *The Yiyuan* says: "The Maiden of Blue Creek is the third younger sister of Marquis Jiang."³¹

The "Song of the Maiden of Blue Creek" reads:

開門白水	Right outside of the door there is a clear river;
側近橋樑	Nearby there is a bridge.
小姑所居	The place where the maiden dwells,
獨處無郎	she is alone, without a lover. ³²

The implicit, yet bold expression of desire fits the image of the unrestrained local girl in Wu songs and could be appealing to an elite audience. However, it sounds alarming and threatening in the context of the story, which suggests that the death of Zhao Wenshao was caused by the maiden, who took him to accompany her into the other world, so she would not have to be alone anymore. The revelation of the woman's identity and Zhao's subsequent death turn the romantic encounter into a horrifying nightmare and perfectly demonstrate the two sides of the local in the émigré elite's imagination: it is as dangerous and alien as it is charming. In his meeting with a goddess or female ghost residing in the wilderness of Wu, what was jeop-

30. Han Wei *Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 1009.

31. *YFSJ* 47.684–85. Madeline Spring points out the possible connection to the image of the mysterious and fickle goddess in earlier *fu* writing, such as the "Fu on Gaotang" (Gao tang fu 高唐賦) and the "Fu on the Goddess" (Shennü fu 神女賦), both attributed to the Warring States Song Yu 宋玉, and Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232) "Fu on the Goddess of the Luo River" (Luoshen fu 洛神賦); Spring, "Recollections of a Fleeting Romance: The Wang Jingbo Narrative," *Early Medieval China* 2 (2005): 1–41; esp. 17–18.

32. *YFSJ* 47.685.

ardized was not only Zhao's life, but also his masculinity and authority. The maiden came and left at her will, initiated the relationship and controlled its development. This reversal of gender roles is caused by her identity—she was the true “owner” of the local territory, where she had lived long before the northern elite member Zhao intruded.

A slightly different version of the same story is told about an Eastern Jin elite, Wang Jingbo 王敬伯. When passing through the Wu area at night during a trip, Wang's singing attracted a beautiful girl to approach him and sing the “Melodic Song” (Wanzhuan ge 宛轉歌), a local tune, for him. This girl later turned out to be the spirit of the deceased daughter of a local Wu magistrate.³³ The existence of multiple versions suggests the popularity of stories about the émigré elite's shocking discovery of dangers lurking beneath the charming surface of the local world, personified by singing girls in the wild who turned out to be supernatural beings. The stories convey the cultural anxiety felt by elite members, especially northern émigrés, toward the southern local culture at the beginning of Southern dynasties. They may have established a political regime but culturally they were still guests and sojourners, having to submit to the authority of the local.

BRINGING THE LOCAL IN ELITE HOUSEHOLDS

The interest of the Eastern Jin émigré elite in Wu songs should therefore be considered in the context of their complex relationship with and mixed feelings about local Wu culture. Collecting Wu songs and having them performed in the comfortable and controlled setting of their own households thus could have been a means to domesticate the local world and contain its strangeness and danger. The local was thereby made into an object of entertainment that the elite could enjoy with a condescending attitude and at a safe distance—the effect that Emperor Wu of the Western Jin unsuccessfully desired to achieve when he asked Sun Hao to perform a local song at his court. The uncanny associations of the “Ziye Songs” as reported in the *Song shu* may carry memories of the beginning of this domestication process. What was heard in the Wang and Yu households could have been performances of “Ziye Songs” collected from the local Wu area. Although tamed and controlled in a stage setting, they may still have sounded strange enough to their elite listeners to resemble “ghosts' singing,” due as much to their content as to their sound. The association of these songs with the feminine voice, in the context of domestication, is a way to create a power differential between the “local” singers and their elite audience. At the same time, this domestication involves the removal of the mysterious (and threatening) nature of local women seen in the stories about Zhao Wenshao and Wang Jingbo. Local girls brought into the elite household became docile and submissive, no longer posing a threat.³⁴

This gender dynamic is evident in several Wu songs about the romantic relationship between an elite member and a lower-class (local) girl.³⁵ For example, the “Song of a Round

33. The story is quoted in the category of “Zither Songs” (Qinqu geci 琴曲歌辭) of the *Yuefu shiji*, giving Wu Jun's *Xu Qi xie ji* as its source, whose extant version does not contain this story; *YFSJ* 60.872–73. For a translation of the Wang Jingbo story and a discussion of its many versions, see Spring, “Recollections of a Fleeting Romance,” 3–16.

34. This removal of divinity or mystery in female images is not unique to the elite literati reception of Wu songs. One may see parallels in the efforts of later interpretive traditions of the *Shijing* 詩經 to provide “rational” explanations to the image of divine or mysterious women in many of the “Airs of the Domains” (Guofeng 國風), for instance, the “roaming/swimming girl” (*you nü* 遊女) in the “Han River Is Broad” (Han guang 漢廣). See Qiulei Hu, “An Examination of the Interpretative Traditions about ‘Han Guang,’” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles and Reviews* 34 (2012): 1–13. Joseph R. Allen notes similar transformation and taming in the Luofu image over time; see Allen, “From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of the Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry,” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48 (1988): 321–61.

35. Stephen Owen discusses these songs to demonstrate the elite's pleasure in playing the role of plebian lover. The willful and temporary crossing of class boundaries, Owen argues, reinforces a sense of authority and superiority

Fan” (Tuanshan ge 團扇歌) is said to be about the love affair between an Eastern Jin elite and a maid. According to the *Gujin yuelu*:

《團扇歌》者，晉中書令王珣捉白團扇。與婢謝芳姿有愛，情好甚篤。嫂捶挾婢過苦。王東亭聞而止之。芳姿素善歌。嫂令歌一曲，當赦之。應聲歌曰：白團扇，辛苦五流連，是郎眼所見。珣聞更問之：汝歌何遺？芳姿即改云：白團扇，顛顛非昔容，羞與郎相見。後人因而歌之。

As for the “Song of a Round Fan,” it refers to Wang Min, the Secretariat Director of the Jin, who [liked to] hold a white round fan. Wang had an affair with Xie Fangzi, maid of his sister-in-law. His affection for her was extremely sincere. Once when his sister-in-law beat the girl too harshly, Wang Dongting [i.e., Wang Xun 王珣 (349–400), Wang Min’s elder brother, famous poet and calligrapher] heard about it and stopped her. Fangzi was always good at singing, so the sister-in-law ordered her to sing a song before letting her go. Immediately she sang, “White round fan, / I (?) am lingering here in misery,³⁶ / You, my love, have seen it with your own eyes.” Wang Min heard the song and asked her, “To whom do you address this song?” Fangzi then changed the lyric and sang, “White round fan, / I look weary and fallow, not my beauty of old, / I am ashamed of facing you, my love.” Later people thereupon sang about it.³⁷

The image of a round fan, associated with a helpless woman in an unequal romance, clearly resonates with the famous “Poem of Reproach” (Yuan shi 怨詩) attributed to Lady Ban, an imperial consort of the Han dynasty who lost the emperor’s favor to the beautiful and wicked Zhao sisters.³⁸ In the “Poem of Reproach,” the speaker, who still enjoys imperial favor, worries about her abandonment and foresees her fate in the round fan that will be stored away once autumn comes.³⁹ Just as Lady Ban is powerless in front of the emperor, Xie Fangzi is depicted here at the complete mercy of her elite lover Wang Min. She is helpless and docile, desperately in need of Wang’s appreciation and rescue. Nothing more adequately bespeaks the power differential of the local girl and the elite lover than the anxiety about her unworthiness for his affection that is expressed in the second song.⁴⁰ This vast power differential caused by differences in gender, class, and culture are the central theme in all extant Wu songs about love affairs between an elite and a local girl. Another example are the “Songs of Peach Leaf” (Taoye ge 桃葉歌), attributed to the renowned Eastern Jin elite Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386, *zi* Zijing 子敬) in the *Gujin yuelu*:

of the elite. Owen, “Xia Jiangnan,” 32–34. What I am discussing here, however, is the other direction of this boundary crossing—the assimilation of the local into their own cultural territory. In addition to stepping into the world of the local, the elite in these stories also take the local into their household to tame them into their servants and concubines.

36. The expression *wuliulian* 五流連 is not clear. 五 (five) might be an error for the first-person pronoun 吾.

37. *YFSJ* 45.660. The “Treatise on Music” of the *Song shu* contains a shorter version of the account, which is ambiguous in regards to whether it is Wang Min or the maid (not given a name) who made the song; *Song shu* 19.550.

38. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, ed. Lu Qinli 逯欽立 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 1.116–17. The story of Lady Ban is recorded in her biography in *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 97a.3951–56. For a discussion of this poem and its authenticity, see David Knechtges, “The Poetry of an Imperial Concubine: The Favorite Beauty Ban,” in *Oriens Extremus* 36.2 (1993): 127–44. Knechtges, after reviewing previous scholarship on this subject by Lu Qinli and Jean-Pierre Diény as well as textual and archaeological evidence regarding round fans in the Eastern Han period, believes the poem was composed in the Eastern Han and got attached to Lady Ban in the Wei-Jin period. This view is widely accepted in later scholarship on the poem.

39. The textual resonance with the “Poem of Reproach” is even more pronounced in the six songs quoted in the *Yuefu shiji*, which are supposed to be among the later “Songs of a Round Fan”; *YFSJ* 45.606.

40. This may remind readers of Lady Li’s refusal to show her face to the emperor on her sickbed, for fear of his disappointment in her faded beauty. *Han shu* 97a.3951–52.

桃葉歌者，晉王子敬之所作也。桃葉，子敬妾名，緣於篤愛，所以歌之。

The “Songs of Peach Leaf” were written by Wang Zijing of Jin. Peach Leaf was the name of Zijing’s concubine. Because of his sincere love, he sang about her.⁴¹

Despite the attribution to Wang Xianzhi in the preface, the persona of the three poems switches between the elite lover and Peach Leaf herself. The following poem is Wang Xianzhi addressing Peach Leaf:

桃葉復桃葉	Peach Leaf, Peach Leaf,
渡江不用楫	To cross the river you do not need an oar.
但渡無所苦	Just cross, do not worry,
我自來迎接	I myself will come to welcome. ⁴²

Unlike elite encounters with local girls, goddesses, or ghosts in the natural landscape of the south, here the member of the elite is taking full control and welcoming the girl to *his* place. As Stephen Owen notes, the “myself” in the last line betrays the power hierarchy in the relationship and Wang’s condescension toward the local lover: he could have sent someone, maybe a servant, to greet her and yet he was there by himself, showing his “sincere love.”⁴³

Another “Song of Peach Leaf” speaks in the girl’s voice:

桃葉映紅花	Red flowers shine amidst the peach leaves,
無風自婀娜	Charmingly swaying even without the wind’s help.
春花映何限	But shine as the spring flowers may—
感郎獨采我	I am touched that you choose me. ⁴⁴

It works nicely as an answering piece to the first song. Peach Leaf is aware of the many choices Wang has and grateful for his exclusive affection. Note that the agency belongs to the elite here: he is the one doing the picking, as opposed to Zhao Wenshao or Wang Jingbo, who were chosen by local maidens.

In both accounts, it is the “sincere love” that makes the elite member willing to overlook class and culture boundaries and to fall in love with a local girl and/or sing in her voice and style. Similar expression is found in the story about the “Song of Green Jade” (Biyu ge 碧玉歌), attributed to a Prince Runan. The *Yuefu shiji* quotes the following lines from the *Yueyuan* about its origin:

宋汝南王所作也。碧玉，汝南王妾名。以寵愛之甚，所以歌之。

It was written by Prince of Runan of Song.⁴⁵ Green Jade was the concubine of the prince.

Because of his extreme love he sang about her.⁴⁶

41. *YFSJ* 45.664. Also, two “Songs of a Round Fan” about her love affair with Wang Xianzhi are attributed to Peach Leaf in the *Yutai xinyong*; *YTXY* 10.472; *YFSJ* 45.660–61. A possible source for confusion is that Wang Xianzhi was the Secretariat Director of the Jin before being replaced by his cousin Wang Min. Xianzhi was known as “Senior Secretary Wang” 王大令, Min as “Junior Secretary Wang” 王小令.

42. The *Yutai xinyong* and *Sui shu* 隋書 versions have the last line as “I myself will welcome you” 我自迎接汝; *YTXY* 10.472; *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 22.637.

43. Owen, “Xia Jiangnan,” 34.

44. *YFSJ* 45.664–65.

45. The identity of this Prince Runan has been a topic of debate. No “Prince Runan” is found in historical records of the Liu-Song dynasty, yet there was a “Prince Yunan,” named Sima Yi 司馬羲 (d. 389), in the Eastern Jin. Also the *Tongdian* 通典, compiled by Du You 杜佑 (735–812), has “Jin Runan wang” 晉汝南王 as the author of the “Song of Green Jade.” *Tongdian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 145.3702. Therefore, many scholars believe that the character “Song” is an error for “Jin.” Moreover, two “Songs of Green Jade” are listed under the Eastern Jin poet Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371) in the *Yutai xinyong*; *YTXY* 10.470–71. Wang Yunxi argues that Sun Chuo wrote these two poems on behalf of Sima Yi; see *Yuefu shi shulun*, 69–73.

46. *YFSJ* 45.663.

This “extreme love” is the topic of the first song as well, the first couplet of which reads:

碧玉破瓜時	When Green Jade reached the age of “splitting the melon,” ⁴⁷
郎為情顛倒	her lover went head over heels because of love.

The expression “head over heels” or “upside down” (*diandao* 顛倒) aptly conveys the irrationality this love caused the elite man and provides an explanation for his—otherwise inconceivable—crossing of boundaries and intimate engagement with local culture. The multiple identifications of the songs’ author likely result from the wide circulation of this story, which attests to the elite’s fascination and active involvement with the local in early Southern dynasties. Instead of trying to determine the real author of these poems, I read them as belonging to a larger cultural narrative about the northern émigré elite’s romantic involvement with southern local girls in Eastern Jin and Liu-Song.

Like the “Song of the White Fan” and the “Song of Peach Leaf,” two of the three “Songs of Green Jade” in the *Yuefu shiji* stress the class difference between the lovers:

碧玉小家女	Green Jade is the daughter of a humble family,
不敢攀貴德	I do not dare to be a match for your high virtue.
感郎千金意	I am touched by your feeling worthy of a thousand in gold,
慚無傾城色	[and] ashamed for not being of city-topping beauty.

碧玉小家女	Green Jade is the daughter of a humble family,
不敢貴德攀	I do not dare to be a match for your high virtue.
感郎意氣重	I am touched by your profound favor,
遂得結金蘭	thereupon we get to form a bond for life. ⁴⁸

The use of the phrase *jinlan* 金蘭 in the second song is a little unusual, since it is commonly used to refer to male friendship or brotherhood, or, in other words, equal relationships. Again, it is the elite’s “extreme love” that made such an impossible relationship possible. In all three groups of songs, the repeated emphasis on the girl’s heartfelt appreciation of the elite’s love and the irrationality and implausibility of their relationship only brings attention to the insurmountable social gap between them. The elite’s condescension and patronization toward the local are unmistakable in the elite’s appropriation of the local’s voice to declare her own humbleness and inferiority. In a sense the Prince of Runan (or Sun Chuo), like Wang Xianzhi in the “Song of Peach Leaf,” has accomplished the task at which Emperor Wu of Jin had failed: to manipulate the representatives of the southern local culture and make them extol his own (northern elite) culture, with admiration and gratitude.

Placed in their specific cultural and historical contexts, the above Wu songs could be understood as love songs to the elite written by the elite for their own consumption in their own space. The local girl in them is domesticated and assigned a subordinate position (as maid or concubine) in the elite households. Xie Fangzi, Peach Leaf, and Green Jade still stand for the local, but they are a domesticated and tamed version of the local, custom-made to suit the audience’s taste for a controlled exoticism and to create an illusion of subjugation and superiority.

Another aspect of domestication accentuated in these songs is the transformation of the local (girl) under elite influence. In the following “Song of a Round Fan,” for example, Xie Fangzi displays a taste for clothes that have apparently been “gentrified”:

47. “Splitting the melon” refers to a sixteen-year old. In contemporary calligraphy, the character *gua* 瓜 (melon), could be split into two *ba* 八 (eight). This phrase later, especially in the late imperial period, acquires a sexual connotation and refers to a woman’s loss of virginity.

48. *YFSJ* 45.664.

白練薄不著	They disdain plain silk and do not wear it;
趣欲著錦衣	Vie to wear clothes made of brocade.
異色都言好	Different colors they all pronounce lovely;
清白為誰施	For whose sake am I presenting my “clarity and purity”? ⁴⁹

The “clarity and purity” of the last line is a pun, referring to both the plain, white silk in the first line and the girl’s innocence and virtue. The line drawn between the two materials—“plain silk” and “brocade”—could signal class and economic differences. For the song’s elite audience, there is also an exotic appeal in the plainness and simplicity of the speaker’s clothes. What is more fascinating, however, is that plain white in clothing was also a mark of refined taste among Eastern Jin elite literati.⁵⁰ The girl’s choice of plain silk therefore panders to elite aesthetics. It shows how, under their influence, she has risen above her peers whose vulgar taste is evident in their preference for colorful and extravagant clothes. Once being domesticated, she is no longer an unrefined and unsophisticated local girl. Such is the transformative power of their own culture the émigré elite wanted to see in songs in the voice of the “local.”

Local girls brought into elite households and transformed under their influence form an interesting contrast with the innocent and naïve girls in the local world prevalent in the Wu-song corpus. Both shaped by considerable elite intervention, they each hold a different kind of appeal to elite audiences and meet different needs of these audiences. The girls in the Wu songs satisfy the elite’s need for an “other” as a reminder of their cultural superiority and their voyeuristic pleasure of the “wild” (in both geographic and cultural senses) world of the local. The transformed local girl answers to the elite’s desire for authority and power over the local. Together they show the elite’s attempt to contain in their households the local that fascinated and threatened them at the same time. The local was feminized and inculcated with habits and consciousness associated with upper-class domesticity, including docility, shyness, humbleness, and a refined taste in clothes. They are molded in such a way that their elite audience may be able to enjoy and possess the best of both worlds.

THE OUTCOME OF THE CULTURAL CLASH: WHO IS THE WINNER/MASTER?

Through their active engagement with Wu songs, the émigré elite in Eastern Jin not only presented the image of southern local culture as an inferior other, but also made it their submissive and grateful “concubine.” But did they succeed in dominating and transforming local culture with their own? This cultural confrontation, like most others in history, yielded more complex results than one completely overpowering the other. For the elite, it was not always easy to keep a condescending distance from something they wholeheartedly enjoyed and intimately related to. Critiques of the “corruption” or “contamination” of elite music practice under local influence are common in historical writing since the Liu-Song dynasty. According to the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書:

自宋大明以來，聲伎所尚多鄭衛篇，而雅樂正聲鮮有好者。

Ever since the Daming reign (457–464) of the Liu-Song dynasty, performers mostly valued pieces of the Zheng and Wei [i.e., vulgar and local music]. Those who preferred refined music and an orthodox sound were rare.⁵¹

49. According to the preface, this poem was composed by “later people” (*houren* 後人), i.e., the elite literati of the Southern dynasties, inspired by the Wang Min story; *YFSJ* 45.660.

50. The most famous anecdote regarding clothes made of plain silk (*bailian* 白練) is about Yang Xin 羊欣 (370–442). When Yang was only a teenager he displayed tremendous talent in calligraphy and was recognized by Wang Xianzhi. One day when Wang went to visit Yang at his home, Yang was taking a nap wearing a gown made of plain silk. Without awaking him, Wang wrote calligraphy all over his gown and left; *Song shu* 62.1661.

51. From the biography of Xiao Huiji 蕭惠基 (430–488); *Nan Qi shu* (Beijing: *Zhonghua shuju*, 1992), 46.811.

As Shen Yue recounts the common practice of elite members creating local-style music and songs in the “Treatise on Music,” he also expresses deep concern regarding the entrance of their works into the official court music repertoire:

隨王誕在襄陽，造《襄陽樂》，南平穆王為豫州，造《壽陽樂》，荊州刺史沈攸之又造《西鳥飛》歌曲，並列于樂官，歌詞多淫哇不典正。

When Prince of Sui Liu Dan was in Xiangyang, he created the “Music of Xiangyang.” When Prince Mu of Nanping was the governor of Yuzhou, he created the “Music of Shouyang.” Shen Youzhi, the provincial governor of Jingzhou, also created the song “Crows Fly West.” They were all listed in the official music repertoire. These songs and lyrics are mostly licentious and obscene, neither classical nor orthodox.⁵²

This reminds us of He Chengtian’s criticism of the performance of local music in official occasions at the Sun-Wu court. Yet history seems to repeat itself and elements from southern local music—later categorized as “Western Tunes” (*xiqu* 西曲)—found their way into the official music repertoire of the Liu-Song court. In 478, troubled by the fact that “the ritual music at court often violates the orthodox and the classical, and that people compete with each other in creating new sounds and various tunes” 以朝廷禮樂多違正典，民間競造新聲雜曲，Wang Sengqian 王僧虔 (426–485) presented a memorial to Emperor Shun, the last emperor of the Liu-Song dynasty. In the memorial he vehemently attacks the vulgar elements in elite music, viewing them as signs of cultural decline, and expresses nostalgia for the music of the Cao-Wei courts in the north:

又今之清商，實由銅雀，魏氏三祖，風流可懷，京洛相高，江左彌重。而情變聽改，稍復零落，十數年間，亡者將半。自頃家競新哇，人尚謠俗，務在嚙危，不顧律紀，流宕無涯，未知所極，排斥典正，崇長煩淫。

Furthermore, today’s *Qingshang* music actually originated in [the performances of lyrics by the three emperors] at the Bronze Bird Terrace.⁵³ The panache of the first three emperors of the Wei [i.e., Cao Cao, Cao Pi, and Cao Rui] is memorable.⁵⁴ They were highly esteemed in the capital Luoyang and even more valued by people left of the Yangzi River.⁵⁵ . . . However, as the situation changed, [the music people were] listening to became different. [*Qingshang* music] was soon scattered. Within a dozen years, almost half of it was lost. Recently households compete with each other [in performing] the new obscene music, and everyone prizes vulgar ballads. All seek the innovative and radical and pay no heed of rules and principles. [The music they are fond of] is unrestrained and without boundary. Nobody knows its limit. People all reject the classical and orthodox, and cherish the superfluous and licentious.⁵⁶

The concept of *Qingshang* as a music category is complex and sometimes confusing, because it has different references and connotations in different sources. These references often include 1) a specific type of music created in the Wei and Jin dynasties; 2) lyrics (and music) of popular songs from the Southern dynasties including Wu Songs and Western Tunes.⁵⁷ In

52. *Song shu* 19.552.

53. Name of a terrace Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) built in the capital city Ye in 210 after his defeat of Yuan Shao 袁紹; *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 1.32.

54. The “Treatise on Music” of the *Song shu* attributes a significant portion of extant *yuefu* lyrics from the Wei dynasty to the three Caos; *Song shu* 21.603–23.

55. “Jiangzuo” (left of the river) is another word for “Jiangdong” or “Jiangnan”: since the emperor’s throne faces south, east of the Yangzi River corresponds to his “left side.”

56. *Song shu* 19. 553.

57. Wang Yunxi believes that *Qingshang* refers to “popular music” (*suyue* 俗樂) from the Han to the Six dynasties. He divides it into “old tunes” (*jiuqu* 舊曲) that date to the Han and Wei and “new sounds” (*xinsheng* 新聲) from the Six Dynasties; see “Qingyue kaolüe” 清樂考略, in *Yuefu shi shulun*, 195–224. For a discussion of the the differ-

the above account, in addition to the common rhetoric of the degradation of music over time, Wang Sengqian also points out the geographical and cultural factors in the changes that are happening in *Qingshang* music. In his view, proper court music had its glorious moment at the Cao-Wei courts, when the north held cultural authority and influence over the south and set trends for the south to follow. Wang lamented the influence of the “changed situation,” which probably included the move of the court to the south.⁵⁸ In Wang’s opinion, elements of novelty (*xin* 新) and vulgarity (*su* 俗) in southern local music had gradually contaminated and eclipsed the northern culture’s *Qingshang* music.

Songs about love affairs between elite literati and local girls in the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song dynasties emphasize the social boundary between them, the temporary crossing of which is shown as a token of extreme affection on the part of the elite. In formal and official settings, however, this boundary needs to be strictly maintained. Attempts to ignore it on public occasions often led to unpleasant results. For example, when Xie Shi 謝石 (327–389) got drunk and sang local songs in a princely court, Wang Gong 王恭 (d. 398) scolded him harshly:

居端右之重，集藩王之第，而肆淫聲，欲令群下何所取則？

You occupy the significant position of a high official and attend a gathering in the household of a feudal prince. Yet you indulge in such licentious sounds. What kind of a standard are you setting for those [ranking] below you? ⁵⁹

As previous discussions have demonstrated, a major part of the elite’s enjoyment of the local lies in the feeling of power and superiority. Like Emperor Wu of the Western Jin, the last thing they want is to be mistaken as members or peers of the local. It is one thing to have professional entertainers perform local songs collected or even made by members of the elite, yet quite another to publicly embrace their local identity.

Yet this attitude toward maintaining the distance from the local relaxed over time. Historical records show that in the Qi dynasty it was quite common for elite to perform local songs at official or semi-official occasions. For example, Shen Wenji 沈文季 sang “Ziye Songs” at a court banquet hosted by Emperor Gao (r. 479–482) when the emperor asked the attending courtiers to show off their talents (*jiyi* 技藝).⁶⁰ Emperor Wu (r. 482–493) ordered Prince Changsha to perform “Ziye Songs” at a literary gathering in his court.⁶¹ Wang Zhongxiong 王仲雄 sang a Wu song, “The Tune of Distress” (Aonong qu 懊農曲), during his audience with Emperor Ming (r. 494–498) to convey his anxiety about the possible prosecution of his family by the emperor. The lyrics—“always I sighed over the heartless lover, / now you have indeed done this!” 常嘆負情儂，郎今果行許—would have been condemned as “licentious

ent understandings and usages of *Qingshang* in the Southern dynasties, see Chen Lan 陳嵐, “Lun ‘Qingshang yue’ yu Nanchao yinyue zhi guanxi” 論“清商樂”與南朝音樂之關係, *Journal of Oriental Studies* 43 (2010): 131–43.

58. The *Yuefu shiji* account of the history of *Qingshang* that quotes this passage makes an explicit connection between the loss of music from the Wei dynasty with the migration of the Jin court to the south (晉朝播遷); *YFSJ* 44.638.

59. *Jin shu* 84. 2184.

60. Other talents displayed by the attendants of the banquet include playing the zither, dancing, and reciting passages from Confucian classics; *Nan Qi shu* 23. 435.

61. *Jinlouzi jiaojian* 金樓子校箋, ed. Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–555) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 2.53. Note that his particular anecdote was included in the chapter on “Remonstrance and Admonition” (Zhenjie 箴戒) and was intended to be read as a negative example. The target of critique in the passage is not the performance, but what happened afterwards, that is, the emperor and his ministers at the end of every song hitting their day beds with precious *ruyi* 如意 scepters made of rhinoceros horn and breaking several of them in one day.

sounds” (*yinsheng* 淫聲) by Wang Gong.⁶² According to the *Gujin yuelu*, Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–549) revised the Western Tunes to create fourteen pieces of court music with the titles “South of the Yangzi River” (Jiangnan 江南) and “Music of Ascending the Clouds” (Shangyun yue 上雲樂).⁶³ The clear-cut demarcation between elite and commoner, refined and vulgar, northern and southern, orthodox and anomaly that had been so carefully maintained by the Eastern Jin émigré elite became blurred and eventually eliminated as their successors settled in the geographic and cultural sphere of the south.

In its account about *Qingshang* music, the *Yuefu shiji* lays out the historical transformations of this music category since the end of the fifth century:

後魏孝文討淮漢，宣武定壽春，收其聲伎，得江左所傳中原舊曲...及江南吳歌、荆楚西聲，總謂之清商樂。至於殿庭饗宴，則兼奏之。遭梁、陳亡亂，存者蓋寡。及隋平陳得之，文帝善其節奏，曰：「此華夏正聲也。」

Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) of the Later [i.e., Northern] Wei dynasty attacked the regions of the Huai and Han Rivers, and Emperor Xuanwu (r. 499–515) pacified Shouchun (in modern Anhui province). They collected the professional musicians of these places and obtained old tunes from the central land [i.e., the area north of the Yangzi river that used to be the heartland before the move south] that were circulated left of the Yangzi River . . . Together with Wu songs in Jiangnan and Western Tunes in Jing and Chu, they were collectively called “*Qingshang* music” and performed side by side at court banquets. During the chaotic demise of the Liang and Chen dynasties, very few pieces survived. When the Sui conquered the Chen, the Sui attained these surviving pieces. Emperor Wen [of Sui] (r. 581–604) was fond of their melodies and said, “This is the orthodox sound of China.”⁶⁴

Local music from the south that Wang Sengqian attacked and rejected as the opposite of the official *Qingshang* music had been incorporated into the latter after only a generation or two. What Shen Yue labeled “neither classical nor orthodox” came to be regarded “the orthodox sound of China” by Emperor Wen of Sui, a northern ruler who defeated the southern Chen dynasty and ended the three-century division between the north and south. In their attempt to domesticate, control, and transform the local, the cultural elite of the Southern dynasties brought local culture into their households, initially indulging themselves in its exoticism and eroticism with a condescending attitude, yet eventually becoming “*er ru/you-you*,” i.e., undistinguishable and inseparable from them.

62. *Nan Qi shu* 26. 485.

63. *YFSJ* 50.726.

64. *YFSJ* 44.638. In this account, Guo Maoqian seems to draw on a few earlier sources including the “Treatise on Music” of the *Wei shu* and *Sui shu* as well as the *Tongdian*. His possible source of Emperor Wen’s comment, the “Treatise on Music” of *Sui shu*, however, does not explicitly mention “Wu songs” or “Western Tunes” as part of the music repertoire the emperor heard and remarked upon; *Sui shu* 15.377. Guo may or may not have based his comment on a different source, but it is worth noting the difference from the historical records.