The *Records of Music*: Confucian Ideology, Cosmology, and Self-Cultivation Practices in Western Han China

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the *Records of Music* (*Yue Ji* 樂記), a treatise considered to be the earliest fully developed text on musical theory in Chinese history. Compiled during the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE), it was the work of Liu De 劉德, King Xian of Hejian 河間獻王, and his circle of Confucian scholars. The text provides a comprehensive discussion of the Confucian proper music (*yayue* 雅樂) system, including how music expresses and evokes human emotions, its interaction with self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身), state politics and the universe.

This thesis reveals that how texts, knowledge traditions, and politics were intertwined in early imperial China through three topics. Chapter 1 explores different versions of the *Records of Music*, showing how the transmission process reflects the mutual influence between imperial and local authorities, and between Confucian scholarship and politics during the Western Han period. In Chapter 2, this thesis examines the cosmological narratives in the *Records of Music* through two lenses: content and rhetoric. It argues that the text's reception of the prevalent correlative cosmology is intended to delineate a sage king who, through rituals and music, governs a harmonious and orderly cosmos that aligns with the Confucian ideal, serving as a model for regulating the real Han dynasty rulers. Chapter 3 further explores the proper music on a microcosmic level: the moral and rational classification of music highlights the unique role of the heart-mind (*xin* 心) alongside other sensory organs, demonstrating a subtle mind-body dualism through the interplay of music and rituals in self-cultivation.

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INTRODUCTION

> The decline or revival of this learning depend on the people. It is appropriate to manage and uphold the proper music to continue what has been lost and highlight what is subtle. Confucius said, "Human beings can broaden the Way—it is not the Way that broadens human beings."[1] In Hejian, although it is a small kingdom, through a passion for learning and restoring the ancient teachings, something has been preserved, and even now, the people praise it. How much more so for a wise ruler with vast resources, who can restore ancient texts, reject the Zheng melodies in favor of proper music, transmit but not create, trust in and respect antiquity, thereby demonstrating to the entire realm and leaving a legacy for future generations? This is indeed no small achievement or minor merit.
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> 衰微之學，興廢在人。宜領屬雅樂，以繼絕表微。孔子曰：『人能弘道，非道弘人。』河間區區，小國藩臣，以好學修古，能有所存，民到于今稱之，況於聖主廣被之資，修起舊文，放鄭近雅，述而不作，信而好古，於以風示海內，揚名後世，誠非小功小美也。[2]

This passage is from the *Monograph on Rituals and Music* (*Liyue Zhi* 禮樂志, hereafter referred to as the LYZ). It reflects the evaluation of "Hejian Music" (*hejian yue* 河間樂) by the cultural official Ping Dang 平當 (?-4 BCE) during the reign of Emperor Cheng of Han (r. 33-7 BCE). Hejian 河間 refers to a small area in present-day central Hebei Province 河北省, PRC.[3] The Hejian Music mentioned by Ping Dang pertains to the proper music (*yayue* 雅樂) culture preserved and developed by Liu De 劉德, King Xian of Hejian 河間獻王, and his local court's

[1] The translation of Confucius' saying, see Edward Slingerland trans., *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), p. 185.
[2] Ban Gu 班固, *Han Shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), vol. 4, p. 1072.
[3] Allison R. Miller provides a map of the twenty-five kingdoms of the Han empire in 144 BCE, during the reign of Emperor Jing. See Allison R. Miller, "The Kings and the Court in the Early Western Han," in *Kingly Splendor: Court Art and Materiality in Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 48.

academic circle, which will be examined in detail later.[4] According to the *Biography of King Xian of Hejian* (*Hejian Xianwang Zhuan* 河間獻王傳) in the *History of Han* (*Han Shu* 漢書), Liu De was the son of Emperor Jing (r. 157-141 BCE) and the elder brother of Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE). He was ennobled as King Xian of Hejian in the second year of Emperor Jing's reign (155 BCE), and he died in 130 BCE.[5] Throughout his life, Liu De had a profound passion for Confucian thought, particularly rituals and music. The subject of this thesis, the *Records of Music* (*Yue Ji* 樂記), is a representative achievement of his pursuits and the only document from the Hejian academic tradition that has survived to this day.[6]

As Ping Dang noted, compared to those well-known feudal kingdoms of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE), Hejian was merely a minor local regime with limited territorial control and political influence. Yet, this inconspicuous kingdom produced and preserved significant Confucian intellectual resources, earning praise from cultural officials of Emperor Cheng's imperial court in a nostalgic tone several decades later. The thesis elucidates how the *Records of Music* understood and responded to its era, and how it was subsequently interpreted and utilized.

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[4] *Yayue* 雅樂 refers to Chinese ancient state-ceremonial music played during important sacrifices, such as sacrifices in ancestral temple (*zongmiao* 宗廟). It could be translated as "ceremonial music", or "formal music" in English; however, I choose the term "proper" to emphasize its moral significance, which Confucian scholars regard as one of its most important characteristics. A complete proper music performance includes music, poetry, exclamation, and dancing. The Confucian ideal of proper music refers specifically to the six ancient generations of music and dancing (*liudai yuewu* 六代樂舞), as well as smaller dances (*xiaowu* 小舞), including martial dance (*wuwu* 武舞) and civil dance (*wenwu* 文舞). For a more detailed description of early performances of this kind of music, see Liang Mingyue, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture* (New York: Heinrichshofen, 1985), pp. 55-59.

[5] The original record states: "Liu De, King Xian of Hejian, was established in the second year of Emperor Jing's reign… He passed away in the twenty-sixth year of his rule." 河間獻王德以孝景二年立……立二十六年薨。See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, pp. 2410-2411.

[6] According to the record in the *History of Han*, the King of Hejian was "fond of Confucian teachings and collected documents on music in collaboration with Mao and other scholars, based on *Zhou Guan* and various scholars' discussions on musical affairs to make the *Records of Music*…" 河間獻王好儒，與毛生等共采周官及諸子言樂事者，以作樂記…… See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1712.

By doing so, it seeks to explain why this text and its ideals of Confucian proper music could transcend the insignificant kingdom of Hejian, being remembered and upheld through the ages.

Western Han Confucian Tradition

As discussed in earlier sections and throughout this thesis, the authorship, content, and transmission of the *Records of Music* are closely intertwined with the Confucian thought that gained prominence from the mid-Western Han period onward. Therefore, before examining the *Records of Music* within the context of Han dynasty Confucian tradition, it is necessary to clarify three important pieces of information about this term.

First, it is important to explain how this thesis approaches and uses "Confucian," "Confucianism," and related concepts. The term "Confucianism" was primarily a Western construct, developed by Jesuit missionaries to encapsulate a complex set of Chinese ideas associated with Confucius.[7] However, many contemporary scholars of Chinese intellectual history point out that "Confucianism" is not a direct and appropriate equivalent of the original Chinese term *ru jia* 儒家. For instance, Lionel Jensen asserts that, as a Western invention, "Confucianism" shaped both Western and Chinese understanding of Chinese philosophy, often oversimplifying and universalizing a tradition that is far more nuanced in its native context.[8] In her work *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, Michael Nylan further argues that the term "Confucianism" has never truly existed as a concrete concept. Rather, it is an abstraction—helpful but always misleading—shaped as much by intellectual as by the ideas it supposedly describes.[9] Nylan, therefore, limits the usage of these terms in her study of the Five Classics

[7] Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 3-28.
[8] Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*, pp. 137-147.
[9] Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 2-5.

(*wujing* 五經) to refer to those who explicitly identified with Confucius's ethical teachings and cultural products, as well as the extensive state-sponsored official education based on the Five Classics, which began in the Western Han dynasty.[10]

Given the complexity and fluidity of the meaning and practices of *ru*, it is always risky to overgeneralize by using "Confucian" or "Confucianism" as a translation without careful consideration—especially when discussing the dynamic and often chaotic intellectual history of the early imperial period. Therefore, it is worth noting that in this thesis, I associate the *Records of Music* with "Confucian" based on the following two understandings: King Xian of Hejian is recorded as having a fondness for Confucian teachings; and this text is dedicated to discussing rituals (*li* 禮), music, morality, and their importance in state governance, which are key focuses of Confucian thought. Consequently, this text was included in the system representing professional training aimed at state service, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1. Although there is no direct textual evidence from the *Records of Music* indicating it belongs to the "Confucian" tradition, it is clear that the text was profoundly influenced by it.

Second, contrary to the common impression that the Confucian tradition solely originates from Confucius and his followers, it actually incorporated teachings from numerous non-Confucian thinkers.[11] This phenomenon of textual similarity is also present in the *Records of Music*. Scholars have noted that some passages and statements in the text are related to earlier works, especially the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Xun Zi* 荀子, and the *Commentary on the Appended Judgments* (*Xici Zhuan* 繫辭傳).[12] Additionally, Chapter 2 of this thesis shows that

[10] Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, pp. 2-5.
[11] Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, p. 2.
[12] Here are some examples: concerning the connection between the *Records of Music* and the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, especially in the resonance (*ganying* 感應) theory, see Liu Chenghua 劉承華, "'Ganying Lun' Yinyue Meixue de

many statements in the *Records of Music* were influenced by the prevalent Han dynasty narratives of Yin-Yang 陰陽, the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行), and the resonance between heaven and humanity (*tianren ganying* 天人感應).

Third, although the Confucian tradition, a system combining ideals and conduct, is identifiable in later periods, it did not define public life during the early period of Western Han dynasty, as many scholars have argued. For example, Michael Loewe noted that there were four stages leading up the formation of a Confucian tradition, and not all officials were familiar with Confucian writings and ideals prior to 30 BCE.[13] Nylan also stated that it was during Emperor Wu's reign that the so-called "Confucian" *Five Classics* were canonized as a set, excluding other texts. Despite this, Han classical scholarship continued to be marked by numerous compromises and contradictions throughout the rest of the Han dynasty.[14]

In fact, the overall cultural development of the Han dynasty only began after Emperor Hui (r. 195-188 BCE) abolished the decree that prohibited the collection of banned books.[15] 除挾書律 However, due to the lack of interest, the development of Confucian scholarship at the early

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Lilun Zijue: Lǚshi Chunqiu, Huainanzi, Yueji de Lunyue Lilu" "感應論"音樂美學的理論自覺——《呂氏春秋》《淮南子》《樂記》的論樂理路[The Theoretical Consciousness of Resonance Theory in Music Aesthetics: Analyzing the Musical Theories in Lüshi Chunqiu, Huainanzi, and Record of Music], *Yinyue Yanjiu* 音樂研究, no.2 (2018), pp. 42-59. For the inheritance and development in the music theory and cosmology between the *Xun Zi* and the *Records of Music*, see Erica Brindley, "Music, Cosmos, and the Development of Psychology in Early China," *T'oung Pao*, vol. 92, no. 1 (2006), pp. 32-44. Regarding the textual similarity between the *Records of Music* and the XCZ, see Zhao Fasheng 趙法生, "Cong Qiankun Yi dao Liyue Yi: Lun Yueji dui Liyue Zhexue he Yixue de Shuangchong Tuijin" 從乾坤易到禮樂易——論《樂記》對禮樂哲學和易學的雙重推進[From the Qian-Kun Yi to the Ritual-Music Yi: On the Dual Advancement of the Philosophy of Rituals and Music and the Study of the Yijing in the Records of Music], *Guanzi Xuekan* 管子學刊, no. 4 (2023), pp. 37-41.

[13] Michael Loewe, "'Confucian' Values and Practices in Han China," *T'oung Pao*, vol. 98, no. 1/3 (2012), pp. 1-30.

[14] Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, pp. 41-59.

[15] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, p. 90. The law on possessing books was promulgated by Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 (r. 221-210 BCE). Emperor Gao Zu of Han (r. 202-195 BCE), who disliked Confucian teachings, retained this law. See Chen Suzhen 陳蘇鎮, *Chunqiu yu Handao: Lianghan Zhengzhi yu Zhengzhi Wenhua Yanjiu* 春秋與"漢道"：兩漢政治與政治文化研究[The Spring and Autumn Period and the Way of Han: A Study of Politics and Political Culture in the Han Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2011), p. 130.

stage of the Western Han remained significantly constrained. The *Biography of Confucian Scholars* (*Rulin Zhuan* 儒林傳) in the *History of Han* records:

> During the reign of Emperor Hui and Empress Dowager Lü, the high ministers and nobles were predominantly military officials and meritorious subjects. Although [Confucian scholars] were somewhat employed during Emperor Wen's reign (r. 180-157 BCE), he himself favored the teachings of form and name. By the time of Emperor Jing, Confucian scholars were not entrusted [with significant positions], and Emperor Dowager Dou favored the teachings of Huang-Lao. As a result, many scholars held their positions but were seldom consulted or promoted.
>
> 孝惠、高后時，公卿皆武力功臣。孝文時頗登用，然孝文本好刑名之言。及至孝景，不任儒，竇太后又好黃老術，故諸博士具官待問，未有進者。[16]

It is evident that during the period of Liu De's upbringing and the academic development in the kingdom of Hejian, the Confucian tradition had not yet achieved a dominant position. However, Liu De's own teacher, Wei Wan 衛綰 (?-133 BCE), the Grand Tutor of Hejian 河間太傅, was a scholar who advocated for the abolition of the Legalist and Diplomatic techniques (*xingming zongheng zhi shu* 刑名縱橫之術).[17] This may help us understand Liu De's particular interests for Confucian teachings.

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[16] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 11, p. 3592.

[17] According to the History of Han, Emperor Jing appointed Wei Wan as the Grand Tutor of the King of Hejian. 乃拜綰為河間王太傅 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 7, p. 2201. At the beginning of Emperor Wu's reign, Wei Wan, then serving as Chancellor, submitted a memorial stating: "Among those recommended as worthy and capable, some follow the teachings of Shen Buhai, Shang Yang, Hai Fei, Su Qin, and Zhang Yi, which disrupt the governance of the state. I request that they all be dismissed." 所舉賢良，或治申、商、韓非、蘇秦、張儀之言，亂國政，請皆罷 Those people he mentioned are viewed as followers of Legalist, Diplomatic techniques, and so on. See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, p. 156.

The formation of Confucian tradition did not begin until the establishment of the Five Classics erudite positions (*wujing boshi* 五經博士) during Emperor Wu's reign.[18] Chen Lin 陳林 has termed this process "ideologization" because it allowed the Confucian tradition to surpass all other schools of thought, granting it absolute interpretative authority over the classics and a dominant voice in politics.[19] I would like to point out that, as Loewe has observed, the study of Confucian writings did not become mainstream among official scholars until the reign of Emperor Cheng.[20] In any case, from the time of Emperor Wu onwards, with the establishment of various systems that supported Confucian tradition, such as appointing disciples to the imperial erudite 為博士置弟子員,[21] Confucian tradition gradually became linked to official ranks and rewards, thereby expanding its political and cultural influence.[22]

Music Theory and Court Music Practices

The proper music that the *Records of Music* focuses on refers to the ceremonial music used in ancestral temples (*zongmiao* 宗廟) sacrifices, court assemblies, and banquets. This includes instrumental music, chanting, and dancing.[23] In early China, especially within the Confucian tradition, proper music was associated with the idealized rule of the Western Zhou

[18] The original record state: "In the spring of the fifth year [of Emperor Wu's reign]… the positions of Erudite for the Five Classics were established." 五年春……置五經博士 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, p. 159.
[19] Chen Lin 陳林, "Guanxue, Lilu, yu Handai Ruxue de Yishi Xingtai Hua" 官學、利祿與漢代儒學的意識形態化 [Official Schools, the Road to Seek High Position and Privilege and the Ideology of Confucianism in Han Dynasty], *Linyi Daxue Xuebao* 臨沂大學學報, vol. 43, no. 3 (2021), pp. 35-42.
[20] The Biography of Confucian Scholars clearly records the increasing number of disciples assigned to the Erudite of the Five Classics: "During the Emperor Zhao's reign (r. 87-74 BCE), the number of disciples was increased to one hundred. By the end of Emperor Xuan's reign (r. 74-48 BCE), this number was doubled… By the end of Emperor Cheng's reign, the number of disciples was increased to three thousand." 昭帝時舉賢良文學，增博士弟子員滿百人，宣帝末增倍之。……成帝末，……於是增弟子員三千人 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 11, p. 3596.
[21] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, p. 172.
[22] Chen Lin, "Guanxue, Lilu, yu Handai Ruxue de Yishi Xingtai Hua," pp. 38-41.
[23] Fu Xiaowei, and Yi Wang, "Confucius on the Relationship of Beauty and Goodness," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2015), pp. 70-72.

dynasty (ca. 1100-771 BCE).[24] Archaeological evidence shows that musical performance techniques had become quite advanced during that period, gradually developing into a system of five tones (*wu yin* 五音), six pitches (*liu lǜ* 六律), and twelve pipes (*shier guan* 十二管), which became a model and basis for subsequent generations.[25] As an activity showcasing political authority, proper music was closely linked with rituals, state sacrifices, and the political and cultural construction of the state. It adhered to a strict hierarchical system and an insurmountable musical standard.[26] Proper music was also one of the four fundamental approaches of governing the state, with its primary function being moral education. As recorded in the LYZ:

> Thus, Confucius said, "To secure the position of the ruler and govern the people, nothing is better than rituals; to transform customs and change habits, nothing is better than music." … When rituals, music, governance, and punishment are all implemented harmoniously without conflict, the way the King is complete.
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> 故孔子曰：「安上治民，莫善於禮；移風易俗，莫善於樂。」……禮樂政刑四達而不誖，則王道備矣。[27]

However, compared to Confucius, other thinkers active in the pre-Qin period were not as enthusiastic about proper music. The *Mo Zi* 墨子, for instance, contains a passage titled "Against

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[24] For example, the LYZ states: "The Zhou dynasty observed [and inherited the practices of] the two preceding dynasties, and its rituals and ceremonies were particularly comprehensive. … Confucius praised this by saying, 'How rich in culture it is! I follow the Zhou'." 周監於二代，禮文尤具， ……孔子美之曰：「郁郁乎文哉！吾從周。」See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1029.

[25] For a more detailed discussion, see Liang Mingyue, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, pp. 52-75. Archaeological reports can be found in Huang Jinggang 黃敬剛, *Zhongguo Xianqin Yinyue Wenwu Kaogu yu Yanjiu* 中國先秦音樂文物考古與研究[Archaeology and Research on Pre-Qin Music Artifacts in China](Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2017), pp. 113-118, 133-189.

[26] Many scholars have discussed the ideal hierarchical rituals and music system. For example, see Fu Xiaowei, and Yi Wang, "Confucius on the Relationship of Beauty and Goodness," pp. 73-79. Moreover, archaeological discoveries in Henan province support this understanding of the court music practices in the Zhou period. See Yang Wensheng 楊文勝, "Chutu Qingtong Liyue Qi Zuhe yu Zhengwei zhi Yin" 出土青銅禮樂器組合與"鄭衛之音"[Excavated Bronze and Musical Instrument Combinations and the "Music of Zheng and Wei"], *Zhongyuan Wenwu* 中原文物, no. 2 (2008), pp. 52-54.

[27] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1028.

Music" (*Fei Yue* 非樂), which begins by asserting that music cannot provide practical benefits to the common people:

> … Thus, upon examining it, one finds that it neither aligns with the deeds of the sage kings above nor benefits the common people below. Therefore, Master Mozi said, "To make music is wrong."
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> ……然上考之不中聖王之事，下度之不中萬民之利，是故子墨子曰："為樂，非也。"[28]

Moreover, the *Book of Shang Yang* (*Shangjun Shu* 商君書) directly criticizes rituals and music as detrimental to state politics:

> The Six Vermin: rituals and music, … If a state has these twelve things, the ruler will not employ farmers and soldiers, and it will inevitably become impoverished and weakened.
>
> 六虱：曰禮樂， ……國有十二者，上無使農戰，必貧至削。[29]

The above critiques illustrate the significant resistance that the theory of proper music faced during the pre-Qin period. Following the collapse of the hierarchical system of rituals and music during the Spring and Autumn (770-475 BCE) and Warring States (475-222 BCE) periods, and the Qin dynasty (221-209 BCE)'s neglect and destruction of rituals and music, the transmission of proper music was almost entirely lost by the Han dynasty.[30] According to the relevant records in the LYZ, the court music practices of the Western Han can be roughly divided into three stages. At the beginning of the Han dynasty, Emperor Gao Zu (r. 202-195 BCE) instructed the

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[28] Sun Yirang, *Mozi Xiangu* 墨子閒詁[An Exegesis of Mo Zi] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2017), p. 249.
[29] Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻, *Shangjun Shu Zhuizhi* 商君書錐指[A Detailed Commentary on the Book of Shang Yang] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2014), p. 790.
[30] It was recorded in the LYZ, saying: "In its decline, the feudal lords overstepped the laws and resented the restrictive nature of the rituals, discarding these texts. This was followed by the Qin's destruction of scholarly traditions, leading to chaos and ultimately their downfall." 及其衰也，諸侯踰越法度，惡禮制之害己，去其篇籍。遭秦滅學，遂以亂亡。See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1029.

Confucian scholar Shusun Tong 叔孫通 (dates unknown) to "follow the knowledge of the Qin dynasty musicians to create music for ancestral temple sacrifices." 因秦樂人宗廟製樂[31] From Emperor Gaozu to Emperor Wu, the court music for ancestral sacrifices was thus largely inherited and adapted from the remnants of the previous dynasties.

> The *Wen Shi* dance, originally the ancient king Shun 舜's *Zhao Wu* dance, was renamed *Wen Shi* in the sixth year of Emperor Gao Zu's reign to signify its distinctiveness. The *Wu Xing* dance, originally a Zhou dynasty dance, was renamed *Wu Xing* in the twenty-sixth year of Qin Shihuang 秦始皇's reign. … The use of the former kings' music signifies adherence to established norms.
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> 文始舞者，曰本舜招舞也，高祖六年更名曰文始，以示不相襲也。五行舞者，本周舞也，秦始皇二十六年更名曰五行也。……樂先王之樂，明有法也。[32]

At the same time, Emperor Gao Zu had a fondness for Chu melodies 楚聲. Consequently, adaptations of ancient music and new creations using the Chu melodies began to be included in the court performances.[33]

In the first stage, the court ceremonial music of the Western Han primarily focused on inheriting and adapting the musical compositions from previous dynasties, while also incorporating local melodies into the court music system. By the time of Emperor Wu's reign, the increasing emphasis on reforming the state sacrificial system led to a growing demand for the creation of court music. Emperor Wu and his cultural officials utilized the Music Bureau (*yuefu*

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[31] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1043.
[32] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1044.
[33] For example, the LYZ records: "There was also the *Sacrificial Music for within the Rooms*, created by Lady Tangshan of Emperor Gao Zu. The Zhou dynasty had the *Music for within the Room*. Emperor Gao Zu enjoyed the Chu melodies, so the *Sacrificial Music for within the Rooms* included Chu melodies. … In the second year of Emperor Hui's reign, he instructed the Music Bureau to have Xiahou Kuan prepare the flutes and pipes for this music and renamed it *Music to Bring Peace* to *the World*."又有房中祠樂，高祖唐山夫人所作也。周有房中樂……高祖樂楚聲，故房中樂楚聲也。孝惠二年，使樂府令夏侯寬備其簫管，更名曰安世樂. See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1043.

樂府) to collect and select music from various local regions, using this material to create the *Songs of Nineteen Chapters* (*Shijiu Zhang zhi Ge* 十九章之歌) for various court activities.[34] However, the court music of this period was criticized for including too many local melodies, which was seen as diverging from the original concept of proper music.[35]

The third stage occurred during the later Western Han period, under the reign of Emperor Cheng and Emperor Ai (r. 7-1 BCE). At this time, Confucian tradition were highly esteemed by the imperial court, with officials advocating for the restoration of rituals and music to transform social customs and stabilize the political situation.[36] This period also saw Wang Yu 王禹 (dates unknown), the inheritor of the proper music of Hejian mentioned in the opening excerpt, visiting Emperor Cheng and his court with disciples to teach the proper music theories. They underwent examination and questioning by Ping Dang. After this academic examination concluded, Ping Dang made a report to Emperor Cheng. He began by reviewing the construction of rituals and music since the founding of the Han dynasty, particularly emphasizing King Xian's achievements in "seeking out reclusive teachings" 聘求幽隱 and collecting ancient texts.[37] However, he then addressed the cultural transmission dilemma faced by the Western Han dynasty and expressed the commendatory remarks on Hejian's proper music, as cited at the opening of

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[34] The original record states: "He established the Music Bureau, collecting poems, songs, and private folk sayings, including songs from Zhao, Dai, Qin, and Chu regions. … eventually resulting in the creation of The Songs of Nineteen Chapters." 乃立樂府，采詩夜誦，有趙、代、秦、楚之謳。……作十九章之歌 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1045.

[35] According to the record in the *History of Han*, at that time, the Zheng sounds was particularly popular. 是時，鄭聲尤甚 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1072. The sounds of Zheng (*zhengsheng* 鄭聲) refers to melodies that did not conform to the concept of proper music and were criticized for being indulgent and unrestrained, a topic that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

[36] For example, Emperor Cheng's cultural official Liu Xiang 劉向 stated: "By presenting rituals and music, promoting the [proper] sounds of *ya* and *song*, and displaying the grandeur of respectful gestures, they sought to morally transform the world." 陳禮樂，隆雅頌之聲，盛揖攘之容，以風化天下。See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1033.

[37] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1071.

this introduction, suggesting that Emperor Cheng adopt and promote this "solitary learning" (*guxue* 孤學) for the benefit of governance and reputation. Although the other scholars present believed that Hejian's proper music was "too ancient to be clearly understood"久遠難分明[38] and difficult to implement, the *Records of Music* did receive proper collation and attention during the large-scale official text organization activities, which will be discussed in Chapter 1. Following this, Emperor Ai adopted more radical measures: he announced the dismissal of Music Bureau officials responsible for performing the Zheng and Wei melodies, which did not conform to Confucian ideals.[39]

Examining the *Records of Music* and its music theory in light of the above facts is meaningful because it provides a starting point to understand how texts, thought, and politics influenced each other in the early period of imperial China, before establishment of a dominant intellectual tradition. Following the LYZ to trace the history of court music practices in the Western Han dynasty reveals a persistent tension. Ideally, there was an aspiration to emulate the Zhou dynasty by using proper music to govern and educate the people. However, in practice, court music that did not entirely conform to Confucian norms was often used. This discrepancy arose partly because of the difficulty in preserving and restoring ancient musical instruments and materials. But it also reflected a reality that might have seemed quite frustrating to nostalgic cultural elites like Ping Dang: music is an art form that continually evolves with changing aesthetic views and performance techniques. The values of the *Records of Music* thus become evident: it actively responded to its contemporary era, attempting to mediate between Confucian

[38] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1071.
[39] The original record is: "Emperor Ai… did not have a natural inclination towards melodies, thus, he issued an edict upon ascending the throne, stating: '…[Identify those responsible for] the Zheng and Wei music that has been criticized in the classics, and assign them to other positions.'" 哀帝……，又性不好音，及即位，下詔曰：「……在經非鄭衛之樂者，條奏，別屬他官。」See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, pp. 1072-1073.

ideals and the prevailing narratives and concerns of the time. Consequently, despite the proper music system's exclusion of local melodies, this text ultimately earned the recognition of Han imperial cultural elites as a significant scholarly contribution of a regional vassal state. They even regarded it as the only satisfactory continuation of Confucian proper music during that period.

Previous Scholarship

Compared to other classical texts closely associated with the Confucian tradition, such as the *Book of Songs* (*Shi Jing* 詩經), research on the *Records of Music* appears limited.

One primary area of research is the interpretive translation of the text. The earliest English version was by the missionary James Legge, followed by selected translations by Walter Kaufmann. Stephen Owen also produced his own selected translations. A complete translation was later done by Scott Cook, with another translations by Lin Yutang 林語堂 and An Zengcai 安增才.[40]

In addition, many earlier studies focused on investigating the authorship and dating of the *Records of Music*. For instance, Lü Ji 呂驥[41] and Yin Falu 陰法魯[42] believed that this text was

[40] I did not have access to all of these translated versions. For more information, see Gong Hongyu 宮宏宇, "Yueji Xiyi: Wuzhong Yueji Xiwen Yiben, Yizhe jiqi Chuanbo" 樂籍西譯：五種《樂記》西文譯本、譯者及其傳播 [Western Translations of Musical Texts: Five Western Translations of Yueji, Translators, and Their Dissemination], *Zhongguo Yinyuexue* 中國音樂學, no.2 (2022), pp. 74-84.

[41] Lǚ Ji 呂驥, "Guanyu Gongsun Nizi he Yue Ji Zuozhe Kao" 關於公孫尼子和《樂記》作者考[An Examination of Gongsun Nizi and the Authorship of the Records of Music], in *Yue Ji Lilun Tanxin*《樂記》理論探新[Exploring New Theories in the Records of Music](Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 1993), pp. 64-81.

[42] Yin Falu 陰法魯, "Du Lǚ Ji Tongzhi Xinzuo Yueji Lilun Tanxin Zhaji" 讀呂驥同志新作《<樂記>理論探新》札記[Notes on Comrade Lǚ Ji's New Work "Exploring New Theories in the Records of Music"], *Yinyue Yanjiu* 音樂研究, no. 1 (1995), pp. 41-43.

compiled during the Warring States period, while scholars like Cai Zhongde 蔡仲德[43] and Zhou Zhuquan 周柱銓[44] examined through bibliographic analysis, as well as from the perspective of the intellectual history, that the *Records of Music* was compiled during the Han dynasty, utilizing some surviving texts in the process. While such investigations are necessary, excessive focus on this topic clearly overlooks the long formation process of the Confucian tradition. This process objectively involved the complex inheritance and transmissions of texts, making it impossible for ancient texts to have a specific compilation date and complete copyright information, as modern books do.

Regarding the textual inheritance of the *Records of Music* and its comparative analysis with other texts, aside from the previously mentioned *Lüshi Chunqiu* and *Xun Zi*, there are also studies on the *Records of Music* and the *Grand Preface of the Odes* (*Shi Daxu* 詩大序). However, in such comparative studies, the *Records of Music* often serves as a reference point. For example, Haun Saussy, by analyzing the textual similarities and differences between the *Records of Music* and the *Grand Preface of the Odes*, argues the latter's unique contributions to emotional and literary expression.[45]

On the other hand, while there are numerous studies on the intellectual history and notions of the early China, the *Records of Music* has received little attention, despite its proven value in this area as listed above.

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[43] Cai Zhongde 蔡仲德, "Yueji Zuozhe Zaizai Bianzheng: Yu Lǚ Ji Xiansheng Shangque" 《樂記》作者再再辨證——與呂驤先生商榷[Further Argumentation on the Authorship of the Records of Music: Discussion with Lǚ Ji], *Zhongguo Yinyuexue* 中國音樂學, no. 4 (1989), pp. 57-64.

[44] Zhou Zhuquan 周柱銓, "Guanyu Yueji de Zuozhe Wenti" 關於《樂記》的作者問題[Research about the Authorship of Yueji], *Yinyue Wudao Tongxun* 音樂舞蹈通訊, no. 1 (1989), pp. 37-39.

[45] Haun Saussy, "The Prefaces as Introduction to the Book of Odes," in *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 92.

A slew of recent research on early Chinese intellectual history focuses on the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, attributed to Liu An 劉安 (179-122 BCE), the King of Huainan 淮南 during the reign of Emperor Wu. For example, Avital H. Rom pointed out the unique role and functions of music in the *Huainanzi*, which uses musical references to construct an ideal model of governance.[46] Interestingly, although Han dynasty records show that King Xian of Hejian was equally renowned for his academic pursuits, often receiving even greater praise than the King of Huainan, the *Records of Music* has not received the same level of attention as the musical discourse in the *Huainanzi*.[47] This discrepancy suggests a need for further investigation into the *Records of Music* and the Hejian Confucian tradition, a focus of Chapter 1.

When discussing different schools of thought and their cultural achievements in early China, the philosophy concerning humans and heaven (*tian* 天) is a topic that cannot be ignored. Therefore, cosmology, which explores how humans position themselves in the universe, received significant attention among scholars of early Chinese thought. Here are a few examples: Aihe Wang systematically introduces cosmological concepts, such as the Five Phases, and their interaction with early Chinese politics.[48] Michael Puett's seminal work, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, explores the development of early Chinese cosmology through a wide range of materials, from Shang (ca. 1600-1100 BCE) oracle inscriptions to the different intellectual traditions of the pre-Qin and Han periods, including Confucian and Daoist texts. Interestingly, while he examines the role of music in cosmogony

[46]Avital H. Rom, "Echoing Rulership—Understanding Musical References in the Huainanzi," *Early China*, vol. 40 (2017), pp. 125–65.
[47] The *History of Han* records: "King Xian of Hejian… was dedicated to studying and appreciating antiquity, seeking truth from facts… At that time, King of Huainan, Liu An also enjoyed books, but those he attracted were mostly prone to empty rhetoric."河間獻王德……修學好古，實事求是。……是時，淮南王安亦好書，所招致率多浮辯 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, p. 2410.
[48] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 75-128.

within the *Grand Music* (*Da Yue* 大樂) in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, he does not pay any attention to the *Records of Music*.[49] Erica Brindley compared various texts on early Chinese music theory and identified a shift in how music's influence on the human psyche was understood—from a "psychology of influence" to a "psychology of cosmic attunement." This shift reflects evolving religious and cosmological beliefs in early China.[50] Brindley discussed the *Records of Music*, within the broader development of music theory, providing essential context for this thesis' examination of the cosmological themes in Chapter 2.

Early Chinese understands of the cosmos and the relationship between heaven and humanity were closely tied to political practice, with rituals and music serving as fundamental tools for bringing cosmic order and harmony to the state. In the discussion of rituals and music, Raymond Dawson pointed out that Confucius emphasized their social and educational values.[51] Du Weiming 杜維明, starting from Mencius' thoughts on rituals and music, argues that Mencius emphasized the human pursuit of morality and extended this to the realm of aesthetics, advancing the connection between rituals and music from an affective perspective.[52] Additionally, Li Hongfeng 李宏鋒 integrated extensive archaeological evidence to explore the reasons behind the collapse of the rituals and music system in the pre-Qin period,[53] while Han

[49] Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), pp. 172-180.
[50] Brindley, "Music, Cosmos, and the Development of Psychology in Early China," pp. 1-49.
[51] Raymond Dawson, *Confucius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 35.
[52] Du Weiming, "The Idea of the Human Mencian Thought: An Approach to Chinese Aesthetics," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, edited by Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 57-73.
[53] Li Hongfeng 李宏鋒, Libeng Yuesheng: *Yi Chunqiu Zhanguo wei Zhongxin de Liyue Guanxi Yanjiu* 禮崩樂盛：以春秋戰國為中心的禮樂關係研究[Ritual Collapse and Music Flourishing: A Study of the Relationship Between Ritual and Music Centered on the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods] (Beijing: Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe, 2009), pp. 127-184.

Wei 韓偉 combined political history to elucidate the reform of rituals and music during Emperor Wu's reign.[54]

Yu-kung Kao 高友工 studied the *Records of Music* and further pointed out that the text emphasizes the equal importance of rituals and music for individuals: the practice of self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) must involve and unify the understanding of external experiences and the expression of internal emotions.[55] This research implicitly explores the relationship between body and mind in the *Records of Music*, suggesting an underlying presupposition of mind-body holism. Many scholars, such as Rogers T. Ames[56] and Francois Julien,[57] uphold the view that early Chinese thought is characterized by a holistic inclination. However, some recent research have identified mind-body dualistic expressions in early Chinese texts. For example, Edward Slingerland conducted a quantitative analysis of Warring States philosophical materials, pointing out the presence of numerous expressions of mind-body dualism.[58] Furthermore, Elisa Sabattini examines the role of the concept of *xin* in political rhetoric during the Western Han period. According to Sabattini, the *xin* is not only a physical organ but also a metaphorical center of intellect and emotions, akin to the ruler of the body, much like the emperor governs the state.[59] The above findings suggest that there was a context that allowed for mind-body dualism in early

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[54] Han Wei 韓偉, "Han Wudi Shiqi de Liyue Xiangxiang yu Wenshi de Meizheng Guannian" 漢武帝時期的禮樂想象與文士的 "美政" 觀念[Imagination of Liyue and Literati's Concept of "Beauty of Politics" in the Period of Emperor Wu of Han], *Jiangxi Shehui Kexue* 江西社會科學, no. 3 (2021), pp. 92-98.
[55] Kao Yukung 高友工, *Meidian: Zhongguo Wenxue Yanjiu Lunji* 美典：中國文學研究論集[Aesthetics: A Collection of Essays on Chinese Literary Studies](Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2008), pp. 96-109.
[56] Roger T. Ames, "The Meaning of the Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, edited by Thomas P. Kasulis, et al. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 157-77.
[57] Jullien Francois, *Vital Nourishment: Departing from Happiness*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 69.
[58] Edward Slingerland, "Body and Mind in Early China: An Integrated Humanities—Science Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 81, no. 1 (2013), pp. 6-55.
[59] Elisa Sabattini, "The Physiology of 'Xin' (Heart) in Chinese Political Argumentation: The Western Han Dynasty and the Pre-Imperial Legacy," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2015), pp. 58-74.

China, leading me to explore the mind-body relationship in the *Records of Music* in Chapter 3, an area that has seen limited research.

In conclusion, as an important text on Han Confucian music theory and practices, the *Records of Music* is surprisingly understudied, not only in terms of its historical background but also in its textual nature, which motivates this thesis's exploration.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is divided into three chapters that closely examine the *Records of Music* and the milieu that behind it, depicting how cultural tradition, ideology, and politics intertwined at the beginning of imperial China.

Chapter 1 begins by combining textual and intellectual history, showing that the emergence, transmission and canonization of the *Records of Music* reflect the political and cultural development from the mid to late Western Han period. As Confucian tradition began to dominate the imperial court of the new empire, King Xian of Hejian and his local scholarly circle compiled the *Records of Music* to provide the much-needed Confucian intellectual resources for the rituals and music construction of the time. Decades later, as the now well-established Confucian tradition sought to further integrate the institutional designs and ideals of the "Six Arts" (*liuyi* 六藝) to improve practical politics in the late Western Han period, the *Records of Music* was rediscovered, reorganized, and elevated from local scholarship to the imperial teaching system by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-08 BCE) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (50? BCE-23 CE) during the large-scale official text collation activities. The compilation and transmission process of this text highlights the tension between local and imperial academic tradition, as well as the interaction between Confucian thought and Han official ideology.

After introducing and analyzing the textual history of the *Records of Music*, Chapters 2 and 3 focus on its content. Chapter 2 begins by explaining how the *Records of Music* employs correlative cosmology. By employing narratives such as Yin-Yang both in content and rhetoric, the text systematically incorporates music as a medium and manifestation of resonance between the human realm and the cosmos. Why, then, did the authors find this specific cosmological framework meaningful? To answer this, we must place our discussion in its historical context. The authors of the *Records of Music* utilized correlative cosmology to depict an ideal Confucian cosmos and an image of the sage king, aiming to reflect on contemporary rituals and music practices and imposing constraints on the actual emperor, showing the tension and collaboration between Confucian and non-Confucian officials in the dynamic political environment during the formation of a knowledge orthodox.

The influence of music on state politics and the cosmos is inseparable from its impact on individuals—who are not only the creators and audience of music but also the concrete components of the world. From this the following problems arise: How and why can music affect individuals in the self-cultivation process? This forms the theme of Chapter 3. The authors of the *Records of Music* classified music according to the moral quality of its melodies and content: in a broad sense, musical performances elicit emotional responses, but only those that demonstrate moral reflection can be considered proper music. This suggests that the authors recognized the higher cognitive and reflective functions of the *xin*, distinguishing them from sensory organs, which indicates the existence of a mind-body dualism. Nevertheless, this dualism remains subtle, as the authors expand the pairing of music and rituals to correspond to the "internal" (*nei* 內) and "external" (*wai* 外) aspects, respectively, emphasizing their collaboration in the process of self-cultivation. Individuals are encouraged to use proper music to regulate their natural

emotions and practice moral self-discipline, while using rituals to constrain behavior and appropriately express inner feelings.

Through these three themes, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the *Records of Music*. The knowledge tradition and political environment surrounding the text both influenced and were shaped by its significant and enduring narratives and ideas, which continues to influence later generations and remain relevant today.

CHAPTER 1

The *Records of Music* and Its Era: Compilation, Transmission, Cultural and Political Context

The *Records of Music* is considered to be the first independent and complete treatise on music in China to date. It discusses the nature, origin, and function of music, providing a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of early Chinese music. However, the process of compiling and transmitting this document remains obscure due to the loss of direct historical records. There are at least five recorded versions of the *Records of Music*, but their relationships and transmission processes lack systematic verification: (1) a version compiled by the King Xian of Hejian and his followers; (2) the Wang Yu version circulating among the public; (3) a version collated by Liu Xiang 劉向 from the inner imperial archives (*zhongmi* 中秘) ; (4) a version included in the *Book of Music* chapter (*Yue Shu* 樂書) of the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi Ji* 史記); and (5) the most widely circulated version in later generations, included in the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites* (*Xiao Dai Li Ji* 小戴禮記).[60]

After compilation, this text was recorded by the compilers of the *Monograph on Arts and Letters* (*Yiwen Zhi* 藝文志, hereafter referred to as the YWZ) in the *History of Han* under the *Survey of Six Arts* (*Liuyi Lüè* 六藝略), which is the earliest extant work on Chinese bibliography, alongside the five other classical texts: the *Changes* (*Yi* 易), the *Documents* (*Shu* 書), the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩), the *Rites* (*Li* 禮), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun Qiu* 春秋). Nevertheless, the nature of the *Records of Music* differs from the other five classics in one key aspect: it is

[60] Liu Yuejin 劉躍進, and Sun Shaohua 孫少華, "Hanchu Liji Yueji de Banben Cailiao yu Chengshu Wenti" 漢初《禮記·樂記》的版本材料與成書問題 [The Materials of Versions about Yueji in Liji]. *Guji Zhengli Yanjiu Xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊, no. 4 (2006), pp. 25-28.

clearly recorded that it is not a text passed down from an ancient era and is not directly related to Confucius. Regardless of which of the above versions is considered, the composition date of the *Records of Music* would not be earlier than the Western Han period. In other words, based solely on its textual nature, this text should be classified under the *Survey of Masters* (*Zhuzi Lüè* 諸子略) or the *Survey of Poetic Compositions* (*Shifu Lüè* 詩賦略) , which includes works of various philosophical schools and poetic/musical works from the pre-Qin to the Han dynasty. It is speculated that the original canonical text on music, possibly named the *Classics of Music* (*Yue Jing* 樂經), was either lost before the Western Han dynasty or never existed.

What was the most plausible process for the compilation and transmission of the *Records of Music*? What drove scholars of that time to believe it was necessary to compose a systematic treatise on music and include it in the *Survey of Six Arts*, achieving a certain degree of recognition (though it was almost never included in the five official subjects of imperial academies and civil examinations later)? Sorting out the relationships among these versions can help us understand the textual nature of the *Records of Music* and its cultural context. The primary issues are: first, the cultural and political context in which the text was compiled; second, the possible process by which Liu Xiang, representing the imperial authorities, collated the text and how it was eventually incorporated into the YWZ, which pertains to the academic and political history of the *Records of Music*'s formal inclusion in the state ideology; third, the relationship between the existing version in *Younger Dai's Book of Rites* and the ancient versions recorded, which impacts the extent to which the understanding of early Chinese music theory, as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, can rely on the text available today.

This chapter, through bibliographic and edition studies combined with the historical background of the Western Han dynasty, posits that the *Records of Music* was compiled by the

King Xian of Hejian and his scholarly circle. It served as a response and recommendation to the imperial government's construction of ritual and music systems. Subsequently, Liu Xiang included the *Records of Music* in the *Survey of Six Arts* to fill the gap caused by the absence of a canonical text in the *Music* section, ensuring the completeness of the imperial academic system. Although only half of the chapters of the existing *Records of Music* remain, it still belongs to the same academic tradition, preserving the music theory of the Western Han dynasty. Mostly, the compilation and bibliographic classification of the *Records of Music* were driven by the Western Han dynasty's need for cultural unification. Under this demand, the status of Confucian thought gradually increased, and the Confucian academic traditions of Hejian thus integrated into imperial scholarship. The transmission process of the *Records of Music* serves as a microcosm of the mutual influence and integration between imperial and provincial authorities, and between Confucian scholarship and politics during the Western Han period.

The Compilation of the *Records of Music* and Its Cultural Context

According to the YWZ, the *Records of Music* was compiled during the reign of Han Emperor Wu by the King Xian of Hejian, along with his circle of Confucian scholars, who collected relevant musical documents from the pre-Qin period:

> In the time of Emperor Wu, the King of Hejian was fond of Confucian teachings and collected documents on music in collaboration with Mao and other scholars, based on *Zhou Guan* (*The Rites of Zhou*, *Zhouli* 周禮), and various scholars' discussions on musical affairs to make the *Records of Music*…Wang Ding, the Assistant Chamberlain for the King Xian, inherited this work and taught it to Wang Yu of Changshan. [Yu] was a Receptionist during Emperor Cheng's reign, explained its meaning several times, and presented a copy in twenty-four *juan*. When Liu Xiang collated and edited books, he came up with [a copy in] twenty-three *pian*, which differed from Wang Yu's version. Its 'way' is permeated with the greatest subtlety.

> 武帝時，河間獻王好儒，與毛生等共采周官及諸子言樂事者，以作樂記……其內史丞王定傳之，以授常山王禹。禹，成帝時為謁者，數言其義，獻二十四卷記。劉向校書，得樂記二十三篇，與禹不同，其道浸以益微。[61]

In addition to basic authorship information, this record mentions two different versions of this text that initially appeared. One version was transmitted by King Xian's official Wang Ding to Wang Yu, who later presented it to the imperial court during the reign of Emperor Cheng. The other version was collated by Liu Xiang from the imperial archives. While these two versions differ in the number of *pian*/*juan*, scholars have proved, based on the format of the YWZ, bibliography, and edition studies, that they are different transmitted versions of the same text. The difference in the numbers of *pian*/*juan* likely resulted from the natural process of manuscript transmission during the pre-printing era.[62] The process of Liu Xiang's collation and the transmission history of this text will be discussed in detail in the second section.

During the early Western Han period, the power of the feudal kings was strong. Initially, the eastern feudal states could independently legislate and appoint most officials without imperial interference.[63] However, following the turmoil during Emperor Jing's reign and several measures to weaken the power of the feudal states, their territories and powers began to be strictly limited.[64] During the following Emperor Wu's reign, significant centralization further

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[61] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1712.

[62] About its content, see Cai Zhongde, "Yueji Zuozhe Zaizai Bianzheng," pp. 57-64. Also see Wang Hongxia 王虹霞, "Yue Ji Zuozhe Fei Gongsun Nizi Zongkao" 《樂記》作者非公孫尼子綜考[A Comprehensive Examination of Gongsun Nizi's Non-authorship of the Records of Music], *Yuan Dao* 原道, no. 4 (2016), pp. 223-234. For its bibliographic format characteristics, see Yao Mingda 姚名達, *Zhongguo Muluxue Shi* 中國目錄學史[The History of Chinese Bibliography] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2002), pp. 89-91.

[63] Chen Suzhen, "Hanchu Wangguo Zhidu Kaoshu" 漢初王國制度考述[Study on the System of Kingdoms in the Early Han Dynasty], *Zhongguoshi Yanjiu* 中國史研究, no. 3 (2004), pp. 27-40.

[64] In 154 BCE, the Seven Kingdoms Revolt (*qiguo zhi luan* 七國之亂) erupted. Afterward, Emperor Jing not only reduced the size of the kings' territorial holdings but also decreed changes to their administrations and symbols of status. In 145 BCE, he ordered that the kings "no longer be permitted to continue to rule their kingdoms." See Miller, "The Kings and the Court in the Early Western Han," pp. 44-52.

reduced their political influence.[65] Despite the continuous weakening of their political power, the feudal kings retained considerable autonomy and influence in cultural affairs. They could still attract scholars from various schools of thought to their local courts, providing opportunities for academic and literary activities, such as the collection and compilation of texts.[66] The most well-known example is Liu An, the King of Huainan, who organized and compiled the *Huainanzi*. Unlike Liu An's interests towards Daoist and Legalist thoughts, King Xian was very fond of Confucian thought. He not only collected many old books and ancient texts but also established erudite positions for the *Mao's Commentary on the Odes* (*Mao Shi* 毛詩) and the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 within his own kingdom. He also "practiced rituals and music, lived and immersed himself in Confucian teachings, and conducted his affairs according to Confucian principles." 立毛氏詩、左傳春秋博士。修禮樂，被服儒術，造次必於儒者[67]

One of the reason Liu De organized the compilation of the *Records of Music* might be his scholarly interest in Confucian thought, particularly the ideal Confucian system of rituals and music. In fact, he produced more than just this text. According to the YWZ, there was also the now-lost *Hejian's Records on Zhou rituals system* (*Hejian Zhouzhi* 河間周制) in eighteen *pian*, which mainly recorded content related to ritual practices.[68] On the other hand, just as one of the reasons the King of Huainan compiled and presented the *Huainanzi* was to articulate his political vision, King Xian's compilation of the *Records of Music* was closely related to the contemporary

[65] Hsu Cho-Yun, "The Changing Relationship between Local Society and the Central Political Power in Former Han: 206 B.C.-8 A.D.," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1965), pp. 358-70.
[66] Sun Guang 孫光, "Hejian Xianwang Xueshu Tuanti Hongjing Moshi yu Wenhua Gongxian" 河間獻王學術團體弘經模式與文化貢獻[Cultural Contributions and Classic-Enhancing Paradigm of the Academic Community Sponsored by Prince Xian of Hejian], *Beifang Luncong* 北方論叢, no. 3 (2017), pp. 33-34.
[67] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, p. 2410.
[68] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1725.

political and cultural context. The LYZ records that when King Xian presented rituals and music to the imperial court of Emperor Wu, it began with:

> At that time, the King Xian of Hejian possessed refined talents and believed that governance could not be achieved without proper rituals and music. Consequently, he presented the collected proper music [to the imperial court].
>
> 是時，河間獻王有雅材，亦以為治道非禮樂不成，因獻所集雅樂。[69]

As discussed earlier, as a local feudal king, Liu De had the authority and opportunity to implement Confucian rituals and music within his own kingdom as part of his governance practices. Based on this academic interest and practical experience, he recognized that Confucian thought, with its core culture of rituals and music, was essential for governance. Therefore, he presented the proper music he had collected to the imperial court. Whether intentionally or not, his Confucian inclination constituted a response to the political and cultural themes of Emperor Wu's court.

The tension between imperial and provincial authorities and efforts towards centralization were core themes in Western Han politics. The promotion and officialization of Confucian thought represented these themes on an intellectual aspect, serving as their theoretical foundation. One of the most emblematic cultural policies of this period was the development of the ritual and music system, seen in the Western Han as crucial for establishing imperial authority and unified governance. For instance, as early as the period of Emperor Wen (r. 180-157 BCE), Confucian scholar-officials Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 BCE) suggested that "since the founding of the Han dynasty, more than twenty years had passed, and it was time to establish institutions and revive rituals and music. By doing so, the feudal lords would adhere to their

[69] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1070.

duties, the people would become simple and honest, and litigations would cease." 漢興至今二十餘年，宜定制度，興禮樂，然後諸侯軌道，百姓素樸， 獄訟衰息[70]

The key to the officialization of Confucian thought was its transformation by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), an imperial erudite during the reign of Emperor Jing. Dong Zhongshu integrated various prevalent philosophical schools of thought of the time, particularly the Yin-Yang and Five Phases theories, to reinterpret Confucian ethics and values essential for governance. He systematically elaborated on the concept of "Great Unity" (*da yitong* 大一統).[71] The core concept of the transformed Confucian thought was the "resonance between heaven and humans," which posited a moral cosmos resonating with the virtue of the ruler, thereby granting him the heavenly mandate (*tianming* 天命). This idea became a powerful source of legitimacy for the unified imperial rule. Therefore, in 140 BCE, Emperor Wu declared Confucian thought the official orthodoxy, elevating it above other schools of thought and solidifying the primacy of the Six Classics. 孝武初立，卓然罷黜百家，表章六經[72]

During the reign of Emperor Wu, due to his extensive reforms and emphasis on state sacrificial rituals, the revival of ceremonial music reached an unprecedented height. However, due to the warfare and the prohibition of classics during the Qin period (221-209 BCE)[73], the state of literary transmissions faced by imperial court in that time was characterized as

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[70] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1030.

[71] Jiang Haijun, "Dong Zhongshu Jingxue de Fasheng, Jieshi jiqi Sixiangshi Yiyi," pp. 30-32. The concept of "Great Unity" is a central theme in Dong's work, *The Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露), as he states: "The Great Unity described in the Spring and Autumn Annals is the constant pattern of heaven and earth and the common righteousness of the past and present." 《春秋》大一統者，天地之常經，古今之通誼也 See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, 2523.

[72] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, p. 212.

[73] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1701. The original content cited here is: With the scourge of the Qin, literary writings were burned and destroyed in order to keep the populace simpleminded. 至秦患之，乃燔滅文章，以愚黔首。

"incomplete books and missing bamboo slips, with rituals collapsed and music in disorder." 書缺簡脫，禮崩樂坏[74] Moreover, in the construction of the rituals and music system, reviving proper music presented even greater challenges than reviving rituals. According to Han Wei' research, there are two possible reasons: First, the remaining music-related texts cannot preserve records of performance techniques and music theory accurately due to the characteristics of musical performances. Second, due to the Qin dynasty's disregard for rituals and music, many experts in ceremonial music were forced to seek refuge among the common people, preserving their skills only through oral tradition.[75] Faced with the lack of theoretical foundations for proper music, the participating imperial scholars relied on a broader collection of folk songs to create new ritual music. The LYZ recorded that:

> Additionally, he established the Music Bureau, collecting poems, songs, and private folk sayings, including songs from Zhao, Dai, Qin, and Chu regions. He appointed Li Yannian as the director of Music Regulation to compose [ceremonial] music, and tasked Sima Xiangru and several others with writing poems and prose. Their discussions mainly revolved around pitchpipes (*lǜlǚ* 律呂) to match the eight musical tones, eventually resulting in the creation of *The Songs of Nineteen Chapters*.
>
> 乃立樂府，采詩夜誦，有趙、代、秦、楚之謳。以李延年位協律督尉，多舉司馬相如等數十人造為詩賦，略論律呂，以合八音之調，作十九章之歌。[76]

The content of the *Songs of the Nineteen Chapters* recorded later in the text indicates that the newly created ritual music based on these resources was likely less formal than intended. Han Wei points out that many of them have an informal tone and are greatly influenced by the prevalent narratives of auspicious omens (*xiangrui* 祥瑞), which contrasts significantly with the

[74] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1701.
[75] See Han Wei, "Han Wudi Shiqi de Liyue Xiangxiang yu Wenshi de Meizheng Guannian," p. 94.
[76] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1045.

ideal form of ancient proper music.[77] Auspicious omens represent a more accessible and straightforward expression of the theory of the resonance between heaven and humans, a concept that particularly interested Emperor Wu himself.[78] For instance, many of these pieces were composed to celebrate the discovery of auspicious objects in various locations, such as the unicorn (*qilin* 麒麟) and precious tripod (*baoding* 寶鼎). Considering the occasions where this music might have been used, namely state sacrificial ceremonies, this was not particularly ideal or dignified and was imbued with an excessive number of mystical elements.

The *Records of Music* was written in such a context. The LYZ mentions a common concern regarding the style of imperial court music when King Xian of Hejian presented his own proper music to the court:

> … The usual court music and that of the ancestral temples are not the proper sounds. … In ancient times, the *Ya* and *Song* of the Yin and Zhou dynasties praised the deeds of meritorious officials, men, and women. Their merits and virtues, being truly admirable, were extolled through music, which filled the heaven and earth with their praises. Thus, their illustrious names became renowned in their time, and their enduring reputations were passed down through generations. However, the current sacrificial prose and songs of the Han ancestral temples lack any mention of the deeds of the ancestors. The eight tones are equalized but not in harmony with the bells and stone chimes. Moreover, within the palace, there are the musicians of the Yeting, and outside, there is the Music Bureau of Shanglin, all using licentious sounds of Zheng to perform at imperial court.

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[77] See Han Wei, "Han Wudi Shiqi de Liyue Xiangxiang yu Wenshi de Meizheng Guannian," pp. 94-96.

[78] In fact, Emperor Wu's reform of the sacrificial system, including the conduct of the Great One sacrifices, was directly influenced by the theory of mutual influence of the heavenly and human realms. The immediate reason for him to set up the altar for the Great One was the auspicious signs of obtaining the precious tripod, which was said to mirror the same incident from the time of the Yellow Emperor (*huangdi* 黃帝). This led him to believe that he was divinely mandated, capable of achieving the same level of greatness as the Yellow Emperor. See Tian Tian 田天, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao* 秦漢國家祭祀史稿[Qin and Han State Sacrifices: A Draft History], Rev. ed (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2023), pp. 125-137. Chapter 2 will also discuss this topic.

> ……常御及郊廟皆非雅聲。……昔殷周之《雅》《頌》，……君臣男女有功德者，靡不褒揚。功德既信美矣，褒揚之聲盈乎天地之間，是以光名著於當世，遺譽垂於無窮也。今漢郊廟詩歌，未有祖宗之事，八音調均，又不協於鐘律，而內有掖庭材人，外有上林樂府，皆以鄭聲施於朝廷。[79]

King Xian and some of his contemporaries recognized that the ritual music of the imperial court deviated significantly from the ideal Confucian music. The imperial court music was even referred to as the "sounds of Zheng"—a term that, in many texts including the *Records of Music*, was considered representative of licentious and immoral melodies. Worse still, the Grand Music Officers (*Da Yueguan* 大樂官) from the *Zhi* family 制氏, could only record the rhythms and melodies but were not able to explain their meanings and theories. 樂家有制氏……但能紀其鏗鏘鼓舞，而不能言其義[80]

In contrast to the predicament faced by imperial court musicians, due to King Xian's interest in collecting ancient texts and his active practice of Confucian rituals and music within his own territory, the proper music in the kingdom of Hejian was highly developed and capable of creating systematic music theories. In fact, at that time, the proper music system had only two branches: the imperial music bureau and the Hejian school.[81] A reasonable assumption is that the ceremonial music of the time raised many concerns, prompting King Xian to organize Confucian scholars to compile the *Records of Music* based on materials from the Warring States period. This raises the following question: What does the Confucian ideal proper music theory in the *Records of Music* look like? This is the main focus of the next chapter. Here, it is worth briefly

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[79] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, pp. 1070-1071.
[80] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1043.
[81] See Zuming 成祖明, "Cong Banben Liuchuan he Wenben Chongjian Lun Yueji de Chengshu" 從版本流傳和文本重建論《樂記》的成書[Discuss the Yueji Becoming a Book from the Spread of Version and the Creative Reconstruction of the Text], *Huangzhong* 黃鐘, no. 1 (2012), p. 90.

mentioning that although the text employs the prevalent Yin-Yang, Five Phases, and resonance theories, it does so in a more serious manner, using these theories to shape the image of the Confucian ideal ruler.

King Xian of Hejian subsequently presented the *Records of Music*, along with the proper music and dances he had arranged, to Emperor Wu. 武帝時，獻王來朝，獻雅樂[82] The YWZ also mentions that after the compilation of the *Records of Music*, he presented the dance of *bayi* 八佾.[83] However, perhaps due to Emperor Wu's interest in auspicious omens, the *Records of Music* did not receive immediate attention. King Xian passed away shortly after his visit to the imperial court in 130 BCE, and the influence of his ritual and music theories might have gradually waned as a result. Nevertheless, the Confucian scholarly tradition of Hejian continued, and the *Records of Music* began to be transmitted through both imperial and local channels, resulting in multiple historical versions discussed in the next section.

The compilation of the *Records of Music* reflects the tension between local and imperial scholarship during the Western Han dynasty. It is evident that after the reign of Emperor Jing, the political power of the kings was greatly diminished, but they still had the capacity to engage in cultural activities within their own territories, provided they were interested in doing so. In other words, it may have been precisely because their political freedom was restricted that the kings shifted their resources towards academic pursuits. This shift allowed local scholarships to develop more robustly than the imperial institutions in certain areas, such as the proper music system. Represented by figures like King Xian of Hejian, these local forces continued to use their cultural influence to participate in imperial political construction. Although their efforts

[82] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, p. 2411.
[83] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1712.

may not be as successful as anticipated, their responses to the political climate of their time still provided a wealth of intellectual resources for subsequent scholars and politicians of the Han. Consequently, the *Records of Music* was eventually incorporated into the imperial academic records after the collation by Liu Xiang and his son.

The Transmission of the *Records of Music*

Although there is a lack of direct textual records detailing the dissemination of the *Records of Music*, a plausible transmission process can still be reconstructed through examining references to the text and Hejian Confucian traditions in historical documents like the *History of Han*. In fact, this text exemplifies how local academic traditions were preserved and propagated during the Han dynasty, demonstrating the interplay between regional scholarly efforts and centralized initiatives in transmitting and editing works. On one hand, local lords organized their scholarly circles to collect materials, compile texts, and ensure their preservation. On the other hand, the central government also organized book compilation activities, often souring manuscripts from feudal lords' submissions or through large-scale collections of privately held books.

As noted at the YWZ, the Wang Yu version of the *Records of Music* represents the result of the continuous dissemination of Hejian scholarship among the populace. In contrast, the version collated by Liu Xiang follows the second path mentioned above, that is, it is a product of the imperial book collection and organization efforts. In 26 BCE, Emperor Cheng ordered Liu Xiang to "oversee the collation of the Five Classics and reverse writings within the [imperial

archives].” 詔向領校中五經秘書[84] It is very likely that during that time, Liu Xiang collated the twenty-three *pian* version of the *Records of Music*. His initial materials came through two main channels: First, it could have been presented by King Xian of Hejian during the reign of Emperor Wu and subsequently stored in the imperial archives, where it was preserved in its original form until Liu Xiang edited and organized it.[85] Second, it might have been obtained through the collection of private books that started during Emperor Wu’s reign. This activity is mentioned at the beginning of the YWZ:

> By the era pf Emperor Xiao Wu, many books were incomplete or lost, and rituals and music had fallen into disarray. The emperor, deeply lamenting this, proclaimed, “I am greatly distressed by this!” Consequently, he established the policy of collecting books, created the office for transcribing books, and gathered all the works of the various philosophical schools and legends, filling the imperial archives.
>
> 迄孝武世，書缺簡脫，禮壞樂崩，聖上喟然而稱曰：「朕甚閔焉！」於是建藏書之策，置寫書之官，下及諸子傳說，皆充祕府。[86]

When Liu Xiang and his colleagues began the task of organizing and collating books, there were numerous versions with significant discrepancies and complex relationships. Their primary work involved comparing the differences between various versions, eliminating duplicate sections, supplementing missing parts, and correcting the order of chapters.[87] After the

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[84] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 7, p. 1950. The translation see Michael Hunter, “The ‘Yiwen Zhi’ 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) Bibliography in Its Own Context,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 138, no. 4 (2018), pp. 763.

[85] Chen Kaixian 陳開先, “Kongbi Guwen yu Zhongmi Guwen” 孔壁古文與中秘古文[The Ancient Scripts in the Wall of Confucius’ Homestead and the Ancient Scripts in the Secret Archives of the Palace], *Zhongshan Daxue Xuebao* 中山大學學報, no. 5 (1997), pp. 45-52.

[86] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1701.

[87] Zou Hao 鄒皓, “Hanshu Yiwenzhi zhong Pian Juan de Hanyi” 《漢書·藝文志》中“篇”、“卷”的含義[A Study on the Meanings of Pian and Juan in “Yiwenzhi” of Hanshu], *Tushuguan Zazhi* 圖書館雜志[Library Journal], vol. 36, no. 10 (2017), pp. 87-89.

collation of the *Records of Music*, Xiang recorded the titles, order of *pian*, content, and historical information in his bibliographic work, the *Separate Listing* (*Bie Lu* 別錄). This work later became the precursor to the YWZ, which will be discussed in the next section.[88] However, the *Separate Listing*, Liu Xiang's and Wang Yu's versions of the *Records of Music* were all later lost, with only the titles and orders of the Liu Xiang's version remaining in the extant fragments of the *Separate Listing*.

The existing version of the *Records of Music* that readers can see today includes only the first eleven *pian* that discuss music theory. These contents were preserved by being included in the nineteenth *pian* of the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites* , originally compiled by the renowned Confucian scholar Dai Sheng 戴聖 (dates unknown) during the mid to late Western Han period. As for the latter twelve *pian*, which mostly detailed the instruments and performance techniques of music and dance, they were relatively neglected and were lost before the well-known Eastern Han commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄(127-200 CE).[89] During his project, Zheng Xuan had access to the now-lost *Separate Listing*. He noted the sequence of *pian* recorded by Liu Xiang and mentioned that Dai Sheng's version of the *Records of Music* matched Liu Xiang's version in terms of the number of *pian* and content, with only differences in the order. Zheng Xuan

[88] Michael Loewe, "Liu Xiang and Liu Xin," in *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China, edited by Michael Nylan*, et al., (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), pp. 376-378.
[89] Wang Yi 王禕, "Liji Yueji Chansheng Yiwen de Yuanyin ji Yiwen Gouji" 《禮記·樂記》產生佚文的原因及佚文鉤稽[The Causes of Missing Texts in the Records of Music of the Book of Rites and Their Reconstruction], *Guji Zhengli Yanjiu Xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊, no. 6 (2010), pp. 14-18. The title of the missing contents recorded in the *Separate Listing* see appendix, table 1.

remarked, “Although combined here, there are slight differences in arrangement.” 今雖合此，略有分焉[90]

Existing records indicate that the sources of the *Book of Rites* edited by Dai Sheng may be quite complex, involving both the aforementioned first and second paths. First, Dai Sheng as an imperial Confucian scholar in the 91 BCE. According to Wang E 王鍔’s research, Dai Sheng thus had access to the books in the imperial archives at that time.[91] Therefore, it is possible that he can see the documents presented by King Xian during Emperor Wu’s reign. Furthermore, the *Monograph of Classics and Texts* (*Jingji Zhi* 經籍志) in the *History of Sui* (*Sui Shu* 隋書) provides a more detailed lineage of the transmission process:

> In the early Han period, King Xian of Hejian obtained 131 *pian* relevant to rituals recorded by disciples of Confucius and subsequent scholars and presented them, though no one at the time continued the tradition. When Liu Xiang examined and collated the classics and texts, he managed to collect 130 *pian*, organizing and recording them in sequence. Additionally, he obtained 23 *pian* of the *Records of Music*, [and other texts,] totaling five different types, amounting to 214 *pian* in all. Dai De (dates unknown) then removed the redundant parts and compiled them into 85 *pian*, which he called the *Elder Dai’s Book of Rites*. Later, Dai Sheng further condensed Dai De’s work into 46 *pian*, naming it the *Younger Dai’s Book of Rites*. At the end of the Han period, Ma Rong (79-166 CE) transmitted the teachings of Dai Sheng. Ma Rong added the *Monthly Ordinances*, *Positions in the Hall of Light*, and *Records of Music* into the *Younger Dai’s work*. Zheng Xuan, a student of Ma Rong, then commentated on these texts.

[90] Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 禮記集解[Collected Commentaries on the Book of Rites] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1998), vol.2, p 975. The different versions of the content arrangement, see appendix, table 2.
[91] Wang E 王鍔, *Liji Chengshu Kao* 禮記成書考[A Study on the Compilation of the Book of Rites] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), p. 322.

> 漢初，河間獻王又得仲尼弟子及後學者所記一百三十一篇獻之，時亦無傳之者。至劉向考校經籍，檢得一百三十篇，向因第而敍之。而又得……《樂記》二十三篇，凡五種，合二百十四篇。戴德刪其煩重，合而記之，為八十五篇，謂之《大戴記》。而戴聖又刪大戴之書，為四十六篇，謂之《小戴記》。漢末馬融，遂傳小戴之學。融又定《月令》一篇、《明堂位》一篇、《樂記》一篇，合四十九篇；而鄭玄受業於融，又為之注。[92]

According to this account, the *Records of Music* entered the imperial scholarly tradition through Liu Xiang's collation and organization. It was then transmitted through four generations of scholars: Dai De, Dai Sheng, Ma Rong, and Zheng Xuan, finally becoming part of the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites* in the late Eastern Han period. Scholars such as Ji Liangkang 吉聯抗 and Zhou Zhuquan 周柱銓 support this view, arguing that Liu Xiang's version is the ancestor of the received version of the *Records of Music*.[93] However, researchers like Gao Xinhua 高新華 have demonstrated that one of Dai Sheng's disciples had already commentated on the forty-nine *pian* of the *Book of Rites*, indicating that the *Records of Music* might have been included into it by Dai Sheng himself, rather than waiting until the late Eastern Han.[94] Regardless, these Han dynasty Confucian scholars were strongly associated with imperial academia. Consequently, the inclusion of the *Records of Music* into the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites* can at least be viewed as connected to imperial academic transmission, even though the existing evidence does not allow

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[92] Wei Zheng 魏徵, et al., *Sui Shu* 隋書[The History of Sui](Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973), pp. 925-926.
[93] Ji Liankang 吉聯抗. "Xu Lun" 緒論[Introduction], in *Yueji Yizhu* 樂記譯注[Annotations and Translations of the Records of Music] (Beijing: Beijing Yinyue Chubanshe, 1958), pp. 1-8. Also see Zhou Zhuquan, "Guanyu Yueji de Zuozhe Wenti," pp. 37-39.
[94] Peng Lin 彭林, "Sanli Shuolüè" 三禮說略 [General Remarks on the Three Rites], in *Jingshi Shuolüè: Shisanjing Shuolüè* 經史說略·十三經說略[The Exegesis of the Classics and Histories: General Remarks on the Thirteen Classics] (Beijing: Yanshan Chubanshe, 2003), p. 113. A more detailed examination see Gao Xinhua 高新華, "Yueji Pianci Liuchuan Kao" 樂記篇次、流傳考[A Research of Sequence of Contents and Spread of the Record of Music], *Zhongguo Yinyuexue* 中國音樂學, no. 3 (2011), pp. 81-84.

us to definitively confirm whether Dai Sheng's version was directly inherited from Liu Xiang's version.

Third, Dai might have also been influenced by the Hejian Confucian tradition and encountered versions of the *Records of Music* circulating among the public. As recorded in the *Biography of King Xian of Hejian* (*Hejian Xianwang Zhuan* 河間獻王傳):

> King Xian of Hejian, Liu De, was ennobled in the second year of Emperor Jing's reign. He devoted himself to studying ancient texts and sought the truth. When he obtained good books from the people, he would always make a fine copy and keep the original for himself and reward them with gold and silk to encourage such contributions. ...Many Confucian scholars from the eastern regions came to study under him.
>
> 河間獻王德以孝景前二年立，修學好古，實事求是。從民得善書，必為好寫與之，留其真，加金帛賜以招之。……山東諸儒者從而游。[95]

During the reigns of Emperor Jing and Emperor Wu, Confucian scholarship in Hejian flourished. As mentioned earlier, their system of proper music was well-developed, and their overall academic influence also reached the point where "many Confucian scholars from the eastern regions came to study under him." 山東諸儒者從而游 More importantly, it can be inferred from this account that Hejian's academic tradition included the practice of making manuscript copies. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that the texts compiled in Hejian at the time, including the *Records of Music*, had copies preserved and transmitted.[96]

[95] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 8, p. 2410.
[96] More analysis see Cheng Zuming, "Cong Banben Liuchuan he Wenben Chongjian Lun Yueji de Chengshu,"p. 91-92.

Moreover, the LYZ records that during the reign of Emperor Cheng, Wang Yu taught the music of Hejian, was able to explain its theories, and his disciples, including Song Ye, submitted petitions based on this knowledge. 王禹世受河間樂，能說其義，其弟子宋暴等上書言之[97] This indicates that the academic tradition of Hejian continued into the reign of Emperor Cheng. It is possible that the *Records of Music* had already been circulating among the public by that time.

The relevant records in the *History of Han* primarily focuses on the imperial academic and teaching system of the Han dynasty, particularly the lineages that eventually established the official erudite positions. It rarely documents local scholarship, yet it is still possible to identify some intersection between the Confucian tradition of Hejian and the imperial academic system. There are many pieces of records, but a direct example is from the reign of Emperor Wen, when Jia Yi taught the *Zuo Zhuan* to Guan Gong 貫公, a scholar from Zhao 趙 who served as the erudite to the King Xian of Hejian later. 誼為左氏傳訓故，授趙人貫公，為河間獻王博士[98] This suggests that there was considerable interaction between local Confucian circles, such as the one in Hejian, and scholars in the central court during Western Han period. Therefore, it is plausible that the *Records of Music* from Hejian continued to circulate among the public and eventually came to the attention of the imperial erudite of the time, particularly Dai Sheng, who incorporated it into his *Book of Rites*.

[97] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1071.
[98] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 11, p. 3620.

The lineage of the various recorded versions of the *Records of Music* can be summarized in the following stemma. As for the version of the *Records of Music* included in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, it was compiled during the reigns of Emperors Yuan (r. 48-33 BCE) and Cheng to replace the original *Book of Music*, which had been lost.[99] According to Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫's research, this version includes some content that might have belonged to the now-lost last twelve *pian*.[100] Additionally, there are a few differences in the order of *pian* due to issues arising from the misarrangement.[101] However, most of the content in this version is identical to that of the *Records of Music* in the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites*.

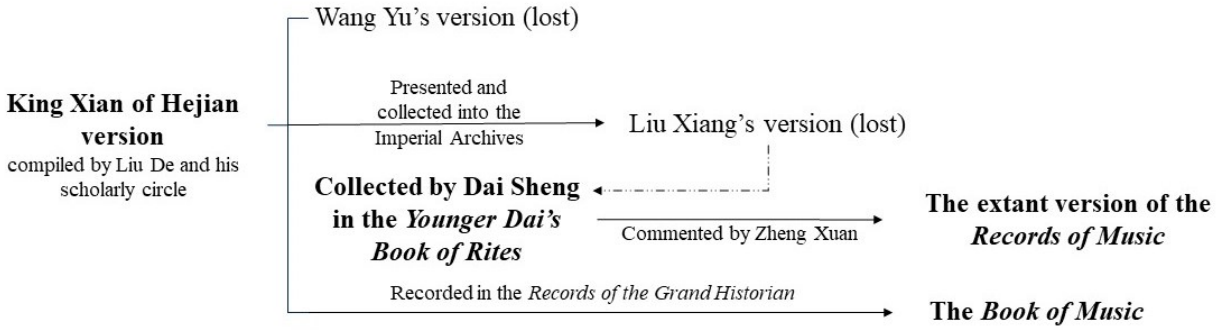

Figure 1.1: Stemma of the Transmission of the Records of Music

In the pre-printing era, the rapid loss of hand-copied texts is evident from the various lost ancient texts mentioned in this section. The *Records of Music*, as a work from a locally active scholarly circle in the early Western Han, came into the imperial academic sphere through multiple channels, which ensured its preservation. In other words, the transmission of the *Records of Music* is thus a result of the interaction between local scholarship and the imperial academic system, as well as Confucian thought and political reality during the Han period.

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[99] Yang Helin 楊合林, and Li Yingwei 李映葦, "Lun Yueji de Pianci yu Pianti" 論《樂記》的篇次與篇題[A Discussion on the Orders and Titles of the Records of Music], *Yinyue Yanjiu* 音樂研究, no. 5 (2023), pp. 26-28.
[100] Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Yu Jiaxi Lunxue Zazhu* 余嘉錫論學雜著[Miscellaneous Writings on Research by Yu Jiaxi] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), pp. 38-40
[101] According to Gao Xinhua's research, this discrepancy is due to misarranged slips. See Gao Xinhua, "Yueji Pianci Liuchuan Kao," pp. 83-86. The different versions of the content arrangement, see appendix, table 2.

The *Records of Music* and the Imperial Teaching System

Regardless of whether the *Records of Music* we see today has a direct lineage to Liu Xiang's version, the rediscovery and collation of this text by Liu Xiang and his son Liu Xin, from the dusty imperial archives, and their decision to place it at the forefront of the music section in the *Survey of Six Arts*, are landmark events in its transmission history. The involvement of imperial academic authorities ensured that their contemporary and subsequent scholars recognized the significance of the *Records of Music* during their preservation and collation efforts, thus preventing it from being entirely lost. Why did Liu Xiang and Liu Xin consciously elevate the status of the *Records of Music*, originating from the Hejian scholarly tradition, within the imperial teaching system? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the academic and political inclinations revealed by their bibliographical efforts.

First, we need to clarify the relationship between the YWZ and the bibliographical achievements of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. The introductory passage of the YWZ explains:

> [The Emperor Cheng] ordered Imperial Household Grandee Liu Xiang to collate the classics, commentaries, master's texts, and poetic works. … After completing each book, Xiang would categorize its contents, summarize its main ideas, and present his findings in a report. When Xiang passed away, Emperor Ai assigned Xiang's son, Palace Attendant and Chief Commandant of Imperial Equipages, Liu Xin, to continue his father's work. Xin collected all the books and submitted the *Seven Surveys*. Hence, there are the *General Survey*, the *Survey of Six Arts*, the *Survey of Masters*, the *Survey of Poetic Compositions*, the *Survey of Military Writings*, the *Survey of Algorithmic and Technical Texts*, the *Survey of Medical Recipes and Techniques*. Now [the present text] pares down [the *Seven Surveys*] to its essentials so as to provide a complete account of archived writings.

> 詔光祿大夫劉向校經傳諸子詩賦，……每一書已，向輒條其篇目，撮其指意，錄而奏之。會向卒，哀帝復使向子侍中奉車都尉歆卒父業。歆於是總羣書而奏其七略，故有輯略，有六藝略，有諸子略，有詩賦略，有兵書略，有術數略，有方技略。今刪其要，以備篇籍。[102]

The collation work by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin lasted nearly twenty years, starting from 26 BCE. During this period, Liu Xiang completed the collation and organization of most of the books, describing each work's collation and summarizing its content. After Liu Xiang's death, his work was compiled into the *Separate Listings*, which is the first bibliographic work in Chinese history.[103] Liu Xin continued his father's work by categorizing (*zhongbie* 種別) and synthesizing (*zong* 總) the collection as a whole based on the *Separate Listings*, forming the *Seven Surveys*. Today, both of these works survive only in fragments, with most of their content lost. Therefore, our knowledge of their achievements comes primarily from the YWZ written by Eastern Han historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE). According to Ban Gu's words, "Now [the present text] pares down [the *Seven Surveys*] to its essentials so as to provide a complete account of archived writings," 今刪其要，以備篇籍 as well as the supplemental quotations from the *Separate Listings* and the *Seven Surveys* added by Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) scholar Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645 CE), it is evident that the YWZ a significantly abbreviated version of its predecessors.[104] Therefore, the YWZ can serve as a strong reference for the bibliographic efforts of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin.

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[102] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1701. The translation of titles referenced Hunter, "The 'Yiwen Zhi' 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) Bibliography in Its Own Context," p. 765.
[103] Sun Xianbin 孫顯斌, "Qilüè Bielu Bianzhuan Kao"《七略》《別錄》編撰考[A Research on the Collation Process of Qilüè and Bielu], *Tushuguan Zazhi* 圖書館雜志, vol. 30, no. 2 (2011), pp. 88-91.
[104] Hunter, "The 'Yiwen Zhi' 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) Bibliography in Its Own Context," p. 764. For the examination of the YWZ as an abridged version of the *Seven Surveys* by Ban Gu, see Yao Mingda, *Zhongguo Muluxue Shi*, pp. 37-41.

Before discussing the status of the *Records of Music*, it is also essential to clarify that, as a bibliographic work, the YWZ actually goes beyond what the noted bibliographic Walter Greg summarized about the work of bibliographers, who "is concerned merely as arbitrary marks and their meaning is no business of his."[105] In contrast, the YWZ prominently features an ideological agenda in compiling, organizing, and establishing its catalog system. Its textual nature has been explored by numerous scholars. For example, Martin Kern compared its orderly classification of materials with rich and diverse narratives found in recent manuscripts discoveries, concluding that "the imperial catalogue was not a disinterested collection and description of all available materials, but rather reflects a selective and prescriptive vision of the textual heritage."[106] Michael Hunter also argues that the YWZ was never intended to serve as a "library catalogue." Instead, it functioned as a highly ideological subject bibliography, selectively including texts that Han imperial bibliographers considered essential for effective governance, based on the *Great Plan* (*Hong Fan* 洪範) of the *Documents*.[107]

On this basis, I argue that the inclusion of the *Records of Music* is tied to the ideological nature of the YWZ, aiming to ensure that the imperial knowledge system aligns with the ideal form of the Six Arts. In the Han dynasty, the Six Arts served as a conceptual blueprint for Confucian knowledge and education system. This concept originated during the Warring States period and gradually developed through the contributions of Jia Yi and Dong Zhongshu, encompassing the six fundamental Confucian classics and their associated teaching systems: the

[105] Walter W. Greg, "Bibliography: An Apologia," in *The Collected Papers of Sir Walter W. Greg*, edited by J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 246.
[106] Martin Kern, "Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han," in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, vol. 1: To 1375*, edited by Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 61-63.
[107] Hunter, "The 'Yiwen Zhi' 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) Bibliography in Its Own Context," pp. 771-780.

Changes, the *Documents*, the *Odes*, the *Rites*, the *Music*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.[108] Apart from the *Music* section, the other five categories each had independent written classics and multiple schools of different teachings during the Han dynasty. However, there was no canonical text for the *Music* section, and as previously mentioned, the Grand Music Officers focused more on practical skills rather than theoretical transmission.[109] From the time of Emperor Wu, Han Confucian thought gradually became orthodox, and the Six Arts began to exert a dominant influence on the establishment of imperial erudite positions. However, due to the lack of a leading classic and clear lineage for the *Music* section, imperial erudite positions during most of the Han dynasty were established for only the other five classics.[110]

In this context, the bibliographic system of the YWZ also emphasizes the structure of the Six Arts. Among the various surveys, the *Survey of Six Arts* holds the highest status. Not only is it placed first, but the explanatory texts related to it are also the most extensive.[111] The compilers also deliberately distinguished the Six Arts from other Confucian texts recorded in the *Survey of Masters*, reflecting the more authoritative position of the Six Arts in the education system.[112] For Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, the authority of the Six Arts derived from its completeness, which was

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[108] Cheng Sudong 程蘇東, *Cong Liuyi dao Shisanjing: Yi Jingmu Yanbian wei Hexin* 從六藝到十三經：以經目演變為核心[From the Six Arts to the Thirteen Classics: Centering on the Evolution of Jingmu], vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2017), pp. 89-96. There are various versions of the Six Arts' order based on the emphasis of different classic, and the version used here is the one from the YWZ.

[109] Many scholars throughout history have held the view that there was no leading classic for the *Music*, such as Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513 CE) and Yan Shigu. On the other hand, some modern scholars suggest that the *Grand Musician* (*Da Siyue* 大司樂) chapter in the *Rites of Zhou* might be the lost *Classics of Music* (*Yue Jing* 樂經), while others argue that it could be the *Records of Music* or the *Book of Odes*. For a summary of the historical perspectives on the existence of a written *Classics of Music*, see Wang Qizhou 王齊洲, "Guanyu Yuejing Wenxian Wenti" 關於《樂經》文獻問題[On the Textual Issues of the Classics of Music], *Qilu Xuekan* 齊魯學刊[Qilu Journal], no. 5 (2021), pp. 37-39.

[110] Cheng Sudong, *Cong Liuyi dao Shisanjing: Yi Jingmu Yanbian wei Hexin*, pp. 97-230.

[111] For the statistical result, see Hunter, "The 'Yiwen Zhi' 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) Bibliography in Its Own Context," p. 769.

[112] Jingwen 李景文, "Bielu Qilüè Jiangou Xihan Xueshu Puxi de Lilu Fenxi"《別錄》《七略》建構西漢學術譜系的理路分析[Analysis of the Construction of the Academic Genealogy in the Western Han through the Bie Lu and Qi Lüè], *Zhengzhou Daxue Xuebao* 鄭州大學學報, vol. 46, no. 5 (2013), pp. 125-127.

related to their own academic and political inclinations towards the theory of the Five Phases. If the *Survey of the Six Arts* lacked a section on the *Music* due to the absence of a canonical text, it would clearly undermine the completeness of this teaching system, thereby diminishing its authority. The concluding remarks following the *Survey of the Six Arts* can help us better understand this point:

> The patterns of the Six Arts are as follows: the *Music* is used to harmonize the spirits, symbolizing humaneness; the *Odes* is used to correct the language, representing righteousness; the *Rites* is used to clarify forms, which are obvious and thus need no further explanation; the *Documents* is used to broaden understanding, serving as the method of wisdom; and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is used to judge affairs, acting as the symbol of trustworthiness. These five constitute the Dao of the five constant virtues, complementing each other to form a complete system, with the *Changes* as their origin. … As for these five, there are changes and adjustments through the ages, just like the Five Phases, alternating and complementing each other in their roles.
>
> 六藝之文：樂以和神，仁之表也；詩以正言，義之用也；禮以明體，明者著見，故無訓也；書以廣聽，知之術也；春秋以斷事，信之符也。五者，蓋五常之道，相須而備，而易為之原。……至於五學，世有變改，猶五行之更用事焉。[113]

While reading this paragraph, one will notice the connection between the Six Arts and the Five Phases. As previously mentioned, the concept of the Five Phases was prevalent during the Han dynasty. By the late Western Han period, the Five Phases had been incorporated into various aspects of the Han knowledge system, including nature, the body, governmental systems, and music.[114] Liu Xiang and Liu Xin inherited and expanded upon Dong Zhongshu's theories, using the Five Phases to intricately and comprehensively explain the cyclical nature of dynastic

[113] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1723.
[114] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, pp. 75-128.

mandates. A representative work in this regard is Liu Xin's *Shi Jing* 世經, which arranges the succession of emperors in accordance with the generating sequence of the Five Phases (*wuxing xiangsheng* 五行相生).[115] Therefore, as Cheng Sudong 程蘇東 pointed out, "when Liu Xin and other Eastern Han scholars attempted to provide a comprehensive narrative of the Confucian classics, they naturally considered how to incorporate this knowledge system into the grand framework of the Five Phases."無論是劉歆還是東漢諸儒，當他們嘗試對儒家經典進行某種總結式敘述時，自然會考慮到如何將這一經典體系納入"五行"的系統之內[116] Connecting the classics to the ethical Five Constant Virtues (*wuchang* 五常) became the most appropriate alignment. In the above passage, the *Music*, *Odes*, *Rites*, *Documents*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are respectively linked to the virtues of humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信). The *Changes* is singled out as the origin of the Five Classics (*wujing zhi yuan* 五經之原) because of the significance attributed to it by Liu Xiang and his son.[117] The whole statement indicates that integrating the Six Arts into the Five Phases creates a strong demand for completeness. If any section were missing, the correspondence between these two systems would be disrupted, preventing them from functioning correctly. In other words, the completeness of the Six Arts is the very source of its

[115] This text is recorded in the *History of Han*, *Monograph on Rhythms and Calendars* (*Lüli Zhi* 漢書·律曆志). See Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, pp. 1011-1025. For research on Liu Xiang and Liu Xin's theories on the Yin-Yang and Five Phases, see Loewe, "Liu Xiang and Liu Xin," p. 370. Also see Ren Milin 任蜜林, "Chenwei yu Guwen Jingxue Guanxi zhi Zai Jiantao yi Liu Xin wei Zhongxin" 讖緯與古文經學關係之再檢討——以劉歆為中心[Revisiting the Relationship between Chenwei and the Study of Ancient Texts: Focusing on Liu Xin], *Zhexue Dongtai* 哲學動態, no. 7 (2019), pp. 86-95.

[116] Cheng Sudong, *Cong Liuyi dao Shisanjing: Yi Jingmu Yanbian wei Hexin*, pp. 234-237.

[117] Many scholars have argued that the special status of the *Changes* is due to Liu Xin's personal emphasis on it. See Wangeng 鄭萬耕. "Liu Xiang Liu Xin Fuzi de Yi Shuo" 劉向、劉歆父子的易說[The Yi Studies of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin], *Zhouyi Yanjiu* 周易研究, no. 2 (2004), pp. 3-12. Also see Zhang Tao 張濤,"Lüè Lun Liu Xiang Liu Xin Fuzi de Yixue Sixiang yu Chengjiu" 略論劉向劉歆父子的易學思想與成就[On the Yi Thought and Achievements of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin], *Wen Xian* 文獻, no. 2 (1998), pp. 79-92.

authority and utility as an imperial teaching system. The content following this passage further describes the shortcomings of contemporary scholars, which lie in their inability to grasp the Five Classics holistically. Since the *Changes* was elevated as the origin, it is evident that the Five Classics mentioned here include the *Music*:

> Ancient scholars would farm and provide for themselves, mastering one classic after several years, focusing on the essentials and merely studying the texts. Consequently, they spent little time but still accumulated much virtue, becoming proficient in the Five Classics by the age of thirty. … Later generations would follow suit even more aggressively, so much so that young learners would focus on one classic, only to be able to discuss it in their old age. They would cling to what they had learned and disparage what they had not seen, ultimately blinding themselves. This is a great peril for scholars.
>
> 古之學者耕且養，三年而通一藝，存其大體，玩經文而已，是故用日少而畜德多，三十而五經立也。……後進彌以馳逐，故幼童而守一藝，白首而後能言；安其所習，毀所不見，終以自蔽。此學者之大患也。[118]

This passage criticizes the prevalent trend of "chapter-and-verse" commentaries (*zhangju* 章句) in the Han dynasty, where "a single five-character phrase could be scrutinized in twenty to thirty thousand words". 說五字之文，至於二三萬言[119] Such meticulous and complicated methods often resulted in scholars mastering only one of the Six Arts in their lifetime. The fact that merely being unable to master all Six Arts was considered a "great peril of scholars" underscores the importance of the integrity of the Six Arts. Therefore, the absence of a canonical text for the *Music* section would evidently undermine the authority of the Six Arts as the imperial teaching

[118] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1723.
[119] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1723.

system, which naturally became a driving force for Liu Xiang and Liu Xin in their collation and organization efforts to find a leading text for the *Music*.

In this context, the *Records of Music* was selected because its content on proper music theory aligned with the academic and ideological needs of the Six Arts. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, the *Records of Music* uses concepts like the Five Phases and the resonance between heaven and humans, which Liu Xiang and Liu Xin particularly emphasized, to elaborate on music theory. For example, it correlates the five musical tones with five social roles, suggesting that if the harmony of the tones is disrupted, it signifies the impending downfall of the state. 五者皆亂，迭相陵，謂之慢。如此，則國之滅亡無日矣[120] Moreover, the *Records of Music* frequently emphasizes the relationship between music, harmony (*he* 和), and humaneness, which matches the *Survey of the Six Arts*' statement that "the *Music* is used to harmonize the spirits, symbolizing humaneness" 樂以和神，仁之表也[121] It reads:

> Music is the harmony of heaven and earth.
>
> 樂者，天地之和也。[122]
>
> Humaneness is akin to music.
>
> 仁近於樂。[123]

More importantly, the content of the *Records of Music* also corresponds with the educational functions required by the Six Arts. This text presents to its readers—likely rulers, as well as scholars and officials around the imperial court—a system of proper music used for

[120] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 978-980
[121] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 6, p. 1723.
[122] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 990.
[123] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 992.

governing the state, educating the populace, and achieving harmony under heaven. This theory includes three levels, from the lowest to the highest, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The first level is "sounds" (*sheng* 聲) derived from nature, which have no moral function. The second level is "melodies" (*yin* 音), created by humans through aesthetic and technical skill, but often lacking moral regulation, leading to sensory indulgence—this is the type of ritual music that concerned King Xian of Hejian. Only the highest level qualifies as music (*yue* 樂), crafted by sages, with the primary function of moral education rather than sensory pleasure. The following passage succinctly summarizes the distinction among these three levels:

> Music embodies the principles of ethics. Therefore, those who understand sounds but not melodies are like birds and beasts; those who understand melodies but not music are the common masses. Only the superior man (*junzi* 君子) truly understands music.
>
> 樂者，通倫理者也。是故知聲而不知音者，禽獸是也；知音而不知樂者，眾庶是也。唯君子為能知樂。[124]

In the YWZ, musical texts are recorded in both the *Survey of the Six Arts* and the *Survey of Poetic Compositions*. If we closely examine all the relevant texts documented in these two surveys, it becomes clear that Liu Xiang and Liu Xin organized musical texts according to the same three-level classification of music, melodies, and sounds.[125] Although there is no direct evidence confirming that they organized these texts based on the *Records of Music*, this at least helps us understand another academic parallel between their work and the *Records of Music*.

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[124] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 982.
[125] Jin Xi 金溪, and Wang Xiaodun 王小盾, "Cong Han Shu Yiwen Zhi Kan Hanru de Yinyue Huayu Tixi" 從《漢書·藝文志》看漢儒的音樂話語體系[Examining Han Confucian Musical Discourse through the Yiwen Zhi of the Han Shu], *Zhongguo Yinyuexue* 中國音樂學[Musicology in China], no. 1 (2020), pp. 66-74.

First, the musical texts recorded under the *Survey of the Six Arts* were considered as proper music suitable for imperial teaching. Six schools of thought documented in the *Music* section. Following the two versions of the *Records of Music*, four texts titled *Proper Songs* (*Yage Shi* 雅歌詩), *Proper Qin By Zhao* (*Yaqin Zhao Shi* 雅琴趙氏), *Proper Qin by Shi* (*Yaqin Shi Shi* 雅琴師氏), and *Proper Qin by Long* (*Yaqin Long Shi* 雅琴龍氏) are listed. The inclusion of the term "proper" (*ya* 雅) in their titles indicates that these texts were viewed as representing proper music with moral education functions during the organization activities. Furthermore, Zhao 趙, Shi 師, and Long 龍 were likely names of contemporary music officials, whose naming conventions are consistent with the Zhi family mentioned earlier as part of the Grand Music Officers.[126] The reason why the *Records of Music* stands out among these proper music texts and holds a leading status is its greater emphasis on exploring musical theory, philosophy, and cosmology. It highlights:

> Music is not merely about the sounds of the yellow bell pitch, the dalü pitch, the string instruments, or the singing and dancing. These are just the superficial aspects of music, which is why children can dance to it.
>
> 樂者，非謂黃鐘、大呂、弦、歌、干、揚也，樂之末節也，故童者舞之。[127]

We recall that the critique of the imperial music transmission was that it "could only convey the rhythms and tones without explaining their deeper meaning." These rhythms and tones are exactly what is referred to here as "the superficial aspects of music." 樂之末節也 Therefore, in terms of the importance of proper music education, the contents of the other four schools of

[126] Jin Xi and Wang Xiaodun, "Cong Han Shu Yiwen Zhi Kan Hanru de Yinyue Huayu Tixi," pp. 66-71.
[127] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1011.

thought in the *Music* section are inferior to the *Records of Music*, which elaborates on the interaction between music and heaven, state politics, and self-cultivation.

Second, the *Survey of Poetic Compositions* mainly encompass contemporary songs and rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), such as regional works, personal exchanges and those used in new ritual practices.[128] Although Martin Kern suggests the need to reevaluate conventional and ideologically-driven understanding of the rhapsodies and related genres recorded in the *Survey of Poetic Compositions*, there is a tension between aesthetics and morality.[129] For example, in his autobiography included in the *History of Han*, the famous Han literati Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE) critiques the genre of rhapsodies for their use of "extremely ornate and lavish phrases, grandly exaggerating their topics to the point that no one could surpass them." 極麗靡之辭，閎侈鉅衍，競於使人不能加也[130] Consequently, readers of rhapsodies became captivated by their literary beauty, neglecting the intended moral message. We can see that the moral education function of works in the *Survey of Poetic Compositions* was thought not as prominent as that of the works listed earlier, placing them at the level of melodies. This is why they are not included in the *Survey of the Six Arts* and cannot be the leading texts of the *Music* section.

We can conclude that Liu Xiang and Liu Xin constructed their system of proper music teaching based on the moral and educational values reflected in the texts they found in the imperial archives, with the *Records of Music* standing out among them. Therefore, the elevation of the *Records of Music* from an academic achievement initially presented by a local prince to a

[128] Martin Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the 'Fu'," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 63, no. 2 (2003), pp. 383-437.
[129] Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the 'Fu'," pp. 389-391.
[130] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 11, p. 3575.

leading text in the imperial teaching system was driven by ideological necessity. It was listed at the leading position of the *Music* section to fill the gap of having no independent canonical text for music, ensuring the completeness and authority of the Six Arts as the imperial education system, and thereby playing a role in the development of the empire.

Conclusion

In the late Western Han period, Wang Mang 王莽(r. 9-23 CE) held the power in the imperial court. When he was young, Wang Mang had served alongside Liu Xin as a Yellow Gate Attendant (*huangmen shilang* 黃門侍郎), and thus he held Liu Xin in high regard, recommending him to the Empress Dowager. 莽少與歆俱為黃門郎，重之，白太后[131] Many of the classics emphasized by Liu Xin were soon established as imperial erudite position during Wang Mang's rule. In the fourth year of the Yuanshi era 元始四年 (4 CE), Wang Mang further established an imperial erudite position for the *Music* and increased the number of erudite positions, assigning five scholars to each classic. 立《樂經》，益博士員，經各五人[132] This was the first and only time in history that the Music was formally established as a scholarly subject by the imperial court. When the Confucian scholars of the Hejian circle compiled the *Records of Music*, they might not have anticipated its future transmission. However, Liu Xin and his father's emphasis on this text during his collation and organization process may have contributed to this recognition. Its significance in political and intellectual history, as Wang Qizhou 王齊洲 noted, lies in "complementing the already reinforced foundation of ritual education with music education, thereby realizing the societal ideals of tracing back to Duke

[131] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 7, p. 1972.
[132] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 12, p. 4069.

Zhou.” 在本已得到强化的禮教基礎之上，補齊樂教的空白，以實現追跡周公的社會理想[133] Since Han Confucian thought became the dominant ideology during Emperor Wu’s reign, constructing knowledge authority became a crucial cultural pathway for the central government to demonstrate its ruling legitimacy. The primary tasks included creating rituals and music and organizing classical texts. Over 130 years later, Confucian scholars and politicians at the turn of the Han dynasty further recognized the ideological significance of a complete set of Six Arts as an imperial education system—it served as the key to achieving the Confucian ideal of sage-king governance. Therefore, the *Records of Music*, initially complied by a feudal academic circle, eventually entered the mainstream imperial knowledge system. Each key stage in this process reflects the dialogue between the Confucian ideal of “grand unification” and the central governance practices of the Han dynasty.

The *Records of Music* incorporated the theories of Yin-Yang and Five Phases, as well as the resonance between heaven and humans, allowing its music theory to fit seamlessly with the political and cultural context of the Han dynasty. The text’s more serious acceptance with these prevalent ideas will be the focus of the next chapter. While the *Records of Music* is rooted in the narratives of resonance and Yin-Yang, it uses these concepts to portray the ideal Confucian sage king. This narrative is particularly relevant to the Western Han rulers, who were deeply invested in “establishing rituals and creating music” (*zhili zuoyue* 製禮作樂) to shape cultural authority.

[133] Wang Qizhou 王齊洲, Wang Mang Zouli Yue Jing Guankui” 王莽奏立《樂經》管窺[A Glimpse into Wang Mang’s Establishment of the Classics of Music], *Zhongshan Daxue Xuebao* 中山大學學報, vol. 62, no. 1 (2022), p. 12.

CHAPTER 2

To Become Sage or God?: The Reception of Correlative Cosmology and the Confucian Ideals in the *Records of Music*

> The way of sound is interconnected with politics. *Gong* is the ruler, *shang* is the minister, *jue* is the people, *zhi* is the affairs, and *yu* is the things. If these five are not chaotic, then there will be no discordant melodies. If the *gong* [tone] is chaotic, then [the melody] is disorganized, [indicating that] the ruler is arrogant. If the *shang* [tone] is chaotic, then [the melody] is slanted, [indicating that] the ministers are corrupt. If the *jue* [tone] is chaotic, then [the melody] is depressed, [indicating that] the people are resentful. If the *zhi* [tone] is chaotic, then [the melody] is mournful, [indicating that] the affairs are overburdening. If the *yu* [tone] is chaotic, then [the melody] is precipitous, [indicating that] the wealth [of the state] is depleted. If these five are all chaotic, and transgress upon each other in turn, this is called "man" (dissolute) [music]. If it is like this, then the extermination and passing away of the state will occur in no time at all.
> 聲音之道，與政通矣。宮為君，商為臣，角為民，徵為事，羽為物。五者不亂，則無怗懘之音矣。宮亂則荒，其君驕；商亂則陂，其官壞；角亂則憂，其民怨；徵亂則哀，其事勤；羽亂則危，其財匱。五者皆亂，迭相陵，謂之慢。如此，則國之滅亡無日矣。[134]

This is a passage from the first *pian* of the *Records of Music*, the *Origin of Music* (*Yue Ben* 樂本), which discusses the resonance between music and state politics. Here, the authors claim that the state of the five musical tones can reveal the current political situation. If the five tones of the prevailing music are in disorder and overstep their bounds, it is called chaos. In this state, the downfall is imminent. 五者皆亂，迭相陵，謂之慢。如此，則國之滅亡無日矣 This

[134] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 978-980

seemingly abrupt connection between music and politics reflects the correlative thinking that was prevalent during the Han dynasty.

The concept of "correlative thinking" is generally believed to have originated from the efforts of Marcel Granet to understand and summarize the cosmological implications of early Chinese thought.[135] Subsequent scholars further developed this concept. For example, A. C. Graham conducted a systematic philosophical exploration of correlative thinking and summarized the core of this concept with the idea of analogy.[136] Roger T. Ames then explain the thought patterns and characteristics of ancient Chinese civilization from the perspective of correlative cosmology.[137] Moreover, John B. Henderson discussed the history of Chinese correlative cosmology from Han to Qing dynasties in great detail.[138] According to previous research, correlative thinking refers to a philosophical approach that views all entities and events—whether natural phenomena, human affairs, or cosmic events—as part of an interconnected system. This system is structured through a principle of categorization (*bilei* 比

[135] According to David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, the concept of "correlative thinking" can be dated back to Marcel Granet. See David L. Hall, and Roger T. Ames, "The Contingency of Culture," in *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 124. However, Granet never used the word "correlative thinking" directly; instead, according to Liu Yunhua, what he discussed is "correlation" (fr. corrélation). Liu states that this concept originates from a combination of (1) Alfred N. Whitehead's discussion about relatedness, togetherness, and aesthetic order; (2) Richard Wilhelm and Carl G. Jung's concept of synchronicity (de. Synchronizität), which originates from their interests in the *Changes*; and (3) Granet's discussion about "correlation". See Liu Yunhua 劉耘華, "Yige Hanxue Gainian de Kuaguo Yinyuan: Guanlian Siwei de Sixiang Laiyuan ji Shengcheng Yujing Chutan" 一個漢學概念的跨國因緣——"關聯思維"的思想來源及生成語境初探[A Transnational Origin of a Sinological Concept: Preliminary Exploration of the Ideological Source and Context of the Formation of "Correlative Thinking"], *Shehui Kexue* 社會科學, no. 5 (2018), pp. 173-182.

[136] A. C. Graham, "The Grounding of Valuations," in *Reason and Spontaneity* (London: Curzon Press, 1985), pp. 57-60. Also see Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, Rev. ed. (Melbourne: Quirin Press, 2016), pp. 29-44

[137] Roger T. Ames, *Ziwo de Yuancheng: Zhongxi Hujing xia de Gudian Ruxue he Daojia* 自我的圓成: 中西互鏡下的古典儒學與道家[Self-consummation: Classical Confucianism and Daoism within the Mirror of East and West] (Hebei: Hebei University Press, 2006), pp. 165-192.

[138] John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 1-227.

類), where various items are classified under certain rules to maintain order and ensure each element has a specific place.[139] Within this framework established by categorization, relationships between different entities are defined by correspondence and oppositions.[140] Furthermore, the interplay among elements and categories, as Joseph Needham summarized, are governed not by mechanical impulse or logical causation but by a kind of mysterious resonance (*ganying* 感應).[141]

Contrary to Granet's view that correlative thinking is unique to China and permeates its entire intellectual history as a presupposition,[142] subsequent scholars such as A. C. Graham and Michael Puett have demonstrated that correlative thinking emerged later, roughly developing during the late Warring States to Western Han period.[143] Moreover, although correlative thinking is not exclusive to China and appears in many other civilizations, it indeed forms an important component of Chinese cosmology.[144] Therefore, the manifestations and impact of correlative thinking are essential subjects in the study of Han dynasty texts concerning cosmology—including narratives about the concepts of time, space, Yin-Yang, numerical and divination systems, and the relationship between heaven and humanity.[145]

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[139] Yu Jia 余佳, "Guanlianxing Siwei de Zui Jiben Xingshi—Yin Yang Dui' ou" 關聯性思維的最基本形式——陰陽對偶[The Most Basic Form of Correlative Thinking: The Binary Opposition of Yin and Yang], *Huadong Shifan Daxue Xuebao* 華東師範大學學報（哲學社會科學版）, vol. 43, no. 1 (2011), p. 9.
[140] Wang Aihe, "Correlative Cosmology: From the Structure of Mind to Embodied Practice," in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 72 (Stockholm: The BMFEA, 2000.), p. 114.
[141] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China vol. 2: History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 281.
[142] Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-divinization in Early China*, pp. 1-30.
[143] Wang Aihe, "Correlative Cosmology: From the Structure of Mind to Embodied Practice," pp. 115-119. Also See Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-divinization in Early China*, pp. 16-21.
[144] Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, p. 1.
[145] Regarding the components of cosmology, see Wang Aihe, "Correlative Cosmology: From the Structure of Mind to Embodied Practice," p. 114.

Like many other texts from the Han dynasty, the *Records of Music* also attempts to incorporate its theory of proper music into a correlative cosmos. This task is relatively straightforward, as musical performances and correlative thinking, according to Kenneth J. DeWoskin, are intrinsically connected. DeWoskin explains that early Chinese concept of resonance stems from their observation of a mysterious acoustic phenomenon when playing music: strings on a zither, as well as between strings and metal instruments, would produce sound through vibrations transmitted by air, without any physical contact.[146] This resonance between instruments inspired and demonstrated the possibility of mutual connections between various entities in the cosmos, allowing them to interact without any visible form of contact, which contributed to the formation of correlative thinking.[147] Additionally, the intricate pitch and scale system further shows the compatibility between music, numerology (*shushu* 術數), and the cosmological equilibrium.[148]

Building upon the physical foundation, the *Records of Music* aligns its music theory with the Five Phases, such as the correspondence between the five tones and the five social roles. From this, the following question arises: Beyond material resonance, how is proper music in the *Records of Music* integrated into a correlative cosmos from a more conceptual perspective? How Confucian ideology shapes this integration? The first and second sections demonstrate that, in the *Records of Music*, the correlation is evident not only in the content—through correspondences and resonance between music and human affairs—but also in the rhetoric, with

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[146] Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1982), pp. 71-74.
[147] DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, pp. 61-68.
[148] For example, the fact that pitch could easily correspond to the length of pipes and strings, as well as the volume of bells, made it a natural reference point for both linear and volumetric measurements. As a result, various musical and acoustic terms were incorporated with the popular concepts of numerology and calendar systems (*lifa* 曆法). See Liang Mingyue, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, pp. 63-70.

frequent instances of pairing (*dui'ou* 對偶) between rituals and music, heaven and earth, and Yin-Yang.[149] The third section depicts the dynamic and contentious environment surrounding the reform of state sacrifices, illustrating how and why the authors of the *Records of Music* actively employed prevalent cosmological narratives to advance their ideal political vision. This section shows the significant and competitive roles played by Confucian scholars (*rusheng* 儒生) and ritual specialists (*fangshi* 方士), both of whom utilized correlative cosmology in the interpretation of state sacrifices. Ritual specialists provided theoretical underpinnings for sacrificial practices through stories of the Yellow Emperor's ascent to heaven, focusing on fulfilling the ruler's personal desires for divine mandate and ultimate ascension. In contrast, the *Records of Music* conveys an approach that opposes that of the ritual specialists. Confucian scholars viewed sacrificial rituals and the underlying cosmology as constraints on the emperor. Their ideal ruler is a sage king who completes self-cultivation and further governs through rituals and music, rather than seeking ascension to heaven and the acquisition of divine power.

Correspondence and Resonance among Music, Humans, and the Cosmos

John B. Henderson pointed out that resonance is, if not intrinsic, a major factor in political-oriented correspondence, including those between human-cosmos and state-cosmos.[150] A phrase in the *Records of Music* further illustrates that resonance, along with categorization, are

[149] Some scholars compare *dui'ou* to the rhetorical phenomenon of "antithesis" in English, but in fact, the two have different essences. For example, see Stephen Owen, "An Uncreated Universe: Cosmogony, Concepts, and Couplets," in *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 78-107. Owen also employs terms such as "parallelism" and "parallel couplet" to refer to *dui'ou* phenomenon in classical Chinese poetry. But I chose to use the translation from Graham's work *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*. The third chapter, "Pairs: The Yin and Yang," is translated in the Chinese version as 對偶：陰與陽. My choice of translation is because of the textual nature of the *Records of Music*—it is not a poem. Therefore, I would like to emphasize the cosmological/philosophical meaning of the *dui'ou* rather than its literary aspect. I will also use terms such as "symmetrical structure" to refer to this rhetorical structure appeared in the *Records of Music*.

[150] Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, p. 22.

fundamental concepts and modes of correlative cosmology: “the principles of all things to move each according to its category.” 萬物之理各以其類相動也[151] This statement articulates that, predicated upon categorization, myriad entities rely on correspondence and resonance to move and influence each other.

The authors of the *Records of Music* employ correspondence and resonance in their theory of proper music, demonstrating how music incorporates and functions within a correlative cosmology. It reads:

> All perverse sounds resonate with people, and rebellious *qi* respond; when these rebellious *qi* manifest as patterns, licentious music arises. Proper sounds resonates with people, and harmonious *qi* respond; when these harmonious *qi* manifest as patterns, peaceful music emerges.
> 凡姦聲感人而逆氣應之；逆氣成象而淫樂興焉。正聲感人而順氣應之；順氣成象而和樂興焉。[152]

The authors divide music and the elements that resonate with it into two categories: perverse sounds, adverse *qi* and licentious music, versus proper sounds, harmonious *qi* and peaceful music. Since they share moral characteristics, they can correspondent and resonate with each other, leading to the generation of music that embodies specific virtues. After correspondence, the involvement of *qi* in the process of music generation clearly exemplifies how resonance operates in the *Records of Music*. According to this account, music follows an abstract and ambiguous process of creation: from sounds to *qi*, then to patterns, and finally to music. In this process, the involved elements do not interact through material causation: music is not directly produced by sound or *qi*, but arises from the resonance among sound, the human heart-mind, and

[151] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1003.
[152] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1003.

qi in a correlative cosmos. It is difficult to define what *ying* 應 and *xing* 興 refer to, as their meanings resist clear articulation through analytical or logical reasoning. As Roger T. Ames has stated, correlative language emphasizes the process; it is about the results, signs, and rewards of sensing the flux of things.[153] If we understand the cited passage from the perspective of correlative thinking, we can say that the authors are emphasizing the process of music generation, where *ying* and *xing* imply the absence of clear steps and causality.

Many passages in the *Records of Music* discuss the origins of music and point to emotions, namely the idea that environmental objects stimulate and interact with human emotions, further refining the aesthetic that music are born from artists' emotional responses to their surroundings.[154] Nevertheless, here, the authors substitute *qi* for emotion, making the process of music generation not just limited to the heart-mind's responses to environmental stimuli but allowing it to expand and point to the resonance between human and cosmos. There are another paragraphs that elaborates in greater details on the resonance between humans and the cosmos as manifested by music:

> Earth's *qi* ascends, heaven's *qi* descends, *yin* and *yang* press against each other, heaven and earth move in unison. Stirred by thunder and lightning, invigorated by wind and rain, driven by the four seasons, warmed by the sun and moon, thus all transformations are stimulated to arise. In this way, music is the harmony between heaven and earth.
> 地氣上齊，天氣下降，陰陽相摩，天地相蕩，鼓之以雷霆，奮之以風雨，動之以四時，煖之以日月，而百化興焉。如此，則樂者，天地之和也。[155]
> After this, [music are] elevated with sounds, and are adorned with *qin* (seven-string zither) and *se* (twenty-five-string zither), animated with martial dances [decorated] with

[153] Ames, *Ziwo de Yuancheng: Zhongxi Hujing xia de Gudian Ruxue he Daojia*, pp. 190-192.
[154] Jia Jinhua, "From Human-Spirit Resonance to Correlative Modes: The Shaping of Chinese Correlative Thinking," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 66, no. 2 (2016), pp. 462-463.
[155] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 993.

> shields and axes, as well as virtuous dances [decorated] with feathered banners, accompanied by the soft sounds of flutes and pipes, illuminating the brilliance of supreme virtue, harmonizing the *qi* of the four season, to manifest the principles of myriad things.
> 然後發以聲音，而文以琴瑟，動以干戚，飾以羽旄，從以簫管，奮至德之光，動四氣之和，以著萬物之理。[156]

The *qi* of the earth belongs to *yin*, and the *qi* of the heavens belongs to *yang*. The merging and fusion of these two *qi*, *yin* and *yang*, form the underlying vitality and dynamism behind natural phenomena: in the cycles of wind and rain, the four seasons, and the sun and moon, all things are transformed and come into being. Due to music's origins cited above, which are rooted in human resonance with the cosmos, it can use sound, flutes, pipes, and dances to participate in the transformation and generation of the cosmos, "manifest the principles of myriad things" 以著萬物之理. Music thus aptly correspondents and depicts this harmony between heaven and earth, a scenario in which all things are interconnected, resonate with each other, and emerge spontaneously.

Music is also incorporated into human-state resonance. As John B. Henderson has noted that, Han cosmologists expanded the concept of acoustical resonance to include statecraft, suggesting that musical tones reflect the prevailing political situation. Consequently, analyzing the sounds, similar to monitoring unusual phenomena in the heavens, evolved into a form of political science.[157] One of the most obvious examples in the *Records of Music* is the correspondence and resonance between the five musical tones and the five social roles, which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Within the five musical tones, the pitch of *gong* is the lowest, while *yu* has the highest pitch. The five tones are arranged in order from lowest to

[156] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1004.
[157] Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, p. 23.

highest pitch, and from the murkiest to the clearest. There is a metaphorical correspondence from the five tones to the five social roles: in ancient music, the murkier tones were considered more revered, thus the lowest pitch, *gong*, corresponds to the highest social position, the sovereign, and so forth.[158] The five musical tones and the five social roles each belong to one of five categories, creating a resonance between them; hence, disorder in a particular tone signals chaos in the corresponding social role within the same category. When all five tones fall into disorder and overstep their bounds, the entire society resonates with this chaos, leading to calamity.

Beyond human-state resonance, the role of music as a manifestation of state-cosmos resonance is more clearly demonstrated in the following passage:

> Therefore, clarity and brightness [of music] mirror the heavens, expansiveness [of music] mirrors the earth, beginnings and endings [of music] mirror the four seasons, cycles [of music] mirror the movement of wind and rain. [Music forms melodies with five tones without chaos], just as five colors create patterns without disorder, [with each of the five relationships (between ruler and subject, etc.) properly in its place]. The eight musical instruments respond to the winds from eight directions [harmonizing without usurping their roles]. The numerous [musical pitches] obtain their constants and remain regular. [The sounds,] whether soft or loud, complement each other [without suppression]. [The music] has its beginnings and endings, but they generate each other [without conflict]. [The twelve-pitch scale], some leading, some following, some murky, some clear, alternate in cycles, all adhering to the natural law.
> 是故清明象天，廣大象地，終始象四時，周還象風雨，五色成文而不亂，八風從律而不奸，百度得數而有常，小大相成，終始相生，倡和清濁，迭相為經。[159]

[158] This theory comes from Zheng Xuan's commentary. The original text states: "All murky sounds are revered, while clear sounds are of lower status."凡聲濁者尊，清者卑。Additionally, he says: "Among the five tones, those with heavier sounds produced by more strings are considered superior. The *gong* string is the thickest, using eighty-one strings, thus *gong* represents the sovereign." 五音以絲多聲重者為尊，宮絃最大，用八十一絲，故宮為君。See Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 979.
[159] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1004.

This passage describes the foundational aspects of the educational function of proper music—its intrinsic characteristics such as style, melody, pitch, and the choice of instruments are derived from manifestations of various natural phenomena within the cosmos. Here, the principle of "like-resonating-with-like" (*tonglei xiangying* 同類相應) are expressed in a more subtle manner: metaphor allows proper music to correspond the attributes of a well-ordered cosmos, whereas resonance empowers music to induce the sought-after cosmic harmony and order within the state. In the sentence immediately following this passage, the educational function of proper music is described as how it brings peace to the world. Through a series of implications to correspondence and resonance, the order embodied in proper music ultimately extends to the harmony of the entire world:

> Therefore, as music is performed, human relations are clarified, ears and eyes are sharpened, blood and *qi* are harmonious and balanced, customs transform and manners refine, bringing peace to all under Heaven.
> 故樂行而倫清，耳目聰明，血氣和平，移風易俗，天下皆寧。[160]

Roger T. Ames once summarized that correlative thinking is primarily metaphorical, based on synchronicity, spatial coexistence, and similarity, establishing meaningful connections that are not causal.[161] The theory of proper music in the *Records of Music* is predicated on this correlative thinking: Ames' summary becomes more evident in the discussion of how music acts as both a conduit and embodiment of interplay between various human societal realms and the cosmos. Through correspondence and resonance, music integrates into and functions within a correlative cosmos.

[160] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1005.
[161] Ames, *Ziwo de Yuancheng: Zhongxi Hujing xia de Gudian Ruxue he Daojia*, p. 176.

Pairing and Binary Opposition: Yin and Yang, Rituals and Music

The binary opposition is another relationship between different entities in correlative thinking, and it is also a fundamental one: the previously mentioned resonances such as human-cosmos, human-state, and state-cosmos all involve relationships between two categories. This is because, firstly, there must be more than one element; otherwise, categorization and correspondence are impossible. Secondly, compared to more complex correspondence systems such as the theory of Five Phases, binary opposition is the simplest way to categorize.[162] When discussing concepts such as Yin-Yang and rituals-music, the *Records of Music* also employs extensive binary opposition to illustrate how these entities, belonging to different categories, are associated and resonate with each other in a correlative cosmos. Here are the most representative passages from the text:

> Music is the harmony of heaven and earth. Rituals are the order of heaven and earth. Through harmony, all things are transformed; through order, all things are distinguished. Music is created by heaven; rituals are established by earth.
> 樂者，天地之和也。禮者，天地之序也。和，故百物皆化；序，故羣物皆別。樂由天作，禮以地制。[163]

> With the heavens high and the earth below, the myriad things are diverse and scattered, then rituals are established and practiced. Flowing without ceasing, converging and transforming, thus music arises. Spring's burgeoning and summer's growth embody humaneness; autumn's harvest and winter's storage embody righteousness. Humaneness is akin to music, righteousness akin to rituals. Music promotes harmony, leads the deities, and follows heaven; rituals delineate appropriateness, dwell with spirits, and follow earth. Therefore, the sages created music in response to heaven and established rituals to

[162] Yu Jia, "Guanlianxing Siwei de Zui Jiben Xingshi—Yin Yang Dui' ou," p.15.
[163] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 990.

> complement the earth. With rituals and music clearly established, heaven and earth perform their functions.
>
> 天高地下，萬物散殊，而禮制行矣。流而不息，合同而化，而樂興焉。春作夏長，仁也；秋斂冬藏，義也。仁近於樂，義近於禮。樂者敦和，率神而從天，禮者別宜，居鬼而從地。故聖人作樂以應天，制禮以配地。禮樂明備，天地官矣。[164]

It is evident that the *Records of Music* uses pairing to describe the generation and interaction between these binary opposition concepts. Pairing is a very important rhetorical structure and means of expression in classical Chinese literature, appearing as early as in the *Odes*. The main characteristic of paring is arranging two sentences or phrases with equal numbers of characters, identical or similar structures, and related meanings (including identical or opposite) symmetrically together.[165]

In discussing the phenomenon of pairing in early Chinese texts, Graham employs the structuralist linguistic approach of Ferdinand de Saussure. Using the pair of structuralist concepts "paradigm/syntagm" for his analysis, he concludes that Yin and Yang form the fundamental linguistic structure, resulting in a long chain of binary oppositions, such as heaven and earth, man and woman, day and night, etc.[166] His perspective is influenced by E. Sapir and B. L. Whorf, who assert that language shapes thought. In Graham's opinion, "classical Chinese is a language remarkable for the ease with which it moves between the rhythmically punctuated and

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[164] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 992.

[165] Wang Yan, "Qiantan Dui'ou Xingcheng de Jichu," p. 7. In his examination of classical Chinese poetry, particularly "regulated verse" (*lüshi* 律詩), Stephen Owen offers a more strict and detailed definition of "parallelism", that is, every word and phrase in one line of a couplet must be matched by a corresponding word in the same semantic category in the same position of the second line. Additionally, the two lines should be parallel in a more general and flexible sense of "sense" (*yi* 意). See Owen, "An Uncreated Universe: Cosmogony, Concepts, and Couplets," pp. 90-91. Since the *Records of Music* is not a poem, I chose to introduce the *dui'ou* phenomenon in a more relaxed manner.

[166] Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, p. 50.

parallelized clauses in which the thinker is grouping concepts in rows of pairs and the unequal and syntactically complex sentences in which he thinks with them."[167]

Considering the pairing of rituals and music through Graham's paradigm/syntagm framework can effectively highlight the parallel structures and the correlative thinking embedded in the *Records of Music*.[168] However, before extending this long chain of binary oppositions to include rituals and music, it is worth noting that adopting this structuralist approach does not imply that I believe these parallel passages in the *Records of Music* represent or shape a universally, static, and deep structure inherent in the so-called "Chinese way of thinking." It is necessary here to discuss both the contributions and limitations of structuralism in exploring early Chinese cosmology. Structuralism has been the dominant paradigm in the study of Chinese correlative cosmology, extending the analysis of cosmology beyond philosophy by linking it structurally to social systems. Under this framework, cosmology was often portrayed as static and permanent, transcending historical changes and human agency.[169] With the rise of post-structuralism and other theories, the initial structuralist view of "culture" has been fundamentally transformed, shifting from a static structure of customs or symbols to a dynamic system that evolves through social practice. As a result, cosmology is no longer seen as a purely mental construct that transcends history and is unaffected by power. Instead, it must be examined as a component of the ideology, dominance, and power dynamics in a society that is constantly evolving.[170] This perspective is the stance taken in this chapter and the previous one. In fact, Graham himself also presented a historical conclusion that opposes the structuralist stance, suggesting that correlative cosmology is not a primordial and quintessential feature of the

[167] Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, p. 45.
[168] Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, pp. 29-44.
[169] Wang Aihe, "Correlative Cosmology: From the Structure of Mind to Embodied Practice," pp. 123-124.
[170] Wang Aihe, "Correlative Cosmology: From the Structure of Mind to Embodied Practice," p. 125.

Chinese mind, but rather a historical phenomenon that emerged at the end of the classical period, contributing to the development of an imperial administrative system and ideology.[171]

Furthermore, subsequent scholars have examined the use of parallelism (*dui'ou* 對偶) from the perspective of how cognition influence language use. For instance, Stephen Owen highlighted that Chinese classical poetry was perceived as the authentic representation of an experience, stating, "The structure of a poem emerged from the structure of experience, moving through rhythms of scene and subjective reflections."[172] This insight is particularly valuable for the analysis in this section, reminding us not to unilaterally assert, as Graham did, that the linguistic structure of classical Chinese is the exact reason for the formation of the "Chinese mind".[173]

In exploring the key concepts of music and rituals and their associated categories, the author of the *Records of Music* frequently use symmetrical sentences, a syntactic feature that vividly demonstrates their correlative thinking. In the above two paragraphs, each pair of sentences adheres to a strict symmetrical structure. The concepts are categorized into two syntagmatic segments through symmetrical sentence structures. The elements within each syntagm are interconnected through experiential and metaphorical associations: the harmonious ensemble of musical tones parallels the vibrant growth of all things in the spring and summer, a dynamic more aligned with the source of *yang*—heaven; conversely, rituals delineate distinctions of status and kinship similar to how all things in autumn and winter withdraw and condense, revealing internal structures, dynamics more aligned with the source of *yin*--earth. Moreover, the pairings of music-rituals, harmony-order, and heaven-earth are situated within the paradigms,

[171] Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, pp. 1-28.
[172] Owen, "An Uncreated Universe: Cosmogony, Concepts, and Couplets," p. 100.
[173] Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, pp. 3-5.

indicating their interchangeability within the same semantic domain. This interchangeability facilitates the authors' use of strictly symmetrical sentence structures to articulate the relationship between rituals and music. As Yu Jia has stated, the parallelism in Chinese poetry is a manifestation of correlative thoughts. The form of correlative thinking is similar to filling in a lyrical template (*cipai* 詞牌); once the template and core elements are determined, all that remains is to insert the appropriate words accordingly.[174] In other words, this symmetrical syntactic structure exemplifies the correlative relationships among paradigms. Through this mechanism, the authors illustrate how different categories are resonated within a broader cosmos. As Du Weiming states, all forms of existence in the correlative cosmos are integral parts of what is often called the great continuum (*dahua* 大化).[175] Although music and rituals are categorized respectively, they are not in opposition or exclusion but are in a closely intertwined relationship of mutual generation. It reads:

> Music originates from the Great Beginning, while rituals dwell among completed beings. That which rests ceaselessly is heaven; that which remains unmoved is earth; the interplay of movement and stillness is between heaven and earth. This is why the sage speaks of rituals and music.
>
> 樂著大始，而禮居成物。著不息者天也，著不動者地也，一動一靜者，天地之間也。故聖人曰禮樂云。[176]

Although music and rituals belong to binary categories, effective governance necessitates generative interaction, mirroring the dynamic processes within the cosmos, which comes into being through the resonances between heaven and earth, Yin and Yang.

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[174] Yu Jia, "Guanlianxing Siwei de Zui Jiben Xingshi—Yin Yang Dui' ou," pp. 9-11.
[175] Du Weiming, *Du Weiming Wenji* 杜維明文集[The Collection of Du Weiming' s Writings], vol. 3 (Hubei: Wuhan Chubanshe, 2002), p. 226.
[176] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 994.

Stephen Owen once pointed out that in an "uncreated world" (mainly referring to a world not created by God), an entity is defined by its differentiation from a series of correlatives and counterparts.[177] Therefore, a poetry that promises to present the "natural" must incorporate these paired relationships, such as complementarity, opposition, and mutual generation, leading to the emergence of parallelism as a form of expression.[178] This statement encourages a reconsideration of Graham's assumptions: the placement of music alongside rituals in the *Records of Music*, achieved through the use of pairing, is a reflection of the prevalent correlative cosmology of the time, particularly the Yin-Yang binary opposition structure, rather than its cause. Scholars like Li Xueqin 李學勤 have demonstrated that the passages in the *Records of Music* concerning heaven-earth, music-rituals are directly adapted from the *Commentary on the Appended Judgments* (*Xici Zhuan* 繫辭傳, hereafter XCZ), which is believed to contain core philosophy of the *Classics of Changes* (*Yi Jing* 易經).[179] The *Changes* and its commentary system have long been regarded as an important intellectual resource for the concept of Yin-Yang binary opposition: according to statistics, more than thirty pairs of opposing concepts appear within it, such as hard (*gang* 剛) and soft (*rou* 柔), prosperity (*tai* 泰) and stagnation (*pi* 否), etc.[180] The XCZ contains famous statements regarded as a brilliant summary of the Yin-Yang opposition and the generation of the cosmos:

> [The successive movement of] Yin and Yang constitutes what is called the Dao.

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[177] Owen, "An Uncreated Universe: Cosmogony, Concepts, and Couplets," pp. 84-86.
[178] Owen, "An Uncreated Universe: Cosmogony, Concepts, and Couplets," p. 86.
[179] See Li Xueqin 李學勤,"Yizhuan de Niandai Wenti"《易傳》的年代問題[The Issue of the Dating of the Yi Zhuan], in *Zhouyi Suyuan* 周易溯源[Tracing the Origins of the Zhou Yi] (Sichuan: Bashu Shushe, 2006), p. 109. Regarding the content and nature of the XCZ, see Joseph A. Adler, "What is Yijing?," in *The Yijing: A Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 12.
[180] Wang Yan 王燕,"Qiantan Dui' ou Xingcheng de Jichu" 淺談對偶形成的基礎[A Brief Discussion on the Foundation of Parallelism], *Yunnan Shifan Daxue Xuebao* 雲南師範大學學報, vol. 31, no. 3 (1999) p. 9-10.

一陰一陽之謂道。[181]

Thus in [the system of] the Yi there is the Great Ultimate, which generated the Two Modes (i.e., Yin and Yang). Those Two Modes generated the Four Emblematic Symbols, which in turn generated the Eight Trigrams.

是故《易》有太極，是生兩儀，兩儀生四象，四象生八卦。[182]

These two statements precisely describe the scenario in which order is created through the mutual movement of two entities, a theme that is emphasized and developed in the *Records of Music*, as we have already seen. According to my preliminary statistics, there are more than forty instances of pairing between rituals and music in the *Records of Music*, which is uncommon in earlier texts. In the earlier Confucian text, the *Zuo Zhuan*, the status of rituals is unique and symbolizes heaven; music, on the other hand, is often subordinate to rituals and is not described independently. It reads:

To comply with Heaven through ritual propriety is the correct Way of Heaven.

禮以順天，天之道也。[183]

Ritual propriety is the warp thread the Heaven, the proper duty of earth, and the best conduct of the people.

夫禮，天之經也，地之義也，民之行也。[184]

The rituals that can sustain a nation have endured for a long time, alongside heaven and earth.

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[181] Huang Shouqi 黃壽祺, ed., *Zhou Yi Yizhu* 周易譯注[Translations and Commentaries on the Zhou Yi] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2004), p. 503.
[182] Huang Shouqi, *Zhou Yi Yizhu*, p. 519.
[183] Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Jiaozhu* 春秋左傳校注[Annotations and Commentaries on the Zuo Zhuan], edited by Chen Shuguo 陳戍國(Hunan: Yuelu Shushe, 2006), p. 335.
[184] Zuo Qiuming, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Jiaozhu*, p. 1058.

禮之可以為國也久矣，與天地並。[185]

According to these accounts, rituals are the manifestation of heaven, or even heaven and earth, and serve as a general term of various ethical principles. Zhao Fasheng 趙法生 summarizes this by stating, “Speaking of rituals without mentioning music, or using rituals to encompass music, was a general tendency in the intellectual world at the time.” 言禮不言樂，或者舉禮而統樂，是當時思想界的一般情形[186] However, in the *Records of Music*, the authors correspond music with heaven and establish a parallel relationship with rituals. This series of expressions suggests a significant elevation in the status of music, further implying that due to its correspondence with heaven, music subtly governs rituals.

By comparing similar passages in the *Records of Music* and the XCZ, Zhao Fasheng further points out that the paring narratives in the *Records of Music* represents a significant innovation in the Confucian correlative cosmology. It “integrates the human realm of rituals and music into the heavenly order of the *Changes*…thereby uniting heaven and humanity as one.” 將人文禮樂植入到《易》之天道秩序中……天人之際因此相與爲一[187] From the discussion on the Six Arts system in Chapter 1, it becomes evident that Han scholars consistently felt an urge to gradually organize a systematic whole to unify the once fragmented and disjointed textual world. Driven by this impulse, the correlative cosmology, due to its inherent characteristic of integrating all things into a system of mutual movement, gained significant attention and reached its fullest

[185] Zuo Qiuming, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Jiaozhu*, p. 1084.
[186] Zhao Fasheng, “Cong Qiankun Yi dao Liyue Yi: Lun Yueji dui Liyue Zhexue he Yixue de Shuangchong Tuijin,” p. 41.
[187] Zhao Fasheng, “Cong Qiankun Yi dao Liyue Yi: Lun Yueji dui Liyue Zhexue he Yixue de Shuangchong Tuijin,” p. 41-45.

expression during the Han dynasty.[188] We can further conclude that correlative cosmology influenced both the content and rhetorical structure of the *Records of Music* in two main ways: the pursuit of a harmonious and orderly system, and the acceptance of the Yin-Yang binary opposition order. This led the authors to choose the rhetorical structure of pairing, placing music and rituals on an equal footing and incorporating them into a cosmos governed by the Yin-Yang structure.

Becoming a Sage: The *Records of Music* and the Confucian Ideal Cosmos

The influence of the correlative cosmology prevalent during the Han dynasty on the *Records of Music* has been thoroughly analyzed and demonstrated. Building on this foundation, several key questions merit further exploration: What political or cultural stance does this text express through its use of correlative cosmology? How does its Confucian background shape the acceptance and interpretation of this cosmological framework? To address these questions, I will first briefly introduce the design and unification of the state sacrificial system in the Western Han period, which should be the most ideal real-world application of the proper music and rituals emphasized in the *Records of Music*. The construction of the state sacrificial system was a battleground for early Western Han cosmology, real politics, and various ideologies, providing clearer insights into the positions of the ruler himself and different groups around him. This context allows us to better understand what the *Records of Music* utilized correlative cosmology to articulate and respond to.

[188] Sun Bangjin 孫邦金, "Zhongguo Gudai de Guanlianxing Siwei yu Zhuti de Zeren" 中國古代的關聯性思維與主體的責任[Intersubjectivity and Correlative Thinking in Ancient China], *Wenzhou Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 溫州師範學院學報, vol. 25, no. 4 (2004): pp. 68-69.

By the era of Emperor Wu, with the Han dynasty's political stability, perfecting the state system and establishing Han dynasty traditions became important tasks that Emperor Wu and his court had to address.[189] The *Records of the Fengshan Rituals* (*Fengshan Shu* 封禪書) states:

> In the first year [of Emperor Wu's reign], more than sixty years had passed since the founding of the Han dynasty, and the realm was peace. The scholarly gentry all looked forward to the emperor conducting the *fengshan* rites and reforming the right systems. The emperor favored Confucian thought, recruited the virtuous and good, and figures such as Zhao Wan and Wang Zang were appointed as ministers because of their literary accomplishments. There was a desire to discuss the ancient practice of establishing a ceremonial hall south of the capital to hold court with the feudal lords.
>
> 元年，漢興已六十余歲矣，天下艾安，搢紳之屬皆望天子封禪改正度也，而上鄉儒術、招賢良，趙綰王臧等以文學為公卿，慾議古立明堂城南，以朝諸侯。[190]

The key roles in the reform of the state sacrificial system were played by the emperor himself, Confucian scholars, and ritual specialists.[191] When formulating a major sacrificial activity, Confucian scholars often provided intellectual resources while ritual specialists supplied the theoretical basis, placing the two in a delicate relationship of both cooperation and competition.[192] This is attribute to the fact that the formulation of sacrificial rituals lacked a definitive theoretical framework and was predominantly reliant on the emperor's own decisions, a pattern observable in several major sacrificial ceremonies during Emperor Wu's reign.[193] This operational mechanism enabled both Confucian scholars and ritual specialists to aspire to and

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[189] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, pp. 205-206.
[190] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi Ji* 史記[The Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), vol. 4, p. 1384.
[191] Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Qinhan de Fangshi yu Rusheng* 秦漢的方士與儒生[Ritual Specialists and Confucian Scholars in the Qin and Han dynasties](Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1978), p. 8.
[192] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 204-206.
[193] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 204.

successfully exert influence through their counsel at pivotal moments in the establishment of significant sacrifices.[194]

However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the Confucian texts available during that time lacked detailed accounts of state rituals and proper music. This absence of ancient records rendered Confucian scholars ineffective in contributing to the reform of the sacrificial system. As documented in the *Records of the Fengshan Rituals*:

> After obtaining the precious tripod, the Emperor discussed the *fengshan* affair with the ministers and scholars. The *fengshan* rites were rarely used, and their rituals were unknown… Since the Confucian scholars could not clarify the details of the *fengshan* rites and were constrained by the classical texts of the *Classics of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*, they could not proceed effectively.
>
> 自得寶鼎，上與公卿諸生議封禪。封禪用希曠絕，莫知其儀禮， ……羣儒既已不能辨明封禪事，又牽拘於詩書古文而不能騁。[195]

Meanwhile, the ritual specialists assumed important roles in the sacrificial activities of Emperor Wu's reign. They did not adhere to ancient texts but instead relied on ritual techniques (*fangshu* 方術) and legends of immortals, such as the well-known story of the Yellow Emperor 黃帝's ascent to heaven. By doing so, they provided innovative theoretical foundation for the establishment and reform of the state sacrificial activities, employing their knowledge to support rituals, including determining sacrificial objects and locations.

On the other hand, the presence of personal quests for the emperor's health and immortality within state sacrifices also provided a justification for the role of ritual specialists.[196]

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[194] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 204.
[195] Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4, p. 1397.
[196] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 9.

Emperor Wu's intense fascination is well-documented in the *Records of the Fengshan Rituals*, which notes that he "ordered the dispatch of several thousand ritual specialists who claimed to have knowledge of the divine mountains in the sea to search for the immortals of Penglai." 乃益發船，令言海中神山者數千人求蓬萊神人[197] Consequently, the ritual specialists drew parallels between Emperor Wu and the Yellow Emperor to fulfill the emperor's personal desires for a divine mandate and ascension to heaven.[198] In fact, in the theoretical resources provided to Emperor himself by the ritual specialists, there was no clear distinction between the emperor's personal welfare and that of the state. State sacrificial activities often revealed Emperor Wu's intense aspiration for personal well-being, such as obtaining the heavenly mandate and ascending to immortality.[199] For example, rituals dedicated to the deities of the Palace of Longevity (*Shougong Shenjun* 壽宮神君) were conducted in hopes of achieving eternal life.[200]

Despite being favored by the ruler himself, the ritual specialists' use of number technology and legends to establish sacrificial traditions, closely linking the ruler's personal well-being with state sacrificial activities, was criticized by Confucian scholars. For instance, Gu Yong 谷永 (?- 8 BCE) criticized ritual specialists and sacrificial practices at his time, stating that they contravened the path of humaneness and righteousness and did not adhere to the teachings

[197] Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4, p. 1397.
[198] For instance, in the most significant sacrificial activities during Emperor Wu's reign, the *fengshan* 封禪 rituals, ritual specialists calculated the process by which the Yellow Emperor obtained the divine mandate and ascended to heave. They drew parallels between Emperor Wu and the Yellow Emperor, asserting, "The ruler of Han should also go for his fengshan rites. By *fengshan*, he too can achieve immortality and ascend to heaven." 漢主亦當上封，上封能僊登天矣. This comparison stirred the emperor's enthusiasm for this sacrificial ritual. Emperor Wu was so pleased that he exclaimed, "If I could indeed be like the Yellow Emperor, I would regard my wife and sons as no more important than casting off my shoes." 於是天子曰：「嗟乎！吾誠得如黃帝，吾視去妻子如脫躧耳。」 He then granted official positions to these ritual specialists and ultimately carried out the *fengshan* rituals. See Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4, pp. 1393-1394.
[199] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, pp. 204-205.
[200] Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4, p. 1388.

of the Five Classics, instead promoting bizarre deities. 諸背仁義之正道，不遵五經之法言，而盛稱奇怪鬼神[201] This distinction arises because ritual specialists and Confucian scholars, despite their mutual interest in the resonance between the cosmos and human, diverge significantly in their interpretations of the human-cosmos relationship, particularly in terms of the emperor's designated role. As illustrated by one of the most influential ritual specialists Gongsun Qing 公孫卿 (dates unknown)'s narrative concerning the Yellow Emperor, the cosmological views constructed by ritual specialists typically center on the emperor's quest for divine sanction and personal quests for immortality. They portray deities in a more anthropomorphized light, necessitating sacrificial servitude or appeasement by the emperor, yet these narratives lack a framework for moral oversight or guidance on the execution of governance.[202] In Gongsun Qing's account, the Yellow Emperor himself was "afflicted by the people's deviation from the proper path, thus he resorted to harsh measures to suppress his subjects, cutting down those who opposed the divine and spiritual," ruthlessly eliminating any obstacles on his quest for immortality. 患百姓非其道者，乃斷斬非鬼神者[203] This stance contrasts with the ideal world envisioned by Confucian scholars of the time. Furthermore, ritual specialists do not rely on classical texts but instead construct their theories based on knowledge of ritual techniques and practices, which is also opposite to the inclination of Confucian scholars. In this section, I argue that as a document deeply influenced by the Confucian traditions of the Western Han period, the *Records of Music* employs correlative cosmology to construct a cosmos that reflects the cautious attitude of Confucian scholars towards state sacrifices at the time,

[201] Ban Gu, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, p. 1260.
[202] Guo Jinsong 郭津嵩, "Gongsun Qing Shu Huangdi Gushi yu Han Wudi Fengshan Gaizhi" 公孫卿述黃帝故事與漢武帝封禪改制[How Gongsun Qing's Stories about the Yellow Emperor Relate to Fengshan and Political Reforms of the Han Dynasty's Emperor Wu], *Lishi Yanjiu* 歷史研究[Historical Research], no. 2 (2021), pp. 107-108.
[203] Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4, p. 1393.

emphasizes the authority of ancient texts, and envisions an ideal ruler who obtains the heavenly mandate through moral education and governance of the people.

The cautious attitude of the *Records of Music* towards state sacrifices is primarily reflected in its emphasis on the simplicity of rituals and music, which is expressed multiple times throughout the text:

> Great music must be easy, and great rituals must be simple.
>
> 大樂必易，大禮必簡。[204]
>
> Music is created by heaven; rituals are established by earth. Excessive control leads to chaos; Excessive creation leads to violence.
>
> 樂由天作，禮以地制，過制則亂，過作則暴。[205]

These two statements elaborates further, suggesting that proper music and rituals must inherently be simple and unpretentious because they emanate from the natural order created by heaven and earth. In other words, these rituals and music draw upon qualities that are akin to cosmic patterns, perhaps best described as the natural "Dao". Therefore, the proper music used in the ancestral temple sacrifices was not created to satisfy sensory desires. Instead, the deep and murky tones better reflected the cosmic patterns inherent in the music:

> Therefore, the grandeur of music [at the sacrifice] does not lie in the extremity of sounds and melodies… The twenty-five-string zither in the song of *Qingmiao* featured red [-boiled] strings and sparse holes [in the bottom]. With one song and three sighs, echoes lingered on.
>
> 是故樂之隆，非極音也……清廟之瑟，朱弦而疏越，壹倡而三嘆，有遺音者矣。[206]

[204] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 987.
[205] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 990.
[206] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 982-983.

Therefore, the excessive deployment of rituals and music, exemplified by frequent quests for immortality and the numerous sacrificial practices, risks engendering disorder and violence.

On the other hand, the cautious stance of the text is also reflected in its tendency to dissociate the pursuit of personal benefits and achievements of the emperor from state sacrificial practices. The entirety of the *Records of Music* does not link rituals and music with the personal welfare of the emperor, nor does it mention any auspicious omens. The implementation of rituals and music is not in response to miraculous signs, but solely for the purpose of moral education. It reads:

> Thus, the ancient kings established rituals and music not to satisfy the desires of the mouth, stomach, ears, and eyes, but to teach the people to moderate their likes and dislikes and to restore the correctness of human nature.
>
> 是故先王之制禮樂也，非以極口腹耳目之欲也，將以教民平好惡而反人道之正也。[207]
>
> When music reaches its pinnacle, there are no grievances; when rituals are perfected, there is no contention. Those who govern the world through gestures of respect and yielding are embodying the essence of rituals and music. The people do not revolt, the vassals are submissive, weapons are not wielded, the five punishments are unnecessary, the populace is untroubled, and the ruler is not angry. If this is achieved, then music has reached its ultimate goal. When the affection between father and son is harmonized and the order between elder and younger is clarified, and such respect extends throughout the lands under heaven, then rituals are successfully practiced.
>
> 樂至則無怨，禮至則不爭。揖讓而治天下者，禮樂之謂也。暴民不作，諸侯賓服，兵革不試，五刑不用，百姓無患，天子不怒，如此則樂達矣。合父子之親，明長幼之序，以敬四海之內，天子如此，則禮行矣。[208]

[207] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 982-983.
[208] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 987.

The ultimate pursuit of rituals and music is the stability of society and political harmony. As summarized in the text, "when the ruler's achievement are accomplished, music is created; when governance is established, rituals are instituted." 王者功成作樂，治定制禮 This suggests that rituals and music, as methods of moral education, can only be created once the ruler's governance is accomplished.[209] Similar to the role of rituals and music, the resonance in the *Records of Music* also serves as a constraint on the emperor. Unlike the ritual specialists who utilize human-cosmos resonance to emphasize the emperor's achievements, such as obtaining the tripod, the various resonances in the *Records of Music*, like the order of the five musical notes and their correspondence with social roles, are seen as standards to assess the stability and harmony of a nation's politics.

Meanwhile, the *Records of Music* also emphasizes the return to the ancient textual authority in the construction of state sacrifices: while the creation of court music and rituals needs to draw from the traditions of ancient kings, what must be adhered to is the immutable essence passed down through the ages, rather than specific practices. The text refers to ancient music created by legendary sovereigns:

> *Da Zhang*, meaning virtue is clear and distinguished. *Xian Chi*, meaning virtue is universally applied. *Shao*, indicating that Shun was able to inherit the virtues. *Xia*, suggesting that Yu was able to expand upon the virtues. The music of Yin and Zhou, capable of exhausting human affairs.
>
> 《大章》，章之也。《咸池》，備矣。《韶》，繼也。《夏》，大也。殷、周之樂，盡矣。[210]

[209] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 991.
[210] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 995-996.

Xian Chi is attributed to the Yellow Emperor, indicating that the Five Emperors in the *Records of Music* clearly includes this ancient sage king. The mention of ancient music from the eras of Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹 to the Yellow Emperor, and through to the Shang and Zhou dynasties, highlights the virtues they present. Contrary to the extensive promotion of Yellow Emperor stories during the state sacrifices in Emperor Wu's era, the authors specifically point out:

> The essence within rituals and music are the same, hence the wise kings follow them continuously.
> 禮樂之情同，故明王以相沿也。[211]
>
> The Five Emperors, belonging to different eras, did not follow each other's music; the Three Sovereigns, from different ages, did not inherit each other's rituals.
>
> 五帝殊時，不相沿樂；三王異世，不相襲禮。[212]

The seemingly contradictory viewpoints proposed by the authors essentially emphasize that the essence of rituals and music lies in human nature, which are constant, hence the essence of rituals and music should persist through the ages. However, the forms of rituals and music should adapt according to the times. From this perspective, the state sacrificial practices around the legends of the Yellow Emperor, which focus only on form, lose the true essence of rituals and music.

Interwoven with the ideal of rituals and music is the image of the ideal ruler. In the *Records of Music*, the sage king depicted through correlative cosmology does not seek to express personal will through sacrifices, whether for boasting of accomplishments or the desire to

[211] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 989.
[212] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 991.

summon spirits and gain immortality. Instead, the sage king bases and pursues rituals and music on the cosmic patterns:

> Only by understanding heaven and earth can one then promote rituals and music.
> 明於天地，然後能興禮樂也。[213]

The sage comprehends and manipulates the principles of heaven and earth, utilizing this knowledge to create rituals and music. It has been noted earlier that music symbolizes heaven, primarily functioning to foster harmony; conversely, rituals represent the earth, their primary function being to enforce regulation. Hence, the authors articulate:

> Rituals and music follow the nature of heaven and earth, embody the virtues of the divine, bring forth the spirits above and below, and shape the forms of the fine and the coarse, governing the bonds between father and son, ruler and subject.
> 禮樂倣天地之情，達神明之德，降興上下之神，而凝是精粗之體，領父子君臣之節。[214]

Rituals and music serves as manifestations of the principles governing cosmic operations. Utilized within sacrificial context, they can not only engage in resonance with heaven, earth, deities and spirits, but also foster order within human society. The impact of rituals and music on both the cosmos and human society rests upon a foundational presupposition: an inherent resonance exists between the heaven and the human realms. This resonance is not merely the basis upon which sages comprehend and construct rituals and music aligned with cosmic principles, but it also underpins the moral educational efficacy of these practices. As pointed at the outset of this text:

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[213] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 990.
[214] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1010.

> Humans are born into a state of tranquility, which is nature endowed by Heaven.
>
> 人生而靜，天之性也。[215]

Given that human nature originates from heaven, music produced by humans has the capacity to reflect the essence of cosmos. However, the innate nature of ordinary individuals, when resonating with outer objects, predominantly engenders desires without moderation. It is solely through the process of self-cultivation that sages can grasp and articulate the fundamental principles governing the cosmos.

> The superior man said, "Rituals and music should never be separated from one's being. By governing the *xin* with music, qualities such as harmony, integrity, affection, and sincerity naturally arise. When such qualities manifest, one experiences joy. With joy in the *xin*, the body attains peace; peace leads to a joyful and long life, which engenders a faithful obedience akin to that towards heaven. The utmost faith breeds reverence, as if worshiping a divine spirit.
>
> 君子曰：禮樂不可斯須去身。致樂以治心，則易、直、子、諒之心油然生矣。易、直、子、諒之心生則樂，樂則安，安則久，久則天，天則神。[216]

Through self-cultivation, potentially employing ancient rituals and music, sages gradually align their inherent human nature and moral dispositions with heaven and divine principles. This alignment enables them to comprehend and control the cosmic patterns. Therefore, based on their intrinsic human nature and virtues, sages are capable of creating proper music that harmonizes with the cosmic order. Given that the essence of human nature in both sages and ordinary people originates from heaven, the virtues of the sages can resonate with the general populace. Hence,

[215] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, p. 984.
[216] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, pp. 1029-1030.

the rituals and music created by sages not only reflect cosmic principles but also serve moral education:

> Therefore, the superior man moderates his emotions to harmonize his will, broadens music to complete his teachings, and as music is performed, the people follow its direction, thus allowing virtue to be observed.
>
> 是故君子反情以和其志，廣樂以成其教，樂行而民鄉方，可以觀德矣。[217]

On the other hand, in the cosmological perspective of the *Records of Music*, the cosmos and human society are in mutual resonance, societal and political disorder manifests as cosmic chaos. 化不時則不生，男女無辨則亂升，天地之情也[218] The sages' comprehension and articulation of the cosmic patterns are crucial because they enable human society to achieve harmony, and in turn, imposes order upon the cosmos:

> Therefore, when the superior man promotes rituals and music, then heaven and earth will become distinctly clear. Heaven and earth blend their *qi*, *yin* and *yang* complement each other, the warming and nurturing *qi* of heaven and the encompassing, fostering form of earth nourish myriad things. Then, plants and trees flourish, buds and shoots grow robustly, birds flap their wings, beasts grow their horns, hibernating insects wake, birds bend down to nurture their young, furred animals breed and multiply, those born from wombs are without stillbirths, and those born from eggs do not crack prematurely. This is the manifestation of all things in the world naturally following their inherent nature, which is the essence of the way of music.
>
> 是故大人舉禮樂，則天地將為昭焉。天地訢合，陰陽相得，煦嫗覆育萬物，然後草木茂，區萌達，羽翼奮，角觡生，蟄蟲昭蘇，羽者嫗伏，毛者孕鬻，胎生者不殰，而卵生者不殈，則樂之道歸焉耳。[219]

[217] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, p. 1006.
[218] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, p. 994.
[219] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, pp. 1010-1011.

In summary, the *Records of Music* delineates a correlative cosmos where order and harmony originates from the cosmos, while humanity wields the capacity to affect heaven patterns.[220] The Confucian narrative of the sage king diverges from legends of the Yellow Emperor created by ritual specialists. On the one hand, the Confucian ideal ruler is depicted as mastering the cosmic patterns, a capacity derived not through the quests of spirits or pursuits of immortality but through self-cultivation—sages possess the nature bestowed by heaven and obtain power through proper moral education. On the other hand, the divine mandate of such sage kings is to deploy rituals and music to articulate cosmic principles, thereby instilling order and harmony across their own person, human society, and the cosmos. Therefore, rather than emphasizing personal ambitions or achievements of the emperor, the *Records of Music* through its advocacy of correlative cosmology, primarily imposes normative constraints and regulations on the conduct of the emperor.

Conclusion

Facing the inclinations of the state sacrificial system at the time, which relied on legends and ritual techniques rather than ancient rituals and music, as well as focused on expressing the personal will of the emperor, Confucian scholars chose to return to the authority of ancient traditions, use cosmic resonance as a test and constraint on emperors, and emphasize the ideal image of the sage king. The correlative narrative in the *Records of Music* can be seen as a reflection of the Confucian stance: in the eyes of the authors, the main purpose of sacrificial practices is to implement moral education. The sage king masters cosmic patterns through self-

[220] This insight is inspired by Michael Puett's analysis of the texts of Lu Jia 陸賈. See Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-divinization in Early China*, pp. 245-258.

cultivation, not by summoning spirits. The ultimate goal of governing using cosmic principles is to bring both society and the cosmos into harmonious order, unrelated to personal fortune.

As the political influence of Confucians grew and their theories were refined, this tendency was fully realized in the state sacrificial reforms during the transition between the Han dynasties, a hallmark of which was the establishment of the Southern Suburban Sacrifice system (*nanjiao jiaosi* 南郊郊祀) under the Wang Mang' s reign.[221] Various omens and worship of immortals were purged from state sacrifices, with the emperor only needing to perform fixed suburban sacrifices to heaven and earth, ancestors, and rivers and mountains. This standardization to some extent reduced the religiosity of state sacrificial activities, marking a decisive victory for Confucian theory in the debates over state sacrifices.[222]

[221] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 326.
[222] Tian Tian, *Qinhan Guojia Jisi Shigao*, p. 327.

CHAPTER 3

Inner Music and Outer Rituals: Exploring the Subtle Mind-Body Dualism in the *Records of Music*

The moral education function of rituals and music discussed in previous chapters is primarily achieved through self-cultivation in individual practices, which is one of the most influential concepts in traditional Chinese philosophy. As a document exploring rituals and music from several perspectives, the *Records of Music* systemically addresses an important question: how do music and rituals function in self-cultivation? Through the use of dualistic expressions such as "inner music and outer rituals (*neiyue waili* 內樂外禮)", the authors of this text views self-cultivation as a practice that involves both the body (*shen* 身) and the *xin*.[223] Furthermore, the text positions music as a means to train the *xin*, while rituals are seen as a way to regulate external behavioral patterns.

This intentional distinction between the inner and outer, as well as between body and *xin*, leads us to the long-standing topic of the mind-body relationship in Chinese philosophy. The key debate revolves around whether the concept of *xin* refers to a physical organ or a center of higher cognition. Many scholars tend to assert that early Chinese thought did not recognize a qualitative difference between the *xin* and the physical body or its organs, thereby considering traditional Chinese thought to be a form of mind-body holism. This is perhaps because, in a universe that

[223] In traditional Chinese texts, there are three commonly seen concepts that can be translated to "body": *shen* 身, *ti* 體, and *xing* 形. However, they do not have entirely overlapping semantic ranges. For example, *shen* often refers more broadly to "the self", while *xing* always refers to "form". In the *Records of Music*, there are only three instances where *shen* is mentioned directly, and I have chosen to translate them into English as either "body" or "self" based on the specific context. The term *xin* was always translated as "heart", "mind", or "heart-mind" depending on the emphasis on its physical function or higher cognition. But I have decided not to translate it, as examining the different functions of the *xin* in this text is one of the main goals of this chapter.

encompasses and resonate all things, as discussed in Chapter 2, the continuity between *xin* and body is also considered self-evident.[224] For instance, Roger Ames states that early Chinese viewed individuals as a "holistic psychosomatic process", finding the notion of the body as a material substance foreign.[225] Francois Julien also notes that the Chinese perceived the body, soul, and mind as a continuous spectrum of energy, rendering the concept of dualism impossible.[226] Another focal point is the relationship between body and *xin* in the process of self-cultivation. Herbert Fingarette points out that at least in the *Analects*, the recognition of the inner psyche is entirely absent in self-cultivation.[227] Chinese-language scholars such as Wu Fei 吳飛 and Zhang Xuezhi 張學智 also emphasize that Chinese philosophy differs from Descartes' mind-body dualism, advocating that the establishment of subjectivity is a holistic process involving both body and *xin*.[228]

On the other hand, some scholars have recognized expressions of mind-body dualism in early Chinese texts. For example, Edward Slingerland, through comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses of late Warring States period texts, suggests that early Chinese thought may have adopted a form of mind-body dualism.[229] Csikszentmihalyi observes the importance of psychological interiority and the leading role of the innermost mind (*zhongxin* 中心) in two

[224] Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-divinization in Early China*, pp. 1-30.
[225] Ames, "The Meaning of the Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy," pp. 157-177.
[226] Jullien, *Vital Nourishment: Departing from Happiness*, p. 69.
[227] Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: the Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 45.
[228] See Wu Fei 吳飛, "Shenxin Yitiguan yu Xingminglun Zhuti de Queli" 身心一体观与性命论主体的确立[The Concept of Mind-Body Unity and the Establishment of the Subject in the Doctrine of Xing-Ming], *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue* 中國社會科學, no. 6 (2022), pp. 71-85, 205-06. Also see Zhang Xuezhi 張學智, "Zhongguo Zhexue zhong Shenxin Guanxi de Jizhong Xingtai" 中國哲學中身心關係的幾種形態[Several Modalities of Body-Mind Relations in the Traditional Chinese Philosophy], *Beijing Daxue Xuebao* 北京大學學報, vol. 42, no. 3 (2005): 5-14.
[229] About his quantitative textual analysis towards early Chinese texts, see Slingerland, "Body and Mind in Early China: An Integrated Humanities—Science Approach," pp. 19-30.

texts: *Mencius* and the *Five Types of Action* (*Wu Xing* 五行).[230] Additionally, Paul Goldin identifies a strong mind-body dualism in Zhuang *Zi* 莊子, *Xun Zi*, and *Guan Zi* 管子.[231] Elisa Sabattini further explores the concept of *xin* in a lot of early Western Han political discourses, demonstrating that the analogy between the *xin* and the sovereign extended into political thought, where the state's stability was compared to the *xin*'s control over the body's functions, reflecting the emperor's authority.[232] However, research on early Chinese ritual and music practices from the perspective of mind-body relationships remains lacking, despite the fact that rituals and music are closely tied to both self-cultivation and politics. In this context, studying the concept of "inner music and outer rituals" in the *Records of Music* can enhance our understanding of the mind-body relationship, self-cultivation process, and Confucian ideal politics in early Chinese thought.

By analyzing the discussion on music, rituals, and human nature in the *Records of Music*, I argue that the author exhibits a tendency towards weak mind-body dualism. This is evident in two main aspects: first, the systematic classification of music in the text—from naturally occurring sounds (*sheng* 聲) to artistically created melodies (*yin* 音), and ultimately to morally reflective proper music (*yue* 樂)—demonstrates the authors' recognition of the *xin* as a locus of higher cognition, particularly moral reflection and free will. Additionally, the text frequently differentiates between "inner music" and "outer rituals", effectively acknowledging the existence of psychological interiority. Moreover, this also explains why I consider the authors' inclination

[230] Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Moral Psychology of the Wuxing," in *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 81-86.
[231] Paul R. Goldin, "A Mind-Body Problem in the Zhuangzi?," in *Hiding the World in the World: Uneven Discourses on the Zhuangzi*, edited by Scott Cook (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 231.
[232] Sabattini, "The Physiology of 'Xin' (Heart) in Chinese Political Argumentation: The Western Han Dynasty and the Pre-Imperial Legacy," pp. 58-74.

towards mind-body dualism to be weak: the authors emphasize that "inner music" and "outer rituals" should cooperate in the process of self-cultivation, thereby bringing harmony and order to the state and the cosmos. They recognize the mutual influence between the inner and outer, as well as between the physical body and the *xin*, preventing the *Records of Music* from advocating an absolute domination of the immaterial over the material in the mind-body relationship. Through the analysis above, this chapter illustrate that just as the "correlative thinking" that transcends history and constitutes the so-called essence of the "Chinese Mind "was actually a mode of thought that only developed and became prevalent around the early imperial period, mind-body holism is merely one expression within ancient Chinese philosophy. At least a subtle form of mind-body dualism also exists in texts like the *Records of Music*.

The Classification of Music and the Reflective Role of *Xin*

The *Records of Music* does not systematically discuss the basic theory of music performance, such as notes and musical scales. Instead, it focuses more on the political and philosophical aspects of music. This text primarily explores two themes: first, the theory of music classification, which is determined by its proximity to morality and comprises three levels—sounds, melodies, and music. Second, it examines how various levels of music influence all participants, including the audience and performers. In this section, I will provide a detailed illustration of the classification of music from both material and moral perspectives. This classification not only depends on but also reflect the *xin* as the locus of cognition and reflection. In other words, it suggests an underlying inclination toward dualism within the text.

The author of this text categorizes music into three levels. At the first passage, known as the *Origin of Music* (*Yue Ben* 樂本), the author illustrates the roots of music, stating that:

> All melodies originate from the *xin* of human. Emotions stir within; thus, they take shape in sound. When sound forms a pattern, it is called music.
>
> 凡音者，生人心者也。情動於中，故形於聲。聲成文，謂之音。[233]

At the most fundamental level are sounds, which encompass a variety of noises from the natural world, such as those made by birds and beasts (*qinshou* 禽獸), as well as sounds produced by humans in response to external objects.[234] This is the lowest level, likely representing sounds generated instinctively, lacking in consciousness. With sounds, the emphasis was solely on the external expression of basic emotional states elicited by simple, unnamed phenomena. The author lists six fundamental emotions: sorrow (*ai* 哀), happiness (*le* 樂), joy (*xi* 喜), anger (*nu* 怒), reverence (*jing* 敬), and care (*ai* 愛). The *xin* generates these six emotions, which are then expressed as sounds with six distinct characteristics:

> Therefore, when the *xin* is touched by sorrow, the sounds are exhausted and subdued. When the *xin* is touched by happiness, the sounds are spacious and relaxed. When the *xin* is touched by joy, the sounds spread out expansively. When the *xin* is touched by anger, the sounds are robust and fierce. When the *xin* is touched by reverence, the sounds are straightforward and respectful. When the *xin* is touched by care, the sounds are harmonious and gentle.
>
> 是故其哀心感者，其聲噍以殺。其樂心感者，其聲嘽以緩。其喜心感者，其聲發以散。其怒心感者，其聲粗以厲。其敬心感者，其聲直以廉。其愛心感者，其聲和以柔。[235]

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[233] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p 978.
[234] I will be using “interiority”, “exteriority”, or “external” for convenience in this and the following sections, but these are not the actual terms used in the *Records of Music*, which instead speaks in terms of *xin* and body (*shen* 身), the innermost (*zhong* 中) and things (*wu* 物), inner (*nei* 內) and outer (*wai* 外).
[235] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 976-977.

From the author's viewpoint, owing to its similarity to an automatic response, the natural quality of sounds is essentially neutral and lacks any moral predisposition. However, melodies and music represent distinct concepts. The author's evaluation of them includes reflection, particularly on the moral values, as mentioned briefly in Chapter 1. This distinction stems from the fact that both melodies and music are products of intentional human refinement, transcending mere craftsmanship to also embody expressions of human preferences.

Melodies represent the second level, originating from *xin*. They are formed by the interaction between sounds, encapsulating emotions that are consciously refined and articulated through the creation of musical artifacts: according to other content in the *Records of Music*, melodies include the five tones of *gong* 宮, *shang* 商, *jue* 角, *zhi* 徵, *yu* 羽.[236] Moreover, the *Rites of Zhou* records that the musical instruments played include eight categories (*bayin* 八音): metal (*jin* 金), stone (*shi* 石), clay (*tu* 土), leather (*ge* 革), silk (*si* 絲), wood (*mu* 木), gourd (*pao* 匏), and bamboo (*zhu* 竹).[237] Further drawing from the *Classics of Odes*, the *Records of Music* summarizes the essential cultural characteristics of melodies as "enticing the people is quite effortless" 誘民孔易, meaning they possess a strong appeal that can influence the public's behavior and moral values.

When discussing the impact of melodies on the audience, the *Records of Music* generally adopts a critical tone. A notable example of this is the comparison between ancient music (*guyue* 古樂) and new melodies (*xinyue* 新樂) found in the passage *Marguis Wen of Wei* (*Wei Wenhou* 魏文侯):

[236] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 978-979.
[237] Sun Yirang, *Zhouli Zhengyi*, vol. 4, p. 1832.

> Marquiz Wen of Wei asked Zi Xia, "When I wear my crown and listen to ancient music, I fear only that I may fall asleep; but when I listen to the melodies of Zheng and Wei, I do not feel fatigued at all. May I ask why ancient music is like that, and why the new music is like this?"
>
> Zi Xia replied, "The ancient music, with [its dance movements] advancing and retreating in formation, and [its melodies] harmonious and expansive… It prompts the superior man to speak, to discuss the ancients, to cultivate oneself and one's family, to bring equilibrium to all under heaven. This is the essence of ancient music. The new melodies, with [its dance movements] bowing forward and retreating downward, is characterized by deceptive sounds that overflow and never cease… At the end of such melodies, one cannot speak, nor discuss the ancients. This is the essence of the new melodies. What you has asked about concerns music, and what you favor are the melodies. Music and melodies are similar yet distinct.
>
> 魏文侯問於子夏曰：「吾端冕而聽古樂，則唯恐臥；聽鄭、衛之音，則不知倦。敢問古樂之如彼何也？新樂之如此何也？」
>
> 子夏對曰：「今夫古樂，進旅退旅，和正以廣…君子於是語，於是道古，修身及家，平均天下。此古樂之發也。今夫新樂，進俯退俯，姦聲以濫，溺而不止……樂終，不可以語，不可以道古。此新樂之發也。今君之所問者樂也，所好者音也。夫樂者，與音相近而不同。」[238]

The difference between new melodies and ancient music, from a practical standpoint, lies in the dance movements and musical scales. According to this passage, the dances accompanying the new melodies are disorganized and untidy. Moreover, the musical scales lack restraint, leading people into unrestrained indulgence. Zi Xia then mentioned four influential melodies, each originating from the regional states of the time: Zheng, Song, Wei, and Qi:

[238] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 1013-1015.

> The melody of Zheng is licentious, leading to depraved intentions. The melody of Song takes its pleasure in women, causing intentions to drown in indulgence. The melody of Wei is hurried and rapid, leading to restless intentions. The melody of Qi is harsh and excessive, causing intentions to become arrogant and unrestrained. All four of these are seductive in their allure and damaging to virtue, which is why they are not used in sacrifices.
>
> 鄭音好濫淫志，宋音燕女溺志，衛音趨數煩志，齊音敖辟喬志。此四者，皆淫於色而害於德，是以祭祀弗用也。[239]

This statement discusses the underlying reasons for the criticism of melodies. They are criticized not only for their inappropriate dance movements and tunes, but also for the intrinsic content and style, which is deemed to be excessive and lacking in restraint. Such musical performances encourage the audience to indulge in sensory pleasure, thereby leading to moral decay.

We can conclude that, unlike sounds, melodies are thoughtfully artistic creations formed through human intervention, demonstrating the cognitive function of the *xin*. They have the ability to evoke emotions in the audience and subsequently influence their thoughts, which in the *Records of Music* is often portrayed in a negative light.

When discussing the superiority of music over melodies, Zi Xia noted that music and melodies are similar, yet fundamentally distinct. The *Origin of Music* states that:

> Music embodies the principles of ethics. Therefore, those who understand sounds but not melodies are like birds and beasts; those who understand melodies but not music are the common masses. Only the superior man truly understands music.
>
> 樂者，通倫理者也。是故知聲而不知音者，禽獸是也；知音而不知樂者，眾庶是也。唯君子為能知樂。[240]

[239] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 1016-1017.
[240] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 982.

Melodies can be created by anyone proficient in relevant theory, whereas music can only be crafted by the superior men or sage kings versed in rituals and morality. The purpose behind music is to educate the populace and regulate human nature and emotions, ensuring they align with certain virtues:

> Therefore, the superior man gets back to his emotions and harmonizes his will, enriches music to promote his teachings, and as music spreads, the people follow the direction, allowing virtues to be observed.
>
> 是故君子反情以和其志，廣樂以成其教，樂行而民鄉方，可以觀德矣。[241]

The moral attribute of music is manifested in its performance, which lies in its moderation and simplicity of the content:

> Therefore, the grandeur of music does not lie in the extremity of sounds and melodies… The twenty-five-string zither in the song of *Qingmiao* featured red [-boiled] strings and sparse holes [in the bottom]. With one song and three sighs, echoes lingered on.
>
> 是故樂之隆，非極音也……清廟之瑟，朱弦而疏越，壹倡而三嘆，有遺音者矣。[242]

According to the commentary by Zheng Xuan, the sound of the red-boiled strings is muddled, whereas the sparse holes at the bottom slow down the sound, making it linger and delay. 朱弦，練朱弦，練則聲濁。越，瑟底孔也，畫疏之，使聲遲也[243] Clearly, compared to melodies, the creation of music involves the *xin* as a locus of reflection because by artificially modifying musical instruments, the rhythm of music is made slower, unable to provide the ultimate sensory pleasure. Furthermore, balance and harmony are also significant characteristics of music. The

[241] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1006.
[242] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 982-983.
[243] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 982.

discordance among the five tones can lead to disharmony in performance, as well as political turmoil. 五者皆亂，迭相陵，謂之慢。如此，則國之滅亡無日矣[244]

We can summarize the features of music: it is composed by the sage kings, carefully balancing tones, and various instruments to create a style that is simple and restrained, achieving the ultimate goal of education. Unlike melodies, which are very attractive, it does not cause one to indulge and amplify one's greed. Instead, music has the ability to calm the human's *xin*, allowing individuals to engage in moral reflection.

Overall, if melodies are described as skillfully blending sounds to create compositions that are both attractive and capable of evoking or responding to certain emotions, then proper music goes further by incorporating the creator's reflection. This prompts us to consider the role of *xin*—the central participant in musical creation, serving both as its subject and creator.

From Natural Emotions to Moral Self-Discipline: *Xin* as a Centre of Free Will

Music can not only affect human emotions and behaviors but also guide them on a moral level. Delving into the principles behind this process draws our focus to the most renowned statement in the *Records of Music* on human nature, emotions, and moral consciousness—in other words, what the existence of *xin* truly signifies. In this section, I argue that the *xin*'s role in music extends beyond merely reacting to external objects. Instead, it possesses a unique capability for moral responsibility and exercising free will, distinguishing it from mere physiological organs. This distinction allows us to understand the extent to which the acceptance of a potential mind-body dualism by the authors is necessary for their music theory.

[244] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 980.

The author illustrates their perspective on the mechanism of interaction between the *xin* and the world. It reads:

> Humans are born tranquil, which is their nature from heaven. They are moved by objects, which are the desires of their nature. When objects are encountered and perceived, preferences and aversions then take shape.
>
> 人生而靜，天之性也。感於物而動，性之欲也。物至知知，然後好惡形焉。[245]

In this context, the author articulates an initial assessment: the innate nature of humans is characterized by tranquility and neutrality. By analogy, if this innate nature were likened to the tranquil surface of a lake, then external stimuli would resemble the act of casting a stone into these calm waters, thereby generating ripples. In response to external stimuli, the *xin* exhibits various reactions, culminating in preferences and aversions towards objects. At this juncture, the *xin* is merely exercising its reflective function, and the emotions it generates can be described as "natural emotions", following the "stimulus-response" method, and arising without the mediation of advanced cognitive assessment.

Whether categorized as sounds, melodies, or proper music, each of these manifestations indeed serves as external stimuli. Delving into the discourse on the effects of melodies on individuals within the passage of *Talks on Music* (*Yue Yan* 樂言) can deepen our comprehension of how the *xin* responds to diverse musical performances:

> Humans possess a nature of blood, *qi*, heart, and consciousness, but lack a constancy of sorrow, happiness, joy, and anger. They are moved by external objects, and the intentions of the *xin* then take shape therein. Therefore, when melodies that are subtle and intricate, exhausted and subdued are played, the people become worried; when melodies of harmony, spaciousness and ease, complex and simple rhythms are played, the people

[245] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 984.

> become peaceful and joyful; when melodies with robust and fierce beginnings, vigorous endings, and broad and angry tones are played, the people become resolute and determined…
>
> 夫民有血氣心知之性，而無哀樂喜怒之常，應感起物而動，然後心術形焉。是故志微、噍殺之音作，而民思憂；嘽諧、慢易、繁文、簡節之音作，而民康樂；粗厲、猛起、奮末、廣賁之音作，而民剛毅……[246]

This dynamic reveals a cycle: on one hand, melodies originate from the impulse to express natural emotions. They are crafted by humans, and the emotions they express naturally fluctuate with the *xin*. On the other hand, melodies evoke emotional resonance within the *xin* of the audience, leading to different emotional responses from listeners based on the style of the melodies. This is akin to numerous stones being thrown into a lake, where the ripples they create interact and affect each other. While this process is not entirely detrimental, the author posits a second evaluative claim: the natural emotions elicited by the *xin* in reaction to external stimuli are characterized by "impermanence (*wuchang* 無常)". This notion of impermanence denotes a lack of consistent rules and an absence of moderation. Reflecting on Marquis Wen of Wei's experience with new melodies, it is suggested that melodies can engender a state of indulgence, from which no moral principles can be learned.

Therefore, if individuals solely engage with and adhere to the functions of *xin* at this basic level, natural emotions remain unregulated, potentially leading to negative outcomes:

> If preferences and aversions are unrestrained within, knowledge is enticed from without, unable to reflect upon oneself, the principles of heaven are lost. The resonance of objects on people is endless, and when people's preferences and aversions are uncontrolled, it leads to people being transformed by things. When people are transformed by things, it

[246] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 998.

> results in the extinction of natural principles and the extreme indulgence of human desires. Consequently, there arises the *xin* filled with rebellion, deceit, and falsehood, and acts filled with licentiousness and chaos. Therefore, the strong oppress the weak, the many bully the few, the wise deceive the foolish, the brave torment the timid, the sick and diseased are not cared for, and the old, young, and orphaned have nowhere to turn. This is the path to great chaos.
>
> 好惡無節於內，知誘於外，不能反躬，天理滅矣。夫物之感人無窮，而人之好惡無節，則是物至而人化物也。人化物也者，滅天理而窮人欲者也。於是有悖逆詐偽之心，有淫泆作亂之事。是故強者脅弱，眾者暴寡，知者詐愚，勇者苦怯，疾病不養，老幼孤獨不得其所。此大亂之道也。[247]

If *xin* merely reacts mechanically to external stimuli, it gives rise to natural emotions that lack any consistent pattern, simply changing with fluctuations in external circumstances and amplifying personal desires. According to the author, this constitutes a breach of the principles of Heaven and is likely to result in social discord.

In the *Records of Music*, melodies are viewed by the author as an art form that can easily influence people's emotions and behaviors. This influence is attributed to their origin in natural emotions and their ability to evoke resonance in the *xin* of the audience, which is considered the fundamental function of the *xin*. However, as previously discussed, the creation and performance of melodies are rooted in the expression of these natural emotions, with creators focusing solely on amplifying the performance through compositional skill and choreography to bring the audience the ultimate audiovisual enjoyment and emotional resonance. From the author's perspective, the creation and popularity of melodies imply that participants are immersed in the natural emotions generated by sensory stimuli, lacking in regulation and restraint. Considering

[247] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 984-985.

that the *Records of Music* and the context of music performances at that time were directed towards rulers of the central government or local feudal states, the author naturally concludes that the popularity of melodies signifies the downfall of the state and the turmoil of political power:

> The melodies of Zheng and Wei represent the melodies of chaos. It borders on dissoluteness. The melodies of the areas between the mulberry trees and above the Pu River signifies the melodies of a nation's downfall; its governance is disorganized; its people are dispersed. Superiors were slandered and private ends were carried out, and it could not be stopped.
>
> 鄭、衛之音，亂世之音也，比於慢矣。桑間、濮上之音，亡國之音也，其政散，其民流，誣上行私而不可止也。[248]

The sage kings create music to regulate natural emotions, ensuring that their expression aligns with certain norms, thereby mitigating any potential harm:

> Therefore, [in the making of music] the former kings based it on human nature and emotions, calibrated it with the scales and pitches of music, and molded it with rituals and moral principles… The four types of *qi* interact within and unfolds without, each maintaining its proper place without interference. Following this, they founded educational systems, expanded the musical rhythms, streamlined the ornamental aspects, to cultivate depth of virtue, standardized the scales to differentiate between lower and higher tones, and sequenced the order from start to finish, to reflect real-life scenarios. The principles of intimacy and formality, nobility and commonality, seniority and juniority, as well as those distinguishing male and female, are all embodied in music. Thus, it is said, "The depth of music is profound indeed."
>
> 是故先王本之情性，稽之度數，制之禮義， ……四暢交於中而發作於外，皆安其位而不相奪也。然後立之學等，廣其節奏，省其文采，以繩德厚，律小大之稱，比

[248] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 981.

> 終始之序，以象事行，使親疏、貴賤、長幼、男女之理皆形見於樂，故曰：「樂觀其深矣。」[249]

The depth of music is embodied in the moral reflection it encompasses. Sage kings create music originating from natural emotions, yet their expression adheres to rituals and social principles. Hence, music emerges as an instrumental tool in the realm of education. This foundation gives rise to the statement:

> Hence it is said, "Music is joy." The superior man find joy in obtaining his Way, while the petty man find joy in satisfying his desires. When desires are governed by the Way, there is joy without disorder; when the Way is forgotten in favor of desires, there is confusion and no true joy.
>
> 故曰：「樂者，樂也。」君子樂得其道，小人樂得其欲。以道制欲，則樂而不亂；以欲忘道，則惑而不樂。[250]

Allowing desires originating from instinct to overwhelm everything not only confuses individuals but also leads to the loss of autonomy over the *xin*, letting unpredictable external stimuli control emotions. This is what is meant by "men being transformed by things." 物至而人化物也 Conversely, if one can cultivate oneself through music and rituals, it is possible to appropriately regulate desires, thereby preserving and fostering one's autonomy.

This statement reveals that the existence of music highlights the *xin*'s higher function—conscious free will. It is the *xin*'s capacity for thought, reflection, and moral responsibility—the unique power of free will—that distinguishes the superior men from animals and petty men, freeing it from the purely physical sequence of mechanical causation. Similarly, the distinction between music and melodies, in essence, lies in the difference between expressing emotions with

[249] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1000.
[250] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1005.

moral self-discipline and merely amplifying emotions through craftsmanship. This further elucidates that the *xin*, along with its capabilities, fundamentally diverges from and transcends our biological nature.

Therefore, although the *Records of Music* does not explicitly distinguish the *xin* from other bodily organs, the foundation of its music and moral theories rests on acknowledging the distinction between inborn emotions and the conscious achievement of self-discipline. In summary, the author posits that the *xin* of superior men and sage kings is endowed with moral responsibility and free will, enabling them to create proper music that educates their people. Given that the *Records of Music* is primarily dedicated to offering an ideal system of rituals and music to the rulers of the Han dynasty—expected to embody the virtues of ancient kings—this text, in significant sections if not entirely, acknowledges the *xin*'s unique functions, supporting the text's inclination toward mind-body dualism.

Inner Music and Outer Rituals: *Xin* in Psychological Interiority

Xin is a locus of free will, setting it apart from other bodily organs. However, the relationship between the *xin* and the physical body in its entirety merits examination. This inquiry delves into another holistic debate: the alleged absence of psychological interiority among the Chinese, characterized by a lack of differentiation between inner life and the outside world. This section presents textual evidence of psychological interiority within early Chinese thought, showcasing how the *Records of Music* explicitly delineates mental interiority from physical actions. Moreover, this inner-outer dichotomy correlates with the distinct contributions of rituals and music to self-cultivation. I further elucidate why the *Records of Music* represents a "weak" form of mind-body dualism: rather than aspiring for total separation between material

and immaterial aspects, it advocates for settling the *xin* within the body, hence fostering harmony within the micro-cosmos.

I will once again start with discussion on the origins of music, which are emphasized in various sections of this text:

> Music comes out from within, rituals come into being from without.
>
> 樂由中出，禮自外作。[251]
>
> Music moves from within, while rituals moves from without.
>
> 樂也者，動於內者也。禮也者，動於外者也。[252]

In discussing the origins of music, the author employs metaphors such as *zhong* 中 and *nei* 內, which are translated to "inner [heart-mind]" or "innermost [heart-mind]". Edward Slingerland notes that these metaphors highlight the contrast between inner psychological state and outer behavior in early Chinese thought. It carries the implication that one's true feelings and emotions or moral integrity tied to *xin*, residing deep within the self's interior, are not necessarily obvious from one's outward behavior. [253] This does not imply that inner thought and feelings are completely hidden from outside observation. The previous discourse on the hierarchical relationship between sounds and music demonstrates that music is one significant manifestation of inner psychology.

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[251] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 987.
[252] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1031.
[253] See Slingerland, *Mind and Body in Early China: Beyond Orientalism and the Myth of Holism* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2019), pp. 128-138.

To detail the function of music as a bridge between the inner and outer worlds, in the final passage *Master Yi* (*Shi Yi* 師乙), the author adopts a famous statement from the *Classics of Odes*:

> Thus, singing involves extending the voice in chant. [We] chant because [we feel] joyful; when mere words are inadequate, we prolong them into chant; when prolonged chant fails to suffice, we sigh; and when sighs are not enough, we unconsciously dance with our hands and stamp with our feet.
>
> 故歌之為言也，長言之也。說之，故言之；言之不足，故長言之；長言之不足，故嗟歎之；嗟歎之不足，故不知手之舞之，足之蹈之也。[254]

While this statement does not explicitly differentiate between inner and outer realms, it implicitly posits a fundamental premise regarding psychological interiority: the deepest feelings and emotions within the *xin* are not openly observable and may not be communicated in an easy and straightforward manner. This explains why the author consistently places rituals alongside music: the structured forms inherent in musical performances and dance, including aspects such as attire, formations, and postures, are encompassed within the domain of rituals. Emotions and moral reflections harbored within the *xin* necessitate not only music but also embodiment through physical expression—rituals—to be communicated as effectively as possible.

Furthermore, the differences in essence between rituals and music stem precisely from this distinction between the inner and outer. In the passage of the *Transformation of Music* (*Yue Hua* 樂化), the author begins by presenting rituals and music as complementary aspects of a pair once again:

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[254] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1038.

> Music is that which moves within, while rituals are that which moves without. Thus, rituals govern reduction, and music governs abundance. Rituals restrain and advance, taking self-advancement as refinement; music fills and reflection, taking self-discipline as refinement. If rituals restraint without self-advancing, they diminish; if music fills without self-discipline, it becomes indulgent…
>
> 樂也者，動於內者也。禮也者，動於外者也。故禮主其減，樂主其盈。禮減而進，以進為文；樂盈而反，以反為文。禮減而不進則銷，樂盈而不反則放……[255]

Rituals and music exhibit distinct characteristics based on their origins from the outer or inner: rituals derive from external social interactions, emphasizing moderation and the containment of human impulses, while music originates from the inner landscape of emotions, encapsulating aspects of enjoyment and care. Moreover, the implementation of rituals and music within the process of self-cultivation necessitates divergent strategies. Given that rituals aim to regulate behavior, occasionally contravening innate tendencies, they may induce feelings of irritation or fatigue, thereby demanding self-motivation and exertion. In contrast, music resonates with the internal spectrum of emotions, posing a risk of becoming unmanageable and leading to excess, thus calling for self-discipline. Briefly stated, within the process of self-cultivation, music represents the expression and reflection of inner psychology, while rituals symbolize the external regulation of behavior and the body.

Therefore, the pairing of rituals and music suggests, to some extent, a subtle recognition of mind-body dualism. It also implies that the *xin* and body are not entirely separate or in opposition; rather, in the perspective of the author, there exists a collaborative relationship between the *xin* and the physical body.

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[255] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1031.

Firstly, one's bodily posture can reveal their true, inner psychology from the opaque surface of the physical body. In the passage of *Bin Mou Gu* 賓牟賈, the author recounts a dialogue between Confucius and Bin Mou Gu, discussing one of the six ancient court music, *Da Wu* 大武:

> Bin Mou Gu accompanied Confucius, and as they spoke, the topic turned to music. Confucius asked, "Why does the *Da Wu* music show prolonged vigilance?" Bin Mou Gu replied: "It reflects the concern of not having the people's support."
>
> "Why does it involve repetitive singing and slow chanting?" The reply came, "It expresses fear of failing to achieve the objective."
>
> "Why does [the dance] starts immediately with vigorous and powerful movements?" The reply came, "It signifies seizing the opportunity when the time is right."
>
> 賓牟賈侍坐於孔子，孔子與之言，及樂，曰：「夫武之備戒之已久，何也？」對曰：「病不得眾也。」
>
> 「咏歎之，淫液之，何也？」對曰：「恐不逮事也。」
>
> 「發揚蹈厲之已蚤，何也？」對曰：「及時事也。」[256]

There is no clearer illustration of how ritual dance, or bodily engagement, mirrors psychological interiority. It is precisely because dance movements symbolize the moral values and inner thoughts inherent in the music that the superior men can engage in discussions about its content after watching a musical performance, as mentioned earlier.

Additionally, in the process of self-cultivation, the interplay and mutual-reinforce between rituals and music, as well as between outer physical body and the inner *xin*, are indispensable.

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[256] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 1021-1022.

> The superior man said, "Rituals and music should never be separated from one's being. By perfecting music to govern the *xin*, qualities such as simplicity, directness, compassion, and goodness naturally arise… Heaven operates without words yet engenders trust, and the divine commands without anger yet instills awe, all through the governance of the *xin* by music. By perfecting rituals to govern the body, one achieves solemnity and respect, which in turn bring about an imposing authority… Therefore, music acts upon the inner self; rituals, upon the outward appearance. When music achieves ultimate peace and rituals achieve ultimate respectfulness, the inner harmony and external compliance ensure that the people, seeing his demeanor, do not compete… Thus, it is said, 'Understanding the principles of rituals and music, and applying them to govern the world, one will encounter no difficulties'."
>
> 君子曰：禮樂不可斯須去身。致樂以治心，則易、直、子、諒之心油然生矣。……天則不言而信，神則不怒而威，致樂以治心者也。致禮以治躬，則莊敬，莊敬則嚴威。……故樂也者，動於內者也。禮也者，動於外者也。樂極和，禮極順，內和而外順，則民瞻其顏色而弗與爭也……故曰：「致禮樂之道，舉而錯之天下無難矣。」[257]

Music and rituals have distinct roles in self-cultivation: music is aimed at regulating the inner *xin*, while rituals are intended for governing the physical body (*gong* 躬). But the *xin* and the physical body also influence and reflect each other. When music thoroughly cultivates the *xin*, a variety of virtuous and beautiful mentalities emerge. Ultimately, when a person's *xin* attains such a divine state (*shen* 神), it is reflected in their demeanor, displaying an imposing presence without anger (*bunu er wei* 不怒而威). Similarly, adherence to rituals cultivates a dignified physical demeanor, which in turn fosters solemnity and respectfulness in the *xin*. Finally, if rituals and music work in concert during self-cultivation, it results in inner harmony (*neihe* 內和)

[257] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, pp. 1029-1030.

and an outwardly composed demeanor (*waishun* 外順), with the *xin* and body nourishing each other. Hence, by cultivating oneself with rituals and music, the superior man achieve the goal of guiding the people and serving as exemplars.

The phrase "trust without words" (*buyan er xin* 不言而信) highlights another point concerning the mutual nourishment between body and *xin*, as well as between rituals and music. It suggests that the harmony between these pairs of concepts can mitigate the potential for a disjunction between internal psychology and external behavior caused by the opacity of the *xin*, which addresses concerns over insincerity (*wei* 僞). Insincerity is a serious accusation in Chinese philosophy.[258] For instance, the *Analects* once states that "a clever tongue and beguiling countenance are rarely signs of Goodness (*ren* 仁)." 巧言令色，鮮矣仁[259] The *Records of Music* points out that:

> Odes express one's will. Song extols one's voice. Dance puts one's countenance into motion… Harmony accumulates within, while elegance and brilliance emanate outwardly, only music cannot be insincere.
>
> 詩，言其志也。歌，詠其聲也。舞，動其容也。……和順積中，而英華發外，唯樂不可以為偽。[260]

In musical performances, odes, songs, and dances not only express but also influence the inner psychology of all participants, elucidating why "only music cannot be insincere". In other words, the mission of proper music is to compensate the potential opacity of the *xin*, counteracting

[258] See Slingerland, *Mind and Body in Early China: Beyond Orientalism and the Myth of Holism*, pp. 135-136.
[259] Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed., *Lunyu Yizhu* 論語譯注[The Analects: Translation and Commentaries] (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984), p. 2.
[260] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1006.

tendencies of insincerity through self-cultivation, thereby achieving inner harmony and an outwardly composed demeanor (*neihe waishun* 內和外順).

Finally, we must question: what does the author perceive as the ultimate aim of self-cultivation? The *Records of Music* emphasizes the benefits that a sage king, who has perfected self-cultivation and achieved a harmony between his *xin* and body, can bring to the real world:

> Therefore, as music is performed, human relations are clarified, ears and eyes are sharpened, blood and *qi* are harmonious and balanced, customs transform and manners refine, bringing peace to all under Heaven.
>
> 故樂行而倫清，耳目聰明，血氣和平，移風易俗，天下皆寧。[261]

In the ideals of this text, the primary focus is on properly situating the *xin* within the body, including physical organs, blood, and *qi*, thereby achieving harmony in the individual as a micro-cosmos. This internal harmony can then resonate outward, bringing order to the macro-cosmos.

Conclusion

Through a detailed explanation of the ethical, progressive theory of sounds, melodies, and music, I have demonstrated that the *xin* in the *Records of Music* is not merely a bodily organ lacking in thought but actually a locus of free will and moral responsibility. Music, with its moral educational function, is precisely the manifestation of the *xin*'s reflective capability, which distinguishes the *xin* from other physical organs.

Furthermore, by analyzing the dual concepts of inner and outer, as well as rituals and music within the text, I have elucidated how this text embodies what has traditionally been considered absent in early Chines thought: psychological interiority. Therefore, I have proven the

[261] Sun Xidan ed., *Liji Jijie*, vol. 2, p. 1005.

text's inclination towards mind-body dualism. I further explain that, in the author's ideal, the ultimate goal of self-cultivation is to settle the inner *xin* within the physical body through rituals and music, and to govern this world as exemplary rulers, bringing harmony to the microcosmos and the entire world. This makes the *Records of Music* exhibit only a "weak" mind-body dualism inclination, rather than a thorough dualism that separates and even opposes the material and the spiritual.

CONCLUSION

This thesis addresses the research question of why the *Records of Music* continued to influence beyond the minor kingdom of Hejian. Its lasting impact lies in its profound response to the political needs of the early imperial period, and in doing so, it shaped and became intertwined with the political context and Confucian ideology to which it belonged.

This first theme, which examines the *Records of Music* and its historical context, reveals how the Confucian tradition absorbed, integrated, and utilized local and non-Confucian thought in its formation, ultimately internalizing them into an imperial and canonized system. Under the overarching ideal of "Great Unity" in the Western Han, the *Records of Music* gained the attention of imperial Confucian scholars through its classification system of sound, melodies, and music, as well as its incorporation of concepts like Yin-Yang and the Five Phases. It was eventually included in the Six Arts system, becoming the leading text in the music category. This process illustrates how the compilation, transmission, and definition of texts were influenced by politics and ideology, and how they became part of the ideological framework.

In exploring the second theme, the *Records of Music* and its cosmological narrative, I propose that the text's acceptance of correlative cosmology was actually a response to political needs. "Cosmology" originally referred to the understanding of the relationship between humanity and the world, or even some transcendent existence. However, the authors of the *Records of Music* believed that cosmology, along with the state sacrificial rituals that embodied it, should be stripped of religious fervor and individual fanaticism as much as possible, and instead serve political and educational purposes. The text's discussion of the resonance between music and politics, and the important role of music in education, aligns with the Confucian

vision of a rationalized and moralized cosmos, even though the fascination with omen interpretation persisted in practice until the Tang dynasty.

The exploration of the third theme, the relationship between body and *xin*, shows that the self-cultivation practices in the *Records of Music* are also highly relevant to politics. The text's subtle mind-body dualism is reflected in its recognition of the unique role and function of the *xin* while also emphasizing its collaboration with the physical body. The ruler should regulate their body and behavior through rituals and use proper music to evoke and cultivate moral emotions, thereby becoming a superior man and a sage king. The ultimate goal of self-cultivation is to achieve harmony within the individual as a microcosm. However, the purpose of self-cultivation is not to gain immortality. On the contrary, the *Records of Music* states that the ruler's harmony as a microcosm can, through correspondence and resonance, bring order to the macrocosm.

This thesis, through the study of the *Records of Music*, demonstrates how the compilation and transmission of the text, the aesthetics of music, the understanding of the cosmos, and the cultivation of the body and mind are all connected with politics. Future research can continue to explore this text in the following areas.

First, given the still limited research on the *Records of Music*, further studies should delve deeper into the intrinsic value of the text itself. Although this thesis shows the political aspects of early Chinese music, a significant portion of the text addresses the interaction between music and emotions. Approaching it from the perspective of affect theory could allow for better understanding of the notion of *qing* 情 in early Chinese thought. In addition, considering the natural and close connection between music and hearing, auditory research on the theory of proper music could correct the visual-centric bias inherent in textual studies. For example, the

music created by the combination of the five musical notes and the way different styles of music evoke corresponding emotions could be examined. By studying the melodic styles of proper music and Zheng melodies, we can better understand how auditory experiences played a role in the lyrical tradition of early China. Furthermore, although later bibliographic systems were influenced by the YWZ, they became quite different over time. Changes in the categorization of musical texts could reflect the reception history of the *Records of Music* in later periods and are also worth studying.

Second, comparative studies can also explore the practice and reception of the Confucian theory of proper music in later periods. For example, Ji Kang 嵇康 (223-262 CE)'s famous essay *Music Has in It neither Grief nor Joy* (*Sheng Wu Aile Lun* 聲無哀樂論) is primarily a critique of the Confucian ideological music. Comparing these two texts can illustrate how people during the chaotic period following the fall of the Han dynasty understood the Confucian system of proper music and rituals, including its discipline of emotions and the connection between music and politics. The spread of Buddhism in medieval China also reshaped the understanding of ceremonial music among various social strata, including new perspectives on ritual space, cosmology, the body, and emotions. A comparative study of the *Records of Music* and Buddhist musical materials, such as Buddhist chant (*fanbai* 梵唄), can enhance our knowledge of the interactions and conflicts between Confucian tradition and Buddhism. Moreover, the significant migration and cultural exchange in medieval China also introduced new musical forms, such as the so-called "foreign music" (*huyue* 胡樂). Exploring the interactions between this type of music and proper music can not only show the conceptual history of music but also investigate how the Confucian intellectual tradition understood the central-peripheral relationship. Additionally, Sima Guang 司馬光(1019-1086 CE) and Zhu Xi 朱熹(1130-1200 CE), leading

scholar-officials (*shi dafu* 士大夫) of the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE), commented on the *Records of Music* and Hejian scholarship. Research into these commentaries can shed light on how the proper music theory was received within the Confucian tradition.

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APPENDIX

Order	Titles Recorded in the *Separate Listings*	Order	Titles Recorded in the *Separate Listings*
1	樂本 *The Origin of Music*	13	樂器 *Musical Instruments*
2	樂論 *The Discourse of Music*	14	樂作 *Creation of Music*
3	樂施 *The Implementation of Music*	15	意始 *Origin of Intention*
4	樂言 *Talks on Music*	16	樂穆 *Solemnity in Music*
5	樂禮 *Music and Rituals*	17	說律 *Explanation of Musical Scales*
6	樂情 *The Sentimental Nature of Music*	18	季札 *Ji Zha*
7	樂化 *Transformation of Music*	19	樂道 *The Way of Music*
8	樂象 *Representation of Music*	20	樂義 *The Righteousness of Music*
9	賓牟賈 *Bin Mou Gu*	21	昭本 *Illuminating the Origin*
10	師乙 *Master Yi*	22	昭頌 *Illuminating Praise*
11	魏文侯 *Marguis Wen of Wei*	23	竇公 *Duke Dou*
12	奏樂 *Performance of Music*		

Table 1. The Titles and Order of the Twenty-Three *pian* of Liu Xiang's Version of the *Records of Music* as Recorded in the *Separate Listing*[262]

[262] The translations of the titles of the first eleven *pian* are taken from Cook, "'Yue Ji' 樂記 – Record of Music: Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Commentary," pp. 1-96. I have updated the titles of sections 1, 3, 6, and 10 based on my understanding of the content and the explanations provided in the commentaries and sub-commentaries. As the content of the last twelve *pian* has been lost, the translations are only approximate, based solely on the titles.

Order	In Liu Xiang's *Separate Listings*	In the *Younger Dai's Book of Rites*	In the *Records of the Grand Historian*
1	樂本 *The Origin of Music*	樂本 *The Origin of Music*	樂本 *The Origin of Music*
2	樂論 *The Discourse of Music*	樂論 *The Discourse of Music*	樂論 *The Discourse of Music*
3	樂施 *The Implementation of Music*	樂禮 *Music and Rituals*	樂禮 *Music and Rituals*
4	樂言 *Talks on Music*	樂施 *The Implementation of Music*	樂施 *The Implementation of Music*
5	樂禮 *Music and Rituals*	樂言 *Talks on Music*	樂情 *The Sentimental Nature of Music*
6	樂情 *The Sentimental Nature of Music*	樂象 *Representation of Music*	樂言 *Talks on Music*
7	樂化 *Transformation of Music*	樂情 *The Sentimental Nature of Music*	樂象 *Representation of Music*
8	樂象 *Representation of Music*	魏文侯 *Marguis Wen of Wei*	樂化 *Transformation of Music*
9	賓牟賈 *Bin Mou Gu*	賓牟賈 *Bin Mou Gu*	魏文侯 *Marguis Wen of Wei*
10	師乙 *Master Yi*	樂化 *Transformation of Music*	賓牟賈 *Bin Mou Gu*
11	魏文侯 *Marguis Wen of Wei*	師乙 *Master Yi*	師乙 *Master Yi*

Table 2. The Order of the Eleven *pian* in the Three Existing Versions of the *Records of Music*