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Sounds for the dead: ritualists and their vocal liturgical music in the Buddhist Rite of Merit in Fujian, China

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**Sounds for the dead:
ritualists and their vocal liturgical music
in the Buddhist Rite of Merit in Fujian, China**

by Hwee-San Tan

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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University of London
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Abstract

In Minnan, southern Fujian, China, a complex ritual performance carried out by ritual specialists after death to assist a soul's journey to a better afterlife is known as *gongde*. Three types of Buddhist ritualist may perform *gongde*: institutional ordained monks, semi-institutional women practitioners called *caigu* ("vegetarian sisters"), and lay professional ritual specialists *xianghua heshang* ("incense-flower monks").

This thesis examines the music, ritual structure, and the background and role of the three types of specialist in *gongde*. Of the three types, the ordained monks and the women *caigu* reveal strong links while the lay *xianghua* have a more tenuous relationship with the two. The hymn style commonly used in *gongde* performed by the first two groups is said to be a regional one originating from Fuzhou, the provincial capital north of Minnan. At the same time, a National style reserved mainly for rituals aimed at personal religious enhancement is now a preferred choice in *gongde* by ordained monks. Interesting questions arise about agreement in hymn styles, melodic unity in hymns and the relationship between text and music, issues about change and variation in relation to musical migration, and musical features in the recitation (*niansong*) form, which is often thought of as non-melodious. This thesis addresses these issues. It also considers the relationship between *xianghua* and the orthodox Buddhists, and the close link between the music of the former and that of local secular traditions.

Social and economic transformations in China in the past two decades have led to change in *gongde*. The three types of ritualists and their respective re-constructions of *gongde* reveal new responses to social changes and political ideology, which in turn impact on music in *gongde*.

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Preface

My interest in Buddhist music was fostered when I began my MMus in Ethnomusicology at SOAS. Although I came from a strong family Buddhist background, my contacts with Buddhist chanting had only been at family funerals. I had never thought of Buddhist chanting as music. Quite by accident, I became the interpreter for Chinese scholar Tian Qing when, in 1993, he visited SOAS with the Tianjin Buddhist ensemble to give a lecture on Buddhist music. During his stay in England, I subsequently acted as his interpreter for lectures at other universities as well. Hence for a period of two months or so, I came to discover much about Chinese Buddhist music. I found myself enraptured by it, and when I decided to pursue a PhD, I was determined to focus on Buddhist music.

Having decided on a research topic, I decided to carry out my investigation in Minnan (lit. southern *Min*), the southern parts of Fujian province in the southeastern coast of China. My main reason for concentrating on the Minnan region is because the dialect commonly spoken in this area is also my mother tongue. I feel that research will be easier and more direct as I am able to communicate without the need for an interpreter. Furthermore, Minnan is rich in religious traditions; institutional Buddhism co-exists with Daoism and folk religion. The revival of religious practices is more vibrant than in any other place in China because of financial input by overseas Chinese with roots in this region. Western studies on religious practices in Fujian also abound: late 19th century ethnographies by for example De Groot (1886; 1892-1910), Doolittle (1866), and more recent studies by Dean (1988; 1993) and Lagerwey (1987) provide useful background sources.

I began my PhD research with the intention of investigating the music and ritual of the Buddhist Universal Salvation Rite held in the seventh lunar month (around August). More commonly known as the Hungry Ghost Festival or by the name of its Daoist equivalent *Pudu*, this is a month-long celebration of feasts and rites aimed at appeasing the hungry ghosts who are temporarily liberated from their sufferings in the Underworld to roam the human realm in search of food. Rites performed by either Buddhist or Daoist ritual specialists are celebrated throughout this period, culminating in a large-scale ritual on the 15th of the month. This is a subject which has hitherto been little studied, and I was curious about its survival in post-Cultural Revolution China.¹

In summer 1997, on my first fieldwork trip, I spent nearly three months in Minnan

¹ Concerning the music of Daoist *Pudu*, see Tsao 1989, Boltz 1996. Pang (1977) examines Daoist *Pudu* among the Chinese in Hawaii, and Lombard-Salmon (1975) surveys Buddhist *Pudu* in Java. For the historical origin of the Ghost Festival, see Teiser 1988.

(southern Fujian Province) with the intention of observing and recording this Buddhist Universal Salvation Rite. To my disappointment, I found that throughout Minnan, government control of public religious activities during the seventh lunar month was very tight. In highly urbanised Xiamen there was hardly any sign of celebrations of this festival. In Quanzhou city, I came across one street opera performance, but no religious ritual was held in conjunction with it. Institutional monasteries held three days of sutra recitation services in which the public was free to participate, but this was a very low-key event. People in Quanzhou told me that *Pudu* is still thought by the government to encourage superstition. Before the start of the seventh month, government officials had already begun clampdowns on any likely large-scale events related to the Festival.

Thinking that official intervention was perhaps less stringent further inland, away from the larger cities, I went to Yongchun and Dehua. I had little luck in Dehua, but in Yongchun a cadre from the local Cultural Office (*Wenhuaguan*) informed me that a two-day *Pudu* celebration by Daoists would take place in the Chenghuang Miao (Temple of the City God) on the 14th and 15th days of the seventh month. The Cultural Office made arrangements for me to go along to observe the celebrations. However, on the morning of the 14th when I arrived at Chenghuang Miao, my informant told me that the *Pudu* had been cancelled by order of the county officials. Instead, the Daoist priests who were already there would be performing a one-day *gongde* Ritual of Merit for a private family.

Thus, I was wholly unsuccessful in observing rituals celebrating the Hungry Ghost Festival. However, during that trip, I found that small-scale rites for the dead were very widespread in Minnan. Known there as *gongde* (lit. Merit), such a ritual can be performed in conjunction with a funeral or as a memorial service after burial to help one's deceased on the path to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha or to a better rebirth. Unlike the Hungry Ghost Festival, the performance of *gongde* did not seem to suffer local authority intervention. Having found a new trajectory, my first port of call was naturally Buddhist monasteries. I began my search in Chengtiansi and Kaiyuansi, the two largest monasteries in Quanzhou. For reasons which will be elucidated in the thesis, I found myself directed by informants to a type of Buddhist women practitioners known as *caigu* ("Vegetarian Sisters"). These are women who live and practice as nuns do but, unlike the latter, do not shave their heads. These women practitioners can be found to run numerous small temples. In Quanzhou, and as I also discovered in Xiamen, *caigu* are the most common type of *gongde* ritual performers. However, the story was slightly different in the inner counties of Yongchun: there, the presence of institutional monks is sparse, and lay Daoists or a type of lay Buddhist known as *xianghua heshang* ("Incense-Flower

monks”) appear to be the main performers of *gongde* rituals. Thus, the relative efflorescence of *gongde* in different strata of Minnanese society and its performance by various categories of ritual specialists make this rite both more readily observable and more interesting to study. Since its liturgical and musical elements are also hitherto understudied, I decided to make Buddhist *gongde* the focus of my research.

Several fieldwork trips between 1997 and 2000 revealed that the performances of *gongde* in Minnan are undertaken by three categories of ritual specialists: ordained monks who live in institutional monasteries, women *caigu* who give up lay life to live in temples, and *xianghua* (incense and flower) lay Buddhists. It would have been preferable to concentrate on one type, for instance, institutional practitioners, to gain deeper understanding. However, I realised that there are intrinsic links among the three types. The link between the *xianghua* and the institutional specialists is somewhat tenuous, but the inclusion of the *xianghua* helps cast light on continuity and change of a tradition in the face of changing political and social conditions in post-Mao China, and on the response of ritual to differing contexts.

The study of the vocal liturgical styles also highlights interesting questions. For example, I was informed by the women *caigu* that they commonly use a singing style which originated from Fuzhou, the northern section of the province. This raised questions about dissemination and change in singing styles that prompted me to extend my search to Fuzhou. Although it was impossible to carry out extensive studies there, preliminary inquiries have provided a better understanding of the singing style. Despite the sketchy nature of my data at present, I have given a goodly number of pages to the question of Fuzhou-Minnan links because it is a topic that has been entirely overlooked in Chinese Buddhist music research. I hope thereby to have paved the way for future researchers.

A few words need to be said here about my fieldwork method and experiences. Being a Chinese, albeit an Overseas one (from Singapore), I had the advantage of being less conspicuous than Western researchers. I was able to conduct research without obtaining permission from the higher level of administrative channels (in the case of my research, these would be the *Wenhuaaju* (Cultural Bureau) and *Zongjiaoju* (Religious Bureau), and thus avoid supervision by officials.² On the few occasions I did have to obtain recommendation letters from such offices, I found them often bureaucratic and suspicious of foreign researchers, even a Chinese one. Since religion is still a carefully trodden area by

² Western researchers in China often report administrative hassles with the appropriate authorities and sometimes close supervision by local officials (e.g. Schimmelpenninck 1997).

government officials, I felt it would be more of a hindrance than a help if I alerted the offices concerned to the fact that I was “snooping” around. Thus whenever I could get away with it, I preferred not to approach a government body of any kind.

Throughout fieldwork, I worked mostly alone, both for financial reasons and to avoid attracting official attention. In Xiamen, I was able to stay at the guesthouse of Nanputuosi monastery because prior to my own research I had stayed there with a team of researchers from the Music Research Institute in Beijing, led by Buddhist music scholar Tian Qing; with his recommendation, I was well received. I made friends with a number of monks there, and they became valuable informants and contacts. Many were friendly and helpful in providing information and referring me to other monasteries or temples. My contacts grew in that way. In Quanzhou, my main informants were He Shaoruo, the leader of the local Nanyin troupe, and the scholar-composer Chen Meisheng. They gave me leads on where to go and who to look for. Very often, I had to go to monasteries and temples without any introductions. I usually asked to see the *dangjia* (an overseer monk) or a *zhike* (guest prefect) or, in the case of *caigu* temples, the sister in charge. Introducing myself and explaining the purpose of my visit, I made requests to observe and record *gongde* rituals in their temple or monastery. Very often, they were sympathetic to what I wished to do and were generally willing to let me observe their rituals. Sister Miaolian, an elderly *caigu* in Quanzhou, in particular, became a valuable informant, and through her I got to know where *gongde* rituals were going to be held; with her help, I was often hospitably received by *caigu* in other temples and allowed to observe their rituals.

In general, using a personal approach, I was able to widen my contacts and succeed in seeking out my research targets. This type of approach, however, did not always work. There were occasions when I met with bureaucratic resistance because I lacked proper permission from the Religious or Cultural Bureau. An example was Kaiyuansi in Quanzhou. Fortunately, these incidents were the exceptions rather than the norm.

Of the three types of ritual specialist, I had the greatest difficulty in tracking down the *xianghua*. In 1997, during the first of my fieldwork trips, I found a group of *xianghua* priests in Yongchun. But identifying other groups turned out to be difficult. While ordained monks and *caigu* were easy to locate since they live in monasteries or temples, *xianghua* were harder to trace for various reasons: they generally do not live in temples (even if some do own a temple); they are itinerant, often performing rituals in private homes in towns and villages; and as they are lay professional specialists like the Daoists, ordinary people often cannot tell the difference between the two and thus misdirect me to a Daoist event. Indeed, many people take the *xianghua* for Daoists rather than Buddhists.

For example, I once mentioned a *xianghua* priest in Shishi to a Shishi lady now living in Singapore; it turned out that she knew of the priest as she had lived in the same neighbourhood. Her reaction was: “Ah, but they are *daoshi* (Daoist priests).” I asked several cultural workers and researchers in Quanzhou city about lay Buddhist priests, but they condescendingly assured me that there were none, and that in rural areas all ritual specialists are *saikong* (Minnanese for Daoist).

I learnt from informants that an elderly monk knew some *xianghua* in Jinjiang. However, when I asked him about this type of ritual specialist, he was very ambivalent about them and would not put me in touch with any *xianghua*. Several trajectories of investigation yielded little success. After much difficulty and only toward the end of my fieldwork, I finally found some *xianghua* in Shishi and Anxi. I did not have sufficient time to build up a good rapport with them or to observe many of their *gongde*. One problem in studying the *xianghua* is in the texts and their contents. (Problems abound also in studying their music, as elucidated in chapter 5.) In institutional Buddhism, hymnals and ritual manuals are published and are widely available, whereas in the *xianghua* tradition there is more secrecy as the tradition is passed on from father to son. Not having had time to earn their trust, it was difficult to persuade the *xianghua* to give me copies of their ritual texts. I managed to hand-copy a few hymn texts from the group in Yongchun. In Shishi, I was given permission to take photographs of some pages of the manuals. While I was taking the pictures, the *xianghua* priest told me that he would not even allow his acolytes to copy from his manual. But when the pictures failed to produce a clear image, Mr. Cai from Shishi kindly photocopied several pages of texts and sent them to me. Because of such problems, my thesis will have inevitable gaps concerning the *xianghua* tradition. Nonetheless, the outline I give will hopefully provide a picture of a tradition which has hitherto been overlooked even by indigenous researchers. Even with the limited information available to me, it is evident that there is much more to this tradition than can be satisfactorily dealt with in this thesis. My preliminary study has revealed that this tradition needs separate attention, perhaps requiring collaborative research with scholars of related musical genres.

Earlier, I mentioned the advantage of carrying out fieldwork as a Chinese. Yet, this has a downside at times. As a Chinese, even though born and raised outside China, I was expected to know how to behave like a Chinese. In particular, I could not ask questions which might make the other party “lose face” (*diu mianzi*). For example, it would be untoward of me to ask monks directly how much money they make from *gongde*. At such

times, I could not help feeling that a Westerner in tow would have been useful: a sensitive question from a Westerner might be forgiven (if not necessarily answered) because a foreigner is not expected to be familiar with Chinese propriety.

I was also generally unable to record interviews and conversations, for two main reasons. First, religion is still a very politically sensitive topic in China, and most people felt the risk of recorded conversations reaching official ears to be too great. Second, as soon as a recording device appears, many people become uneasy, protesting that they are not experts, do not really know anything and so forth. I obviously did not try to make surreptitious recordings. For this reason, aside from a very few formal, recorded interviews, I cannot refer the reader to my field tapes for documentation. For statements of any contentiousness, I have tried to give the date of the conversation based on my field notes. The 39 DAT tapes that I did record between 1997 and 2000 are referred to in the text as CFJ [for China FuJian] 001 to 039; annotated copies will be deposited with the International Music Collection of the British Library National Sound Archive.

These are just some of the problems I faced in fieldwork. As a lone female working in the field, I was sometimes faced with other problems, but I will not detail them here.

Linguistic and musical conventions

In a work on Buddhism and Chinese culture in a region with its own distinct dialect, it is inevitable that a myriad of terminological, linguistic and stylistic problems will recur. Here I describe some conventions to help guide the readers through the labyrinth.

Chinese terms and names are romanized in *pinyin*, the standard system for modern Mandarin, the official national language. However, exceptions will be found in the case of words better known to Western readers in their non-*pinyin* spelling; for example, Taipei rather than Taibei, Yangtze rather than Yangzi. There is no standard practice for the word division of romanized Mandarin. Personal names, when cited full in running text, are given in Chinese order, surname followed by given name. In cases where there are two characters in the given name, they will run together in the *pinyin*; for example, Cai Qingyang. Upon ordination, Buddhist monks (and nuns) adopt the surname Shi (first character of the transliteration of Sakyamuni: Shijiamoni), followed by two-character Dharma name (*faming*). When citing Buddhist clerics, the surname Shi will be omitted and the Dharma names will run together as with Chinese names. Some monks who are not Chinese in origin are better known by their Chinese than their native name – for

example, Amoghavajra is better known as Bukong. In such cases I will use the Chinese name in running text, giving the non-Chinese name in parentheses on first appearance.

There is also the problem of what to do about the local Minnanese language, which, though closely related to Mandarin, differs from it phonetically enough to prevent mutual intelligibility. (For details, see Moser 1985: chs 12-13, or Norman 1988: ch. 9.) Although almost all locals can speak Mandarin, Minnanese is the language of daily discourse. Since the ideograms used in written Chinese give no clear indication of pronunciation, the same word in a Buddhist text might be pronounced in Mandarin by ordained monks in major temples who have come from elsewhere, but in Minnanese by Buddhists of local origin. And just as the performance of Buddhist rituals differs among different types of practitioners, so the actual ritual terminology may differ as well. After much agonising and discussion with colleagues, I have decided to romanize all Chinese terms (including a few in yet other dialects) as if they were Mandarin terms pronounced in Mandarin, partly for ease of recognition and comparison. Minnanese transliterations are given in the text when I deem it helpful. In musical examples, the lyrics of hymns sung in Minnanese will be romanized as Minnanese. The romanization systems for Mandarin and Minnanese are given at the end of this preface. Speech tones are not marked because they seem to be irrelevant to text setting in Buddhist music.

Aside from dialectal differences, there is the problem of whether to leave terms in Chinese or to translate them. Few readers will want to face several dozen Chinese terms recurring in the thesis. Yet for many terms there is no convincing and convenient English translation. So, despite some inevitable inconsistency, I aimed at pragmatism, using English, Chinese or sometimes even Sanskrit as it seemed most helpful and appropriate. Particularly when a lucid and helpful English translation is available, English alone will be used after the first occurrence; thus the hungry ghost known as Yankou will be called Flaming Mouth, a literal and revealing translation, though I will occasionally add the Chinese name in parentheses to remind the reader. By contrast, Chinese terms of crucial centrality to this thesis, such as *gongde*, *caigu*, *xianghua* and *zan*, will be kept in the Chinese. Finally, a selection of Sanskrit words which should be known to readers familiar with Buddhism – for example, *sangha* (monastic community), *sutra* (canonical text), *gatha* (verse), *Bodhisattva* (a being who is destined for enlightenment) – will be used without italics in the thesis, with Chinese equivalents and English translations given where relevant. (Diacritics are omitted from Sanskrit terms.)

But our terminological and translational woes are not quite over. It is not possible to provide a unique English translation for each Chinese term we encounter. For example,

Chinese has different terms for several types of religious establishments: *si*, *miao*, *gong*, *guan* and yet others. These suffixes appended to official names of a place of worship clearly delineate its religious affiliation in the Chinese context. Thus, *si* is a general term for a Buddhist place of worship, while *guan* and *gong* refer to one of Daoist leanings, and a *miao* is often a place where local deities are worshipped. These terms might all be translated broadly as “temple” or “monastery”, but these English terms often do not convey the Chinese concepts explicitly. In all fairness, the Chinese terms themselves are not always explicit and consistent in meaning. I favour a middle road approach here by keeping the Chinese suffix while also adding the broad English term on its first mention. For example, *si* is often appended to official names of Buddhist places of worship despite a dual level of semantic specificity. It can refer to a monastery with a large number of clerics in residence run by strict regulations which is, first and foremost, a place of religious learning, but it can also refer to a smaller temple with none of the above characteristics. Hence, I will write “Nanputuosi monastery” or “Tongfosi temple” the first time the term occurs, to emphasise their different natures, generally dropping the English term thereafter. A phrase such as “Tongfosi temple” may seem redundant, but it serves to clarify for the reader the kind of establishment I am referring to. The same will apply to the suffix *shan*, meaning mountain. In the Buddhist context, it often refers to a mountain complex with many temples and monasteries, such as Wutaishan or Putuoshan. On first mention, I will write “Wutaishan Mountains” and so on. (Names like Nanputuosi and Wutaishan never occur without their suffixes in Chinese.)

English titles of musical pieces are enclosed in quotation marks (“True Incense Hymn”) except in tables. But there are also names for subclasses of hymns (Incense Hymns, etc): these will simply have upper-case initials. For each title, I have chosen a single translation equivalent and used it consistently (I hope!). But this translation is necessarily somewhat arbitrary, because there is lack of consistency in naming individual pieces among both practitioners and scholars. Very often practitioners use the first line of text as a title, but they also invent short or collective titles for some hymns or hymn groups. In *Chanmen Risong*, for example, only collective titles are given for some hymns.

Translations of song texts are mine unless otherwise stated. The aim is to convey meaning, not to attempt to reproduce structural features of the Chinese. All photographs are also by me unless otherwise stated.

Glossary 1 defines briefly the more important Sanskrit and Chinese Buddhist terms, with characters for the Chinese words. The separate Selected Character List gives characters but no definitions for selected terms of lesser importance. Place names appear

in the Selected Character List. All schematic representations, unless otherwise stated, are my own construct derived from my own observations. Glossary 2 defines and discusses some of the English theoretical terms employed, such as “key” and “style”.

Romanization systems

1) **Mandarin:** The *pinyin* romanization is well described in most specialist books on China; here I only try to clarify the more confusing symbols for non-Chinese speakers by giving approximate English equivalents.

q = between ch and ts; with tongue tip forward

x = between sh and sy; with tongue tip forward

c = ts

z = dz

zh = the middle sound of “pledger”, not “pleasure”

zhi, shi, chi, zi, ci: tongue tip is back; vowel is similar to English “her”

-ian = yen

-en: rhymes with the second syllable of “women”

-ei: rhymes with “day”

2) **Minnanese** creates problems because the term encompasses a number of subdialects that differ more than Cockney, Glaswegian and the “Queen’s English” in Britain – perhaps as much as Spanish and Italian. Moreover, scholars have used other terms for all or part of this dialect region, such as Hokkien and Amoy (the latter strictly indicating only the dialect of Xiamen). Finally, several slightly different romanization systems are in use. Since textual analysis is not important in this thesis, I have adopted and adapted a version of what Wright calls the “missionary romanization system” or MRS, which is sufficient to convey the basic sounds.³ Most symbols are as in *pinyin*, but:

ph, th, ch, kh: h shows considerable aspiration

l = between the “l” of “college” and the flapped “r” of British “courage”

q = only as a glottal stop at the end of a syllable

mng, tng (etc): “vowelless” syllables have a brief vowel like the “a” of “woman”

m: can be a word by itself, meaning “not”

³ Mike Wright, “The missionary romanization system used for certain southern Min dialects” (www.coastalfog.net/languages/xiarom/html, accessed 31.viii.02); see also Bodman 1955-8.

ng = always soft as in “singer” rather than “finger”

i, e, a, o, u = approximately as in Spanish

eu: rhymes with English “could” or French “peu”

@ = “open o” as in British “hot”, American “caught” (MRS may use o’)

-ian, -iat = yen, yet

-ie: rhymes with “ee-uh”

ui~ (etc): a tilde (~) indicates that the preceding vowels are weakly nasalized

m-, n-, ng-: initial nasal consonants give weak nasalization to the following vowel(s); this is not marked with a ~.

This same system will be used for lyrics in Fuzhou dialect. Sung texts do not always follow the phonology of normal speech, and there are many inserted vocables, so the transliterations are only approximate.

Musical examples

Musical examples are given in staff notation, normalized to the key of C for convenience of comparison. (Absolute pitch is usually irrelevant in Buddhist music.) Some pieces do modulate one or more times, in which case other key signatures appear (see Glossary 2 for discussion). Vocal ornamentation, portamenti and so forth are shown only in sufficient detail as to be relevant to the discussions of tune relatedness below.

All transcriptions are by me unless otherwise stated.

For some purposes I resort to cipher notation (derived from the Galin-Paris-Chevé system), which is very convenient for monophonic melodies and is widely used in China (and indeed elsewhere in Asia: China imported it from Japan). It works as follows: Pitch: numbers 1-7 (corresponding to moveable do, re, mi...) are used for the central octave; the same with dots underneath for the lower octave; the same with dots above for the upper octave. Duration: a plain number represents a crotchet; one underline is a quaver, two a semiquaver, three a demisemiquaver (corresponding to the number of beams in Western notation); a minim is shown as a crotchet followed by a dash; a rest is a zero. It is common in Chinese musicology to speak of “1 = C”, “1 = G” etc to show where the tonic is; we will sometimes need to do the same.

Because I have been unable to get my computer to produce acceptable cipher notation (e.g. the underlines obscure the lower-octave dots), I will use the system of italicizing upper-octave pitches and putting lower-octave ones in bold type.

In my staff notation, x represents a pitch that cannot be precisely determined, or which I feel the singer did not intend to have a precise pitch.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor and supervisor David Hughes and his wife Gina Barnes for their tremendous support throughout my PhD, and particularly in the last couple of years. Tian Qing inspired my interest in Buddhist music, offering frequent help and guidance, and Stephen Jones shared a wealth of insights into Chinese music.

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I am indebted to Lin Lin, Wang Linping and Ren Yong, and Zhang Ailing for putting roofs over my head, and welcoming me into their homes – a tremendous change from the dingy local hotels of my first field trip.

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I am grateful to Tsai Tsan-Huang, who most willingly shared his own research. John Briers and Ellen Moerman read my early drafts and offered helpful comments and useful suggestions. I am grateful to Henry Zhao for taking me through the finer points of Chinese poetry. Manuel Jimenez patiently and tirelessly typed out my musical examples. Without Weng Leong's computer wizardry, my graphics would never have seen the light of day. Dusadee Swangviboonpong and Nicolas Magriel helped in the making of my CD examples. Many friends in London and Singapore, while I can't name them all, provided moral support when confidence waned. Last but not least, I am grateful to my family for their understanding and support throughout the pursuit of my goals in the last fifteen years.

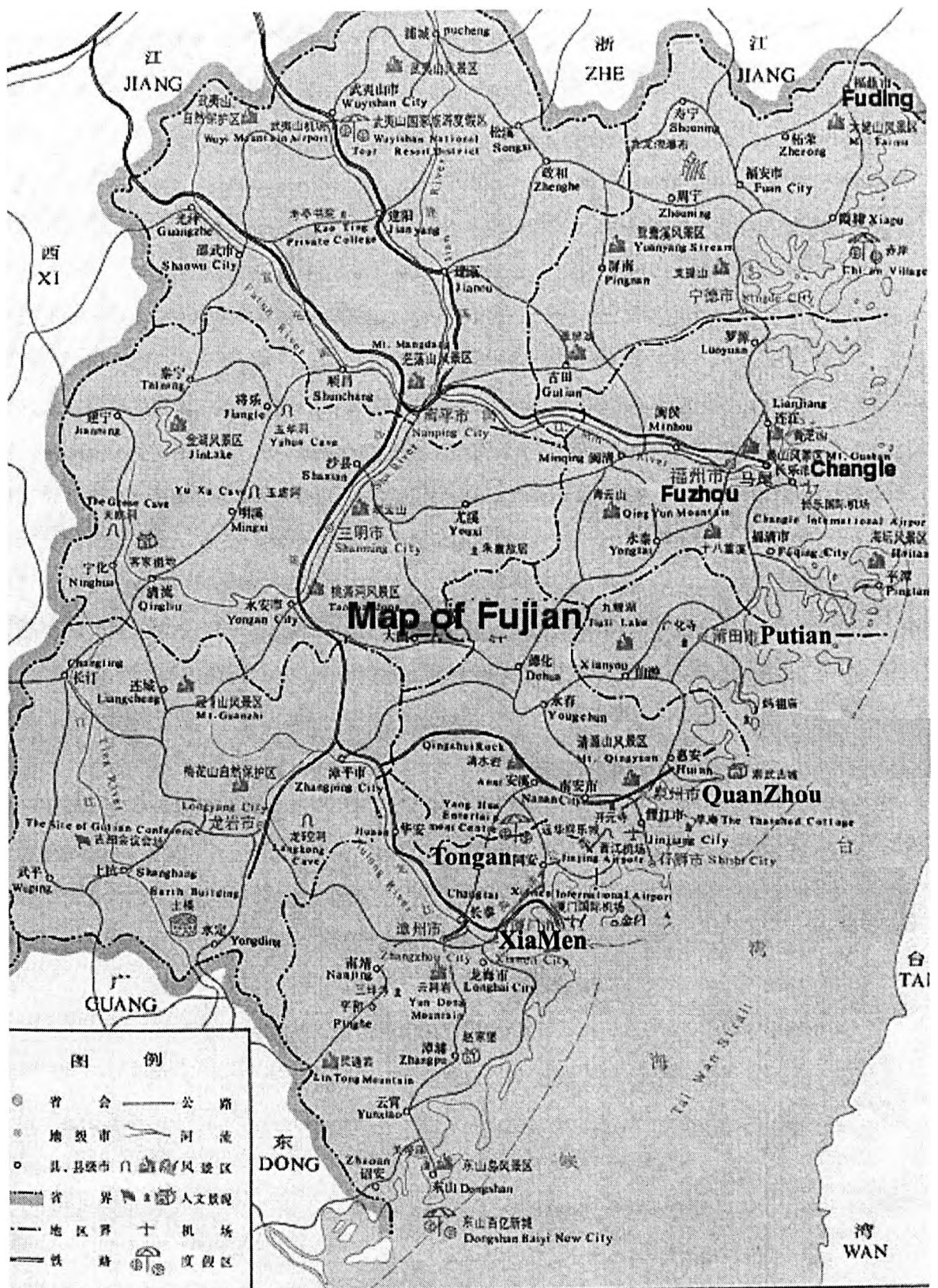
I am solely responsible for any errors of fact and interpretation.

Table of Dynasties

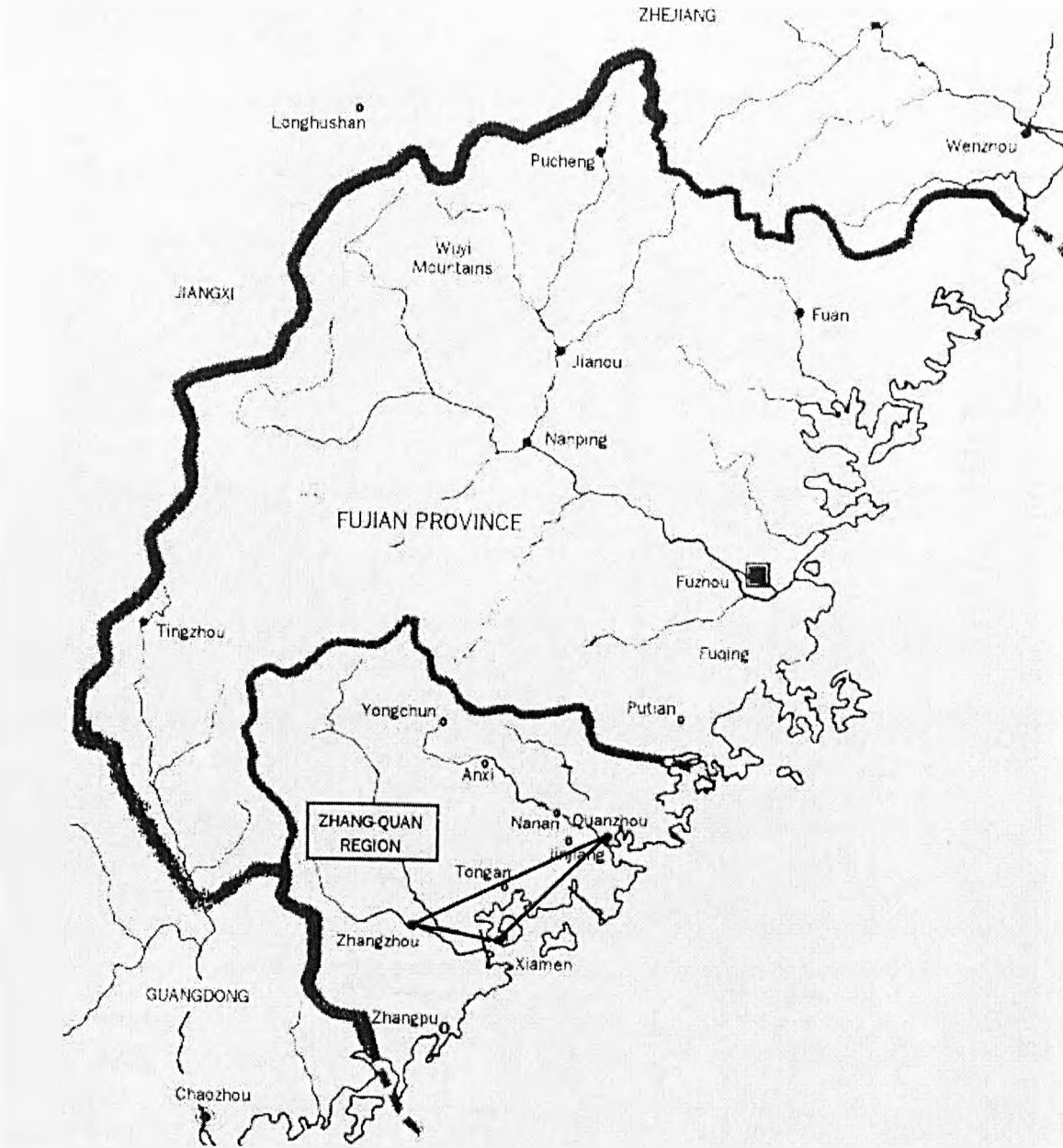
(omitting those before Qin, which are irrelevant to this thesis)

Qin	221 BCE - 207 BCE
Western Han	206 BCE - 8 CE
Eastern Han	25 CE - 220 CE
Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shuhan, Wu)	220 - 265
Western Jin	265 - 316
Eastern Jin	317 - 420
Northern and Southern	420 - 589
Tang	618 - 907
Five Dynasties	907 - 960
Northern Song	960 - 1127
Southern Song	1127 - 1279
Yuan	1271 - 1368
Ming	1368 - 1644
Qing	1644 - 1911
Republican	1911 - 1949
People's Republic	1949 -

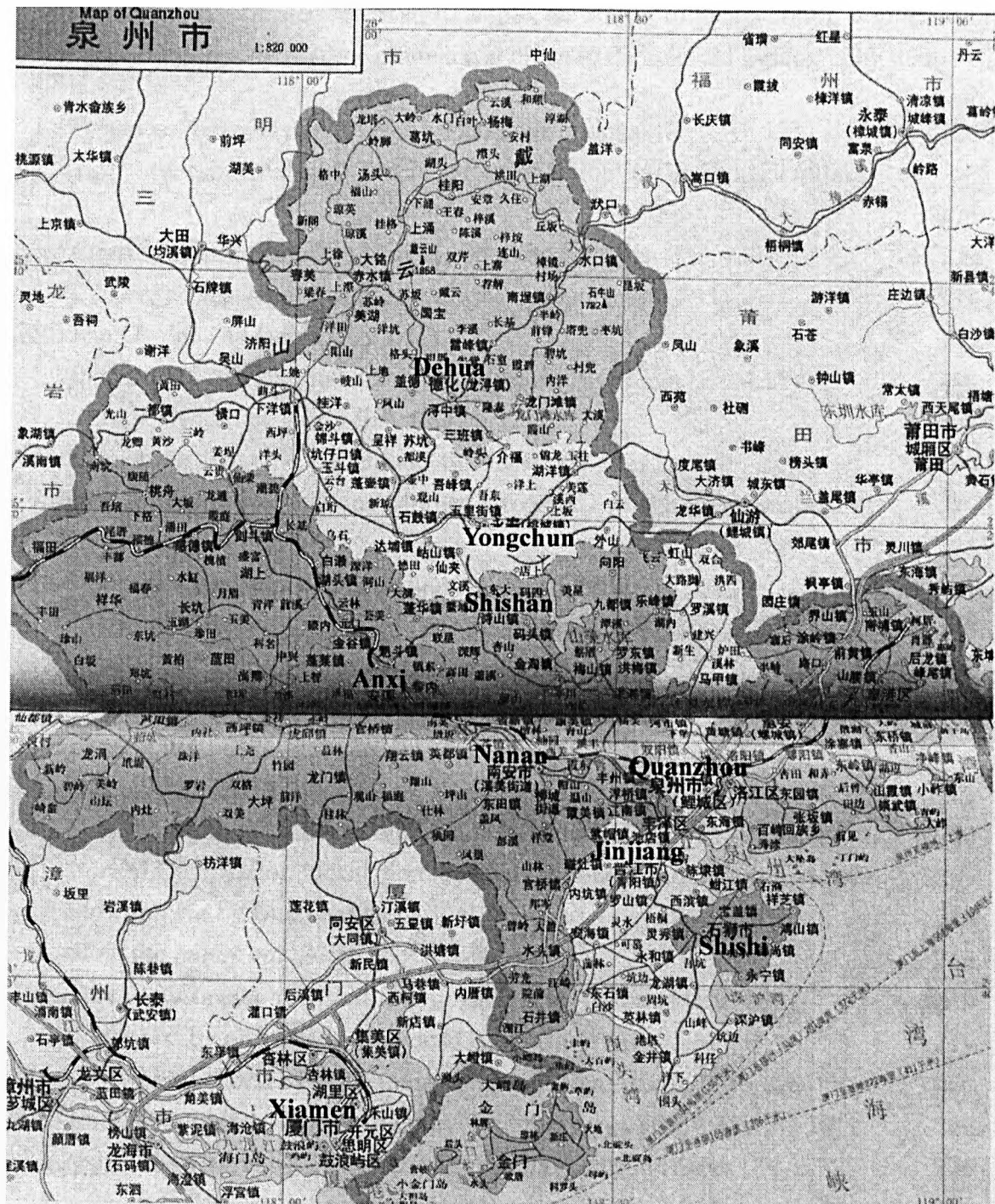
Map 1 Map of Fujian



Map 2 Map of Zhang-Quan region (adapted from Dean 1993: 22)



Map 3 Map of Quanzhou



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Aims and scope

Rites related to the dead in China may be divided into two types: funerary rites and post-funerary rites.¹ There is some overlap between the two but also differences. Funerary rites, for example, may include dressing and washing of the corpse, wailing for the dead, offering to the dead, performed by the family according to a prescribed set of ritual actions. Funerary rites may also include encoffining, burial and sets of rites which require attendance by ritual specialists such as Daoist or Buddhist priests. In contemporary China, elaborate funerary rites in urban centres are practically eliminated due to state restrictions. In rural areas, however, traditional funerals are re-emerging (see Whyte 1988; Dean 1988a).

A structured set of rites performed by Buddhist or Daoist ritual specialists aimed to assist the soul on its journey to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha or to a better rebirth may be included in the funeral service, but more often it is performed on specific days after death. Such a performance is paid for by a single family and hence could be said to be private; this is known in Minnan (southern Fujian province), as *zuo gongde* (Minnanese *zui gongdiak*, lit. to make merit).² My study will focus on this type of post-funerary ritual as performed by Buddhist ritual specialists rather than the broad funerary rites which may include a wider range of activities not necessarily requiring attendance by religious specialists.³ While funerary rites have been extensively studied (see Watson and Rawski 1988), there is a serious lack of scholarly attention to post-funerary ritual and its music in contemporary Buddhist studies.⁴

First, a few words about my geographical boundary must be said. For reasons explained in the Preface, I wanted to carry out my research in Minnan, southern Fujian

¹ For descriptions of funerary and burial rites in late imperial China, see de Groot 1886, 1982; Doolittle 1866.

² The term *gongde* refers to the Buddhist concept of merit (see below); its use to designate a post-funerary rite is unique to the Minnan and Chaozhou regions and is also widespread in the Chinese diaspora. In the 11th century, private rites for the dead were called *Shuilu zhai* (Water and Land Feasts; see Davis 2001: ch. 8), after the large-scale public Water and Land Grand Ritual (*Shuilu fahui*). Up to the late 16th century, private rites for the dead remained known as *Shuilu hui* (Water and Land Assembly) (see e.g. the 16th century popular novel *Jinping mei*, ch. 8; see also Tian 1992).

³ The terms “rite” and “ritual” are often used interchangeably. In this thesis, I will use “rite” to refer to a smaller and complete set of ritual actions and “ritual” as an aggregate of rites.

⁴ Chinese Buddhist studies generally pay little attention to ritual forms; general introductions to various types of rituals can be found (see e.g. Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui).

(Map 1). Xiamen, Zhangzhou, a city 50 kilometres west, and Quanzhou together form the “Zhang-Quan” economic region.⁵ These three cities, roughly forming a triangle, make up what is known as Minnan, sharing a similar dialect and a distinct regional subculture (Map 2). After arriving in Quanzhou via Xiamen, I found that it was a gargantuan task to try to cover the whole of Minnan. Quanzhou region alone, apart from the city and its surroundings, has seven districts under its municipal control, while Zhangzhou has nine districts and Xiamen one.⁶ Since Quanzhou region is the hub of the Minnan subculture, and Xiamen is easily accessible because of its location, I narrowed down my geographical area mainly to include these two regions (Map 3). Although this study omits the Zhangzhou region, for convenience I will still use the term Minnan when talking about Quanzhou and Xiamen as a whole.

Since the 1980s, the post-funerary *gongde* (Ritual of Merit) commanded by single families are becoming ever more prevalent in Minnan. Rapid economic development in this coastal area and the CCP’s religious reform have contributed to a huge expansion in religious activities (see e.g. Dean 1988). Since a *gongde* is a private event and tends to be on a fairly small scale (at least in urban centres), it does not suffer local authority intervention as much as, for example, the more controversial Hungry Ghost Festival held in the seventh lunar month (see Preface). Its prevalence makes this ritual an ideal research topic.

Three types of Buddhists are involved as *gongde* ritualists:⁷ institutional ordained monks, a type of lay female practitioner known as *caigu* (Minn. *caig@*, lit. vegetarian sisters) and lay professional *xianghua heshang* (Minn. *hionghua hexiu~*, lit. incense flower monk).⁸ Of the three, the ordained monks and the female *caigu* reveal strong links while the lay *xianghua* have a more tenuous relationship with the other two.⁹ Although I experienced much difficulty in locating the *xianghua* (see Preface) and my data for this group are less substantial, I felt it was essential to include *xianghua* in this study because the existence of this marginal group has frequently been dismissed. As the *xianghua* have more similarity with lay Daoists than with orthodox Buddhists, they have received little attention as a separate tradition. In Quanzhou, local researchers tell me that lay Zhengyi

⁵ For the economic systems of the southeastern Chinese coast, see G. W. Skinner 1985.

⁶ For further statistics on Minnan, see Dean 1993: 217.

⁷ I will use the word “ritualist” rather than the more cumbersome “ritual specialist”. But attention is drawn to readers that my use of “ritualist” refers to specialists who have specific inside knowledge of how a ritual should be performed.

⁸ In some parts of Minnan, lay Daoists also perform this ritual, but for obvious reasons, I will not discuss Daoist *gongde*.

⁹ I will drop *heshang* as this group do not address themselves as “monks” (*heshang*). It is a folk term used to differentiate this group from the Daoists.

sect Daoists predominate in rural areas and that there are no Buddhist ritualists; in the West, until the last few years, scholars studying Fujian have held the same opinion.¹⁰ Recent research in western Fujian has revealed different types of lay Buddhists (Lagerwey 2001). My research also demonstrates that Daoist and Buddhist lay ritualists do clearly differentiate their religious heritage. This is definitely an area worthy of future attention. Thus although my treatment of the *xianghua* and their music and ritual activities is outweighed by the other two ritualist types, my preliminary findings will hopefully draw attention to this group and encourage further research.

As this is a music thesis, much weight is put on analysis of the vocal liturgy of the three types. This thesis also aims to focus on the rise, background, training and functions of the ritual specialists, whose presence and function in ritual are often overlooked (Bell 1992: 130-40). Of the three types, institutional ordained monks are the most familiar to those interested in Chinese religion. As we shall see, *gongde* is regarded by the Buddhists themselves and scholars of religion as a somewhat abnormal religious activity; a study of monks and their involvement in *gongde* will allow insight into social relations and hierarchy in institutional Buddhism. As for the *caigu* and *xianghua*, the former's role as *gongde* ritualists is a recent phenomenon hitherto unexplored, while the latter have been neglected as their existence is hardly recognised.

Up to late imperial times, *gongde* (as observed by late 19th century Christian missionaries and others) seems to have had a more or less uniform structure regardless of who performed it. The advent of the Communists brought dramatic changes in religious and cultural traditions, particularly during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Soon after 1976, introduction of new policies (most relevantly the Religious Reform) and subsequent economic expansion have triggered a vibrant religious revival, particularly in coastal areas such as Fujian. The re-opening of China's doors to the outside world also led to an increase in studies of its religious revival. This phenomenon poses interesting questions: Have religious practices changed, or are they reconstructions of traditional practices? If so, to what extent? What new meanings are linked to changed or reconstructed ritual practices? This study, through examining *gongde* performed by these three types of ritualist, explores these questions.

Gongde performance in Minnan presents a mixed picture. *Gongde* performed by institutional monks today reveal a much modified model; their close counterparts the *caigu* retain some traditional elements, while the *xianghua* model represents a revival of

¹⁰ Personal communication with Piet van der Loon (1994).

traditional *gongde*. Why is this so? In Minnan, urban practices reflect communist ideological control, while rural rituals to some extent represent a revival of traditional values and practices. Yet there is more than a growing dichotomy between urban and rural sectors. The degree to which traditional practices are included in *gongde* today depends largely on the degree to which religious activities are tolerated; as this thesis demonstrates, the degree of tolerance is highly variable in different regions, counties, townships and even villages.

Anthropological studies on religious revival in China have shown that new social meanings can be perceived in revitalised ritual practices (e.g. Dean 1993; Siu 1989; Feuchtwang 2000). Indeed, the different types of change in *gongde* reflect new responses to social transformations and state political ideology. Changing meanings have an impact on music in *gongde* and therefore draw our attention.

This study is on contemporary Buddhist practices in the *gongde* ritual for the dead. Discussion of historical matters will therefore be brief.

1.2 Methodology

The architectonic role of music in ritual was recognised by sociologists including Tambiah, Bloch and others in the late 1960s and early '70s; but the study of music in ritual has only been given the attention it deserves in more recent decades. Studies on ritual and music focussing on single cultures have emerged (see Yung 1996: Introduction). Collective publications bringing together multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of music and ritual or music and religion are only slowly emerging; rare examples are Yung, Rawski and Watson (1996); Ralls-MacLeod and Harvey (2000); and an entire issue of the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* (11/1, 2002). As yet, little overarching theory in this field of study has developed. Yung, Rawski and Watson (in their introduction) attempt to assess ritual and music in a systematic way, and this is also the first collective work aimed at proposing a theoretical framework for the study of Chinese ritual sound. The present study draws on some of the general analytical ideas proposed by Yung et al., while relying also on traditional methods of music analysis and the approaches of sociocultural anthropology and ethnomusicology. Particular theories or approaches will emerge when relevant below.

This study is a result of some nine months of fieldwork carried out in three visits from 1997 to 2000. One of my field tasks was to gather historical documents such as local, religious and temple gazetteers, liturgical manuals, scriptures, and other source materials. Liturgical manuals and scriptures of the institutional tradition are easier to obtain as they

are widely circulated in monasteries. Such materials of the more esoteric *xianghua* tradition are more jealously guarded by the ritualists, although I was fortunate to gather some from a group of *xianghua* in Shishi city. Official publications containing historical and cultural information are being re-issued by the Quanzhou municipal government; although not available for sale, one could obtain them from the government office. Temple gazetteers contain valuable facts about local religious history, important religious figures, events, temple development, and so on. These, I understand from informants, are still in the process of re-writing and many are as yet unpublished. Relying on the goodwill of some local informants, I was able to obtain a manuscript copy of the *Gazetteer of Religion in Xiamen (Xiamen zongjiao zhi)*.

Apart from gathering documentary data, I also conducted informal and formal interviews with individuals and groups, including religious personnel, local researchers, patrons or observers of *gongde*, and the ordinary folk. The discovery that the common hymn style sung in *gongde* came from Fuzhou, the provincial capital north of Minnan, led me to extend my collection of information outside of my intended geographical boundary. But this actually allowed a broader survey to large monasteries in Fuzhou (§2.2.4), providing further insights into the state of *gongde* in institutional Buddhism. The music sampling in Fuzhou also facilitated comparative analysis of hymn music to establish the migration of hymns and draw attention to change and variation.

In the section on sung hymns,¹¹ music analysis is an inductive tool to the understanding of the principles of their musical grammar and form. The oral nature of the hymns strongly suggests the possibility of formulaism in the make-up of hymn tunes. My methods of inquiry here draw on the theories of formulaic analysis and text-melody relations established by scholars of medieval chant and folk song (e.g. Bayard 1950; Bronson 1951; Cowdery 1984; List 1979; Seeger 1966). Statistical analysis is also sometimes used to support my findings. At the same time, the Chinese musical system of “labelled melodies” (*qupai*), where a tune with a specific title is generally employed to set texts of similar poetic structure, appears to be at work and needs to be verified. A common characteristic in *qupai* is variation from one performance to another, as the “same” tune is sung to different texts or by different singers (Yung et al. 1996: 29-30). This principle is at work in Buddhist hymns, but not quite in the same way as in other Chinese musical genres.

¹¹ Poetic texts sung in Buddhist rituals are in reality metred songs sung to praise and eulogize or as prayers to the Buddhist pantheon. Since this is close in meaning to the Western term “hymn”, I will borrow it for general designation for the convenience of Western readers.

Emphasis is also put on determining the melodic nature of Buddhist recitation, the delivery of which is often thought of by scholars of Buddhist music as monotone chanting and hence less melodious. My study of different sub-types in Buddhist recitation, hitherto little explored by researchers, demonstrates not only that this common notion of recitation is erroneous but that the gamut of musical types found in this form needs thorough investigation.

In examining the music of the *xianghua*, a different set of problems confronts the researcher. Its close link with local secular music, particularly with *Nanyin* (a vocal-instrumental genre of Minnan) and the music of the string puppet theatre, call for a different methodology or even cross-musical collaborative research.

1.3 Brief review of relevant literature

Rites performed to aid the soul's journey to better rebirth, as mentioned earlier, began to draw the attention of Western observers, mainly Christian missionaries, in China in the late 19th century. The subject of religions practised in China was of great interest to the missionaries as they try to proselytise the Chinese. Their greatest challenge came in the form of ancestral worship: the tenacity of the Chinese notion of continuous exchange between the living and the dead, and Buddhist involvement in performing rituals to facilitate this. Descriptions of Buddhist rituals, particularly the private *gongde*, for the dead, its contents, structure, performance and the clerics are subjects of close study (e.g. Doolittle 1866; Soothill 1913; Reichelt 1927, 1951; de Groot 1885, 1910).

De Groot's *Buddhist masses for the dead at Amoy* (1885) is an important source of earlier practices of *gongde* in Xiamen (Amoy) and hence of Minnan region. Although he was writing about funerals, including accounts of washing and dressing the corpse, paying respects by friends and relatives, and so on, he also recounted, in great detail, rites performed by Buddhist ritualists. His descriptions facilitated comparisons of *gongde* performed up to late imperial times and in contemporary China. Doolittle's (1866) detailed account of the private rituals for the dead (which he called "meritorious ceremonies") in Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province, is also of relevance to this study.

Holmes Welch's (1967) study is still the most authoritative work on Buddhist monasteries, their system and practice in the first half of the 20th century. This study is a useful reference for monastic practices before the Communist takeover. A recent study by MacInnis (1989) of religion in China in the wake of the Religious Reform provides official party and state documents on the implementation of the policy of freedom of religious beliefs. Part two of the study gives an overview of the recovery of the practice

of religions soon after the reform. This section will be a useful measure for change in practices in time to come.

Scholarly interest in Buddhist music, or indeed in other religious music, began for all practical purposes when the Communists encouraged it in their bid to use music as a political tool. In the 1950s and 1960s, research led by Yang Yinliu, father of Chinese musicologists, yielded several valuable collections of transcriptions of regional Buddhist music (Yang Y. 1956, 1960; Ya 1955; He et al. 1959).¹² But the tumultuous Cultural Revolution soon halted all research activities. From the 1980s onward, revival of religious practices brought about by economic and political reforms served as an impetus for individual scholars. Buddhist music research resumed, resulting in a growing number of integrated, broad-based and theoretical studies. Space precludes a survey on this fairly vast body of literature, for the review of Buddhist music research in China, see Greene et al. (to appear).

Despite the growing body of writings, liturgical music in Buddhist rituals for the dead, in particular the private familial rites, is still a much neglected subject of study. Scholars generally focus on the music of the nationally unified daily rituals, stressing its homogeneity in the performance of its vocal liturgy. As for the music of rituals for the dead, research is still fragmented; scholars often claim that there is no uniformity in the liturgical music in these rituals, but that they differ regionally (e.g. Hu 1986; Tian 1993). The rituals for the dead referred by scholars, however, often include only recognised rituals such as the *Yogacara* Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth (*Yuqie Yankou Shishiyi*) and the Water and Land Grand Ritual (*Shuilu fahui*). Private familial ritual for the dead is hardly ever considered for reasons that will become clear in this study.

Since there is a serious lack of attention in the music of the ritual with which I am mainly concerned, there is hardly any literature on this topic. However, several works are still crucial references for this study; Hu Yao's (1986) analytical study of *zan* (hymns having lines of unequal syllables) sung in the daily lessons provides a basis for my own analysis of hymns. Hu's study is the first showing that a great number of hymn texts share a few tunes. A body of musical transcriptions, published and unpublished, by the late Quanzhou musician Cai Junchao (1986, etc) will be a source for some of my comparisons of hymns. In the 1980s, Cai, a retired musician from the Quanzhou string puppet troupe, began collecting and transcribing Buddhist hymns. He travelled to monasteries in Quanzhou and Putian regions, and recorded many hymns sung by monks

¹² For a review of research trends from the 1930s to the early 1990s, see Tian 1994.

and lay practitioners. Although his publications lack analytical details, they represent the most comprehensive collection of hymns in various styles including some local styles that are rarely sung today.

The rest of this chapter will provide mostly background information. A brief overview of religions in Minnan follows in §1.4, after which some basic concepts and practices in *gongde* and other types of Buddhist rituals for the dead linked in some ways to *gongde* will be outlined (§§1.5-6).

Chapter 2 will introduce the three types of *gongde* ritualists. The first section discusses monastic attitudes and involvement in *gongde* today and also considers who among institutional ritualists are involved in performing *gongde*. The focus on the women *caigu* (vegetarian sisters) is on the rise of their tradition and their role as *gongde* ritualists. The *xianghua* (incense-flower) lay ritualists are often mistaken as Daoists; the third section will examine their background and their claim as Buddhists.

Chapter 3 focuses on the structure of *gongde* as performed by the three types. Textual contents of the sung hymns and recited texts will also be introduced. A brief discussion of hymn styles and musical instruments found in *gongde* opens chapter 4. This will be followed by detailed analysis of the two vocal liturgical forms: *chang* (to sing) and *nian* (to recite). The sung form will include musical analysis of two different hymn styles used in *gongde* (§4.2), while the different types of recitation form will be introduced in §4.3. Hymns sung by different singers, or the same hymns sung in different regions raise questions about change and variation. These issues are investigated in §4.4. While music in *gongde* has not undergone much change, socio-economic and political conditions lead to change in meanings in *gongde* and thus have other impacts on music (§4.5).

The music of the *xianghua*, although they share some common materials with the institutional Buddhists has closer links with secular music traditions of Minnan. The nature of their music is hence discussed separately in chapter 5. The correlation of their music with operatic traditions and the *Nanyin* (lit. Southern sounds) chamber-instrumental genre, and the *xianghua*'s histrionic ritual performances confer different meanings to *gongde* as perceived by the patrons, audience, and the ritualists themselves. These are examined in §5.5. The final chapter is a summary of findings, including questions arising from this investigation and suggestions for future research.

1.4 Overview of religion in Minnan

Fujian province lies on China's southeastern coast (Map 1). It measures about 540 km east to west and 550 km north to south. Of the land area of roughly 12,000 square km,

85% is mountainous terrain. Fujian has four major coastal plains and a large number of narrow mountain valleys. It is flanked by Zhejiang province in the north, Jiangxi province in the west, Guangdong province in the south, while on the east across the straits is the island of Taiwan. As of 1990, the population of the province had reached a little over 30 million people. Han nationals make up 98.5 % of the population, the rest being ethnic minority groups including the She, Hui (Muslim), and Gaoshan (Highland) peoples. Overseas Chinese with ancestral roots in this province total about six million (*Fujiansheng dituce* 1995). Fujian is one of the provinces of China with the most Chinese abroad. The provincial government is located in Fuzhou.

Before the Christian era, Fujian was an independent kingdom ruled by non-Han tribes and known as Minyue. To this day, the word Min remains synonymous with Fujian province. The Minyue kingdom became a part of unified China after 213 BCE. In 110 BCE the indigenous tribes rebelled against Chinese domination but were crushed by the succeeding Han dynasty (BCE 206-CE 8). From around the close of the second century, a small settlement of Han Chinese began to immigrate to Fujian. But it was not until the unrest in the northern frontiers that Han Chinese migration to Fujian increased. During this period (307-312), known in Chinese history as “the troubles of Yongjia” (*Yongjia zhiluan*), this outback region of the Middle Kingdom was far from the center of the troubles and thus became a haven for a great number of Chinese from central and northern China. From then onward, the number of Han Chinese in Fujian began to grow (*Minshu* [History of Min] 1629).

Minnan, the southern region of the province - the area with which this study is most concerned - only began to develop into an urban commercial centre from the Tang dynasty (618-907) onward, with Quanzhou gradually gaining importance as China's most vibrant trading port with the West.¹³ Indeed it was this unique position of Quanzhou that saw the rise of foreign religions including Islam, Manichaeism, Christianity and Buddhism, in addition to the indigenous Chinese Daoism and local Minnan cults. With the fall of the Tang, during the Five Dynasties period (907-960), Fujian briefly became an independent kingdom again; but the political power of this Min kingdom was concentrated only in the Minnan region. From the Song dynasty (960-1279), Fujian was once again part of greater China. Flourishing foreign trade made this coastal region key to the subsequent Song and the Yuan dynasties (1271-1368) as China's contact point with

¹³ Quanzhou was known earlier as Fengzhou; the name Quanzhou first appeared in history in 589. Since then, Quanzhou has remained as the administrative city of Minnan until this day. For a study of this region from the third to the thirteenth century, see Clark 1991.

the West. After the fall of the powerful Mongol Yuan regime, Quanzhou port began to decline. Around the 16th century, the late Ming sovereignty imposed restrictions on foreign trade and contact. A slowdown in its economy led many Minnan people to seek opportunities overseas. Many emigrated to Taiwan and to Southeast Asian countries. During the 19th century, as contacts with Western European countries increased through Christian missionary activities, Xiamen replaced Quanzhou as a treaty port.

Over the centuries, the prefectural boundaries of Quanzhou underwent several changes. Today under Communist rule, Quanzhou is an administrative city controlling two county-level cities: Shishi and Jinjiang, and five districts (*xian*): Hui'an, Nan'an, Anxi, Yongchun and Dehua.¹⁴ Quanzhou can be divided into two distinct topographical zones: a coastal lowland comprising Shishi, Jinjiang, Hui'an and southern Nan'an, and an interior highland zone including northern Nan'an, Anxi, Yongchun and Dehua (see Map 3). I will use the term Quanzhou when referring to the greater administrative area but will refer to the smaller city area as Quanzhou city.

Another section of Minnan, which will also come under much scrutiny in this thesis, is Xiamen, right on the tip of the southern coast. Historically, the island of Xiamen (known as Amoy in Western ethnography) was under the administration of Tongan county, which was in turn controlled by Quanzhou. After 1840, when it was made an open port, Xiamen began to develop rapidly following growth in foreign trade and an influx of missionaries. In 1980 Xiamen became a Special Economic Zone. The city of Xiamen now has administrative control over Jimei district and Tong'an county.

A brief summary of the main religions in Minnan is presented below. Local cults are mentioned in conjunction with Daoism since they rely mainly on Daoism for their pantheons, ritual structure and religious personnel. First, a brief word about Confucianism is necessary here since the ensuing discussion will omit it. Throughout imperial rule, Confucianism had always been recognised as the religion of the state, even during times when Buddhism or Daoism was favoured by the ruling monarch. Confucianist ideologies had been a tool used by the ruling elite and upper class to control the masses. The practice of its ritual was the prerogative of the elite.¹⁵ For the general populace, Confucianism was a code of ethical practice integrated into the family, the basic unit of Chinese society, rather than a religion as such; but its influence on Buddhist, Daoist and local cult practices is particularly evident in rituals for the dead.

¹⁴ According to the CCP government, the island of Jinmen also comes under the jurisdiction of Quanzhou; but in reality, Jinmen is currently under the control of Taiwan.

¹⁵ For a discussion on Confucianism as a state religion, see C.K. Yang 1970. See also Wing-Tsit Chan

1.4.1 Daoism and local cults

Recent studies on Daoism and local cults in Minnan provide a comprehensive coverage of their history and contemporary practice (e.g. Dean 1993). It is unnecessary to deal at length with this subject here. Daoism and local cults have the greatest number of followers aside from Buddhism.¹⁶ The lay Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) Daoism predominates today in Fujian.¹⁷ Numerous Zhengyi Daoists are found in Yongchun, Nanan, Anxi and Dehua, providing professional ritual services for the general populace.

Local cults proliferated after the 10th century, flourishing in Quanzhou.¹⁸ Among the major cults still practised is that of *Mazu* (Goddess of the Sea, also known as *Tianhou*, Empress of Heaven), which spread from Meizhou island near Putian (Map 1). This cult spread widely to other coastal areas and overseas to Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries. Quanzhou's Mazu temple (also called Tianhougong) was built in 1196. Destroyed in the Cultural Revolution, it was rebuilt and is now one of the biggest and most famous Daoist sites in the city. In Xiamen, many local cult temples worshipped Mazu. Other local cults still widely practiced in Minnan today include that of Baosheng Dadi ("The Great Emperor Who Protects Life") and Qingshui Zushi ("Patriarch of the Clear Stream") (see Dean 1993 for further details).

Historical heroes Guan Yu (known popularly as Guangong or Guandi) and Yue Fei were worshipped nationally from the Song dynasty onward. Revered for their loyalty and patriotism, they were granted titles by the imperial state to promote nationalism among the populace. The Buddhists began to appoint local deities such as Guandi as protector saints of monasteries (*qielan sheng*).¹⁹ In the Daoist pantheon, however, Guandi has a more elevated position.

In Quanzhou today, there are fewer temples dedicated to Yue Fei. In contrast, Guandimiao temples are still pervasive in Minnan; the one in Quanzhou is one of the most frequently visited religious sites by locals, tourists and overseas pilgrims. Following the religious revival from early 1980, Guandimiao in Quanzhou was designated as a Daoist site. A research society dedicated to Daoist culture was established within the

1953.

¹⁶ A document by the Religious Affairs Bureau of Fujian in 1988 gives these statistics for various religions in the province: Buddhists, 70,000; Protestant Christians: baptised 201,000, preparatory members 168,600; Catholic Christians, 188,706; Muslims, 1,350; Daoists, no information. But these statistics are not wholly representative; see MacInnis 1989: 119.

¹⁷ On different Daoist traditions and Daoist practices in Minnan, see Dean 1993.

¹⁸ For Chinese-language study of local cults in Quanzhou, see Wu Youxiong 1993; on the rise of popular religion in the Song period, see Hansen 1987.

¹⁹ For Guan Yu's rise from popular god to monastic guardian, see Hansen 1993: 75-113.

temple in the mid-1990s. However, on my return to Quanzhou in 1999, Guandimiao had become an official Buddhist place of worship. This is confirmed by the inauguration of a branch of the Buddhist Association at the temple in that same year.

From the end of Qing to the Republican period, Daoism, as with Buddhism, went into a decline. As modernization and Westernization exerted unprecedented influence on new China, calls by the young educated generation for the elimination of the old and superstitious made religion an obvious target. From the 1920s and 1930s until after the Cultural Revolution, Daoism and other religions suffered even more damage. Since the Religious Revival from the early 1980s, Daoism has slowly rebuilt its tradition (Dean 1988, Hahn 1989; Pas 1989). However, in the new Socialist China, many local cults are no longer practised, particularly in urban areas. Today in Quanzhou, the three largest Daoist temples are Xuanmiaoguan, Tianhougong (where Mazu is worshipped) and Guandimiao (which had reverted to Buddhism since 2000); smaller temples dedicated to the city god (Chenghuang), earth god (Tudi) and other local deities are dotted around the city. A large number of Daoist or local cult temples which were turned into factories, schools, neighbourhood centres, or given other uses in the first half of the 20th century were not reestablished for religious usage or were demolished (Chen and Lin 1990).

In Xiamen, Gazetteer records show that there were at least 70 local cult temples at the end of the 19th century. Forty percent of the temples were dedicated to Baosheng Dadi and Mazu, and the remainder to Qingshui Zushi, Yuefei, Guandi and others in the Daoist pantheon. But at the turn of the 20th century, some of these local cult temples, particularly those which were receiving much income from incense visitors (*xiangke*),²⁰ were appropriated by Buddhist monks for their own benefit. Many local cult temples thus became Buddhist hereditary (*zisun*) temples (i.e. temples owned by a single monk or a family of monks, see §2.2.1). By the 1930s, some of these temples had been taken over by the *caigu* Vegetarian Sisters. After much political upheaval and by the time of religious revival of the 1980s, very few local cults and Daoist temples survived in Xiamen. The religious picture in Xiamen today, as elsewhere in urban Minnan, is strongly Buddhist (§1.4.3).

In contrast, in the inland counties including Anxi, Yongchun and Dehua, popular Daoism, and indeed popular Buddhism (i.e. the *xianghua* Buddhists) is stronger than institutional Buddhism. In Anxi and Yongchun, Lingbao sect Daoists are common; but also in Dehua, there are other sub-sects of Zhengyi Daoism (Haiqing, Wuxianzu etc).

²⁰ *Xiangke* (incense visitor) is a term for devotees who visit the temple to pray. Very often incense (and paper money) is burnt as an offering to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

Some local cults such as Zhanggong (another Song dynasty mythical figure) and Chen Jinggu, the protector goddess of new-born children, which have disappeared from Xiamen and Quanzhou cities can still be found in these areas.

1.4.2 Christianity, Islam and other religions in Minnan

Tang-dynasty China was a melting pot of foreign culture and religions. Quanzhou's rich legacy of different religions was due to the opening of its port to trade from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Apart from Daoism and Buddhism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism, Islamic religions and later Catholicism and Protestantism took root there. These religions flourished in Minnan during different periods after Tang.²¹

Archaeological findings attested to the existence of Nestorianism, Manichaeism, Judaism and Brahmanism (Hinduism) in Quanzhou, but these religions flourished only for a short time, gradually dying out after the Mongol rule. Islam, on the other hand, had greater impact than the other short-lived religions. It first served the huge colony of Arab and Persian merchants living in Quanzhou, gradually spreading among the local population. By the 13th century, Quanzhou had become an important centre for the dissemination of Islam to the Sumatran and Java islands. But with the decline of Quanzhou port and persecution by the Ming government, the number of Muslims decreased as many become sinicised. Since Islam is a dominant religion and culture among many ethnic minorities, it has also become one of the protected religions under the new religious policy (see MacInnis 1989). Muslim sites in Quanzhou were restored and are protected as national cultural relics. The number of Muslims there has grown to around 70 thousand (*Quanzhou Licheng Wenshi Ziliao*: 205).

The Roman Catholics established themselves in China as early as the 14th century. Fujian, particularly Minnan, was an important base for Catholicism, and later in the 19th century, Protestantism.²² Christian missions introduced modern sciences and education system in China, and their widespread influence in Minnan is not to be overlooked.²³

1.4.3 Buddhism in Minnan, Fujian

Fujian, in particular the Minnan region, is an area with rich religious traditions. Apart

²¹ For a study of Nestorianism and Manichaeism, see Saeki 1937 and Lieu 1998 respectively.

²² The history of Catholicism in China is well documented; see, for example, Soothill 1906; Latourette 1970, Bays 1996; Fairbank 1974. For Christianity in Fujian, see Wu 1993; Chen and Li 1992.

²³ Since the policy of religious freedom was implemented in 1979, Catholicism and Protestantism have begun to reestablish themselves. The revival of Christianity in Fujian is an area of research that requires much attention. For some information on the Christian revival in Xiamen and Fuzhou in the 1980s, see MacInnis 1989.

from the major “great” religions such as institutional Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Islam, many local cults also exist. In Quanzhou city alone, temples and monasteries of the “great” religions existed alongside temples of the “little” tradition of local cults. Every district within the city had a local “protective” deity (see Chen and Lin 1990). Buddhism and Daoism were probably the first great religions to develop in the area. The earliest record of a Buddhist temple built in Fujian was in 280 CE, the period when China was briefly reunified under the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 CE). Between 280 and 299, at least five more temples were built (Wang 1997). Apart from the construction of temples, there are no other records of obvious Buddhist activities in Fujian around that time. This probably indicates that Buddhist development in this decentralized region was really in an infant stage. But under the Western Jin, the Chinese were permitted to become monks for the first time; some monastic communities may thus have appeared along with these temples.

Buddhism in Fujian grew steadily in strength right through the period when China was divided into the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589).²⁴ Particularly during the reign of Emperor Wudi (r. 502-49) of the southern Liang kingdom (502-57), the foundation of sinicized Buddhism in Chinese society was assured through the emperor’s fanatical support for the religion. During this time, the number of Buddhist temples in Fujian had grown to a total of 65 (Wang R. 1997). The rise in the number of temples and monasteries was surely an indication that monastic communities were also on the increase.

Under the Tang dynasty (618-907), China reached a pinnacle of economic and cultural development. This golden era also witnessed the growing economic power of Buddhism and its communities. Quanzhou developed rapidly during this period. By the mid- to late Tang era, Buddhist communities, supported by the ruling elite, had acquired much wealth and power. Kaiyuansi monastery, built in 686, remains one of the biggest and most famous Buddhist monasteries in Quanzhou city today. Buddhism suffered a brief period of setback when Emperor Wuzong (r. 841-6) ordered the persecution of the religion. But by the end of the 10th century, reports that there were over tens of thousands of ordained monks in Quanzhou alone revealed that Buddhism was still strong in Fujian (Clark 1991: 60). From around the same time, the more philosophical schools, including the Tiantai, Huayan and Weishi sects established in the Tang period, began on their

²⁴ During this period, northern China was ruled successively by non-Han tribes from beyond the frontiers; whilst in central and areas south of the Yangtze River, four Chinese kingdoms - Song, Qi, Liang and Chen

gradual decline. The meditative Chan (Dhyana) school and ritualistic Pure Land (Jingtu) School, on the other hand, continued to flourish (Ch'en 1964: 389). Chan Buddhism prospered in the Fuzhou area; Buddhist influence spread rapidly to the Quanzhou region.²⁵

During the Song dynasty (960-1279), Buddhism lost aristocratic patronage and the imperial court tightened its control on the religion. However, the efflorescence of economic development, especially due to Quanzhou's position as an entrepot harbour, helped retain both the economic and the religious powers of Buddhist communities in the region (Clark 1991: 60). When China fell under Mongol rule (1280-1368), the growth of Buddhism abated. Although the Mongol empire supported Buddhism, they favoured the Tibetan School which was less common among the Chinese at that time. The Mongolian rulers' tolerance of other religions also led to the rise in popularity of Manichaeism, Islam and Catholicism in Quanzhou. Perhaps to combat the competition arising from the other religions, Buddhism gradually began to form a coalition with Daoism, its long-time rival.

From the 14th century onward, Buddhism underwent further changes; the Ming Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368-98) manipulated the major religions (Confucianism, which remained the state religion, Daoism and Buddhism) to his advantage. He imposed restrictions on the ordination of Buddhist and Daoist priests and on landholdings of monasteries. Such controls, however, were not new to Buddhism; over different dynastic rules, Buddhism has had to adapt itself to these conditions (see Ch'en 1964). Another action by Zhu Yuanzhang, which perhaps had a greater impact for later times, was his division of Buddhist monks into three categories, *Chan* (Dhyana school), *Jiang* (all other doctrinal schools) and *Jiao* (ritual practices). Before Zhu Yuanzhang's intervention, from around 11th or 12th century, a classification of temples and monasteries had already emerged: Chan monasteries were those dedicated to the teachings of this school, *Jiao* ("to teach") monasteries were those devoted to the propaganda of the other schools (such as Tiantai, Huayan, etc), and Lu (Law) monasteries were those devoted to the study of the *Vinaya* rules (Ch'en 1964: 274). Zhu Yuanzhang renamed *Jiao* with *Jiang*, and replaced the *Vinaya* (*lu*) monks with those specializing in religious rituals (*jiao*).²⁶ The Ming government even set down rulings on payments to the last type of monks in return for their services (see *Shishi jigulue xuji*, vol. 2). The Ming emperor's formal recognition of

- ruled successively.

²⁵ Indeed, among the founders of several Chan sub-denominations (Weiyang and Caodong) were Minnanese Chan masters. Up to this day, many monasteries in Fujian, including the famous Yongquansi in Gushan and Kaiyuansi in Quanzhou, belong to the Caodong branch of Chan Buddhism. For the history of Buddhism in Fujian, see Wang R. 1997.

monks specialising in ritual practices and open encouragement of payment for monks in return for ritual services probably helped accelerate ritualization and commercialization in Buddhism. Over different periods, ritualization and commercialization certainly became a bone of contention among intellectual and the elite Buddhists, who felt that the decline of their religion was attributed to these.²⁷ As we shall see later in §2.2.2, these sentiments are still voiced by clerics today. As the other Buddhist schools declined, monasteries dedicated to their teachings gradually ceased to exist. Lu monasteries survived but only in small numbers.²⁸ Today the majority of temples or monasteries in China are linked to either the Lingji or Caodong branch of the Chan school.

Buddhism in Fujian weakened toward the middle of the 16th century when its coastal regions came under Japanese pirate attacks. To raise money to combat piracy, the Ming government levied heavy taxes upon land held by the rich Buddhist institutions. This undermined the economic and political power of the Buddhist communities in Fujian, a condition which continued well into the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). From around the 17th century, a surge in emigration saw many Minnanese leave their homeland in search of better prospects in Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and Japan. Buddhism also began to spread overseas to these countries. Many Fujianese clerics crossed the waters and set up branch monasteries in these areas.²⁹

By the mid-18th century, changing political and social conditions led to further decline of monasteries.³⁰ Since the monastic community did not provide a role model, many turned to lay Buddhism. A lay Buddhist movement began to manifest itself in Quanzhou.³¹ Intellectuals studied Buddhism in an attempt to place it within Confucian ideals. But more significantly, lay movements were sweeping through the general populace. Many men and women became disciples of learned monks. Some even set up shrines in their own homes and observed vegetarianism and the five vows of lay Buddhists. In Quanzhou, men who piously followed Buddhism came to be known

²⁶ For more detailed analysis and impact of Zhu Yuanzhang's reclassification of monasteries, see Yu 1981.

²⁷ For Buddhist reform advocated by two late 16th century monks, see Yu 1981 and Hsu 1979; for 20th century reform movement, see Welch 1968; Pittman 2001.

²⁸ Longchangsi in Baohuashan mountains, Jiangsu province, is the best known Vinaya monastery left in China today.

²⁹ The Fujianese monk Yinyuan from Huangpo monastery in Fuqing left for Japan in 1654 and set up Wanfusi monastery in Uji. In Nagasaki, Buddhist monasteries built by monks from Fujian were numerous. See Wang R. 1997: 328-39.

³⁰ Many late 19th and early 20th centuries Western observers in China reported on the decadent state of the religion (e.g. Doré 1987: 175; Doolittle 1866: 253). Others commented on the low intellect and morals of the monks (see Soothill 1906).

³¹ Lay Buddhism experienced a renaissance in the late Ming period with the influence of several eminent Buddhist monks. Their thoughts and teachings greatly influenced the monastic and lay communities of their times, and charted the course for Buddhism as we see it today. For a Chinese-language overview of

colloquially as *caiyou* (“vegetarian friends”) and women were called *caigu* (“vegetarian sisters”). As we shall see in §§2.2 and 2.3, such lay Buddhists gradually became ritual specialists, especially in performing rituals for the dead.

From 1820 to the revolution in 1911 which removed the last of imperial rule in China, the Qing government was undermined by political uprisings and by profound changes in social, economic and political systems brought about by increased contacts with the West. The turn of the 20th century marked a departure for Buddhism as well. In the late 19th century, the religion became a pawn in the power struggle between Emperor Guangxu and the Empress Dowager Cixi. Under the influence of a reformist group in his court, Guangxu issued an edict for the confiscation of the property of Buddhist institutions to be replaced by schools. However, the Empress Dowager, who usurped power and held authority until the Republican revolution ended Qing rule, quickly quashed the Qing reformists. Buddhism’s reprieve, however, was short-lived. After 1911, China was gripped by a passion for reforms. As a new generation of young Chinese became acquainted with Western modern sciences, feelings that China needed to be modernised were running high. This meant that old customs and religions, now seen to be superstitious beliefs, should be eliminated. With anti-religious feelings on the increase, Buddhism was once again under threat. To counteract this, the Buddhist communities began to call for reform in the monastic system.

The most influential figure in the Buddhist reform was Taixu (1890-1947). He called for new Western-style education to be promoted among the clerics to prepare them for spreading the teaching.³² Taixu’s reform spread rapidly to Fujian. A Buddhist seminary under his direction was established in Xiamen’s Nanputuosi monastery. During the Republican era (1911-49), the Minnan region became an important centre of Buddhist reform. Many learned monks were influenced by Taixu and joined in proselytizing “correct belief” Buddhism (*Zhengxin fojiao*). Buddhist lectures were regularly organised in Xiamen, Jinjiang and Quanzhou. Apart from Taixu, there were a number of Minnanese monks who were noted for their contribution to Buddhist reform. They traveled around Xiamen, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou to propagate Buddhism, disseminating Taixu’s ideals. Lay Buddhist movement began to spread, particularly among young intellectuals who supported the Buddhist reform. Up to the Japanese invasion, Buddhist Educational

Buddhism in the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Guo P. 1981.

³² The basis of the Buddhist reform was in fact laid down by Yang Wenhui, a Confucian scholar who turned to Buddhism. Yang launched a sutra printing press, set up schools to educate clerics and laymen to train them for missionary work, and established societies for the scholarly research of Buddhism. For details of his contribution to the Buddhist reform, see Welch 1968.

Societies run concurrently by monks and lay Buddhists were flourishing. These societies also carried out much charitable works (*Quanzhou Wenshi Ziliao* 1994:571-8).

Earlier, we said that lay women Buddhists were called *caigu* in Minnan. By the end of the 19th century, a new phenomenon had developed in the Minnan region: *caigu* were not merely lay women Buddhists, but the term had come to refer to women who give up lay life to live in temples while keeping their head unshaven. More is said about *caigu* in the next chapter.

Thus from early 20th century up to the Communist takeover in 1949 Buddhism, particularly Taixu's reform movement which marked a watershed for the religion in the 20th century, had a profound influence in the Quanzhou area. Taixu's influence, as we shall see in §4.5, is still a basis for the shift in dynamics in institutional Buddhism after the Cultural Revolution hiatus. A picture of Buddhism in post-Mao Fujian will emerge in the ensuing chapter.

1.5 *Gongde* Ritual of Merit: concepts and practices

Concepts of life after death in China were greatly enriched by Buddhist soteriology. The Confucianist Chinese familial worship of ancestors came to depend on the Buddhists, allowing them play a leading role in taking care of the dead.³³ At the same time, the diachronic pattern of beliefs and practices in rituals for the dead up to late imperial times reveals the influence of native Chinese ideology of afterlife, some aspects of which are Confucianist in origin.

Buddhist rituals for the dead, in particular the small-scale *gongde* performed on behalf of a single family, exemplify a complex historical process of syncretism of the two systems. This section will briefly discuss some basic concepts and practices in *gongde* to put it in perspective. Since good studies of Chinese concepts of hell are available (Teiser 1993, 1994), I will not go into great detail here.

Before the introduction of Buddhism onto Chinese soil, the Chinese believed that a commoner, at death, lost all individual existence and that the soul was "reabsorbed into the sacred forces from which the soil draws its fertility" (Granet 1930: 234). The souls of the nobility, on the other hand, when worshipped correctly could live on in the state of a "spiritual being" (*shenming* - god), and sacrifices must be performed periodically. The procedures of ancestor worship came to be codified in Confucian discourse on ritual, and

³³ In parts of Minnan and Taiwan, Daoists do not perform rites for the dead; see Dean 1986, 1988, Lagerwey 1987.

gradually became widespread among different strata of society.³⁴

Buddhism introduced the notions of *karma* (Ch. *yinguo*) and transmigration (Skt. *Samsara*; Ch. *lunhui*) to the Chinese. The Buddhists preached the belief that one's destiny depends on one's volitional actions in life: virtuous conduct will bring the rewards while misdeeds will be punished. This is *karma*, while the concept of continuity of life in other forms is transmigration of which there are six paths. After death, good *karma* will ensure that one is reborn in one of the three upper paths (*deva*, human and *asura*) (see Glossary 1) of transmigration while evil transgressions will result in rebirth as an animal, hungry ghost or in hell, the three evil paths (*san edao*). Buddhists also advocate the concept of *gongde* (merit) whereby extra credit can be earned or cultivated by performing Buddhist-related deeds such as reciting sutras, contributing (either monetarily or otherwise) to the betterment of a temple or monastery, or making offerings to the Three Jewels (Buddha, *Dharma* and *Sangha*). Buddhists believe that the accumulation of merit constitutes a person's store of benefits in the next life or lives to come.

The concept of merit became more inclusive to accommodate further idea that merit accrued through one's virtuous actions could be transferred to another, living or dead. Thus paying the sacrosanct clergy to perform a special set of rites (all of which contribute toward the accrual of merit) and transferring them accordingly to the dead would help pave the soul's way to the next life. These Indian Buddhist concepts of afterlife combine to magnify Chinese ancestor worship.

Buddhist sutras allude to how one can be delivered. The Sutra of Amitabha exhorts repeated invocation of Amitabha Buddha's name during one's lifetime; if one was pious, upon death, Amitabha Buddha and his assistants will appear to receive one into His Western Paradise.³⁵ Through one's own pious efforts before death, combined with the merit accrued from rites performed by the sacrosanct sangha, rebirth in Western Paradise is almost guaranteed. If one transgresses in life, intercession by ritual specialists, particularly Buddhists, after death can provide salvation for the suffering soul. Merit accrued is transferred (*huixiang*) toward the attainment of one's Buddhahood or to other beings for their benefit; this step is a fundamental part of all Buddhist rituals. This is confirmed by singing the gatha (verse) of Transferring Merit (*huixiang ji*) toward the end of a ritual. In Minnan the concept of *gongde* was extended to mean ritual performed to accrue merit for the dead, and indeed, oneself.

³⁴ See *Liji* (Book of Rites) and *Yili* (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial). For a translation of *Liji* and *Yili*, see Legge 1885, Steele 1917; discussion of the rites is also in Nylan 2001. On Confucianism and ancestor worship, see Legge 1880.

The *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store (Ksitigarbha) Bodhisattva (Dizang pusa benyuan jing)* stipulates that to relieve the sufferings of the deceased, the descendants should “recite this [Sutra] with sincerity before the images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or request others to recite it, either three or seven times” (Heng Ching 1974: 159). Furthermore, to assist the soul on the road ahead, merit could be created by hanging banners and canopies, lighting lamps, making offerings before the images of Buddhas or sages and reciting the names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The sutra further states that if one did not plant good causes during one’s life, and if there are no descendants to perform acts of merit on one’s behalf and rescue them from difficulty, the newly dead will fall into hell (Heng Ching 1974: 84). This sutra further indicates that if meritorious acts are performed on behalf of the dead during the first 49 days, they can be released from hell.

Thus during a period of 49 days after death, family members should perform many good deeds to liberate the departed soul from the evil paths, and to be reborn among gods (*deva*) and receive supremely wonderful bliss. The benefits that accrue to the survivors are also unlimited (Heng Ching *ibid.*: 168). Thus according to the *Sutra of Past Vows*, the period of seven weeks after death is crucial. The sutra also describes different hells and their punishment and further ways of aiding the soul onto the right transmigrational path.

This period is believed by the Buddhists to be the “intermediary state” between death and rebirth; rebirth can be achieved on every seventh day (Conze 1959). Performing *gongde* every seven days therefore hugely benefits the dead. Up to late imperial times, those Chinese who could afford it were performing *gongde* every seven days, and even the less wealthy would try to sponsor at least one *gongde* (see Doolittle 1866, vol.1). Furthermore, the 49th day was by no means the end: *gongde* might be performed on the 100th day and the first and third anniversaries. This was an extension of the Chinese observations of mourning periods. This, as well as other concepts and practices discussed below, reveal influences from Confucian ancestor worship and gradual embellishing by the Chinese of the basic Buddhist ideology.

1.5.1 Infusion of Chinese elements in *gongde*

Western observers in late imperial China found the worship of the dead so central to the religious and social life of the Chinese that writings on the topic were abundant (e.g. de Groot 1885; Doolittle 1866; Pitcher 1912). The rites described in these writings reveal

³⁵ For an English translation of this sutra, see Inagaki 1995.

how, up to the end of imperial rule, the Buddhists familial ritual for the dead had assumed a form that strongly reflect Chinese rather than Indian worldview. Its prevalence and commercialisation was also bringing disrepute to the religion (§1.4.3).

The gradual sinicization of Buddhist rituals for the dead began after the Tang dynasty and accelerated after the 10th century. Economic and social changes under the Song government contributed to religious change (Ebrey and Gregory 1993). Chinese interpretation of hell, seen as a synthesis of Indian and Chinese cosmology, developed from the 10th century onward (Teiser 1993). Chinese influence is evident in the view that the underworld is governed by a bureaucratic system that mirrors the imperial bureaucracy and also by the inclusion of the Chinese cosmology. From this period onward, subtle reinterpretation of the Buddhist ideology set in: the soul must journey through ten courts of hell to be judged by a presiding magistrate in each court before it can be released for rebirth (see Teiser 1994). Belief in this purgatory system continued to spread among commoners through to the 14th century and maintained a dominant hold until the end of imperial rule.

These are reflected in some of the practices which had become part and parcel of *gongde* witnessed by 19th-century Westerners. The burning of paper objects (houses, money, servants, etc) in order to send them to the afterworld served both as a bribe to Underworld officials in order to obtain a lenient judgement and to ensure that the dead continue to have material comforts. Petitions, written on paper and burnt, were made to the Jade Emperor, the highest ruler in the Chinese cosmos, for the sins of the soul to be exonerated (Rite of Pardon); only then could Ksitigarbha (*Dizang*) Bodhisattva, the Buddhist saviour of sinners in hell, break into hell to save the soul (Rite of Smashing Hell).

As pointed out by scholars of Chinese religion (e.g. Watson and Rawski 1988), after life in traditional Chinese concepts is not about salvation. Traditional Chinese ideology is about continuity and reciprocity in the relationship between the living and the dead. The Buddhist ideal of salvation through rebirth in Western Paradise did not complement the basic tenets of ancestor worship and other popular beliefs. Through the study of *gongde*, we can see how the Chinese accept or recognise the boundaries between orthodoxy, i.e. the correct belief according to Buddhism, and orthopraxis, i.e. correct practice.³⁶

³⁶ On "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy", see Sheila McDonough in Eliade 1987; on "Orthopraxy", see Judith Berling in Eliade 1987.

1.6 Types of Buddhist rites for the dead

In Chinese Buddhism, many types of rituals developed over different times. However, systematic classification of rituals commonly practised in monasteries is rarely a concern among Buddhist music scholars. Scholars speak mainly of three types of rituals when discussing Buddhist music; these are daily lessons, the Yogacara Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth (*Yuqie yankou shishiyi*), usually abbreviated as *Yankou* (Flaming Mouth), and the Water and Land Grand Ritual (*Shuilu fahui*) (Wang M. 1986; Yang Y. 1960; 1990). Hu Yao (1986; 1992) is the only scholar who has made some references to ritual classification. He classifies Buddhist rituals into three types: *xiuxing fashi* (rituals aimed at enhancing religious practice), *jinian fashi* (rituals of commemoration) and *puji fashi* (rituals of salvation). He includes, in the first type, the daily morning and evening lessons (*zhaomu kesong*) (including bi-monthly observations of new moon and full moon (*shuowang*)),³⁷ sutra sermons (*jiangjing yi*), Buddha recitation ceremonies (*nianfo yi*) and all types of Penitence rituals (*chanfa*). The second type includes all rituals observing special dates such as the Buddha or Bodhisattvas' birthday, attaining enlightenment (*chengdao*), entering extinction (*niepan*, Skt. *Nirvana*). The last type includes rituals performed to save the dead: the Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth, the Water and Land Grand Ritual and *Yulanpenhui* (Ullambhana Assembly).

In general, I agree with Hu's three-fold classification, but I feel that it might be expedient to have another category for more clarity. For example, sutra sermons, Buddha recitation ceremonies and Penitence rituals may also be self-enhancing rituals, but they are not always regularly performed in most monasteries in China. These could perhaps be classified as Special or Ceremonial rituals. Other rituals such as Ordination ceremony and Bathing the Buddha Festival (*Yufu jie*) may be included in this category. For convenience of English readers, I will term the self-enhancing (*xiuxing*) daily lessons and new and full moon rituals as Practising rituals. Rituals celebrating special commemoration days of the pantheon will be called Celebratory rituals; rituals performed to save the dead will be termed Salvation rituals.

The Salvation rituals often mentioned are large-scale public rituals initiated by monasteries. They are public in the sense that anyone wishing to benefit from the rituals may pay, large or small sums of money depending on their means, as merit patrons (*gongde zhu*) to save the souls of their deceased or to enhance their own propitiousness. *Gongde* is also a salvation ritual, although it is sponsored privately by a single family, it

³⁷ Observing the new and full moon is an ancient Indian custom adopted by the early Buddhists; gatherings during these two sacred periods also took the form of confessions (see Reed 1896: 137).

should be included in the Salvation category.

The origin of the large-scale rituals for the dead, most of which are founded in the pre-Tang and Tang dynasty periods, can be found in Buddhist sources while official records rarely contain information of the small-scale *gongde* ritual. It is not the intention of this thesis to focus on the major rites for the dead, but some such as the Water and Land Grand Ritual is quite apparently the model for the small-scale familial ritual, and the Flaming Mouth *Yankou* rite is often included in *gongde* to accrue further merit. It is thus useful to briefly introduce some of these rites here.

1.6.1 Water and Land Grand Ritual

The Water and Land Grand Ritual (*Shuilu fahui*; see *fahui* in Glossary 1), aimed at saving all souls who perished on land or in water, was initiated by Emperor Wudi (r. 502-49) of the Liang dynasty (502-56). A fervent Buddhist who spent a huge amount of time and money during his reign in promoting Buddhism, Emperor Liang, having dreamt that his beloved empress had turned into a serpent after her death, ordered Buddhist clerics to devise a ritual to deliver her soul.³⁸ The ritual was contrived after three years; its first performance was held in Jinshansi monastery (Jiangsu province) in 505 (*Fozu Tongji* vol. 33, see T.2035). After Wudi's time, the Water and Land ritual fell into disuse until some time in the late seventh century, when its ritual manual was rediscovered. From then on, the mass remained popular among the Chinese and Buddhist masters of different periods revised its contents, and the form of the ceremony continued to evolve.³⁹ In the late 16th century, Chan Master Zhuhong (1535-1615) collated the ritual texts available and revised the ritual. His edition became the authoritative reference for later editions. The manual for this ritual as performed today is based on Qing dynasty monk Yirun's 1821 revision of Zhuhong's edition.

The Water and Land Grand Ritual lasts for seven days and includes many rites, hence it is also sometimes referred to by Western scholars as a Plenary Mass. It is divided into two main sections: Inner Altar (*neitan*) and Outer Altar (*waitan*). The Inner Altar is the major focus of the ritual while the Outer Altar, comprising six sub-altars, is dedicated to the performance of specific sutra or penitence texts. The six sub-altars are the Emperor Liang Altar (*Lianghuang tan*), Various Sutras Altar (*Zhujing tan*), Wondrous Lotus Altar (*Fahua tan*), Pure Land Altar (*Jingtu tan*), Avatamsaka Altar (*Huayan tan*), and the

³⁸ Liang Wudi was said to have contributed to the sinicization of Buddhist music, see Tian 2000.

³⁹ For introductions to the Water and Land Mass, see *Zhongguo fojiao Xiehui* 1982: 383-7; Zhang Yunhua 1997: 226-37; Hu Yao 1992; Lin Pei'an 1987: 28-32.

Medicine Buddha Altar (*Yaoshi tan*). The first sub-altar is dedicated to the performance of the ten-volume *Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang (Lianghuang Baochan)*, a penitential rite whose text was formulated specifically to save the soul of Liang's Empress. Till this day, this text is still the main penitential text performed in a 3-day *gongde*. Each of the other altars is dedicated to the recitation of specific sutra texts after which the altars are named. There is an exception in the case of the Pure Land Altar: here the focus is on the repetitive recitation of Amitaba Buddha's name in keeping with the basic concept that this action, piously carried out, is sufficient to transport one to the Buddha's Western Paradise upon death. These different activities, carried out concurrently require the attendance of many monks. The general public can pay a sum of money, large or small depending on one's means, for their benefit (either to save their dead or to propitiate the living).

As for the Inner Altar portion of the ritual, patrons who wish to participate in this section must pay large sums. Rites in this altar are quite unique and follow the *Shuilu yigui* (Ritual Procedures of Water and Land). The Inner Altar is out of bounds (to maintain its sanctity) to most people apart from the clerics involved and the patrons who had paid much money to participate in this section. It is not proposed to go into the details of rites in the Inner Altar, but it should be noted that a symbolic bathing ceremony and an Appeal for Writ of Pardon are among the rites found in this section. This last rite symbolises the appeal to the divine beings present to pardon the sins of all souls who suffer in the three lower realms (i.e. animal, hungry ghosts, and hell paths) and to allow these souls to be released from their sufferings and be reborn in the Western Paradise. On the last day of the ritual, a spectacular procession around the monastery compound sends off the Divine (*songsheng*), and all the paper documents, paper items such as a huge boat to sail the salvaged souls to the Western Paradise, paper horses which dispatched the writ of pardon to the deities, and any other paper paraphernalia are burnt. Every evening, the rite of feeding Flaming Mouth (*fang yankou*) is performed.

The Water and Land Grand Ritual is a colossal event integrating many different rites. Because of its scale, only large monasteries have the economic means to hold this ritual. However, historically it has been known to be performed for a single deceased.⁴⁰ Discussions in §3.1 will reveal that some of its rites are also mirrored in *gongde*.

⁴⁰ Davis (2001: ch. 8) demonstrates that from the 11th century people of different social strata, from officials to literati to commoners, were sponsoring Water and Land Feasts (*Shuilu zhai*) for their dead. In 1093 the famous Song poet Su Dongbo commanded this ritual for his deceased wife; in 1151 the empress

1.6.2 Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth

After the eighth century, esoteric Buddhism gained popularity under the patronage of Emperor Daizong (r. 762-79) of the Tang dynasty. One of the most influential Indian tantric masters is Amoghavajra (705-74) (known as Bukong Jingang in Chinese). Bukong, who translated *The Scripture of the Spell for Saving the Flaming Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing*, T.1313) in which was found the story of Buddha's disciple Ananda's encounter with a hungry ghost named "Flaming Mouth" (*Yankou*).⁴¹ This key text led to the inception of a ritual to save hungry ghosts.

According to the sutra translated by Bukong, Ananda was meditating one night when a ghost king named Flaming Mouth (also called *Mianran*) appeared before him. The ghost had a throat like a needle and flame was spewing from his mouth. These prevented him from having food and he was therefore constantly hungry. Flaming Mouth predicted that, in three days' time, Ananda would be born among the hungry ghosts and would suffer the same fate as he. Terrified, Ananda asked how he could avoid this fate. The ghost said he could be spared if he bestowed food on all beings in the evil paths (see transmigration in Glossary 1). Ananda appealed to the Buddha, who then instructed Ananda in a powerful incantation by which water and food could be multiplied to feed the hungry ghosts and relieve them from their sufferings.⁴²

During the Tang dynasty, the Rite of Feeding Hungry Ghosts was introduced in ceremonies for the dead. But the rite fell into disuse after the fall of the Tang dynasty. During the Song, the Mengshan Rite of Feeding, another similar but simpler liturgy (see below) rose to popularity. When the Mongols came to power, Tantric Buddhism was reintroduced by the new rulers and with this arose a ritual manual titled *The Yogacara Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth* (*Yuqie Yankou Shihi Yi*, T.1320). This was the text on which subsequent versions of Rite of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts are based. Bukong's text, meanwhile, provides the canonical charter of the rites, their key mantras and the origin tale. From the 14th century on, this salvation ritual remained popular.

The Flaming Mouth rite, although concocted to save the hungry ghosts, was included as a part of the various rites performed for the dead. It is performed in the Water and Land ritual and even in the small-scale *gongde* for a single family. A *Yankou* rite may be performed by at least 7 to 15 or more monks. The officiant, who must be of certain standing, is the *Jingang shangshi* (*Vajra High Master*). He is symbolically transformed,

ordered one to be held for a Chan monk who was influential at the court (Lin Pei'an 1987).

⁴¹ This sutra text was first translated in 699 by a Khotan monk Siksanda (652-710). Cf Taisho no. 1314.

⁴² See Teiser 1988 for a detailed study of the origin and spread of the *Yankou* ritual in medieval China.

at the point in the ritual when he puts on the *pilu* crown, as Dizang Bodhisattva, saviour of the Underworld. The complexity of this rite requires a separate study. It is only possible to give a summary of its content here.

The *Yankou* rite may be broadly divided into 4 major sections: *zhaoqing* (invocation), *jiejie* (marking ritual space), *shishi* (feeding), *huixiang* (transferring the merit). The first section is mainly a preliminary ceremony inviting the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all the saints to be present for the offering. When the preparatory acts are completed, the High Master mounts his seat, puts on his *pilu* hat and begins to purify ritual space. The Buddhas of the Five Directions (North, South, East, West, Central) are invoked symbolising the marking of the ritual space. Following this, offerings are made to the saintly realms. The High Master enters into a state of intense contemplation (*guanxiang* in Buddhist terminology) in preparation for the next section. The climax of the rite is in this third section, the feeding of hungry ghosts. With the help of *mudra* (tantric hand symbols) and deep contemplation, the doors of hell are opened; Dizang, the guardian Bodhisattva of hell, is then invoked. With the help of Dizang, the hungry ghosts are ushered out of hell to attend the feast. Since hungry ghosts have throats as thin as a needle, their throats must be symbolically “opened” so that they can consume the food offering. After the offering, penitence is said for the hungry ghosts; a sermon is delivered and the souls are urged to take refuge (*guiyi*) with the Triple Gems. Repenting souls are then delivered to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha. The last section is the conclusion of the ceremony. The merits accrued in performing the rite are confirmed and transferred accordingly. More will be said on this below.

The *Yankou* rite is indeed a unique Buddhist liturgy that contains a rich variety of movement (*mudra*), literature, drama, and music. Its music deserves yet more extensive study.⁴³ In *gongde* performed in monasteries, this rite is often appended to enhance further merit for the deceased and the patrons.

1.6.3 Mengshan Recitation and Exhortation Rite of Bestowing Food

The Mengshan Recitation and Exhortation Rite of Bestowing Food (full title *Mengshan shishi niansong shuofayi*, thereafter abbreviated as the Mengshan rite) is another liturgy for bestowing food on hungry ghosts. It was compiled sometime in the 12th century by a monk known as the Budong Jingang (“Unshakable High Master”,

⁴³ For the rise of the *Yankou* rite, see Hu Yao 1992. For studies on its music, see Yuan 1997 and notes by Ling Haicheng (see discography R12).

Sanskrit name Aksobhya Vajra).⁴⁴ The rite was named after Mount Mengshan on which Budong lived. During the Song dynasty, this liturgy replaced Amoghavajra's Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth in popularity.

The fact that its origin also lies in the story of Ananda's encounter with the ghost king suggests that Budong's Mengshan rite was based on Siksanda and Bukong's translation of *The Scripture of the Spell for Saving the Flaming Mouth Hungry Ghost*.⁴⁵ By the 16th century, the Mengshan rite was incorporated into the daily evening lesson, and since then it continues to be performed. In addition, this simpler Mengshan rite also replaces the longer and more complicated Flaming Mouth rite in *gongde*, particularly if the family concerned is not able to afford the extra expenses of the latter.

The rite as performed today consists of three major sections: the introductory recitation, the actual recitation of the Mengshan bestowing rite, and the Return of Merit.⁴⁶ The introductory rite consists of the opening hymn "Willow branch purification water" (*Yangzhi jingshui*), followed by the Grand Compassion Incantation (*Dabei zhou*), Amitabha Sutra, "Crossing life" Dharani (*Wangsheng zhou*), and a hymn in praise of Amitabha Buddha.

The second section is the original Mengshan rite as set out by Budong. Indeed, contents in this section are the same as the Mengshan rite performed as part of the evening lesson. It is divided into six sub-sections known as the six sermons. The first sermon begins with a four-line gatha followed by the Smashing Hell, General Invocation, and the Untying the Knot of Injustice mantras (short incantations). Each mantra is repeated at least seven times. In the second sermon, the Avatamsaka sutra (*Huayan jing*) is recited, and various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are invoked. The third sermon contains a brief announcement on Taking Refuge with the Triple Gems (*san guiyi*) followed by the Penitential Confession of Sins. When the fourth sermon has finished, vows are then made in the next sermon. Finally, in the sixth sermon, the act of bestowing food takes place: first Dizang and Guanyi Bodhisattvas' mantras to dispel adverse actions are recited; then the mantras for Opening the Throat (of the hungry ghosts), Transforming Food and Sweet Dew (into bounteous amount), etc, are performed. Following that, the powers of the seven Tatagathas (Future Buddhas) are invoked. A gatha confirming the powers of the mantra is then recited, followed by more mantras of non-discriminate feeding and general

⁴⁴ Originally an Indian, Budong went to the Kingdom of Xixia (990-1227), a small kingdom during the Five Dynasties period. He was well respected by the King of Xixia. Budong later moved from Xixia to Mengshan (in Sichuan province).

⁴⁵ This story can be found in the introduction to *Mengshan shishi niansong shuofayi*.

⁴⁶ See *Mengshan shishi niansong shuofayi*. For the ritual within the evening service, see *Fojiao niansongji*.

offering for all suffering souls. The Heart Sutra follows; thereupon the repenting souls are ready to be transported to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha by the powers of the "Crossing life" dharani, recited 21 times. This is followed by the recitation of the mantra for general Return of Merit and a gatha entreating auspicious protection by the Triple Gems and all Buddhist saints. This ends the main section of the rite. In conclusion, merit gained from performing the rite is confirmed by a gatha, followed by the recitation of the names of Amitabha, Guanyin and other Bodhisattvas while circumambulating. This is followed by a text of vows composed by Zhuhong. Finally, the Taking the Triple Refuge hymn (*San guiyi*) is sung, bringing the Mengshan rite to a close.

Chapter 2

Buddhist *gongde* ritualists in Fujian today

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 discussed Buddhism (and other religions) in Minnan, the types of ritual for the dead related to the genesis of small-scale private *gongde*, and how indigenous Chinese and Buddhist soteriology has helped shaped such a ritual. In this chapter, we meet the types of ritual specialists involved in *gongde* performance.

In recent decades, the study of ritual, in other words, the practice rather than the cognitive aspects of religion, has received increasing attention (see Bell 1992; 1998). Generally, the focus is on the basic elements of ritual, such as gesture, symbolism, speech, theatre and music. Through the study of these elements, scholars attempt to understand the social and cultural meanings of ritual. However, one aspect still relatively understudied is ritual specialists. Their presence and function in ritual performance are often recognised, but their background, classification, training and social interaction are usually overlooked.

In Minnan today, three types of Buddhist *gongde* ritual specialists can be found: institutional ordained monks, semi-institutional *caigu* (lit. "vegetarian sisters"), and lay *xianghua heshang* ("incense-flower monks").¹ Ordained monks who perform *gongde* are termed here institutional ritualists because they live in recognised, formal establishments, either large monasteries or small temples. The *caigu* "vegetarian sisters" are women who devote their lives to the Buddhist cause without shaving their heads, as nuns do. They give up lay life to live in small temples and maintain close relationships with the institutional monasteries. Because of this institutional link, I label the *caigu* semi-institutional ritualists. The *xianghua*, although locally referred to as *heshang* (monks), are in fact lay practitioners. They, like Fujian's *huoju* ("fire-dwelling") Zhengyi sect Daoist priests, live in secular society and are often from a long line of hereditary ritual specialists (§1.4.1).

To further understand the identity of the ritualists and their role in *gongde*, this chapter introduces the three types of *gongde* ritualists found in Minnan. Discussion will include the rise of each type of ritualist and their status within society. Monasteries and their policy concerning rituals for the dead is one of the focal points in understanding

¹ Ordained nuns are omitted here since institutional ritualists in Minnan are mainly male-dominated. In the case when ordained nuns are found to perform the *gongde*, their activities are linked with those of the *caigu*.

which ordained monks become *gongde* ritualists and what their social status is in the monastery. In the case of the women ritualists, I will examine the rise of *caigu* against the historical background of the lay Buddhist movement, the myth and the reality of their origin, the change in the younger generation and their ritual activities. The rise of women ritualists and their increasing role in *gongde* also bring out issues such as the change in women's place in the social hierarchy, their relationship with the institution, the extent of their role in a male-dominated domain and the society's acceptance of women ritualists. These issues have to be understood in the light of how they perform *gongde*. The focus on *xianghua* ritualists will be on their background and their links with institutional Buddhism. Case studies of different *xianghua* groups in Yongchun, Anxi and Shishi will help determine their origin and characteristics. The state of Buddhism in Minnan in the post-Mao era will also emerge from the following discussion.

2.2 Institutional ritualists: monastic involvement in *gongde*

The Buddhist monastic community is known collectively as the sangha (transliterated in Chinese as *sengqie*). A single monastery may consist of monks-in-residence who originate from different parts of China. In imperial times, such institutions could house up to a thousand ordained monks. Numbers today are much smaller, varying from around 50 to 100 in large monasteries, while the number in small temples varies from one or two to 20 or more. Institutional *gongde* ritualists are ordained monks who live in either large monasteries or smaller temples. But not all ordained monks who live in the larger institutions are *gongde* ritualists. Who then, among the monks in monasteries, are involved in the performance of *gongde*? Why do monks who benefit commercially from performing *gongde* exist alongside those who are more concerned with their religious goal of attaining enlightenment? Before this can be discussed, we need some idea of the types of monastic establishment found in China today.

2.2.1 Types of Buddhist establishments and their functions

From the Song dynasty onward Chan monasteries, with their systematic codification of monastic rules, were the only ones among the various Buddhist Schools that continued to exert any influence. In Fujian today (and in other parts of China), 90% of monasteries and temples are of the Chan sect. Although Buddhist institutions label themselves as belonging to the Chan sect, in its practical cultivation modern Buddhism is an amalgamation of four doctrinal schools: Chan, Pure Land, esoteric Mizong and Lu (Vinaya). This sectarian syncretism was a gradual process that began from the Song and

Yuan periods culminated with new thoughts and teachings advocated by four eminent monks in the late Ming.²

There are several types of Buddhist institution. In general, the Chinese term *si* is often appended to official names of Buddhist institutions. This term, however, has different levels of semantic specificity: for example, Nanputuosi is a large monastery of religious learning; Tongfosi is a small *caigu*-run establishment. To date, Holmes Welch's (1967) study of the Buddhist monastic system from 1900 to 1950 is the most extensive and authoritative work. Although aspects of his classification of temples and monasteries may need updating in view of socio-political changes after the Communist takeover, Welch's study is still sufficiently authoritative.

The categories of Buddhist institution differentiated by an array of Chinese terms relevant to this study are summarized here. At the top of the rank is the *conglin siyuan* ("forest grove Buddhist institution"). The term *conglin* is a metaphorical reference to the assembly of monastics in one dwelling, like trees in a forest. It denotes a Chan Buddhist institution that operates in accordance with a multitude of rules and regulations which were established by the Tang dynasty Chan master Huaihai. A *conglin siyuan*, commonly translated as monastery (and a term which I will thereafter adopt), is defined by the following characteristics: it is of considerable size in terms of site and the number of occupants. It is communally owned by all the clerics who live in it, and the appointment of its abbot (*fangzhang*) is through an election system. It is also an institution in which emphasis is placed on learning and practice of religion. Due to this last, a monastery also permits any ordained monk who is not normally a resident to seek unlimited stay for the purpose of learning. Thus today, the term *shifang conglin* ("forest of the ten directions") is also sometimes used for monasteries of this sort. In this sense, the term "large public monastery" as used by Welch is a fairly precise classification. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the term "institutional monastery" will be used to refer to such establishments. Traditionally, monks and nuns do not live in the same monastery. A monastery or temple that houses ordained nuns is known as *an* (nunnery), but officially it is also often called a *si*. For example, Chongfusi monastery in Fuzhou is a nunnery and also runs a Buddhist College for women.

Within the Buddhist context, the term *miao* can also be used as a categorization, but

² Four monks of outstanding learning and charisma dominated the late Ming Buddhist scene: Zhenke (1543-1603), Zhuhong (1535-1615), Deqing (1546-1623) and Zhixu (1599-1655). For a Chinese-language overview of Buddhism in the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Guo P. 1981. For English studies on Zhuhong and Deqing, see Yu 1981 and Hsu 1979 respectively.

not as an official name.³ This term has both a broad and a narrow connotation. In the first instance, it alludes to a small-sized temple. For example, a *caigu-run si* may be vernacularly referred to as *caigu miao*. In a narrower context, the term *miao* is applied to a Buddhist establishment which is privately owned by a single monk or a “family” of monks. Such a type of establishment is known correctly as *zisun miao* (“offspring temple” or “descendant temple”) but more casually as *xiaomiao* (“small temple”), even though in some case, it may have a large number of residents or large landholdings. Such a hereditary temple may have some rules and regulations but these are often not strictly regulated. Nonetheless, in most of these temples the daily morning and evening lessons are still carried out. Upon the death of the monk who owns it, a hereditary temple is passed on to the tonsure disciple of the monk.⁴ Hereditary temples do not have an abbot but are run, instead, by an overseer known as *dangjia* (“maintainer of household”) or *zhuchi* (“main administrator”). The most common types of Buddhist institution in Minnan today are *conglin* institutional monasteries and *zisun* hereditary temples (For a table of summary, see App. 1).⁵ Other small temples, such as those in the *caigu* or *xianghua* tradition, can also be considered hereditary temples since they are passed on to a designated next-of-kin in the former or the eldest son in the latter case.

In institutional *conglin* monasteries, monks-in-residence are, in general, primarily concerned about their individual religious learning and practice, because it is this that will, if performed well, help them in their path to enlightenment. Practising rituals are hence of great importance to enhance their self-cultivation. As part of their practice, all resident monks in institutional monasteries (including those on short stay) must take part in the daily ritual activities – the morning and evening lessons and meal rituals. The latter is the partaking of the three daily meals in complete silence and in accordance with special rites; recitations precede and follow each meal. Celebratory rituals are also an important part of monastic activity. Apart from the regular rituals, institutional monasteries also hold occasional rituals. These may range from communal *nianfo* (reciting Buddha’s name) rituals to major or minor salvation rituals for the dead. For monks (including those who have administrative duties) in the monastery, their main tasks include participating in the practising rituals and carrying out the study of sutras or other forms of cultivation during their spare time. The latter is unsupervised, and it is

³ The suffix *miao*, added to official names of temples, indicates an establishment of the popular religion. An example is *Guandimiao* (a temple worshipping the deified general Guanyu).

⁴ The first step in giving up lay life is to shave one’s head in a hereditary temple. The monk who shaves the novice’s head is the tonsure teacher (*shifu*) and the latter the tonsure disciple.

⁵ According to Welch, there are several more types of Buddhist institutions; since these are not prevalent in

entirely up to individual monks how much or how little they wish to pursue.

Hereditary temples are generally not bound by rigid rules and regulations. Still, the daily morning and evening lessons are performed. Small temples do not observe meal rituals but do perform celebratory rituals, during which devotees flock to the temples to participate or to worship privately. This is one of the ways in which temples obtain “incense and oil” (*xiangyou*) donations from the public. For hereditary temples, one other way of securing income is by performing *gongde* for private families.

Conglin monasteries and hereditary temples are the most prevalent types of Buddhist institution in Fujian today. If the focus of institutional monasteries is on learning and religious practice, how and why did commercial rituals for the dead become so prevalent in these learning institutions? This is examined below.

2.2.2 Rites for the dead in monasteries in late imperial times

In §1.4.3 we saw the introduction by Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang of a category of monks who specialize in performing rituals. Monks who respond to calls to perform rituals in return for commercial benefit came to be known as *yingfu seng* (“monks on call”). By late Qing, continuing well into the Republican era, such monks were co-existing in the same institution as *xiuxing* (“practitioner”) monks as rites for the dead became more prevalent in monasteries (see Welch 1967; Reichelt 1927).

During the peak of Buddhism, many institutional monasteries had large landholdings, from which they could derive rent. By the late Ming, adverse social and economic conditions began to set in, leading to decline in the economy of monasteries. It became common for many large monasteries to rely on performance of large and small-scale rituals for the dead as a main source of income. As commercialization of rituals set in, discipline within the monastery gradually slackened. Monks were generally held in low esteem by society because it seemed that most were more familiar with performing death rites than preaching the doctrine. Its discreditable state led to a re-evaluation of Buddhism by some late Ming Buddhists whose thoughts and teachings greatly influenced the monastic and lay communities of that time, charting the course of Buddhism as we see it today.⁶ This renaissance was short-lived. By late Qing and the early Republican period, further political and social upheaval catapulted Buddhism into another abyss. Decadence

Fujian, they will be omitted here. See Welch 1967.

⁶ Four monks of outstanding learning and charisma dominated the Buddhist scene in the late Ming. They included Zhenke (1543-1603), Zhuhong 1535-1615), Deqing (1546-1623) and Zhixu (1599-1655). For a Chinese language overview of Buddhism in the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Guo Peng 1981. For English studies on Zhuhong and Deqing, see Chun-fang Yu 1981 and Sung-peng Hsu 1979 respectively.

within the monastic community was again strongly felt.⁷

The most serious threat to the monastic community came when monasteries and temples were appropriated for modern education during this period.⁸ It was under the shadow of this threat that the monk Taixu called for reform within the Buddhist tradition (§1.4.3). As with the late Ming period, one of the causes thought to have led to the degeneration of Buddhism was the decline of intellectual and ethical standards among the monastic community. Certainly, the orthodox camp held (and still holds) that involvement in rituals for the dead disrupted monastic routine and distracted monks from their religious studies. Another criticism often voiced was that such services were tainted with commercialism: having extra income might tempt monks away from their pursuit of a life of sanctity.

Thus with respect to performing rites for the dead, what was the impact of Taixu's call for reform within the sangha in the Republican period? Welch gives a mixed picture; for example, the code of rules at Gaominsi monastery (in Jiangsu) states that it is a "*ts'ung-lin* [Wade-Giles romanization for *conglin*] whose perpetual work is meditation and religious study. No major or minor Buddhist services whatever will be accepted" (Welch 1967:198). Some institutional monasteries prohibited their resident monks from performing *jingchan* rituals in patron's homes. Some held smaller penitence rites within the monastery only for their most important patrons, while others (such as Gushan) continued to perform rites for the dead. Certainly among monastic intellectuals, stigma was strongly attached to the performance of *gongde*. However, feelings about the major *jingchan* such as the Water and Land Grand Ritual, Flaming Mouth Rite and the seventh lunar month *Ullambhana* festival (*Yulanpen hui*) in which hungry ghosts are delivered from their sufferings, were more ambivalent. This can be seen in Fitch's remark about the performance of the Water and Land Grand Ritual in Putuoshan: "Intelligent priests will most seriously attack this practice in private conversation, but one has not heard of any who had the courage of their conviction so as to try to break the practice" (1929: 42-3).⁹ Up to the 1940s, many large institutional monasteries including Tianningsi in Zhejiang and Qixiashansi in Nanjing were still frequently holding the Water and Land ritual.¹⁰

Attitudes towards performing rites for the dead began to change within some

⁷ Many Western observers reported on the decadent state of Buddhism at the end of the imperial era and the early Republican era. See e.g. Reichelt 1927; Doolittle 1868; Johnston 1913.

⁸ Reichelt (1927:134) witnessed this appropriation of temples in the early 1920s.

⁹ Putuoshan, an island situated off the coast of Zhejiang, is one of the four sacred Buddhist sites in China. Each of these sites is dedicated to one of the four great Bodhisattvas.

¹⁰ According to Welch (1967: 191), up to ten Water and Land Grand Rituals, lasting 70 days in all, were performed each year at Jingshansi before the Japanese occupation.

Buddhist monasteries after Taixu's call for reforms in the 1920s, but the impact of these changes on the rites for the dead was not significant. Even after the Communist takeover and up until the Cultural Revolution, *jingchan* activities were still widespread. Welch (1972) cites eyewitness accounts of pilgrimages, large-scale rituals, private rites for the dead, and so forth taking place in monasteries in Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Fujian and Guangdong provinces in the late 1950s and early '60s. Indeed, an elderly monk in Fuzhou informed me that up to the early 1960s *gongde* were still prevalent in Yongquansi and Xichansi monasteries. The disruption to cultural and religious life during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), followed by a radical change in economic and social policies after Mao, marked a turning point for contemporary Buddhism. Since the implementation of the policy of religious freedom in 1979, many institutional monasteries have adopted a different course of action with regards to rites for the dead. This change, I feel, was part of a gradual process with roots partly in the Buddhist reform advocated by the monastics led by Taixu, and partly in the new socialist ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. What sorts of changes have taken place since 1979? In Fujian province as elsewhere, the situation is no more uniform than after Taixu's reforms, making generalizations difficult. Below, my observations of policies and attitudes toward *gongde* undertaken by institutional monasteries in Fujian will show how current socialist ideologies dictate concomitant changes in the nature of the power of rites for the dead and the way in which this power is exercised. This will then help toward a better understanding of institutional *gongde* ritualists and their status in the social hierarchy.

2.2.3 Rites for the dead in monasteries in contemporary socialist China

After 1949, the Communist government adopted an ambivalent attitude towards religion in general. Although the Religious Affairs Bureau was set up under the State Council in 1954 to assist Party implementation of religious policy, contradictory political views had resulted in increasing restrictions on religious activities. This led to a total clampdown on all religious activities in 1966 with the onset of the Cultural Revolution. This hiatus lasted until 1979 when a new policy on religious freedom was established following the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress. This was linked with Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping's implementation of Economic Reform.¹¹ In the early 1980s, religious revival began in earnest; Buddhist and Daoist monasteries and temples, Christian churches, and so on, destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, were gradually

¹¹ For details of the policy documents on religious freedom, see MacInnis 1989.

restored. Religious professionals who had been forced to leave their religious abodes began to return to them.¹²

Recent studies (e.g. Pas 1989) reveal that after the implementation of the “religious freedom” policy, the religious tradition of China is still very much alive. The vibrancy of worship by the populace and the revival of rituals attest to this. Although studies on the practical aspects of Buddhism and Daoism in particular are emerging, the situation is such a complex one that more research is still needed to obtain a balanced picture of religious practices and their practitioners.

In the late 1990s, my fieldwork confirmed the vitality of religious practices in the Fujian province, in particular of Buddhism. Major monasteries and temples flourished in cities along Fujian’s coast. Since 1979 Fujian has become one of the country’s major Buddhist centres. The increasing economic affluence of this region since the reform, aided by overseas Chinese eager to renew kinship ties, has led to an efflorescence of ritual activities. During the course of fieldwork for this study, the most conspicuous ritual activity in Fujian was the performance of small-scale private *gongde*. Yet, among institutional Buddhists, performing such rituals is becoming increasingly objectionable and stigmatised (for reasons discussed below). However, the picture is still an unbalanced one. To demonstrate this, I offer a brief description of the situation concerning the performance of *jingchan* rituals for the dead in monasteries not only in the Minnan region but also in the Fuzhou area.

2.2.4 Monasteries in the Fuzhou area

Fuzhou is the capital of Fujian province. Up to the Republican period, Fuzhou and the counties, cities and districts under its administrative control had been the epicentre of Buddhism, and a number of monasteries in the area were historically important. Yongquansi monastery in the hills of Gushan used to house over a thousand monks and was an ordination platform, while Fuqing county’s Wanfusi in Huangposhan was the founding monastery of the Huangpo branch of the Chan School and the parent monastery of Japan’s Manpukuji. Chongshengsi in the Xuefeng mountains in Minhou county produced many Chan masters over the centuries, and Longquansi in Changle is well known as the monastery where the 8th-century Chan Master Baizhang took his monastic vows. However, several decades of political and social turmoil beginning in the Republican era brought decline and extensive destruction.

¹² For observations of the early stages of religious revival by Western scholars, see also Jan 1984; Sponberg 1984; Powell 1984; Hahn 1989.

Gushan Yongquansi, built in the 10th century, is one of the largest and most famous monasteries in Fujian.¹³ Up to the Republican period, ordination was held every spring and many came from Penang and Taiwan to seek ordination. Whereas at one time the monastery housed several thousand monks, by the Republican era the number had dwindled to three to four hundred (Welch 1967: 138). Although Gushansi monastery was a *conglin* institutional monastery and still served as an ordination platform in early Republican days, the code of rules was not strictly observed. In fact, rules were so slack that any monk with money could secure a position of authority within the monastery. The winds of Buddhist reform in the late 1920s changed all this. Under Xuyun, an eminent monk influenced by Taixu's reform, a stricter code of rules and conduct was enforced (Welch 1967: 139-40). But *gongde* continued well into the 1960s.

Since recovery from the effects of the Cultural Revolution, some major changes have begun to set in. Let me describe my findings during fieldwork in 1997 and 1998.

From the early 1980s Gushan gradually recovered from the destruction it had suffered during the Cultural Revolution, being designated in 1987 as a nationally protected monument.¹⁴ By that time the monastery had about 60 monks. Today the number remains roughly the same. In imperial times Gushan had huge landholdings, but Republican and Communist actions greatly reduced these. Although cropland is limited today, cultivation of land was encouraged during the early period of the religious revival (see Luo 1991). In general, Gushan now relies mainly on entrance tickets, income from shops selling Buddhist paraphernalia, cassettes and books and, to some extent, on donations by visitors. Monks staff the entrance and the shops. Visitors include local Buddhist devotees who come to offer incense and pray, as well as many tourists.

During my research in Minnan, practitioners claimed that the hymn-singing style used in *gongde* originated in Fuzhou. The intention of my visit to monasteries in Fuzhou was therefore to investigate this claim. During a visit to Gushan in the summer of 1997, I spoke to the monks about this local Fuzhou hymn-style. Many of them, however, were not indigenous Fujianese but came from other parts of China. They informed me that Gushan is a *conglin* monastery and so emphasis is placed on *xiuxing* ("practice"). Apart

¹³ In the case of Yongquansi in Gushan and Chongshengsi in Xuefeng mountains, the names of the mountains where they are situated have become synonymous with the monasteries. More often, these monasteries are better known by their place name rather than official name. In the passages following, the name by which they are more commonly known will be used.

¹⁴ Following implementation of the Party's Religious Policy after the Cultural Revolution, many historic Buddhist monasteries and temples have been classified as Prominent Monasteries (*zhongdian simiao*). Different levels of classification exist: some are at the national level while others are at provincial level. Temples and monasteries so classified are regarded as cultural relics protected by law. Nearly all the major monasteries under discussion here are prominent temples of one type or the other.

from the daily morning and evening lessons, no other religious services are held. In daily lessons, liturgical hymns are sung in the *conglin* style (i.e. the national monastic style; see chapter 4) and in Mandarin instead of the local Fuzhou dialect.

The next monastery visited was Xichansi, located in the west of Fuzhou city. Built around the 9th century, it belongs to the Lingji branch of the Chan School. In 1941 it was almost razed to the ground by Japanese bombs. In the 1980s, with aid from overseas Chinese, it was rebuilt. Like Gushan, Xichansi has also been designated as a national Prominent Monastery (*zhongdian simiao*) and now stands on more than a hundred *mu* of land. Reconstruction was still going on in many halls. One monk with whom I spoke was originally from Sichuan. He informed me that Xichansi now has over 100 monks-in-residence. When I explained the reason for my visit, his response was the same as that given at Gushan, that the monastery is a place of “practice” and does not perform rituals for the dead. Asked if he knew of any one in the monastery who knew Fuzhou-style hymns, he led me to another monk whom he described as a good singer. This second monk, Pinxing, was also from Sichuan. When requested to sing some hymns, he was reticent and said that he did not have a good voice. He informed me, when asked if he knew any Fuzhou style hymns, that the style is used mainly in *jingchan* rituals. Since he did not perform such rituals, he did not know the style. He explained that the main focus for most monks in Xichansi is religious practice (*xiuxing*). Xichansi prohibits the performance of *jingchan* rituals within its premises, but he admitted that some monks do participate in such rituals outside the monastery. As in Gushan, the only rituals performed within the monastery are the daily lessons.

Pinxing led me to a native Fuzhou monk also resident in Xichansi who actively participated in *jingchan* rituals outside. Knowing the stigma attached to *jingchan*, I approached the subject cautiously. As expected, the Fuzhou monk was reluctant to talk about it. He denied taking part in rituals outside the monastery. Perhaps he was suspicious of my motives, or was embarrassed to be known as a *jingchan* monk. After some insistent probing, he finally admitted to performing rituals outside, but hastened to add that not being an officiant monk, he could not sing the Fuzhou style well.

Another monastery I visited in that same year was Chongfusi, north of Fuzhou city. Built in 978 CE, it was esteemed over the centuries as one of the five renowned monasteries of Fuzhou.¹⁵ In 1957 the Fuzhou Buddhist Association set up a retirement home for elderly monks and nuns in Chongfusi. After great damage during the Cultural

¹⁵ The other four renowned *conglin* monasteries are Gushan Yongquansi, Xichansi, Linyangsi in the hills of Ruifeng, and Chongshengsi in the Xuefeng mountains.

Revolution, Chongfusi was restored after 1976; from 1983 it became a nunnery, and a College for women was established.

My 1997 visit coincided with the period of the summer retreat.¹⁶ Having a College, Chongfusi has many (especially newly ordained) nuns from outside Fujian province. During the retreat, more came for the three-month intensive practice. During this period, visitors are usually not allowed. However, the Abbess was kind enough to receive me, and I had opportunities to speak to several nuns there. Again, as at Gushan and Xichansi, the nuns were ambivalent about performing *jingchan*, saying that their emphasis is on pious practice and acquiring Buddhist knowledge. I learnt later that Chongfusi managed a crematorium in the 1950s; it is unclear if they resumed this service in recent times.

Chongshengsi is a historically famous monastery of Chan origin. Situated midway on the Xuefeng mountains in Minhou county, about 80 kilometres from Fuzhou city, it is known more commonly as Xuefengsi after the mountains. Founded by a famous Chan Master in 870, it had achieved fame by the 10th century as one of the greatest *conglin* in south China, housing no less than 1500 monks. During my visit in 1997, many of its buildings were being renovated, and new guestrooms for patron use were being established. Although the abbot was absent, Mr. Chen (a layman and secretary to the abbot) was very welcoming and arranged for some monks to sing hymns. After recording, some monks stressed that *gongde* were not performed in Xuefengsi. For one thing, it is a *conglin* monastery, so *jingchan* rituals were not encouraged; also, the isolated location of the monastery meant that demand for such rituals was relatively low. At the end of that visit, I was invited to return in a month's time for a Water and Land Grand Ritual to be held in the monastery.

When I returned for that ritual, I met the abbot Guanglin. He told me that unlike urban monasteries such as Gushan, Xichansi and Chongfusi, Xuefengsi is not well off. Villagers who live in the mountains near the monastery are mostly poor peasants, and lack of good transportation makes it difficult for ordinary *xiangke* (incense visitors) to visit. For this reason, Guanglin had worked hard to win over donors (*gongde zhu*) from Fuzhou city and among Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Through his tireless efforts, funds were raised to carry out repair works and expand the monastery. The Water and Land Grand Ritual was the first such rite organized by the monastery. Holding this ritual, which the abbot hoped would become an annual event, was one way of increasing

¹⁶ Retreat, known as *anju* (Skt. *Varsika*), is a three-month period during which monastics remain in the monastery and carry out pious practice. In China, this activity takes place before the summer, from the 4th lunar month to the 7th lunar month. During this period, intensive religious training is carried out.

income.

In the winter of 1998/99, I visited Changle, a small county city near Fuzhou. The revival of Buddhism here began only in the late 1980s as economic development was much slower than in some parts of Fujian. Changle boasts several historically prominent Chan monasteries, including Longquansi and Tianwangsi. Up to the late 1990s, both temples were expanding. Today, both places can only be considered hereditary temples since they do not follow strict codes of rules and the abbotship is not on an election basis. Both temples receive much of their income from performing *gongde*.

We have seen that up to the Cultural Revolution, rites for the dead, both small- and large-scale, were still prevalent in some institutional monasteries in Fuzhou. But religious revival brought a fundamental change concerning rites for the dead among Fuzhou monasteries, for reasons too complex to be discussed in detail here (see §4.5). Monasteries including Gushan and Xichansi adopted the radical policy of prohibiting all forms of rituals for the dead within the monastery; yet impose no similar restrictions on their monks if they choose to be involved in *gongde* outside. Other monasteries, for example Chongshengsi in the Xuefeng mountains, accept that holding large-scale Water and Land rituals for the dead is justified to bring in income, but small-scale *gongde* are not encouraged. Meanwhile hereditary temples, which had traditionally relied on such rites for their main source of income, continue to do so in the new socialist era. The focus now narrows to monasteries in Minnan to see whether the situation is similar.

2.2.5 Monasteries in Minnan

Several key institutional monasteries in Minnan will be the basis of discussion; they include Kaiyuansi, Chengtiansi, Chongfusi in Quanzhou, and Nanputuosi in Xiamen. Among these, the oldest (in existence since 686) and most historically famous monastery is Kaiyuansi. However, since the Republican era, its fame has been replaced by that of Nanputuosi, with the latter surpassing even Gushan and Xuefengsi. Nanputuosi began as a small temple built around the 10th century. In the 17th century it acquired its present name and expanded its scale. It was a hereditary temple of the Lingji branch Chan School until 1924, when it was converted to an institutional *conglin* monastery and an abbot was democratically elected. A year later, the Minnan Buddhist College was established there. In 1927, the reformist monk Taixu was elected abbot and Director of the College. Under Taixu, Nanputuosi became an important base for the Buddhist reform movement.

In the post-Mao era, Buddhism in Minnan has recovered much faster than in any other place in Fujian and China. The firm foundation laid down by famous Buddhists,

including Taixu, Buddhist law master Hongyi and others, exerted considerable influence. Also, Minnan's tenacious link with overseas Chinese, along with Minnanese monks who made an impact in Southeast Asia, Taiwan and the Philippines, contributed greatly to the rapid recovery of Buddhism.

Nanputuosi is situated on the southern tip of the island of Xiamen, near the famous University of Xiamen. The monastery operates Minnan Buddhist College (Minnan Foxueyuan). The College comprises two branches: one for monks, is situated within the monastery, and another for nuns, near the city's railway station. In the 1920s, it was an important centre for monastic education in south China and a role model for Buddhist Colleges in other parts of China. From 1937 wave after wave of political instability halted the teaching programme in the College; it was not until 1985 that it resumed functioning. The monastery, on the other hand, continued to function with an abbot in place until 1958. Then, however, it fell into disuse, and the buildings suffered damage during the Cultural Revolution. Afterwards, monks began to return to the monastery and a new abbot was elected in 1989.

Today Nanputuosi is one of the greatest tourist attractions in Xiamen. Local "incense visitors" (*xiangke*) and lay Buddhists also frequently worship at the monastery. On the Birthdays or special commemoration days of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas, the monastery stays open throughout the night to cater for the huge number of devotees.

Nanputuosi houses a little over 100 monks-in-residence, including student monks in the Buddhist College. In comparison to Gushan and Xichansi in Fuzhou, Nanputuosi has a very vibrant ritual schedule. Aside from the daily lessons (which also see active participation by lay Buddhists), congregational rituals such as *nianfo* (reciting Buddha's name) and *baichan* (penitence) are regularly held. Such activities usually coincide with the fortnightly new or full moon (*chuyi shiwu*) services, or with special commemoration days. Usually a group of about ten monks will lead the service. The main shrine would be filled with devotees, the majority being elderly and middle-aged ladies. These activities are generally well attended, reflecting the efflorescence of Buddhism in Xiamen.

Apart from regular rituals, both large- and small-scale rituals for the dead are also frequently performed at Nanputuosi. Since 1995, the Water and Land Grand Ritual has taken place annually, drawing Grand Rituals of devotees. *Gongde* performed for private families are so prevalent that one was taking place in the main shrine virtually every other day. In addition, the Flaming Mouth Rite was also frequently performed as part of *gongde*. After previous experiences in Fuzhou, where the absence of *gongde* was explained by the fact that the priority of monks in an institutional monastery lies in

religious practice and self-cultivation, I was surprised to find that an estimable institution like Nanputuosi is not disinclined to hold such rites. This is particularly perplexing since Nanputuosi had been a central base for the Buddhist reform movement in Fujian, and one of the aims for reform was to distance Buddhism from the long-standing disrepute of being a religion serving the dead. Why does Nanputuosi continue to perform rituals for the dead when many major monasteries today simply ban the activity? To understand the background to this, we first need to be familiar with the ritual contents of *gongde*, introduced in the next chapter. The issues of continuity and change in a ritual that is still considered controversial call for separate discussion (§4.5). For the moment, let us turn our attention to other monasteries in Minnan.

Today the two largest institutional monasteries in Quanzhou are Kaiyuansi and Chengtiansi. Chongfusi monastery used to be on par with the other two, but history has taken its toll and the pace of its revival has been much slower. During a visit in 1997, few monks were in residence and parts of the monastery were under reconstruction. A return visit three years later saw that it is now more established, with around ten monks in residence. Its main source of income is performing small-scale rituals for the dead.

Following the expansion of Quanzhou city in modern times, Chengtiansi now sits in the heart of the city. At its zenith, the monastery had over 40 large and small halls and housed 1700 monks. Today, there are around 60 to 70 monks in residence. During the Republican era the monastery was turned into an army base, and during the Japanese invasion it was ravaged by bombs. After 1949, the monastery suffered no better fate: it was turned into a factory and housed over 40 families. Efforts at restoration began in 1982. With large donations from overseas devotees, rebuilding began in 1985, taking ten years to complete. It is now a designated important monument of Fujian province.

Since its restoration, religious activities have gradually resumed. As a *conglin* monastery Chengtiansi maintains strict rules and regulations. A young monk in the monastery said that anyone wishing to be absent for more than two days must obtain permission from the prior (*jianyuan*).¹⁷ Today, Chengtiansi is a strictly practising (*xiuxing*) monastery. Like Gushan and Xichansi, it does not hold private *gongde* or other large-scale rites for the dead; but unlike the former, the monastery also strictly prohibits its monks from performing such rituals outside. Chengtiansi holds congregational sutra recitation or penitence rituals which usually coincide with special commemoration days of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas. For example, on the celebration of the birth of the

¹⁷ For a description of the personnel system in monasteries, see Holmes Welch 1967: 26-8.

Medicine Buddha, devotees may pay a sum of money to have a paper tablet erected for the purpose of *xiaozai* (eliminate calamities) or *yanshou* (“prolonging life”). During the 7th lunar month (traditionally the month when the “Hungry Ghosts Festival” used to be observed) a three-day ritual may be dedicated to the recitation of the sutra of Dizang Bodhisattva. During this period, devotees would pay for tablets set up for the purpose of “ferrying the dead” (*chaodu*). The merit accrued from reciting sacred texts would then be transferred (*huixiang*) at the end of the ceremony to benefit either the living or the dead. Thus in a way, rituals of this kind have a twofold purpose: they encourage devotees to be personally involved in practice, thus achieving the aim of religious cultivation, and they satisfy the devotees’ desire to show their piety for their deceased or to ward off any misfortunes or improve one’s lot. These rituals allow the monastery to obtain some income and provide an alternative to *gongde*.

Throughout history, Kaiyuansi has been a well-known Buddhist institution and the largest in Minnan. Today it is a major tourist attraction. Before my visit, I had been informed, both by locals in Quanzhou and outsiders who have carried out research in that area, that Kaiyuansi monks are actively involved in *gongde* held within and outside the monastery. Encouraged by this information, I went enthusiastically to Kaiyuansi to find out more. The regional Buddhist Association (Fojiao Xiehui) situated within the monastery was my first port of call. Through the secretary of the Association, I was introduced to Venerable Daoyuan, the prior who was temporarily in charge because its abbot was in poor health.¹⁸ On the subject of *gongde* and whether they are performed in private homes, Daoyuan’s ambivalent reply was that Kaiyuansi is a government-designated Prominent Monastery and that all rituals are therefore held within its compounds. This was contradictory to the information given by others, but since he appeared unwilling to discuss further, I had to drop the subject. My request to observe *gongde* in the monastery was also met with some resistance. It took some persuasion before Daoyuan reluctantly acquiesced, and I was told to call again on the evening of a specific date. The rite performed that evening, as it turned out, was a *Yankou* Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth; it was held as a part of a private *gongde*, but I was not given the opportunity of observing the rest of it.

During my second trip to Quanzhou in April 1999, I went to see Daoyuan again and made a similar request to observe a *gongde* in Kaiyuansi. He told me I could come to a *gongde fahui* which was to be held on the Birthday of Guanyin Bodhisattva. Arriving

¹⁸ Since late 2000, Venerable Daoyuan has officially become the abbot of Kaiyuansi.

early that morning, I first went into an office where some monks were gathered; since Daoyuan was not there, I introduced myself and explained that he had given me permission to record that day's ritual service. One monk chatted with me briefly, but most of the others ignored me. After a while, I went to the main shrine where the service was being held. A number of devotees were gathered there; several monks were busy putting up pink and yellow strips of paper with names onto a wall at the side of the hall where two altars were set up next to each other. Two other monks were seated at a desk near the entrance; they were taking money from devotees wishing to have names put on a strip of paper. One could either erect a paper tablet for "ferrying the dead" (*chaodu*) or for *xiaozai* ("eliminate calamity") purposes. I realised then that this was not a private *gongde* but a Grand Ritual service in which any devotees may participate to gain merit, similar to those held by Chengtiansi. The service was called the *Guanyin Shengdan gongde fahui* ("Ritual of Merit on the Holy Birth of Bodhisattva Guanyin"). Although this was not the *gongde* ritual, I nonetheless decided to record the service. But before I could get very far, a monk stopped me and told me, in a brusque manner, that video recording was not allowed without written permission from the Cultural Bureau (*Wenhuaaju*). To avoid further confrontation, I put away my video equipment.

In contrast to Nanputuosi monastery where monks were quite open and friendly and where video recording did not cause a problem, monks in Kaiyuansi appeared rather bureaucratic and hostile. After several failed attempts to observe the *gongde* in Kaiyuansi, my general feeling was that authorities there were sensitive about this issue. Perhaps those in charge were suspicious of my investigation, or felt that since Kaiyuansi is a government-appointed monastery they had to keep up appearances. Dean (1988a: 29) observed that paper houses for use in the *gongde* held in Kaiyuansi cost 500 RMB. A *gongde* ritual held in the monastery costs 2,000 RMB, while if it is held in a private home the fee rises to between 6 to 8,000 RMB. These figures confirm that monks in Kaiyuansi do, despite Daoyuan's denial, perform *gongde* outside the monastery. Dean's remarks thus provide some clues to Kaiyuansi's involvement in *gongde*.

Thus my investigation in Minnan reveals a somewhat inconsistent picture of the policies of institutional monasteries on the issue of performing *gongde*. Some monasteries are still strongly against *jingchan* rituals of any sort, large or small, but instead replace them with Grand Ritual services that have more or less the same intent. Others such as Nanputuosi are actively and openly engaged in *jingchan*; while some perform both *jingchan* rituals and also Grand Ritual services, but are taciturn about the activities of the former. Throughout history, Buddhism did not have a strong central

church. This is no different in contemporary times. It is therefore not surprising that an uneven picture of institutionalized Buddhism continues until this day.

2.2.6 A profile of institutional *gongde* ritualists

Since the efficacy of religious rituals often lies in their performance, they require the presence of specialists, who indeed are seen as central to ritual. Some consideration has been given to ritual specialists in studies on Chinese ritual, but as yet no detailed study has been made of varying types in one single tradition.¹⁹ In the late 1920s Karl Ludwig Reichelt (1927), a Norwegian missionary and observer of Chinese Buddhism, provided a glimpse of what motivated people into becoming monks and nuns. Circumstances and motives leading people into monastic life back then varied widely just as they do today. My concern here, however, is a narrower one: the involvement of Buddhist clerics in a ritual that created, and still creates, conflicts within the Buddhist institution. Attention is paid to who they are, why they perform ritual, their status in the monasteries, how they acquire their ritual expertise, how their presence affects ritual, and so on. These questions, applied in particular to institutional ritual specialists, are crucial to our understanding of the practical organization of ritual activities in monasteries. It is possible to offer a few general thoughts as to which ordained monks become involved in *gongde*, but in reality the situation is far more complex and the picture far from complete. My observations here are therefore not a representation of the circumstances surrounding the issue of the highly contentious *jingchan* rituals but are merely intended to raise some potentially important questions.

It is often said that an institutional monastery (*conglin siyuan*) is a place of religious learning. Yet, education and instruction are rarely active processes in such a place. Systematic training exists in Buddhist Colleges, but in a monastery the zeal for acquiring religious knowledge has to come from oneself. Since self-study is carried out in one's own time and at one's own initiative, it is difficult for outsiders to assess whether such self-study is actually happening.²⁰ From my observations, monks whose education level is higher, and those who hold important administrative posts, tend to be more motivated toward self-improvement. There are, of course, exceptions. I have found that in general, those who are diligent in self-study are also keen practitioners of calligraphy, which is

¹⁹ Naquin's study (1988: 37-70) of funerals in northern China looks at types of specialists, their role in funerals and the correlation between training and education.

²⁰ The same has been noted by Western researchers of post-Mao Buddhism, e.g. Powell 1984 (12): 77-88.

considered to be a form of exalted cultivation among intellectual clerics.²¹ Those who hold administrative posts in the monastery or teaching posts in the Buddhist College do not need, nor desire, to be involved in performing *gongde*. Others who do not have official duties but who view their religious commitment seriously will also avoid involvement in this type of ritual. Who, then, are the *gongde* ritualists in an institutional monastery?

Observations and direct contact with clergy left me with these impressions of who becomes involved in *gongde*. Generally, those in the institution who lacked the opportunity for higher education find the highly technical language of the sutras difficult. Such learning difficulties reduce self-motivation. Furthermore, a lower standard of literacy is a deterrent to obtaining a decent administrative post. Such monks thus have much free time. In monasteries which do not restrict the performance of private *gongde*, monks of this type would usually be assigned the relatively easy task of performing these rituals. Financial profit is also an attraction. For some, this is preferable to being assigned a menial task within the monastery, which many younger monks these days are not prepared to do. In monasteries where rituals for the dead are not performed, some monks team up with commercial ritualists outside, very often spending less time on self-study and ever more time performing *gongde*. Having said that, there are examples of elderly clerics who were *jingchan* monks in their younger days but who have, over time, acquired profound religious knowledge and who are just as committed to their religious goals as any erudite monk. The situation varies with individuals.

As might be expected, those who actively participate in *gongde* often do not admit to doing it for personal commercial gain. One *jingchan* monk, however, told me that he performs *gongde* rituals to earn enough money to build a small temple (*xiaomiao*) in his hometown. His sole ambition is to own and run his own temple, where he can devote himself to the religious exercises that will prepare him for a better life in the next rebirth; consequently, for him, performing *gongde* is a justified means to that end. Others view *gongde* as part of the monastery's normal activity: since they are assigned the task, performing it is therefore part of their duty. Of course, they are not averse to the extra income. It is possible that some do find their religious ideals overwhelmed by commercialism. But since this is often a sensitive subject, it is not easy to obtain explicit information from those involved in *gongde*. Even if they are prepared to answer my

²¹ Indeed, many eminent monks in past and recent history were also known to be distinguished calligraphers. Early 20th century eminent monk Hongyi (1880-1942) is considered a great master of calligraphy. For a biography of Hongyi, see Wang R. 1997: 381-95.

queries, it is doubtful the answers would be entirely honest.

At present, participation in *gongde* is closely linked to policies adopted by each monastery. In Gushan, for instance, this activity is banned within the monastery; but some monks take part in *gongde* outside, probably for commercial reasons. In other instances, monks who do not perform *jingchan* in one monastery where it is prohibited may do so when they move to another monastery with no such restrictions; I know of one such example.

As for fellow monks' opinions of those who perform *jingchan*, the age-old stigma is still highly evident. Performing commercially paid rituals came to be known as *gan jingchan* ("rushing sutra penitence"), so called because the main contents of such rituals include the recitation of sutras and penitential texts. Monks who perform this type of ritual for financial gain are contemptuously called *jingchan gui* ("sutra penitence ghosts") by the more conservative and erudite monks. Jiexiang, the secretary of Nanputuosi's Education and Cultural Foundation, holds that the performance of such a service is often turned into an activity for personal gain, which brings Buddhism into disrepute. The more elite and erudite monks in the monastery still view those who take part in such services as mercenaries. Guoman, the guest prefect, felt that many who perform *gongde* gradually become materialistic as their income increases; when that happens they lose sight of their goals of religious practice and become indolent (*bu jingjin*). Guoman confirmed that there are examples within Nanputuosi. Some no longer attend the daily lessons or strive to better themselves in religious doctrines; performing rituals becomes their sole occupation. Before long, performing *gongde* becomes a routine and simply a tool for making a living; as a result, the sanctity of the ritual is no longer a concern. Others who spoke against such rituals expressed similar views. As in imperial times, *jingchan* monks and more learning-focussed ones often co-exist in a single institutional monastery. The former are tolerated but are often viewed with disdain by the latter.

Ironically, vocal prowess may incline a monk toward *gongde* performance. A cleric once told me: "If a monk has a good voice, he is likely to end up as a *jingchan* monk".

In society at large, people generally do not differentiate between a *gongde* monk and a learned one. Those with some piety for the religion generally treat any monk they see with a certain amount of respect and see him as an authority on any religious matters. But some sceptics, quite often the younger, highly educated ones who are ignorant of the religion, hold the view that monks are just as materialistic as any other people, and that they do not practise their religion conscientiously.

Today, the small-scale *gongde* are in many ways still considered highly contentious,

while large-scale rituals for the dead, in particular the *Yankou* Rite and the Water and Land Grand Ritual, are often viewed with more tolerance. Nanputuosi, as mentioned earlier, holds the Water and Land Grand Ritual annually, while a *Yankou* Rite is part and parcel of *gongde* if the family can afford it. The same monks who would not be involved in *gongde* could be found performing in the larger rituals for the dead. Indeed, Guoman often officiates as a *Vajra* High Master in the *Yankou*. Both Guoman and a preceptor monk, who does not take part in *gongde* but does officiate in the larger rituals, said that *Vajra* High Masters should be monks of more exalted practice as their religious purity would add to the efficacy of the ritual. Although these two feel that they have not reached the required level of practice, they are nonetheless asked to take the roles of *Vajra* High Masters because they are able to perform the mudras (tantric hand movements) and complicated solo recitations in the ritual which ordinary *gongde* monks are not trained to do. They also stressed the importance of religious sanctity in performance, which can be difficult to maintain at times because they are often outnumbered by others who put less care into their performance.

In recent years, the efflorescence of Buddhism in the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora has led to a rise in the performance of large-scale rituals such as the Water and Land Grand Ritual. An example is Singapore, where the latter has become highly popular in the last few years. Since local monks are not familiar with this ritual, monasteries there often invite monks from large monasteries in Fujian or Zhejiang province. Monks from Nanputuosi are often invited by overseas monasteries to perform large-scale rituals, but those sent are almost never the ones involved in performing *jingchan* rituals; the ones sent are those who hold administrative ranks or are more formally educated. Guoman, Jiexiang, and other fairly high-ranking officers in Nanputuosi frequently travel abroad for this purpose. It is quite ironic that some, like Jiexiang and a few others known to me, who normally took no part in and are averse to *jingchan* rituals in their monastery are prepared to overlook such inconsistency. They justify their actions by claiming that those who represent the monastery overseas should be of high status lest the reputation of the monastery be put to shame. Such remarks reveal indirectly the low status accorded *jingchan* monks, although such views are not openly expressed.

Thus, it seems that there are two standards. Involvement in a private *gongde* service is still seen as potentially damaging to one's moral and religious growth and is therefore eschewed by those who have either a better position in the monastery or a better educational background; however, participation in rituals which are believed to benefit a wider circle of beings (i.e. the larger-scale rituals) is seen as acceptable, if care is put into

the performance or if the monastery's prestige is at stake. This also raises questions of training, ritual expertise, performance and specialization. Such issues are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

In conclusion, we see that Buddhist institutions, in particular *conglin* monasteries, operate largely as stratified societies. Differentiation of labour in rituals for the dead in such institutions shows a correlation between status of the ritual and social hierarchy within the institution. The small-scale *gongde* is often considered as being the lowest level of ritual. Those who are the lowest in the social hierarchy, namely those with little or no formal education and those who belong to the rank and file, are often associated with such rituals. The stigma attached to such participation, however, ensures that the social status of these monks remains low. Those who have official status within the institution, and those who are more esteemed as “intellectuals”, are awarded higher authority and prestige within rituals, particularly those rituals which are justified by the religious ideals of universal salvation.

Now that we have a picture of who is a *gongde* ritualist in the monastic institution, how do we then classify him? How do we correlate his status and social hierarchy with ritual expertise and authority? These issues can be better considered in the larger picture of other types of *gongde* ritual specialists. The social background and rise of the women *caigu* ritualists are explored next.

2.3 Semi-institutional ritualists: rise of the *caigu* (“vegetarian sisters”)

A second type of *gongde* specialist exists in Minnan, known in the local dialect as *caigu* (lit. “vegetarian sisters”). They are women who do not shave their heads like nuns but give up lay life to live in temples. On the one hand, they practice like the monastics, while on the other, they serve the local community in rituals for the dead. I call them semi-institutional ritualists because they maintain a close relationship with the Buddhist institution.

It is not clear when and how the *caigu* tradition came about. As with most traditions, its evolution must have been gradual. However, the *caigu* as a distinct group came into focus in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their rise could be seen firstly in the light of changing social and political conditions which gripped China at that point in history, and subsequently against the background of the lay movement that gained popularity in the 1920s. Under the social control of Confucianist mores, women in Chinese society had traditionally been given inferior social status. At the turn of the 20th century this began to change; revolutionary events such as the May Fourth Movement greatly affected urban

women's roles and lives. Examples of urban women who broke free from convention and gained economic independence became common. The rise of *caigu* was an example; some women left home to live in temples and chose to dedicate their lives to the practice of religion. In the early days they lived either by tending to their own small plot of land or by receiving donations from incense visitors to the temple. Subsequently, some *caigu* began to run the temples they lived in; some even built their own small temples. In Quanzhou, by 1941 more than 70% of all temples were run by *caigu*. In the first half of the 20th century, *caigu* were known to have contributed much to the history of Buddhism in Minnan. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

Since the Cultural Revolution, the *caigu* tradition, like all other religious traditions, has made a comeback in post-Mao China. Since then, it has become more common for *caigu* to take on the role of *gongde* ritualists. How did the *caigu* tradition arise? How did their ascent as *gongde* ritualists come about? What social and religious role do they play in what is still a male-dominated domain? In what ways do they epitomize a change in women's place in the social hierarchy? How are they regarded by society at large and by the Buddhist order? The *caigu* phenomenon in Minnan is quite an exceptional one insofar as women's role in Chinese religion is concerned.²² Hitherto, this tradition has been little studied.²³ The section below is an attempt to find some answers to the above questions through my own findings and observations of the *caigu* tradition. A brief glimpse into the history of lay movements in Chinese Buddhism will help construct a historical framework for this tradition and to put the study into wider perspective. With the above questions in mind, the rise of the *caigu* tradition, its social structure, their ritual activities and the religious sphere in which they operate will be discussed.

2.3.1 The history of lay Buddhist movement

Lay people have always played an important role in Buddhism in China. In the early part of its dissemination, some of the most prominent translators of Buddhist scriptures were laymen. Examples include the third century Indo-Scythian laymen Zhiqian and Kang Senghui. A lay assembly of some sort came to the fore in 402 CE, when the monk Huiyuan, named as the first patriarch of the Pure Land Sect, assembled a group of his

²² In China, a woman's role in religion is often seen as that of a worshipper of deities, a household ritualist (taking charge of the worshipping of the husband's ancestors), and a pilgrim; if they were ritualists, they were shamans or spirit mediums. See Overmyer (1991: 91-120).

²³ Some information is to be found in recent publications of historical data of Quanzhou, see *Quanzhou Licheng Wenshi Ziliao* [Cultural and Historical Data of Quanzhou Licheng area] 1995: 114-21. Much about the *caigu* can also be found in Buddhist gazetteers of different regions. Works on the Buddhist gazetteers are ongoing for some regions, while some have been completed but not yet published.

followers, lay and ordained, before a statue of Amitabha and made a collective vow to be reborn in the Western Paradise. This signifies the first lay initiation in Chinese Buddhist history. Shandao (613-81), the founder of the Pure Land sect, followed on from Huiyuan and advocated five main activities that would lead to rebirth in the Western Paradise, the forms of which continue in Pure Land practices till this day.²⁴ This formed an important basis for lay societies to develop. Activities in these societies include collective act of reciting of Amitabha Buddha's name (*nianfo*) in the aspiration for rebirth in the Western Pure Land. This heralded other religious activities such as sutra recitation, offering of vegetarian meals, copying sutras and sponsoring the carving of statues in the name of acquiring merit. The growth of lay Buddhist movements further expanded rapidly from the 7th century onward. Monasteries provided leadership and spiritual (and sometimes economic) support for the activities of these societies. In return, members assisted the monastery in every way possible. From around the 10th century onwards, there were also societies organized to promote friendship among women (Ch'en 1964: 290-5).

From the Song dynasty onward, lay societies continued to grow. Buddhist lay societies, and the salvation ideals of Amitabha, came to provide a basis for lay congregational religious sects known as *Zhaijiao* (vegetarian sects). Some of these sects took on heretical or revolutionary tendencies and were heavily persecuted by the imperial authorities.²⁵ But these are offshoots of the lay movement that pivots around monastic Buddhism. Lay Buddhist movement experienced a boost in the late-Ming period with support from the gentry society of that time. This was due to the influential thoughts of eminent figures such as Zhu Hong.²⁶ The basis of intellectual lay movement today can be seen as a continuation of that in the Ming.

Taixu, in pushing his monastic reform in the early 20th century, recognised at the same time the importance of the laity. Encouraged by the sangha, a lay Buddhist movement manifested itself around the 1920s, particularly in the south. For instance, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian had large numbers of lay devotees.²⁷

The widespread proliferation of lay societies took many forms. The most common

²⁴ The five activities include the repetitious chanting of Amitabha's name, the recitation of sutras of the Pure Land sect, meditating, worshipping, and singing praises of the Buddha.

²⁵ For sectarian religion and its development, see Overmyer 1976; for the persecution of sectarianism, see De Groot 1903.

²⁶ For a discussion of Zhu Hong and the lay movement, see Yu 1981; for the study of Buddhism and the gentry society, see Brook 1993.

²⁷ The lower Yangtze region has long been the centre of Buddhism. The manifestation of lay movement was thus also strongest there since the late Ming period; see Brook 1993: 103-7. Holmes Welch noted that in the 1930s, Jiangsu and Zhejiang were the two provinces with the largest number of lay devotees. Fujian stood in fifth position after Sichuan and Hubei. See Welch, 1968: 72-81, and also Chan 1953: 67.

types were the *Fojiaohui* (Buddhist Societies) which saw a close cooperation between sangha and laity, and *Jushilin* ("Forest of lay Buddhists", Upasaka Association). These societies encouraged the study and cultivation of Buddhism, organizing lectures by learned monks, and congregational ritual activities. In the 1930s in Minnan, under the auspices of several monks the Jinjiang County Branch of the Chinese Buddhist Society (Zhongguo Fojiaohui Jinjiangxian Fenhui) was established. The branch consisted of 436 members, most of whom were lay Buddhists. Its lay committee members worked closely with the monks to organize Buddhist lectures, initiate social welfare work, promote preaching in prisons, and so on. Another type of association was that set up on the initiative of lay Buddhists themselves; *Jushilin* is one such type. One example cited in Welch (1968:77-81) is the *Fojiao Zhengxinhui* (The Right Faith Society), founded by a successful businessman, Wang Sen-p'u, in 1920 in Hankou. He served as its president, donated his house to serve as its headquarters and devoted much of his life to Buddhist activities. Although Wang and successive presidents of the Society were followers of Taixu, the society was very much run by lay members; monks merely played a supporting role, giving sutra lectures or lead in rituals on festival days. One characteristic of the Right Faith Society, notable at that time because of its uniqueness, was that lay staff members of the Society lived at their headquarters, although most of them did have families to whom they returned on occasion. Lay members carried out the daily morning and evening devotions just like monks do in monasteries, and they were no less adept in rituals than trained monks. In the 1930s, the membership of the society had increased to 3000 and it was the most active Buddhist laymen's association in China. This society probably served as a model for others to follow.

The *Jushilin* in Xiamen was founded in 1952 by a lay Buddhist. Regular religious activities including rituals for reciting Buddha's name, rituals for propitiousness, and sutra lectures were organized for its members. But by 1958, all activities in the *Jushilin* came to a halt. In 1989, several lay Buddhists who were active in the 1940s and early 1950s joined efforts to revive the Association. The Religious Bureau of Xiamen allocated a local cult temple, Yangzhengong, for its use. In 1997, Yangzhengong was claimed by the Buddhist Association and a monk was put in place to run the temple (*Xiamenshi Fojiaozhi*). *Jushilin* was relocated to Neiwumiao, another local-cult temple. During my visit in 1998, Xiamen *Jushilin* was being rebuilt. In November 2000, an inauguration ceremony of the association was presided over by the Abbot of Nanputuosi, who acts also as the supervisory cleric for the Association. Conversation with Mr Yang, the Vice-President, revealed that the Association received financial support from overseas lay

Chinese and from local residents. They maintain a close relationship with the sangha but they operate independently. From the 1980s, similar lay Associations can be found in other parts of Minnan. The situation in Fujian today exemplifies the revival of a model that had taken root in the early part of the 20th century.

During the Republican period, another notable phenomenon was the efflorescence of lay Buddhist ritualists.²⁸ Welch (1968: 82) noted: "It became somewhat more common during the Republican period for lay devotees to take part in the performance of mortuary rites, which had normally been reserved to monks" (see also Welch 1967: 384-5). In the Yunnan province in 1938, members of a lay Buddhist club were seen to be performing rites for the dead under the leadership of a local monk; the lay members were paid for their service, just as if they had been monks themselves (Osgood 1963: 294-6). Indeed, in Fuzhou during the Republican period, a type of lay organization called *doutang* ("Dipper's Hall") came into existence. Members of the organization were dedicated Buddhist or Daoist laymen who performed rites of propitiation or rites for the dead as a free service to fellow members (See Chen M. 1989).

In Minnan, similar groups may have existed; although there is no literature about this, elderly *caigu* and monks mentioned to me that before the Communist takeover, lay male ritualists known as *caiyou* ("vegetarian friends") were commonly performing rites for the dead. *Caiyou* or *shanyou* ("benevolent friends") is also a colloquial term for male *jushi* (lay Buddhists). However, members of the Jushilin in Xiamen told me that, in general, proper *jushi* do not perform rites for the dead. They feel that it is ethically improper to do so because they do not have the "practice" (*xiuxing*) of a monastic; since they are not empowered to perform such rites, doing so is not only unethical but might even bring ill-fortune upon themselves. However, they do encourage members to carry out "support recitation" (*zhunian*) when there is death among fellow members or their families. This is the continuous recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name at a funeral or at somebody's deathbed, to aid the soul's path to the Western Paradise of Amitabha.

Today, male *caiyou* ritualists are harder to find. They seem to have been superseded by the female *caigu* as ritualists; but the existence of *caiyou* is confirmed by the legacy of a style of hymn singing known to the locals as *caiyou* style (§4.2). I will return to the subject of *caiyou* later in this chapter. Now let us focus on the rise of the *caigu*.

²⁸ Lay ritualists are not a phenomenon of the early 20th century; the trend toward performance of ritual by lay priests began with Ming emperor Taizu's encouragement of ritual practice. See Guo P. 1982.

2.3.2 The rise of the *caigu* tradition

Traditionally in China, the number of nuns has been much lower than that of monks.²⁹ In Minnan, this was no different. Since the religious revival, the number of ordained nuns in Fujian has increased somewhat, but many are from other provinces of China.³⁰ They are found mainly in the Buddhist seminaries in Xiamen or Fuzhou. According to an informant, up to 1999 the number of ordained nuns studying in the Minnan Buddhist College in Xiamen totals about 80.

Among the local population, it is more common to find a type of half-lay, half-institutionalized female Buddhist practitioner. These women, who give up lay life to live in temples and practice like the monastics, are known as *caigu* (“vegetarian sisters”). Where do *caigu* belong in the classification within Buddhist tradition? The Buddhist community is divided into two main groups, monastic and lay. The former is further divided into five categories: *Bhikṣu* (monk), *Bhikṣuṇī* (nun), *sramanera* (male novice), *sramaneri* (female novice) and *sikṣamāṇā* (*xuejienu*, a married woman who has given up lay life but who has to wait two years before becoming fully ordained). The second category consists of the *upāsaka* (male lay Buddhist) and *upāsikā* (female lay Buddhist), both known in Chinese as *zaijia jushi* (“stay home lay Buddhists”). Lay Buddhists need not live in the monastic community: they usually lead a normal family life. *Caigu* is a category that falls in between an ordained nun, a *sikṣamāṇā* and a female lay Buddhist. Unlike ordained nuns, *caigu* do not shave their heads and pledge to observe 348 Buddhist rules of abstention (precepts). Instead, like lay Buddhists, *caigu* undertake only 10 precepts. Yet they are different from lay Buddhists who usually practice the religion from home and lead an ordinary family life; *caigu* give up lay life to live in temples and lead a monastic life. They cannot be considered a *sikṣamāṇā* since some have not been married and they do not become ordained after the two-year period; although they could be seen as a “noncommittal” *sikṣamāṇā* since some *caigu* take the full vows of an ordained nun at some point in their life. Many, however, remain unordained all their lives. Just like ordained clerics, *caigu* adopt the term *chujia* (“leave home”) for what they do. Another term commonly used to describe the *caigu* way of practice is *dai fa xiuxing* (“practising with a full head of hair”).

The general process of becoming a *caigu* is, in some ways, similar to that of a lay

²⁹ According to research on the number of the sangha in 1925, there were approximately a million monks and nuns in China (excluding wandering monks not attached to monasteries). Nuns were, however, scarcely more than one-tenth of the entire number (see Reichelt 1927: chap. X).

³⁰ Statistics of clergy in the present-day are still lacking. For some figures for the number of Buddhist monks and nuns, see MacInnis 1989: 124-5; 145-6.

Buddhist. They undertake to become confirmed Buddhists by pledging the “Triple Refuge” (*san guiyi*) and vow to observe 10 precepts.³¹ They follow an ordained monk and recognize him as their *shifu* (lit. teacher-father; a religious teacher). *Caigu* thus have a close relationship with institutional monasteries. For this reason, I refer to them as semi-institutional ritualists.

I have often been told that the *caigu* tradition is quite unique to Minnan. It is difficult to confirm if this is true without having carried out a wider research in other provinces. In Fuzhou, however, one hears of the term *caigu*, but they seem to refer to women, especially the elderly, who observe vegetarianism and live in a temple mainly because they choose to retire there either because of lack of family support or for personal religious sentiments. Clerics there tell me that it is rare to find *caigu* in that area running temples or performing the role of ritualists. It has been noted, however, that there are lay women ritualists in the Zhejiang area (Overmyer 1991: 109).

In the early 1900s, the term *caigu* originally applied to women who were members of vegetarian sects (*zhaijiao*) living in vegetarian halls (*zhaitang*). *Zhaijiao* were considered as popular sects and not officially recognised by orthodox Buddhists.³² *Caigu* in these vegetarian sects, unlike Buddhist *caigu*, did not have a Buddhist monk as a teacher-mentor and did not strictly follow the teachings of Buddhism. During that period, the Buddhist reform movement was most vibrant in the Minnan area; monks including Taixu, Hongyi and others, were actively spreading the teachings of orthodox Buddhism and discouraging practices that were incompatible with its original tenets. Influenced by the new political and social conditions, and by the teachings of the Buddhist reformists, some *caigu* of *zhaijiao* sects began to reform their practice and thinking, with many turning to orthodox Buddhism (*Xiamen Buddhist Gazetteer*, unpublished). Of course, not all *caigu* were originally from heretical sects. To find out how this tradition came about, I quizzed many *caigu*, young and old, about their origin.

As with many traditions, some *caigu* practitioners seem keen to embellish its beginnings. One young *caigu* told me that their tradition came about when a young daughter of an imperial official in Minnan wanted to give up lay life to become a

³¹ Taking the triple Refuge is to affirm commitments to the Triple Gems, which include the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Some monasteries periodically hold such ceremonies for their devotees. Very often many lay Buddhists pledge only to observe 5 precepts: no killing, stealing, adultery, lies, and alcohol. A few then progress to an additional 5 precepts (known as the precepts of the Bodhisattva) which include observing vegetarianism, refraining from using perfume and cosmetics, from music and dance, and sleeping on high beds. For a study of lay Buddhists, see Welch 1967: 357-93.

³² In Xiamen, *zhaijiao* groups such as Longhua and Xiantian were active until they were persecuted by the Qing government see de Groot 1903. *Zhaijiao* sects are no longer found in Minnan today. In contrast, one can still find the Longhua sect in Taiwan. For a study of *zhaijiao* in Taiwan, see Gao X. 1995

Buddhist nun. The family objected; but failing to dissuade the young girl, they built a temple for her to devote her life to Buddhist practice – but on the condition that she did not shave her head. From then on, my informant suggested, *dai fa xiuxing* (“practising with a full head of hair”) became popular in Minnan. A written source suggested a similar beginning: a small temple named Shijiasi in Quanzhou was said to have been built in the early Ming period (late 14th century) by a local Minister whose daughter lost her betrothed before the marriage could take place. As it was the custom in those days that she should not then marry, the Minister built a small nunnery for her to practice Buddhism (Fu 1992: 155).

Sister Miaolian, a 76-year-old *caigu* who runs Tongfosi in Quanzhou city, is unsure how this tradition came about, but she agreed that it became more popular during the Republican period. According to her, one of the reasons why women in Minnan preferred *caigu* status (once this model became acceptable in society) rather than become nuns was because of the copious precepts ordained nuns must adhere to. Women who want to practice Buddhism feared that they would not be able to comply with all the stipulated vows and follow the restricted life of a nun. If vows were violated, their merit would be greatly reduced. Many therefore preferred to practise without shaving their heads, gradually adding to the number of precepts that they could keep. From what sister Miaolian had said, my conjecture is that women refrained from taking the full vows of a nun because ordained nuns, according to Buddhist laws, are forbidden to retake their vows if they return to laity.³³ Sister Miaolian also said that in the earlier days, nuns were rarely seen in public; this meant nuns had less freedom in movement. Keeping their hair made *caigu* less conspicuous and thus gave them more mobility. This was indeed a common view of other elderly *caigu* in Xiamen; they said keeping their head unshaven is more convenient (*fangbian*). Thus few women, and girls, among the indigenous population become ordained because they are not prepared to commit fully despite wanting to practice like the monastics. Another reason, perhaps, is the low status of nuns in traditional Chinese society (Overmyer 1991). The compromise was therefore to become *caigu*.

Returning for a moment to the scant written literature on *caigu*, these articles often found practical reasons for the origin of the tradition. Throughout the imperial history of China, women had to endure the Confucianist ideologies of being subordinate to men (i.e. father, husband, son) all their lives. They had limited economic and social roles outside

³³ Monks are not subjected to the same rule. An ordained monk has seven chances to return to his cleric status after renouncing his vows.

the home, particularly in the wealthier class. They were mostly deprived of education, were sometimes subjugated to child marriages, concubinage, unhappy marriages, and so on. How aptly did these apply to the rise of the *caigu* tradition? An account of the history of Suyansi, a *caigu* temple in Jinjiang, can perhaps throw some light on this.

2.3.3 Case study of Suyansi temple

Suyansi is a small temple run by *caigu*. It is situated halfway up a hill in Tingdian village in Jinjiang. According to a written account of its origins, Suyansi was built by a vegetarian sister named Yang Jiagu in the late 19th century. A native of Tingdian village, Jiagu began to observe vegetarianism at the age of seven. When she was 18, she was married to a man in another village and soon had two daughters. Widowed at the age of 28, she was evicted by her husband's family because she bore no son. She was left to fend for herself and her two young daughters. She rejected remarriage and decided to devote her life to Buddhism. One day, an old woman came to see her and said: "Follow me, give up lay life" (*suiwo chujia*)! Jiagu thus arranged for her daughters to be adopted as child brides and left with the old woman. The old woman took her to Laojun Mountain near the village, and the two women settled in a cave. Before long, the old woman disappeared and Jiagu never saw her again. She sensed that that she had been guided by a Bodhisattva to take this path. She then survived on wild fruits and roots in the mountain and concentrated on ascetic practice. One day, a woodcutter saw her and thought she was an immortal. He spread the news in the village about the sighting, and soon people from nearby villages came to the mountain to burn incense and pray. Jiagu then built a small shrine, and more people came to worship. The news of this soon spread to a rich man who owned land on Laojun Mountain. He accused Jiagu of surreptitiously occupying his land and had her arrested. Jiagu was thrown into jail, but she refused to give in and continued to practice piously. One day a Bodhisattva appeared before the magistrate, admonishing him for holding a chaste woman who worked hard to serve the religious needs of the people. The magistrate reported this to the landowner, who adamantly refused to have Jiagu pardoned. Finally, with pleas from many literati and scholars, Jiagu was exonerated. When she was released, she wanted to take her own life. The landowner asked Jiagu why she wanted to kill herself now that she was freed. Jiagu answered that she did not want to die when she was in jail because she had been unjustly wronged. Now that her innocence had been proven, she could take her life to prove her will to serve Buddhism. Moved by her piety, the landowner decided to donate the land on Laojun Mountain to Jiagu. After this incident, Jiagu's confidence grew. She vowed to devote

even more efforts to the religion. With donations from devotees, she gradually built a small temple and named it Suyansi (lit. “home of the swallow”) to commemorate the time she lived like a swallow in a cave.

Meanwhile, her two daughters had been married and widowed. Around 1913, both brought along their 3-year-old daughters to stay with Jiagu. They assisted in running the temple and cultivating land. The two young girls, Wenlian and Huiqing, thus grew up in the temple. Upon Yang Jiagu’s death at the age of 66, Suyansi was passed on to Yang’s eldest daughter Yinggu. But within two years of Yang’s death, Yinggu also died, leaving the running of the temple to her daughter Wenlian. During the Japanese war, when many people sought refuge in Suyansi, Sister Wenlian took them in and fed them. But as food became depleted, she decided to travel to the Philippines to raise money from the Chinese community there. Caught in the tumultuous unrest there, she was unable to return to China. She sought out an old monk, Venerable Xinyuan, and became his pupil. While in the Philippines, she met some lay Buddhists, and together they carried out much benevolent and religious work for the local Chinese. After the war, she returned to China and took her vows as an *upasika* in Nanputuosi in Xiamen. She also rebuilt the main shrine of Suyansi temple and initiated a plenary ritual in commemoration of those who perished in the war. Soon Sister Wenlian returned again to the Philippines to continue her religious activities there. After much hard work, she built a sister temple, also named Suyansi, in the Philippines. In 1958 she invited her cousin Huiqing to come and assist in the running of that temple. Two years later, Sister Wenlian passed away at the age of 50 and Sister Huiqing had to succeed her. Following in Wenlian’s footsteps, Huiqing continued with the social and religious work. Receiving much support from the sangha and the Chinese community, Suyansi in the Philippines gradually expanded in scale. In 1979, Sister Huiqing established a charity medical clinic in memory of Wenlian, which continues to provide medical relief for the poor (Feilubin Suyansi Wenlian Shizhensuo Jiniankan 1983).

During my visit to Suyansi in Quanzhou in 1997, *caigu* living in the temple told me that Huiqing later became a fully ordained nun and is now known as Venerable Guangren. In the early 1990s, Guangren had initiated reconstruction work of Suyansi. When I was there, new dormitories had already been completed and the main shrine was in its last stages of reconstruction work.

Although the tale of Yang Jiagu has surely been coloured with legends, we can still get a glimpse of the social conditions of women in late imperial times. Women turned to religion as a kind of refuge from social pressures. As widows, women would be seen by

society as licentious if they remarried. Furthermore, those who bore no sons were rejected by their husbands' families, leaving them with no financial support. The only way women in those circumstances could gain economic independence and be granted some respect by men was to be pious in religion. The religious piety of *caigu* and their dedication to Buddhism and its salvation ideals were indeed exemplified by Yang's granddaughters Wenlian and Huiqing.

From the account of the origin of Suyansi, it seems that in late imperial times *caigu* were mainly women who had suffered unhappy marriage or widowhood; this gradually changed in the first half of the 20th century. This kind of sisterhood appeared to attract women who prefer the Buddhist way of life instead of marriage. In Xiamen and Quanzhou, a great number of *caigu* who had given up lay life before the Cultural Revolution seem to be of this type. Sister Miaolian was one such example. Strongly influenced by her father, a dedicated lay Buddhist (*caiyou*), she gave up lay life at a young age. During the Cultural Revolution, she was pressured to give up her devotion and marry, but she resisted. After the Cultural Revolution, she began running the Tongfosi temple in Quanzhou. Other *caigu* in Xiamen, now in their seventies or eighties, told me similar stories. One told me that she was originally living in a temple in Tong'an, but as pressures were put on her to marry she left Tong'an and went to Xiamen where she worked in a factory. Some gave in to the pressures put on them by the Communist Party and married during the Cultural Revolution, but returned to run or live in temples afterwards. Many women voluntarily give up lay life to pursue religious sisterhood, but others became *caigu* because they grew up in the environment. A *caigu* now in her 50s said she was given up by her family when she was a baby because she was prone to illness. Her family decided she was "difficult to raise" (*nanyang*) and therefore sent her to a Buddhist temple. Adopted by the *caigu* there, she eventually became a *caigu* herself.

Since the Cultural Revolution, a whole new generation of *caigu* is emerging. Social conditions have changed. How are they different from the *caigu* of early days? This is examined below.

2.3.4 Younger generation of *caigu*

In the seaside town of Chongwu, Huian county, Sister Huigen (aged 30) from Jinghai'an temple told me that she had studied at the College in Chongfusi in Fuzhou. She said she "gave up lay life" (*chujia*) at age seven. She was raised in a temple and grew into the *caigu* sisterhood. In Fujian, many baby girls were, and still are, abandoned on the doorsteps of *caigu*-run temples. Some were abandoned because they were born with a

defect, others simply because they were girls. In recent years, because of China's one-child policy, new-born girls are sometimes abandoned so that the family can try for a boy child. Indeed, in many other *caigu*-run temples I visited, there are girls ranging from several months to 9 or 10 years old. They are looked after by the *caigu* and are sent to schools. They observe vegetarianism and are taught the basic daily rituals. Sister Miaolian of Tongfosi told me that when these girls grow up, they can choose whether to be a *caigu* or to lead a normal life: the decision is entirely their own. Another elderly *caigu* in Quanzhou said the same of the girls she adopted.

Huigen told me that many young women in Huian county, particularly in the town of Chongwu, become *caigu*. In her opinion, young women become *caigu* today because they feel strong piety for Buddhism. Sister Adong who runs Qingfusi in Xiamen is an example. She told me that at age 12 she felt a calling and was compelled to "give up lay life" and so went to live in a temple. She could not explain why she had this compulsion.

Among elderly *caigu*, some remain illiterate because opportunities for education were rare; they learn the daily rituals from their teacher-monk and are able to recite these by rote. But apart from the basic recitations, many could not read the canonical texts. Some, like Miaolian, who received some schooling fared better. Today, the new generation of *caigu* is more fortunate. Many attend the Buddhist Colleges for women in Xiamen, Quanzhou or Fuzhou. Those who graduate from these colleges have better job prospects: a *caigu* who graduated from Xiamen Buddhist College works as a dentist in Nanputuosi's charity clinic; another filled a teaching post in the College after she graduated.

Sister Miaolian once said that *caigu* numbers are diminishing in the present day and age. Fewer women choose this profession or want to dedicate their lives to religion. This is quite true in developed urban cities like Xiamen and Quanzhou. Rapid economic development in the cities meant that the standard of living, economic means, education and cultural level of their residents also improved rapidly. Fewer people are attracted to a religious vocation. The lower number of locals Minnanese among the students in the Buddhist Colleges attests to this. However, the number of young *caigu* in Huian is still high. Reasons for this are rather difficult to pinpoint without carrying out a more systematic and thorough survey; there is certainly more scope for future investigation. However, one general feeling is that Huian is one of the poorer counties in comparison with others along the coast. Although it too is developing rapidly economically, its social conditions are still less developed than Quanzhou and Xiamen. Undoubtedly, social and economic transformations in cities like Xiamen and Quanzhou may have already begun to have an impact on this fairly young tradition. As modernization continues in China,

change in women's attitudes to becoming *caigu* will perhaps see further changes in the *caigu* tradition in the near future.

2.3.5 *Caigu's* ritual activities and their rise as *gongde* ritualists

Most *caigu* have, as their teacher and mentor, an ordained monk. This consequently gives them a strong link with institutional monasteries. *Caigu* take their own practice seriously, observing the daily lessons and all other regular "practising" activities found in institutional monasteries. Thus, in *caigu*-run temples, morning service takes place at 5 am, and evening lessons at 4 pm. On new-moon or full-moon days, or special commemoration days of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, *caigu* may lead a small congregation in a sutra recitation service. On such days, a mid-day vegetarian meal would be provided for those who attend.

In the past two decades, however, *caigu* are more prominently seen in the role of *gongde* ritualists, apparently in response to an increase in demand. In Tongfosi *gongde* take place almost every day; while in recent years, some younger *caigu* frequently perform in private homes when invited. How did this come about? Was *caigu* already commonly performing *gongde* before the Cultural Revolution? Having spoken to many *caigu* in their seventies, answers to the second question emerged.

In the early part of the 20th century, *caigu's* role as ritualists was mostly restricted to a more private sphere; Sister Miaolian said that when she was young, *caigu* did not perform *gongde* services. Some elderly *caigu* in Xiamen confirmed this. Although some *caigu* did perform *gongde* before the Communist takeover, they were an exception rather than the norm; most certainly *caigu* did not perform such rituals in private homes; if it was performed, it usually took place in the temple. Most elderly *caigu* said that in the earlier days, they were normally self-sufficient from farming small plots of land, doing light handicrafts, and receiving additional income from donations by "incense visitors". At times, *caigu* performed simple rituals such as reciting sutras in the temple for believers in return for a small fee. If this was the case, how did *caigu's* status as *gongde* ritualists come about?

This has to be understood against new social changes. From the late 1980s, or even earlier, demands for *gongde* have arisen, both in the urban and rural areas. There are several reasons for this: firstly, people are able to pay for such services with improved economic means; secondly, after the Communist takeover, movements and campaigns culminating with the Cultural Revolution halted religious activities. After a long period, many are anxious to renew their kinship link with their deceased; this is particularly so

for the overseas Chinese. Although there is much relaxation in religious policy after 1979, in the cities, lavish funerals are still frowned upon by the local authorities.³⁴ In Xiamen, for instance, the dead is cremated within 24 hours of death. The body may be placed at a funeral parlour during that time, but no religious ceremonies are allowed there. In Quanzhou, the body is allowed to lie-in-state in the home for up to 3 days. Thus for most, one of the ways to compensate for the simplicity of rites in funerals is to hold *gongde* memorial rites, which are seen as legitimate because they are considered a part of Buddhist rituals. Families who can afford the expense will command a *gongde* either on the 7th day or/and on the 49th, and 100th day after death. Some may hold the *gongde* in a monastery or temple, but in the last few years, it is becoming more common to perform it in a private home.³⁵

With an increasing demand for the *gongde*, ritualists are needed to perform these rituals. Thus the demand for *caigu* as *gongde* ritualists can be attributed to the following reasons: firstly, the general reluctance of monastic Buddhists to be involved in *gongde* and the prohibition of this service by some monasteries in a way created a gap for *gongde* ritualists. Secondly, *caigu* have the advantage of having a ritual space – their temples. Thirdly, *caigu* temples which used to have lands to farm on are losing these to urbanization due to rapid economic development since the Economic Reform; performing *gongde* has thus become an economic means of survival for some *caigu* temples. Fourthly, a *gongde* performed in a *caigu* temple costs less than that in institutional monasteries for the reason that the temple is not as religiously prestigious as the monastery. But for families with lesser economic means, the *caigu* are a good second choice. Last but not least is the *caigu*'s willingness to accommodate certain religious customs that institutional Buddhists now eschew; to give one example, the burning of paper objects is still a common part of *gongde* performed by *caigu*, whereas this is banned in *gongde* performed in some monasteries. (§4.5 discusses this further.)

In central Quanzhou, several *caigu* temples are frequent venues for *gongde* rites. At Tongfosi, which is in the heart of the city, *gongde* rites take place almost every day of the week. Usually, a family will call at the temple to speak to Sister Miaolian; they will discuss the dates and other practicalities of holding a *gongde* there. Very often, families request either a one-day or three-day rite (see Tables 3.1 and 3.3 for the ritual programme). As mentioned above, some *caigu*, particularly the younger ones, also perform *gongde* rites in private homes. Sometimes, there is an insufficient number of

³⁴ For CCP policy towards funerals, see Whyte 1988:289-316 and also MacInnis 1989.

³⁵ Up to 1989, it was against government policy to hold religious rites at home; see MacInnis 1989:146.

caigu in one temple to perform a *gongde* and *caigu* from other temples are enlisted to help. They are therefore very mobile. However, not all *caigu* temples perform *gongde*. Suyansi in Jinjiang is an example. Its location halfway up a mountain may be one of the reasons there are fewer demands for *gongde* there. But since they do attract local visitors during the weekends and holidays, they provide vegetarian meals for tourists and incense visitors for a fee. This is one of their main sources of income.

From the above description, we see the rise of a new ritual tradition. Women – the *caigu* – now occupy a growing, if still marginal, place in religious society in Fujian. This crossover into the traditionally male domain reveals a change in ritual tradition due to socio-economic changes in society. Their activities and roles in religious circles certainly pose many interesting questions: How different are *caigu* as *gongde* ritualists in comparison to the institutional ritualists? How is their ascent into the public sphere viewed by the institutional Buddhists and by society at large? Certainly *caigu*'s rise as *gongde* ritualists highlights a change in women's place in society and new perceptions of gender power in Socialist China. These issues can only be understood in the light of how they perform the ritual, what determines their musical behaviour, and how they assert their religious authority. Some of these issues will arise later in the present thesis.

2.4 Lay ritualists: the *xianghua* (“incense-flower”) monks

The third type of *gongde* ritualists in Minnan is *xianghua heshang* (lit. incense and flower monks). The term *heshang* is one used by folk society to differentiate Buddhist ritualists from Daoist priests, who are called *saigong* (in Minnanese) or *daoshi*.³⁶ This type of ritualist claims links with Buddhism. Although referred to as “monks”, they are actually lay ritual practitioners who often rely on providing religious services for the populace as their main occupation. *Xianghua* ritualists belong to a type of popular ritual specialists of which many different kinds exist all over Fujian.³⁷ Unlike ordained monks or *caigu*, *xianghua* ritualists live an ordinary family life, may not observe vegetarianism or Buddhist rules of abstention, and rarely actively involve themselves in religious practice (*xiuxing*) or learning of the religion. Most *xianghua* do not live in temples but some do own or run small temples. *Xianghua* monks have more in common with the “fire-dwelling” (*huoju*) lay Daoists of the Zhenyi sect in terms of their habits and

³⁶ In orthodox Buddhism, the term *heshang* is a term of respect used only for monks with exalted practice or high position. For example, the abbot of a monastery may sometimes be referred to as *Da heshang* (Great Monk); sometimes, younger monks may also respectfully call an elderly monk *lao heshang*.

³⁷ In Western Fujian, another type of *xianghua* Buddhism exists; ritual officiants of this type refer to their tradition as belonging to the teachings of Pu'an (a 12th century Chan Buddhist monk from Jiangxi known

ritual conventions: the ritual tradition is hereditary, that is, it is passed down from generation to generation; both groups share, to some extent, broadly similar ritual structure; the range of percussion and melodic instruments used by both groups are virtually the same, and the ritualists are often adept in most musical instruments. Similarly, their music is heavily influenced by local musical and operatic genres, and their rituals are highly entertaining and resemble operatic performances. The music is analysed in chapter 5.

Today *xianghua* monks are more commonly found in Yongchun, Dehua, Anxi and the northern parts of Nan'an counties. In general, they live in the county towns but they are highly peripatetic and operate largely in nearby villages and towns. In the increasingly urban coastal areas of Jinjiang, Shishi, and Hui'an, *xianghua* monks are also known to operate. How are *xianghua* ritualists related to the Buddhist tradition? What is the sphere of their religious activities? How are they looked upon by society and what is their relationship with the institutional Buddhists? These issues will be examined below.

While the Zhengyi Daoist tradition in Fujian has been the subject of study in recent decades (Dean 1986, 1988, 1989, 1993), the *xianghua* tradition has been little studied. Research of popular ritual specialists has begun of late (see Lagerwey forthcoming), but huge gaps remain. Historical studies relate lay popular Buddhism to the sectarian *zhaijiao* ("vegetarian sects"). Popular Buddhism as manifested in sectarian movements in the late 19th century and their persecution was described by De Groot (1903) and later studied by Overmyer (1976). Sectarian movements which appeared to be strongly influenced by Mahayana Buddhism have been eradicated following socio-political changes in modern China; but a question arises: is the *xianghua* tradition an altered form of earlier folk Buddhist sects under new socialist control? Some answers emerge from case studies of groups of *xianghua* ritualists I have encountered in Minnan. These are described below following a discussion of historical perspectives which might throw light on this tradition.

2.4.1 The rise of lay ritual specialists

The rise of popular lay ritual specialists is often hampered by lack of official historical records, which rarely chronicle accounts of popular cults or their religious activities. However, glimpses of accounts can be seen in reports by local officials or gentry when there was official persecution or government objection to unsanctioned religious activities (Overmyer 1976).

for his skills in magical spells). See Lagerwey 2001.

After the 10th century, particularly during the Song dynasty, popularised religious sects influenced by Buddhism, Daoism, Manichaeism, Confucianism began to spread rapidly. Religious societies were prevalent; some were regarded as secret societies with predominantly political tendencies, while others were predominantly religious.³⁸ One such religious society, which began as a Buddhist sect but gradually developed syncretic and political leanings, was the White Lotus Sect (Bailian zong).³⁹ The society was widespread in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian. By the 13th century, the White Lotus Society was firmly established in Fujian. In Zhangzhou, temples built by such societies were known to exist. Priests associated with these temples did not obtain proper ordination certificates, did not shave their heads and led a normal family life. They were even known to perform rituals in private homes “all in the manner of the sangha” (quoted in Lian L. 1988: 32).

One other significant factor that led to the rise of lay ritual specialists was the sale of monk ordination certificates by the imperial government in 1067.⁴⁰ The document served as an identity of duly qualified monks and holders were entitled to privileges such as exemption from labour services and taxation. One of the impacts of the sale of ordination certificates on Buddhism was increasing laicization of clerics. As shown in the example above, members of religious societies built temples and practiced like ordained monks without ordination certificates. Those who were rich bought them to acquire the privileges of ordained monks, while not having to practice as one (see Ch'en 1964: 392). After the fall of the Song dynasty, the Mongol Yuan rulers were tolerant of most religious activities, thus lay ritualists continued to flourish. When the Ming emperor Taizu came into power, although he was less tolerant of religious societies and took steps to eradicate them, he decreed that anyone (priest or lay) who had taken the Refuge with the Triple Gem (*Guiyi Sanbao*) and had taken the five or ten Buddhist precepts could “set up altars in the open, or cities or villages” (*Shishi jigu luexuji*, vol. 2). Taizu's actions thus only served to sanction the existence of lay religious specialists. De Groot's careful study of the legal codes of the Ming and Qing dynasties in which many anti-Buddhist measures could be found to restrict the number of ordained monks and nuns led him to conclude: “The number of consecrated clergy sinks into insignificance compared with those who remain unconsecrated, and who therefore more in name and dress than in reality belong

³⁸ Brief discussions on religious societies are found in Ch'en 1964: 290-95, and Chan 1953:156-72. Ter Haar (1992) discusses the history of the White Lotus Society.

³⁹ This Bailian zong was the precursor of the better-known Bailian jiao which rose to prominence sometime in the Yuan dynasty. Ter Haar (1992) discusses the history of the White Lotus Society.

⁴⁰ See Guo P. 1985:17-27 and Ch'en 1964: 390-4.

to the clerical class. They form a caste of priests who for the laity perform religious functions, principally for the redemption and salvation for the dead.” (1903: 98). Indeed another source cited that, by the middle of the Ming period, it was common to find temples in rural parts of northwestern Fujian run by one shaven-head monk but when rituals needed to be performed, he would be aided by others who lived a normal family life away from the temple (quoted in Lian L. 1988: 36).

Thus, religious lay communities with strong Buddhist or Daoist leanings had been in existence since the Song dynasty. Secular priesthood also developed out of it. This type of priesthood was first mentioned in the Ming official records when the imperial authorities began persecuting them in 1394. The term *huoju* (fire dwelling) was used to describe lay Daoist priesthood, while lay Buddhist clergy were called *yingfu* (on-call).⁴¹ Up to the 19th century many lay Buddhist sects, such as Longhua jiao, Xiantian jiao, often considered heretical and objects of persecution by the authorities could be found. The eschatology and characteristics of folk Buddhist societies have been adequately dealt with by many scholars (e.g. de Groot 1903; Overmyer 1967; Ma and Han 1992). Here, I will only outline some general points for later comparison with *xianghua* ritualists of the present time.

Folk Buddhist societies of imperial times revealed the following characteristics: they were often congregational, they had a leader or founder, their members observed vegetarianism and devoted themselves to self-cultivation in their aspiration to reach the Western Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. The use of vernacular scriptures such as *baojuan* (precious scrolls) was also common. Some such societies were evangelistic and were largely syncretic, mixing Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and the belief in the mythological Wusheng Laomu (The Eternal Mother) or Xiwang Mu (Mother Queen of the West), thought to be the creator and preserver of all living beings.

Can we find traces of sectarian folk Buddhism in present-day *xianghua* tradition? A closer study of three separate groups of *xianghua* ritualists I encountered, introducing their background, their ritual activities and the religious sphere in which they operate, will allow for comparisons to be made.

2.4.2 Rural *xianghua* ritualists in Yongchun

Yongchun county is situated in the south central parts of Fujian (see Map 3). It is under the administrative control of Quanzhou city and is part of the Minnan sub-culture.

⁴¹ De Groot (1903: 120-36) outlines in detail the mandates by the Ming government to persecute secular priests of Buddhism and Daoism.

Historically there were many Buddhist temples but today only a few remain (*Yongchun zhouzhi*: 172-5). The number of ordained monks and nuns in this county is small compared to the coastal areas. Lay priesthood, of both Daoist and Buddhist traditions, prevails.

In Taocheng (Peach city), the county town of Yongchun, I came across two groups of *xianghua* ritualists. One of the groups is led by Liao Liangcai. Born in 1928, Liao is the eighth generation of a family of professional *xianghua* ritualists. Today, he is the oldest *xianghua* ritualist in Yongchun. From a very early age, he began learning the rituals from his father, and by the age of twelve he was able to perform ritual services. Liao told me that even before the Cultural Revolution, the Communist Party's restrictions on ritual activities in rural areas had begun to set in. By the time of the Cultural Revolution, they could no longer practice their religious activities. By the early 1980s when religious activities resumed, he and another 60-year old were the only surviving *xianghua* ritualists in Yongchun. As soon as it was possible, he began passing his skills to two of his sons. In addition, he has six to seven disciples. According to Liao, up to the end of the 1990s, there were around one hundred newly trained *xianghua* ritualists in Yongchun.

Liao runs a small temple called Huayenshe in Wulijie (Five-Miles Street), on the outskirts of Taocheng. The temple was built by his great-grandfather. However, he lives not in it but in a house nearby with his family. The temple is dedicated to the worship of Bodhisattva Guanyin. A local deity- Zhanggong, and a statue of their patriarch (*zushi*) are also worshipped in the same temple. Today, the temple also houses the Yongchun branch of Buddhist Association, of which his eldest son is a vice-president. Mr. Liao said that all places of worship have to be registered with the county government; lay ritualists such as Mr. Liao and his sons are therefore recognised officially as Buddhist religious personnel.

Liao told me that the *xianghua* tradition is one that is firmly embedded in the Buddhist tradition. The sutra texts and incantations used are the same as those used by the institutional Buddhists. The origin of *xianghua* tradition, he claimed, descended from the Yunmen branch of Chan Buddhist School. Yunmen sect is one of the five branches of this Buddhist School.⁴² Liang said that originally, Yunmen sect practitioners were monastic-based, but gradually they abandoned the monastic way of life and adopted the lay form of today. Yunmen sect was founded in the early 10th century by a monk who lived in the Guandong province. The teachings of the sect began to spread to Fujian in the

⁴² The other four branches are Weiyang, Caodong, Lingji and Fayan. Weiyang and Fayan, like the Yunmen sect, gradually declined after the 12th century. Caodong and Lingji sects, the teachings of which also spread to Japan and Korea, remain until this day. For a closer study in Chinese of the development of Chan

11th century and flourished from 1068 to 1127. Towards the end of the 12th century, the sect began to decline and gradually fell into oblivion (see Wang R. 1997). Lack of written historical evidence makes Mr. Liao's claim of belonging to the Yunmen Chan sect difficult to verify, but earlier we saw how the Song period imperial sale of ordination certificates created an impact on the sangha; it is likely that this and other socio-economic conditions may have contributed to the laicization of the Yunmen Buddhist sect as it gradually weakened and died out.

Liao's claim was confirmed by another group of *xianghua* I came across in Yongchun. According to an official from the local Cultural Office, this group was led by Chen Jincai, the ritualist named by Liao as the other oldest surviving *xianghua* in Yongchun. Chen's group was performing a funeral service when I met them. Chen himself was not there but speaking briefly with his disciples they also told me that they belong to the Yunmen sect.

According to Liao, no special initiation ceremony is needed to become a Yunmen *xianghua* ritualist. An apprentice simply goes through a ceremony to "take refuge with the Triple Gems" (*guiyi sanbao*) and pledge to observe the five precepts (*shou wujie*). The ceremony is not performed under the auspices of an ordained monk since they Yunmen *xianghua* ritualists do not fraternize with institutional Buddhists; usually the eldest of the ritualists can conduct the ceremony in a temple. Thus, the vows taken by Yunmen *xianghua* Buddhists are no different from that of a Buddhist Upasaka (*jushi*). In general, *xianghua* ritualists do not abstain from eating meat as this is not a prerequisite of the five vows. However, Liao said that if a Yankou ritual is performed, the officiant will observe vegetarianism on the day of that ritual.

For *xianghua* ritualists, their main ritual activity is the performance of *gongde* and funeral services. Very often they are called out to perform such services in people's homes. Liao and his acolytes travel to towns and villages in northern Nanan, Dehua and even Anxi counties to perform *gongde*. Sometimes, for services that last for several days, patrons need to put the ritualists up in their homes. Liao said that in a year, he and his group perform over a hundred *gongde*.

Other ritual activities performed by the *xianghua* include blessings and exorcism rites. Daily "practicing" (*xiuxing*) rituals are not carried out. Rituals are sometimes performed in the temple when there is a special celebration such as the birthday of a deity or to mark the ghost festival during the seventh lunar month. In general, *xianghua*

School in Fujian, see Wang R. 1997.

Buddhists are not concerned with self-cultivation practices, although in the case of Liao, he revealed himself to be quite knowledgeable about Buddhist teachings, and he told me that since he is semi-retired he spends much time reading Buddhist texts.

2.4.3 *Xianghua* ritualists in Anxi

Anxi county is in the western part of Minnan. It has a strong overseas Chinese connection. Its most famous religious site is Qingshuiyan, a temple near Penglai town founded by the Buddhist monk Chen Puzu who was later deified as Qingshui Zushi (Patriarch of the Clear Stream). Despite this connection, institutional Buddhism is less tenacious in this county; lay Daoist and Buddhist traditions are more prevalent.

Mr. Xie Jinliang (in his 40s) and two of his brothers are *xianghua* ritualists from the county town of Fengcheng (Phoenix city). The tradition does not go back very far in their family. His father, born in 1925, was sent away to learn the trades of the *xianghua* when he was thirteen years old as the family was too poor to keep him; becoming a *xianghua* ritualist was a way to “earn a living” (*tao shenghuo*). Xie Jinliang and his brothers followed in their father’s footsteps after the Cultural Revolution. According to him, the *xianghua* tradition in Anxi goes back a long time; his current generation is the 60th generation of *xianghua* ritualists. Previously a lineage book (*zupu*) of *xianghua* “monks” existed; but it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Like the *xianghua* of Yongchun, Xie also told me that he belongs to the Yunmen *xianghua* tradition. Today, there are over a hundred Yunmen ritualists in Anxi. Interestingly, he gave a new piece of information that provided further insight into the tradition: for each generation of *xianghua* ritualists, the first character of the “dharma name” (*faming*) has been prescribed. According to Buddhist tradition, when someone becomes ordained as a monk or a nun, he or she no longer uses the names given to him or her at birth. Instead they adopt the character Shi (as in Shijiamoni, transliteration of Sakyamuni) for their surname; a dharma name, usually consisting of two characters, is then given. Sometimes for those having a common lineage, the first character of the dharma name is commonly shared by all in the same generation.⁴³ This system is known in Chinese as *zibei* (“generation character”). Thus according to Xie, the “generation characters” of the *xianghua* Yunmen sect run as follows:

⁴³ This system is not a Buddhist tradition but a Chinese one. Traditionally, the male members of the patrilineal family share the same first given name. The names are then entered into the lineage book (*zupu*).

zu, dao, jie, ding, zong,	祖道戒定宗
fang, guang, zheng, yuan, tong,	方廣正圓通
zhen, ru, ming, shi, ji,	真如明實際
de, zhao, man, xin, hong.	德照滿心弘

The sequence of order reads like a 5-word gatha. Xie Jinliang and his brothers belong to the Ru “generation character”, which according to him is the 60th generation. Xie said that these “generation characters” were set down by a “monk” named Guangxiao, but he does not have further information of this monk. Liao Liangcai from Yongchun did not seem aware of this system in the tradition, but he once told me that his Dharma name is Shi Yuancai, his first character Yuan is the 9th in this sequence. This may not have any significance in Liao’s case. As for a patriarch of their tradition, Xie was not aware that they had any; they, like Liao, see their tradition as being a branch of the Chan School.

To be initiated into the *xianghua* Yunmen sect, Xie told me that a disciple must undergo a ceremony of shaving his head and Taking Refuge with the triple Gems. Unlike Liao’s group, they do not take their vows of precepts; these, he explained, must be taken in an institutional monastery such as Gushan or Nanputuosi when there is an ordination ceremony. They have to wait for the right opportunity to do that; sometimes they go through a *xianghua* career without undertaking the five basic vows. Xie spent a year studying in a Buddhist Seminary in Sichuan. He admitted that this was not common in their tradition; but in modern times things have changed, although not many get the opportunity as it is costly and one must reach a certain level of literacy to be accepted as a student.

Xie Jinliang’s father was affiliated to the Qingshuiyan temple in Penglai and the brothers too, used to work from there. But now, Xie runs a temple in Fengcheng. In the temples, ritual activities such as the celebration of the birthdays of the Buddhist pantheon, are held. Their main occupation is the performance of *gongde* and funerals; they also perform exorcism, blessing rites. Xie’s group operates generally in Anxi county, but they sometimes also travel to Sanming in the northwest and to Quanzhou to perform *gongde*.

2.4.4 *Xianghua* ritualists in Shishi

Shishi is situated on the eastern coast of Jinjiang (Map 3). In 1987, it was given the status of county-level city (*xianji shi*) and is under the administrative control of Quanzhou city. Since the Economic Reform, this little coastal city has developed rapidly

into an industrial zone and has become increasingly urbanized. This city, like many places in Jinjiang, has a strong Buddhist influence. The *caigu* tradition is widespread; at the same time, lay Buddhist *xianghua* ritualists can also be found there.

Cai Qingbiao and Cai Qingyang are two brothers who come from a family of *xianghua* ritualists. They are the fourth generation of such ritualists and the tradition is being passed on to two of Cai Qingyang's sons. The two brothers each run a small temple in Shishi. Cai Qingyang's temple, Tonghua miao, was built by their father. Its main deity is Guandi, the warrior god, regarded as one of the protector Bodhisattvas of a Buddhist monastery (*qielan pusa*). Other deities worshipped include Guanyin and a local deity known as Chenghuang Furen (City God Lady).

As to the origin of their tradition, the brothers were uncertain; but Cai Qingbiao, the elder of the two brothers, said that the *xianghua* tradition in Minnan began in Anxi, gradually spreading to the other nearby areas. They regard Amoghavajra (Bukong), the 7th century Indian monk who translated the first text on saving the Hungry Ghost Yankou (§1.6.2), as the ancestral master (*zushi*) of their tradition. Although the *xianghua* ritualists in Yongchun and Anxi made no mention of this, Liao once alluded to Bukong when he described the movements in an invocation rite (described in greater detail in §3.1.3) as emulating Bukong's since he was known to have a limp in one leg. These remarks show the importance the *xianghua* attach to the Indian monk in order to reaffirm their Buddhist identity; however, the dance-like pacing movements resemble those of the Daoist "pacing the void" (*buxu*) (Boltz 1996: 192).

The most common ritual activity for the Cai brothers is *gongde*. They are usually invited to perform in private homes. In addition, they also perform funeral, blessing, exorcism and propitiation rites. They operate mainly locally in Shishi, but they also travel to places in Jinjiang. Sometimes such rituals are performed in their temples.

Quite unusually for a *xianghua*, Cai Qingyang had an ordained monk for a teacher, under whom he took his Triple Refuge and five Precepts. Furthermore, both brothers are adept in the National and Fuzhou styles of hymn singing in addition to the *xianghua* style. In contrast, the Yongchun and Anxi *xianghua* ritualists are not familiar with styles other than those of their own tradition. (For details of music styles, see chapter 5.)

2.4.5 *Caiyou* ("vegetarian friend") ritualists

Another type of lay ritualist whose distinction from the *xianghua* is fuzzy are the *caiyou* "vegetarian friends". From information given to me by elderly *caigu*, older monks and the older generation of Buddhists (e.g. the director of Xiamen Lay Buddhist

Association), *caiyou* are male lay disciples of monks. Like the *xianghua*, they do not live in temples but lead a normal family life; but unlike the *xianghua*, they observe strict vegetarianism and the five or ten lay precepts. Before the communist takeover, some *caiyou*, being conversant with Buddhist rituals and its vocal liturgy, commonly took the role of *gongde* ritualists. Ordained monks probably did not view the usurpation of these lay Buddhists as *gongde* ritualists as a threat since the former themselves hold ambivalent views about performing this controversial ritual anyway. But the number of *caiyou* gradually declined, due probably to complex social and political changes that assailed China in the first half of the 20th century. In Minnan after the Cultural Revolution, the women *caigu*, as we have seen above, have emerged as the protagonist of *gongde*. During my fieldwork, I have encountered young laymen who take part in *gongde*; some people inform me they are *caiyou*, but the more elderly (among whom include Sister Miaolian) told me they are not proper *caiyou* as some of them do not observe long-term vegetarianism. Thus it seems an important criterion of *caiyou* is the observation of vegetarianism. Thus in this way, the new generation of *caiyou* is more like *xianghua* ritualists.

During my fieldwork, *caiyou* were less ubiquitous than *caigu*; I was informed that the number of *caiyou* in Minnan today is small. Once in a *caigu*-run temple in Shishi, a large-scale *gongde* ritual was being jointly performed by ordained monks and lay *caiyou*. The younger ones were there to make up the number; but there was a more senior *caiyou* who acted as officiant at times. This senior *caiyou*, I was informed, was a “proper” *caiyou* who observed vegetarianism and the Buddhist precepts. He was well spoken of by *caigu* and ordained monks alike and even by the *xianghua* Cai brothers in Shishi. Because of his close interaction with institutional monks, he is familiar with the musical styles used by *caigu* and institutional ritualists. At the same time, the Cai brothers told me that this *caiyou* also knew the *xianghua* style well as he sometimes performs with the *xianghua* ritualists. In areas such as Anxi and Yongchun where contact with institutional Buddhism is less tenacious, the term *caiyou* is a less familiar one. This seems to suggest that *caiyou* is a more urban phenomenon. From the above case studies, we can see that the lay ritualist scene in Minnan is a fairly complex one. Indeed, Xie Jinliang once told me that the *xianghua* Buddhists who are affiliated with the Chenghuang (City God) temple in Anxi are not Yunmen Buddhists but are of the Lingji Chan sect. Even within one linguistic region, there exists many sub-regional differences. My research has shown that I have merely scratched the surface of a rather complex picture. More research, which is beyond the scope of this researcher at this point in time, will surely be needed to further

our understanding of this type of ritualists and their music.

To briefly conclude this section, the above case studies show that the *xianghua* are not generally very cohesive among their own type outside of their immediate groups, probably because of direct competition. At the same time, they identify themselves as having descended from the Chan Buddhist sub-sect of Yunmen. They distinguish themselves clearly from Daoists and other popular ritualists, claiming lineage links to Buddhism via the scriptures used and the pantheon worshipped. Yet institutional Buddhists do not even recognize them as *jushi* (lay Buddhists). I once asked an elderly monk whom I had heard was acquainted with some *xianghua* ritualists if he could tell me how I could contact them; however, he was quite dismissive of them, telling me these aren't proper Buddhists. Naturally, I did not get any contact information for *xianghua* from this monk.

Xianghua ritualists themselves have also often told me that *Chanhe* (*xianghua* term for institutional Buddhists) monks look down on them. This view was similarly held by the Shishi *xianghua* Mr. Cai, even though he has an ordained monk as a teacher. Thus, while *caiyou* and *caigu* still maintain some form of relationship with ordained monks and are accepted by them, *xianghua* ritualists rarely interact with the institutional Buddhists.

Unlike the *zhaijiao* vegetarian sects of imperial days, which often proclaimed strong salvation ideologies for their followers, Yunmen *xianghua* ritualists are not congregational in nature and do not have widespread membership. They also do not have a divinity-claiming messianic leader. Sources on vegetarian sects cite the members' piety in religious practice whose primary aim is still that of securing a better rebirth for oneself, but *xianghua* are in general less concerned about their own religious cultivation. In general, the characteristics of Yunmen *xianghua* ritualists differ greatly from those of the earlier popular Buddhist vegetarian sects. Even if they were the residua of vegetarian sects of earlier times, in socialist China today, despite the implementation of freedom of religion, the Communist government still exercises stringent control over religious activities which might be counterrevolutionary or threaten social order. Indeed, in Minnan today, even lay *xianghua* ritualists are properly registered with the local government. There is evidence that some sectarians became professional ritual performers (Naquin 1988: 51); however, it is more likely, as recent research on popular ritualists is beginning to show, that there developed independently in China many types of professional ritual groups, particularly in folk rural society. Such a group might show some degree of affiliation with either Daoism or Buddhism or syncretically merge various traditions. But there is hardly any information on such groups because they

operated at the lowest grassroots level. Little attention had hitherto been paid to them, probably because they, unlike sectarian religions, do not threaten the social order since their main concern is commercial. Only recently have researchers turned their attention to rural ritual specialists; much more research is needed.

2.4.6 Conclusion: the social classification of the three types of Buddhists ritualists

Having introduced all three types of *gongde* ritual specialists in Minnan, we can now consider their social classification and their ritual roles. Given the orientations of the three types, how should they be categorized? Are they specialists, professionals or nonprofessionals? To determine their categorization, we must have a clear definition of the categories. In some writings no clear distinction is made between a specialist and a professional (Naquin 1988), while in others, the difference between professional and nonprofessional specialists lies in payment to the specialists. That is, if a ritual specialist is paid, he is deemed a professional; if he is unpaid, he is a nonprofessional (see Watson 1988:111). For our purposes, this criterion is insufficiently encompassing. Merriam's (1964) definition of terms applied to musicians in relation to their social behaviour in society but is useful as a basis for distinguishing a classification for our three types of ritualists.

A *xianghua* ritualist has specialized skills as a ritual performer; having such "inside" knowledge thus makes him a specialist. His skills are the tools of his trade and he largely depends on these specialized skills for his livelihood. The social behaviour of the *xianghua* ritualists thus suggests that they are "economic specialists". Merriam assigns the musician as an economic specialist, "performing particular tasks to which he is assigned by the society, and producing a particular kind of good, whether tangible or intangible, which contributes to the total labor necessary for the economic requirements of the society as a whole" (Merriam 1964: 124). In this sense, the *xianghua* ritualist can also be seen as a specialist; his labour differs from others in the society. Arguably, this definition applies equally to the other two types of ritualists, the ordained monks and the women *caigu*. The services provided by these two latter types are also specialized skills that no ordinary members of the community can provide.

To differentiate between the types of ritualists and their "specialization", Merriam's approach of professionalism, "which is usually defined in terms of whether the musician is paid for and supported economically by his skill" (ibid.) is used as a criterion for differentiating the three types of ritualists. If we assume "professionalism" to mean total devotion to the task and the receipt of total economic income from it, a *xianghua* ritualist

would be a professional ritual specialist. Furthermore, he would be a “true” professional specialist because he is acknowledged as one by the members of the society of which he is a part. In the case of an institutional ordained monk who performs *gongde*, he is a “true” specialist since he has the “expertise”; but as he is a member of a monastic institution and receives an allowance regardless of whether he performs *gongde* or not, he is not dependent on *gongde* performance for his total income. Furthermore an ordained monk is seen first of all, even if it is by virtue of his appearance, as a member of the sangha and a practitioner of the religious doctrines. His role in rituals for the dead is a secondary one. In this sense, an ordained monk is not a professional or an economic specialist although he is still a ritual specialist. As for the *caigu*, some do rely on performing *gongde* for their income, but carrying out this task is not their entire vocation. The primary aim of a *caigu* is still self-cultivation for religious ends. Based on these variables, the *caigu* group can perhaps be considered as semi-professional.

This discussion of specialist knowledge, professionalism, and so on, leads us to another consideration: does professionalism have a bearing on musical proficiency? How does the fact that one’s livelihood depends on performing *gongde* affect the ritual and musical behaviour of the ritualists? These aspects, however, can only be addressed in the light of better understanding of the music and ritual contents and will be discussed in §4.5.

Chapter 3

Ritual and textual structure of *gongde*

3.1 Ritual structure of *gongde* performed by the three types of ritualists

Ethnographic sources on rites for the dead in late imperial and early contemporary China have provided us with pictures of a more or less homogeneous form which was widely accepted as the traditional way and likewise practiced by ritual specialists of institutional Buddhism, Daoism and popular religion. In the Socialist China of today, this homogeneity appears to be disintegrating. In Minnan the *gongde* now has three varying structures, performed respectively by monks, *caigu* and *xianghua* priests. *Gongde* performed by the institutional ordained monks and semi-institutional *caigu* ritualists share a similar, almost identical, structure, but the *caigu* may perform extra elements. In contrast the structure of *gongde* performed by the *xianghua* is quite different. It contains ritualistic elements conforming more to earlier tradition but which the institutional Buddhists nowadays eschew. This chapter introduces the basic structure of *gongde* performed by each type of ritualist as observed today. Variants and changes in ritual structure and the meaning and function of music in *gongde* performed by institutional ritualists and *caigu* are discussed in §4.5, while the same in *gongde* by the *xianghua* follow in §5.5.

3.1.1 *Gongde* performed by institutional monks

Traditionally *gongde* may be performed on any 7th day after death up to the 49th day, and/or on the hundredth day and first and third anniversaries. In the past *gongde* may last from three to seven days or more, depending on the wealth of a family. Today in cities like Xiamen and Quanzhou, half-day, one- and three-day *gongde* are more common. In rural areas, however, *gongde* lasting three days or five or more days appear to be more widespread.

The *gongde* is an assemblage of several, sometimes autonomous, rites. In this section, I will describe the basic contents of this ritual as found in institutional context today. To facilitate the discussion, the general outline of a one-day *gongde* is set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Basic procedure of a one-day *gongde* as observed in Nanputuosi

Morning
1. Purification (<i>Jingtān</i>)
2. Penitence (<i>Baichān</i>) (vol. 1)
3. Penitence (vol. 2)
4. Offering (<i>Shānggōng</i>)
Afternoon
5. Penitence (vol. 3)
(6.) Small <i>Mengshan</i> Universal Salvation Rite (<i>Xiao Mengshan</i>) ¹
7. Transferring Merit (<i>Huixiāng</i>)
Evening
(8) Flaming Mouth Universal Salvation Rite (<i>Yānkou Shīshīyì</i>)

There are five separate rites in this table: the Purification, Penitence, Offering, Small Mengshan and Flaming Mouth rites. The Purification and Offering rites may be performed in other types of rituals; the Mengshan rite is part of the evening lesson, while the Penitence and Flaming Mouth rites may be performed independently. Although the procedures of the smaller Purification and Offering rites are found in published hymn manuals, there is no prescribed liturgical manual for *gongde* as a whole (see e.g. *Fojiao niansongji*). More rites may be added to the basic structure depending on patron demands. There is thus great flexibility in *gongde*. The two universal salvation rites are never performed together in one single *gongde*. The Flaming Mouth Rite, being more specialised and requiring more manpower, is performed only when patrons pay for it. If a family cannot afford the extra expenses of the Flaming Mouth rite, the Small Mengshan is performed as part of the basic structure.

The length of *gongde* dictates the choice of penitence texts: for half-day and one-day *gongde*, the text most popularly used is the 3-volume *Cibei Sanmei* [Skt. *Samadhi Shuichan* (Compassionate Intent Contemplation Water Penitence, hereafter shortened to Water Penitence)]. Other alternative sutra texts may be used, such as *Jin'gang Baochan* (The Precious Diamond Penitence) or *Dizang Pusa Benyuanjing* (Sutra of the Original Vows of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha), each having 3 volumes. For *gongde* of three days or

¹ Its full title is the “*Mengshan* Recitation and Preaching the Dharma Rite of Feeding” (*Mengshan shishi*)

more, the 10-volume *Lianghuang Baochan* (Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang) is often performed. The lengthy penitence texts thus make the Penitence rite a major component of *gongde*. This focus on the Penitence and recitation of other necessary sutra texts is a reason performing rituals for the dead is called, by the Buddhists themselves, *jingchan* (lit. “sutra penitence”; see §2.2.2 on the stigma attached to *jingchan*). Let us look at the expanded programme of a one-day *gongde* based on a performance in Nanputuosi (Table 3.2). (Several terms included in this table as prefixes to the titles (*zan*, *ji*, *bai*, *fohao* etc) will be defined later when their meanings become relevant.)

Table 3.2 Expanded programme of the Water Penitence

<p>1. Purification (<i>jingtān</i>)</p>	<p>Procedure at the Buddha Altar (<i>Fotan</i>)</p> <p>i) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Yangzhi jingshui</i> (Willow Branch Purified Water)²</p> <p>ii) <i>Bai</i>: <i>Sanbao wen</i> (Three Jewels text) by Officiant</p> <p>iii) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Jishou guiyi fofaseng</i> (Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Three Jewels, a.k.a “Jeta Garden”); variable</p> <p>iv) <i>Fohao</i>: Triple Invocation (<i>Sancheng</i>)</p> <p>v) <i>Bai</i>: <i>Shuiwen</i> (Water text) by Officiant</p> <p>vi) <i>Zhou</i>: <i>Dabei zhou</i> (Grand Compassion Dharani), <i>Shi xiaozhou</i> (Ten Short Incantations), <i>Xinjing</i> (Heart Sutra)</p> <p>vii) <i>Fohao</i>: Triple Invocation (<i>Sancheng</i>)</p> <p>viii) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Fo gongde bukeliang</i> (Inimitable Merit of the Buddha); variable</p> <p>ix) <i>Bai</i>: <i>Shuwen</i> (Memorial text) by Officiant</p> <p>Proceed to the Spirit Altar (<i>Lingtān</i>) while reciting Amitabha name chant</p> <p>x) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Zhantan haian</i> (The Shores of Zhantan); variable</p> <p>xi) <i>Zhou</i>: Triple Invocation, Grand Compassion Dharani</p> <p>xii) <i>Fohao</i>: <i>Ganluwang pusa</i> (Triple Invocation of the Dew King Bodhisattva)</p> <p>xiii) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Yici zhenling</i> (With This Resounding Bell)</p> <p>xiv) <i>Bai</i>: Memorial (<i>Shuwen</i>) by Officiant</p> <p>xv) <i>Jing, zhou</i>: Heart Sutra or <i>Mituo Jing</i> (Amitabha Sutra), <i>Wangsheng zhou</i> (Reborn in the Pure Land Dharani)</p> <p>xvi) <i>Zan</i>: <i>Nanke meng</i> (Illusory Dreams); variable</p> <p>Return to the Buddha Altar while reciting Amitabha name chant</p>
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niansong shuofa yi). See §1.6.3 for further description.

² Vocalizations of different types are performed as an ensemble unless otherwise stated. The word “variable” means that different hymn texts may be sung.

<p>2. Penitence (<i>Baichan</i>): vol. 1 of The Water Penitence</p>	<p>Buddha Altar i) <i>Zan: Luxiang zan</i> (Censer Incense Hymn); variable Contents below are from vol. 1 of Penitence ii) <i>Nian: Qichan</i> (Begin Penitence): recitation of verse iii) <i>Fohao</i> (Buddhas' name chant, antiphonal) iv) <i>Nian</i>: Penitence text v) <i>Fohao</i> (sequence iv follows) vi) items iii and iv alternate until end of volume vii) <i>Zan</i>: Closing hymn from vol. 1 viii) <i>Zan: Sanmei shuichan gongdeduo</i> (Bountiful Merit of Water Penitence); variable</p> <p>Spirit Altar viii) <i>Zan</i>: variable ix) <i>Jing, zhou</i>: Amitabha Sutra and Reborn in the Pure Land Dharani x) <i>Ji: Huixiang ji</i> (Gatha of Transferring Merit)</p> <p>Buddha Altar xi) <i>Ji</i>: Gatha of Transferring Merit</p>
<p>Interval</p>	
<p>3. Penitence: vol. 2</p>	<p>Contents follow vol. 2 of Penitence</p>
<p>Interval</p>	
<p>4. Offering (<i>shanggong</i>)</p>	<p>Buddha Altar i) <i>Zan: Jieding zhenxiang</i> (True Incense Hymn) ii) <i>Zhou, fohao</i>: Triple Invocation, names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (repeated thrice) iii) <i>Zhou: Bianshi zhenyan, Ganlushui zhenyan, Pugongyang zhenyan</i> (Transforming Food, Sweet Dew and General Offering Incantation, each three times) iv) <i>Zan: Tianchu miaogong</i> (Sumptuous Offering of the Heavenly Kitchen) v) <i>Bai</i>: Memorial text (<i>Shu</i>)</p> <p>Spirit Altar vi) <i>Zan</i>: variable vii) <i>Jing, zhou</i>: Amitabha Sutra, same incantations as iii viii) <i>Zan</i>: variable ix) <i>Bai</i>: Memorial text (<i>Shu</i>) x) <i>Fohao</i>: Triple Invocation of Guanyin xi) <i>Zhou</i>: Reborn in the Pure Land Incantation xii) <i>Zan: Mituofu dayuanwang</i> (Amitabha, King of Great Vows); variable</p> <p>Buddha Altar xiii) <i>Ji</i>: Gatha of transferring merit</p>
<p>Mid-day break</p>	
<p>5. Penitence: vol. 3</p>	<p>Buddha Altar i) <i>Zan: Zhantan hai'an</i> (The Shores of Zhantan) ii) Contents follow vol. 3 of Penitence iii) <i>Zan: Sanmei shuichan gongdeduo</i> or text from Penitence text</p>

	Spirit Altar i) <i>Zan</i> : variable ii) <i>Jing, zhou</i> : Amitabha Sutra, Reborn in the Pure Land Dharani iii) <i>Zan</i> : Illusory Dreams iv) <i>Ji</i> : Gatha of Transferring Merit Buddha Altar v) <i>Ji</i> : Gatha of Transferring Merit
Interval	
6. Small <i>Mengshan</i> (<i>Xiao Mengshan</i>)	Performed outdoors i) <i>Zan</i> : Willow Branch Purified Water ii) <i>Zhou</i> : Grand Compassion incantation iii) <i>Fohao</i> : Triple Invocation iv) <i>Zan</i> : <i>Jixiang huiqi</i> (Auspicious Assembly) v) <i>Zhou</i> : <i>Shishi zhou</i> (Food-giving incantations) vi) <i>Zan</i> : <i>Jishou guiyixiong</i> (Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Buddha) vii) <i>Jing, zhou</i> : The Heart Sutra, Reborn in the Pure Land Dharani viii) <i>Zan</i> : variable ix) <i>Ji</i> : Gatha of Transferring Merit
7. Transferring Merit (<i>Huixiang</i>)	Buddha Altar i) <i>Ji</i> : Gatha of Transferring Merit ii) <i>Ji</i> : <i>San guiyi</i> (Triple Refuge)
(8). Flaming Mouth Universal Salvation Rite (<i>Yankou shishi yi</i>)	

The above table illustrates the basic contents of a one-day *gongde*. From it, we can see that the rites are performed in turn at two altars: the *fotan* (Buddha Altar) and the *lingtan* (Spirit Altar). The first is the main altar where the Buddhist pantheon is revered.³ The second, a temporary altar set up especially for the *gongde*, is reserved for worshipping the dead (Fig. 3.1). Each rite begins at the Buddha Altar; on completion of a rite, the ritualists then proceed to the Spirit Altar. At the Spirit Altar, hymns and laments are sung to console the soul and exhort its repentance from past sins; sutras and magical incantations are recited to aid their passage to the Western Paradise or a better rebirth. At the end of each rite, the merit accrued from the performance is passed on (*huixiang*) to those on whose behalf the ceremony is conducted (see §1.5). This is confirmed by a *ji* sung at the end of each rite. Thus, ritualists in a *gongde* are continuously moving between the two altars. The different components of *gongde* are examined in greater detail below. It is unnecessary to go through each phase in the rite since it has already been set out in the table. I will concentrate instead on describing the significance of the actions; textual contents will follow below.

³When performed in a monastery or temple, this altar is often the main shrine; when performed in a private home, a make-shift altar with a statue of the Buddha or scrolls of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will be set up.

Fig. 3.1 Spirit Altar in *gongde* performed by monks at Bailudong temple, Xiamen



Many special Buddhist rituals begin with the Purification (*Jingtan*) rite to cleanse the ritual space of impurities. Buddhist rites usually begin with a hymn invoking the Buddha or a Bodhisattva. In the Purification, the Bodhisattva invoked is Avalokitesvara, known to the Chinese as Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy. Invocation is further expressed by repeating (thrice) the name of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Triple Invocations may be appended to 6-line hymns as a coda, or it may be prefixed to sutras or incantations. More will be said in §4.2-3.

Two short texts are crucial to the process of purification. The first is the *Sanbao wen* (Three Jewels text) and the second the *Shuiwen* (Water text). Both texts are performed by the *zhufa* (Officiant monk). The Three Jewels text announces the merits of the Three Jewels text (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), while the Water text describes the purification powers of the sweet dew. These two texts are separated by a hymn. When reciting the Water text, the Officiant holds a small water vessel in one hand; the water is then consecrated by the Grand Compassion incantation. The Ten Short incantations and the Heart Sutra follow; while the group is reciting these, the Officiant walks around the main altar, shaking drops of water from the vessel with a willow branch to purify the ritual space.

Following the recitation, a laudatory hymn is sung. Then the *Shu* (Memorial) is proclaimed, stating the time, date and place of the ritual, the name(s) of the person(s) for whom it is performed, the names of its sponsor(s) and the relations of the deceased. The

Shu is an important feature of *gongde*, and indeed of other types of rituals performed on behalf of others. Repeatedly recited in the different rites at both the Buddha and Spirit Altars, it represents a formal supplication to release the soul for rebirth. Its written form is then burnt at the end of the service...

After the Memorial, the ritualists and the patrons move to the Spirit Altar. Here, the purification does not entail a repetition of the full process by the Officiant: an invocatory hymn and the Grand Compassion Dharani are sufficient. At the Spirit Altar, there are other concerns: the spirit has to be invoked by singing an appropriate hymn (see item xii in Purification). Then the Memorial is proclaimed again. The soul, having arrived, must then be sermonized. Either of two sutra texts may serve this function: the *Mituo jing* (Amitabha Sutra) or the *Xinjing* (Heart Sutra). In addition, the mysterious powers of *Wangsheng jingtu shenzhou* (Reborn in the Pure Land Magical incantation, usually abbreviated as *Wangsheng zhou*, hereafter Reborn in the Pure Land Incantation) will assist the soul along the path to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha; this is often recited after the sutra sermon. Before bringing the Purification to a close, all the merits accrued through reciting the sutra texts and incantations must be transferred to the soul by singing *Huixiang ji* ("Gatha for Transferring Merit"). The assembly then returns to the main altar, where the Penitence Rite begins.

Penitence Rite has its own prescribed texts. There is thus little room for variation in this section of the *gongde* as the contents in the Penitence liturgy are generally followed. Texts will be discussed later in this chapter. On completion of a volume of the Penitence, a visit to the Spirit Altar to transfer the merit is required.

Before the morning is over, the Offering (*Shanggong*) rite is performed. This is the offering of food and drink to the pantheon and to the soul for whom the *gongde* is performed. Adhering to the Buddhist tradition of not consuming food after 12 noon (*guowu bushi*), offerings to the higher realms (i.e. Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, demi-gods, etc) should thus be performed in the morning. After the opening invocation hymn at the Buddha Altar, a number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are invoked and invited to partake of the offering. Magical incantations indispensable in this rite include the *Bianshi zhenyan* (Transforming Food incantation), *Ganlushui zhenyan* (Sweet Dew incantation) and *Pugongyang zhenyan* (General Offering incantation).⁴ These are recited to transform the offerings into bounteous amounts. Then the Memorial is repeated after a hymn praising the sumptuous offerings and before proceeding to the Spirit Altar. At the Spirit

⁴ The Chinese use several terms for magical spells uttered in their original Sanskrit (transliterated into Chinese syllables). These will be discussed in §3.3.1

Altar, a hymn is sung and the Amitabha Sutra recited before the magical formulae to transform the offerings are pronounced once again. While the feasting is symbolically taking place, the soul is further implored to repent its sins by more hymn singing and sutra recitation. The group then returns to the Buddha Altar to transfer the merit with a *ji gatha*.

In the afternoon, the final volume of the Penitence is performed. This completes the Penitence rite. At this stage, the sins of the soul have surely been purged by the various meritorious acts. However, Mahayana Buddhist ideals dictate that the salvation of beings suffering in the three lower realms would bring greater merit for the soul and its family.⁵ Hence, a *gongde* must always include one of two universal salvation rites: the larger-scale Flaming Mouth rite or the Small Mengshan rite (see §1.6.2-3). The Flaming Mouth rite requires more monks and must be officiated by monks of higher standing; hence its inclusion incurs extra costs. This usually takes place on the last evening of the *gongde*, from around sunset to before midnight. The simpler Mengshan rite, when performed, takes place toward the end of the *gongde*.

On completion of the Mengshan rite, performed in the open courtyard of a monastery or temple where a separate table laden with offerings is set up, the final Transferring Merit is performed at the Buddha Altar. The “Three Refuges” (*Sanguiyi*), a pledge that must be sung at the end of all Buddhist rituals, closes the *gongde*. This verse symbolises one’s willingness to follow the teachings of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha).

The programme just described shows the basic procedure of a *gongde* ritual performed by monks. Let us now consider how a performance of *gongde* by *caigu* would differ.

3.1.2 *Gongde* performed by *caigu*

A *gongde* performed by *caigu* follows the same structure as that adopted by the monks. This is particularly the case when the ritual lasts only half a day or one full day. However, the structure may be expanded by the addition of extra elements. When discussing these extra elements, certain concepts concerning the afterlife in correlation with Buddhist, Confucianist and indigenous Chinese ideologies will repeatedly recur. This topic was dealt with earlier, and the reader is referred to that section (see §1.5). The broad outline of a one-day *gongde* performed by *caigu* is set out in Table 3.3.

⁵ The six paths of transmigration from the highest to the lowest orders are deva, human, asura, animal, hungry ghost and hell. The last three are considered the lower realms.

Table 3.3 Broad outline of a full-day *gongde* performed by *caigu*

Morning	
1.	Purification (<i>Yanjing</i> , Minn. <i>Yanzng</i>)
2.	Calling the Soul (<i>Yinhun</i> or <i>Diaohun</i>)
3.	Turning the Wheel (<i>Qianzang</i> , Minn. <i>Kanzng</i>)
4.	Bathing the Soul (<i>Muyu</i> , Minn. <i>Bokyok</i>)
5.	Penitence (Water Penitence vol. 1) (<i>Baichan</i> , Minn. <i>Baicam</i>)
6.	Offering (<i>Zuogong</i> , Minn. <i>Zueikieng</i>)
Mid-day break	
7.	Water Penitence (vol. 2)
8.	General Offering (<i>Pushi</i> , Minn. <i>P@si</i>) – Small Mengshan rite
Evening break	
9.	Water Penitence (vol. 3)
10.	Mengshan Feeding Rite (<i>Mengshan shishiyi</i> , Minn. <i>Bongsan</i>)
11.	Burning the Spirit House (<i>Shao lingcu</i> , Minn. <i>Sio liengcu</i>) (end of ceremony)

As can be seen in Table 3.3, *caigu* do not always use the same terms as institutional monks to designate the various sections of *gongde*. Ordained monks in monasteries often come from other parts of the province or outside the province, whereas *caigu* are indigenous to the region and can therefore use the vernacular Minnanese. Thus the institutional *jingtān* (“purify altar”) becomes *yanzng* (“perform purification”) for *caigu*; an Offering is called *shanggong* by the former and *zueikieng* by the latter, and so on.⁶ But more importantly, aside from the vernacular use of terminology, there are extra elements not found in the institutional model. These include items such as Calling the Soul (*yinhun*), Turning the Wheel (*qianzang*) and Burning the Spirit House (*shao lingcu*). However, if these items are removed, the basic structure of the institutional model can still be discerned. But within this basic paradigm, there are other differences such as the choice of hymn-singing styles, the ritualists’ knowledge of the hymn repertoire, the language/dialect used in hymn-singing, and so on. Such issues, as we will see in chapter 4, have implications for the music. For now I will introduce the extra elements found in *caigu gongde*.

Calling the Soul (*yinhun*) is the summoning of the soul to attend the *gongde* performed for their benefit. This section of the rite is sometimes, particularly in a short *gongde*, no different from the section performed by monks before the Spirit Altar in the

⁶ Moreover, the *caigu* pronounce these terms in Minnanese rather than Mandarin. But we cannot cope with all these different languages. I have given the Minnanese in Table 3.3; henceforth I will use the English, but where it is impracticable the Mandarin transliteration will be used. See “Linguistic and musical conventions” above.

Purification rite (see Table 3.2). I will, for convenience, term this the basic invocation of the soul as there are other variations to discuss below. The soul is summoned during the Triple Invocation (*sancheng*) appended to the hymn “With this Resounding Bell” (item xiii in Purification Rite, Table 3.2). While the Triple Invocation is being sung, the officiating *caigu* waves a *fan* - a colourful cloth streamer on which is inscribed the name of the deceased and attached to a bamboo stick - to symbolize the invocation.⁷

Sister Miaolian from Tongfosi told me that during the *qingming* (the time of the year, usually around April, when the ancestral tomb must be visited and offerings made to ancestors) and the seventh lunar month Ghost Festival period, *gongde* are rarely performed because the wrong soul may be summoned since many other souls are also around during these times.

I learnt from a *caigu* originally from Hui’an but now living in Xiamen that Calling the Soul is more elaborate in her home county. After the Purification Rite, a table with some food offerings is placed outside, and the ritualists and the family members go outside. More incantations are recited and hymns sung while family members kneel and wave the streamer. To determine if the soul for whom the service is performed has arrived, the officiant (or sometimes the head of the family) throws a pair of small crescent-shape wooden divination blocks (*bei*) on the ground. If the blocks lie on opposing faces, the soul has arrived; if they reveal the same sides (both facing up or down), the waving and the recitation will continue until the blocks express affirmation. I have seen a Calling the Soul rite of this type in a *caigu*-run temple in Shishi. The *gongde* on that occasion, however, was not performed by *caigu* but by both ordained monks and lay *caiyou* ritualists. In Quanzhou and Xiamen city, Calling the Soul in *gongde* performed by *caigu* generally follows the model I term basic. In contrast, in Nanputuosi the use of the streamer, or indeed the other ritual elements which will be described below, is not seen in *gongde*. The fact that Nanputuosi excludes such elements in their *gongde*, however, does not preclude such performances from being carried out by institutional monks elsewhere. The reasons for such contradictions within the Buddhist Church involve political and ideological issues too complex to discuss here but which will be examined in greater detail in §4.5.

Another rite found in *gongde* by *caigu* is a process known as Turning the Wheel (Minn. *kanzng*). A *zng* (Mand. *zang*) is a cylinder-like object made of bamboo and paper, attached to a bamboo pole which acts as an axis (Fig. 3.2). This object is turned round

⁷ De Groot (1885:50-5, 79-82) describes the use of the *fan* in *gongde* in late Imperial times.

and round to symbolise leading the soul out of hell. This ritual as performed by *caigu* today takes place soon after Calling the Soul. Members of the family turn the Wheel round and round while the officiating *caigu* recites the Heart Sutra and the Grand Compassion Dharani, followed by a hymn. At the end of the recitation and singing, the divination blocks are again thrown to determine if the soul has ascended from hell.

Fig. 3.2 Paper wheel (Minn. *zng*) in *gongde* at Tongfosi temple



When this has been confirmed, Bathing the Soul then takes place. This is carried out symbolically by placing an empty basin, with a clean towel draped over it, within a straw mat folded cylindrically (Fig. 3.3). It is believed that the rescued soul will be in a disheveled state after enduring endless tortures in hell and will therefore need a wash. Similar recitation and singing take place before the encircling mat while the officiant immerses a willow twig in a vessel which contains purified water and shakes drops of water into the mat. The *zang* is then taken away to be burnt while the ritualists return to the Buddha Altar to begin the Penitence. Turning the Wheel is less frequently performed by *caigu* in Xiamen, but it is still common in the Quanzhou area.

Fig. 3.3 Bathing the Soul administered by *caigu* in Tongfosi temple



Up to late imperial times, Turning the Wheel was part of the Breaking the Blood Pond (*po xuehu*) ceremony in Minnan (de Groot 1885: 108-15).⁸ The Blood Pond, as its name suggests, is a pond filled with blood in the underworld in which women who have died in childbirth or have given birth are plunged upon death. A rite must be performed to save them from this grisly fate. Yet Breaking the Blood Pond is not performed at any time by the *caigu*. When I ask *caigu*, both young and old, why this rite is not included in their *gongde* performance, some reply that this is a superstitious (*mixin*) custom; some say that it is not related to the true doctrines of Buddhism, but when I ask in what way it contradicts, they usually cannot elaborate. When I challenge them on their acceptance of Turning the Wheel, which seems equally heterodox, some justify it by saying that it helps release the soul from hell, and it accords with the compassion ideal in Buddhism. But then, the same would be true of Breaking the Blood Pond. Sister Miaolian was pragmatic about this: since Turning the Wheel is a custom that has been followed in Minnan for generations, people have come to expect its performance; the *caigu* therefore have to be flexible about it. Personally, however, she feels that Turning the Wheel is also contradictory to *Zhengxin* (“Correct”) Buddhism (see also §4.5.2). This concept of “Correct” Buddhism came about with the Buddhist Reform in the early 20th century.

⁸ Turning the Wheel, however, is not found in the Blood Pond ceremony in other regions. See Doolittle 1866; Doré 1987; Day 1940. For detailed descriptions of the Blood Pond ceremony, including Turning the Wheel, performed by Buddhists and Daoists in Singapore, see Kamata 1986: ch. 6; for its present-day revival by Daoists in Minnan, see Dean 1988: 64.

Since 1980, this issue has become a concern again among some Buddhists. As mentioned earlier, these issues need separate consideration and will be discussed separately in §4.5.

As mentioned earlier, a universal salvation rite is usually added to *gongde* to increase merit. Since *caigu* are not religiously qualified to perform the lengthy *Yankou* rite, they perform only the Mengshan Rite. However, due to lack of time in the *gongde*, a shortened form referred to by the practitioners as “Small Mengshan” (*xiao Mengshan*) is performed. The simplified form basically retains the three major sections and the key mantras and dharanis (see §1.6.3), but sutras and sermon texts are omitted.

One last rite included in *caigu*’s performance of *gongde* is the Burning of the Spirit House (*shao lingcu*) and treasury money (*kuqian*). The burning of such paper paraphernalia usually takes place at the end of the *gongde* ritual, or sometimes before the Mengshan rite. As discussed in §1.5.1, by late imperial times, this custom had become very much a part of *gongde* performed by ordained monks or nuns and lay ritualists alike. I will return to this in my summing up after the description of the structure of *gongde* performed by *xianghua* ritualists.

3.1.3 *Gongde* performed by *xianghua* ritualists

Gongde performed by the *xianghua* show a marked difference from the first two types, both in content and meaning (the latter discussed in §5.5). Table 3.4 gives an overview of the basic programme of a *gongde* lasting two and a half days which I observed in a village in the town of Shishan, Nan’an county, performed by Mr Liao and his acolytes from Yongchun. For the sake of consistency, it would be preferable to provide a parallel example by showing the sequence of a one-day *xianghua* programme, but rural *gongde* tend to be longer. In fact, the model below reflects the integral framework of *xianghua gongde*.

Table 3.4 Basic programme of a *gongde* performed by *xianghua* ritualists

Day 1 – 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
1. Opening drum (<i>Qigu</i> , Minn. Kig@) – Blasting the Hall (<i>Naoting</i> , Minn. Laotia~)
2. Announcement (<i>Fabiao</i> ; Minn. Huatbio)
3. Inviting the Gods (<i>Qingshen</i> , Minn. Qia~xin)
4. Penitence (Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang vol. 1) (<i>Baichan</i> , Minn. Baicam)
Day 2 – Morning
5. Calling the soul (<i>Yinhun</i>)
6. Bathing the soul (<i>Muyu</i> , Minn. Bokyok)
7. Invite the Soul to Pay Respect to the Three Jewels (<i>Qing ling jian sanbao</i> , Minn. qia~liengki~sambo)
8. Settling in Place of the Soul (<i>Anling</i> , Minn. Anlieng)

9. Opening a Road in the Darkness (<i>Kaiguang</i> , Minn. Kaikong)
10. Penitence (vol. 2 & 3)
11. Noon Offering (<i>Wugong</i> , Minn. Ngokieng)
Day 2 – Afternoon
12. Penitence (vol. 4 & 5)
Day 2 – Evening
13. Dispatching the Writ of Pardon (<i>Qingshe</i> , Minn. Qia~xia)
14. Smashing Hell (<i>Dacheng</i> , Minn. Paxia~)
Day 3 – Morning
15. Penitence (vol. 6)
16. Penitence (vols. 7 & 8)
17. Offering for the soul (<i>Linggong</i> , Minn. Liengkieng)
Day 3 – Afternoon
18. Penitence (vols. 9 & 10)
19. Universal Offering & Juggling the Cymbals (<i>Pushi & shua naobo</i> , Minn. P@xi, suaolaobuat)
20. Burning paper money (<i>Tuiku</i> , Minn. Tuik@)
21. Sending off the Gods (<i>Songshen</i> , Minn. Sangxin)

We can see that the *xianghua gongde*, in a very broad perspective, includes the Offering and Penitence rites also found in its parallel models. Several ritual items found in *caigu* performance are also found here, including Calling the Soul, Bathing the Soul, and burning paper money and objects. In addition, we also find a number of rites not found in institutional or *caigu gongde*. Before discussing these, it would be useful to know about the location and space in which the *xianghua* ritual takes place.

Gongde performed by ordained monks and *caigu* are often celebrated in a temple or monastery. *Xianghua gongde*, on the other hand, is more frequently held in private homes. We noted in §3.3 that *xianghua* operate largely away from urban centres. Unlike the city where most people live in small dwellings, rural houses, particularly those newly built after the economic boom, are bigger, and there is more open land space in villages. We will also see below why space is important in *xianghua gongde*. Furthermore, in villages government restrictions on funerals and related rituals are less stringently enforced, and those who can afford to have *gongde* performed prefer to hold them in their homes and often do so in a grand style.⁹

In the other models, the main shrine in a monastery or temple serves as the Buddha Altar while another shrine is used for the Spirit Altar. When *xianghua gongde* take place in village homes, temporary altars have to be set up. Usually two houses are needed, one for the Buddha Altar, the other for the Spirit Altar. Very often the house of a villager or

⁹ In the late 1990s when I visited, monks in Nanputuosi tell me that they sometimes perform *gongde* in private homes. *Caigu* sometimes do the same. But in general, *gongde* in cities take place more frequently

the village ancestral hall (if there is one) is used as the Buddha Altar (Fig. 3.4). Scrolls of a whole pantheon of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are hung on its walls. In the centre are images of three Buddhas: Sakaymuni, Amitabha and the Medicine Buddha. Two other images, whose roles in *gongde* are crucial, are Guanyin and Dizang Bodhisattvas. Subsequently this altar becomes the temporary home of the ritualists; most of their ritual paraphernalia is stored in this house, the place where they rest during breaks in the ritual and sometimes it might even be their temporary abode for the nights if the ritual lasts several days.

Fig. 3.4 House in Shishan village used as Buddha Altar



The Spirit Altar is set up in the house of the family who commands the ritual. Here, the most striking object is the paper *lingcu* (Spirit House). In Quanzhou and Xiamen, Spirit Houses are relatively simple, while in Anxi and Nan'an, they are huge and very elaborate, often hung with bright coloured bulbs and electrical gadgets, some making paper aeroplanes go round, accompanied by cybernetic musical tunes (Fig. 3.5). A table placed before the Spirit House serves to receive percussion instruments, ritual objects and liturgical manuals needed by the ritualists, plus the soul tablet. Sometimes a photograph of the deceased is placed on the table behind the soul tablet.

Fig. 3.5 Spirit Altar in a *gongde* performed in Shishan



Very often, the two altars are quite far apart; it is thus a common sight for villagers, and a great delight for curious children, to see ritualists (and musicians) meandering to and fro on the earthen tracks when a *gongde* is held in a village (Fig. 3.6).

Fig. 3.6 Yongchun *xianghua* and musicians on their way to the Spirit altar



As a general rule, a *xianghua gongde* opens with Opening Drum (*Qigu*) at the Buddha

Altar. This opens with a drum solo, with gongs and cymbals soon joining in. Solo drumming at the start of any ritual is also common in institutional and semi-institutional contexts. Indeed, the drumming warns ritual performers and participants that the ritual is about to begin, giving them time to take their places at the altar. This percussion introit is followed by instrumental pieces from the Nanyin repertoire.¹⁰ This musical interlude is also called *Naoting* (Blasting the Hall). More is said on this in §5.4.

After Opening Drum and Blasting the Hall, the Announcement (*Fabiao*) was performed around 6 p.m. This, I was told by Mr Liao's group from Yongchun, is a rite to invite the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to attend the ceremony. Mr Liao later told me that there are two types of Announcements: the Big Announcement (*Da fabiao*) for *gongde* rituals lasting more than a day, and the Small Announcement (*Xiao fabiao*) for shorter *gongde*. The one performed in Shishan was the Big Announcement, the programme of which was given to me by Mr Liao. Another *xianghua* group from Shishi told me that the Announcement is similar in meaning to the purification of the altar.¹¹ Indeed, their presentation has some similarities with the Purification performed by institutional ritualists. Furthermore, the Announcement performed by the Shishi *xianghua* is a shorter programme, but further research is needed to ascertain if the Shishi *xianghua* Announcement is that of the Small Announcement implied by the Yongchun *xianghua*. To facilitate discussions, the two types are presented in Table 3.5 below:

Table 3.5 Programme of Announcements

Big Announcement (<i>Da fabiao</i> performed by Yongchun <i>xianghua</i>)	Announcement (<i>Fabiao</i> performed by Shishi <i>xianghua</i>)
i) Song: <i>San guiyi</i> (Triple Refuge)	i) Song: <i>Yangzhi jingshui</i> (Willow Branch Purified Water)
ii) Recitation: <i>wen</i> (text unknown)	ii) Recitation: <i>gongwen</i> (Respectfully I hear)
iii) Song: <i>Xijing</i> (Pure Cleansing)	iii) Song: <i>Benshi shijia monifo</i> (The True Teacher Sakaymuni Buddha)
iv) Recitation: Text unknown	iv) Recitation: <i>shuiwen</i> (Water text), <i>Dabei zhou</i> (Grand Compassion Dharani)
v) Song: Text unknown	v) Song: <i>Tian asuluo</i> (Asuras in the Sky)
vi) Recitation: <i>shu</i> (Memorial)	vi) Recitation: <i>shu</i> (Memorial)
vii) Recitation: <i>San fengqing</i> (Triple invitation)	vii) Song: <i>Shanglai xianqian qingjingzhong</i> ("Before [the Buddha] comes the Pure Assembly")

¹⁰ Also known as Nanguan in Taiwan, this is a chamber vocal and instrumental genre of the Minnan region. For an introduction, see Jones 1995; for detailed studies, see Wang Y.1992a and b; Yeh 1985; Wang & Liu 1989.

¹¹ The term *fabiao* is not found in de Groot, although he described a process whereby a myriad of Buddhist saints were invoked after a period of singing and chanting (1885: 58).

	comes the Pure Assembly”) (end of programme)
viii) Dance: <i>Zhongzun zoubu</i> (Officiant paces the void)	
ix) Recite: <i>Jinbiao</i> (Presenting the Memorial)	
x) Song: Gatha of Transferring Merit	

The performance of the Announcement, performed out of context for me by Shishi’s Mr Cai and his group, revealed a procedure that closely resembles the Purification by monks and *caigu* (see also Table 3.2). More about hymn texts will follow; the music of the *xianghua* will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The Big Announcement performed by the Yongchun *xianghua* warrants a more detailed description as it is not a familiar rite in the institutional mode. The passage below describes my own observations during the Shishan *gongde* performed by the Yongchun group, supplemented by details provided later by Mr Liao. A comparison with Dean’s (1988: 61) description of a *fabiao* from a Buddhist manuscript confirms a similar procedure.

The Big Announcement took place at the Buddha Altar. Six priests stood around a long table, facing the open doorway. The officiant (*zhongzun*, “intermediary divine”) stood in the middle flanked by two acolytes on each side, with two assistant priests in elaborate robes at the outer corners of the table. They began with a sung verse (item i, *San guiyi*), followed by a text invoking the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. While the text was recited, the Officiant, holding a vessel with water in one hand and a sceptre in the other, wrote a mantra in the air with the sceptre, thus symbolically purifying the water. He then passed these two items to a priest on his right. With the next hymn – a four-line verse about the purifying powers of water – the latter priest stepped out and began pacing in front of the altar. He bowed to the East, bent down and mimed the action of shoveling something into the vessel with the sceptre. Then he straightened up and wrote a talisman in the air with the sceptre. These motions were then repeated facing in the other three directions, after which the priest returned to his place. The Officiant delivered another text, this time consecrating a hand-held incense burner (*shoulu*). He then passed this to the priest on the left. While the chorus sang another verse, the second priest performed the same dance-like movements as carried out by the first priest. Next, the Officiant recited the *shu* Memorial. At this point, the husband of the woman on whose behalf the *gongde* was performed knelt before the altar holding the soul streamer (*fan*). The Officiant continued with a Triple Invocation (*San Fengqing*), inviting the Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas to the ceremony. He then stepped out, incense burner in one hand and sceptre in the other, invoked the Four Great Messenger-Officials and performed the same dance while the musicians, who are hired by the ritualists to provide melodic accompaniment, played a lively tune (see §4.1.4 and §5.2). When dancing and music ended, the written Memorial was presented (*jinbiao*): both the Officiant and the member of family holding the soul streamer knelt down, facing outwards, and held up the document on a plate. The Officiant reverently announced to the Bodhisattvas that the *guandie* (document of the Announcement, see §3.3.2) was ready to be dispatched. The document was then taken out and burnt. The Officiant returned to the altar, and the priests sang a gatha for Transferring Merit, thus bringing the Announcement to a close.

From the above procedure, it appears to me that the rite, indeed as stated by Mr Liao, places more emphasis on the invocation of the pantheon than on the purifying symbolism stressed in the institutional Purification rite. The Announcement can also be found in Daoist *gongde*. Daoists also have both a briefer, simpler ritual (Lagerwey 1987: 174) and a longer, complicated version, the details of which differ somewhat from the *xianghua* equivalents while having the same general meaning (Dean 1988a: 47-9).

After the Announcement came Inviting the Gods (*qingshen*), the rite of invoking “gods” (*shen*). The officiating priest sang a verse accompanied by melodic and percussion instruments. Holding the water vessel in one hand, the bell and a willow sprig in the other, the priest wrote a magic formula (miming this action with the hand that held the bell) while reciting a text. He submerged the willow sprig into the water vessel and sprinkled water around him. A hymn and the Heart sutra followed next. To conclude the rite, a Gatha of Transferring Merit was sung.

The object of this simple rite, according to Mr Liao, is to invite gods and spirits of lesser status than the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to the ceremony. Thus, this is similar to the Announcement in meaning, although a separate category in the pantheon is addressed. The *xianghua* veneration of *shen* shows a distinct influence of popular Daoism on the *xianghua* Buddhist tradition. In Orthodox Buddhist ideology, *shen* are spirits who belong to the highest transmigratory cycle of *deva* (*tianren* or “heavenly human”). Since those reborn in this category may still succumb to the wheel of transmigration, the institutional Buddhists do not acknowledge their existence in the revered pantheon nor encourage their sanctification. In the *xianghua* context, however, these *shen* are awarded some status. It is interesting to note that in contrast, the Daoist *qingshen* is an invitation to the whole pantheon of their gods from the highest Three Pure Ones (*Sanqing*) to the lowest in the rank (Dean 1988: 49; Lagerwey 1987: 174-5).

After the *qingshen* ceremony, three priests began reciting the *Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang (Lianghuan baochan)*. After an opening hymn, they recited volume one of the penitence, bringing the proceedings of the first day to a close. Mr Liao, and other *xianghua* ritualists I met, told me that their penitence texts, and indeed all canonical texts and incantations used in all their rituals, are no different from those used by institutional Buddhists. It is my impression that the fact that they share a common body of canonical texts is important to the *xianghua* ritualists. This confirms their identity as Buddhists as opposed to Daoists, and in the eyes of the authority, their affiliation with Buddhism therefore legitimizes their activities (see §2.4).

At the break of dawn the next day, the family of the deceased gathered in a clearing outside their house. The priests turned out in full force for the Calling the Soul (*yinhun*) ceremony. A table laden with food offerings was set up. Members of the family knelt at the table whilst the priests sang and chanted. The Officiant monk held up the soul streamer and waved it around while summoning the soul to come forward from whichever direction. This petition was repeated in a three-verse *qu* song entitled Triple Invocations (*San Fengqing*);¹² the *shu* Memorial was read at the end of each verse. Following this, the soul was believed to have entered the streamer; the priest returned the streamer to the chief mourner, and the family prostrated three times on the ground. The priests then proceeded to the Spirit Altar, followed by the family. There a straw mat was folded into a cone and a basin and towel placed under it, in preparation for the ritual Bathing of the Soul (*muyu*). The officiant came forward and began the Grand Compassion Dharani. He wrote a magical formula with the hand holding the bell, pretended to dip its handle into the vessel he was holding in the other hand and shook the bell over the mat. This symbolised the cleansing with water which has been purified by the magic spell. The priest held the streamer over the mat for a while, then returned to the Spirit altar and chanted the Memorial. While this was going on, a member of the family poured three cups of wine onto a small pile of paper money which was then taken outside and burnt. This completed the ritual bathing. The *xianghua* Calling the Soul and Bathing the Soul are generally similar to the same rites performed by *caigu*. However, in this ritual I did not see Turning the Wheel, which in a *caigu gongde* was performed before the bathing rite.

The soul, cleansed by the ritual bathing, must then pay its respect to the Three Jewels. This simple rite Invite the Soul to Pay Respect to the Three Jewels (*Qing ling jian*

¹² A greater selection of sung metrical pieces in *xianghua* rituals are called *qu* (“tune”). I will use the term “song” to indicate these pieces.

sanbao) is performed before the Buddha Altar. The priests, while singing a *qu* hymn, began to walk in circles around the Buddha Altar, followed by the male members of the family. The procession then returned again to the Spirit Altar to Settle the Soul into Place (*anling*); a lengthy song was sung to pacify the soul.¹³

The next item in the ritual programme was Opening a Road in the Darkness (*kaiguang*). The significance of this, as explained by Mr Liao, is to sweep away darkness in the Underworld and provide a lighted path to assist the soul's ascent.¹⁴ One important aspect in this rite is Amending the Vows (*gaiyuan*). Here the Officiant intercedes on behalf of the soul, reciting vows and incantations, to purge the sins committed before death.¹⁵ Taking place before the Spirit Altar, the ceremony began with a *zan* hymn invoking Dizang, the Bodhisattva who vows to rescue all who languish in Hell. Next came the *Yaoshi jing* (Sutra of the Medicine Buddha),¹⁶ after which another song was sung. The priests sat themselves down before the Spirit Altar and Amending the Vows proper began. Meanwhile, the women knelt on the ground encircling a round plate on which were placed seven wicks (representing the soul lamps). Each time a vow was announced, the priest mimed the writing of a magical formula, threw some rice in the air, held up a bank note, and pressed it against the bell before putting it down again. This action was repeated until all vows were completed (Mr Liao mentioned there are 49 vows to be made). A *qu* song was sung, then the priests returned to the Buddha Altar. More songs were sung before and after a short recitative by the Officiant bidding the soul to pay respect to the Three Jewels now that its sins had been purged; male members of the family, one holding two lanterns on a tray and the other holding the *shoulu* incense burner, bowed on behalf of the soul.

When all the ritual segments concerning the welfare of the soul were completed, two more volumes of the Penitence Rite were recited. At the end of each, the priests returned to the Spirit Altar to sing the *gatha* of Transferring Merit and chant the Memorial. The same procedures were repeated in the afternoon for Penitence volumes 4 and 5. Before

¹³ De Groot's (1885) descriptions of calling, inviting and pacifying the soul do not include the bathing rite, but they reveal a whole gamut of other customs and traditions which will be useful for comparison with rituals performed today.

¹⁴ This rite was not described in de Groot's (1885) study of Buddhist rituals in Amoy, but a similar rite known by the term *kai tongming lu* ("Opening a path in the darkness") is found in Daoist *gongde*.

Largewey (1987) devotes a whole chapter to its description; see also Dean 1988a.

¹⁵ The purgation of the sins of the soul and the making of vows on its behalf is known in Daoism as *jiejie* (Untying of Knots). Again the details differ somewhat between the two traditions (see Dean 1988a: 50-1; Largewey 1987: 187-88).

¹⁶ The full title of this sutra is *Yaoshi Liuli Rulai Benyuan Gongde Jing* (Sutra of True Vows and Merit of the Medicine Buddha). This sutra is usually related to the elimination of calamities and ill health. I am unclear about the correlation between the recitation of this sutra and the purging of the soul's sins in the

noon, the Offering to the pantheon must be performed. This is generally similar to that in institutional *gongde*: a number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are invoked, the mandatory incantations are recited, and so on. However, in the *xianghua* Offering, the rite was only performed before the Buddha Altar. The offering for the soul (*linggong*), I was told, would take place the next day.

On the evening of the second day, two very theatrical rites were performed in the open space outside the family house. Very often, these two rites attract a fairly large audience, both children and adults. The first was *fangshe* (Rite of Pardon). To absolve the sins of the soul, a writ of pardon has to be requested and then delivered to the King of Yama (*Yanluowang*) in the underworld by the *sheguan* (Officer of Pardon). This rite enacts the invitation of the Officer of Pardon and his journey on horseback to the underworld to deliver the writ. Below is a brief description of the rite.

On a table in the clearing rested food offerings, a paper horse and a paper image symbolising the Officer of Pardon (Fig. 3.7). The musicians and several priests began with a musical interlude, performing pieces from the *Nanyin* repertory. Following this, five priests stood before the table and sang a song while the Officiant presented incense to invoke the appropriate deities. By way of a call and response recitative between the Officiant and a second priest, the Officer of Pardon is invited. The Officiant then read the writ; a song was sung while the Officiant hung the writ over the arm of the paper figure representing the Officer of Pardon, bidding him to take it to the King of Yama.

What then followed, to great amusement of the onlookers, was a display of some nimble footwork by the priests. The paper horse and the paper Officer of Pardon were in the hands of two ritualists, while the others each held two lanterns. They began walking round in circles to the accompaniment of drum, gongs and cymbals. As the beat of the percussion instruments quickened, the priests broke into a trot and began to weave in and out between each other. After a few minutes of slowing down and quickening their steps to the intricate rhythmic patterns of crashing cymbals and drum, the two priests holding the paper figures put these on the table and rejoined the others. Standing in a circle, they each held out one hand and put it on top of that of the next priest; holding on tightly, they started twirling around at a fast rate, increasing the tempo. The crowd giggled and laughed to see such antics. This entire skit, I was later told, is the Walking the Writ of Pardon Horse (*zou shema*). It depicts the journey of the Officer of Pardon into the underworld to present the writ. This ended the first half of the Rite of Pardon.

Fig. 3.7 Paper horses used in Rite of Pardon during large-scale *gongde* in Anxi



In the second half, the soul, having been pardoned, has to be exhorted on the four great virtues of loyalty, piety, honour and chastity (*zhong xiao lian jie*). Two priests carried out a dialogue on the subject of each virtue; each exchange was followed by a song each depicting the story of a famous historical figure. Next the Officer of Pardon was invited to come down from his horse for a libation. The paper horse was symbolically fed some hay, and three cups of wine were offered as a reward for the Officer's labour in securing the soul's freedom. The paper figures were then thrown into the fire and burnt. The didactic purpose, for the living rather than the dead, is quite clear here. Long before the days of radio and television, performances such as these not only provided a form of entertainment but also served as moralistic instruction for the common people; the same function is found in storytelling, narrative singing and operas.

Smashing Hell (*dacheng*), the second highly theatrical rite followed immediately. It enacts the story of the monk Mulian (Skt: Maudgalyayana), a disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha who goes to the nether regions of hell to save his mother. From its Buddhist origin, the story of Mulian's journey became popularized over the centuries in storytelling forms, first in Tang dynasty *bianwen* (transformation texts) and their later reincarnation *baojuan* (Precious Scrolls); it further evolved into operatic performances

and also became part of funerary *gongde* rituals.¹⁷ A more detailed discussion of Smashing Hell is in §5.5.

On the third and last day of the Shishan *gongde*, the priests returned to the Buddha Altar early in the morning to recite further Penitence volumes. At the end of volume 8, they made their way to the Spirit Altar. During a song, a paper flower and a rectangular paper box holding a Mandate (a document stating details of the *gongde* and names of sutras recited) were taken away to be burnt. The Officiant read the Memorial, after which an entreaty was made on behalf of the family for prosperity and abundant fortune. The procession then returned to the Buddha Altar to recite the last few Penitence volumes.

The midday offering on this last day, held before the Spirit Altar, is referred to as Offerings for the Soul (*linggong*) (Fig. 3.8). In the Shishan *gongde*, a priest began the proceedings with a song, during which the mourners poured wine onto some paper money which was then taken out to be burnt. The priest recited a Triple Invocation for the soul to come and accept the offerings. The lead mourner threw two coins on the ground to determine if the soul had arrived. When confirmed, the family prostrated three times on the ground. The priest led the way out of the house, followed by the chief mourner holding the soul tablet, to where a paper sedan chair and two lanterns were placed. These were consecrated by the priest and burnt. After this preliminary invitation, the offering began. The procedure here was similar to that at the Buddha Altar: a song was sung, the memorial was read, incantations of transforming food and water were recited. For this rite, everyone in the family turned out to prostrate before the soul tablet. When members of the family had paid their respects to the soul, the Officiant read the memorial while the head of the family threw the coins again to determine whether the soul had had its fill. The priests then moved to the courtyard area where the family was kneeling and began circumambulating while repeating the name of Amitabha Buddha. The purpose was to send the soul, now fed and purged of its sins, on its path to Amitabha's Western Pure Land.¹⁸ At the end of the offering, the procession returned to the Buddha Altar to confirm the merit accrued with a Gatha of Transferring Merit.

¹⁷ For studies of the Mulian opera, see Johnson 1989 and 1995.

¹⁸ This act, according to de Groot (1885: 100), was known in Amoy as *zhuan xifang* (*tng sai hong*), "to transfer (the soul) to the Western regions". I have not heard the *xianghua* ritualists use this term.

Fig. 3.8a, b *Xianghua* consecrating offerings in a large-scale *gongde* in Anxi



The morning's proceedings over, a great feast was laid for everyone who attended the ritual. After lunch, a number of priests left early, leaving the musicians and two priests to conclude the *gongde*. At about 4 pm, two tables with some food offerings were set up outside. To the accompaniment of the drum and crashing gongs and cymbals, one priest began a juggling act with a pair of cymbals, spinning them on a long bamboo pole, balancing the pole on his feet, forehead, and so on. This is Juggling the Cymbals (*Shua*

naobo). It is performed in conjunction with the Universal Offering (*pushi*). The juggling naturally attracted many onlookers, particularly children. Amidst the noise of the percussion instruments accompanying the juggler, nobody took much notice of the lone priest performing the Universal Offering at the second table. His utterances and singing were completely drowned by the blast of percussion instruments, but each time he tossed buns, candies and cakes on the floor for the hungry souls, children and adults alike made a dash for the goodies. The Universal Offering, I was later informed by Mr Liao, is only performed in three-day *gongde*. Later that evening, the paper house, paper money and other paraphernalia were burned, and a rite was performed to send off the deities.

3.1.4 Conclusion

Thus far, we have seen the basic ritual structure of *gongde* performed by ordained monks, *caigu* and *xianghua* ritualists. They represent present-day paradigms of this type of ritual in parts of Minnan. The first two models are almost identical, although the *caigu* version often contains additional elements. The *xianghua* model, on the other hand, differs quite extensively from the other two, but the underlying structures of *gongde* - the Penitence, Offering, the general sequences of vocal delivery, and so on - can be still discerned. Are all three paradigms a representation of traditional ritual practices or are they recent reconstructions? Observations by Western missionaries and travellers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries provide us with some clues: *gongde* performed by ordained monks was closer to the present-day *xianghua* model than to the institutional model we see today. That is to say, some rites such as Breaking the Blood Pond, the Rite of Pardon, Smashing Hell, and the burning of paper objects were once also commonly seen in *gongde* performed by ordained monks. These, however, are generally missing in the institutional model in Minnan today.

What does this imply? Is this a "dilution" of ritual practices, as suggested by some scholars on China (Siu 1989), or an impoverishment of tradition? If the institutional model represents a reconstruction of a ritual which had lapsed, what then are its new social meanings and how are these meanings linked to the music in such rituals? The answers to these questions can be better explained (see §4.5) when the types and characteristics of music in *gongde* are introduced in the next chapter. Basic textual materials and their contents will be introduced below, but since texts are less of our concern in this study, the discussion will be brief.

3.2 Textual contents of the *chang* (song) form

Chinese Buddhist vocalization as a whole is referred to as *fanbai* (also pronounced as *fanbei*). The first element of the compound, *fan*, can be an abbreviation of the transliteration of the Sanskrit *Brahma*¹⁹ meaning “pure, tranquil”, but in China the word also came to be a prefix implying some association with India. *Bai* is said to be the transliteration of the Sanskrit *bhasa* (transliterated in Mandarin as *poshe* or *poshi*), meaning “to repress or stop” or “to eulogize”, or, in the opinion of some, it is the transliteration of the Sanskrit *pathaka* (transliterated in Mandarin as *bainuo*), meaning to recite or chant.²⁰ In China, the term *fanbai* came to mean songs of praise (*gezan*), while the recitation of sutras came to be known as *zhuandu* (“undulating reading”) (*Gaoseng zhuan* T.2059: 415b).

Chinese Buddhist practitioners often describe their vocal delivery as *changnian* or *changsong* – “sing and recite”.²¹ This seems to imply that the first form (*chang*) of vocal liturgy is melodious while the other (*nian* or *niansong*) is less so.

Indeed, the *chang* form is what we would musically conceive of as metred song. For convenience I will draw on the English term “hymn” to describe the song form while also retaining the Chinese terms as necessary. The song form basically comprises two textual types: *zan* and *ji*. These terms imply poetic more than musical characteristics. *Zan* are heterometric texts consisting of lines having differing numbers of lexigraph; *ji* (Skt. *gatha*) are isometric texts having equal numbers of lexigraphs in each line.

The *niansong* recitation form comprises a wide range of textual types including *jing* (“sutras”, canonical texts), *zhou* (Skt *dharani*, incantations), *wen* (announcement texts of various types) and *fohao* (names of Buddha). These different types, on closer examination, reveal varying degrees of melodiousness and metrical properties. Musical characteristics, however, will be discussed in the following chapter; here we focus on texts.

We must also clarify what textual, and indeed musical, materials are shared or not shared among the three types of ritualists. Since the *caigu* tradition is largely an offshoot

¹⁹ There are several full transliterations of *Brahma*: *fanmo*, *poluo hemo*, *fanlanmo*, and so on. See Foxue *dacidian* (1991): *fanbai*.

²⁰ See *Zongjiao cidian*, *Foguang dacidian* (s.v. *fanbai*) and also *Hôbôgirin* (Demiéville 1978) s.v. *bombai*, pp. 95-7. In Sanskrit dictionaries (see Monier Williams 1899; Lanman 1912), *bhasa* refers to language or speech while *patha* or *pathaka* means to “chant, recite, repeat the name of a god, invoke” (see also Whitaker 1957). Bearing in mind that Sanskrit, like many other languages, underwent change with time, it is difficult to draw any conclusion on the basis of the latest stage of Sanskrit. Furthermore, Buddhist scriptures were first written in the Indian vernacular, and only later in classical Sanskrit. Even then, the Sanskrit used was not the standard language but an amalgamation of the vernacular and the classical, resulting in what modern scholars call Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit (see Zhu 1992: 34).

²¹ The character *nian* is usually paired with another compound *song*, which also generally means to recite. *Nian*, on its own, alludes to a less musical performance and is closer in meaning to “read”. Adding *song*

of institutional Buddhism, one would expect the vocal music of these two traditions to have much in common in style and content. Indeed, *niansong* texts and their musical styles are virtually identical between the two. The *xianghua* case is more complex. Since they claim to be Buddhists, it is inevitable that they share some features with the others. In the *xianghua gongde*, the sutras, dharanis and penitence texts (and their vocal delivery) are the same as found in institutional Buddhism. However, our discussion of ritual structure revealed that a *xianghua gongde* contains procedures that differ from the present-day institutional Buddhist model. Thus some *xianghua* recitation texts differ from institutional ones, particularly the *wen* announcement texts. Furthermore, the *xianghua* also have extra rites not performed in institutional or *caigu gongde*, so extra texts are to be found. As for hymns, while *xianghua* adopt a selection of institutional hymn texts for certain contexts, in general they also have song texts that are unique to their tradition.

Space precludes the discussion of the historical development of Buddhist vocal liturgy, for a discussion on this the reader is referred to Tian (1999/2000). The order of discussion is as follows: song and recitation texts of the institutional context will first be discussed while texts in *xianghua* context will be discussed separately.

3.2.1 Contemporary classification of *zan* and *ji* texts

Institutional Buddhist monasteries play a role in circulating liturgical texts: they compile and print sutra texts and hymn manuals, and these are often available from bookshops in monasteries. The earliest compilation of hymn texts and rituals is *Zhujing risong* [Selections from various sutras for daily recitation], compiled by the Ming dynasty monk Zhuhong (1535-1615). Zhuhong's compilation was the basis of *Chanmen Risong*, a compilation of liturgical texts prevalently used in Chan monasteries printed around 1821, which came to be the most authoritative source for modern day liturgical manuals.

However, *zan* and *ji* texts in *Chanmen Risong* are interspersed within individual ritual programmes; more *zan* texts are merely listed under "miscellaneous". Since the classification of texts or rather the lack of it in *Chanmen Risong* is outdated for modern times, monasteries today often print their own collection of hymn and ritual manuals to suit their own needs. Thus up to now, no single system of classification exists. My discussion will concentrate on hymn manuals commonly used in Minnan and Fuzhou.

In a selection of modern-day manuals, the classification of *zan* is structured according to two criteria: specific rituals and textual content (subject matter). Classification by ritual

implies a greater degree of musicality.

is commonly seen in manuals printed by monasteries, with congregational participation becoming increasingly popular within the last thirty years. In this type, ritual programmes are set out as performed: *zan*, *ji*, incantation and sutra texts are arranged according to the sequence of performance in a ritual.²² Experience tells me that there is flexibility in the choice of hymns in a given context. Such ritual handbooks therefore usually include an extra selection of miscellaneous and *ji* hymn texts since the ritual content set out in the handbook may not always be strictly followed (see e.g. *Fojiao Niansongji*).

The other type of classification commonly found in printed editions is the grouping of texts by subject matter. One such collection is *Zansong Jiyao* (*A Concise Collection of Hymns and Recitation*), collated by the Fuzhou monk Fanhui and printed around 1926 (reprinted by Tapei: Fojiao Chubanshe 1983). This is mainly a collection of *zan* and *ji* hymns, although a small selection of ritual procedures is also given.²³ In this, texts having the same subject matter are grouped under a collective title which further serves to imply the function for which the hymn may be used. For example, a group of *zan* collectively titled Water Hymns (*shui zan*) contains texts describing the purifying effects of water or sweet dew; any of these texts may be used as the opening hymn in the Purification Rite. The Incense Hymns (*xiang zan*) group contains seven texts about the pious offering of incense; these are sung at the start of a ritual for invocation purposes. The Offering Hymns (*gongyang zan*) group contains texts which may be sung in the Offering ritual, and the list goes on.

Two groups of texts in *Zansong Jiyao* are titled Collection of Skeleton Texts (*kulo ji*) and Collection of Hymns for the Soul (*hunzan ji*). These are hymns commonly used in *gongde* and are sung to beseech the soul to repent from past sins so that it can be reborn in the Western Paradise. I will return to this below. The *ji* gatha, like *zan* texts, are also classified by subject matter. There are 104 gathas classified into the following categories: Water gathas (*shui ji*), Offertory gathas (*gong ji*), Laudatory gathas (*zanfo ji*), Memorial gathas (*shu ji*) and Lamenting the Soul gathas (*tanling ji*). However, most of these are obsolete today. In addition, this manual deviates a little from its criteria: a selection of hymns titled *congbei* (short for *conglin fanbei*, Institutional Hymns) collection, actually suggests the context in which these hymns should be used, i.e., in practising (*xiuxing*)

²² For an example, see *Nianfo yigui* 1989:

²³ Some rituals prescribed in this collection have unfamiliar titles such as *fazhou* ("present announcement"), *qingzuo* ("invitation to ascend the seat") and *fangdeng shishi* ("release lamp and provide food"), whilst some of the familiar rituals such as the morning and evening lessons have contents which differ from those performed today. These procedures may be regional variants which have become obsolete over time. This manual, however, is still a major source reference of hymn texts for *gongde* ritualists in the Fuzhou area.

rituals. Also, 35 texts, each of 6 lines, are simply collectively called 6-line hymns (*liuju zan*); these are randomly arranged with miscellaneous subject matter and no hint of context.

From such classifications, we see that the contexts in which the texts should be used are not usually prescribed. Such a collection is more suited for the use of “insiders”, i.e., practitioners who are familiar with the contexts of such texts. *Chanlin Zanji* [Collection of Chan monastery hymns] is another liturgical manual for use by “insiders”.²⁴ This volume, first printed in Quanzhou possibly in 1934, is not publicly available; copies are circulated among *gongde* practitioners in Minnan. Comparing *Chanlin Zanji* with *Zansong Jiyao*, I found that the hymn texts in these two are largely similar.²⁵ From the compilation dates, it is quite likely that *Chanlin Zanji* is based on *Zansong Jiyao*. Like *Zansong Jiyao*, hymns in *Chanlin Zanji* are grouped according to subject matter. But in the latter, groups of hymns are classified into two broad functions: *foqian zan* (hymns sung before the Buddha) and *lingqian tanci* (laments sung before the soul).

Chanlin Zanji contains 156 *zan* texts for use before the Buddha Altar and 143 laments for the soul. The groupings and number of texts in each are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Grouping of *zan* texts in *Chanlin Zanji*

<i>Foqian zan</i> (Hymns before the Buddha)	
1. <i>Xiang zan</i> (Incense Hymns)	8
Addendum: <i>Shui zan</i> (Water Hymns)	4
2. <i>Zhuyan zan</i> (Felicitation Hymns) ²⁶	4
3. <i>Sanbao zan</i> (Three Jewels Hymns)	9
Addendum: <i>Jishou zan</i> (Prostration Hymns)	27
4. <i>Gongyang zan</i> (Offering Hymns)	7
Addendum: <i>Shigong zan</i> (Ten Offerings Hymns)	60
5. <i>Lijing zan</i> (Salutation Hymns)	37
<i>Lingqian tanci</i> (Laments before the soul)	
1. <i>Jishou guiyi zan</i> (Prostrate and Take Refuge Hymns)	24
2. <i>Tanwang mianci</i> (Lament and Encourage the Dead)	48
3. <i>Tanshu gujin</i> (Lamenting the Past and Present)	71

In the Minnanese *Chanlin Zanji*, gathas are grouped by their function: Gathas following Recitation of Memorial before the Buddha Altar (*foqian xuanshu ji*), Gathas

²⁴ For musical transcriptions of hymns in *Chanlin Zanji*, see Cai Junchao 1998.

²⁵ A hymn compilation printed in Hunan entitled *Chanmen Zanji* does not contain many hymns sung for the dead found in the Fujianese collections; while there are texts in the Hunan edition not found in the latter collections. This suggests that some hymns sung for the dead may be generated locally.

²⁶ This category is not used in *gongde*.

following Recitation of Memorial before the Spirit Altar (*lingqian xuanshu ji*), Gathas for Transference of Merit after the Offering (*shanggong huixiang ji*), and Gathas for Transferring Merit (*huixiang ji*). A total of 83 gathas are listed.²⁷ More is said about gatha texts below. Now, let us examine the contents and functions of *zan*. I will use the classification in *Chanlin Zanji* as a reference.

3.2.2 *Zan* at the Buddha Altar: functions and contents

Zan hymns are sung at the opening and closing of rites; they are also interspersed between recitation of sutras, dharanis and *wen* texts (see Table 3.2). Since the objects of worship differ, one being the saintly pantheon and the other the suffering soul, the contents of texts must serve different functions. Thus, *zan* texts sung before the Buddha Altar generally contain words of reverence and praise for the greatness of the Buddhist pantheon; *zan* sung at the Spirit Altar, on the other hand, serve the function of exhortation and proselytization. This last group, although supposedly sung for the benefit of the soul, is also intended to promulgate the religion to the living. *Zan* texts sung at the Buddha Altar are discussed first.

Zan sung before the Buddha can be further divided into three main categories according to function: invocatory, laudatory, and offertory. Invocatory hymns, as implied, are sung to invoke the Buddha, Bodhisattva or the soul. To fulfill this function, this type of hymn is sung at the commencement of a rite. The Incense, Water and Ten Offerings²⁸ Hymns are invocatory hymns, but each group is further dedicated to a more specific function. For example, the meaning behind the Purification Rite is to purify the ritual space; any one text from the Water Hymns may be used. Since Buddhist hymn texts are collective literature, like epics or folk songs, and are aimed generally at the propagation of the religion, the lyrics tend to contain stock themes and stereotyped images. The formulaic nature of Water Hymns is facilitated further by their standard prosodic metre of 4, 4, 7, 5, 4, 5. The lyrics of Water Hymns are generally about the powers of purified water: “Water disposes of impurities and washes away dust, a drop will eliminate calamities forever”, or “a drop covers the Ten Directions, cleansing the ritual altars”.²⁹ The text most commonly sung today at the opening of the Purification is *Yangzhi*

²⁷ Texts in this section also include a list of names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for use in circumambulation and poetic lines in pairs which can be written on scrolls and hung in rituals. The former are not commonly used today, and the latter are not *changnian* texts. These will therefore be omitted in ensuing discussions.

²⁸ The standard ten offerings in Buddhist rituals include incense, flower, lamp, oil, fruit, tea, food, pearl, gems, clothing in this order. For an invocation, the text on the offering of incense is used.

²⁹ Phrases 3 and 4 of *Shuiming bade* (The Eight Merits in the Name of Water), and phrases 4 and 5 of

Jingshui (“Willow Branch Purified Water”).³⁰ It is also the hymn prescribed in the Purification Rite in standard manuals (see *Fojiao Niansongji*).

In the Penitence and Offering, incense is offered to invoke the saints at the beginning of the rite. Another group of texts functioning as invocatory hymns is the Incense Hymns. Lyrics of these hymns often contain words describing the offering of incense to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or how the auspicious smoke of the incense permeates the Ten Directions. Hymns on this topic may contain 5, 6, 8, or 10 phrases. In Minnan, I have found that the shorter 5- or 6-phrase Incense Hymns are more commonly used.

In the Penitence Rite, the hymn prescribed in the manual (*Cibei Sanmei Shuichan Keyi* 1993) is *Jieding zhenxiang* (“True Incense of Precepts and Meditation, hereafter “True Incense Hymn”), yet in most *gongde* I have observed, practitioners (*caigu* and monks) frequently sing *Luxiang zan* (“Censer Incense Hymn”) for the opening invocatory hymn. I was told that sometimes *Zhantan haian* (“The Shores of Zhantan”) and *Xiangfen zai shangfang* (“Incense Permeating the Realms Above”), which are grouped under the Ten Offerings Hymns, may be used instead. As for the Offering, the opposite of what I have just described happens; “Censer Incense Hymn” is the prescribed invocation hymn in manuals (see *Fojiao Niansongji*), but in real contexts, the hymn popularly sung is the “True Incense Hymn” (see Table 3.2, item 4i).

To perpetuate the invocation, hymns of this function invariably end with a Triple Invocation. Homage, repeated three times, is paid to a Buddha or Bodhisattva appropriate to the context; for example, in the Purification rite, the Pure and Cool Earth Bodhisattva (*Qingliangdi pusa*) is invoked, while invocatory incense hymns invoke the Incense-cloud Canopy Bodhisattva (*xiangyungai pusa*).

The second category of texts sung before the Buddha is the Laudatory hymns. These are texts extolling the virtues of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (Three Jewels) or other Bodhisattvas. Laudatory hymns are sung only after the recitation of announcement texts, incantations and sutras. Three Jewels Hymns and Prostration Hymns usually fulfill this function; any one of these hymns may be selected at random by the ritualists. Three Jewels Hymns comprise four texts. In each of these, the greatness of the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and the Three Jewels are extolled respectively. Included in this same group are other texts in praise of Amitabha Buddha, Medicine Buddha, the Western Paradise, and so on. These latter texts are used more often in *gongde* than the Three

Tianxuan ganlu (Sweet Dew falling from the Sky).

³⁰ In a 19th century liturgical manual, this text had already been prescribed as the opening hymn for the Purification Rite (*Chanmen Risong Zhujing* 1877). In *Chanlin Zanji*, however, this hymn is not found

Jewels Hymns because they contain allusions to the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha to which the soul will be appropriately delivered.³¹ Examples of specific texts include *Mituofo dayuanwang* (“Amitabha, King of Great Vows”) and *Fogongde bukeliang* (“Boundless Merit of the Buddha”). Another group of laudatory hymns contains three stanzas. These are the Prostration Hymns, thus named because the texts begin with the phrase *Jishou guiyi* (Prostrate and take refuge with), the contents of which are an entreaty to pay respects to and take refuge with the Three Jewels. The text most commonly used by monks and *caigu* is *Jishou guiyi Fofaseng* (“Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha”). Since there are other sets of texts also beginning with the same first line, I will name this “Jeta Garden” (*Jiegu yuan*), using words from its second line. This is often sung after the Three Jewels text in the Purification (see Table 3.2, item 1iii).

Apart from laudatory Hymns, the Salutation Hymns (which is a selection of 6-line texts) may also be sung in between recitations. These texts generally describe the powers of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or protector gods and how they bring benefits to living beings. The most popular texts from this selection used in *gongde* are again those extolling Amitabha Buddha or Guanyin Bodhisattva.

In the Offering, hymns sung after the recitation of sutra and dharanis are not the laudatory but the Offertory kind. A text prescribed in ritual manuals, and more commonly followed by monks, is *Tianchu miaogong* (“Wondrous Offering of the Heavenly Kitchen”). This is a 6-line hymn containing two lines of Chinese; the other four lines are Sanskrit words transliterated in Chinese, rendering the meaning undecipherable. On some occasions, extra Offertory Hymns are sung. These may include *Xianghua dengtuguo* (“Incense, Flowers, Lamps, Oil and Fruits”) and *Nanhai Putuoshan* (“Putuo Mountains of the Southern Sea”, sometimes also known as *Nanhai zan*, “Hymn of the Southern Sea”). The first describes the ten standard offerings (see fn 29), but the latter is a rather unusual choice as the text is more about the greatness and compassion of Guanyin Bodhisattva whose seat of manifestation is in Putuoshan, an island off the coast of Zhejiang. These are sung more frequently by the *caigu* than by the ordained monks.

To summarize so far, *zan* hymns generally serve three functions: they are sung at the beginning of a rite to invoke a saint or saints from the pantheon, in between recitations of texts and incantations to praise the pantheon, and at the end of a rite to close the

among the four Water Hymns but is grouped under the Ten Offering Hymns.

³¹ In contrast, the text praising the Medicine Buddha is reserved for rituals performed to eliminate calamities (*xiaozai*) or to pray for longevity (*yanshou*).

proceedings. Certain groups of hymns with a typical subject matter relate to specific functions. Within the Incense, Water and Offertory Hymns groups, any hymns can be used for invocation. From my own observations, the shorter 6-line hymns tend to be the common choice, and choices are limited to only a few among the vast repertoire. Hymns sung after the recitation are usually of the laudatory type, except in the Offering rite. Longer texts of 8 or 10 lines are quite common, although a repertoire of shorter 6-line hymns (grouped as Salutation Hymns in *Chanlin Zanji*) may also be used in between recitations.

The Penitence Rite is performed only at the Buddha Altar. The contents of the Penitence litany consist largely of sections of sutra texts punctuated by passages venerating the names of a myriad of Buddhas (*fohao*). We will come back to the recited texts below. *Zan* in this rite are only sung at the opening and end of each volume. As mentioned above, any Incense Hymns can be used in the opening of a Penitence. The closing *zan* in this rite, on the other hand, are prescribed in the Penitence manual.³² These generally reflect the contents of a particular penitence, and tell of the merit of atoning for one's sins and wrongdoings. Thus, in the 3-volume Water Penitence, there are three closing hymns, and in the 10-volume, there are ten hymns for each volume.

Apart from the closing hymns in Penitence, the main corpus of hymns just discussed is not restricted only to *gongde* but is used in the same way in the daily lessons and Celebratory rituals. This corpus of hymns is sung for the Buddha and could be conveniently called "Buddha hymns". *Zan* sung before the Spirit Altar are restricted to the symbolic function of releasing the soul from suffering, exhorting it to repent its sins and to Take Refuge with the Three Jewels so that it can be delivered to the Western Paradise. These hymns are therefore used only in *gongde*. Hitherto, this category has not been studied. I will describe its contents below.

3.2.3 *Zan* sung at the Spirit Altar: contents and functions

There are over a hundred texts sung for the soul listed in *Zansong Jiyao* and *Chanlin Zanji*. I will call these Spirit hymns. This repertory of texts is not found in the 19th century *Chanmen Risong* compendium. Since Spirit hymns are meant for the mortals rather than the saintly pantheon, and thus, in the opinion of the Buddhists, do not constitute a part of religious practice, they were omitted. This repertory cannot be termed

³² The texts of the closing hymns to the 10-volume Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang (*Lianghuang Baochan*) and the 3-volume Water Penitence (*Cibei Sanmei Shuichan*) can also be found in *Chanmen Risong*.

fanbai and scholars of Buddhist music hold the view that, strictly speaking, it should also not be called *zan* but as *foqu* (Buddhist songs) (Tian Qing, pers. comm.). Since there is no clear-cut definition of *zan* in Chinese and since *gongde* practitioners also refer to hymns in this category as *tanwang zan* (“Lamenting the dead hymns”), it seems expedient to continue using the term “hymn” but I will use it interchangeably with the expression Lament. Ensuing discussions will follow the classification found in *Chanlin Zanji*.

Hymns sung for the soul function largely to propagate the teachings of Buddhism. Since its objects for persuasion are the ignorant and unbelieving mortals, earthly or otherwise, texts of this kind usually contain strong allegorical images to drive home the message.

As seen in Table 3.6, hymns sung before the Spirit Altar are divided into three broad sub-categories in *Chanlin Zanji*: Prostrate and Take Refuge Hymns, Lament and Encourage the Dead, and Lamenting the Past and Present. The first group is thus titled because the first line of each hymn begins with the words *Jishou guiyi* (Prostrate and Take Refuge) or *Jishou li* (Prostrate and Salute), followed by the object of veneration. In this category, the venerated is still the saintly pantheon, which includes any or all three of the Three Jewels, Buddhas of different names, Guanyin and Dizang the two Bodhisattvas central to the saving of the soul. Texts of this type usually begin by praising the magnanimity and compassion of the saint revered, and end by exhorting the soul to Take Refuge with the saint to avoid the perils of hell or to be transported to the wondrous land of bliss. Because the contents of these hymns are similar, those with the same prosodic metre usually employ standard formulaic phrases; for example in a set of 3 texts venerating Amitabha, Guanyin and Dizang, the first 3 lines use a standard vocabulary of words (the triple 0s show the change of names or descriptive words; Xs represent syllables per line):

Prostrate and Take Refuge with 000 (name of saint)	XXXXXXXX
[Whose] vows are 000 (immeasurable, deep, etc)	XXXXXXX
To save all living beings from 000 (the river of love, web of life, etc)	XXXXXXXX

While the last 2 lines use this formula:

If one Takes Refuge with 000	XXXXXXXX
Early will one depart from 000	XXXXXXX

A special feature of hymns sung for the soul is the length of some texts. Whilst Buddha hymns rarely exceed 10 lines in length, Spirit hymns may be as long as 28 lines. In the Prostrate category just discussed, there is a set of 3 texts consisting of 15 lines and another set of 5 texts in the same vein of 19 lines. These are still verses showing clear poetic metres.

In the second sub-category collectively titled Lament and Encourage the Dead, there are three lengthy prose-like texts. These three texts do not appear to have strict prosodic forms. These texts have a common theme: that of lamenting on the ephemeral of life. Narrative-like, these texts present the message through a third person's encounter with a heap of bones by the roadside. Using stark imageries of the lone skull lying by the banks, "the jade green grass as mat, the moon as lamp, all alone", the narrator rhetorically alludes to the skull's previous existence and all that it had enjoyed in life. In one text, the narrator speaks in an admonishing tone: "Were it not for obstinate attachments, were it not for excessive concern [for the materials in life]", "Skull o skull, I see you are now left with only a pair of eyeholes". After the laments and the exhortation, the lost soul is beseeched to take the opportunity: "Tonight, an assembly for souls is presented by the vegetarian host (*zhaizhu*), in the golden censer the precious incense burns, souls are being universally saved, attend the ritual assembly, eliminate [your] impediments, receive auspicious blessings, [and] be transported to the West [ern Paradise]". It is clear from the vernacular style of writing (in simple rather than literary language) and the allegorical metaphors employed that these texts are aimed to get the message across, not only to the dead, but also to the living.

Other laments in the above and third category are stanzaic texts on grouped themes. For example the Buddhist message of cause and effect is expressed in a set of four texts portraying emotions such as joy, anger, melancholy, happiness (*xi, nu, ai, le*). The first text tells of joy in leaving the mother's womb, but soon one is consumed by the lure of money and fame in life, unaware that these do not last forever. The second conveys the ire of meeting Yama, the ruler of the underworld. All the riches in life could not save one from death, and no wife, concubine or son can take one's place. The third text laments the melancholy of entering the gates of hell and the endless pondering of how one can evade the wheels of transmigration. Finally, happiness is found because the compassion of Buddha in seeing the suffering beings, salvages one from the infernal hell and transports one to a higher realm. Similar exhortation message can be found on the theme of greed for wine, beauty, money and power (*jiu, se, cai, qi*). A common device in such texts is the allusion to historic figures such as the poet Li Bai (Li Po), past kings and generals and

their association with a particular vice as examples of the ephemeral of worldly passions. The transience of life is similarly depicted by the themes of emptiness (*kong*), dreams, and so on.

Nature is also a subject frequently drawn on to propagate the Buddhist message. The four seasons, the moon, the spring wind, the cloud and the five watches of the night (*wugeng*)³³, etc are common themes. Again, these elements share the same transient nature and are therefore ideal for lamenting the fate of the dead and the need for turning to Buddhism early in life.

Of all the lament texts, only 1 set of text with seven stanzas is known to be by Zhu Hong, the late 16th century Chan master who was instrumental in the structuring of monastic rituals. This gives an indication of the time during which some of these laments and hymns for the soul were composed. In general, the corpus of hymns and laments meant for the soul show more informal and vernacular modes of expression than the strict poetic structure and patterns followed by Buddha hymns. The vernacular style is marked by repetition or doubling of syllables or phrases, particularly in longer texts (for example, see *Jishou guiyi Omituo*).

Based on my observations, only a small percentage of this rich corpus is in use today by monks and *caigu* in the *gongde*. Many among the younger generation are unfamiliar with the melodies of some texts, particularly the longer ones. More on learning and transmission of vocal liturgy (§4.4) and musical impoverishment (§4.5) will be discussed. Next, the contents and functions of *ji* gathas are examined.

3.2.4 Contents and functions of *ji* texts

Ji gathas are always sung at the end of a recitation, following a laudatory *zan* hymn, or toward the end of a rite. They can be seen as complementary to *zan* hymns, serving to enhance religiosity and encapsulate the ritual. As discussed earlier, gathas can be grouped according to subject matter or function. However, among the gathas listed in both the Fuzhou and Minnanese manuals, many are rarely used.³⁴ Based on texts currently in use, scholars of Buddhist music (Hu 1986) proposed such a classification: gatha of Praise of Buddha (*zanfo ji*), gatha of Vows (*fayuan ji*), gatha of Exhortation (*jingzhong ji*) and gatha of Transferring Merit (*huixiang ji*). These by and large reflect the subject matter.

³³ *Wugeng* refers to the five periods of the night from seven in the evening to five in the morning, each watch lasting two hours. This subject is also found in the song lyrics (*quzi ci*) of Dunhuang (Lin 1984) and it is also a favourite song-type in the folk song genre (see Schimmelpenninck 1997: 186-7).

³⁴ Many gathas in these two collections are not found in more contemporary hymnals (see e.g. *Fojiao niansongji*). My own fieldwork observations also attest to this.

Like *zan*, gathas can also function as eulogies. The usual array from the pantheon may be the subject of veneration. Hence we find gathas of praises dedicated to different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, just like in *zan* hymns. Gathas of Vows express the will to eliminate barriers to the practitioner's practice or vows to be true to the teachings of Buddha. Gathas of exhortation function as a reminder to the community to maintain diligent practice. These three groups are usually sung in the Practising or Celebratory rituals.³⁵

The primary function of the *gongde* is the accumulation of merit for the soul through meritorious actions (sutra recitation, incantations, hymns, prostrations, etc) performed by ritual specialists. The gatha of Transferring Merit has the symbolic function of confirming, through prayers and vows, and "transferring" the merit accrued. The gatha of Transferring Merit is therefore sung at the end of a rite.

Like *zan* hymns, some gathas of Transferring Merit are specific to certain functions. For example, in the Purification, a double quatrain 6-syllable gatha *Yici yanjing gongde* (With this Merit of Purification) is sung before the Spirit Altar. This sings of the transferring of merit to the protector saints and the assurance that the dead (and the living for that matter) will be endowed with good fortune and security. For the Penitence, a gatha often used is *Wanchan gongde shushengxing* (The Merit of Completing Penitence Practised Auspiciously). This tells of how the merit is transferred to the suffering souls and that they will be rapidly transported to the Land of Amitabha. This gatha can also be used for other occasions, replacing the first two words in the first line by other verbs such as *shishi* (Feeding), *shanggong* (Offering), and so on. Having said this, I found that the institutional and *caigu* ritualists do not always adhere strictly to using specific gathas meant for a certain function. On many occasions, the gatha used repeatedly regardless of function is *Yuansheng xifang jingtu zhong* ("Vow to be Reborn in the Western Pure Land"). This is a gatha pledging to be reborn in the Western Paradise as a lotus of highest practice; the subsequent flowering of this lotus symbolizes one's rebirth in a land where one hears the wonderful words of the Buddha and learns there is bliss ever after.

The poetic form of gatha follows that of the Chinese regulated verse (*qiyán shī*), but unlike its Chinese form, gathas are written in blank verse. They are usually divisible into quatrains, although groups of 6, 7 or 8 lines also occur. For example *Wanchan gongde shushengxing* has three extra lines appended, but these lines are not always performed. Double quatrains are more common.

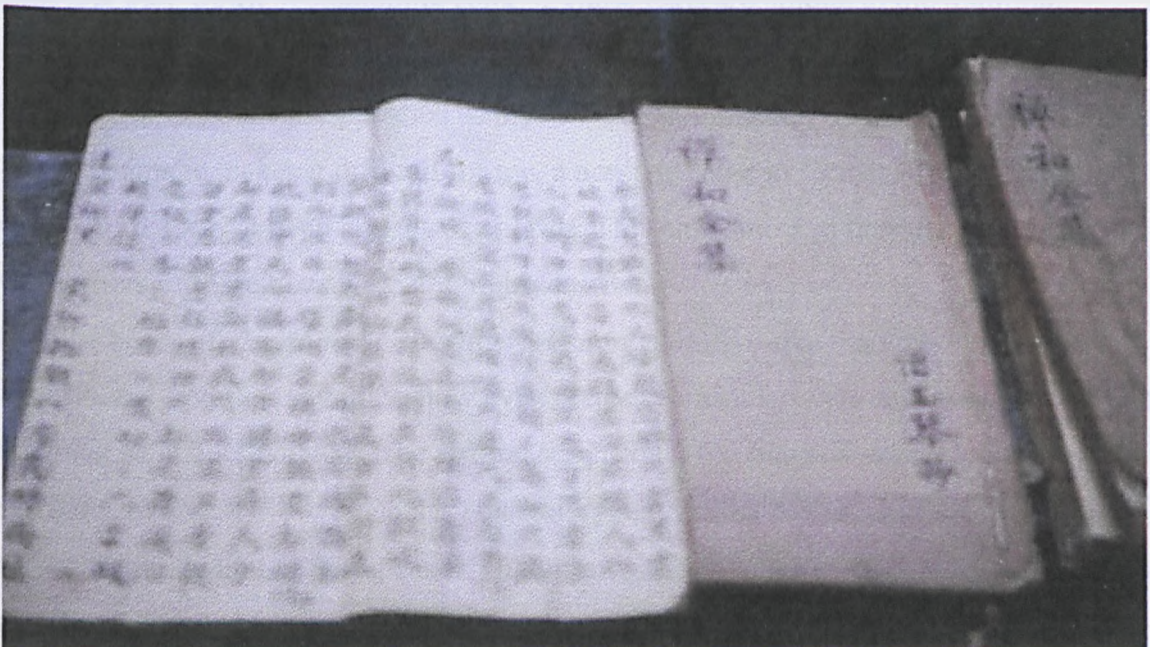
³⁵ For more detailed discussion of gathas in practicing rituals, see Hu 1986, 1992; see also Chen P. 1999 on their function in the daily lessons.

The above discussion has focussed on the range of *zan* and *ji* texts used by institutional ritualists (including *caigu*). The texts largely convey a Buddhist worldview and are rich in devices appropriate to religious poetry – association, analogies, emotional appeal, exhortation. They are used to fulfill the fundamental aims of proselytisation and propagation of the religion without recourse to direct reasoning or preaching.

3.2.5 Song texts in the *xianghua* tradition

Unlike the institutional Buddhist tradition, where ritual texts and manuals are openly circulated and widely available, *xianghua* ritual texts are not circulated outside the tradition. It is understandable why there is such a contrast in the two traditions; institutional Buddhism is basically evangelistic in its own way. Rituals, either to enhance one's Buddhist goals or to improve one's lot or save one's deceased, are frequently organised by monasteries. Congregational participation is encouraged and participants recite texts and sing hymns along with the sangha. Ritual and sutra texts are therefore made easily accessible for the keen lay Buddhists. The *xianghua*, on the other hand, are laymen who possess ritual knowledge unknown to the common people. This esoteric knowledge gives them the prestige as specialists and allows them to maintain a foothold in the ritual market. They therefore have to guard their tradition and its knowledge jealously. The *xianghua* tradition is mainly hereditary. Ritual knowledge is passed down orally from father to son, and hymn texts and ritual procedures can only be hand copied by the son when he has mastered the rituals (Fig. 3.9).

Fig. 3.9 *Xianghua* ritual manuals



In §3.1.3 we found a somewhat varied ritual structure in the *xianghua* context; but basically, *xianghua* procedures also take place before the Buddha and Spirit Altars. Thus, as in institutional Buddhism, it is expected that different repertoires of texts exist for these contexts. The word *zan* is used by the *xianghua* to refer only to the group of texts that are shared with the institutional Buddhists. Yongchun *xianghua* Liao Liancai calls this repertoire *Chanhe qu* (Minn. *Siam@kiaq*; “Chan harmony tunes”). The *xianghua*’s use of this term is not to be mistaken with that known in Fuzhou. As we shall see in §5.3, *xianghua Chanhe qu* and its namesake in Fuzhou bear no resemblance musically. From the information I gathered, the most common Buddha hymns borrowed by the *xianghua* are the invocation Incense Hymns. These include the “True Incense Hymn” (*Jieding zhenxiang*), “Censer Incense Hymn” (*Luxiang zan*), “Precious Censer Hymn” (*Baoding zan*), “Incense Heating Up” (*Xiangcaire*), “The Heart Flames in Five Measures” (*Xinran Wufen*), and “Willow Branch Purified Water” (*Yangzhi jingshui*). Another institutional Offertory *zan* text frequently performed by the *xianghua* is “Putuo Mountains of the South Sea” (*Nanhai Putuoshan*). In addition, Anxi *xianghua* Xie Jinliang told me that they also use a small number of Laudatory Hymns, including “Medicine Buddha, King of Longevity” (*Yaoshifo yanshouwang*), and “Three Jewels Hymn” (*Sanbao zan*). The musical characteristics of some of these hymns are discussed in §5.3.

All other sung texts in the *xianghua* tradition are referred to as *qu* (Minn. *Kiaq*; which generally means tune or melody). I shall call these songs. There are songs for the Buddha, for which there are no particular terms and the contents of which are *xianghua* in origin; there are also Spirit songs sung for the soul, known in *xianghua* tradition as *chaoling qu* (“Spirit Worshipping song”). These texts are unique to the tradition.

Xianghua songs vary in length. The Buddha hymns are also laudatory in content, but they are not as poetically polished as institutional hymn texts; the sometimes awkward use of language makes it difficult for me, a non-specialist in Chinese poetic forms to decipher its form or even lengths of phrases. This clumsiness in literary style suggests that writers of these texts were not highly learned.

The lyrics of *xianghua* Spirit songs are more narrative-like than the Laments in institutional tradition and they show even greater vernacular style embedded strongly in the local Minnanese dialect. The written scripts may be comprehensible to Mandarin speakers, but the use of vernacular vocabulary may render the sense of some sentences unintelligible to non-native speakers. Examining the contents of several texts, the subject matters of Spirit tunes songs quite varied. One text describes how the seasons change,

that “time slips away, a person can be lofty but not so the heart”, and urges the soul to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha as early as it is possible. Thus the ideas of proselytising and admonishing the soul are similar to those found in institutional Spirit hymns. Some *xianghua* Spirit songs are not strongly ideological but instead focus on simple words of exhortation to practice benevolence, compassion and to refrain from self-indulgence so as to benefit later generations. In addition, some texts also contain words about earning fortune and wellbeing for one’s descendants; thus strong folk ideology of reciprocity between the living and the dead are evident in the lyrics.

The narrative nature of *xianghua* Spirit hymns is also strongly evident. Some recount historical tales of generals and heroic characters, while some, probably aimed at instilling fear of retribution, recount the sufferings in hell, the regrets of failing to heed the words of Buddha, and the longing to be reborn in the Western Paradise. Pieces from the Rite of Smashing Hell also frequently serve as Spirit songs.

As for *ji* hymns, the *xianghua* sometimes use texts from institutional Buddhism; an example is “The Merit of Offering Reverently Practised” (*Xianzhai gongde shushengxing*). Several *ji* texts listed in *Chanlin Zanji* are also used by the *xianghua*. However, these are not commonly used by institutional and *caigu* ritualists.

In institutional *gongde*, the transference of merit is always expressed by four-line *ji*, but in the *xianghua* case, this act can be expressed through long heterometric texts. An example is “Before [the Buddha] Comes the Pure Assembly” (*shanglai xianqian qingjingzhong*) which is sung to transfer merit in the Purification performed by Shishi *xianghua* (see Table 3.5). It begins with 12 lines of texts with different number of syllables in each line, this is followed by an incantation (still sung) and the piece ends with a further 8 lines of text in the form of a prayer for endless endowment of wealth and dharma for the patron.

From the limited textual material I have, the abundance and variety of *xianghua* liturgical texts can already be glimpsed. What I have shown here merely scratched the surface of a tradition that needs to be studied on its own right. The same, as we shall see below, can be said about the *wen* memorial and texts of the rite of Pardon and Smashing Hell in this tradition.

3.3 Textual contents of the *nian* (recitation) form

Textual types which are classified under the *nian* recitation form encompass the following: *jing* sutras, *zhou* incantations, and *wen* announcement texts. There are recitation types which are, as such, not running texts; these are the Triple Invocation - a

line of homage to a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva repeated three times, and *fohao* – lines of similar homage frequently found in the Penitence texts. Sutras and incantations, as we shall see in the next chapter, are similar in performance style. *Wen* texts, *fohao* and Triple Invocations, on the other hand, may vary musically.

The subject matter, structure and style of these texts will be described. Monks and *caigu* share the same recitation materials. As for the *xianghua*, they hold that their sutras and incantations texts are also the same as in institutional Buddhism. Thus my discussion of these texts apply to both traditions. *Wen* announcement texts will be treated separately because of their complexity. Penitence texts will also be discussed separately.

3.3.1 Sutras and incantations

Two fundamental sutras recited in the *gongde* are *Borui boluo miduo xinjing* (Sanskrit *Prajna Paramita Hrdaya Sutra*, translated as The Heart Sutra) and *Omituo jing* (Sukhavatī-Vyuha Sutra, commonly known as Amitabha Sutra). The Heart Sutra is associated with the ritual for the dead because Avalokitesvara (Guanyin), known in the sutra as Guanzizai (the Omniscient One Who Sees), figures prominently in this sutra. In the Chinese mind, this Bodhisattva has come to be preeminently associated with compassion and wisdom. He is said to hear the sufferings of beings and delivers them.³⁶ Thus his powers are relied upon to succour the soul, offering it the hope of rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land.

The Heart Sutra was translated from the Sanskrit into Chinese by Xuanzang in 649 CE, and this is the version still used today. It tells of Avalokitesvara's practice of the profound perfection of wisdom (*prajna paramita*); this wisdom lies in the realization that all thoughts, actions, feelings, etc, are void of intrinsic existence.³⁷ This is one of the shortest sutras in the Buddhist canon, comprising 262 words in the Chinese translation. In the Purification rite, the Heart Sutra forms a part of the Ten Short Incantations (*Shi xiaozhou*). It is also recited on its own in the Small Mengshan Feeding Rite. At times, this sutra may be recited before the Spirit Altar in lieu of the Amitabha Sutra.

Another intrinsic sutra text recited in the *gongde* is the Amitabha Sutra.³⁸ This text is one of the more important sutra texts in the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism. Through

³⁶ Guanyin (short for Guanshiyin – He who perceives all sounds) in China gradually took on female form and became popularly known as the Goddess of Mercy.

³⁷ For details of the content, a choice of English translation and commentaries of the Heart Sutra exist. See Conze 1958 and also Muller 1927 for the earliest translations of this sutra. For more recent studies, see Lopez 1998.

³⁸ There are two versions of this text, one is referred to as the Larger Sukhavatī-Vyuha (known in Chinese as *Da wuliangshou jing*, 2 volumes) and the other the Smaller Sukhavatī-Vyuha (known as *Omituo jing*, 1

the interlocution between the Buddha and the elder Sariputra, the Sukhavatī (*Jileguo*, Land of Supreme Happiness) of Amitabha Buddha is described: “In that world Sukhavatī there are lotus-lakes, adorned with the seven gems, ...”, “there are heavenly musical instruments always played on, and the earth is lovely and of golden colour” (Muller 1927 XLIX: 89-193). The benefit of being born in this Pure Land is outlined in the sutra. The crucial message here is that if one was pious in the repetition of Amitabha’s name during one’s lifetime, upon death, Amitabha and his assembly will appear to receive one to his Western Paradise (ibid.) Since the Chinese more than willingly accepted this alternative to the unattainable *Nirvana*, the inclusion of this text in rituals for the dead was therefore highly appropriate. Following the chanting of this sutra, the Reborn in the Pureland incantation (*Wangsheng zhou*) must be recited to advance the soul’s journey to Amitabha’s Western Paradise. Since this is its major function, the Amitabha Sutra is therefore recited before the Spirit Altar.

Chinese sutra texts are mainly written in narrative prose. They do not have clear poetic metre or consistent rhyme. Before beginning the text, an invocation of Buddha/s or Bodhisattva/s relating to the text is repeated three times. This is termed *sancheng* (Triple Invocation). The title of the sutra text follows the Triple Invocation. For example, the Amitabha Sutra begins with the Triple Invocation *Nanmo lianchi haihui fopusa* (Homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Lotus-lake), then its title *Foshuo omituo jing* (The Buddha speaks the Amitabha Sutra), followed by the rest of the sutra. But when it is preceded by a series of recitations, as in the case of the Heart Sutra in the Ten Short Incantation, there is no Triple Invocation; only the title is chanted before the rest of the texts follow.

The *xianghua* also recite the Heart Sutra and Amitabha Sutra, although they do not recite these texts in the same order as that in the institutional and *caigu* model. In addition, the *xianghua* recite *Yaoshi jing* (Sutra of the Medicine Buddha) in their rite of Opening a Road in the Darkness. This sutra relates the Buddha’s preaching to Manjusri Bodhisattva. The Medicine Buddha resides in the Eastern Paradise of Crystal Light. During his practice in the Bodhisattva path, he made 12 vows to cure all beings suffering from any deformity or illnesses and that upon his enlightenment, his body will emit rays of light clear as crystal to shine upon all beings who pledge to be reborn in his Eastern Paradise. In the institutional context, this sutra is never recited for *gongde* for the dead but is instead recited in *gongde* for eliminating calamities (*xiaozai*) or for the intent of

volume). For an English translation, see Inagaki 1995.

praying for longevity (*yanshou*). The *xianghua*, on the other hand, perform this sutra in a *gongde* for the dead to help bless the soul with a healthy body in their next life.

Zhou, a generic Chinese term for incantations or spells, are Sanskrit syllables transliterated into Chinese. The Buddhists believe that these are words with extraordinary powers whose meanings cannot be explained by language alone; thus they are never translated. The incantations are used in prayers to enhance the effects of a ritual. It is further divided into two types: *dharani* (transl. in Chinese as *tuoluoni*) and *mantra* (transl. in Chinese as *mantala*). In meaning, *dharani* refers to an incantation of absolute power (*zongchi*) while *mantra* refers to tantric or true words (*zhenyan*). Over time, these meanings have become indistinct. One other way of differentiating the two types is by length; long incantations are *dharanis* while short incantations are referred to by their Chinese term *zhenyan* (*Foguang Dacidian*, s.v. *zhou*). But since Chinese Buddhists use the terms *zhou*, *tuoluoni* and *zhenyan* without clearly delineating them, length is not by all means a strict criterion. In general, I have found that incantations termed as *zhenyan* tend to be short. Having said that, a *zhenyan* in the Ten Short Incantations have up to 55 syllables, while another has 54.³⁹ Those termed simply as *zhou* are the most ambiguous; it can be as short as 26 syllables or as long as 117 syllables. *Tuoluoni* are generally incantations having over 80 or more syllables. For convenience I will adhere to the term “incantation”.

In *gongde*, Guanyin Bodhisattva’s Grand Compassion incantation (Skt. *Mahakarunikacitta Dharani*, Ch. *Qianshou qianyan guanshiyin pusa dabeixin tuoluoni*, abbreviated as *dabei zhou*) is often used for purifying purposes. It exemplifies the greatness of this Bodhisattva. Different versions of this incantation are found in more than 10 sutras on the subject of Guanyin. It is recited before the Buddha and the Spirit Altar in the Purification. It is a general incantation which can be employed for purifying purposes in the Bathing the Soul or before burning paper objects.

The other ubiquitous *dharani* in *gongde* is the Reborn in the Pure Land Incantation (*wangsheng zhou* or *wangsheng jingtu shenzhou* – Reborn in the Pure Land Magical Incantation). This is recited after the Amitabha Sutra or on its own before the Spirit Altar. It is believed that the recitation of this powerful incantation will help the soul be transported to Amitabha’s Pure Land.

The Ten Short Incantations recited in the Purification rite consists, as its title

³⁹ I am counting the incantations by the number of syllables since these are transliteration of the Sanskrit sounds and one is never sure what the actual Sanskrit words are. See also Chen P. 1999 for her discussion on incantations.

suggests, of 10 incantations. They include the *Ruyi baolunwang tuoluoni* (The Great Wish King of Precious Wheel Dharani), *Xiaozai jixiang shenzhou* (Eliminate Calamity Auspicious Magical Incantation), *gongde baoshan shenzhou* (Merit Treasure Mountain Magical Incantation), *Zhunti shenzhou* (Cundi [another name for Avalokitesvara] Magical Incantation), *Sheng wuliang shou jue ding guangmingwang tuoluoni* (The Saintly Boundless life Bright King on the Highest Dharani), *Yaoshi guanding zhenyan* (Baisajyaguru Abihiseka Mantra), *Guanyin ling'gan zhenyan* (Avalokitesvara Inspiration Mantra), *Qifo miezui zhenyan* (Seven Buddhas Eliminate Sins Mantra), *Wangsheng jingtu shenzhou* (Reborn in the Pure Land Magical Incantation), *Da jixiang tiannu zhou* (The Great Auspicious Goddess Incantation). This set of incantations is also recited as part of the morning lesson. In the *gongde*, it is recited only before the Buddha Altar in the Purification, probably to enhance the powers of purification.

Another set of three mantras commonly used in *gongde* is the Transforming Food Mantra, the Pure Dew Mantra and the General Offering Mantra. These incantations are of great importance in the Offering. They help transform and purify food, water and all other offerings to the pantheon and the soul. The essence of Mahayana equality is expressed in a text in Chinese recited after the Pure Dew Mantra: “These aromatic food, are offered to all Buddhas above, to all saints in the middle, and to all beings in the six paths, with no discriminations. Wish it all fulfills, thus endowing the donor, with boundless wisdom. The three merits and six tastes, to the Buddha, sangha and all beings, are universally offered”.

The incantations described above are the main incantations used in *gongde* performed by monks and *caigu*. The *xianghua* ritualists use most of the incantations described here in their *gongde* with the exception of the Ten Short Incantations. This is probably due to the fact that the *xianghua* Purification rite has a different programme.

3.3.2 Wen texts

Wen texts are pronouncements of diverse types. In institutional Buddhism, three main types of *wen* texts are found in *gongde*.⁴⁰ These include *sanbao wen* (Three Jewels text), *shuiwen* (Water text) and *shuwen* (Memorial text). The Three Jewels and Water texts are found in the Purification rite, while the *shu* Memorial is repeated many times before both altars. The style of delivering *wen* texts is termed *bai*, a verb that has no equivalent in English but implies heightened speech recitation style. More on the music is in §4.3.2.

⁴⁰ There are many more different types of *wen* texts for different ritual contexts; here I will restrict my discussion to those specific to *gongde*.

The Three Jewels text, I found, is not prescribed in modern-day manuals (see *Fojiao Niansongji*) and is indeed, omitted by the *caigu*. However, ordained monks and the *xianghua* recite this text after the opening hymn. The Fuzhou manual *Zansong Jiyao* lists seven Three Jewels texts. The Minnanese *Chanlin Zanji* has eight, of which six are the same as in *Zansong Jiyao*.

Three Jewels texts vary from 9 to 23 phrases in total lengths. Like *zan* hymns, these texts have phrases each of different lengths; but unlike *zan*, there is no rhyme scheme. In general, these texts contain words in praise of the greatness of the Three Jewels. In some, the Three Jewels are invited to grace the ritual, and the texts usually end with how the pious celebrants will worship the Three Jewels in accord.

The standard Water text performed by monks and *caigu* in Purification today is a 4-line 7-syllable gatha (see *Fojiao Niansongji* s.v. *jingtān yigui*). The text describes how a drop of pure dew on the willow branch (the implement used to sprinkle the water) will dispel impurities and cleanse the ritual space. The Bodhisattva endowed with this power is Guanyin, hence the Grand Compassion Dharani is chanted after the Water text. *Chanlin Zanji* contains a selection of Water texts, some of which are used by the *xianghua* in Shishi.

In imperial times, the *shu* was a document presented by ministers to the imperial court. In a stratified society as China was, the emperor represented the highest authority in the world of people. In reporting to the emperor, the highest authority in this world, courtly documents such as *biao* (Announcement), *shu* (Memorial), *die* (Mandate) are used. However, legitimation of authority outside the mundane world lay in celestial power. The Chinese concept of the ultimate power of Heaven and its hierarchical system as forces of control over men and all events in the universe is thus the symbolism of such pronouncements. Similarly, pronouncements made to the higher authority of the cosmic order mirrored that of imperial authority. The Memorial in *gongde* is a document stating the time and place, names of “vegetarian host” (*zhaizhu*) and immediate family members, and the intent to deliver the soul. The text, often in archaic language to show officialdom, is written on a piece of yellow paper and folded into strips for ease of handling by the Officiant. This document is recited repeatedly toward the end of a rite as a proclamation to the saintly pantheon. Finally the Memorial is burnt at the close of the ritual to symbolise its transmission to the celestial authority.

In addition to the *shu*, there is another type of *wen* document - the *die* (Mandate). According to a printed source (*Shudie Wenpu*, n.d.) of sample texts for the Memorial and Mandate, like the Memorial, there are Mandates for different occasions. There are those

for vows taken by monks (*jiedie*); these serve as proof of their authentic identity as monks.⁴¹ In addition, there are other types of mandates for use in various rituals. Examining the contents of these mandates, I find that they are similar to the Memorial; they state the time, place and intent of the service and names of its sponsors. But in addition, they list the scriptures read on behalf of the soul and state that “with the merit accrued, the soul (followed by its name) will receive the blessings of Amitabha and be reborn in his Western Paradise”. Thus the Mandate, which is also burnt at the end of the ritual, serves as a proof or pass that the soul is delivered. This type of mandate is not used in present-day institutional *gongde*, but is found in *xianghua gongde*. The *xianghua* appear to have a confusing array of various types of mandates for different purposes.⁴² For example, during the *Fabiao* Announcement rite, a mandate of the Announcement (called the *biao*) is proclaimed. This, like the *shu* memorial, also contains the time, date, sponsors of the ritual. In addition, it carries a request that his message is delivered on high. Furthermore, there is a *guan* mandate. This announces that the *biao* had been sent and is dispatched to the *zhifu shizhe* (Messenger-official of the hour), requesting that he delivers the mandate of Announcement to Lingjiushan mountains where the Buddhist pantheon are gathered. According to a *xianghua* priest, the *guan* is a simpler document with no details such as time, place, etc of the ritual.

There are also *die* mandates directed to the soul. One such document is the *kudie* (Mandate for treasury). The *kuqian* (treasury money) is paper money burnt for the provision of the soul. The paper money and all other paper paraphernalia such as the paper house are burnt as a final act in *gongde*. A *kudie* is addressed to the soul and burnt along with these items; a deed for the paper house is also burnt. These serve as proofs that the items are meant for the soul in question, and so that it can then collect its dues.

As described above, the *xianghua* have extra ritual programmes not performed by monks and *caigu*. These are the Rite of Pardon (*fangshe*) and Smashing Hell (*dacheng*). Extra texts in the *xianghua* tradition are therefore expected. However, a closer examination of these rites and their contents would require a separate study; these will have to be omitted here.

⁴¹ The *jiedie* is an important document for monks because traditionally, ordained monks are allowed to seek temporary stay in any institutional monasteries for the purpose of seeking learning. The *jiedie* thus serves as a proof of one's authentic status as a monk.

⁴² The range of documents used by the *xianghua* are confusing because the *xianghua* priests themselves give me ambiguous information. For example, Liao Liangcai in Yongchun told me that a *biao* is similar to the *shu* memorial. Another priest in Anxi told me that the *guan* and *biao* are similar, etc. Clearly, more research is needed to understand the *xianghua* tradition. For now, I can only rely on some scattered

3.3.4 Penitence texts

The Penitence, although not a recitation type as such, contains many passages performed in different vocal styles. It is thus useful to introduce the contents of the Penitence here.

Penitence began as a ceremony through which the sangha can repent their sins. Around the 4th century, the monk Daoan (314-85) prescribed three basic ritual practices for the sangha: sutra sermon, daily rituals (including meal times), and penitence. This last was usually carried out during the retreat periods. In China, the performance of Penitence gradually came to be popularly associated with rituals performed for the benefits of others, including the Water and Land Grand Ritual, rituals for the dead or for propitious intent.

The origin of the Precious Penitence of Emperor Liang has been discussed (§1.6.1). As for the *Cibei Sanmei Shuichan* (Compassionate Intent Contemplation Water Penitence), it was collated sometime in the 9th century by a monk Wuda (who was a *guoshi* – lit. teacher of the country – a title endowed upon him by the Tang emperor Yizong in 863). The preface of this text relates the origin of this Penitence. Briefly, the story tells of how, due to past sins he committed, a growing face grew on Wuda's knee to torment him. It appeared that an enemy from his past life had come to seek revenge on him. But because of a benevolent he did in his present life, he was cured of the growing sore. He therefore vowed to reflect on his past sins and collated the 3-volume Water Penitence.

Penitence texts have similar textual structures. Following the opening hymn and before the actual Penitence text begins, there are several pages of introductory texts and gathas; but due to lack of time in *gongde*, these are never performed in *gongde*. I will omit these since they are of no relevance to this thesis.⁴³ The introductory texts are found only in the first volume, but in each of the volumes there are two sections called *ruchan wen* (Entering the Penitence text) and *chuchan wen* (Leaving the Penitence text). Again these sections are sometimes omitted by the ritualists in the *gongde* context.

The Penitence proper (*qichan*) begins with a 4-line gatha praising the greatness of the Buddha. This is usually where *gongde* ritualists in Minnan begin. A passage termed *fohao* (Buddhas' name chant) follows. This is a series of names of Buddhas to which

information in Dean's studies on Daoist and Buddhist rituals in Fujian (Dean 1988).

⁴³ Today, congregational Penitence rituals for *xiuxing* (self-enhancing) purposes are performed in monasteries. The Water Penitence and other Penitences such as *Bashiba Fo Hongming Baochan* (The Precious Penitence of the Names of Eighty-eight Buddhas) and *Dabei Chan* (Grand Compassion Penitence) are commonly the texts chosen for this context. In Minnan, the Penitence favoured is the *Qianfo*

homage is paid. Their musical characteristics are discussed in the next chapter. After the first set of *fohao*, the Penitence text begins. The texts in the first section stress that before reflecting on one's sins, homage must be paid to the pantheon. This thus sets the scene for the rest of the Penitence text: sections of running texts are always preceded by *fohao* passages. This alternation of texts and *fohao* continue until the end of the volume. A hymn specific to this volume is sung after the last recited text passage; this is followed by "Leaving the Penitence text" (*chuchan wen*) which brings the volume to a close.

The Penitence text passages are too long to be translated, but their contents usually combine salutary warnings to sinners, painting vivid pictorial representations of forms of punishment for the sins, with expressions of desire to repent from those sins.

From the above discussion, we see that there is a wealth of sung and recited texts in both institutional and *xianghua* Buddhist traditions. The next chapter will discuss the musical forms and characteristics of the different types of *changnian* forms introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 4

Music in institutional and semi-institutional *gongde*

4.1 Musical styles and musical instruments

As mentioned in §3.2, Buddhist vocalization comprises two main types of delivery referred to collectively by the practitioners as *changnian* or *changsong*, both translatable as “sing and recite”. The term *changnian* seems to imply that Buddhist vocalization falls neatly into two categories, one very melodious, one less so. On a broad surface level, this is indeed true, but on a deeper level, there are many complex melodic implications in both forms. In this chapter, I hope to bring about further understanding of the *chang* form and to briefly introduce the *nian* form and the problems with its investigation.

In Minnan, several bodies of hymn tunes are shared in *gongde* performed by institutional ritualists and semi-institutional *caigu*. The ritualists use the term *diao* when describing each of these different corpora. *Diao* can have several meanings in Chinese music. The most common one is musical mode. The compounds *diaomen* (“mode door”) and *diaoshou* (“mode head”) refer to a defined pitch for the modal tonic in those genres which use fixed-pitch instruments. However, *diao* also equates roughly to the English term “style”. (See Glossary 2 for a discussion of my use of English musical terms such as “tonic”, “key” and “style”.) The compound *qiangdiao* refers to a musical style, usually of the Chinese operatic type. *Qiang*, which generally indicates “sung melody”, may also be used to refer to musical style, as in the word *kunqiang* (the style of *kunqu*); in non-musical contexts, it can indicate for example a regional linguistic accent, as in *beifangqiang*, “northern accent”.

Ritualists in Minnan identify three corpora of hymn tunes, which they call respectively *Waijiang diao*, *Fuzhou diao* and *Caiyou diao*. In this usage I will translate the term *diao* as “style”. In English-language musicological usage, style is a very broad term which may include any or all of the elements related to the organization of musical sound itself: pitch elements (scale, mode, melody, harmony, tuning systems), time elements (rhythm, metre), timbre elements (voice quality, instrumental tone colour), and sound intensity (loudness and softness). But there is no widely accepted definition of the term “style” in English (Blum 1992: 175). In ethnomusicological usage it may also embrace strictly non-sonic elements of a performance such as bodily movement, though careful usage might

distinguish “musical style” from “performance style” and again from “performance practice”.

Here, I use the word in the same sense as ritualists in Minnan, that is, to refer to musical style. We will see that the three hymn corpora mentioned above, while sharing most of their lyrics, do not share their melodies: with rare exceptions, these three constitute separate repertoires of tunes, though not of texts. However, thinking back over my conversations in the field, it eventually dawned on me that the practitioners seem to think of these three named corpora as constituting different styles, not different repertoires *per se*. When I am next in Fujian and ask the question, I expect to find that many ritualists have not even noticed the non-overlap of tunes. The conversation will be difficult, though, because of the seeming lack of a traditional word for “repertory” separate from those used in Western-style musicology. I will use the term “style” to translate *diao* here because it is the stylistic differences which seem most salient in practitioners’ minds (though the term “repertory” will also be used when clarity demands it). For example, in §4.1.2 we will see that one *caigu* found the important distinction between two of these corpora (*diao*) to be tempo, a stylistic feature, rather than melody.

The *xianghua* ritualists have their own distinct musical style (in the sense defined above: a combination of repertory and performance style), although sharing some textual materials with institutional Buddhists (§3.2.5). Given the links between institutional Buddhists and *caigu* (§2.3.2), it is not surprising that the two types have much more in common stylistically with each other than with the *xianghua*. *Xianghua* music is therefore discussed separately in the following chapter.

Before moving on to a detailed musical analysis, let us briefly introduce the three hymn styles performed by institutional and *caigu* ritualists, and the musical instruments used in their liturgies.

4.1.1 National *waijiang* style

Three types of hymn styles are found in *gongde* performed by ordained monks and *caigu*. These can be categorized as national, regional and local styles. Ritualists in Minnan call the first type *waijiang diao* (“style from beyond the river”), because the style originated from outside Fujian. *Waijiang* style is the hymn style adopted nationally in monasteries and temples all over China today and commonly used in practicing, ceremonial and calendrical rituals.

Buddhist music researchers in China hold the view that two distinct Buddhist vocal

styles – northern and southern – evolved at an earlier stage. Sometime around the 18th century, the southern vocal style, with its epicentre around the Zhejiang and Jiangsu regions, gradually took over (Tian 1985; Hu 1986). Scholars have little evidence of the northern style, and few have dealt clearly with how and when the southern style assumed dominance.¹ Such historical issues, however, are too complicated to go into and are in any case beyond our scope. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to know that a more or less homogenous style of liturgical singing exists in major monasteries and temples all over China today, and indeed in countries outside China where Chinese Mahayana Buddhism prevails.

Waijiang style is modelled on the hymn singing of several prominent monasteries such as Tianningsi, Tiantongsi and Baohuashansi in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. This central-eastern area, commonly called Jiangnan (“south of the River [Yangtze]”) by the Chinese, is long recognised as the axis of Buddhist philosophical thinking and its cultural development. A few monasteries there were, and still are, large national ordination centres where novices from all over China gather to be trained and ordained. It is therefore not surprising that the hymn style of this region has diffused widely and gained ascendancy.

The singing style of the Jiangnan monasteries is known by different names in different regions. In Fujian it is called *waijiang* style; in Taiwan, *haichaoyin* (“sounds of the waves”); while in other parts of China, it is sometimes referred to as *shifangyun* (“musical sounds of the ten directions”) or *conglin diao* (“institutional style”). The term *Tianning qiang* (“tunes of Tianning”), named after Tianningsi, was coined by scholars for the reason that the hymn singing of this monastery is considered the most supreme in the Jiangnan region. To avoid the profusion of nomenclature, I will use the self-explanatory term “National style” when referring to what the Minnanese call *waijiang* style.

It was mentioned earlier that the National style is commonly used in rituals for practising (*xiuxing*) purposes. Indeed, the *caigu* sing this style when performing their morning and evening services. However, unlike in monasteries, where liturgy is performed in Mandarin, *caigu* sing and recite in the Minnanese dialect. Sung in this context, National style hymns are slow in tempo and very melismatic. This, in theory, is to allow practitioners to reflect on the religious meanings of the lyrics and enhance religiosity.

As we shall see later in this chapter, the National style can also sometimes be used in *gongde*. But first, let us look at the regional hymn singing style.

¹ Further to the historical development of Buddhist music, see Hu Yao (1992); for an English-language article on the sinicization of Buddhist music, see Tian 2000.

4.1.2 Regional Fuzhou style

The second, and most prevalent, hymn style used in *gongde* in Minnan is termed *fuzhou diao* (“Fuzhou style”). This information was first given to me by Sister Miaolian of Tongfosi in Quanzhou (July 1997). She told me that the hymns they sing are in *fuzhou diao* and that the style came to Minnan from Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian. Subsequently many other *caigu* I met confirmed this. But in the case of ordained monks, many do not know the origin of the style they have learnt to sing. I will come back to hymn learning and transmission in Minnan today in §4.4.1.

To confirm that the so-called Fuzhou style in Minnan is indeed one that originated from Fuzhou, I decided to broaden my field research to the Fuzhou area. On my first visit, I had difficulty locating monks or nuns who could sing the Fuzhou style. In §2.2.4 we saw that since the revival of religion after the Cultural Revolution hiatus, major monasteries in Fuzhou, including Yongquansi in Gushan, Xichansi and Chongfusi, reestablished themselves strictly as *conglin* monasteries (institutions of learning) and do not permit the performance of rituals for the dead. As in Minnan, a great number of the monks (or nuns in the case of Chongfusi) who now reside in these monasteries are from other parts of China and are therefore not familiar with the local hymn style.

After several trips, I found a number of clerics in the city of Changle, near Fuzhou, who could sing the style. One of them is Venerable Huaqing, who told me that Buddhism in the Fuzhou and Changle areas was almost completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and although it is now recovering, few indigenous monks remain. Huaqing himself is not a native of Fuzhou but is originally from Fuding (further east, in the Ningde region bordering Zhejiang, see Map 1). He knew only a small repertory of Fuzhou style hymns, which he learnt in the early 1980s after he became ordained. Two young nuns I met in Yunmensi come from Fu’an, also in the Ningde region. They told me that in their hometown and indeed throughout Ningde region, there is no Fuzhou style: hymns are sung in the National style. They only learnt to sing a number of Fuzhou style hymns when they came to Changle, by listening to elderly monks.

Just when I was on the verge of giving up finding any indigenous monk who could help me understand Fuzhou style better, in late 1998 I chanced upon 73-year-old Venerable Benfa, Abbot of Tianwangsi in Changle. Benfa, a native of Fuzhou, became a novice at the age of seven. In Fuzhou, Benfa told me, the style is of course not known as “Fuzhou style”

but is instead called *Chanhe qu* (“melodies of Chan [Zen] harmony”). It is difficult to trace the origin of the style since no written records exist. According to Chen Maojin (1989), from around 1875 a type of folk ritual society known as *doutang* (“Dipper’s Hall”) gradually developed. It consists of laymen who group together to provide ritual services for their members. They are not a commercial group since they perform rituals in return for feasts laid out by the patron. This type of organization rapidly spread among communities in all Fuzhou dialect areas. Activities were halted during the Japanese war, quickly resumed afterwards, but collapsed after the Communist takeover in 1949 as societies of this type were disbanded completely. Two major groups had evolved: one under Buddhist influence and the other Daoist. *Doutang* groups with Buddhist predilection were called *Chanhepai doutang* (Chanhe sect Dipper’s Hall), while those influenced by Daoists were called *Zhengyipai doutang* (Zhengyi sect Dipper’s Hall). Elderly members of these groups who have since passed away told Chen they learnt the hymns from Buddhist monks. Initially they had sung the hymns (called *Chanhe qu*) in the monastic way, that is, only with ritual percussion accompaniment, but from around the 1920s melodic instruments were added.

Thus if *Chanhe qu* hymns began to spread among folk ritual society by 1875, we can assume that the style was probably well established before this period. The music of these *doutang* societies appears to have been borrowed from monastic Buddhism, but over time the lyrics of some have changed to convey Daoist meanings.²

According to Benfa, his teacher (*shifu*) studied *Chanhe qu* from two of Fuzhou’s most reputable exponents of the style. Benfa’s teacher was an *yiseng* (a less derogatory term for *jingchan* monks, monks who depend on performing rites for the dead for their livelihood). He was noted in the monastic circle for his mastery of hymn singing. Benfa, being the eldest of his teacher’s four disciples, was trained as his successor. Benfa claims to have learnt over 200 hymns from his teacher. Since the 1980s, he has been trying to teach all he knows of *Chanhe qu* hymns to his two eldest disciples.

Benfa said that before the 1950s *Chanhe qu* hymns were still commonly used in Yongquansi and Xichansi monasteries and other smaller temples around the Fuzhou area. Apparently the hymn singing at Xichansi was the best. Up to the early Republican period, Yongquansi was a famous ordination centre for monks not only from Fujian but also from Taiwan and even Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Monks who come to be

² About 300 lyrics and 100 or so melodies of *Chanhe qu* have been collected; see Huang Y. 1982.

ordained will often stay for a fairly long period for training. If *Chanhe qu* hymns were commonly used in these large monasteries, visiting monks would have come into contact with this style, learnt it and taken it back home with them. Thus, *Chanhe qu* hymns were gradually disseminated widely in Minnan, Taiwan, and other Southeast Asian countries.³ Indeed, Benfa told me that in earlier days, *Chanhe qu* hymns were sung not only in *gongde* but also in the daily lessons in monasteries in Fuzhou. Since the revival of religion after the Cultural Revolution, *Chanhe qu* hymns are used exclusively in *gongde* as the National style has gained ascendancy in “practicing” rituals.

Today it is *caigu* who are the exponents of this style in Minnan. According to Sister Miaolian of Tongfosi, the style is preferred in *gongde* because the hymns are somewhat faster than the National style; the many ritual components in *gongde* leave insufficient time for the slow, melismatic National style hymns. More on this is given below.

From various sources, it appears that before the Cultural Revolution the style which migrated from Fuzhou to Minnan was disseminated mainly by monks. The *caigu* in turn learnt from the monks, as confirmed by elderly *caigu* I spoke to (§4.4.1). But social and political changes since 1949 have reversed the situation: today younger monks, who are frequently not indigenous to Fujian province, are learning Fuzhou style from the *caigu*. The rise of *caigu* as *gongde* ritualists and the gradual decline in number of older indigenous monks have now made the former the bearers of Fuzhou style in Minnan.

4.1.3 Local *caiyou* style

Caiyou style, it was claimed, is a hymn style adopted by *caiyou* (“vegetarian friends”; see §2.4.5). It developed locally in Minnan. Cai Junchao, a retired musician from the string puppet troupe in Quanzhou, first told me about this style. According to him the older generation of monks in Minnan, particularly those who were involved in *gongde*, knew this indigenous style well. When I tried to collect data for this style, young monks today have never heard of this style, particularly those in big monasteries. *Caigu*, young and old, know of this style; however, the elderly shy away from singing *caiyou* style hymns, telling me that it is not a “proper” (*bu zhenggui*) style. An elderly monk who now lives in Chengtiansi sang a few *caiyou* style hymns for me, but he also dismissed these as “not pleasing to the ear” (*bu haoting*).

³ For a preliminary examination of the dissemination of the Fuzhou (ie. *Chanhe*) hymn style to Taiwan, see Tan 2001: 487-508.

Sister Miaolian of Tongfosi, and other elderly *caigu* I met, say that the style is rarely used today in *gongde*. Miaolian calls it the “humming” or “twittering” (*zhizhi hengheng*) of the *caiyou*. She says *caiyou*-style melodies are simple, with a faster tempo than Fuzhou style; they only use it when pressed for time in a *gongde*. A young *caigu* said her generation today does not learn *caiyou* style at all, because it is not reverent enough and its use would be disrespectful to the Buddhas.⁴

From what I have gathered so far, this style seems to be declining among institutional and *caigu* ritualists in Minnan. However, urban *xianghua* such as the Cai brothers from Shishi appear to know some hymns in this style; some Quanzhou locals have told me that there are *caiyou* in some parts of Jinjiang. Certainly, further research is needed to determine the true nature and state of this style.

4.1.4 Musical instruments in *gongde*

In institutional Buddhist tradition, ritual percussion instruments play very important roles, while melodic instruments are not used in strictly monastic ritual contexts – at least in the most highly institutional monasteries. Smaller temples, however, are less strict, particularly in rituals for the dead. In northern China, Buddhist instrumental music has a long tradition; the instrumental repertoires of Zhihuasi temple in Beijing and of the Buddhist sacred mountains Wutaishan are examples.⁵ In Minnan, by contrast, melodic instruments are not used at all in institutional monasteries or in rituals performed by ordained monks, nor in rituals performed by *caigu*. However, I have on several occasions witnessed the use of melodic instruments in *gongde* performed in *caigu*-run temples, although on these occasions the rituals were presided over by both ordained monks and lay *caiyou*. On such occasions, secular musicians who earn a living from performing such tasks are hired to accompany vocal liturgy and to perform para-liturgical music. In the *xianghua* tradition, although some ritual percussion instruments are also used, melodic instruments play the more important role. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Ritual percussion instruments, known as *faqi* (*dharma* instruments), are sacrosanct in the monastic tradition. They are thought of as the “eyes and ears of the heavenly dragons”; since the heavenly dragons are the guardians of a temple or monastery, instrumental performance must be carried out with care. There are two types of ritual percussion:

⁴ Verbal communication with Sister Huigen from Jinghaian temple in Hui’an (12 August 1997).

⁵ For a review of studies on Chinese Buddhist instrumental music, see Tian 1994 and Greene et al. (to appear).

instruments that act as signals for daily activities, for example the wooden *yunban* (“cloud board”) used to assemble the community during mealtimes, and instruments that accompany ritual vocalization. I will not discuss the first type, since it does not have a musical function.⁶

Percussion instruments used in a ritual service serve both to keep time in hymn singing and as signals for prostration and other ritual movements. Because of the sanctity of the ritual percussion, religious taboos in the handling and performance of these *faqi* are strictly observed. Indeed, I was informed by some practitioners that when learning hymn-singing, they first learn the rhythmic patterns of the percussion by tapping on a surface or on their knees. When pupils are ready to play with the instruments, a placard is placed on a table with a plea to the heavenly dragons not to take offence since the performers are learners. Players of the ritual percussion, known in the tradition as *yuezhong* (lit. crowd pleasers), are required to play strictly in time during a programmed ritual. Monastic members believe that if the percussion instruments are not properly performed, the protector gods will be enraged and bring wrath on the community. Also, they feel that an erratic rhythm would disrupt the concentration of the masses and the sanctity of a ritual.⁷

Ritual percussion instruments used to accompany vocal liturgy include the *qing* (large bronze bowl) (Fig. 4.1), *dangzi* (hand-held gong), *hazi* (small cymbals), *linggu* (bell-drum) (Fig. 4.2), *muyu* (lit. wooden fish, a wooden block with a slit), and *yinqing* (small bronze bowl on a stick), (Fig. 4.3).⁸ These are the basic instruments used to accompany hymn singing in all rituals. In *gongde* and other rites for the dead, a set of two hand bells called *faling* (*dharma* bells), performed by the officiant, is added (see Fig. 4.1). The rhythm of the ritual percussion instruments is strictly indicated by symbols marked on the right side of the text (Fig. 4.4). However, it is difficult to tell the precise duration of rhythmic beats from merely looking at the symbols. The learning of the rhythm and co-ordination of the ritual percussion is transmitted orally.

⁶ For information on percussion instruments used in non-musical contexts, see Shi Huizhou n.d.

⁷ Personal communication with monastic members of Foguangshan monastery, Taiwan. See also Shi Wuyi 1997. Young monks in some monasteries in Fujian do not appear to be aware of this taboo, as I have sometimes witnessed them playing the instruments casually before or between rituals.

⁸ The bell-drum is considered as one instrument: a small bell is suspended on the right side of the drum and both are played by one person. In some rituals, another independent small bell known as *baozhong* (signal

Fig. 4.1 Dharma bell (*faling*) (from www.npm.gov.tw/exhibition/ctib003/tib_c2.htm) and large bronze bowl (*daqing*) (www.hk.geocities.com/threegrouphomework/e04.htm)



Fig. 4.2 Small cymbals (*hazi*), hand-held gong (*dangzi*) and bell-drum (*linggu*) (left: from Tian 1997; right: photo by Siu-Yuk Yip)



Fig. 4.3 Wooden fish (*muyu*) and small bronze bowl (*yingqing*) (*left*:photo by Siu-Yuk Yip; *right*: from www.hk.geocities.com/threegruphomework/e04.htm)



bows according to signals from the small bowl. After the prostration, if the large bowl is struck three times, it is a warning that a hymn is to follow. If instead the wooden fish is struck three times, it is a signal that recitation will follow. During the recitation of sutra texts, for example, the large bowl is struck at different intervals to tell the participants to clasp their hands or to turn their palms upward. As there are many repeats in vocal liturgy, the sound of the large bowl serves to warn the assembly that the hymn or incantation is coming to a close; it would be struck, for example, on the third repeat of the Triple Invocation in a hymn, or just before the final repetition of an incantation.

During hymn singing, the main time-keeping instruments are the wooden fish, drum, cymbals and hand-held gong. The first three (which may or may not all be used) are struck on the strong beat while the hand-held gong falls on the weak beats, providing the basic rhythm known as “orthodox beat” (*zhengban*) (Ex. 4.1). The bell on the bell-drum sometimes provides rhythmic diversity by playing “flower beats” (*huaban*). These are improvised, syncopated rhythmic patterns of sixteen or thirty-two beats. Flower beats are strictly prohibited in the National style but very commonly used to accompany hymn singing in *gongde* or other rituals for the dead. During the chanting of sutra texts or incantations, the wooden fish is struck on every syllable and used to keep the crowd in time. More will be said below about rhythm in hymn singing and in recitation.

Ex. 4.1 *Zhengban* orthodox beat



4.2 The *chang* (sung) form: the nature of *zan* and *ji* hymns

In Chinese Buddhist vocal liturgy, the word *chang* implies a musical style with regular metre and a high degree of melodiousness. Within this form, two subtypes are identified: *zan* (lit. “to praise”) and *ji* (equivalent to the Sanskrit *gatha* meaning “verse”), the names of which allude more to their textual rather than their melodic type (see §3.2). Finding English terms to designate each of these, as indeed other Chinese terms, is problematic. Many scholars of Buddhist music broadly use the term “chant” to refer to hymn singing (e.g. Liu 1978). To distinguish clearly between the melodiousness of singing and chanting, for the moment, I prefer to borrow the Western term “hymn” for the more melodious *zan*

and *ji* and keep “chant” for the less melodious recitation forms. At the same time, the Chinese terms will also be adhered to for a clearer distinction of the types. Aspects of the texts have been dealt with in the previous chapter; here, the focus will be on the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of *zan* and *ji*.

Of the three styles discussed above, Fuzhou style is the most commonly found in *gongde*, but the National style is also sometimes used, particularly by institutional ritualists, the reasons for which will be examined in the next section. To date, comprehensive study of the musical nature of Buddhist hymns is still largely lacking; scholars of Buddhist music have made few attempts to decipher and analyse the musical nature of *zan* hymns. A study by Chinese scholar Hu Yao (1986) is by far the most detailed revelation of the characteristics of National style *zan*. Hu shows that there is a high degree of shared melodic units among *zan* by dividing the tunes of nine commonly sung hymns into melodic units, and calculating the frequency of the occurrences of each unit. Such statistical reduction results in an enlightening picture that a large repertory of *zan* texts uses only a small number of melodies. Hu’s investigation, although far from complete, is a useful beginning for this type of inquiry. I will therefore try to decipher his analysis and go on from there. Following that, I will also use the same method for examining Fuzhou style *zan*. Study of *ji* will then follow.

Although it is often said that Chinese hymn singing is homogeneous, we shall find this to be far from absolutely true: different singers, or sometimes even one singer, may sing the same hymn tune with more or less variation. Homogeneity in *zan* singing only applies in that a common broad melodic outline can be found. But only after having established the basic configuration of *zan* and *ji* form can we examine the patterns and causes of variation and change in hymn singing. These issues are explored in §4.4.2.

4.2.1 Musical characteristics of National style hymns

Zan, and to a lesser extent *ji*, form the most important and diverse repertory in Buddhist vocal liturgy. *Zan* can usefully be defined as a verse in lines of unequal length generally in praise of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas. In general, the *zan* repertory is the most melodious form found in Chinese Buddhist liturgy. In the National style, *zan* are usually sung at the leisurely speed of 25 to 30 crotchet beats per minute. They are highly melismatic and, as mentioned above, are accompanied only by ritual percussion.

The *Chanmen Risong* compendium (see §3,2,1) contains 177 *zan* texts; however, only

30 or so are commonly used today (Hu 1992: 91). According to Hu Yao's (1986) analysis of *zan* hymns, which I will decipher in detail below, there are no more than 10 hymn tunes in this category, and even within this handful of tunes there is a high degree of shared melodic material. Does this homogeneity suggest that the *qupai* ("labelled melodies")⁹ system is in operation in Buddhist *zan* hymns? Or does it imply a degree of formulaism whereby musical ideas recur and serve as essential building blocks? Or do both elements, to some extent, exist in *zan* hymns? What relationship exists between the lyrics and musical phrases? More importantly, this section also aims to find out whether there is a correlation between National style and Fuzhou style hymn singing, or whether these are different from each other.

Regarding my use of analytical terms: When talking about texts, I will use the terms "syllable", "cluster" and "line" to designate a single lexigraph, a group of lexigraphs and a full prosodic line respectively. When discussing music, the term "unit" designates one bar of material; "fragment" refers to a group of two or more units, and "phrase" indicates the complete melody of a textual line. The term "formula", in medieval Christian chant analysis, is defined as "a group of notes which is regularly employed under the same architectonic conditions to fulfill a given musico-syntactical function" (Jeffery 1992: 90). "Centonization" originally describes the creation of a religious text which was put together by drawing quotations from the Bible and other pre-existing literary sources. But in Christian chant scholarship it is also used to describe some form of musical formulaism (ibid.). To me, its original definition appears to imply a less structured and more random borrowing from various sources to create a new work. Thus, I will interpret centonization in this last sense to contrast it with formula as defined above.

Hu's data are based on his own transcriptions of *zan* sung by monks from Tianningsi monastery in Changzhou, Jiangsu. His article, however, failed to provide sufficient data and contains many inconsistencies in categorizations and unit numbering, making comprehension very frustrating and difficult.¹⁰ Hu's study only goes as far to show that melodic materials among hymns of different prosodic forms are in reality quite scanty and that there is more homogeneity in the hymn tunes than normally discerned. But to understand why and how formulaism or centonization is at work, I will take his analysis

⁹ A *qupai* is a named pre-existent tune (or tune family), with a standard title and a distinct musical and poetic structure, which serves as basic musical material for different texts or contexts. They occur widely across different regions and genres. See Gao Houyong 1989; Jones 1989, 1995. For "tune families" in Western folk music scholarship, see Cowdery 1990; Bayard 1944; Bronson 1951; Seeger 1966.

further by looking at the correlation between text and music.

Hu sets up a table showing a threefold classification: the general subject of the hymns, the number of tunes each group shares, and the number of texts, including each of their titles (see Table 4.1).

The first category, texts in praise of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which Hu collectively named Three Jewels Great Hymns (*Sanbao dazan*; hereafter Three Jewels Hymns), is said to have nine texts sharing one tune.¹¹ These texts have a common poetic form of eight lines of unequal lengths. The ninth item in this category, however, is confusing: Hu lists a text titled “Great Felicitation Hymn” (*Zhuyan dazan*), yet he also gives a separate category of Felicitation Hymns with four members. I have also found another 49-syllable 8-line hymn, *Fo gongde bukeliang* (“Inestimable Merit of the Buddha”), which shares almost the same prosody and the same tune as those in the Three Jewels category. Perhaps this latter hymn is Hu’s “Great Felicitation Hymn”.¹²

¹⁰ I will not give details of Hu’s full paper but will concentrate only on the relevant section on *zan* and *ji*.

¹¹ There are in reality more than nine texts in this same prosodic model; Hu probably omitted those because they are less commonly used today.

¹² See “Stylistic and linguistics conventions” preface regarding my policy in translating titles.

Table 4.1 Classification of hymns (adapted from Hu 1986: Fig. 2). Titles of three Felicitation Hymns are transliterations of Sanskrit and thus left untranslated.

Class of hymns	Three Jewels Great Hymns	Five Directions Hymns	Incense Hymns	Offertory Hymn	6-line Hymns	Refuge Hymn	Felicitation Hymns
No. of tunes	1	1	2	1	1	1	4
No. of texts with same prosody	9	5	2	1	100+	1	4
Names of hymn texts	Sakyamuni Great Hymn (<i>Shijia dazan</i>)	Praise to [the Buddha of] the East (<i>Zanli dongfang</i>)	Precious Censer Hymn (<i>Baoding zan</i>)	Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers (<i>Qiancheng xian xianghua</i>)	Censer Incense Hymn (<i>Luxiang zan</i>)	Refuge Hymn (Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Great Enlightened One (<i>Jishou guiyi dajuezhun</i>))	<i>Om mani bami hong</i>
	Amitabha, King of Great Vows (<i>Mituofu dayuanwang</i>)	Praise to the South (<i>Zanli nanfang</i>)	True Incense Hymn (<i>Jieding zhenxiang</i>)				<i>Om namo bage wadi</i>
	Guanyin's Deepest Vows (<i>Guanshiyin shiyuanshen</i>)	Praise to the West (<i>Zanli xifang</i>)			(and many more)		<i>Om amuqie</i>
	Medicine Buddha, King of Longevity (<i>Yaoshifo Yanshouwang</i>)	Praise to the North (<i>Zanli beifang</i>)					Long Live the Emperor (<i>Huangdi wansui</i>)
	Praising the Buddha (<i>Fobao zan</i>)	Praise to the Centre (<i>Zanli zhongyang</i>)					
	Praising the Dharma (<i>Fabao zan</i>)						
	Praising the Sangha (<i>Sengbao zan</i>)						
	Three Jewels Hymn (<i>Sanbao zan</i>)						
	Great Felicitation Hymn [?]						

The second category is the Five Directions Hymns (*Wufang zan*), which has five texts sharing one tune. The Incense Hymns (*Xiang zan*) group has two texts, “True Incense Hymn” (*Jieding zhenxiang*) and “Precious Censer Hymn” (*Baoding zan*), which have different prosodic forms and melodies. The fourth category, Offertory Hymn (*Gongyang zan*), is said to have one text and one tune.¹³ This 8-line hymn, I find, has a slightly different prosody than the 8-line hymns in the Three Jewels category and has a total of 53 syllables versus their 47 to 49. Yet I have found that it also shares the same tune as the Three Jewels Hymns. Next in Hu’s classification is 6-line hymns, with over a hundred texts sharing one tune. The 10-line “Refuge Hymn” is said to have one text and one melody,¹⁴ while the last group, Felicitation Hymns, has four texts and four tunes. Thus, according to Hu’s table, there are 11 tunes for well over 100 *zan* texts. For his analysis, he omits the “Refuge Hymn” because it has a completely unique tune, and analyses the 6-line hymns separately because their melodic units do not overlap significantly with the other categories. He then subdivides the remaining nine tunes into two groups: one of five hymns (Three Jewels, Five Directions, the two Incense Hymns, and the Offertory Hymn) and one of four Felicitation Hymns.

Hu divides these nine tunes into 42 melodic units (numbered consecutively), of which 41 consist of one 4/4 bar and one is a two-bar cadential motif. What these nine tunes share, Hu claims, is a general unity of melodic building blocks. Among the 42 units, 18 are shared by the five hymns group, and six of these 18, along with another five units, are shared by at least three of the four Felicitation Hymns; thus, six units are found in a majority of both subgroups. According to my calculus, the total number of bars in the nine *zan* hymns (i.e. the five hymns group and the four hymns group) is 586; a mere 14 melodic units (that is, 33% of the total number of types) account for 422 of those 586 bars (72% of all occurrences of the 42 units).

At the next level of complexity, these melodic units combine into recurring melodic fragments. Thus Hu’s units 1, 2, 3, and 4 form a recurring fragment. These fragments seem to consist of from about 4 to 8 melodic units each.

¹³ The full title of this hymn is *Qiancheng xian xianghua* (“Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers”). This is the title I will use here. Hu’s abbreviated title *Gongyang zan* (Offertory Hymn) is rather misleading because there are other texts of offertory nature collectively called *Gongyang zan*, but the particular hymn under discussion is not among them. See *Zansong Jiyao* (1925).

¹⁴ For convenience I follow Hu in referring to this *zan* as “Refuge Hymn”, but practitioners always use its full title, “Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Great Enlightened One” (*Jishou guiyi dajuezhun*). This is because, as seen in §3.2.2, many other hymns begin with the phrase “Prostrate and take refuge...” and thus might equally be collectively called “Refuge Hymns”. Since we only need hereafter to refer to one other of these,

Finally, Hu sees these melodic fragments as grouping into recurring melodic sections. He has often interpreted the occurrence of unit 4, the 2-bar cadential marker, as a signal of the end of a section.

In evaluating Hu's analysis, let us start by considering the potential limitations of Hu's choice of a unit length of basically one bar. First, obviously the choice of a single bar as a unit of analysis is an arbitrary one. However, it seems to me that at one level of analysis the bar is a salient unit in this repertoire. Granted, singers do not speak in terms of bars since they are almost never working from notated music and the bar is a notational concept. However, the emic existence of a basic 4/4 bar is confirmed by the percussion patterns that accompany hymns, as discussed below; melodies must interact with this basic framework. Also, in most cases Hu's one-bar units do occur independently in multiple contexts. There are of course cases where a melodic gesture may not be entirely complete in a single bar. We mentioned just above that the sequence of units 1-2-3-4 often functions as a recurring fragment, but these units may also occur independently.

Second, to arrive at a certain note, there are sometimes different possible idiomatic ways of melodic movement, which means that one of Hu's one-bar units might occur in an altered form due to melodic context. Comparing "wholes to wholes" is the basic principle set out by Cowdery for dividing melodies into formulas (Cowdery 1984, 1990), which might suggest that we need to look at each variant unit in its full context rather than as a single bar. However, in the same way that a linguist accepts that the English word *transmission* is both a single unit and a combination of the elements *trans-*, *-mit* (in contextual variant form) and *-sion*, so we can accept that two variants of a one-bar motif are indeed "the same" at one level of analysis. In the case of Chinese Buddhist hymn singing as in other orally transmitted musics, there are also non-contextual, "free" variants even within the same monastery or by the same singer. One weakness in Hu's analysis is the lack of parallel consideration of possible variants of the same *zan* hymn, but we will come back to this later.

In any case, given the other tasks I have set myself in this thesis, it would be a daunting undertaking to attempt to re-analyse Hu's data from the start. In order to make my own analysis comparable to Hu's, I accept that, in general and with few exceptions, it does not do a serious injustice to the music to start with the bar as a basic unit.

Hu's analysis is, on the whole, convincing: it accords with my own sense of the

we will give that one a different convenience name when it occurs, to avoid confusion.

basically formulaic structure of these hymns. However, there are serious discrepancies in the details of his Figure 3, which shows the number of occurrences of each of the 42 units in each of the nine melodies and his distribution analysis.¹⁵ Using Hu's own full staff transcriptions (1993: 95-206) and the tables in his 1986 paper, I will try to decipher his unit numbers. (For my numbering of the units, see Appendix 2.)

Following the order of *zan* texts outlined in Hu's Figure 3, the unit numbers and their occurrences match perfectly until the Offertory Hymn. Then Hu seems to have made a scribal error, recording unit 14 as occurring twice when it actually appears four times. He also recorded one occurrence of unit 19, but this musical motif does not occur at all in this hymn. He also wrongly ascribed an extra occurrence in the last unit (32) of this hymn. Hu may also have changed his mind about the identity of this unit since the number (but not the musical unit) confusingly appeared in one of the Felicitation Hymns. More confusion sets in among the four Felicitation Hymns. For example, Hu labelled the melodic unit d - - d c d e (2 - - 2123) as motif 37 in "Om Namō Bage Wadi", but in "Om Mani Bami Hong", this same unit was numbered as a variant of unit 15.

Faced with too many inconsistencies in this group of four Felicitation Hymns, I have decided to give a melodic unit a new number whenever I cannot link it to Hu's numbering. But since I have decided to follow in part Hu's method of analysis, I will adhere to his unit numbers as far as I can determine what they are and despite doubts about his approach to variants. To avoid ambiguity, I have elected not to number units as variants unless the underlying melody is clearly identical. In doing this, I end up with 50 units instead of the 42 Hu has prescribed (Appendix 2). When analysing the units in the context of whole phrases, it becomes clear that some ambiguous units are indeed variants. This again points to the weakness of segmenting motifs into one-bar units; but as it is sometimes extremely difficult to decide, it is better to be cautious.

Comparing the number of occurrences of units among the nine tunes of this group, we find units 4 and 8 occurring in all nine tunes (Appendix 3). The second most common units are 13, 14, and 15 with occurrences in eight of the *zan*, and unit 16 in seven. From this table, we can also see that the tune of the Offertory Hymn "Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers" is over 90% identical with that of the Three Jewels Hymns. We can say that the Three Jewels Hymns melody is a *qupai* (labelled tune) for nine or more 8-line hymn texts,

¹⁵ Hu's Figure 3 is not reproduced here, but I will present my own computation of the frequency of the motivic units (Appendix 3).

since texts of this prosody having a total of 48 or 49 syllables all have practically identical melodic outlines. In the case of the Offertory Hymn, although it has 53 syllables, it shares the same tune as the Three Jewels Hymns. But oddly enough, the second (and similarly the sixth) phrase of the “Three Jewels Hymn” (which has 6 syllables) has 8 musical units (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), while that of the Offertory Hymn (which has 7 syllables) has condensed the two units 8 and 9 into a single-bar unit 31 (units 5, 6, 31, 9, 10, 11, 12), cramming two extra syllables into one bar (Ex. 4.2).

Furthermore, we can also discern from the table that the first 16 bars of the 5-line “Precious Censer Hymn” are practically identical to the first half of the 8-line Three Jewels Hymns (minus units 8 and 9 in Three Jewels) (CD Tr. 1); while the melody of the 10-line Five Directions hymns shares melodic material with both the “True Incense Hymn” and the Three Jewels Hymns. Of the four Felicitation Hymns, the table (Appendix 3) shows that three of them – “Om Mani Bami Hong”, “Om Namó Bage Wadi” and “Long Live the Emperor” – share the most melodic materials, while “Om Omuqie” has many more new melodic units.

Ex. 4.2 Phrase 2 of “Three Jewels Hymn” and “Pious Offering” (in Hu 1993: 101-8, 190-201)

TJ
Gong cheng wu

PO
zhi hui

TJ
liang jie

PO
deng hong yan jiao

TJ
zhong,

PO
jia,

In Hu’s distribution analysis, he collates the units firstly into musical fragments (represented by lower-case letters), then further groups these fragments into larger sections (indicated by upper-case letters), using cadential unit 4 as a marker (Ex. 4.3).

Ex. 4.3 Hu’s (1986) distribution of melodic units in “Three Jewels Hymn”

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17 //

a b c

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 18¹⁶ + 4 // 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 //

a ca [sic] b

13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17 // 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17 //

c a c

1 + 2 + 3 + 19

a¹

a // b + c + a // ca // b + c + a // c + a¹

A A¹ A² A¹ A³

¹⁶ Hu miswrote this as unit 8, a clear scribal error.

A closer examination reveals that Hu has ignored textual syntactic structure. For example, his third musical phrase (c) consists of 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17. Unit 16 is a bar with no syllable, while 17 is the beginning of line 8 of the text (Ex 4.4). He has done so in order to retain the next 4 units as one group so as to show greater homogeneity among the phrases. Hu's analysis thus succeeds in revealing that there is much musical homogeneity among the phrases, but it does not tell us why this is so.

Ex. 4.4 Third phrase of “Three Jewels Hymn” (in Hu 1993: 103)

The image shows a musical score for the third phrase of the 'Three Jewels Hymn'. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff contains units u.13, u.8, and u.14. The second staff contains units u.15, u.16, and u.17. Below the notes are the syllables: 'wei wei zhang liu zi jin' on the first staff and 'rong jue dao' on the second staff. A long slur is drawn under the notes for units u.15, u.16, and u.17, indicating they are grouped together. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some quarter notes.

Going further from where Hu's analysis ends, I would argue that analyzing the melodic phrases according to textual syntax reveals not only a pattern of how the melodic formulas are organized but also a correlation between text, music and rhythmic pattern. The transmission of Buddhist vocal liturgy is entirely via oral tradition; printed hymn texts, however, serve as an important aide-memoire. The only musical feature marked in liturgical manuals is the rhythmic pattern (*banyan*). These markings provide clues to how the texts are set. As we shall see later, a single text may have different melodies, but the distribution of rhythmic patterns remains similar in each.

All *zan* have a simple 4/4 metre, against which may occur three rhythmic patterns. The basic rhythmic pattern, as mentioned earlier, is known as *zhengban* (Orthodox beat). A variant of this pattern occurs at the close of nearly all hymns (Ex. 4.5):

Ex. 4.5 Concluding rhythmic pattern in *zan*

The image shows a rhythmic pattern for the concluding part of a *zan*. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Hand-held gong' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Cymbals'. The notation shows a sequence of notes and rests on a five-line staff. The gong part has a series of quarter notes and rests, while the cymbal part has a series of eighth notes and rests. The pattern is repeated several times, ending with a double bar line.

Another rhythmic pattern which occurs only at cadential points is called *qixing ban* (Seven Stars Beat) by practitioners (Ex. 4.6). Performing this pattern is known as *guoban* (Crossing the Beat).

Ex. 4.6 Seven Stars Beat

The musical notation for Ex. 4.6 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Hand-held gong' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Cymbals'. The notation shows a sequence of rhythmic patterns with notes and rests, indicating the timing of the gong and cymbal strikes.

In *zan* with unit 4, this pattern occurs only at this cadence (cf. CD Tr. 1). In a great number of hymns, this cadential rhythm coincides with the last syllable of a line; according to Ven. Wuyi of Taiwan, this is known as *li guoban* (Inner Crossing the Beat). Occasionally, the cadential pattern begins on a bar with no syllable, in which case this is called *wai guoban* (“Outer Crossing the Beat”). I have found that this latter occurs only in three of the four Felicitation Hymns. In these cases, the Seven Stars beat begins a bar later than unit 4, which in these pieces occurs in a slight variant form (Ex. 4.7).

Ex. 4.7 *Wai guoban* in Felicitation Hymn “Long Live the Emperor” (in Hu 1993: 126)

The musical notation for Ex. 4.7 is arranged in three systems. Each system has three staves: 'Hand-held gong' (top), 'Cymbals' (middle), and a vocal line (bottom). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 30. The lyrics are: 'Huang di wan sui' (first system), 'wan sui wan wan' (second system), and 'sui,' (third system). A box labeled 'u.4' is placed above the first staff of the second system. The notation shows the timing of the gong and cymbal strikes relative to the vocal melody.

Giving consideration to textual syntax, I arrive at the following distribution (Ex. 4.8).

Ex. 4.8 Distribution analysis of the 4-line “True Incense Hymn”, 5-line “Precious Censer Hymn”, and 8-line “Three Jewels Hymn” (square brackets show repeats of the previous 2 phrases)

A. “True Incense Hymn” (sub-divided into 4 + 5 syllables)

20 + 21 + 22 + 12 // 13 + 28 + 25 + 12 // 23 + 3 + 4 // 13 + 28 + 25 + 12 //
a (4-syll.) b (5-syll.) c (4-syll.) b (5-syll.)

23 + 3 + 4 // 13 + 28 + 25 + 12 // 13 + 29 + 30 // 8 + 9 + 27 // coda
c (4-syll.) b (5-syll.) d (4-syll.) e (5-syll.)

B. “Precious Censer Hymn”

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // 5 + 6 + 7 + 10 + 11 + 12 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 //
a (5-syll.) b (4-syll.) c (7-syll.)

8 + 26 + 14 + 15 + 16 // 8 + 9 + 27 // [13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 // 8 + 9 + 27] // coda
c' (7-syll.) d (4-syll.) c (7-syll.) d (4-syll.)

C. “Three Jewels Hymn”

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 //
a (5-syll.) b (6-syll.) c (7-syll.)

17 + 1a + 2 + 3 + 4 // 13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 18 + 4 // 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 //
a' (5-syll.) c' (7-syll.) b (6-syll.)

13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 // 17 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 // [13 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 16 //
c (7-syll.) a' (5-syll.) c (7-syll.)

17 + 1 + 2 + 3a + 19]
a² (5-syll.)

Looking at all three hymns, I find that a general grammar emerges: within a hymn text, textual lines with the same number of syllables often use the same or similar melodic formulas. This demonstrates that the formulaic phrase of a single *zan* hymn is, to some

extent, linked to the length of textual lines. Yet there are cases when melodic phrases of text lines with the same number of syllables differ quite considerably (see “Precious Censer”, b & d). Thus this formulaic nature does not always apply. How can this discrepancy be explained? There is no easy answer to this question as hymn practitioners do not verbalize about their music in a theoretical manner. Wuyi of Taiwan, drawing from his personal experience, has attempted to offer his own thoughts on some aspects of hymn singing. I will draw from his notes to a recording (Shi Wuyi 1997) to see if it would help us understand how *zan* work, but where no explanations can be found, I will turn to the music itself to try and offer my own views.

I found that in most hymns, variations occur commonly in the opening and closing lines. Opening phrases of *zan* are never repeated in the same way later in the same hymn. This is due to the way *zan* hymns begin. The first two (or less often three) syllables are sung as a solo, on two or three reciting tones in a melismatic manner, usually pivoting around the second or third note of the scale, in *tempo rubato*. The precentor (*weinuo*) sings this opening solo without instrumental accompaniment; the assembly and percussion instruments join in when the tempo begins to settle down (cf. Tr. 1). This characteristic opening of *zan* hymns thus renders the melodic phrase of the first line somewhat different from subsequent lines with the same number of syllables (see e.g. “Three Jewels Hymn”). In “True Incense Hymn”, for example, subsequent 4-syllable phrases (3rd and 5th) are different from the opening because the melody is moving toward unit 4.

The last phrase of a hymn is also never quite the same as the previous phrases with the same number of syllables for two reasons. In the case of small hymns, a coda (triple invocation of a Bodhisattva) has to follow; thus to link the hymn and the coda smoothly, some melodic changes occur. Using the example of “True Incense Hymn” again, the penultimate 4-syllable phrase is yet different from phrases 3 and 5 which end with unit 4. It may be that the last musical phrase is building up towards the coda, so that the cadential pattern 4 with its extra bar would not be too obtrusive at this juncture; thus the melody needs to be different from phrases 3 and 5. In some instances (most 8-phrase hymns) where no coda follows, only minor adjustments are needed in the last bar or two in order to bring the hymn to an end (see ex 4.8C above).

According to Wuyi, textual lines having the same number of syllables are sung to the same *banyan* (rhythmic pattern) and same melody. This is something we have already established (with exceptions in opening and cadential contexts). But his reasoning on

rhythm gives us further food for thought. I found, from examining liturgical manuals, that in all the hymns that we have discussed lines that have the same number of syllables but different percussion patterns tend to be melodically different. But this argument leads us to a question: did the melodies come before the rhythmic pattern or vice versa? To find an answer would involve research into historical realms beyond the scope of this writing. For the present, I can only highlight some of the phenomena observed and raised some questions. Further research might yield some answers.

Moving from the nine tunes to the 6-line hymns which have a different melody, Hu, using “Censer Incense Hymn” as a model, says that the tune totals 22.5 bars (excluding the “Incense Cloud Canopy Bodhisattva” coda) and yields 11 units of various lengths, but he does not show what these units are for some reason. Perhaps he felt that the same principles were operative here as in the previous examples and thus the details of the analysis should be obvious. Giving the motifs numbers beginning with 71 and working upwards, I find that the 6th bar (unit 15) is the only bar that is in common with the other nine melodies. Based on Hu’s earlier criterion of one bar per motif, I arrive at 14 melodic units including unit 15 (Appendix 4). To get it down to 11, it appears he may have grouped any bar with no syllables with the one before it as being a single unit. The distribution analysis of this hymn shows that like other small hymns and 8-line hymns analyzed earlier, the formulaic structure of the melody complies with what I said (Ex. 4.9).

Ex. 4.9 Distribution analysis of “Censer Incense Hymn”

71 + 72 + 73 // 74 + 75 + 15 + 76 // 77 + 78 + 79 + 80 + 81 // 78 + 79 + 82 + 83 //
 a (4 syll.) b (4 syll.) c (7 syll.) d (5 syll.)

74a + 75 + 15 + 77 // 78 + 79 + 80a // coda
 b' (4 syll.) d' (5 syll.)

In addition to the main body of the hymn, all 5- or 6-line small hymns have a coda called Triple Invocation (*Sancheng*).¹⁷ The Bodhisattva to be invoked changes depending on the subject of the hymn. If it is an incense hymn, the deity venerated is usually Incense Cloud Canopy Bodhisattva; the Triple Invocation thus carries the words *Namo Xiangyungai Pusa Mohesa* (Reverent Incense Cloud Canopy Bodhisattva, Mahasattva).

¹⁷ Hu calls this Triple Invocation “Cloud Canopy” (*Xiangyungai*), but this is misleading as the name of the

This phrase is then repeated twice more, hence the title Triple Invocation. Although this melodic section is usually appended to small hymns, it may sometimes be sung independently. Looking at Hu’s transcriptions (1993), I found that the coda of the “True Incense Hymn” and “Precious Censer Hymn” shares the same melody (CD Tr. 2). This short coda contains small units and fragments from “True Incense Hymn”, but about 57% of it is new (Ex. 4.10). The Triple Invocation for “Censer Incense Hymn” (and all 6-line hymns), in contrast, has its own unique melody.

Ex. 4.10 “True Incense Hymn” Triple Invocation (in Hu 1993: 173)



6-line hymns also have another coda with a different melody: *Mohe borui boluomi* (Sanskrit. *Maha Prajnaparamita*, meaning The Great Perfection of Wisdom), which is also repeated three times and can also be sung independently.

Large hymns of 8 or 10 lines do not have codas, although there is an exception in the Offertory Hymn “Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers”. In this hymn, the homage is paid to Universal Offering Bodhisattva (*Pugongyang Pusa*). Stylistically, this coda is much faster (in 2/4 rhythm) and less melismatic than the others.

To summarize so far, if we use the “labelled melody” system of Chinese music, we can say that all 6-line *zan* texts use one labelled melody. As the most common hymn text in this category is the “Censer Incense Hymn” (*Luxiang zan*), this may serve as a *qupai* title. The melodic material in this *qupai* is 93% unique, having only one of its 14 units in common with the other hymns. The “Three Jewels Hymn” (*Sanbao zan*) can perhaps be taken as the representative of the whole Three Jewels Hymns group as the labelled melody for 8-line hymns sharing the same prosody. The 5-line “Precious Censer Hymn” (*Baoding zan*)

Bodhisattva revered may change according to context.

shares 90% of its melody with the “Three Jewels Hymn”, as do the Five Directions Hymns (*Wufang zan*). Thus the “Three Jewels Hymn” can be said to be a *qapai* for many hymn texts. Three of the four Felicitation Hymns share very similar melodic materials, while the other has some common units with the others but has more new units. We can therefore say there are two tunes in this category. Thus with reference to Table 4.1, we can see that the nine tunes Hu started with are now reduced to five tunes with motivic overlaps among these as well. Adding the two independent tunes for 6-line hymns and the “Refuge Hymn”, there are thus seven basic tunes for a large corpus of *zan* texts.

Within individual hymns, we can discern a correlation between structural levels of the text and melody. Entire melodic phrases often assume formulaic functions and serve as melodic building blocks in relation to textual syntax. This formulaic principle may sometimes also be seen at work among different hymns (for example, phrases with 4 syllables with melodic units 23 + 3 + 4 can be found in both Five Directions Hymns and “True Incense”), but this is not as common as within one single hymn. Several independent units (including 8, 12, 13, 15, 17 and more rarely 4) can be interspersed, in a centonate fashion, among Hu’s group of nine tunes. Unit 4 is more often paired with 3, and this pair recurs in the Three Jewels, “True Incense” and Five Directions hymns. Unit 8 may sometimes pair up with units 9 or 14, and so on. Thus, a melodic phrase may comprise a configuration of different single one-bar or two-bar units in a complicated “mosaic” manner I defined earlier as centonization. This structure is not dissimilar to that of Nanguan songs found in Minnan (see Wang Y. 1992a).

4.2.2 Musical characteristics of Fuzhou style hymns

In §3.1.1 we saw that ritual action occurs in association with two different altars: the Buddha Altar and the Spirit Altar. Similarly, ritualists in Minnan often classify *zan* into two groups: “before the Buddha” (*foqian*) and “before the Spirit” (*lingqian*) (see *Chanlin Zanji* 1934). However, the first category includes (among others) invocation and laudatory hymns, both of which are sung not only before the Buddha Altar but also before the Spirit Altar. In contrast, all *lingqian* hymns are indeed for the purpose of lamenting the spirit (*tanwang*, lit. sighing for the dead). As mentioned in §3.2.3, their texts contain words of admonition and proselytisation; they are meant to educate and encourage the dead (and the living!) about Buddhist mores. These hymns are therefore performed only before the Spirit Altar. Since the *foqian* hymns are not necessarily performed *before* the Buddha but are

always *for* the Buddha, let us translate these two categories of hymn for clarity as “Buddha hymns” and “Spirit hymns”.

Furthermore, Buddha hymns are also sung in the daily rituals or other calendrical rituals, while Spirit hymns are uniquely for *gongde*. This means that a common repertory of Buddha hymn texts is performed in two singing styles, National and Fuzhou. Within a *gongde*, either of these two styles may be sung. When and why is one style preferred over the other? This question relates to interesting musical issues such as modifications in melodic lines, rhythm and tempo, and to extra-musical factors involving socio-religious and political change. These issues, however, will be discussed separately below. Note also that any institutional monk wishing to perform *gongde* must learn at least a few hymns in Fuzhou style (or some other locally acceptable alternative to National style): all *gongde* must include some lamentation hymns, but there are none available in National style.

This section will focus mainly on finding out how Fuzhou style hymns are constructed. Wuyi, the Taiwanese monk, is of the opinion that the tunes of hymns from Fuzhou (also popularly disseminated in Taiwan but known there as *Gushan diao*, Gushan style) are really variants of the National style. This hypothesis will be tested. If the melodic content is consistently different, it will also be interesting to see whether, as in the National style, a *qupai* tune type system and similar melodic-textual characteristics also occur in Fuzhou style. Let us begin with Fuzhou style Buddha hymns.

4.2.3 Buddha hymns

Some words must be said about the repertory available to me and about the sources I will be relying on. To test the hypothesis that Fuzhou style *zan* may be variants of the National style, it makes sense to compare hymns with the same lyrics as those analysed in §4.2.1. In this section, the data used will centre on my recording and my transcriptions of the Fuzhou monk Benfa. (All transcriptions are by me unless otherwise stated.) My recordings of Benfa, in March 1999, were made out of the context of *gongde*. On these occasions, melodic instruments, played by musicians Benfa hired, accompanied the singing; my transcriptions will omit the melodic instruments, although I will make some observations about them later when discussing variants. Since I did not know at the time of my fieldwork that I would be making such an analysis, I do not have some of the hymns ideally needed for comparison.

The late Quanzhou musician Cai Junchao’s transcriptions of Buddhist hymns are

possible alternative resources. Having transcribed a few pieces from Cai's own collection of recordings which he had kindly made available to me (Discography, R15), I was able to compare my own transcriptions with Cai's.¹⁸ In terms of the main melodic lines, his transcriptions are accurate; however, details such as ornaments were sometimes only sketchily notated or even omitted. But since these details do not affect the broad picture, such minor discrepancies do not devalue Cai's transcriptions.

Having said this, comparing hymns sung by Benfa with their equivalents in Cai's transcriptions, I sometimes found considerable variation. I analyze such variation in §4.4.2, but at this stage – searching for relationships between Fuzhou and National styles, and structural characteristics – it will be easier to work with one version only. Another limitation of Cai's collections is the lack of clear labelling: at times it is unclear whether a hymn is in Fuzhou or National style; hence again it is best to start with my own recordings. In comparing with Hu's transcriptions of the National style, then, I will start with Benfa's versions, turning to Cai's transcriptions only when I do not have my own recordings of Fuzhou style versions of hymns analysed by Hu.

It appears to me that some texts used specifically for *gongde* do not exist in a National style version at all. It is tempting to take this as an indication that such hymns exist only in the regional style, perhaps because institutional monks tend to eschew *gongde* in the first place. However, there are also Fuzhou style hymns sung in non-*gongde* contexts for which I can find no National style version (e.g. "Incense, Flower, Lamp, Oil and Fruit"; "Putuo Mountains of the South Sea"). Further research is thus required before drawing conclusions.

To check whether Fuzhou style hymns are variants of the National style (or of course vice versa), I compared the same repertory of texts analysed by Hu Yao with their settings in Fuzhou style. But several hymns had to be omitted: the four Felicitation Hymns are not used in *gongde*, nor could I find Fuzhou style versions of "Praise to the West" and "Precious Censer Hymn". This leaves us with the Three Jewels Hymns, "Refuge Hymn", "True Incense Hymn", "Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers" and "Censer Incense Hymn". In addition, I will also examine other hymns used commonly in the context of *gongde*. Appendix 5 lists the Fuzhou style hymns examined in this section; Appendix 6 lists Fuzhou style melodic units.

¹⁸ Items in the Discography, referred to in the text and in Example captions, are indicated by R plus a number, or by CFJ + number for my own field tapes.

Comparing the 6-line “Censer Incense Hymn” sung in Fuzhou style by Benfa with that sung in National style by an elderly monk Longgen (and also verifying with Hu Yao’s version), we discover that they are clearly variants (CD Trs. 3 and 4). The Fuzhou style, however, features melodic simplification (end of line 1), different melodic gestures and shortening of the cadence (first half of line 2), along with minor changes in text distribution (line 3) (Ex. 4.11). Comparing my transcription of Benfa with that of the *caigu* singing the same hymn in the same Fuzhou style, we find other changes. But we will come back to this in §4.4. Comparing “Willow Branch Purified Water”, another 6-line hymn with the same prosody as “Censer Incense Hymn”, sung also by Benfa, the two hymns are found to be close variants. Since the Fuzhou style “Censer Incense Hymn” is a variant of the National style, and another 6-line Fuzhou style hymn with the same prosody also has the same melody, we can conclude that only one melody exists in all 6-line hymns.

Ex. 4.11 “Censer Incense Hymn” in a) National style by Shi Longgen (Discog. R15, transcr. by H.S. Tan) and b) Fuzhou style by Shi Benfa (Discog. R6)

The musical score is organized into three systems, each containing two parts: (a) National style and (b) Fuzhou style. Each system includes staves for Hand-held gong, Cymbals, and a vocal line.

System 1:

- Hand-held gong:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Cymbals:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Vocal line (a):** Treble clef, lyrics: L@ xiang
- Vocal line (b):** Treble clef, lyrics: L@ hong

System 2:

- Hand-held gong:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Cymbals:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Vocal line (a):** Treble clef, lyrics: z@ yi (ei)
- Vocal line (b):** Treble clef, lyrics: z@ lie

System 3:

- Hand-held gong:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Cymbals:** Two staves showing rhythmic patterns with vertical bar lines.
- Vocal line (a):** Treble clef, lyrics: fa (a) jie (ci) mo— ng
- Vocal line (b):** Treble clef, lyrics: hua (a) gai b@ - (a) ng

a) *fa ai* etc.
 cadence curtailed
 b) *bai*

Detailed description: This musical score shows two staves, a and b, with lyrics underneath. Staff a) has lyrics 'fa ai' and 'etc.' Staff b) has the lyric 'bai'. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. There are rests and various note values (quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes) throughout. A 'cadence curtailed' label is placed between the two staves.

However, a comparison of the Three Jewels Hymns, “Pious Offering of Incense and Flowers”, “Refuge Hymn” and “True Incense Hymn” with their National style textual equivalents reveals no melodic resemblance (Ex. 4.12). Thus, only the “Censer Incense Hymn” is closely similar in the two styles. Since this only became clear to me on detailed musical analysis, it is difficult to ascertain at this point why this should be so. Further research is needed.

Ex. 4.12 “Three Jewels Hymn” in Fuzhou and National styles

a = Fuzhou style in Cai 1998
 b = National style in Hu 1993

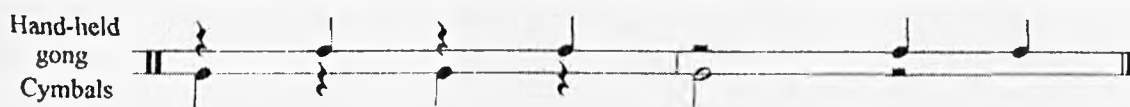
a) *Fo bao zan*
 b) *Fo bao zan*
 a) *wu*
 b) *wu*
 a) *qiong* etc.
 b) *qiong*

Detailed description: This musical score compares two styles: Fuzhou style (a) and National style (b). It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has lyrics 'Fo bao zan'. The second system has the lyric 'wu'. The third system has the lyric 'qiong' and 'etc.'. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The Fuzhou style (a) generally features more complex rhythmic patterns and melodic ornamentation compared to the National style (b).

The performers rarely find it necessary to verbalise about distinct musical features of hymn singing because melodies are passed on orally by rote. Very few practitioners formulate theories or verbalise about this aspect of their tradition. This indifference, I believe, is also linked to doctrinal Buddhist disdain of music related to non-cultivation contexts (see further §4.5 on politics and music). On one occasion I played a recording of a Fuzhou style hymn sung by Benfa to Sister Miaolian of Quanzhou; she told me the tune sounded different from her version, although my analysis shows them to be close variants. Indeed, the ear may be easily deceived through just listening. There are, I feel, various reasons why Sister Miaolian did not relate Benfa’s version to her own. First, Benfa was singing in the Fuzhou dialect, which is unfamiliar to Miaolian, who sings in Quanzhou dialect; the hymn therefore sounded alien to her. Also, the contour of the melody has changed somewhat, as we shall see later.

Bearing in mind the syntactic formulaism of the National style, I looked more closely at the correlation between melody, rhythm and text distribution. Firstly, the basic 4/4 metre is also characteristic of Fuzhou style hymns. The Orthodox (*Zhengban*) beat (Ex. 4.1 above) also dominates; but for the *guoban* cadential rhythmic pattern, instead of the more complex Seven Stars Beat of National style hymns (Ex. 4.6), Fuzhou style uses a relatively simple pattern called Three Stars Beat (*Sanxing ban*; Ex. 4.13).

Ex. 4.13 Three Stars Beat



Despite this difference, if we compare the *banyan* rhythmic patterns of “Censer Incense Hymn”, Three Jewels Hymns and “Refuge Hymn” in manuals for National and Fuzhou style contexts, the overall distribution of strong and weak beats and the duration of syllables can be said to correspond closely between the two styles. As said earlier, *zan* hymns passed down in printed form carry only texts and *banyan* symbols; textual prosody and the stipulated rhythmic symbols therefore act as a guide as to how the syllables should be distributed melodically. In the “Three Jewels Hymn”, for example, to the right of the second character *bao* are written two hand-gong strokes (-) followed by a wooden fish symbol (o) and two more gong strokes. This is a clue that this syllable falls on the third beat and is extended by one extra bar. Assuming that the National style developed earlier than Fuzhou style, composers of Fuzhou style hymns, when composing new melodies to these

texts, may have modelled it on the rhythmic patterns of the National style since it is available to them in printed form. This close resemblance in text distribution between National and Fuzhou styles is quite common even though the melodies are different. In the example of the “Refuge Hymn”, it is probably no coincidence that the tie over to the next bar following the second syllable of lines 2, 4 and 8 can be found in both National and Fuzhou styles (Ex. 4.14 (a) and (b) respectively).

Ex. 4.14 “Refuge Hymn” showing similar text setting ((a) in Hu 1993: 110, transposed in the key of C; (b) in CFJ 027)

The image displays musical notation for the "Refuge Hymn" in two styles: (a) National style and (b) Fuzhou style. Each style is shown in two staves. The lyrics are written below the notes. In style (a), the lyrics are "Wu shang neng" with a tie over "shang". In style (b), the lyrics are "Wu shang (wu shang) neng" with a tie over "(wu shang)". A second system shows the word "ren" in both styles, with "etc." to the right.

Yet again, there are exceptions. In the “True Incense Hymn”, the *banyan* indication in Fuzhou style is different from that in the National style. This results therefore in quite distinct text distributions (Ex. 4.15).

Just as in National style, textual syntax also has some relation to the choice of melodic building blocks within one single Fuzhou style hymn: lines with the same prosody often share the same melodic phrases (Ex 4.16; cf. §4.2.1, Exx. 4.3, 4.8). From the following example, we can see that syntactic formulaic principle is also at work to some extent in Fuzhou style hymns – but again, as in National style, there are exceptions.

Ex. 4.16 Text–melody relationships in several Fuzhou style hymns (c.f. Ex. 4.8)

A. The Merit of Reciting Buddha’s Name (*Nianfo gongde*)

11 + 6 // 12 + 2 + 13 // 14 + 15 + 16 + 46 // 11a + 6 //

a (4 syll.) b (4 syll.) c (5 syll.) a' (4 syll.)

12 + 2 + 13 // 17 + 18 + 3a // 19 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 47 // 14 + 15 + 16 + 3

b (4 syll.) d (8 syll.) e (9 syll.) c' (5 syll.)

B. “Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom”

33 + 59 + 34 + 13 // 35 + 35 + 56 + 6 // 36 + 37 // 38 + 46 //

a (7 syll.) b (7 syll.) c (5 syll.) d (5 syll.)

39 + 40 + 41 + 14a // 2 + 42 + 19a + 34 + 13 // 35 + 35 + 56 + 6 //

e (9 syll.) a' (7 syll.) b (7 syll.)

36 + 37 // 38 + 13b // 39a + 40 + 41 + 14a + 9a

c (5 syll.) d' (5 syll.) e' (9 syll.)

C. “True Incense Hymn”

11 + 6 // 12 + 2 + 13a // 11b + 6 // 36 + 37 // 18a + 3a //

a (4 syll.) b (5 syll.) a (4 syll.) c (5 syll.) d (4 syll.)

43 + 37a + 37 // 18a + 3a // 12 + 2
 e (5 syll.) d (4 syll.) b' (5 syll.)

D. "Refuge Hymn"

20 + 21 + 22 + 6 // 23 + 24 + 25 + 9b + 10a // 20a + 21 + 22 + 6 //
 a (7 syll.) b (4 syll.) a (7 syll.)

23 + 24a + 25 + 9b + 10a // 26 + 27 // 28 + 27 // 29 + 30 //
 b (5 syll.) c (4 syll.) c' (4 syll.) d (6 syll.)

31 + 25 + 9b + 10a // 20a + 21 + 22 + 6 // 23 + 24a + 32
 b' (4 syll.) a (7 syll.) b² (4 syll.)

In National style hymns, the formulaic principle occasionally works among different hymns. That is to say, whole melodic phrases having the same number of syllables may recur in different hymns; for example, a 7-syllable phrase may recur in 8-line, 10-line and Felicitation Hymns. However, in Fuzhou style, I do not seem to detect similar macro "syntactic formulas" at work. What is more characteristic of Fuzhou style, but occurs to a lesser extent in National style, is that a hymn begins (and sometimes ends) like another existing tune, but the melody diverges at some point and melodic units or phrases from other hymns are added like a patchwork. Several hymns of different prosodic metre have for their basis the melody of the 10-line "Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom", which sometimes serves as an almost complete tune model with only a few divergences, while longer texts see a greater process of centonization at work. The four texts which draw many or most of their melodic phrases from the "Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom" (hereafter IPMW) are "Jeta Garden" (*Jiegu yuan*)¹⁹, "Incense Burning Above" (*Xiangfen zai shangfang*), "Wondrous Scripture of Lotus" (*Miaodian shuo lianhua*) and "Incense, Flower, Lamp, Oil and Fruit" (*Xiang hua deng tu guo*).

Looking first at "Jeta Garden", this 8-line hymn begins with its unique melodic unit (58) with the first and second syllable of line 1 on the first two beats of that unit, followed by the three units 59, 34, 13 (CD Tr. 5). IPMW has a different opening followed by the same three units. The hymns otherwise share the same melodic sequence up to the fourth text line (Ex. 4.17) (CD Tr. 6).

¹⁹ "Jeta Garden", a Prostrate and Take Refuge hymn, has three stanzas dedicated to the Three Jewels.

Ex. 4.17 IPMW and “Jeta Garden” by Benfa in Fuzhou style (CFJ 027)

IPMW
Jie xiang ding xiang

JG
Ji shou (Ji shou)

IPMW
yu hui xiang,

JG
gui yi fo,

IPMW
Mu dan shao yao zhen kan

JG
fo zai jie gu

IPMW
xian, su you zhan nei deng

JG
yuan (jie gu yuan) shuo fa

IPMW
qing jing tu gong yang

JG
shuo fa li ren tian

The two hymns have rather different prosody, but the text and melody are adapted to each other in several ways: the first two syllables in “Jeta Garden” are repeated since its first line has two less syllables than IPMW; unit 35 in line 2 of IPMW is repeated to accommodate seven syllables, while this is not necessary in “Jeta Garden” since its

second line only has five syllables. The next two lines have the same prosody and therefore need not change. However, line 5 of IPMW has nine syllables while that of “Jeta Garden” has only five. This extreme incompatibility in the prosody makes it impossible to continue with the melody of IPMW. The next few lines of “Jeta Garden” consist of fragments from various sources (Ex. 4.18).

Ex. 4.18 Units 11b to 3a of “Jeta Garden”

Units 11 and 6 from "The Merit of Reciting"
Wei wei fo tuo ye

Variant of unit 59 Units 34 and 13 of IPMW
wan de fo tuo ye

Units 17, variant of 18 and 3a from "The Merit of Reciting"
xiao zai yan shou fo tuo ye

To end, the last line of “Jeta Garden” borrows a melodic unit from the “True Incense Hymn” to fit the first two syllables; the next two syllables comprise a new melodic unit; then the last three syllables return to the ending of IPMW. But since IPMW continues with a Triple Invocation coda while “Jeta Garden” does not, a little melodic cadence has to be added to round off the latter hymn (Ex. 4.19).

Ex. 4.19 Last line of “Jeta Garden” and IPMW

Jeta Garden Unit 43 from "True Incense" New unit Units 41, 14a and 9a from IPMW
Nan mo zhen ru fo tuo

JT
ye

end of IPMW Triple Invocation Coda etc.
sa Nan mo pu

A feature of Fuzhou style less common in National style is the borrowing of melodic fragments to fit different prosody. In the case of “Incense Burning Above” (*Xiangfen zai shangfang*), the hymn begins with its own melodic unit, filling the first four syllables of a 5-syllable line. The next four melodic units are derived from the first line of IPMW. In IPMW, however, the seven syllables of line 1 take up this melodic phrase, but in its new context (“Incense Burning Above”), unit 62 serves the last syllable of line 1 while units 59, 34 and 13 form the melodic phrase for the second line (Ex. 4.20).

Ex. 4.20 “Incense Burning Above” (CFJ 027) and IPMW

The image displays two systems of musical notation comparing the IBA (Incense Burning Above) and IPMW (Incense, Flower, Lamp, Oil and Fruit) styles. Each system consists of two staves: the top staff is labeled 'IBA' and the bottom staff is labeled 'IPMW'. The first system shows the IBA staff with lyrics 'Xiang fen zai shang fang, Rui ai' and the IPMW staff with lyrics 'Jie xiang ding xiang'. The second system shows the IBA staff with lyrics 'jin lu fang' and the IPMW staff with lyrics 'yu hui xiang,'. The notation includes treble clefs, notes, rests, and lyrics in Chinese characters and Pinyin.

To further illustrate the prevalence of this phenomenon in Fuzhou style, here is another example from the 13-phrase “Incense, Flower, Lamp, Oil and Fruit”. A fragment of its fourth melodic phrase (units 41, 14a and 2) is from IPMW; here this fragment fills the last 2 syllables of a 5-syllable line while in IPWM it forms the second half of a 9-syllable line (Ex. 4.21).

Ex. 4.21 Comparison of IFLOF (CFJ 027) and IPMW

The image displays three systems of musical notation comparing IPMW and IFLOF styles. Each system consists of two staves: the top staff is labeled IPMW and the bottom staff is labeled IFLOF. The first system shows IPMW with lyrics 'Miao pu ti' and IFLOF with lyrics 'Ci bei ai'. A box above the IFLOF staff is labeled 'Variant unit from "Jeta Garden"'. The second system shows IPMW with lyrics 'guo feng xian fa zhong wang,' and IFLOF with lyrics 'na'. The third system shows IPMW with lyrics 'Yu (first syllable of line 6)' and IFLOF with lyrics 'shou,'. Both systems end with 'etc.'.

These examples illustrate the complex ways melodic fragments may be excerpted from one hymn to serve in another context. In these cases, these fragments do not seem to function as syntactical divisions in the text. If the term *formula*, as applied to analysis of medieval Christian chant, suggests “a group of notes which is regularly employed under the same architectonic conditions to fulfill a given musico-syntactical function” (Jeffery 1992: 90), this term is less suitable for the phenomenon just described. Until further “emic” conceptions of “formula” can be ascertained, perhaps for now the idea of centonization may be used loosely to depict the seemingly more random borrowing and arranging of melodic fragments into a mosaic to create a new hymn tune.

Another feature shared by National and Fuzhou styles is the presence of melodic models (*qupai*) for a large number of texts. We saw earlier that National style hymns having the same text prosody and *banyan* normally also share a tune type. Similarly, I found that the *qupai* system also operates in Fuzhou style hymns. The 6-line “Censer Incense Hymn” melody serves as the *qupai* for all 6-line hymns having the same prosody and *banyan*. And three hymns which share a single tune – “Buddha Dharma Sangha Three Jewels”, “Refuge Hymn” and “Light a Stick of Sandalwood Incense” – turn out all to be 10-line texts with very similar prosody (Ex. 4.22).

Ex. 4.22 Textual prosody of “Buddha Dharma Sangha Three Jewels”, “Refuge Hymn” and “Light a Stick of Sandalwood Incense”

BDSTJ 9, 4, 7, 4, 4, 4, 6, 4, 9, 4
 RH 7, 4, 7, 5, 4, 4, 6, 4, 7, 4
 LSSI 7, 4, 7, 4, 4, 4, 6, 4, 7, 4

Although the first and eighth lines of BDSTJ have 9 syllables, the extra two syllables are made to fit into the melody phrase. The same happens to the fourth line of RH.

As for the 8-line Three Jewels Hymns, my data is incomplete; turning to Cai’s transcriptions (1999), I found that, as with the National style, at least four hymns of this textual and prosody type (sung by the same singer) share the same melody. Going back to Benfa’s singing, I found that two 8-line hymns with different prosody from the Three Jewels Hymns share another unique tune model. Table 4.2 summarizes the situation.

Table 4.2 Fuzhou style hymn texts sharing same tune models

6-line: 4, 4, 7, 5, 4, 5 One tune	8-line: 5 (or 6), 6, 7, 5 (or 6), 7, 6, 7, 5 One tune (Cai 1999)	8-line: 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5 One tune (from Benfa)	10-line: 7 (or 9), 4, 7, 4 (or 5), 4, 4, 6, 4, 7 (or 9), 4 One tune
Censer Incense Hymn	Three Jewels Hymn	Tathagata Gem of Buddhas	Buddha Dharma Sangha Three Jewels
Willow Branch Purified Water and others	Medicine Buddha Incense of Precepts and Meditation	True Incense Hymn	Refuge Hymn Light a Stick of Sandalwood Incense
	Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom		

Thus there are in reality only about eight or nine tunes, depending on how one quantifies a tune which is a patchwork of various tunes, in Fuzhou style for a total of 155 texts or so. This *qupai* system is further confirmed in a hymn manual compiled in the 1930s by a monk from Fuzhou (see preface to *Zansong Jiyao*). Some hymns or hymn groups in this manual are clearly labelled with names of *qupai*. For example, the group of Ten Offering Hymns (*Shigong ji*) beginning with the “True Incense Hymn” has the *qupai* title *Gua jinsuo*, while another group of offering hymns beginning with the text *Xiang caire* has the *qupai* title *Jisheng cao*. The *qupai* titles *Langtao sha* and *Shizai gong* also appear. At the end of some texts are other labels such as *Jinxian ban* and *Siming qiang*

which seem to imply singing styles of some sort. Yet many other texts do not carry *qupai* labels.

4.2.4 Conclusion

In summary, examination of both National and Fuzhou *zan* hymn styles makes it quite clear that they have different melodic repertoires. But in terms of broad melodic characteristics, the two styles share many traits: correlation among textual prosody, melody and rhythm; some form of *qupai* system; and so on. Yet at the same time, the organization of Fuzhou style hymns appears to be less tightly structured than that of National style hymns. This may be due to the fact that the National repertory is smaller and more limited in context. Further probing (in the next section) into the parameters of overall melodic contour and variation may provide us with more clues about the principles of *zan* hymns. Let us now examine *zan* hymns sung before the Spirit Altar.

4.2.5 Spirit hymns: laments for the dead

Laments for the dead (*tanwang zan*), as mentioned above, are songs containing words of exhortation and teachings of the Buddha sung to the spirit. For parallelism, we will refer to these by their alternative name, Spirit hymns. There are over 100 texts of this type, and their prosodic metres are more varied than National style hymns. In the National style, 5-, 6-, 8- and 10-line texts are the most common, while Spirit hymns may have texts of over 20 phrases (their textual prosody is discussed in §3.2.4). In present-day *gongde*, long laments are very rarely sung; one such text which is sometimes still sung today is “Prostrate and Take Refuge with the Stalwart” (*Jishou guiyixiong*). This hymn is actually from the Flaming Mouth Universal Salvation rite; a few other hymns in this rite are also popularly used in *gongde*.

I will, however, also briefly analyze some of the long Spirit hymns. One aim is to see how their music is related, or not as the case may be, to Fuzhou style Buddha hymns. To do so, it is necessary to continue to use my own recordings of Benfa. In §4.4.2, I will compare the singing of Benfa with that of the *caigu* in Minnan.

In general (and accepting that my sample is small), analysis of Benfa’s Spirit hymns revealed almost no new melodic units or fragments. This implies that there are no independent new tunes in this category of hymns. Instead melodies of most Spirit hymns are built on fragments of several pre-existing Fuzhou style Buddha hymns. Of the few

source tunes from which new Spirit hymn tunes are largely composed, the five most frequently used are the “Refuge Hymn” (hereafter RH), “Offering of Flowers to Manjusri” (*Hua fengxian Wenshu*; OFM), the “Merit of Reciting Buddha’s Name” (*Nianfo gongde*; MRBN), “Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom” (*Jiexiang dingxiang yu huixiang*; IPMW) and “Incense Burning Above” (*Xiangfen zai shangfang*; IBA). In the Spirit hymns, both formulaism and centonization are prevalent. Compared to the National style, the structure of Spirit hymns appears less ordered. My observations when transcribing and analysing the hymns support this statement.

Examining the five hymns most commonly drawn on for Spirit hymns, I discovered an interesting phenomenon: OFM and RH often pair up to provide melodic units, fragments and phrases for certain Spirit hymns, while MRBN, IPMW and IBA form another group for other hymns to draw upon. These two groups tend not to overlap, although there were two exceptional cases, discussed later.

Since Spirit hymn texts show great variety in length and prosody, the mosaic feature is even more prominent here than in the Fuzhou style Buddha hymns. The formulaic principle, in which melodic phrases having the same number of syllables can be transplanted from the source hymn to the new hymn, is comparatively prevalent in Spirit hymns. In the nine hymns analysed, musical formulae for 7-syllable lines are commonly borrowed for 7-syllable lines in Spirit hymns. Formulae for 4- and 5-syllable lines are also frequently transplanted. However, there is also versatility in that borrowed formulae may not always be used for lines with the exact same number of syllables. A phrase originally of 7 syllables may be used for a line with fewer syllables (Ex. 4.23), or a source phrase of 4 syllables may be used for a 5-syllable line in the new Spirit hymn.

Ex. 4.23 Phrase 6 (7-syll.) of IPMW used in Spirit hymn *Chunyu hefeng* (CFJ 026)

The image displays musical notation for three examples of a 7-syllable phrase. Each example consists of two staves: a top staff for the source melody and a bottom staff for the target melody. The notes are aligned to show the transposition of the melodic structure.

- Source IPMW:** The top staff shows a melody with seven notes. The first note is labeled 'su' and the seventh note is labeled 'tuo'.
- Chunyu Hefeng:** The middle staff shows the same melodic structure transposed. The first note is labeled 'hu' and the seventh note is labeled 'die'.
- IPMW:** The bottom staff shows the original 7-syllable phrase from IPMW. The notes are labeled 'gong', 'yang', 'da', 'shi', 'jia', and 'etc.'.
- CH:** The bottom staff shows the same 7-syllable phrase from IPMW transposed into the CH style. The notes are labeled 'cheng', 'shuang', and 'dui'.

In the above cases the words are adapted to the music, but at times the music may be tampered with to fit the words. Thus the first line of “Lamenting about the Fisherman” (*Kantan yuweng*) has 4 syllables but borrows its melody from the 7-syllable first phrase of RH (CD Tr. 7 and 8). Given this large prosodic difference, the musical phrase of the source hymn is contracted to fit the 4-syllable line of the new hymn (Ex. 4.24).

Ex. 4.24 First phrase of “Refuge Hymn” (CFJ 027) and “Lamenting about the Fisherman” (CFJ 026) by Benfa

The image displays three systems of musical notation. Each system consists of two staves: the top staff is labeled 'RH' and the bottom staff is labeled 'LAF'.
 - The first system shows a melody in RH and its corresponding LAF version.
 - The second system shows a contraction of the melody. A bracket under the LAF staff indicates a section where the melody is shortened to fit a shorter line. The word 'contraction' is written below the bracket.
 - The third system shows the continuation of the melody, ending with 'etc.' on the right side.

Centonization is also evident in nearly all the hymns analysed here. “Summer Days are Bright” (*Xiari zhengqinghe*), for example, opens with one variant unit (59a) from IPMW, then a unit (62) is borrowed from IBA. These two units form the first phrase, serving the first textual line of 5 syllables. A segment (units 59, 34 and 13) from IPMW becomes the second phrase, another 5-syllable line. Oddly enough, units 62, 59, 34 and 13 are segments found at the beginning of IBA. If we look at the prosody of the first two lines of both texts, both have 5-syllable lines.

IBA: 61 + 62 // 59 + 34 + 13
 5-syll 5-syll.

SDAB: 59a + 62 // 59 + 34 + 13
 5-syll. 5-syll.

Transcribing the Spirit hymns revealed various interesting facts. In long Spirit hymns, I noticed that the singers sometimes became quite lost or appeared uncertain about the melodies of some lines. In one very long Spirit hymn (about 28 lines) lamenting about the ephemeral existence of one, the source of its melody is derived mainly from two hymns: RH and OFM. The result was a new tune of about 5 phrases which is then repeated over and over again for the remaining text. But each time the lyrics “skeleton skeleton” (*kulou kulou*) appeared, Benfa seemed unsure of the melody. For now, I can only conjecture that the fact that these long hymns are sung less often, along with the hiatus of the Cultural Revolution, may have led to memory loss.

The system of *qupai* applies likewise to this category of hymns, in the sense that groups of texts in the same prosody use the same melody. New *qupai* are created from a patchwork of melodic patterns based on a number of existing tunes. This is an interesting insight into the creation of new melodies in Chinese Buddhist liturgical tradition. It is also worth noting that the five tunes which seem to form the basis of many Spirit hymns rarely serve individually as complete *qupai* models for them. This is probably due to the fact that the prosodic metres of the Spirit hymns are so varied. Of the nine Spirit hymns examined, only one (which has a total of four texts collectively titled “Four Great Greeds”, *Si datan*) is based entirely on a single hymn, namely OFM. The borrowing is facilitated by a similar 6-line prosody. But because the last two lines of OFM and “Four Great Greeds” differ in their syllable counts, some centonization takes place in line 5, although its material is still derived from OFM.

We have gone some way towards elucidating the musical nature of Fuzhou style hymns. But these findings have only scratched the surface of what appear to be very complicated processes of creation and re-creation. Perhaps more light will be thrown on some of these processes when we further examine (§4.4.3) these hymns as sung by different singers in different locations. But first we examine the basic characteristics of *ji*.

4.2.6 Musical characteristics of *ji* hymns

Ji is both the transliteration and translation of the Sanskrit *gatha*, which (in China at least) indicates an isometric song text (i.e. one with the same syllable count for each line). Almost all *ji* have four lines of text, though some may have six or eight. According to Hu Yao (1986), only one melody is sung for all *ji* in the contexts of daily or calendrical “practicing” rituals, with this basic melody then being varied appropriately to serve 7-, 6-

or 4-syllable verses (CD Tr. 10). Note that there are *ji* with different melodies in other contexts (see Cai 1999), although these are less commonly sung today; I will ignore these here since our focus is on *gongde*. In *gongde*, *ji* hymns have several different melodies which are distinct from the one sung in practicing rituals.

In *gongde*, five *ji* texts are frequently sung. The 7-syllable *Yuansheng xifang jingtu zhong* (“Vow to be Reborn in the Western Pure Land”, hereafter “Vow to be Reborn”) is invariably sung to transfer merit (*huixiang*) to the soul. Before the Buddha Altar, several texts for specific contexts are sung. At the end of the Purification Rite or of a volume of the Penitence, several texts are sung: the 7-syllable (*Yanjing*) *gongde shusheng xing* (“Merit (of Purification) Reverently Practised”, hereafter “The Merit”) or the 6-syllable *Yici yanjing gongde* (“With This Merit of Purification”, hereafter “With This Merit”).¹ After the Offering, ritualists may sing the 4-syllable *Sande liuwei* (“Three Merits and Six Flavours”, hereafter “Three Merits”) or the 7-syllable *Woyi Puxian xing yuanli* (“I Draw on the Great Vows of Samantabhadra”, hereafter “The Great Vows”).

Ji melodies are far more syllabically set than *zan* melodies, with text structure dominating melodic structure. Text lines may be of 4, 6 or 7 syllables. However, the 7-syllable lines of “The Merit” and “The Great Vows” are subdivided in performance into two line-segments of 4+3 syllables, for no obvious reason, and this has implications for the text setting. In setting any line or line-segment, each syllable occupies one beat, with an extra beat (a tied note or a melodic extension) to mark the end of the line. This generates a handful of basic melodic units of 4, 5, 7 or 8 beats (which will be our units of analysis, equivalent to the single-bar units of Hu Yao’s analysis of *zan*).

Analysis reveals a mere six melodic formulae, each the size of one unit, among a total of 24 lines in the five texts, plus two typical final cadence patterns; each of these formulae (named a, b, c, d, e, f, and fc for final cadence) has many variants (Appendix 7). Actually, the six basic formulae always occur in fixed pairs: a+b, c+d, e+f. The formulae combine to yield four tunes for the five texts named above. However, the tunes of “Three Merits” and “With This Merit” both consist of repetitions of formulae c+d; they differ only in that these formulae are expanded internally by two beats in “With This Merit” to accommodate two extra syllables per line. Thus really we have only three tunes.

Formulae a and b are always used for 7-syllable lines and thus each occupy 8 crotchet

¹ The bracketed words may be substituted to express other contexts; for example *Wanchan* (Accomplishing the Penitence) *gongde shusheng xing*, *Zhuangyan fotu* (Glorious Buddhaland) *gongde shusheng xing* etc.

beats; c has 5 or 7 beats, adjusting to the syllable count as noted just above; similarly, d has 4, 5 or 7 beats, e has 5 beats, f has 4 beats, while the final cadence has 4 or 5 beats.

Formulae a and b are the building blocks of the 7-syllable “Vow to be Reborn” (CD Tr. 11; Ex. 4.26). First sung respectively to lines 1 and 2 of the text, they are then repeated (inevitably with slight variation) for lines 3 and 4. A final cadence usually concludes (see Appendix 7), but the singers may instead move on to a *fohao* (Buddha’s name chant, §4.3.3). As in this example, ritualists sometimes transpose the final cadence up a fourth or down a fifth, introducing 4 (f) into the melody. It is not clear why this is done, but my guess is that it is an intuitive device to avoid ending up in a low tessitura in the piece following.

Ex. 4.26 Formulaic structure and melody of “Vow to be Reborn” sung by *caigu* from Tongfosi (CFJ 009)

a // b // a // b (1st half) + fc
 line 1 line 2 line 3 line 4

wan seng sei hong zeng t@ tiong, jiu pin lian hua

wee hu bia, hua kai kian hut ng@ wu seng,

(lu etc.)

b@ lan pu sa wee ban lan mo lan mo @ mi etc.

Formulae a and b are used only in this tune, which mainly serves “Vow to be Reborn”,² although in theory any 7-syllable text could be sung to it. An example is “The Merit”: although this 6-line *ji* can also be sung to another tune, the tune of “Vow to be Reborn”

² In *gongde* for eliminating calamities (*Xiaozaï*), the gatha text sung is *Yuanxiao sanzhang zhu fannao* (Vow to Eliminate the Three Obstacles and All Troubles).

serves it equally well despite the two extra lines in the text. In such a case, the formulae are simply repeated.

The next two formulae, c and d, again work as a pair to become the sole tune for all 4- and 6-syllable *ji* (Ex 4.27).

Ex. 4.27 Comparison of 4-syllable “Three Merits” sung by Hongshansi monks (CFJ 032) and 6-syllable “With This Merit” sung by *caiyou* Tianpei (CFJ 010)

a) common structure:

c // d // c // d (1st half) + fc
 line 1 line 2 line 3 line 4

b) comparative score of first two lines:

At the same time, formulae c and d may combine with other formulae to form the tune of “The Merit” 7-syllable hymn group. This is the case in which the 7 syllables are divided 4+3 into line-segments. This tune appears to have two variants. A 4-line version, sung by institutional ritualists, has this motivic distribution (CD Tr. 12):

c + d // e + f // c + d // e + fc
 seg, 1 + seg. 2 // seg, 1 + seg. 2 // (etc.)
 line 1 line 2 line 3 line 4

A second version has the pair of motifs reversed:

e + f // c + d // e + f // c + d [or fc]
 line 1 line 2 line 3 line 4

More often, I have found the 4-line text expanded thusly, each line repeated (CD Tr. 13):

e + f // c + d // e + f // c + d // e + f // c + d // e + f // c + fc
 line 1 line 1 line 2 line 2 line 3 line 3 line 4 line 4

The fact that the second melodic phrase could be sung to the first line of the text seems to suggest that speech tones are not relevant to melodic contours. Evidence that several texts could be sung to one melody also supports this claim.

To recapitulate so far, there are basically only three *ji* tunes in *gongde*. The text “Vow to be Reborn” has its own tune. A different tune exists for “The Merit”, another 7-syllable *ji*, even though this text can also be sung to the tune of the former. Two musical formulae from the tune of “The Merit” can also become an independent tune (thus in effect a third tune) for 4- or 6-syllable *ji* (Table 4.3). This last tune, I found, is also sung for “The Three Refuges” (*Sanguiyi*), a 4-syllable text sung only at the end of every ritual.

Table 4.3 Text distribution in *ji*

Title of texts	Syllables per line	Beats per line	Formulae used
Vow to be Reborn	7	8	a+b
The Merit; The Great Vows	4+3	5+4	c+d+e+f or e+f+c+d
Three Merits	4	5	c+d
With This Merit	6	7	c+d

The melodic motifs also reveal new insights into the rhythmic structure of *ji*. According to the Venerable Wuyi, *ji*, like *zan*, should have “One beat three eyes” (*yiban sanyan*), that is, 4/4 metre. Examining all the above *ji* reveals this to be not always the case. We have seen that the last syllable of a text line (or line-segment in some cases) always has an extra beat. As Table 4.3 shows, only the “Vow to be Reborn” and the second line-segment of “The Merit” and “The Great Vows” can be analyzed as being in 4/4. The demands of syllabic text setting override considerations of musical metre. Scholars of Buddhist music often transcribe hymns of this type in 2/4 metre, changing some bars to 1/4 to reflect a rhythmic shift in the percussion pattern. Thus the 4-syllable “Three Merits” would have this metre:

0 x x 0 x 0 x x
 $\frac{2}{4}$ 1 2 3 | $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 2 | $\frac{2}{4}$ ʒ3 3 2 1 | etc

Clearly the percussion pattern does show the emic perception of the finer level of metrical analysis of such passages, but in terms of the formulaic structuring of *ji* this level is finer than needed.

All the tunes show a strongly pentatonic character, with the seventh degree appearing as a passing note in some variants. *Ji* tunes are fairly short and repetitive. Thus even though the tune is varied upon repetition or among different performers, it is still clearly discernible. As we shall see below, the case with variants in *zan* hymns is more complex.

4.3 The *nian* (recitation) form: *jing*, *zhou*, *bai* and *fohao*

The *nian* or *niansong* recitation form is one of the least understood forms of Buddhist vocalization. This is due in part to Chinese scholars' claims that this form, in particular that of sutras and incantations which is seen as the archetype of Buddhist chanting, is "level reciting" (*zhinian*) (Hu 1993: 96) or that it comprises short melodic phrases repeated over and over again (Tian 1993: VI). Such views impede closer study of this form, since it is seen as having few musical traits, and with this oversight arises the misconception that all the types within this form are equally monotonous and untuneful. In this section, I hope to draw attention to the fact that Buddhist *nian* is far from monolithic but is characterised by a gamut of musical features. Of the four textual types included under this rubric, the performance of sutras and incantations is by far the most difficult to understand; some scholars are beginning to recognise that there is more to this type than meets the eye, or the ear.³

Western scholarship often translates this form of vocalization as "chanting". This term, in broad English usage, encompasses a gamut of vocal expression ranging from speaking or repeating monotonously (for example a crowd chanting in unison) to singing psalms and canticles in religious worship (as in Ambrosian or Gregorian chant and plainsong). Indeed, the term can indicate various quite separate points on a continuum between speech and song (see e.g. List 1963). Thus the term "chant" is hardly useful even for a broad and imprecise description.

Having said this, the Chinese terminology is also imprecise and polysemous. Either of the two elements *nian* and *song* might equally be translated "read out loud" or "recite", but both cover various vocal styles. Space does not permit a historical overview of their usages. Until we examine the current musical performance styles of the four subtypes of *nian*(*song*) to see if more specific terminology might be found, the English term "chant" will serve to facilitate discussion.

³ Chun-Jo Liu (1978) has made some interesting observations about this recitation type and commented on the complexity of transcribing it. Tsai Tsan Huang carried out an interesting experiment to analyse sutra recitation, discussed below.

4.3.1 *Jing* sutras and *zhou* incantations

Sutras (*jing*) are texts said to have been expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha. These were translated into Chinese prose, yielding irregular prosodic groupings depending on the morphology of the Chinese language. Incantations (*zhou*), believed to hold magical powers, were not translated but only transliterated, so the meaning may be unknown to practitioners (§3.3.1). The verb *song* is generally used for sutra performance, whereas *nian* is used with *zhou* and the other two subtypes *bai* and *Fohao*. But this distinction seems to have no musical relevance: *jing* and *zhou* are performed in a similar style.

Both are performed as a homorhythmic group activity. After a damped stroke on the large bronze bowl followed by one knock on the wooden fish, the officiant intones the first two syllables *Namo* (Reverent), then the chorus joins in with the *Fohao* (Buddha's Name Chant, described below) related to the text to be performed. After a Triple Invocation, the officiant alone again intones the first two syllables of the sutra or incantation, after which other performers enter in the style we are discussing. From this point on, the wooden fish is struck on every syllable of the text, beginning at a steady tempo of about 70-74 beats per minute and gradually accelerating to about 160 beats per minute (Discog. R10 tracks 3-6). This tempo is then more or less maintained until the end of the text.

But it is the melodic relationship of the different singers' lines that has challenged scholars (CD Tr. 14). They have interpreted this collective chanting in disparate ways. Tian (1997: 16) claims that sutra chanting is "not very melodic and often consists of short repetitive phrases". Hu (1992: 96) opines that sutras and incantations "do not have melodic tones and are rendered monotonously". Perris (1986: 432) states: "The chanting, ... in long unmeasured phrases, is more syllabic than melismatic". None of these capture what is actually the most striking feature of the style. Picken comes closest (notes to recording R1), describing it as a "heterophonic choral chant ... composed of many independent voices singing different cantillation formulas".

Tian finds the phrases short, Perris long; Tian finds little melodic movement, Hu apparently none; Tian finds much repetition, Picken hints at some degree of repetition by writing of "formulas". Perris notes the unmeasured and largely syllabic nature of this style. Picken is the only one to mention heterophony and "independent voices". So what is the truth?

Prior to detailed discussion, let me try to summarize the basic features of sutra and incantation performance as I hear them.

- choral, accompanied by *muyu* “wooden fish”, with large bowl *daqing* providing signals;
- all sing in same key (for my use of the term “key”, see Glossary 2);
- tonal material: anhemitonic pentatonic, 1 2 3 5, occasionally low and high 6 and very rarely high 1;
- one syllable and one *muyu* stroke on each beat;
- unmeasured;
- gradual acceleration from about 70 to 160 beats per minute;
- one to two notes per syllable/beat; rarely three at slow tempo;
- melodic movement of each voice: largely conjunct (one pentatonic step up or down) or repeated, with an occasional leap of one step;
- vocal lines are otherwise independent, so that any and all pitches of the pentatonic scale may occur simultaneously;
- phrases are quite long – as long as one’s breath lasts; but:
- singers strive to take breaths at different moments, so that someone is always singing;

This outline would allow someone to execute a reasonable melodic part for a *jing* or *zhou*. These principles occur so consistently that one might liken them to the “rules” of a “grammar”, except that they are not taught as such – indeed, there is virtually no systematic or verbalized instruction for this style at all. A deeper analysis would yield many more details; let me give two examples only (which can be evaluated against the various musical examples below).

First, the principles of melodic movement given above apply first to the main notes, those that occur as each syllable is articulated simultaneously with a stroke on the wooden fish. In my view (and my experience performing this style), the singer is free to choose these notes in accordance with those principles. The second note on any beat, however, is almost totally predictable from context. If movement between two adjacent main notes is stepwise (e.g. 1 to 2 or 5 to 3), then if a note is sung on the second half of the first beat, it will be on the same pitch as the following main note (1 2 2 or 5 3 3). However, when descending one step (2 to 1; 3 to 2) an *échappé* may occur (i.e. 2 3 1; 3 5 2). If the two main notes are two steps apart (3 to 1; 2 to 5), then the intervening note is a passing note (3 2 1; 2 3 5). These three principles account for virtually all second notes of a beat, although at fast tempo the precise pitch may be partly obscured by portamento. The two notes on a beat

may be of equal duration, but often the first is much shorter, almost a grace note.

A second detail is that melodic lines tend to move relatively smoothly, rather than in, for example, a sharp zigzag fashion. They often tend to rise and fall overall, or start high and then descend; breaths are usually taken at the low end of the range. Often three or more consecutive syllables are sung on one pitch, which helps provide stability.

Are there further significant constraints on melodic movement? Picken, with no direct knowledge of this genre, suspected that “cantillation formulas” were in use. However, performers never refer to such formulas, and (unlike the motivic structure of hymns) I can find no evidence of their existence.

Picken’s mention of heterophony is also misleading. We shall see that the different singers are not individually varying a common melody simultaneously in the normal sense of the term heterophony: instead, each singer is theoretically free to follow a different path, so long as the principles elucidated above (and a couple more discussed below) are maintained.

In other words, they are improvising. Improvisation is generally defined as the creation of music during performance or as real-time composition.¹ Virtually no “improvised” performance is without stylistic or compositional constraints of some kind. These might be, depending on the culture, a system of modes (as in, say, India or the Middle East), harmonic progressions (as in jazz), formulaic patterns, metrical cycles, and so on. Since the relevant principles are not articulated in this case (except as described below), I had to extract the principles given above by examining examples of performances and drawing on my own experiences as a performer of the genre.

Since the constituent melodies of *jing* or *zhou* are independent in terms of pitch, the resulting near-random polyphony in a full choral performance renders transcription extremely difficult. Ideally one needs a multi-track recording, with each singer having a separate microphone. It need not be explained why such a task was impractical in the course of my fieldwork. However, Tsai Tsan-Huang, while a Master’s student at Sheffield University, was able to do this by inviting three nuns living in England to a London recording studio.² (The nuns belong to the Foguangshan monastery of Taiwan and were

¹ Studies of improvisation exist for many cultures, and attempts to theorize cross-culturally also abound. A good starting point is Nettl & Russell 1998.

² Tsai’s report is part of his unpublished Master’s thesis (Tsai 2000). I am grateful for his permission to draw on his work. Since space considerations allowed him only five pages of analysis, and since this was an unpublished work (though publicly available from the university library), it would be unfair to criticise his findings at length; I will instead focus on his highly valuable transcriptions.

trained there, but their performance style for *niansong* is, for all practical purposes, identical to that of institutional clergy in mainland China.) The result was a recording and tremendously valuable transcription of a three-part performance of a sutra and incantation, lasting over 2,500 syllables.³ I will draw on Tsai's transcriptions as well as my own recordings in normal ritual contexts or of solo renditions; I will also rely on emic views of how this type of chanting should be performed. Based on limited materials and restricted methodology, the findings offered here are not conclusive but should bring us a step closer to understanding the most complex vocalisation in Chinese Buddhist liturgy.

As an emic starting point, let us describe four points which are sometimes mentioned as important in the performance of this genre by members of the Foguangshan monastery. Although less often articulated outside of Foguangshan, I believe they shed some light on performers' intentions and perceptions in general. The conscious verbalising of such principles within Foguangshan is itself a recent phenomenon. It seems to be part of a general systematisation which was felt necessary for successful large-group teaching and also to produce satisfactory stage performances (both of these being distinctive features of Foguangshan).⁴

The four points can be summarised as: continuity in performance; wave-like melodies; avoidance of unison; and individuality and variability.

1) Continuity in performance: There should be no break in sound or in concentration from beginning to end: at least one voice must always be heard. The Foguangshan nun Mankuan said that a chanter who runs out of breath at any point may omit a few syllables, but while regaining breath, he or she must continue to think of the words, picking up the flow again when ready. A true practitioner must reflect on the meaning of the words even when not vocalizing them. On another occasion, Abbess Yi I of Foguangshan London, giving a course on the etiquette of a penitential ritual, provided a few tips on sutra chanting to the lay community. She told us that one can breathe at any point in the text but should not deliberately break at textual caesuras. The idea is to continue for as long as one can manage, then snatch a quick breath. Also, breathing at different, random moments ensures

³ Tsai omits tempo markings, rhythmic detail within any one beat, and the text. But the three melodic lines can be easily compared using his transcriptions.

⁴ Tsai (2000: 18) usefully summarises five similar points (overlapping with mine) as he heard them at Foguangshan London, although his presentation may give the impression that they are taught as a unified five-point programme; he agrees with me that they are not.

that when someone is silent for a while, others are still chanting, thus guaranteeing continuation of the sound stream.⁵

However, this continuous flow of words and the fast tempo make the text barely intelligible to a non-Buddhist audience. This seeming incoherence is even more acute in incantation (*zhou*) chanting as the text is in Sanskrit. Why is a continuous flow in the performance of both types deemed essential, overriding considerations of audience comprehension?

Incantations are formulas with magical powers; from an oral viewpoint, it is conceivable that performance in a smooth flow could augment their mystic powers, as perhaps does their very incomprehensibility. Sutras, on the other hand, have meaningful texts, yet no attempt is made to convey the meaning to the audience. The answer to this, it seems, lies in that sutras are not intended for an audience. Mankuan told me that real merit comes from the act of chanting itself; understanding the words, although also important, only comes with time. Elucidation of sutra texts, which contain many obscure words incomprehensible to a lay person, usually comes from a learned member of the monastic community in the form of sutra lectures. Thus it seems the physical act of performance carries more weight. These comments highlight the importance of continuous flow in chanting sutras. Looking for a parallel in other Buddhist traditions, we find that the creation of an unbroken and continuous sound is also a central concept in chanting within Theravada Buddhism (Sheeran 1993/4). This may point to a fundamental concept passed down from early Indian Buddhism.

2) Wave-like melodies: A Tang dynasty source described the performance of sutras as “undulated reading” (*zhuandu*; *Gaoseng Zhuan* T. 2059:415b). The term appears to imply some degree of melodic contour, and this is indeed what we find in sutra chanting today. Abbess Yi I told me that singing on a monotone is not stylistically good, and that one should “have one’s own melodies” (*you ziji de diao*), by which I interpret as “making up” a more varied melody as one chants. She proceeded to give further tips on how these melodies may be improvised: When there is sufficient breath, one should sing in a high tessitura. When running out of breath, one should drop into the lower range while trying to regain breath; when breath is recovered, the melody should rise again. In this way, there

⁵ David Hughes tells me that the same is true in the (secular) Okinawan court song tradition, where breath phrases are quite long. There certain principles are elucidated to encourage asynchronous breathing.

will be contours or “waves” in the melodies. Wuyi, our elderly monk who has pondered much about vocal performance in the tradition, also called for waves, although seemingly in a reverse form: chanting, he said, should normally be on low pitches; when running short of breath, one should begin to raise the pitch, descending again when breath has been recovered.

Transcribing Ven. Yi I ‘s solo demonstration of an incantation, I found that she generally does take a breath while in the low register (around notes 1 and 2) and ascends to 5 or sometimes 6 after breathing (Ex. 4.28a; CD Tr. 15). Of course, we would expect her to do this as she had verbalised about this just before her demonstration. But listening to her chanting with the group (her voice was clearly audible as she was singing with a microphone), I could still detect the same pattern (Ex. 4.28b).

Ex. 4.28a Grand Compassion incantation by Yi I (Discog. R14)



na mo ho la tan nuo



duo la ya ye na mo @ li ye



po lu jie di suo po la ye pu ti sa duo po ye mo he



Sa duo po ye mo he jia lu ni jia ye om sa po



la fa yi shu ta nuo tan xia na mo xi ji



li duo yi meng @ li ye po lu jie di



shi fo la leng tuo po na lai jin chi di li suo ni nuo etc.

Ex. 4.28b Grand Compassion incantation by Yi I with congregation (Discog. R14)

solo, free

na mo ho la tan na duo la ya ye na mo @ li

ye po lu jie di shi duo la ye pu ti sa duo po ye mo he sa duo po ye

~~dropped out for 12 syllables~~

shu ta nuo tan xia na mo jie di li duo yi

mong @ li ye po lu jie di shi po ua li

duo po na mo na lai jin chi jie di mo po duo po

ho no na lai mo lo ti xi duo a

lai mo tan zhi ta etc.

Having learnt this “principle”, I listened to my own recordings of *gongde* with a renewed ear. Since many singers now use microphones (or at least the officiant does), it is usually possible to pick out one or two relatively prominent voices. I found that Yi I’s principle holds true for many Minnan ritualists. Re-entering after fading out and catching a good long breath, a singer usually either starts in the high register or gradually moves up before descending again (Ex. 4.29; CD Tr. 16).

Ex. 4.29a Excerpts from Penitence by Daoxing and Tianpei (CFJ 003)

The musical score consists of five staves. The first three staves are for DX (Di Xu) and the last two are for TP (Tianpei).
- Staff 1 (DX): A single melodic line starting with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth notes.
- Staff 2 (DX): A melodic line that ends with a 'fade out' instruction, followed by a '(re-enter)' section with a few notes.
- Staff 3 (DX): A melodic line ending with 'etc.'
- Staff 4 (TP): A melodic line ending with a 'fade' instruction.
- Staff 5 (TP): A '(re-enter)' section followed by a melodic line ending with 'etc.'

Ex. 4.29b Excerpts from Grand Compassion incantation by Shishi *xianghua* Cai Qingyang (CFJ 037)

po ge mo ha kia lu ni kia ye an sa po

la ta yi shu tan nuo tan xia na mo siak kia

x x yi meng @ li ye fade out

na mo @ lai kin di ei li meng @ ban duo sa mi sa po he na liao zi

x x x sat po sat duo na mo po sa duo lai mo po kay fade out

la ye lu kia dei kia lu dei yi ei li mong @ po dei san po san po san

po mo lai mo lai mo lu mo hei li duo ei ku lai ku lo

kia mo du lu du lu a xia hei bei mo @

xia a xia hei dei to lai to lai dei li ni jiao hun

It would be interesting to know whether Wuyi's principle also works (for him at least), but I have no recordings. In any case, contradictory statements about chanting are not unexpected. Many Fujianese monks, asked how they learn chanting, say that it is not taught, that no formal instructions are given. You just follow the crowd. Some simply say they rely on instinct, and that a good chanting style comes with experience. Another interesting perspective was expressed by an elderly nun, Ven. Yi Yan: "Strictly speaking, there is no melody in sutra chanting, it would be too pedantic to say that there is melody. Chanting is very free (*ziyou*), very natural" (pers. comm.1998). Some Nanputuosi monks have also said that sutra chanting is in a free style.

Some say that they will try to imitate someone whose chanting sounds “good”. However, these same people could not define “good”. In Taiwan, the metaphor “the sound of ocean waves” (*haichao yin*) is used by some monastic members as a parallel to chanting. A phrase from a sutra is often quoted: “The sounds of *fan* are like the sounds of the wave, [it] surpasses all sounds in this world” (*fanyin haichaoyin, sheng bi shijianyin*) (*Miaofa Lianhua Jing* T. 262: 58a). This metaphor paints a picture of the surging and subsiding but never broken flow of the waves, which corresponds to the ideas of chanting as perceived by Abbess Yi I and Wuyi. This holds yet another clue to the concept of unbroken continuity discussed above. Furthermore, this is also a fundamental reason why Buddhist chanting is not a solitary but a group activity.

3) Avoidance of unison: Abbess Yi I also once said that if another chanter is in the high register, you should sing low pitches and vice versa. The idea is to avoid unison and create diversity. Obviously, given a limited pitch repertoire and a large number of performers, some pitches do coincide, but more experienced chanter will move away to different tones. Monotonic stretches may occur in individual parts, because inexperienced performers tend to chant in almost level contours. Thus one performance may contain both melodiousness and monotony, but the overall effect will probably be similar.

Tsai’s transcription of the three nuns could provide excellent data for a statistical study related to these Foguangshan precepts such as avoidance of unison. One could calculate the approximate likelihood that any two voices singing in accordance with the melodic principles I elucidated above would coincide in pitch for one or more consecutive beats, and then see whether his singers tend to differ more than would be expected by chance. Tsai suggests (2000: 27) that any two parts tend to coordinate vertically by avoiding “non-harmonic intervals (primarily seconds)”, but statistically we would expect this by chance anyhow. So far I am not persuaded that singers think vertically at all in actual performance. Avoidance of unison is merely inevitable, given that a performance may last for thousands of notes yet there is no fixed melody and no vocabulary of formulas to draw on. However, the ideology of performance raises this avoidance to a positive principle, thus justifying and encouraging it.

4) Individuality and variability: Abbess Yi I’s suggestion that each person should sing one’s own melody is a clear call for guided improvisation. But she also stressed that

this involved individuality, and that there was no reason to expect that one would sing the same melodic strand each time. Tsai's recording session bore this out. When he had each nun sing along with the original recording of herself and the two others, each one sang quite differently the second time (2000: 28, his Fig. 8).

Given that all parts are improvised, it is again obvious that we cannot speak of heterophony. This term refers to simultaneous variation or decoration of one and the same basic melody. In sutra or incantation chanting, there is no basic melodic outline to vary.

And again, there are no common melodic formulas in use. The length of a musical phrase in this style is determined by each chanter's breath capacity. As Examples 4.28 and 4.29^b suggest, no two phrases are the same. Thus sutra chanting does not consist of "short repetitive phrases" or of "cantillation formulas".

In sum, a suitable term for this style of performance might be homorythmic accidental polyphony. However, the word "accidental" must be approached with caution. The rather chaotic-sounding polyphony is intended, not accidental; it is the detail that is unplanned. Since there are only five tones in the scale and no semitones, even when all five are heard simultaneously the sense of dissonance is less than it would be for a heptatonic scale.

It must be kept in mind, of course, that musical ability is never a criterion for participation in Buddhist vocal performance (excluding certain recent stage performances). Practitioners undergo no specific teaching, learning by osmosis and imitation. Even guidelines such as the Foguangshan ones given above are rarely encountered. Therefore, it is not surprising that the principles discussed in this section are sometimes violated. For example, singers are not always in the same key. Tsai's transcriptions showed that one of his singers changed key, dropping a whole tone in pitch, at beat 1090, and then maintained this new key until the end of the piece at beat 2544. The other two singers carried on regardless until beat 1364 (274 syllables and nearly two minutes later), when one of them, after a breath, re-entered in the lower key. This left the third singer in the minority, but she continued in the original key until finally joining them 490 beats later. They then went on in the same key for the final 690 syllables. Clearly the first key change was not planned or intentional but the result of limited musicality. However, I have heard no claim that such divergences diminish ritual effectiveness.

4.3.2 *Bai* announcement texts

Bai, the genre of announcement texts of varying content, is another little-studied type of *niansong*. Yang Yinliu, father of Chinese musicology, wrote about vocalization of this type in his fieldwork report on Buddhist music in Hunan (1960). Subsequent writings on the nature of this genre have added nothing to Yang's description (see e.g. Wang M.1986). I will use Yang's work as a starting point for our search for the musical characteristics of *bai*.

The term *bai* is used in Chinese opera to refer to stylised or heightened speech. As Yang pointed out, *bai* in the Buddhist context encompasses more than this, embracing also several styles of free-metre singing. Yang's informants identified four such types: *fan bai*, *shusheng bai*, *shufan bai* and *daoqiang bai*. *Fan bai* (lit. "Brahma" *bai*)⁶ has one basic tune which can be expanded or contracted to fit different text phrase lengths. It can be used with poetic or prose texts of any number of syllables. Because of this flexibility, it is the most common type of *bai*. Yang reports two sub-types in *fan bai*: the slow *manfan* and fast *kuai fan*. *Shusheng bai* ("Book sound" *bai*), also called *shuqiang* ("Book style"), is sung to rhymed texts alternating lines of four and six syllables. Yang proposes that this might resemble an ancient Chinese style of intoning written passages. The third type, *Shufan bai*, is described by Yang as a combination of the first two types, as its name elements suggest. *Dao bai* is again used for four and six syllable texts; Yang suspects influence from Daoist singing styles, as the name again suggests.

Although Yang has given us some basic terms to work with, his definitions are far from unambiguous. At times, we are no closer to knowing what depicts the style except for the fact that they are all in free metre.

Yang transcribed only one piece in each of the four types, presumably because he feels each type has a single basic melody. I will compare these with my own transcriptions of the first, third and fourth types. Yang's transcriptions are based on the singing of a nun named Yinlian from Hunan, while my singer was the monk Guoman from Nanputuosi (recorded in September 1997). As I have no recording of Guoman's (or any other singer's) *shufan bai*, comments on this type will be based solely on Yang's transcriptions.

Each of these four types uses a single, unique basic melodic outline (CD Tr. 17) A structural feature common to these four tunes, apart from free metre, is that each consists of

⁶ I will write this term as two syllables to distinguish it from the term *fanbai* (often pronounced *fanbei*) which indicates Buddhist singing in general. The character *bai* is written differently in these two (see Glossary).

four melodic phrases in a fixed order, which may be repeated as a group, usually with some variation, to accommodate extra text. Comparative reduction scores of the melodies of fast and slow *fan bai*, *shusheng bai* and *dao bai* by the two singers (Ex. 4.30) show that the diagnostic tones (the main melodic notes) in each type generally coincide between the two singers despite a separation of three decades and 400 miles. Their cadences are also strongly similar. I can find nothing to suggest that *shufan bai* is a combination of *fan bai* and *shusheng bai*: it is simply a different tune.

[Ex. 4.30 on next two pages]

Ex. 4.30 Reduction scores of three types of *bai* sung by Guoman (Nanputuosi) (CFJ 017) and Yinlian (in Yang 1960: 587-91)

(a¹) *Fan bai* (fast) N.B. a double barline indicates a textual break

YL
xiu zhai gong de yi fen feng shi shi fang fa jie zhu tian dao zhong etc.

GM
xiu zhai gong de feng wei yang zhai lu zhong xian zhi xue gu li xian

(a²) *Fan bai* (slow)

YL
jing dian suo zai ji ru lai she li zhi shen

GM
Du yi wu lu wu shi zi wu

YL
fa dao neng hong bi da

GM
ren zhang xiang wang da fang

YL
de seng qie zhi shi etc.

GM
zhi shi

(b) *Shusheng bai*

YL
wei shan zui le dang zi zhong yu wei qu

GM
wei shan zui le dang zi zhong yu wei qu

YL
de nian shen gao su bi quan yu ding ming etc.

GM
de nian shen gao su bi quan yu ding ming

(c) *Daobai*

YL
yong yin fengci zi zhi yin duo zhuan dui zhi Cai

GM
dong yue tian qi rensheng di wu yue sheng di

YL
wei miao chan yu shan tong shi shan quan yu fang bian

GM
wu yue zuo ming zai shun sui fu

Concerning performance practice, *bai* performance differs from that of the other *nian* categories. The officiant performs *bai* on his own, without percussion except for the marking of certain phrases by the large bowl, plus in *gongde* by the addition of drum rolls for certain long cadences. Due to its solo nature and free recitative-like rhythm, no two performances of a tune are the same. The melodies are easily adaptable to textual structure. Thus even with the same performer, the same *bai* tune sung to a different text with a

different number of syllables would show melodic variation (CD Tr. 18). With different singers, one would expect even greater variation (Ex. 4.31). Since *bai* are sung solo, the singer may vary more freely than in, say, *zan* hymns.

Ex. 4.31 Excerpts of slow *manfan* by two singers: Guoman (CD Tr. 17, CFJ 017) and Tianpei (CD Tr. 18, CFJ 010)

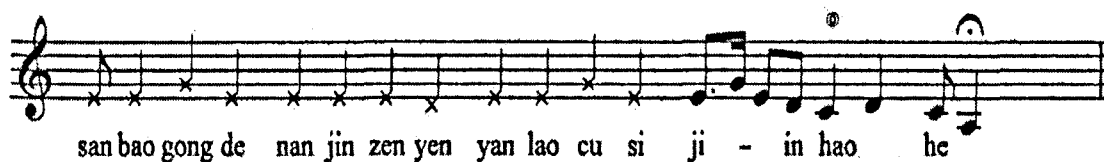
The image displays four pairs of musical staves, each representing a different excerpt of slow *manfan* singing. Each pair consists of a top staff (Guoman, GM) and a bottom staff (Tianpei, TP). The lyrics are written in Chinese characters and pinyin below the notes. The first pair shows Guoman singing 'du yi wu (u) wu' and Tianpei singing 'tai wan bu an'. The second pair shows GM singing 'fii (i) wu shi' and TP singing 'kak ying jiek'. The third pair shows GM singing 'zi wu' and TP singing 'sei kian xin bao tai hee (ee)'. The fourth pair shows GM singing 'ren zhong xiang wang' and TP singing 'liong jiu sa (a) kai'.

The tunes of *bai* are purely pentatonic except for a single use of the fourth degree in *dao bai*. It is highly unlikely that the *fan bai* type could have any correlation with Indian music as suggested by Yang. The melodic phrases are quite clearly dictated by the text lines, and all *bai* texts are in Chinese. It is not impossible that *bai* style could be related to early Chinese singing of poetry. This art is now lost, but Chinese scholars believe that

poetry singing (*yinsong*) was also in free metre and that its melody was highly influenced by speech tones (see e.g. Li Ming n.d.).

Several contexts in *gongde* call for singing *bai*. In the Purification rite, two texts, the Three Jewels text (*Sanbao wen*) and Water text (*Shuiwen*), use *bai* performance style (see Table 3.2). Another important text in *gongde* which is performed in all sections of the different rites is the Memorial text (*Shuwen* or *Shu*; see §3.3.2 on *wen* texts). Examining transcriptions of performances of *wen* texts, I found two manners of *bai* delivery here. The Three Jewels text is commonly delivered in a “spoken-sung” indeterminate pitch declamation, turning melodic only in a commonly used cadence pattern (Ex. 4.32; CD Tr. 19). In one *gongde* context, the Three Jewels text is sung to the slow *fan bai* tune.

Ex. 4.32 End of Three Jewels text performed by officiant monk in Hongshansi, Xiamen (CFJ 032)



The four-line Water text may also be delivered in that same heightened speech style, but just like in the Three Jewels text, it can also change to melismatic singing for the last two lines. In one performance, the melismatic section could possibly be a variant of the tune of *shusheng bai* (Ex. 4.33; CD Tr. 20).

Ex. 4.33 Water text performed by Ven. Xue Ming of Nanputuosi monastery (CFJ 036)

Minnanese ritualists refer to the performance of the Memorial as *xuanshu* (“announcing the Memorial”). When I asked what tune would they use for *Shu*, I got several answers. An elderly *caigu* who now lives in Fuzhou told me that there is only one basic tune for the Memorial text. But other *caigu* in Minnan and some monks at Nanputuosi told me there are multiple tunes. None of the ritualists I spoke to mentioned any of the technical terms for *bai* styles when describing *Shu* performance. Examining my transcriptions, I found that it is true to some extent that there are different tunes. One example used a variant of the slow *fan bai*; another starts with a tune resembling the *shusheng bai*, but then appears to go off in a new direction rather than repeat the same four phrases. On three occasions, I found a new tune quite distinct from the four *bai* types; its frequency suggests it might be a model tune for *Shu* (CD Tr. 21). Further research might uncover even more *Shu* tune models.

4.3.3 *Fohao* Buddha’s Name Chants

Fohao (lit. Names of Buddhas), normally translated as Buddha’s Name Chant, are short texts venerating or invoking a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Each text starts with “Homage to” (*Namo*) followed by the name of the deity to be revered. Name chants can be used in three distinct contexts, and we will give them names accordingly. The first, the Triple Invocation name chant, invokes a Buddha or Bodhisattva prior to chanting a sutra or incantation; here the phrase is repeated three times, hence the name.⁷ The Amitabha name

⁷ This is different from the Triple Invocation serving as a coda to *zan*.

chant occurs only in rituals for the dead: as the ritualists move from one altar to the other, the name of Amitabha Buddha is repeatedly sung. The third type is Penitence name chants: the sutra sections of Penitence texts are separated by a succession of homages to different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (see also §3.3.4). Each of the above contexts dictates a different performance style. Buddhist music scholars have ignored this aspect of Buddhist liturgy; the following descriptions are based on my own observations in *gongde*. I will first describe musical characteristics, followed by the manner of performance.

The Triple Invocation name chant has one basic simple melody in duple metre. It uses four tones (1 2 3 5) from the pentatonic scale, moving up to a 6 sometimes as a neighbouring tone. The melody starts with a repeated 3 and, after a few transitional notes, cadences on 2. Text setting is quite syllabic.

In performance practice, the officiant or a precentor begins the first two syllables “Homage to” (*namo*) by ornamenting pitch 3 in free metre before other ritual performers join in. The performers sing in near-unison, repeating the melodic phrase three times, during which the wooden fish accompanies every beat and the large bowl or, in *gongde*, a shake of the hand bell provide occasional punctuation. The last two syllables of the invocation are prolonged to allow the officiant to sing an opening solo for the succeeding text (Ex. 4.34). Thus, here is an example of a metred, simple and repetitive melody sung in unison, not unlike English nursery rhymes.

Ex. 4.34 Triple Invocation Name Chant by *caigu* from Tongfosi, Quanzhou (CFJ 009)

Wooden fish

na mo ling san hui xiong pi lu zei nuo fo na mo

ling san hui xiong pi lu zei nuo fo na mo ling san hui xiong

Grand Compassion Incantation

pi lu zei nuo fo (ai) la - an mo

The Amitabha name chant has two different versions and performance styles depending on which altar the ritualists are moving to. The first type, sometimes known by the practitioners as “Six-syllable name chant” (*liuzi fohao*), is sung when moving from the Spirit Altar to the Buddha Altar; this is thus called because the name chant consists of six syllables: *na-mo-O-mi-tuo-fo* (Homage to Amitabha Buddha). However, the name chant changes at some point to the four syllable *O-mi-tuo-fo*. This name chant starts with a short AB pattern syllabic melody, which is repeatedly sung. The melody changes when the four-syllable name chant sets in (Ex. 4.35). Melodies for both sections make full use of the five notes in the pentatonic scale (CD Tr. 22). The six-syllable first section may range from low a up to g, while the second four-syllable section sometimes have notes reaching high c. The first section is repeated over and over at a leisurely pace before speeding up with the transition to the second section.

Ex. 4.35 Six- and four-syllable Amitabha Buddha name chant by *caigu* from Tongfosi (CFJ 009)

Hand-held gong
Cymbals

(lanmo)lan mo o mi t@ hut lan mo o mi t@hut lan mo o mi t@hut lan mo o mi

Switch to 4-syllable name chant

t@ hut lan mo o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi

t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut

The musical score consists of three systems. Each system has a percussion staff at the top (Hand-held gong and Cymbals) and a vocal staff below. The first system shows a six-syllable chant with lyrics: (lanmo)lan mo o mi t@ hut lan mo o mi t@hut lan mo o mi t@hut lan mo o mi. The second system shows a transition to a four-syllable chant, indicated by a box labeled 'Switch to 4-syllable name chant'. The lyrics for the second system are: t@ hut lan mo o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi. The third system continues the four-syllable chant with lyrics: t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut o mi t@ hut. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff, and the percussion staff shows rhythmic patterns with vertical lines and stems.

There is no free metre introductory solo in this chant: all start singing almost together. The first phrase is repeated in close heterophony but wider variation is discernible among different voices in the four-syllable section. During circumambulation in practising rituals, the first six syllables are chanted 108 times, the large bowl acting as a signal to change to the four-syllable phrase or to end. In *gongde*, the first phrase is usually repeated until the Buddha Altar is reached, when the change to the four-syllable phrase takes place.

This name chant uses more percussion instruments than the Triple Invocation name chant. The wooden fish on each beat is joined by hand-held gong and cymbals (Ex. 4.35).

The second Amitabha name chant is performed when the ritualists make their way to the Spirit Altar; the name invoked is *Xifang Jieyin Omituofu* (Western Receiving Amitabha Buddha). Its melody is also repetitive, as it needs to go on for however long it takes to get from one altar to the other, but its basic melody is distinct. (Again, some degree of variation may occur between different groups or individuals.) The most distinct characteristic of this melody is that it is melismatic, quite unlike the above two which are fairly syllabic. It is in 4/4 metre; has an ambitus of an octave and is again purely pentatonic. Its melodic characteristics are similar to the Triple Invocation appended to *zan* hymns. Again there is a free-metre solo opening, followed by homophonic group singing. Its accompaniment by the full range of ritual percussion is also similar to *zan*, with the Seven

The third type of name chant is Penitence name chant. These are sets of Buddha's names found in the Penitence texts. The first is a set of eight lines venerating the various Buddhas of the past, present and future (*sanshi zhufu*). This set occurs only once at the beginning of each volume. Another set, which recurs throughout the Penitence and is interspersed between recited texts, has sixteen lines each containing the name of one of ten Buddhas or six Bodhisattvas. Basically, one tune is sung for the set: an officiant begins a tune for the first line, then the chorus repeats this tune for the second line, and so this goes on. However, because each line of name chant may have different number of syllables depending on the name of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, the tune has to be slightly adapted to fit the syllables. For example, Penitence name chant performed in the National style has one basic tune (CD Tr. 23).⁸ Taking the first 8-line set, the name of the Buddha in the first line has six syllables (*Guoqu Piposhi Fo*) and occupies six bars; in the next line the Buddha's name has only three syllables (*Shiqi Fo*), so a bar is omitted; the third line, with a seven-syllable name (*Benshi Shijiamoni Fo*), adds a bar (Ex. 4.37).

Ex. 4.37 Penitence name chant in National style sung by Huayu and Guoman (CFJ 017)

The image displays musical notation for a penitence name chant in National style. It is divided into two systems. The first system shows three lines of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: 1st line: (a) na (ai); 2nd line: na (ai); 7th line: (a) na. The second system also shows three lines of music with the same notation. The lyrics are: 1st: mo guo qu pi po shi fo; 2nd: mo shi (ai) qi fo; 7th: mo ben shi shi jia mo ni fo.

⁸ Personal communication from Huayu and Guoman of Nanoutuosi (27.IX.97).

Although in the National style context, there is only one basic tune for the sets of names, in *gongde* we find a myriad of tunes for these. The officiant picks whichever melody comes to mind, and the respondents follow. Sampling a wide number of name chants performed in *gongde* by both institutional ritualists and *caigu*, I found nine different tunes. Among these, one tune is a variant of the National style discussed above. Another which is quite commonly used (I found four variants by different groups) is a variant of the second half of the National style melody. Of the nine tunes I came across, four of them end on 1; four others end on low 5 (Appendix 8). Interestingly, the ninth tune, which is also frequently sung, has a question-and-answer A-B pattern (CD Tr. 24).

Several ritualists have told me that in Minnan in the early days there were only four basic tunes to Penitence name chants. One elderly *caigu* thinks that some of the later additions to this repertoire were borrowed from folk songs or *huangmei* opera tunes.⁹ In terms of performance practice, this type of name chant is usually responsorial and overlapping. The officiant begins a melody, then the respondents enter on his final syllable and continue with their phrase; the officiant then enters again on their last syllable, and so forth. This call and response is repeated until all the name chants have ended. I suspect that this overlapping is to reinforce the final syllable: one must prostrate oneself at the end of each line, which might obscure the sound, so by entering early the respondents help keep the continuity of the melodic line. (Some *gongde* practitioners do not overlap in this way.)

Penitence name chants are accompanied by a range of ritual percussion including the wooden fish, hand-held gong, and the drum and bell, generating a spirited effect (see line 1 of Appendix 8).

This section has dealt only with Buddha's Name Chants commonly found in *gongde*; other melodies exist for different name chants in other contexts. This reminds us that what I can present in this thesis is only a small portion of the rich legacy of Buddhist vocal music.

We have seen that Buddha's Name Chants are usually repetitive, but far from being tuneless or monotonous, as the word "chant" might imply, they range from simple but metrical to melismatic melodies. Even Penitence name chants are melodious and have a wide ambitus.

⁹ *Huangmeixi* is an operatic genre of Anhui province whose musical material is from local folk songs.

4.3.4 Conclusion

This section has shown that *niansong* is not, by any means, a single style but a myriad of sonic phenomena ranging from heightened speech to syllabic freely-sung melodic lines, from melismatic melodies in free rhythm to short metrical melodies.

It may be difficult to perceive sutras and incantations as song because the free polyphony sometimes produces a musical surface whose melodic strands are hard to sort out: to the uninformed listener, the result seems like cacophony. Yet the study above has shown that even these two subcategories make full use of the pentatonic scale, often over a range of a 10th. For the other *niansong* types as well, it is hard to see why they should be called chants instead of songs.

The term “chant”, as we noted, indicates various distant points on a continuum between speech and song. This already reduces its usefulness in shedding light on styles not yet known to the hearer: if someone says to you, “It’s like a chant”, you have little idea what this means. On the other hand, we have seen that each of the *niansong* types varies quite widely in their characteristics: the term *niansong* itself is overly broad! But at least it is an indigenous term. However, I feel that it is necessary to describe each of the subcategories separately in order to understand the full range of their musical characteristics.

4.4 *Zan* hymns: learning, change and variation

Wuyi and Benfa told me that they learnt hymn singing by rote: their teachers sang the hymns, the students repeated each phrase until the tune was memorised. Several other elderly monks I spoke to also confirmed this. Benfa said that if he failed to reproduce a phrase correctly, or if his teacher thought he had added extra tones that were not supposed to be there, his teacher would make him kneel for hours in front of the Buddha (*guixiang*, lit. kneeling incense) as a punishment. Benfa said his teacher was really strict. Today, he said, times have changed and he could no longer use his teacher’s methods when teaching hymns to his disciples (interview, March 1999). Benfa’s statements suggest two things: first, such a method of imparting hymn singing suggested there was a correct way to perform each hymn; second, the present-day way of learning has changed. The issue of learning will be dealt with later in this section; we are first concerned with issues related to dissemination and its impact on hymns.

Buddhist hymn singing in daily lessons and calendrical rituals is said to be homogeneous in style. The traditional teaching method guaranteed that deviation was

highly restricted. As seen above, the repertory of *zan* melodies is small in comparison to the number of texts. However, in hymn dissemination, variation occurs in performance, consequently resulting in large numbers of variants. Some variants are temporary, just one of perhaps several legal alternatives: the next time, the previous version may re-appear. Others may find favour and be adopted in preference to other options, leading to unidirectional, permanent change.

In reality, different singers, or even the same singers, do not necessarily perform the same melodies in the same way. Even in one style, hymns sung by different singers display varying degrees of melodic differences. Sometimes the morphing of a melody may be so extreme that a new melody results. This does not imply that practitioners freely interpret the melodies they have learnt in order to introduce individuality as performers in other genres or other cultures do. The prevalence of variants in oral traditions is well known (see e.g. Lord 1960). As observed by Charles Seeger, “The lack of any printed or written anchor not only encourages but enforces variance of performance” (1966: 122).¹⁰

The nature of Chinese music has some influence on the way melodies in Buddhist hymns evolve. In much of Chinese music motivic variation can take place in real time, “in the course of performance” (to use Nettl’s phrase). But this is not pure improvisation: as in many music systems, Chinese musicians largely draw on a pre-existing set of elements and procedures. For instance, the grammar of melodic characteristics may affect how a melody moves from one juncture to another. For a simple example, it is absolutely standard that the melodic fragment 2 1 can be elaborated to 2321 or 2531. On the other hand, it cannot be elaborated to 2511. As illustrated by traditional teaching methods, Buddhist practitioners, unlike secular musicians, do not seem to intentionally or consciously vary their melodic lines. However, many factors lead to change and variation, such as the obvious ones linked to oral processes (memory lapses, accidental mistakes), stylistic tendencies, extra-musical conditions, and so on.

Chinese Buddhist hymns have been disseminated over great distances; it is expected that melodic change may take place during such migration. Performance practice of Chinese Buddhist hymns is a much-neglected topic. Although studying change may help further our understanding of the nature of hymn singing and perhaps highlight some historical issues such as dissemination, problems abound in such an investigation. In

¹⁰ For studies on melodic variation in British-American folk tunes, see Seeger 1966; Bronson 1950; Bayard 1950. Variation in Chinese folk song is studied by Schimmelpenninck 1997.

addition, gaps exist in emic articulation of phenomena recognised in the process of my analysis (pending further investigation). In this section, my aim is to focus on changes that arise in the context of *gongde*. One of the objectives is to identify whether the so-called Fuzhou style sung in Minnan is indeed disseminated from Fuzhou. If this is indeed so, then the degrees of similarity or deviation in the melodies will be examined, and attempts will be made to determine the reasons for divergence. In *gongde*, change and variation may be due to musical factors such as speed of singing, different ways of decorating a melodic line, etc. At the same time, extra-musical conditions linked to functional and contextual differences, social, economic and even political factors may also be at work to influence changes not only in music but also in the form and content of the ritual itself. This section will focus on the musical factors.

Of the various song and recitation forms, *zan* hymns will be the focus of discussion here since they have the greatest variability and reflect choices made by ritualists. I will consider National style hymns in the context of *gongde* and compare Fuzhou styles hymns by singers in Fuzhou with those in Minnan. Issues discussed will include melodic identity, the speed factor and degree of deviation. The data for analysis will come mainly from my own transcription, but I will also use some of Cai Junchao's transcriptions where gaps occur in my data. To check for consistent or divergent patterns in hymn singing, I will also compare hymns sung by the same singer at different times. Here, I will use my recordings of Benfa made in 1999 and earlier (undated) recordings of Benfa made by a local audio company.

To determine if two or more melodies are related, one approach is to reduce them to their skeletal forms, looking for common melodic elements. One dilemma when carrying this out is how to decide what the main melody note or notes are, as opposed to those functioning in a supporting or ornamenting role. The process, I admit, is largely subjective: there is no easy solution to this problem but to rely on my experience and knowledge of Chinese music and its variational principles. The deep, structural, reduced level (which is the analyst's abstraction) is useful for determining if pieces are related. To understand how a melody varies, the study of the surface level (i.e. what was actually performed) is necessary; however, it is not always easy to assess why variants take place or what has happened in a variant. Buddhist practitioners do not think about what they do in performance and they do not analyse their own music. I will often need to rely on my own observation, and make hypotheses.

But before I start on the music, some brief words, which will be of relevance to our discussion later, must be said about hymn learning and transmission among institutional and *caigu* ritualists today.

4.4.1 Hymn transmission today

Since the Cultural Revolution hiatus, hymn transmission has in some way remained the same, but it has also changed. Some of these changes have an impact on hymn singing today. Earlier, we saw how older generations of monks were taught to sing hymns. Wuyi, a monk of high standing now living in Taiwan, was trained at Qixiasi monastery in Nanjing, a well-known institution of learning. Wuyi said that during the summer, older monks would gather the young novices who had remained in the monastery and patiently impart hymn singing orally.¹¹ Ruimiao, an 85-year-old monk who lives in Nanputuosi, told me that in his youth older monks would teach younger ones hymn singing in their free time. The testimony of such elderly monks teaches three things about hymn transmission in large institutional monasteries: the elders taught the young monks; transmission of melodies was oral (i.e. no notation); and teaching was sporadic, occurring only as time permitted.

Today, the conditions for hymn learning in institutional monasteries in Xiamen and Quanzhou are more complex than fifty years ago. As mentioned in Chapter 2, many monks in institutional monasteries come from other parts of China. Nanputuosi, in particular, attracts many student monks from afar because it has one of the most reputed Buddhist Colleges (both for men and women, in separate sites). Although students of the Buddhist College (*Foxueyuan*) are not necessarily granted residence in its main monastery, many graduates do obtain posts and remain in Nanputuosi. Others who were not students of the College may also apply to stay.¹² Hymn singing is not part of the College curriculum. It is expected that individual monks would have learnt to sing some hymns before coming to Nanputuosi. Students from the College to whom I spoke confirmed this. The monk Jiexiang once said the monks bring with them a style of their own; gradually they influence each other's singing and another style emerges, which in his opinion could be the Fujian style. Although probably too simplistic a view, this is a start to understanding why variants exist. Some, like Guoman from Anhui province and Huayu from Yunnan province, are

¹¹ In the summer, novices are given leave to return to their lay homes to visit their families.

¹² Nanputuosi, being a "Forest of the Ten Directions" (*Shifang conglin*) (see §2.2.5), is open to any monks for

interested in learning hymn singing and seek out good singers when they travel to other monasteries. Guoman told me he wanted to learn from some elderly monks in the Jiangsu region, but they were reluctant to impart their singing skills. He thought they were suspicious of his intentions. In my view, this mistrust could be a repercussion of the experiences of the Cultural Revolution, when Buddhist monks and nuns were persecuted; they were perhaps wary of trusting anybody. Huayu said when he was visiting monasteries in the Putuo Mountains, he liked the singing style of the *Shu* memorial there, so he learnt by listening and imitating. Huayu and Guoman also learn from tape recordings when available. Indeed, Huayu, although he does not perform *gongde* in Nanputuosi, once asked a *caigu* in Xiamen to record some Fuzhou style hymns on audio tapes so that he could “familiarise” himself with the “local” style.

Nanputuosi monks use Fuzhou style when they perform *gongde*. But when I ask them about the style they sing, many call it the “local style” (*bendi diao*). When I probe further to find out what they mean by “local”, they tell me it is “Xiamen style”. Thus many monks simply assume that the style they sing is one that developed in Xiamen. I mentioned (§3.1) that many monks in institutional monasteries in Minnan or Fujian today are not natives of the region. It is therefore not unusual that many do not know about the style: they arrive in Nanputuosi to find that for *gongde* they must learn an unfamiliar hymn style. Since performing *gongde* is not really high in the priority of a monk’s vocation, little effort is given to acquiring knowledge and proficiency in hymn singing. This is apparent in the way they learn these hymns. Before arriving in Minnan, they have usually learnt some hymns with their tonsure teacher in the small temples where they became novices. After coming to Nanputuosi, they learnt to sing the “local” style by simply listening to the others who have been there much longer. In other words, they “pick up” the style as they go along. Gradually, with time, they get better at these unfamiliar tunes, or not as the case may be. Zhenxin was among those who told me that when he first started performing *gongde* in Nanputuosi, he could not sing in Fuzhou style, so he listened while others sang. Gradually, the tunes became familiar and he could sing along, getting better – or not, as we shall see later – as time passed. As mentioned above, some, like Huayu, who are friendly with local *caigu* learn from the latter.

In Nanputuosi, elderly monks of Minnanese origin are difficult to find; I was told that some “retire” to smaller temples near their homes, while some who still live in Nanputuosi

a short period of stay. Some come on this basis and apply to stay on. See Welch 1967 for more details.

are too old to sing. Today, they do not actively offer their expertise in singing to younger monks. They often only want a quiet peaceful time to practice the religion and gather merit for themselves before they die. They rarely mix with younger monks, and in reverse the young do not seek them out.

In monasteries in Quanzhou, conditions of hymn learning among the younger generation are similar. Few receive lessons from older monks. In Chengtiansi, *gongde* is not encouraged either in the monastery or outside (see §2.2.5). An elderly monk in Chengtiansi is one of the remaining few who can sing the local *caiyou* style, but he holds the opinion that this style is not pleasing to the ear (*buhaoting*) and therefore does not pass it on to the younger generation.

Benfa, on the other hand, is a typical example of a monk who had lived mostly in small temples. His teacher was a “sutra penitence” (*jingchan*) monk, that is, one who performs *gongde* mainly to make a living. Since singing is the main tool of the trade, his teacher therefore trained him well. Benfa said he learnt nearly 200 hymns from his teacher. Benfa now has two disciples to whom he is passing his hymn legacy. He lamented, however, that the traditional teaching methods of his teacher no longer work on the young today. The new generation is not so fearful of or reverent towards their teachers. Television and CD players are common items in temples today. The social distractions are certainly more diverse than in earlier days, so his disciples do not work very hard at learning the hymns. He told me there are still many hymns his disciples have not mastered, particularly the long difficult ones.

As for the *caigu*, 80-year-old Sister Feigu from Yanshoutang (Longevity Hall) in Xiamen told me she learnt hymn singing from her “teacher-father” (*shifu*), an ordained monk who is her mentor. Sister Yulian, another *caigu* in her 50s, told me her *caimu* (“Vegetarian mother”), a *caigu* who raised her but has now passed away, was a very good singer of Fuzhou style hymns. This “Vegetarian mother” was taught by her *shifu* and then taught Yulian. Indeed, Quanzhou musician Cai Junchao’s (published) transcriptions contains regional style hymns sung by ordained monks. He told me that in the 1980s, he visited old monks in Kaiyuansi and Guanghuasi and recorded their hymns. Since he could not travel abroad, he also wrote to Minnanese monks living in the Philippines, requesting recordings of their singing. All this confirms that ordained monks were the main proponents of Fuzhou style hymns in Minnan until recently.

Today, the learning conditions are also changed among the younger generation of

caigu. Most of those who perform *gongde* learn by listening to others rather than through formal teaching. The Cultural Revolution created a yawning gap between the eldest generation and the youngest. The oldest generation are mostly too infirm to teach, and there is no middle generation. *Caigu*-run temples often take in abandoned baby girls. These girls are sent to normal schools when young. I have seen older girls among them taking part in the daily or other rituals. The elderly Quanzhou *caigu* Miaolian told me that when they grow older, they are free to decide whether they wish to become *caigu*. Some, when they complete their normal schooling, are sent to Quanzhou Buddhist College or Minnan Buddhist College in Nanputuosi. Thus the current generation of young *caigu*, because of their background, are exposed to hymn singing from a young age; this hence reduces the need for formal hymn teaching.

4.4.2 Change and variation in Buddha hymns

The preferred choice of hymn style for *caigu* in *gongde* is the Fuzhou style, thus called because it is said to have originated from Fuzhou. But did they in fact originate there? If so, are they sung in the same way in Minnan as in Fuzhou? In this section we examine the Buddha hymns, leaving the Spirit hymns for the next sub-section. To find an answer to my first question, I compared fourteen hymns sung by Benfa (including also a few by others in Fuzhou) with hymns of the same text sung by different *caigu* in Minnan, and from Cai Junchao's transcriptions. I found only one pair of hymns that bore no resemblance. Thirteen pairs of hymns from these two regions share their melodic outline, but they vary in different degrees. Some hymns are closely similar; some deviate quite widely on the surface, but reducing the melodies to a skeletal contour reveals that they are still related; some have sections that are similar but also have sections which vary widely from the Fuzhou versions. Table 4.4 shows the titles of the fourteen hymns I examined, listed in approximate decreasing order of resemblance.

Musical comparisons indeed show an overwhelming similarity in the Fuzhou style as sung in Minnan and in Fuzhou, supporting the *caigu*'s claim of Fuzhou origins for this style. It was shown above (§4.2.3) that texts which have the same prosody share the same tune. All 6-line hymns, for example, share the tune of "Censer Incense Hymn", while 8-line hymns use the same tune as the Three Jewels Hymns and so on. Thus although I have only compared 14 hymns, there are in fact many more which share tunes.

Table 4.4 Fuzhou style hymns sung by Fuzhou singers and Minnanese *caigu*

Hymn Category	Title of hymn
Incense Hymn	Censer Incense Hymn (<i>Luxiang zan</i>)
Purification Hymn	Willow Branch Purified Water (<i>Yangzhi jingshui</i>)
Offertory Hymn	Putuo Mountains of the South Sea (<i>Nanhai Putuoshan</i>)
“	Incense, Flower, Lamp, Oil and Fruit (<i>Xiang hua deng tu guo</i>)
“	True Incense Hymn (<i>Jieding zhenxiang</i>)
Refuge Hymn	Jeta Garden (<i>Jiegu yuan</i>)
Laudatory Hymn	Praise to the Buddha (<i>Fobao zan</i>)
Incense Hymn	Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom (<i>Jiexiang dingxiang yu huixiang</i>)
“	Tathagata Five Measure Incense (<i>Rulai wufen xiang</i>)
“	A Stick of Heart Incense (<i>Xinxiang yizhu</i>)
Ten Offering Hymn	Incense Burning Above (<i>Xiangfen zai shangfang</i>)
“	Offering Flowers to Manjusri (<i>Hua fengxian wenshu</i>)
Offertory Hymn	Prostrate before the Thousand-petals Lotus Seat (<i>Jishou qianye lianhua zuo</i>)
	Refuge Hymn (<i>Jishou guiyi dajuezun</i>)

The “Refuge Hymn”, the last in the above table, is the only tune that does not match. The hymn as sung by Benfa and by a *caigu* from Xiamen has different tunes (Ex. 4.38). In the *caigu* recording, before beginning the hymn she announced that she was going to sing in Fuzhou style; thus there is no doubt, at least in her view, that she is singing in the Fuzhou style. Can we determine whether one of these versions might be erroneous? Turning to Cai’s transcriptions, I do not find the “Refuge Hymn” in Fuzhou style; but I found three other Fuzhou style hymns of similar prosody. Comparing the melodies of these to the *caigu*’s “Refuge Hymn”, I found that these closely resemble the *caigu*’s version. Moreover, *Chanlin Zanji*, the text manual used by ritualists in Minnan, lists these three texts consecutively with the “Refuge Hymn”. The rhythmic beats (*banyan*) are marked alongside the text of the first of the four, but subsequent texts do not have rhythmic beats, which usually indicates that they are sung to the same tune. This confirms that the *caigu* was very likely singing the tune that is meant for this text. However, there is no mistake in Benfa’s singing either: he sang the “Refuge Hymn” to the same tune in another recording he made several years before.

Examination reveals that neither tune is a variant of the National style version either. Could it be that this hymn in Fuzhou style was not transmitted to Minnan, but that the Minnanese acquired another tune and wrongly ascribed it to Fuzhou? Could it be that there

is another tune for this same text in Fuzhou and that this alternative tune was the one that was transmitted? These are questions for the future.

Ex. 4.38 “Refuge Hymn” sung by Xiamen *caigu* (Discog. R13) and Fuzhou monk Benfa (CFJ 027)

The musical score for Ex. 4.38 is presented in two systems. Each system contains two staves: the top staff for Xiamen *caigu* and the bottom staff for Fuzhou monk Benfa. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system covers the first line of the hymn, with lyrics 'Ji (a) shou gui yi (a)' for *caigu* and 'Kei siu (a) gui yi (a)' for Benfa. The second system covers the second line, with lyrics 'da jue zun' for *caigu* and 'dai ka zon' for Benfa. Both staves in the second system end with 'etc.' to indicate the continuation of the piece.

Among the hymns which resemble each other, some interesting changes can be observed. Space does not permit description of how each of these thirteen pairs differs; I will highlight only a few to illustrate certain points.

During oral transmission, several types of change may occur. An example is the loss of part of a hymn over a short period of time. When comparing the three-stanza hymn “Jeta Garden” sung by Benfa and by *caigu*, I found that while the two are closely related, towards the end of each stanza three lines of text and eight bars of melody are missing from the *caigu* version. Among Cai’s transcriptions I found the same hymn sung by Dingmiao, a monk from Guanghuasi monastery in Putian, which is nearer to Quanzhou than to Fuzhou. His rendition not only closely resembles Benfa’s but is also intact (Ex. 4.39).¹³ As it is common to sing only one stanza at any one time, it is unlikely that eight bars were abridged to save time. It is also unlikely that this change happened only after the Cultural Revolution since I found that this hymn sung in Taiwan also has these eight bars missing.¹⁴ The current generation of institutional ritualists, who frequently use this hymn in their *gongde*, similarly sing the shortened variant. It is evident they learnt it from the *caigu*.

¹³ Visiting Guanghuasi in 1999, I found that Dingmiao had passed away.

¹⁴ In Taiwan, hymns sung in rituals for the dead is called *Gushan diao* (Gushan style) because it is believed to originate from Gushan in Fuzhou. Based on my present findings, I pointed out that the influence of *Gushan diao* in Taiwan is more likely to have come from Minnan than Fuzhou (Tan 2001: 487-508). But further research is pending.

Ex. 4.39 “Jeta Garden” by Benfa (CFJ 027), Putian monk Dingmiao (in Cai 1998: 99) and Quanzhou *caigu* Lianzang (transcribed by Cai; unpub.)

BF
 si - @ hua lai lin tian
 DM
 shuo fa li ren tian
 LZ
 shuo fa li ren tian

BF
 wei wei hot tuo ye wan dai
 DM
 wei wei fo tuo ye wan de
 LZ
 8 bars missing

BF
 hot tuo ye xiao zai yan siu
 DM
 fo tuo ye xiao zai yan shou
 LZ

BF
 hot (a) tuo ye
 DM
 fo tuo ye
 LZ

BF Na (ai) mo jin yu etc.

DM na mo zhen ru etc.

LZ na mo zhen ru etc.

As seen earlier (§4.1.1), hymns sung in the self-enhancing daily rituals or calendrical rituals are in the slow and highly melismatic National style. The solemnity and meditative quality of this style is believed to enhance religious piety and contribute to self-betterment. I was informed by Minnanese *caigu* that there is insufficient time to sing hymns in the National style in *gongde*; the preferred style is Fuzhou style because it is “faster”. The elderly *caigu* Miaolian told me that when really pressed for time they would use the local *caiyou* style, as this is even “faster”. The “speed” of hymn singing appears to be a criterion for choice for *gongde* ritualists; this is worth looking into as it might have some influence on change and variation in hymn singing.

Taking the example of the “True Incense Hymn”, often sung to open the morning or evening lesson and the Offering rite in *gongde*, let us compare the time it takes to sing this same text in the National and Fuzhou styles. This text has a total of 36 syllables. In the National style in the context of a morning lesson at Nanputuosi (CD Tr. 25), the time taken to sing these 36 syllables is approximately 4’30” (giving an average rate of 8 syllables per minute).¹⁵ This same text sung in the Fuzhou style by Benfa took 1’33” (ca. 23 syllables/minute) (CD Tr. 26), while a group of *caigu* from Tongfosi, performing in a *gongde*, took about 1’22” (ca. 26 syllables/minute) (CD Tr. 27; see Table 4.5 below). This is the sense in which the regional Fuzhou style is “faster”: it covers the same amount of text in significantly less time. In other words, the textual density (syllables per minute) is greater. Hence in *gongde*, where the Penitence texts are often long and the number of sub-rites copious, it is pragmatic for ritualists to use Fuzhou rather than National style. The *caiyou* style, introduced in §4.1.3, is even faster. Two Buddha hymns, one consisting of 39 syllables was performed in 55’, while another with 40 syllables took 29’. This would save even more time in *gongde*, but we saw in §4.1.3 that *caigu* now do not sing *caiyou* style hymns because it is not dignified enough, presumably because it is performed with

unseemly haste.

The two versions (Benfa's and the *caigu*'s) of the "True Incense Hymn" are close variants. As there are 17.5 bars, if we assign four main beats per bar, the total number of beats is 70. The matching rate of the two is over 75% (Ex.4.40).

Ex. 4.40 Reduction score of "True Incense Hymn" by Benfa (CFJ 026) and Tongfosi *caigu* (CFJ 009)

The image displays a musical score for two instruments, BF and CG, arranged in six systems. Each system consists of two staves. The notation is in treble clef and includes various note values, rests, and ties. The final two systems end with 'etc.' indicating continuation.

Variants occur in the *caigu* version in the first phrase, the end of fifth and parts of the sixth phrase. Examining the opening phrase, Benfa ends on d' but the *caigu*'s cadence is on a. The *caigu*, by simplifying the opening notes, landed earlier on their second and third syllables than Benfa; since the *caigu*'s third syllable is already around d', they must move to another note rather than stay on d' as Benfa has done (Ex. 4.41). Such melodic

¹⁵ I will omit the Triple Invocation coda here.

simplification is also noticeable in the rest of this *caigu* melody. By not “adding flowers” (*jiahua*), to use a Chinese musician’s term for ornamenting melodies, the hymn can be sung in a shorter time. However, Adong, a *caigu* from Xiamen, managed to sing this hymn six seconds faster than the Tongfosi group despite greater ornamentation.

Ex. 4.41 Phrase 1 of “True Incense Hymn” by Benfa and Tongfosi *caigu*

Freely, solo

Comparing this same hymn sung by three Minnanese singers, their main melodic outline is in even closer agreement than with Benfa’s. Benfa’s, on the other hand, shows closer similarity with another Fuzhou singer. Thus during its migration from Fuzhou to Minnan, the melody has taken on a slightly different contour in some places.

The first 13 pairs of hymns in Table 4.4 are without doubt related, but in some the melodic contours show significant differences. Therefore, when listening to the same hymn by Fuzhou and Minnanese singers, immediate aural identification is more difficult to make than, say, when two Minannese sing the same hymn. The fact that different dialects are used in these two regions also leads to aural misperception.

Over time, the hymn style that originated from Fuzhou became the widely accepted alternative to National style in *gongde*. Although a local *caiyou* style was also available, it was not considered respectable, so it was only used as a substitute when pressed for time. Fuzhou style is considered by many *caigu* a dignified style suited for *gongde*, perhaps being more prestigious than *càiyou* style because it came from outside the region.

Thus today, the preferred style by *caigu* is the Fuzhou style, which we have determined came indeed from Fuzhou but has changed in various ways. What hymn styles do institutional *gongde* ritualists favour today? Ordained monks also use the Fuzhou style; but as elucidated in the section on transmission (§4.4.1), they do not learn Fuzhou style hymns formally. In comparison to the women, however, the institutional ritualists know only a small number of Fuzhou style hymns. Since Buddha hymns also exist in the National style, the institutional ritualists find it convenient to stick to National style they are already familiar with, alternating it with the few Fuzhou style hymns they have learnt.

When the institutional ritualists sing in National style in *gongde*, they solve the same problem faced by the *caigu* (i.e. insufficient time) by speeding up National style hymns. Earlier we saw that the “True Incense Hymn” as sung in the daily lesson in Nanputuosi took 4’30” (cf. CD 25). When Nanputuosi monks performed this same hymn in *gongde*, the time taken to get through it was only 1’52” (CD Tr. 28) (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Duration of “True Incense Hymn” in different styles

Hymn style & context	Total number of syllables in text	Total time in minutes & seconds	Syllables per minute
National style (morning lesson)	36	4’30”	8
National style (<i>gongde</i>)	36	1’52”	19
Fuzhou style sung by monk in Fuzhou	36	1’33”	23
Fuzhou style sung by <i>caigu</i> in Minnan	36	1’22”	26

Another group of institutional ritualists from Hongshansi shows a similar tendency, that is, they also supplement Fuzhou style with National style in *gongde*.¹⁶ Their speed of National style hymns varies from about three and a half to two minutes. Presumably because the monks are so accustomed to singing these same pieces for their daily lessons, I find less divergence in the melodies in the two contexts; but in *gongde* the ornaments are somewhat curtailed and sometimes long-held beats are drastically shortened to save time (Ex. 4.42). The reasons for the institutional ritualists’ restricted repertory, and indeed their performance practice, are linked to changing meanings in *gongde* which are influenced by social, economic and political conditions in the Reform era. These are discussed in the next section.

¹⁶ Hongshansi, also in Xiamen, is a branch temple of Nanputuosi with about a dozen monks in residence. Monks from Nanputuosi are invited to assist when *gongde* is performed in Hongshansi.

Ex. 4.42 “True Incense Hymn” sung in (a) morning lesson (CFJ 001) and (b) in *gongde* by Nanputuosi monks (CFJ 021)

Freely (solo) tutti ♩ = 32

(a) jie - e . . . ding* zhen - (a) . . .

Freely (solo) tutti ♩ = 55

(b) jie - e . . . ding* zhen - (a) . . .

xiang (a) . . . (a) - fen - qi (e) . . .

xiang (a) - (a) - fen - qi . . .

chong tian - shang - (a) . . . etc. . .

chong tian - shang - (a) . . . etc. . .

Fuzhou style hymns sung by institutional ritualists are close variants of those sung by the *caigu*. As there is virtually no formal transmission of the Fuzhou style: monks who perform *gongde* are either guided by the *caigu* or learn by osmosis. Institutional ritualists’ Fuzhou style hymns are close variants of the *caigu*’s; a difference is that the institutionalists, mostly of non-Minnan origin, sing in Mandarin rather than in Minnanese. The *caigu*, as the most prolific *gongde* specialists in Minnan today, are very likely the institutionalists’ closest source of Fuzhou style. Further evidence is found in “Jeta Garden”, where eight bars are missing from today’s *caigu* version: the institutional ritualists similarly sing this hymn in its abridged version.

To determine the extent variation exists in hymns sung by the same singer, I checked my recordings of Benfa against an earlier recording (undated) he made for an audio company (Discog. R2). Listening to several hymns, I found very little variant in Benfa’s singing; minor changes in ornamentation do sometimes occur, such as singing 6156 in place of 11, or singing 35321 as 3532 on a different occasion. These are simply possible ways for ornamenting notes and such changes do not really affect the melody in any great way. However, I found an example that illustrates how accidental melodic change may sometimes lead to permanent change. The third phrase (where the 4th text line enters) of the three-stanza “Jeta Garden” as sung by Benfa on my field recording ends with a cadence

on g. In the commercial recording, Benfa sang a different melodic unit in the penultimate cadence bar. This results in a cadence ending on c' (Ex. 4.43). In this recording, however, he sang all three stanzas; I found that this third phrase in his two subsequent stanzas is identical with the version on my recording. This thus confirms that he made a mistake in his first stanza. Still, isolating just the bar with the cadence, we may think that Benfa could still have made his fragment end on the g cadential pattern. But if we put this together with the bar preceding it and examine the whole repertory, we will see that stylistic habits dictate that a singer singing this pattern invariably ends on c'. Examples of the way this cadence works are given in Ex. 4.44. Benfa could easily have slipped into this pattern by accident as it is common to leap up a fourth, or if he adds an extra ornamented note a, the leap up a third is also common.

Ex. 4.43 Two performances of “Jeta Garden” by Benfa: a) my recording (CFJ 027); b) Discog. R2, undated

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece "Jeta Garden". Each system consists of two staves. The first system (a) represents the author's recording, showing a melodic line that concludes with a cadence on the note c'. The second system (b) represents a disc recording, showing a similar melodic line but with a different cadence pattern, also ending on c'.

Ex. 4.44 Cadential patterns in Fuzhou style ending on c'

The image shows three staves of musical notation illustrating cadential patterns in the Fuzhou style that end on the note c'. The notation features a series of notes and rests, with a final cadence on c'.

Examining hymns finishing with the cadence from c' to g, we see that the tendencies for the bar preceding this cadence are as in Ex. 4.45. This is a classic example of how memory lapse could lead to melodic variants. Benfa, being an experienced singer of the Fuzhou style, realised his mistake and rectified it. An inexperienced singer might have passed on the wrong version (since it also works without much awkwardness), which might then eventually become an accepted way of singing this phrase.

Ex. 4.45 Cadential patterns ending on g



4.4.3 Change and variation in Spirit hymns

Although variants are common, the Buddha hymns on the whole show more correspondence with their place of origin. Greater discrepancies, which sometimes cast doubts about their identity, are found in the Spirit hymns. In the 8-line “Buddha, My Teacher of Three Realms” (*Wofo sanjieshi*), Benfa’s melodic contour is quite different from two Minnanese versions shown, one by a *caigu* and the other by a Quanzhou monk (Ex. 4.46). Though the melodies diverge widely, there is no doubt that they are variants. However, Benfa transposed the melody a 5th upward (to the key of G) towards the end of the piece, changing it drastically and ending its resemblance with the Minnanese versions, which agree closely and stay in one key throughout (Ex. 4.47). The last section of the Minannese version (last 2 bars of Ex. 4.47) is a variant of line 2 (Ex. 4.46, SY bars 3 & 4), thus showing some consistency with the first half of the melody. Benfa, on the other hand, introduces a completely new phrase, a cadence on b (Ex. 4.47, BF bar 4; 3 in the pentatonic scale or 7 if we still think of it in the key of C, but this 7 is an indication that modulation has taken place).

Ex. 4.46 “Buddha, My Teacher of Three Realms”(first few lines) by Benfa (CFJ 027), anonymous Xiamen *caigu* (Discog. R13) and Quanzhou monk Shanyang (in Cai 1998: 196)

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with three staves for different vocal parts: BF (Baritone), AD (Alto), and SY (Soprano). The music is written in 4/4 time. The first system contains the following lyrics: BF: Ng@ fu sa - an gai jie (ei); AD: wo fo san jie shi; SY: wo fo sa jie shi. The second system contains the following lyrics: BF: si se - ngda - ai dai (ai) ci h@ etc.; AD: si sheng da ci fu etc.; SY: si sheng da ci fu etc.

It is difficult to judge why Benfa changed pitch and whether he did so intentionally. In Western-style harmonic music and in many Chinese genres, modulation in the course of a piece is a developmental structural device. The term “transposition”, in contrast, usually implies a change of overall pitch level for some other reason, such as to accommodate a singer’s vocal range. I have not discussed this with Benfa, but I suspect that the mid-performance change was unconscious. Such changes occurred a number of times in my sessions with Benfa, perhaps because he and his colleagues found that their voices could not cope with the tonal range at a particular point in the key in which they started. There are times when I suspect sudden unexpected changes to another key disorientated the singers and they ended up singing another tune. But remember: these are amateur singers; they are not given any theoretical training; and I have not yet pursued this matter with Benfa. (See the end of §4.3.1 for another example of presumably unintentional transposition.)

Ex. 4.47 Last section of “Buddha, My Teacher” by Benfa and Shanyang

Another hymn, “Yesterday Roaming in the Wilds” (*Zuori huangjiao qu wanyou*), has more complicated incidences of modulations and their interpretation by the singers. This is one of the long laments containing words of admonition of mortal failings. Since these are rarely sung by the *caigu* in Minnan these days, probably because of their length, I turn to Cai Junchao’s transcription of Shanyang, a monk from Kaiyuansi. Comparing it with Benfa’s singing led to some interesting findings. At first glance, the melodies do not resemble each other. Furthermore, Cai’s transcription seemed questionable, as there were many instances of key change, which I did not detect in Benfa’s singing.

Listening to the recording of Shanyang (a copy of which Cai gave me in 1997), I could confirm that, apart from details of ornaments, Cai was right about the modulations (CD Tr. 29). However, in his notation,¹ he recorded a modulation up a fifth in bar 9, starting on the last syllable of the second textual line (Ex.4.48). The recurrences of b (7th degree in the pentatonic scale) and f# (4th degree), which in a strongly Chinese anhemitonic pentatonic context usually facilitate modulation, are hints that a key change has occurred

¹ Cai’s published transcriptions (1999) contain only cipher notation. Here, I am working on a copy of his manuscript which he gave me in 1997, in which both staff and cipher notations are used.

at the start of that line. Cai, however, seems to have felt that these notes were merely acting as passing tones (as they often do).

Ex. 4.48 “Yesterday Roaming in the Wilds” by Shanyang (trans. By Cai 1998: 179)

My earlier analysis of Benfa, however, had shown that modulations rarely occur in the middle of a phrase. There are many instances when elements from different hymns are borrowed to form a new tune, but as whole melodic phrases. Based on these facts, we can conclude that Shanyang’s modulation actually began at the start of the second phrase (call it phrase B) rather than at the end. Establishing this, Cai’s 5th degree (which he writes as g^1 in the key of C) at the start of phrase B should then be interpreted as the new tonic. For ease of comparison, I will rewrite Cai’s phrase B in the key of D and do the same for Benfa. Thus, correcting Cai’s error revealed that, despite some minor variances and the extension of the cadence by Cai’s singer, his melodic outline is closely homogeneous to Benfa’s phrase B (Ex. 4.49).¹

¹ I have corrected beat 3 in bar 5 to b instead of the c shown by Cai; Cai probably made a mistake because the singer was in a very low register and the recording quality is bad.

Ex. 4.49 Phrase B of “Yesterday Roaming in the Wilds” by Benfa (CFJ 026) and Shanyang (in Cai 1998: 179) re-written in the key of D

Going back to the first phrase (named as A), if we rewrite Cai’s transcription in the key of G rather than in C as he has done (the designation of the tonic is in effect arbitrary), the two phrases again reveal close correlation. (Ex. 4.50). But Shanyang began in one key (say G), then used an imperfect cadence as a pivot note for modulation up a fifth (to the key of D) in the second phrase. Benfa, on the other hand, has somehow interpreted the opening phrase in the key of C rather than G (CD Tr. 30). Ending his phrase A on the 2nd degree, the strong sense of the C key allows him to leap up a 7th to start phrase B, inadvertently avoiding the need for modulation. As we can see after much re-interpretation, the melodic outlines of the two hymns are intrinsically the same; but as a result of ambiguity in subtle key changes which can be achieved by the appearance of one or more exchange tones, the cognition of the piece becomes somewhat different.

Ex. 4.50 Phrase A of “Yesterday Roaming in the Wilds” by Benfa and Shanyang

Substituting one note of the pentatonic scale to facilitate melodic shifts or modulations is widespread in Chinese instrumental music (Yuan 1999: 94-100; see also Jones 1995). By substituting *b* for *c*, the pentatonic scale changes from *c d e g a* to *g a b d e*, resulting in modulation up a fifth. But in instrumental music, players consciously carry out such key shifts as a variation technique to create whole new pieces or sectional variants. Buddhist monks, or indeed the *caigu* or *xianghua* ritualists, are rarely trained musicians; they do not theorise about their music in any such way.

I mentioned briefly above that some modulations seem to result from singers finding themselves in a key that is too high for their voice range. This kind of abrupt key change is not uncommon among Buddhist practitioners and is understandable because they are not trained musicians. But as the above example illustrates, at times the problem with modulation is more than just adaptation to voice range. Modulations which raise questions are more noticeable in the long Spirit hymns. Pending a further meeting with Benfa, I can only venture some my ideas about why this phenomenon is prevalent in such hymn types. As noted in §4.2.5, Spirit hymns have little original material: their tunes are constructed from a mosaic of phrases or fragments imported from other existing hymn tunes. Again, this is very common in Chinese instrumental music in general. New pieces are often created from borrowing materials from different *qupai* (see Yuan 1999: 76). Citing the hymn “Yesterday roaming in the Wilds” which we have just discussed, my analysis based on Benfa’s singing showed that phrase A is derived from the first phrase of the “Refuge Hymn”, while the second phrase is borrowed from the hymn

“Offering Flowers to Manjusri”. The rest of the hymn tune consists mainly of repetitions of these two phrases. Since phrases are pieced together from different sources as independent building blocks without any organic links, there is no preparation for any modulation that might occur, unlike in Western music where modulation generally happens in some musically logical way, for example, through a pivot note or chord.

There are several other reasons for change I could offer by way of hypothesis. For my recording of Benfa and his disciples, he hired a group of musicians from Fuzhou to accompany the singing. This surprised me, but Benfa said it was common to have instrumental accompaniment when singing Fuzhou *Chanhe* style (see discussion of *doutang* in §4.1.2). As is common in the Buddhist tradition, one person (the officiant or precentor) sings the free metre opening without any accompaniment. Benfa would begin the hymns, thus setting a pitch; the instrumentalists, joining in after this opening, then begin to adjust their playing according to Benfa’s pitch. Sometimes, it takes them a while on their respective instruments to find the right pitch.

On one occasion when Benfa sang a long Spirit hymn, “Greed and Ignorance” (*Yipian tanchenchi*), he started on a pitch which the musicians had great difficulty in adjusting to. For seven bars this complete disharmony continued; then, rather than stopping and starting again (as a ritual performer he is probably used to continuing no matter what goes wrong), Benfa suddenly modulated to a different key. This change of key gave the instrumentalists the break they needed, and they were able, from then on, to play in that pitch (CD Tr. 31). Based on observations drawn from my analysis of Spirit hymns, however, I hypothesise that Benfa had in one way or another switched to a different tune from the one he was suppose to sing. Spirit hymns are made up of fragments from different existing Buddha hymns, but we saw in §4.2.5 that when a new hymn borrows material from “Incense of Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom”, the rest of the borrowed material will usually come from “The Merit of Reciting Buddha’s Name” and at times also from “Incense Burning Above” (call these Group 1 for the moment). But if it borrows materials from “Offering Flowers to Manjusri”, it will combine those with materials from the “Refuge Hymn” (Group 2). Materials from Groups 1 and 2 rarely mix. In the above hymn, Benfa began with four bars from “Incense of Precepts...”, then four bars from its legitimate Group 1 partner “The Merit...”, then back to “Incense of Precepts...” – but after one bar from this hymn, he suddenly changed key, and what followed were melodic fragments from “Offering Flowers to Manjusri” of Group 2. This abrupt switch after a bar is not common in the make-up of Spirit hymns. Furthermore, soon melodic fragments from the “Refuge Hymn” could be detected as well. From the

point of modulation, Benfa did not return to any fragments from Group 1, which again is unusual. This suggests that he may have accidentally, perhaps while subconsciously adjusting to the instrumental pitches, slipped into a different tune which is not the usual one but which, as it happens, could also fit the lyrics of “Roaming in the Wilds”.

When recording Benfa, there were more incidents of faltering or wavering in his singing of the long Spirit hymns than the Buddha hymns. On one occasion, he started singing a melody but began to waver slightly; his disciple, perhaps sensing his uncertainty, increased his volume, then lowered his voice when Benfa was confident again. Memory lapses may be a cause; but according to Benfa, during the Cultural Revolution, although monks were not allowed to openly perform any rituals, some like him continued to perform the daily lessons in secret. He said that although there were no performances of *gongde* at all during that time, in private he regularly practised the 200 hymns he had learnt.

4.4.4 Conclusion

Our comparative analysis in this section has supported the theory of the dissemination of Fuzhou style hymns to Minnan. On the other hand, it has also revealed that there are diverse ways of performing any one melody, and that the choice among them is based on a variety of factors. In a way, we can say that what is really disseminated is an impression or outline of a melody which becomes embellished in different ways by different people. How identically a piece is transmitted depends partly on the transmission methods. In earlier times, it is said, the older generation passed on the hymns with more care. This is still evident in small temples like Benfa’s, where he grooms his disciples in the singing of hymns. The result is that the identity of tunes is not drastically changed. But with changing conditions in institutional monasteries, where traditional methods of transmission have fallen apart as a result of various changes in society, less concern about how the music should sound might lead to more radical musical change in the future.

In the next section, I will discuss the changing meanings in *gongde* due to social, ideological, and political factors. These, in my view, are conditions which have a decided impact on music in *gongde*.

4.5 Music and meaning in institutional and semi-institutional *gongde*

Following reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, Chinese social, economic and political structure underwent tremendous changes. In traditional China,

peasants formed the socio-economic basis of the society. Strong family values were the most stabilizing factor in Chinese peasant social life. With the reform came rapid urbanization, industrialization, and changes in social structure. These have different impacts on religion and ritual activities. Religious practices resumed following the government's introduction, in 1982, of the policy of freedom of religious belief.² However, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) continues to view religious practices, particularly traditional customs, with suspicion, deeming them "feudal" and "superstitious". On the one hand, the CCP pledges freedom of religious belief, while on the other it continues to control and regulate religious practices. Institutional religions such as Buddhism, monastic Daoism, Christianity and Islam are more open to political manipulation by the CCP. But at the same time, for their own growth and development, institutionalised religions see no disadvantage in adapting and functioning according to new socialist ideologies. This section will show how monastery-based institutional Buddhists respond to government ascendancy by re-interpreting *gongde*, a ritual traditionally infused with elements contrary to orthodox ideology and one which has for a long time been a bone of contention among Buddhists. Institutional Buddhists see this remodelling of *gongde* as a chance to modernise their religion and to rid Buddhism of unorthodox practices that had become associated with it, as manifested particularly in *gongde*. As we shall see later, the basis of their religious renewal is an extension of early 20th century reform advocated by Taixu.

Changes in social structure and ideology have also led to redefinition of gender roles and relations. Ethnomusicological studies on gender suggest that men and women have separate musical spheres in many societies (see e.g. Koskoff 1987), and many argue that music may serve as a medium through which differences are constructed (George 1993). The case with *caigu* might be seen as the opposite: appropriating the music of (male) institutional ritualists is one way by which they affirm their identity as *gongde* ritualists. Yet gender issues *per se* are less significant in the *caigu* rise as *gongde* ritualists than are social, economic and ideological forces. Music and its changing meanings in *gongde*, as we shall see, are a reflection of changes in modern Chinese society.

4.5.1 Changing meanings in the music of *gongde*

The topic of music and meaning has been a concern in ethnomusicology since at least the 1970s and one that continues to exercise ethnomusicologists today.³ This concern has

² For a complete translation of the relevant policy document, see MacInnis 1989: 10-26.

³ See for example the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* vol. 10, no. 1 (2001), special issue on "Music

also extended increasingly to the study of music in ritual and to music in Chinese ritual in particular.⁴ The last-mentioned topic has been examined from various perspectives and in different contexts. But studies of music in the context of its performance in ritual are still few and far between.⁵ In recent years, the performance approach has been recognised as an important breakthrough in the study of ritual and its elements (Bell 1998). Examining music in its performative context contributes to a better understanding of the associated meanings and dynamics of music in ritual and how they combine to bring about ritual efficacy.

Buddhist vocal liturgical music has not undergone modernisation or major innovation in its system since the end of the imperial era. On the one hand, perpetuation of traditional liturgical forms is still strong, but within this continuity, changes have occurred and are occurring. Variants as a result of change in speed, ornamentation and melodic contour, as discussed in the previous section, can be seen as a type of change; but this is only a surface change. Behind this, which can be considered internal change, lie deeper dynamics of external changes. Below I will first outline what, in my view, is changing in music of institutional *gongde* and will follow this with thoughts about why it changes.

Fuzhou style hymns are an expedient choice for *gongde* ritualists in Minnan for reasons already discussed (§4.4.2). Yet compared to their women counterparts, institutional *gongde* ritualists are familiar with only a small repertory of Fuzhou style hymns. Insofar as tunes are concerned, the institutional ritualists use only four Buddha hymn tunes: that of “Censer Incense Hymn”, “True Incense Hymn”, “Three Jewels Hymn” and “Jeta Garden”, alternating these with National style hymns. A variety of texts are then sung to the first three tunes according to context. As for Spirit hymns, Nanputuosi monk Xianyan told me that the ones they commonly sing include “Five Dreams” (*Wumeng*), “The Silent Green Mountains” (*Qingshan wuyu*) (a verse-like hymn), and “Prostrate and Take Refuge” hymns (whose one tune could be sung to several texts venerating different deities). Thus they claim familiarity with three tunes. OF these three, however, the only one I have heard in institutional *gongde* is the five-stanza “Five Dreams” (*Wumeng*). The two most popular stanzas are “Spring Dream” (*Chunxiao meng*) and “Illusive Dream” (*Nanke meng*), sung one stanza at a time during the various visits to the Spirit altar. I once heard another group of ritualists from Hongshansi sing a Spirit hymn text (*Omituofu su you wubian shi*), which uses the tune of

and Meaning”.

⁴ Yung et al. (1996 - introduction) gives a brief review of studies in this domain.

the “True Incense hymn”. Thus institutional ritualists have a limited repertoire of both Buddha and Spirit hymns. What then are the implications of institutional ritualists’ limited performance of a repertory that is quite abundant?

The first is “impoverishment”, or shrinkage, of the repertory of the Fuzhou style in Minnan, particularly among institutional ritualists. Elderly *caigu* learnt the Fuzhou style from monks (see §4.4.1), and Cai Junchao’s transcription contained many Fuzhou style hymns that were sung by monks. It seems that in Minnan, at least in pre-Communist times, monks were traditionally the main proponents of Fuzhou style hymns and used this style in *gongde*. With the gradual demise of the older generation of Minnanese monks, and changing conditions in the 1980s (to which I will return below), the younger generation only learn enough to cope in *gongde*. The contraction of the regional style repertory has a further implication: hymns interspersed between recitations in *gongde* become more rigidly fixed. Traditionally, with the ritualists’ knowledge of a wide repertoire of hymns, there was constant creative decision-making in selecting hymns; this allowed for more variety both within one *gongde* and between performances. Now, with fewer hymns at their disposal, we find increasing standardization of hymn choice.

The *caigu*, on the other hand, know more Fuzhou style hymns and use a greater variety of both Buddha and Spirit hymns. Having said that, they do not sing long Spirit hymns in *gongde* probably due to lack of time, but this means that the younger *caigu* have no need to learn these. Older *caigu* used to sing hymns in local *caiyou* style as an alternative to Fuzhou style; but few among the younger generation want to learn it. Hence there is, but perhaps less so than among institutional ritualists, some impoverishment in Fuzhou style and also the gradual abandonment of the local repertory among the *caigu*.

Another change that has come about with the diminution of Fuzhou style is the change in context and performance practice of National style hymns. The latter, usually performed in practising rituals such as the daily lessons, are adapted for the new context of serving others. This change in context brings about a change in the meanings of the music. In the practising context, vocal liturgy aims to end all impure thoughts and to inspire religious piety. National style hymns, with their slow, solemn pace and strictly regulated rhythmic patterns, are considered a vehicle for attaining and advancing one’s personal spiritual fulfillment. But when used in *gongde*, these same hymns are sung at a faster tempo in order to save time; their rhythmic patterns are replaced by the lively “flower beats” (*huaban*) and punctuated by the loud jarring handbells essential in *gongde*.

⁵ For such a study, see Ping-Hui Li in Yung et al. 1996.

Indeed, on occasions I have noticed that the percussion players are rhythmically out of synchrony with the singers, not even performing at the same tempo. From their casual attitude in singing and recitation, it is obvious that institutional ritualists put little effort into *gongde* performance.

The women ritualists' attitude toward performance in *gongde* is, in general, more dedicated. Sister Miaolian, for example, says it is also essential to sing piously in *gongde*; she complained that young *caigu* today sing badly due to insufficient efforts to learn hymn singing. Sister Adong of Xiamen tells me that it is important in *gongde* to perform *changnian* (hymns and recitations) with care; it is essential to *guanxiang* (lit. concentrate and think), a Buddhist term for extreme concentration of the mind practised with utmost sincerity of will. Only then will the powers of merit be adequate to save the soul. Sometimes when there is time, *caigu* also sing National style hymns in *gongde*, but they do so with the same dedication as in the practising rituals. However, not all *caigu* are equally dedicated. Chanlian, a disciple of Miaolian, says that performing *gongde* is just a job that has to be done; she doesn't exert herself too much in its performance. As I got to know Chanlian better, I learnt that she had attended the Female Buddhist College (*Nuzhong Foxueyuan*) run by Nanputuosi. Her ambition is really to teach in the Buddhist College, but because Sister Miaolian was in ill health, she had to go back to Tongfosi in Quanzhou to help out. As the livelihood of those living in the temple depends on income from performing *gongde*, despite her contempt for *gongde*, she has no alternative but to perform it. Similarly, I have seen other young *caigu* who are unable to sing in tune performing *gongde* as an expedient way of earning a living.

One other change, not so much of the music but rather of ritual elements, in *gongde* by institutional ritualists is the purging of customary rites considered incongruent with orthodox Buddhism. Over its long history, interpretations of Buddhist soteriology had turned *gongde* into a histrionic ritual to satisfy the Chinese familial obligations of ancestor worship. *Gongde*, performed by Buddhists, Daoists or popular ritualists, must include various ritual elements related to saving the dead from torture and suffering in the nether world; in Minnan, these included turning a paper wheel to symbolise leading the soul out of hell, saving a soul from drowning in a pool of blood, burning paper items to provide for the dead, and so on. In the early 20th century Buddhist reform led by Taixu (§1.4.3), the prevalence of *gongde* among Buddhists was seen as one of the factors contributing to the decline of monastic Buddhism, but Taixu also advocated reform in education among the *sangha* as a radical way forward. For reasons too complex to elucidate here, Taixu's Buddhist reform did not quite realise its full potential during his

lifetime.⁶ With the advent of the Communists in 1949, whose successive political reforms and movements disrupted normal life nationwide culminating in the virtual suspension of religious practices during the Cultural Revolution, Taixu's reform was curtailed.

Before the Communist takeover, many major monasteries supplemented their income by performing rites for the dead.⁷ It is evident that *gongde* was a lucrative source of income for many Buddhist institutions, large or small. Thus, while some monks viewed it with disdain, few were capable of challenging or reforming a ritual that involves complex social and economic implications. In the late 1990s, however, a different and diverse picture has emerged in Fujian province. As this has already been discussed in §§2.2.3-5, I will not repeat the information; it is only necessary to summarise briefly here. Major monasteries in Fujian which were known to be active in *gongde* before 1949 now ban its performances on their premises; some monasteries prohibit their resident monks from performing *gongde* outside, while others are less stringent. Institutional Buddhists today, particularly the more erudite monks, still scorn the performance of *gongde* as mercenary or even superstitious. Elderly monks often lament how because of its commercialisation, *gan jingchan* ("rushing through sutras and penitence"), a deprecatory way of referring to *gongde*, leads to indolence in religious practice and might even lead to depravity, which are the very antithesis of a monk's goals.

In contrast to other major monasteries, Nanputuosi, Xiamen's largest monastery, continues to perform *gongde* today. *Gongde* commanded by private families are so prevalent that a service takes place in Nanputuosi's main shrine virtually every other day. Why does Nanputuosi continue to perform *gongde* when there is evidently still much stigma attached to it? What then are the dynamics behind these shifts? How do institutional practitioners themselves view this contrariety in their performances? What are the patrons' views on musical practice in *gongde*?

There are no simple or straightforward answers to these questions as we find that social, economic and ideological factors interact in complex ways to condition new approaches to *gongde* performed by institutional ritualists and by *caigu*.

⁶ The genesis of 20th century Buddhist reform is dealt with extensively in earlier studies (see Welch 1968); for more recent studies, see Pittman 2001. For a study of Buddhism and the intellectual movement in late imperial China, see Chan 1985.

⁷ Major monasteries such as Tianningsi and Qixiashansi in Zhejiang and Yongquan-si in Fuzhou were known to hold minor rites for the dead, while some only held the large-scale Plenary Water and Land Mass (see Welch 1967; Fitch 1929).

4.5.2 Social, political, ideological and economic forces

Following political, economic and religious reforms beginning in the early 1980s, religious traditions were rebuilt rapidly. In the new era, *gongde* is experiencing greater changes than any other Buddhist rite because of its contentious nature. To the CCP, it borders on “superstition” because it propagates belief in ghosts and spirits. To the more learned Buddhists, it is an obstacle to the development of doctrinal Buddhism for two reasons: undesirable syncretism with popular beliefs over time, and distraction from the basic aims of their religious practice due to the temptations of commercialism. Radical political and social changes under Communist rule have presented the Buddhists with an opportunity to re-evaluate a ritual that has cast a shadow over the Buddhist order. My assessment of the changes in *gongde* and their causes is based on findings in Minnan, focussing particularly on Nanputuosi; but I believe that this is not simply a regional phenomenon because Buddhists at local and provincial level are more or less regulated by the National Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui).⁸ Yet at the same time, even within Minnan the picture is an uneven one. On the one hand, these changes can be interpreted as a response to continued state control in the new reform era. Reinterpretation of *gongde* by the institutional Buddhists reveals how they respond and adapt to political agendas. On the other hand, the modern-day picture seems to represent more than mere compliance with the Party line: it appears to point to a redefinition of ideological orthodoxy by institutional Buddhists, the basis of which lies in Taixu’s reform. This legacy exerted some influence on and, in my opinion, continues to influence trends in contemporary Chinese Buddhism.

The basic model of *gongde* performed in Nanputuosi today was discussed in §3.1.1. From Table 3.1 we can see that the Penitence forms the bulk of the ritual. To further enhance merit for the deceased, a universal salvation rite is added, either the larger-scale Flaming Mouth Rite if a family can afford the extra expenses or the simpler *Mengshan* rite. Flamboyant traditional rites, mentioned earlier, highlighting the rescue of the soul from its sufferings in hell, and the burning of paper items are conspicuously absent in institutional *gongde*. By excluding elements often considered by elitist Buddhists as being inconsistent with true Buddhist teachings, Nanputuosi hence legitimises a ritual often regarded as highly suspect. In doing this, it attempts to promote the ideology of “Correct Buddhism” (*Zhengxin fojiao*) (i.e. orthodoxy) and eliminate heterodox practices which up to late imperial time were regarded by the populace as the correct way to perform *gongde* (i.e. orthopraxis).

Was this move by Nanputuosi a direct response to the CCP's religious policy?

First let us examine some aspects of the CCP's political agenda concerning religion. One relevant document states that the CCP's basic tasks in effecting the policy of freedom of religious belief are to "consolidate and expand the patriotic political alliance in each ethnic religious group; to strengthen education in patriotism and Socialism among them, and to bring into play positive elements among them in order to build a modern and powerful Socialist state and complete the great task of unifying the country; and to oppose the hegemonism and strive together to protect and preserve world peace" (MacInnis 1989: 13). Another predicated the right and the duty of the state to protect "normal" religious activities. There is no clear definition in the policy documents of "normal", or for that matter of "protect". In a textbook for young people explaining religion and religious policy, a vague listing of "normal" religious activities included worship, prayers, and preaching (MacInnis 1989: 92). Ancestor worship and belief in ghosts and deities are omitted, as they are still seen by the CCP as superstition. Yet as long as the related rituals are performed by government-sanctioned religious personnel, and do not disrupt political or economic activities or harbour anti-revolutionary intent, prohibition is not put in place. Thus, in actual fact, there is much latitude in the interpretation of the government's policy on ritual activities, particularly in rural areas (§5.5; also e.g. Dean 1993).

In the early stages of implementation, monks or nuns were not allowed to perform *gongde* in private homes (MacInnis 1989). By the late 1990s, the picture I saw in Minnan was quite different: inviting ordained monks to officiate at *gongde* in the home has become more common.⁹ Since the mid-1990s, some monasteries have begun to hold annual large-scale Water and Land Plenary Masses which often attract thousands of devotees. Such an event, despite its tendency to attract large numbers of people, is accepted as a legitimate activity since Buddhism is a protected official religion. Are these cases an indication of the CCP's relaxation of control over religion? I would argue that the CCP no longer feels threatened by institutional Buddhism as the religion today is seen to fully support the government's policy of realising modernisation and building a strong nation.

By the late 1990s the CCP's regularization (*guifanhua*) of religious institutions, put in place since the implementation of the religious policy, was firmly established.

⁸ For the role of the Chinese Buddhist Association in contemporary China, see MacInnis 1989; Pas 1989.

⁹ I was told by monks in several monasteries in Xiamen that they quite often perform *gongde* in private homes. I have not witnessed this myself, but I have attended *gongde* performed by *caigu* in a private home in Xiamen.

Religious places of worship, large or small, and religious organisations must apply for authorization and be registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau, the state organ for implementing this policy. This Bureau conducts regular inspections of registered religious organizations. Organised religious activities, especially large-scale events, are still tightly monitored and controlled (Spiegel 1997). The Chinese Buddhist Association and its provincial and municipal branches are the links between Buddhists and the Religious Affairs Bureau. This hierarchical administrative framework enables the CCP to supervise and control religious bodies without the need for direct sanctions.

Today many abbots of institutional monasteries hold important posts in the national or regional Buddhist Associations, and some are representatives to the National People's Congress (NPC) or the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). In an interview by MacInnis (1989: 144) a monk said, "Before Liberation, monks did not participate in political affairs, nor did they join in any other activities in society. After Liberation this changed." The Abbot of Nanputuosi is, for example, the Vice-President of the national Buddhist Association of China, and also a representative to the NPC and CPPCC. In Buddhist publications, either regional or national, slogans such as "love the country, love the religion" (*aiguo aijiao*) show the institutional Buddhists' response to CCP calls for religion to serve the goals of socialism.¹⁰ Public speeches by Buddhist clerics often outline the roles of modern Buddhism. These include promoting world peace, propagating the Buddhist ideology of compassion and equality and purifying hearts and minds, defeating heretical religious movements by promoting Correct Buddhism (*zhengxin fojiao*), and building a Humanistic Pure Land (*renjian jingtu*) (Shi Shenghui 2000).

These patriotic undertones are a reflection of the success of the CCP's control and co-option of Buddhism. Buddhism is now a positive force in nation-state building because it encourages patriotism among its believers; also, the CCP can benefit from Buddhism's international contacts as one of the world religions. But if Buddhism is to be seen as upholding this patriotic image and contributing to socialist nation-building, it must rid itself of its old image as a religion for the dead in order to dispel the view that Buddhism is adulterated with superstitious elements. While they are impelled on the one hand by state policy, some Buddhists also see this new era as an opportune moment for reinforcing and modernising their doctrinal ideologies. *Gongde* with its numerous sub-

¹⁰ This slogan often appears in publications by regional or local Buddhist Associations, and in speeches by clergy. See for example *Fujian fojiao* 2000/3. The slogan sometimes extends to "loving the people" (*aimin*) as well.

rites incompatible with Buddhist doctrine is therefore abolished or, if still performed, must be reinterpreted in the light of modern Buddhism.

This Buddhist promulgation of Correct Buddhism and a Humanistic Pure Land, in my view, did not emerge after the Communist takeover but is a perpetuation of Buddhist reform manifested in an intellectual movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Taixu's influence in Minnan is not to be overlooked. Briefly, Taixu advocated two main developments in Buddhism. The first was a radical reform in doctrinal ideology: to liberate Buddhism from being a religion "for the dead", and to turn its focus to dealing with realistic humanistic problems, suggesting that enlightenment will follow if one first succeeds as a good human. Taixu felt that Buddhism should be for the living. He coined the term *rensheng fojiao* (Human Life Buddhism) to express this ideal. He identified the main cause of Buddhism's degeneration as the lack of education among monks: the number who could expound the dharma was low in comparison to those who performed rites for the dead. He thought that if monks were better educated in the scriptures, they would be better placed to spread the "correct" dharma (*zhengfa*). He therefore founded several Buddhist colleges (*foxueyuan*) and advocated modern education for monks.¹¹

In 1924, Huiquan, the first abbot of Nanputuosi, founded the Xiamen Buddhist College. Later, Taixu was invited as director of the College. During Taixu's time in Xiamen, he influenced many Minnanese monks who were to gain prominence later in Taiwan and in Southeast Asian countries. From the mid-1920s to the 1940s, these young Minnanese monks held numerous lectures on Buddhism, published Buddhist journals, established Buddhist youth societies to attract the young, held congregational rituals, organised charity work, and so on. Movements to eliminate of "superstitious" customs were widespread (*Xiamen fojiao zhi*, unpublished). That these efforts met with some success in Minnan is evident in a comment to me in 1999 by an 85-year-old monk living in Nanputuosi. He said that in the 1920s eminent monks including Zhuanfeng and Huiquan lamented that Buddhism had assimilated too many popular practices.¹² They not only voiced their disapproval but also took steps to discourage the practice of performing death rituals. By as early as the 1930s, it was rare for ordained monks to perform Smashing Hell, the enactment of the story of Mulian and his mother; this rite was instead

¹¹ At the end of imperial rule, the old imperial examination system was abolished. Classroom-style modern education was introduced by Western missionaries and spread rapidly. Buddhist colleges were modelled on this (ironically Christian-derived) modern education system, and general education was introduced in the curriculum. Traditionally monks were trained differently in large learning monasteries in Baohuashan, Qixiashan, etc.

¹² Zhuanfeng was the last head monk (*zhuchi heshang*) of Nanputuo-si when it was a hereditary temple. In 1924 in the wave of Buddhist reform initiated by Taixu, Zhuangfeng volunteered to turn Nanputuo-si into

performed by *xianghua*. By that time, the rite of Breaking the Blood Pond was also rarely performed by monks. Instead, Turning the Wheel, which used to be a part of Breaking the Blood Pond, was retained as an independent rite (see also §3.1.2). From what the elderly monk told me, I surmise that Turning the Wheel became a separate rite of its own probably because the ordained clerics found it less contentious than Breaking the Blood Pond.

Turning the Wheel and burning paper houses are not found in *gongde* performed at Nanputuosi. Patrons are also not encouraged to burn paper money for the dead during *gongde*; but in the hills behind the monastery, a burner is available for this very purpose if patrons wish to burn paper money.

Thus, although in his lifetime Taixu's efforts were met with some resistance from the more conservative Buddhists as well as from non-Buddhist intellectuals (Welch 1968; Pittman 2001), there is no doubt that some of his teachings and ideals were already taking effect in pre-Communist China, particularly in Minnan. Modern Buddhists in China accredit Taixu's influence for their promotion of Correct Buddhism. Yet, in my opinion, today's changes in Chinese institutional Buddhism are not a straightforward postscript to Taixu's reform, since his ideas were not further developed before being curtailed after 1949.

Taixu's Buddhist reform was, however, the precursor of a movement called *renjian fojiao* – Humanistic Buddhism – a term which has only come to the fore in the past twenty years.¹³ While Buddhism struggled to survive in Maoist China, Taiwan became the nurturing bed for Taixu's ideals. From the mid-1960s onward, some radical monks who had taken refuge in Taiwan after the Communist takeover gradually reshaped Taixu's ideals into Humanistic Buddhism; leading figures include Taixu's student Yinshun (b. 1906), Shengyan (b. 1930), and Hsing Yun (b. 1927). Among them, Hsing Yun's influence today is the most widespread: Foguangshan monastery and its affiliated Buddha's Light Association consisting of lay Buddhists, both founded by him, now have branches worldwide.¹⁴ There is no room for detailed discussion of Hsing Yun's success in promoting Humanistic Buddhism, but it is fair to say that this strand of Buddhism appears to be a very influential trend in modern Buddhism, particularly in other Asian countries.

an institutional monastery (*shifang conglin*), Huiquan was subsequently elected as its first abbot.

¹³ This term is a rephrasing of Taixu's earlier *rensheng fojiao* by Yinshun, a follower of Taixu's ideals who went to Taiwan in 1952 and is regarded as one of the progenitors of Humanistic Buddhism (see Jones 1999: 124-35).

¹⁴ Jones 1999 discusses Buddhism and the state in Taiwan from Qing to modern times, and on pp. 185-98 describes Hsing Yun's contributions and (briefly) the Foguangshan system. See also Pittman 2001, chap. 6.

As mentioned, Buddhists in power cite Taixu when talking about Correct Buddhism. In Minnan, monks to whom I speak often express their admiration for Hsing Yun; his influence could be strongly felt among younger monks (and indeed among the *caigu*), although among Hsing Yun's own generation, the more conservative monks find him to be too radical. Political control and the CCP's suspicion of Hsing Yun prohibits his model from flourishing in China;¹⁵ nevertheless, the vocabulary and some practices now adopted officially by Buddhists on the mainland reveal its influences. In my view, the changes in institutional Buddhism in China are in some ways a response to this.

In Xiamen *gongde* performed by institutional monks from other temples basically follow the model of Nanputuosi. However, exceptions occur: in some less institutionalised temples, monks may administer the rite of burning paper houses. The monks tell me this is performed only if patrons request it.¹⁶ They tell me the same is extended to Turning the Wheel. When asked, however, the monks do stress that they do not perform Breaking the Blood Pond or Smashing Hell as they are of the opinion that these are particularly superstitious beliefs unrelated to Buddhist ideology.¹⁷ I once asked Guoman of Nanputuosi what he thought of burning paper objects. He said he does not believe in its necessity since in orthodox belief, if one has not committed any great sin, such as killing, the path to rebirth (to either the Pure Land or the human path) is usually achieved soon after death. However, he continued to cite an incident in which he found himself in a predicament: one year during the Water and Land Plenary Mass at Nanputuosi, a troubled devotee came to Guoman and told him that a deceased relation appeared in his dreams, complaining that he was not adequately warm. As the devotee had paid a sum for his deceased relation to be ritually saved at the mass, and the Yankou salvation rite had been performed the previous evening, Guoman was at a loss. Finally, he had to advise the devotee that a solution was to burn some paper clothing and money for the poor soul to assuage its sufferings. He thus found himself having to fold stacks of paper clothing and administer its burning. Looking back now, he said, it seems amusing; but at the time, the seriousness of the incident was real for the family concerned. Even he himself was cast into some doubts.

Other monks who perform burning paper houses or Turning the wheel have also told me that it is difficult to rid people of traditional customs. Some patrons still hold on to

¹⁵ The CCP has an ambivalent attitude towards Hsing Yun because of his worldwide network and influence among Chinese Buddhists outside China.

¹⁶ I refer here to what were hereditary temples, but this term is no longer valid as temples are no longer privately owned due to CCP control.

¹⁷ In Changle, I have, however, witnessed Breaking Hell performed by monks.

the belief that their dead might be suffering in hell. They thus feel, perhaps for their own peace of mind, that it is necessary to perform these customary rites. On a more pragmatic note, the performance of these abolished rites by institutional ritualists is also financially driven. Indeed, although these rites are not performed in Nanputuosi, when the same monks perform *gongde* in private homes, they are quite willing to administer these if patrons pay for it.

Perhaps out of economic interest, some monks in Nanputuosi told me that they interject “local” style (meaning Fuzhou style) hymns in *gongde* because patrons like them. Xianyan told me this style is also popular among Buddhists in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. This seems to suggest that institutional ritualists see Fuzhou style essentially as a reinforcement of their relationship with patrons. Ironically however, when I asked some *gongde* patrons about the singing in *gongde*, they generally cannot tell what style the ritualists are singing. Once I asked a family what they think of the music in *gongde*. They told me, probably out of politeness, that they like the music. Others, however, do not even think about the ritualists’ performance as “music”. It is fair to say that the general patrons do not really care about the singing, or the recitation for that matter, in *gongde* as long as all the necessary ritual actions are carried out. This is attested by the fact that patrons do not complain when ritualists sing badly or out of tune. Once a patron in a *gongde* told me she did not know if the performance was efficacious, but what comforted her most was that it was performed at all.

A social change resulting from modern lifestyles has impacted *gongde* as a whole. Traditionally *gongde* last at least for one day and one night. But in Minnan, half-day services are now more common. Xueming from Nanputuosi told me many people do not have time to hold lengthy *gongde*. In the cities, many women hold jobs and have to juggle these with looking after a family. Indeed, I often see only one or two *gongde* patrons in attendance during the *gongde*. Sometimes other family members drop in at the temple at a time convenient for them as a token of respect. An elderly patron said her children were at work and unable to attend the *gongde*. As urban life takes over, nuclear families also become more common. In the old days, *gongde* could also be seen as a social event for the family and the extended family; feasts are a key event in traditional *gongde*. But in the busy lives of city folks today, there is no time for such paraphernalia. This social change in urban society today thus results in demands for shorter *gongde* and, in turn, shorter musical performances. As we shall see in the next chapter, traditional *gongde* and social values are still more or less retained in rural society.

As said in §2.3.2, the *caigu* tradition is an offshoot of institutional Buddhism. *Gongde* performed by *caigu* take the same institutional form. I found, however, that the rites of burning paper objects and Turning the Paper Wheel are more prevalent in *caigu gongde* (see Table 3.3). *Caigu* Adong told me that in Xiamen, in general, Turning the Wheel is less commonly performed than burning paper houses. While in Quanzhou and Hui'an (as I also observed), both these rites are still popular. Adong also said that when Turning the Wheel is performed in Xiamen, it is very simple: the paper object is just symbolically turned several times while the ritualists recite the "Grand Compassion" incantation (*Dabei zhou*). In Quanzhou and Hui'an, she said the rite is more elaborate. This last is indeed true, as discussed in §3.1.2.

Traditionally, Turning the Wheel was linked with Breaking the Blood Pond rite (de Groot 1885; Doolittle 1866). In rural rituals revived today, this is still unchanged (see Dean 1988a). As performed by some monks and by *caigu*, it has now become an independent rite. This signifies another change.

In a way, the rise of women as ritualists can be attributed to changes in social structure and ideology. Under Communist rule, the status of women has vastly improved. Government ideology has certainly led to redefinition of gender roles and relations (see e.g. Wolf 1985; Croll 1984). Social acceptance of women in untraditional roles in modern society, coupled with institutional Buddhists' tacit endorsement of the women and some monasteries' disinclination to perform *gongde* at all, combine to create a niche for women as ritualists. *Caigu's* flexibility with respect to traditional rites eschewed by institutional monasteries goes some way to making them a preferred choice of *gongde* patrons. But as we have also seen, some institutional ritualists are not disinclined to include unorthodox rites for economic gain; *caigu's* willingness to include such rites is therefore only one factor. Another consideration for patrons when choosing *gongde* ritualists is economic means. The cost of *gongde* in an institutional monastery is higher than in *caigu* temples. Those with more modest means therefore choose *caigu*.

A final observation concerning patronage: For some patrons, particularly those from abroad, the name of a monastery is of some importance. Many overseas Chinese, for example, choose Nanputuosi for *gongde* because of its acclaim.

4.5.3 Conclusion

Gongde represents an interesting case study for religious change and its subsequent impact on its music. On the one hand, state policy has played a major role in fostering a symbiotic relationship between religion and nationalism, but on the other, the

actualization of Taixu's Buddhist reform in Taiwan has presented Buddhists in socialist China with a perfect paradigm for modernising their religion. In Minnan today, we see diverse processes at work in rebuilding Buddhist tradition. These serve to legitimise a ritual which had been seen by Buddhist clerics as an embarrassment to the religion and seen by the government as a challenge to its political ideology. Yet even in urban China, the process of change in *gongde* is far from homogeneous and complete. At one end of the continuum, some institutional monasteries completely ban its performance, while at the other, some continue to perform it but in an expurgated form; intermediate practices determined by patron demands also occur. Some monks are still lured by the lucrateness of *gongde* and would visit private homes to perform *gongde*. Political and ideological propagandizing in modern cities may have implanted a new set of values affecting the way some city folks commemorate their dead, but there is also evidence that their effects on the common people's attitudes are still limited.

With continued state domination of the discourse of nationalism and modernisation, aided by the Buddhists' own desire to purge *gongde* of superstitious elements, the institutional Buddhists might further succeed in hegemonising a deeply contentious ritual practice. The rise of women *caigu* as *gongde* ritualists in some ways serves as a gap-filler to fulfill the needs of the populace who continue to cling to tradition and popular beliefs. But tension continues between Buddhists who wish to keep *gongde* free of undesirable elements and those willing to compromise for commercial benefit.

Music in *gongde* has reacted to the flux of modern economic, socio-cultural, political and ideological change. But amidst the uncertainty of continuing conflicts in religious ideologies and practices, will music be further impacted? If so, how? There are no immediate answers to these questions; only time will tell.

Chapter 5

Music in *xianghua gongde*

5.1 Introduction

The *xianghua* tradition, as seen in §2.4, has links with Buddhism in various ways. But since the orthodox Buddhists do not approve of *xianghua* ritualists, the latter's personal contacts with institutional monks are tenuous. This has important implications for *xianghua* music. It was probably easier for the *xianghua* to adopt Buddhist scriptures, artifacts and images because these were tangible materials that were readily circulated and hence widely available. But the passing down of its music was by oral tradition. Lack of contacts between *xianghua* priests and institutional monks therefore limited the dissemination of institutional musical practice from the latter to the former. As we shall see below, the *xianghua* thus had to turn to other sources for their liturgical music.

The Cai brothers in Shishi appear to be a cross between *caiyou* “Vegetarian friends” and the pure *xianghua*. Their versatility in hymn styles supports this: they are familiar with Fuzhou style, and even the National style; but they also have a repertoire of their own, not shared with the institutional Buddhists. One of the Cai brothers is a disciple of a monk in Xiamen, which suggests that they have contact with institutional Buddhists; thus their familiarity with institutional vocal liturgy is not surprising. In contrast, the *xianghua* in Yongchun and Anxi, when I asked if they could sing Fuzhou or Caiyou style, had not even heard of these terms. Liao Liangcai of Yongchun stated that their music is different from that of the institutional Buddhists.

The extent of contacts between institutional monks and *xianghua* seems to vary from place to place; we could even say it is broadly linked to an urban and rural divide. In highly urban cities like Xiamen and Quanzhou few *xianghua* or even Daoist priests can be found.¹ As one travels further inland to the more mountainous counties such as Yongchun, Dehua and Anxi (Map 3), which are changing rapidly in the new Reform era but still somewhat behind in development in comparison to the coastal areas, one finds more lay professional Buddhist and Daoist ritualists. This is linked to the fact that institutional Buddhism is less developed in these areas, and fewer institutional monks are found.² In Jinjiang and Shishi (Map 3),³ which are rapidly urbanizing since the 1980s,

¹ In Xuanmiaoguan, a Daoist temple in Quanzhou, I was told there are no Daoist priests in residence; Daoists from Yongchun are invited when needed for any special celebratory occasions.

² Yongchun and Anxi have several Buddhist temples, but today there are no monks residing in them. These

institutional Buddhism is strong but one also finds both *caiyou* and *xianghua* lay ritualists (As mentioned, the relationship between *caiyou* and *xianghua* requires further investigation). On the urban extreme there is institutional Buddhist, while on the rural extreme we find *xianghua* musical styles. In between, the two overlap.

5.2 Musical styles and musical instruments

Xianghua ritualists rarely speak of singing styles because their tradition, being hereditary, is more esoteric. Liao once told me that his acolytes are not taught everything: the trade secrets are only passed on to his son or sons who are his successors. Shishi's Cai made a similar remark when he let me copy some hymn lyrics from his manuscripts (one is shown in Fig. 3.9).

Just as in the institutional *gongde* context, the *xianghua* also have different repertoires relating to functions: hymns sung for the Buddha and hymns sung for the spirits. The *xianghua* borrow some Buddha hymn texts from the institutional Buddhists but also have texts unique to their tradition (§3.2.7). They identify two vocal styles: *Kuilei diao* (Minn. *kalei diao*; puppet style) and *xianghua qu* (Minn. *hionghua kiak*; *xianghua* style, lit. *xianghua* tunes). Puppet style melodies are vocal “labelled melodies” (*qapai*) borrowed from *Kuileixi* (Minn. *Kaleihi*), the string-puppet theatre of Quanzhou. *Xianghua* style consists of melodies that originated within the tradition. Both these styles, I found, could be sung to texts for the Buddha or to texts for the Spirits.

In *xianghua gongde*, paraliturgical music plays a very important role. A wide range of melodic and percussion instruments are used (see below). *Xianghua* ritualists are usually adept in the performance of melodic instruments, and when not involved in ritual actions, they also act as instrumentalists. In *gongde*, however, a few extra secular musicians are always hired to accompany the vocal liturgy and ritual actions. Contexts in which *xianghua* ritualists are also instrumentalists include the performance of Blasting the Hall (*Naoting*), musical interludes before the start of the theatrical rites of Pardon and Mulian, and when moving from one altar to another (§3.3.1). The repertory played during these interludes is borrowed from *Nanyin* (“Southern melodies”, called *Nanguan* in Taiwan), an instrumental and vocal chamber genre of Quanzhou. As for instrumental music played to accompany ritual movements or during brief gaps in ritual, short instrumental “labelled melodies” found in the Pear Garden opera (*Liyuanxi*; Minn. *leihnhi*) and string-puppet

places are often tourist attractions run by county governments. A monk in Xiamen said that places like Yongchun are too remote, thus few institutional monks want to reside in these temples.

³ Shishi was previously a small coastal town of Jinjiang; in the late 1990s it was designated a county-level

theatre are commonly used.⁴

Compared to the music of institutional Buddhists, *xianghua* music is more diverse. While the music of the former has developed within the monastic tradition, that of the *xianghua* is clearly more secular.⁵ The functions and meanings of the music in *xianghua gongde* are also somewhat different from institutional *gongde*. This is discussed later. We will first look at the range of musical instruments used in *xianghua* tradition.

5.2.1 Musical instruments in *xianghua* tradition

Since *xianghua* music, both liturgical and para-liturgical, relies heavily on operatic and other musical traditions, a wider range of melodic and percussion instruments are found. The *xianghua* use ritual percussion such as the wooden fish, large bronze bowl, held-held bronze bowl, handbells, and so on; but Liao once told me that ritual percussion is less important than melodic instruments. This is not unusual as many of their sung pieces are borrowed from other traditions which include the accompaniment of melodic instruments.

Melodic instruments found in *xianghua* rituals range from string instruments such as the four-string lute (*pipa*), two-string fiddle (*erhu*) and three-string lute (*sanxian*) to wind instruments including large shawm (*da ai*), small shawm (*ai zai*), and transverse flute (*dizi*) (Fig. 5.1). These melodic instruments are also commonly found in *Nanyin* and string-puppet theatre. A wide range of percussion instruments from these traditions is also used in *xianghua* rituals. These include southern drum (*nangu*), knobbed gong (*zheng*), flat gong (*luo*) (Fig. 5.2), big and small cymbals (*danao*, *xiaonao*). In addition, the *xianghua* also borrow percussion instruments unique to *Nanyin*. These include clappers (*paiban*) made up of five slabs of wood tied together at one end, a small bamboo-frame gong (*xiangzhan*), and a small hand-held gong (*xiaojiao*) (Fig. 5.3). In *Nanyin*, the repertory types (see Yeh 1985) circumscribe different combinations of melodic and percussion instruments. In the *xianghua* ritual context, the ensemble is less rigid as it often depends on the number of musicians hired. The ritualists sometimes sing to the accompaniment of one shawm, or the flute and *pipa*; but even when melodic instruments are limited, the percussion is out in full force.

city (*xianji shi*) to boost its rapid industrial development.

⁴ There is much borrowing between the music of the Pear Garden opera and string-puppet theatre. I shall refrain from repeatedly stressing their correlation.

⁵ I am not dismissing the influence of secular music on monastic music; indeed, Buddhist music scholars believe *kunqu* opera music probably had some influence on hymns (Tian Qing, pers. comm. 1998); scholars claim that Fuzhou style hymns have also been influenced by local secular music (Chen M. 1989). But the influences of secular music on Buddhist liturgical music are more difficult to trace.

Fig. 5.1 Musicians playing the 2-string fiddle(*erhu*), transverse flute (*dizi*) and small shawm (*aizai*)



Fig. 5.2 *Luo* (flat gong), *zheng* (knobbed gong) and *nangu* (southern drum)



Fig. 5.3 *Nanyin* hand-held gong (*xiaojiao*) with a wooden beater



With such a wide variety of instruments, both melodic and percussive, the ambience and timbre of a *xianghua gongde* is very different from that of institutional Buddhists. Loudness, complete with the noise of fire-crackers released at intervals, is what most distinguishes the ritual music of the *xianghua*. This raucous character, as we shall see below, holds important significance in *xianghua gongde*. Another noticeable feature of *xianghua* vocal style is the high tessitura: falsetto is common. A reason for this tendency may be that high-pitched instruments such as the small shawm and transverse flute influence vocal range. In *xianghua* rituals, short instrumental preludes are played before the singing; the instruments therefore set a pitch for the singers to follow. As we have seen, when institutional Buddhists sing to instrumental accompaniment, the vocalist sets the pitch and the instrumentalists have to find their way around this.

5.3 The nature of *xianghua* vocal liturgy

Melodic instruments play a very important role in accompanying *xianghua* liturgical singing. But herein also lies my greatest obstacle in obtaining data: in a ritual context, loud piercing instruments such as the shawm plus the blaring sounds of the metal percussion in a usually confined ritual space was not in the least conducive to the audio recording of this music. Moreover, the instruments often drown the singing, making transcription impossible. A solution was to make special recordings outside ritual contexts, which is difficult as *xianghua* are professional ritualists who depend on performing *gongde* for their living. Other problems, omitted here, also have to be overcome. Yongchun's Liao Liangcai recorded a few *xianghua* pieces for me, but commented that it was difficult to sing without melodic accompaniment. On my last field trip, Cai Qingyang of Shishi assembled his acolytes and a group of musicians. With their help, I was able to get sections of several rites recorded. With limited data available, I can only offer preliminary observations on *xianghua* music.

5.3.1 *Xianghua* vocal music

The *xianghua* borrow some Buddha hymn texts from institutional Buddhists. But did they also borrow the tunes? This cannot yet be fully confirmed, but based on the few Buddha hymns I have, this is what I found.

Buddha hymns sung by Yongchun *xianghua* Mr. Liao include the “True Incense hymn” (*Jieding zhenxiang*), “Censer Incense Hymn” (*Luxiang zan*), and “The Heart Flames for Five Measures” (*Xinran wufen*). Another Buddha hymn is “Willow Branch Purified Water” (*Yangzhi jingshui*), sung by the Shishi *xianghua*. The last three hymns are six-line hymns; since earlier findings show that hymns with the same prosody should share the same melody, these will be examined first to see if this pattern persists in the *xianghua* context.

Examining the distributional pattern of the “Censer Incense Hymn” sung by Mr. Liao revealed that, with the exception of line 4, it closely mirrors the formulaic structure of this hymn in the National style. Using the same approach for “Willow Branch Purified Water”, the result also points to a close enough relationship (Ex. 5.1):

Ex. 5.1 Distributional structure of National style (NS) and *xianghua* style “Censer Incense Hymn” (XS-CI) and Willow Branch Purified Water (XS-WB)

NS: a (4-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + c (7-syll.) + c' (5-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + c' (5-syll.)

XS-CI: a (4-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + c (7-syll.) + d (5-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + c' (5-syll.)

XS-WB: a (4-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + c (7-syll.) + d (5-syll.) + b (4-syll.) + d' (5-syll.)

This finding prompted a closer scrutiny of the three melodies. The skeletal outlines of the two *xianghua* versions are closely similar (ex. 5.2; CD Tr. 32 and 33); but the divergence between the *xianghua* and National style is a little too great to claim close relations. Further inspection of another six-line hymn “The Heart Flames for Five Measures”, sung in a ritual context by Liao’s group, revealed that it shares the same melody as “Censer Incense Hymn”. This thus also points to one melody being shared among hymns with similar prosody. The fact that similarity is found in hymn melodies sung by two *xianghua* who have no contact with each other and are from different regions in Minnan does show that esoteric as it is, there is common lineage in the *xianghua* tradition.

Ex. 5.2 Reduction scores of “Censer Incense Hymn” by Yongchun *xianghua* Liao Liangcai (CFJ 006) and “Willow Branch Purified Water” by Shishi *xianghua* Cai Qingyang (CFJ 037)

N.B. Double barlines show textual syntax

Liao
L@ hiong za li - e

Cai
yi - ong ki jieng sui

Liao
hu - a(n) kai bong hun

Cai
pi - an sa san qian

Liao
zu hu hai hui

Cai
xing kong bat diak

Liao
xi yao wen

Cai
li lin tian

Liao
sui cu kie etc.

Cai
hua gai kong etc.

Comparing another Buddha hymn “True Incense Hymn” sung by *xianghua*, like the “Censer Incense Hymn”, there is some similarity in the distribution of melodic phrases. But its melody shows no correlation with the same hymn in National or Fuzhou style. “True Incense Hymn” in *xianghua* style has a simple, formulaic melody. If we divide the prosody of this text into 8 lines of 4 and 5 syllables consecutively, the *xianghua* melody basically yields only three melodic phrases in total (Ex. 5.3).

Ex. 5.3 Distribution analysis of True Incense Hymn in *xianghua* style (XS) and National style (NS), and transcription of the hymn in *xianghua* style by Liao Liangcai (CFJ 006)

XS: a (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // c (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // c (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // c (4 syll.) // + b (5 syll.) + coda (Triple Invocation)

NS: a (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // c (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // c (4 syll.) // b (5 syll.) // d (4 syll.) // e (5 syll.) + coda (Triple Invocation)

♩ = 40-60

Gai die ng jin (a u) hee yio- ng hee yi- ong

hun (a) ki (i) qi ong ti- an xi (i) (i) (ei)

xi- ong (lei) din (in) ki- an ki- an xi (i) ieng etc.

Several features are apparent in this melody. Although mainly pentatonic, the seventh degree is used often as passing note. In phrase b, the seventh degree appeared prominently on the third beat, suggesting a brief modulation. Another notable feature is the ubiquity of syncopated rhythm: strong beats are often not articulated or are tied over (see Ex. 5.3 bars 3 to 5). The tendency to sustain notes and stagger phrase-lengths is also a common stylistic feature in *Nanyin* (Yeh 1985: 256). This points to the influence of *Nanyin* vocal style in *xianghua* singing.

Examining another Offertory hymn “Putuoshan Mountains of the South Sea” (*Nanhai Putuoshan*), I compared two Minnanese versions (one sung by Liao and the other a transcription by Cai Junchao of a lay *caiyou* ritualist)⁶ and two Fuzhou style versions (one

⁶ This is taken from an unpublished manuscript given to me by Cai.

by Benfa and the other a transcription by Cai of a monk in the Philippines). Using reduction approach, we can see that the two local versions are 82% similar while the two Fuzhou style versions are 93% similar (Ex. 5.4).

Ex. 5.4 Reduction score of “Putuoshan Mountains” in Minnanese and Fuzhou styles

TP=Transcription by Cai (MS) of Minnan *caiyou* Tianpei

LC=Transcription by H.S. Tan of Yongchun *xianghua* Liao Liangcai (CFJ 006)

DJ= Transcription by Cai (1998: 111) of the Phillipines monk Daojin

BF= Transcription by H.S. Tan of Fuzhou monk Benfa (CFJ 026)

Phrase a

TP (local)
LC (local)
DJ (Fuzhou)
BF (Fuzhou)

Nan hai pu tuo shan yi zuo

Phrase b

TP
LC
DJ
BF

wei wei bai bao (bai bao) gu feng

Phrase c

TP
LC
DJ
BF

zu ta lian hua bi bo zhong

Phrase d

TP
LC
DJ
BF

bi bo zhong shui jing gong

The whole hymn consists of four distinct phrases (named a b c d); phrases b, c and d are repeated for the rest of the text. Disregarding those notes where either tradition (Fuzhou and Minnan *xianghua*) does not have a consensus and counting only the clearly non-problematic notes, Fuzhou and local style match 31% of the time.⁷ However, this ratio is raised somewhat perhaps by an idiomatic 3-note cadential motif at the end of phrase b; ignoring those 3 notes brings the figure down to 23% (6 out of 26 notes), barely better than chance for pentatonic music. Based on this ratio, it may seem rather forced to claim that the Fuzhou and local style are related. On the other hand, if we look also at the formulaic distribution of the two styles, we find an almost exact match (Ex. 5.5). That is, the structure of this piece in both styles is identical, though the actual content of the formulae is not. This may suggest a historical relation that has been obscured by the development of regional variants, but more research is needed.

⁷ The musicologist Wang Yaohua also affirms the correlation of this hymn in the two styles. For his discussion of this piece performed in the Nanyin suite, see Wang and Liu 1989: 404-11.

Ex. 5.5 Distribution analysis of *Nanhai putuoshan*

Cai-TP (local) a // b // c // d // c // b // c // d // c // b¹ // c // d // c // d // c // d
Benfa (FZ) a // b // ca // d // ca // b // ca // d // ca // b // ca // d // ca // d // ca // d

It is clear that change resulting in extreme variation has taken place during transmission and dissemination of the hymn. Looking back at Ex. 5.4, the local and Fuzhou styles differ virtually throughout the opening phrase; then we find some convergence in the melodies of phrase b and a very close match in phrase c, but a near-total divergence again in phrase. We also notice that both local singers modulated a 5th upward, whilst the Fuzhou style versions remained in the same key throughout.

Variants also occurred between the two local versions (Ex.5.6). In the opening phrase the first singer, TP, interpreted the textual phrase as ending on the syllable *shan*, rather than *yi zuo*. TP hence ended on the 1 6 (c' a) cadential motif; he then began modulating up a fifth from *yi zuo*. The result is a clear melodic variant. Liao Liangcai (LC)'s melody, on the other hand, does not modulate until after the syllables *yi zuo*. In this example, Liao's version is written without time signature because his time-keeping is difficult to determine in my recording; it is possible he was not used to singing without instrumental accompaniment or that his age (he was 69 in 1997) was a factor. Liao's opening phrase comprises a sequence of three phrases which I interpret to have the same outline 3 5 3 2 2 (e' g'e' d' d') with the cadence on *zuo* prolonged. Yet the third syllable *pu* and subsequent syllables land on the 2, thus suggesting that this note falls on a strong beat. As mentioned earlier, instrumental style has a strong influence on *xianghua* singing, more research needs to be done before a clear picture of *xianghua* musical style can emerge.

Ex. 5.6 Comparative score of first phrase of “Putuoshan Mountains” by Tianpei (TP) and Liao Liangcai (LC)

The musical score consists of three systems, each with two staves: TP (Tianpei) on top and LC (Liao Liangcai) on the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

- System 1:** TP lyrics: Nan hai pu tuo shan, LC lyrics: Nan hai pu tuo shan yi. LC has a triplet of eighth notes over the word 'shan'.
- System 2:** TP lyrics: Yi zuo, LC lyrics: zuo,.
- System 3:** TP lyrics: wei wei etc., LC lyrics: (zuo) Wei etc.

The *xianghua* also have vocal pieces they claim to be their own, known as *xianghua qu* (Xianghua tunes). I believe we can entirely dismiss the probability that these pieces are musically linked to institutional Buddhism for the reason that the texts are not found at all in the latter tradition. But their links with secular music, or indeed Daoist music, still need to be established before it can be confirmed that they indeed developed independently in the *xianghua* tradition. At the present stage of my research, my attempts to analyse the music are thwarted by confusion about the identity of the vocal pieces. The *xianghua* themselves were not always lucid, as demonstrated by Shishi *xianghua* Mr. Cai’s response to my questions on the identity of some pieces that they had performed for me. He told me that apart from pieces sung in the “Smashing Hell” rite which are borrowed from the puppet theatre, all other vocal pieces are Xianghua tunes. This, however, contradicted the information provided by Mr. Chen, the shawm player from the same group: he gave me the “labelled melody” titles of some pieces in other rites, some of which, as we shall see below, I was able to verify as puppet theatre melodies. When I

probed further, Mr. Cai admitted that there are times when he is uncertain whether some pieces are from the *xianghua* tradition or linked to other musical traditions. He learns only what is written down in his father's manuscripts. He also said they are ritual performers and not musicians, so to them the finer points of music are of less importance than the ritualistic aspects.

5.3.2 *Niansong* recitation in *xianghua* tradition

The style of *niansong* recitation in the *xianghua* tradition is, in general, similar to that in institutional Buddhism. The *xianghua* style of performing sutras and incantations is no different from the institutional Buddhists. As for Buddha's name chants (*fohao*) and *bai* announcement texts, the situation varies somewhat according to context. Just as in the institutional context, the Triple Invocation name chant which precedes a sutra or an incantation also has a short, but different, melody (Ex. 5.7).

Ex. 5.7 Triple Invocation Buddha's name chant performed by the *xianghua* from Huayanshe in Yongchun (CFJ 006)

The musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff, labeled 'Wooden fish', shows a series of vertical lines representing a regular beat. The lower staff is a treble clef staff with a melody line and lyrics underneath: 'lan mo cam hui hui xi - ong hut (a) p@ sat'. A box at the end of the staff indicates '3 times'.

A variant of this short melody, I found, can also be used to invoke the series of Buddha's names in the Offering (*shanggong*) rite and is extended to the incantations for Transforming Food, Sweet Dew and General Offering (cf. Table 2.2, item 4). The wooden fish provides a regular beat, while the four-string lute and flute accompany the singing. Note that in the institutional context, the name chants and incantations in this rite are performed in the free individually improvised style, rather than in unison.

Another way in which *xianghua* performance is different is seen in the Amitabha Buddha name chant and Penitence name chant. In *xianghua gongde*, as mentioned earlier, paraliturgical music is performed when the ritualists move from altar to altar, thus removing the need for the Amitabha Buddha name chant. In addition, Penitence name chants in *xianghua gongde* are not sung, but are recited straight through in the same way as the penitence texts.

The *bai* recitation form in *xianghua* tradition is similar to institutional *bai* in some

ways and different in others. In both contexts, announcement texts such as the Water Text and the *shu* memorial text use the *bai* performance style. For *wen* texts, in general, *xianghua* performance varies depending on the type: *shu* memorial texts are delivered in free metre recitative style, as in institutional *gongde*, while other types more commonly use heightened speech. At times, a combination of both “spoken-sung” manner and melodic singing is also possible in one *wen* text. Some *bai* can also include responsorial singing between the officiant and the group.

From my general survey of some sung hymns and recitation forms in the *xianghua* repertory, we have this picture: “Putuoshan Mountains in the South Sea” reveals a kinship with the Fuzhou style, and the melodies of the “True Incense Hymn” and “Censer Incense Hymn” are typically local. As for recitation forms, the style of delivery is similar to that in institutional Buddhist tradition, but the melodic materials need further examination. Wider sampling is needed to clarify the picture of the *xianghua* repertory that is shared with the institutional Buddhists.

5.4 Relationship between *xianghua* music and local genres

We have seen that the music of the *xianghua* Buddhists shows relationships with monastic Buddhism; but their music is also highly syncretic, borrowing vocal and instrumental music of local genres. Closer study, however, reveals that Buddhist music has also influenced secular music and musical culture. There is thus a two-way interaction between the music of the *xianghua* and that of the surrounding culture. It also highlights the non-ecclesiastical character of the *xianghua* tradition and the close affinity of the ritualists with the populace.

Apart from unique *xianghua* tunes, the *xianghua* also borrows vocal “labelled melodies” from the string-puppet theatre but sing these to lyrics of Buddhist themes. Their paraliturgical music uses tunes from both *Nanyin* and the string-puppet theatre. In reality, there is much overlap in the repertoires of *Nanyin*, *Liyuan* opera and *Kuilei* string-puppet theatre; the music of *Nanyin* can also be used in *Liyuan* opera, and similarly the music of *Kuilei* and *Liyuan* are closely related (see e.g. Wang & Liu 1989: 158-70). Thus we can see that a thorough study of *xianghua* music would require some degree of investigation into other musical genres. This section makes a start on the topic, which is tangential to my main aims and must largely be left to future research.

5.4.1 *Xianghua* vocal music and the string-puppet theatre

The *Xianghua* borrow a number of “labelled melodies” (*qupai*) from in the string-

puppet theatre. This system of “recycling” familiar music materials in new contexts is a fundamental feature of the music of many Chinese instrumental and theatrical genres. To reiterate, *qupai* are pre-existent melodies with standard titles that serve as basic music materials for different texts or contexts. For the moment, it is difficult to determine the extent of this borrowing; a rough estimate infers ten to fifteen “labelled melodies”. Ones I was able to identify are *Ao guo yujiao*, *Bubu jiao*, *beidiao*, *Dijin dang*, *Ganzhou ge*, *Guizhi xiang*, *Hua qiuer*, *Paosheng*, *Ti yindeng*, *Sheng diyu*, and *Shua haier*.

The *qupai Paosheng*, I noticed, is sung to 7-syllable texts, usually of four lines: any *xianghua* liturgical texts in this form can be sung to it. *Bubu jiao* also seems to fit texts of a typical prosodic model. In puppet theatre, this melody is sung to texts having this prosody: 7, 5, 5, 8 (or 9), 5, 5, 5 (see e.g. Cai 1987, vol. 1: 136) (CD Tr. 34). *Xianghua* texts using this *qupai* have similar prosody, with extra syllables in some lines. For example, a piece titled “Opening the Door of Dharma” (*Dakai famen*), sung in the Offering rite, has this prosody: 7, 5, 5, 10, 6, 5, 8 (CD Tr. 35).

Musically, the *xianghua* treatment of the “labelled melody” is somewhat different: melodic fragments are repeated in several places, resulting in the extension of phrases (Ex. 5.8). Examining the *xianghua* texts, we see that this extension is made necessary by a repetition of the last three syllables in the 1st, 2nd and 4th line. This repetition of words in the texts leading to musical extensions is a typical feature of *xianghua* vocal pieces. A reason for this, I can only venture for now, may be that such lengthening is a way of emphasising the meanings of the text.

Ex. 5.8 Comparison of “labelled melody” *Bubu jiao* sung in puppet theatre (from Cai 1986, vol. 1: 136) and by the *xianghua* from Tonghuamiao in Shishi (CFJ 037)

Puppet theatre
 wo jin nian lao
 Xianghua
 dai kai huat (huat (ei)) bng

PT
 ri
 luo
 XH
 pi - an (pi - an) si - ap (pian sip)

PT
 Extension
 XH
 hong (pi - an) (a) si - ap pian sip

PT
 xi
 XH
 hong) (@)

A free-metre recitative-like introduction known as *Man* (“Slow”) found in *Nanyin*, string-puppet and *Liyuan* pieces is also used by the *xianghua*.⁸ The *Man* is like *bai* in the Buddhist context (see §4.3.2) in that it is a free metre recitative. Similarly, no two performances of *Man*, even by the same singer, are exactly the same.⁹ It is difficult to tell if the Buddhist tradition influenced the secular or vice versa. For now, I am unable to ascertain if there are model tune types; but *Man* tunes, like *bai*, have typical formulaic melodic fragments or certain melodic gestures that make them distinguishable.

Another musical element common to *xianghua* music and secular genres is a coda known as *lolilian* or *lianwei* (“lian tail”). This musical section, which can be sung to

⁸ This is called *Mantou* (“Slow Head”) in *Nanyin* and *Liyuan* opera, and *Zhengman* (“Proper Slow”) in puppet theatre.

⁹ For musical examples of *Man*, see Quanzhou Difang Xiqu Yanjiushe (2000) and Cai (1987).

several different tunes, is sung to the three vocables *lo*, *li* and *lian*. Believed by the locals to be the transliteration of Sanskrit incantation and linked therefore to Buddhism, these three syllables are thought to have ritual powers – yet these three syllables are absent from monastic Buddhism. According to scholars of Minnanese theatre genres, players of the *Liyuan* opera and puppet theatre must perform (before their first performance on stage) an independent musical piece known as *lian-a-li-lo-lian* to invoke the protector gods of the theatre (Liu H. 1999: 69). In these two genres *lolilian* is also a short tune serving as a coda to many vocal pieces. This points to religious influence in secular music.

5.4.2 Paraliturgical instrumental music

As mentioned earlier, the paraliturgical music of the *xianghua* is borrowed from *Nanyin* and the theatrical genres. Prior to some rites, particularly those which attract a large audience, *Nanyin* is played (Fig. 5.4). *Nanyin* has three categories: *zhi* vocal suites, *pu* instrumental suites and *qu* short independent vocal pieces (Yeh 1985; Wang & Liu 1989; Wang 1992). Based on some titles given to me by the *xianghua*, I get the impression they play some *zhi* suites and “labelled melodies” of *qu* pieces (CD Tr. 36). *Zhi* suites have texts related to a story or plot, but these texts are rarely sung. These suites are often used in the *Nanyin* tradition for learning purposes. Each of these suites (there are 48 in the *Nanyin* repertory) may consist of from one to eight sections, each with different *qupai* titles. I believe the *xianghua* do not perform complete suites: they play only some sections, the number depending on the time they have in a *gongde* and, as we shall see later, on audience response. Even in the *Nanyin* context, it is not uncommon to play only one or two sections within a set at any one performance (Yeh 1985: 138).

Fig. 5.4 *Xianghua* priests and musicians playing *Nanyin* music before the Rite of Smashing Hell



As for the *pu* purely instrumental suites, of which there are 17 in the *Nanyin* repertory (Wang & Liu 1989: 26), it appears the *xianghua* do not play them. A reason may be that compared to *zhi* these suites are longer and more difficult to master. Since the *xianghua* themselves, and indeed instrumentalists they sometimes hire, are not professional musicians, they therefore eschew these. It is possible they sometimes play the “labelled melodies” of short *qu* pieces, but texts are omitted. But this needs further investigation. Problems with matching *qupai* titles and music are often faced by Chinese music researchers dealing with instrumental genres. Since my focus is on liturgical music, I paid less attention to paraliturgical music during my research.

Another type of paraliturgical music used by *xianghua* is short instrumental pieces with “labelled melodies”. In puppet theatre and *Liyuan* opera, these pieces serve as musical interludes between scenes, as preludes to songs, or to accompany stage actions. In the *xianghua* context, they are used to accompany ritual dances or as preludes to songs.

In summary, we can see that *xianghua* music is much more diverse than that of the institutional Buddhists. While singing some institutional vocal liturgical pieces, they also have their own repertory which developed indigenously. The influence of secular music on their liturgical and paraliturgical repertoires is strongly evident in their rich musical heritage. This also raises the question: Where is the border between sacred and secular? The answer to the first question lies in that the diversity of *xianghua* music is closely rooted in social meanings: while institutional *gongde* and its music reflect change in

social and political ideology in modern China, *xianghua gongde* and its music are the opposite. They affirm the traditional social order guided by relations of power – the family over the individual, the dead over the living, and so on. These will be investigated in the next section.

5.5 Music and meaning in *xianghua gongde*

Since the end of the Mao era, the revival of religions and their practice has been phenomenal in Minnan. This is a result of rapid economic development in Minnan, aided by overseas Chinese eager to renew ties with their homeland. Many temples are restored and expanded; *gongde* rituals in villages flourish as overseas Chinese rush back to their ancestral homeland to bury or re-bury their dead (see e.g. Dean 1988a). Yongchun *xianghua* Liao Liangcai told me that the most lavish *gongde* they perform, lasting from five to seven days, are usually commanded by overseas Chinese. The extravagance is seen in their lengths, the opulence of paper houses, and at times the number and even types of ritualists invited to perform.¹⁰ Although the CCP government still frowns upon large-scale ritual activities, particularly those associated with superstitions, my observations in the late 1990s present a picture of lax control. Large-scale *gongde*, especially in rural areas, are less stringently overseen: in an event to celebrate the restoration of the lineage books (*zupu*), a whole village in Anxi took part, many overseas Chinese from the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore and indeed, local officials played active roles. In my view, many such events are funded by overseas Chinese; the government thus turn a blind eye as these events are seen to contribute to the building and establishment (*jianshe*) of the local economy.

The dynamics of *xianghua gongde* are different from institutional ones. The music of the *xianghua* and its performance hold the key to better understanding the associated meanings and dynamics of *gongde* ritual. As we shall see, the fact that the ritual music is of secular origin does not diminish its ritual efficacy. In the process of re-contextualisation – from secular to sacred – the music, while changing little structurally, takes on different sonic dimensions and confers entirely different meanings for the performers and participants.

Compared to the institutional Buddhists, there is less change in *gongde* ritual structure performed by *xianghua*. On the whole, *xianghua gongde* continue to portray the prototype of traditional *gongde* as described by Western ethnographers in late imperial

¹⁰ Dean (1988a: 28) informs us that on some occasions both Daoists and Buddhists are invited to perform in one single *gongde*.

and early Republican times. Minor changes and reinterpretation of meanings may be taking place. In modern times, the Opening Drum (*Qigu*) rite, for example, appears to have changed somewhat in meaning. De Groot, writing about Buddhist masses for the dead in Amoy (Xiamen) in 1885, reported that *qigu* was intended to “Call the Soul” (*Yinhun*). The object of the drumming, he claimed, was to induce the spirit to return to the house and enter the image that had been set up to represent its body. According to Yongchun *xianghua* Mr. Liao, however, the opening drum serves to announce the beginning of a ritual; Calling the Soul, he said, was to take place the following day. Observing the *yinhun* rite the following day, I found that it was somewhat different from the procedure described by de Groot. Over time and with the Cultural Revolution hiatus, some rites may indeed have become simplified or changed to suit modern times. However, since my research on the *xianghua* is less extensive as that of the institutional Buddhists, it is still too early to give a judgement.

5.5.1 Music and performance: ritualists, patrons and audience

We have seen how the *xianghua* appropriate secular music: *Nanyin* is played at different points in *gongde*; puppet theatre music with its loud percussion adds to the histrionic effect of the Rites of Pardon and Smashing Hell. *Naoting* (Blasting the Hall), Liao Liangcai informed us, serves three purposes: it is a musical offering to the deities; it makes the ritual *renao* (lively, lit. “heat and clamour”), and it is an occasion for the musicians to show off their dexterity on their instruments. From his comments, we can see that this music is performed not only for the gods, but it also entertains the “living”, including the patrons and villagers. During a performance in a village in Shishan (see §3.1.3 for ritual programme), only one item was played, but the musicians told me sometimes up to three pieces may be played. Apparently, it depended on the crowd: if there were more people in the audience, more pieces would be played. Thus to the musicians (and the ritualists who in this event also play the role of musicians), audience interaction is a deciding factor on the number of pieces and the length of the performance. More on this will be said later.

As seen earlier, the *xianghua* borrow secular music not only for extra-liturgical contexts such as Blasting the Hall, but also for liturgical contexts. One could well ask how secular music renders sacred meanings and how ritual efficacy can be attained through this music. To illustrate this, I will use the example of the histrionic Smashing Hell rite to show how a *xianghua* priest, through music and all the other elements, is ritually transformed into a spirit-medium to carry out the task of rescuing the soul from

the underworld.

5.5.2 Rite of Smashing Hell

The story of Mulian (Skt. Maudgalyayana, a foremost disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha) first became known sometime in the Tang dynasty with the rise of the *Ullambhana* (*Yulanpen*) Festival. The tale of how Mulian journeyed to Hell to save his mother from her sufferings is found in *The Buddha's words on Ullambana Sutra* (*Foshuo Yulanpen jing*), translated in China in the 4th or 5th century. The sutra preaches that filial sons who prepare a feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, when the sangha emerge from their three-month summer retreat, and invite them to say prayers for their dead will accrue merit for their deceased and for themselves. Emperor Liang Wudi introduced the festival to the Chinese in 538 CE (*Fozu Tongji*, vol. 37), and by the Tang dynasty the *Ullambhana* Festival had become a grand and much celebrated festival all over China. Operas based on the story of Mulian evolved and became widely performed in association with the *Ullambhana* Festival (later became better known as the Hungry Ghost Festival) (see Johnson 1989).¹¹

There are many regional variations of the Mulian story. In Quanzhou an antithetical counterpart of Mulian in the form of Lei Yousheng (lit. thunder is noisy), a former bandit turned monk, is introduced in the plot.¹² In this version, Mulian is on his way to the Underworld to rescue his mother while Lei Yousheng is doing the same to rescue his father. While Mulian represents the symbol of the powers of Buddhist piety, Lei depicts feebleness for failing to keep his Buddhist vows. Mulian succeeds in his mission, but Lei is sent back by Bodhisattva Guanyin to Putuoshan mountains to resume his religious practice.

In Quanzhou, the full-length Mulian opera can be found in the string-puppet theatre repertory from around the 17th century (Huang S. 1996). It is padded with more sub-plots and scenes (see *Quanzhou chuantong xiqu congshu*, vol. 10).¹³ By the late 19th century, operatic troupes, known as *dachengxi ban* (Smashing Hell Operatic troupes), specialising in Mulian plays had emerged (Su n.d.: 570).

It is unclear which came first; but by at least the end of the 16th or 17th century, the Mulian story has become a rite in the course of *gongde* (see Dean 1995). In *gongde*, only

¹¹ For ongoing research on Mulian ritual theatre in different parts of China, see *Studies in Chinese ritual theatre and folklore series* (1997).

¹² See Dean (1989) for a study of Lei Yousheng and Mulian in the Minnanese theatrical and funerary traditions. Judd (1996) is a study of the Mulian story as ritual opera.

¹³ For a full transcription of its music, see Cai 1986, 1987.

an excerpt (a section sub-titled *shuangtiao* – “double shouldering”) from the full-length opera is performed. The exchange between Mulian and Lei Yousheng is the main focus, along with other comical skits. The description below is both a transcription of my recording of the rite performed out of context by the Shishi *xianghua* and the rite as performed in *gongde* by other groups of *xianghua*.

Smashing Hell is performed outdoors in the evening. Its performance often follows *Fangshe* (Rite of Pardon), in which a writ from Heaven must be obtained and delivered to King Yama of the Underworld to secure the release of the soul (§3.1.3).

A fortress constructed of paper and bamboo, some six feet tall, represents the underworld (Fig. 5.5). On each panel of the wall are inscribed the names of various places in the underworld. These include *Fenshui guan* (Pass of the Separation of the Waters), *Guimen guan* (Ghost Gate Pass), *Naihe qiao* (Bridge of Sighs), *Senluo dian* (Hall of the Infernal Judge), and so on. Inside the fortress is a table laden with food offerings and ritual paraphernalia. Musicians crowd inside the fortress, providing musical accompaniment to the ritual drama taking place outside.

Fig. 5.5 Paper fortress in Rite of Smashing Hell



The rite begins inside the fortress with a purification of the ritual space and the invocation of Bodhisattva Dizang, the saviour of sinners dwelling in Hell. After the Purification, the officiant leads the other priests, each holding a lantern, in a prancing dance outside the fortress. One, or sometimes two, members (usually the eldest son/s) of the family sponsoring the *Gongde* join the priests; the son plays the part of Mulian, carrying across his shoulder a bamboo pole with objects tied on either end. The priests walk round the fortress, followed by the son acting as Mulian. Gradually the percussion beats accelerates and the priests break into a trot. Soon they are weaving in and out in figures of eight at great speed; the son tries to keep up with the priests and to avoid running into them, but does not always succeed, much to the mirth of the onlookers. One of the priests, holding a staff (*xizhang*) symbolising Dizang Bodhisattva, bows in front of each wall, writes talismans in the air and twirls the staff with great dexterity. After this spectacle, which symbolises Mulian's journey into the underworld, the story begins to unfold. During the course of the drama, different characters enact the story outside the fortress.¹⁴

In the first scene, Lei Yousheng makes his appearance. He asks a "stable boy" if he can have a horse or sedan chair; the boy tells him there are none available. Lei laments loudly that he has to travel to the Western Paradise to save his father; how could he make this journey without horses or sedan chairs? The boy suggests that he should walk. Lei sets off, singing "Fuqin gebie" (Separated from my Father). On his way, he has a conversation with a passer-by. He introduces himself, and humorous repartee follows. During the conversation, he boasts that his father was a general who was killed in battle and, Lei fears, is now suffering in one of the courts in hell. He then announces he has to leave to go to Jingang Mountain to meet up with Mulian. At the foot of the mountain, he asks the gatekeeper if he has seen Mulian. The keeper describes the appearance of someone to whom he spoke earlier. To the laughter of the audience, the keeper uses the wrong terms to describe the monk's attire, and Lei corrects him, giving the proper names of Buddhist garments. Lei then tells the keeper that the person he is meeting has a pole on his shoulder; tied to one end of the pole is a sutra while on the other end is an urn holding his mother's ashes. The keeper tells Lei that the monk he saw left a note. Lei reads the note and realises that Mulian has proceeded on his way to rescue his mother. Lei thanks the keeper and leaves hurriedly.

In the next scene, a monk carrying a pole across his shoulders enters singing "Wo

¹⁴ Performances of this same rite by different groups of *xianghua* differ slightly; the dialogue in particular tends to vary, due perhaps to a certain amount of improvisation.

tiaojing tiaomu” (I Carry a Sutra and My Mother) (sung to *qupai: Bubujiao*). This is Mulian on his way to rescue his mother. Lei catches up with him and complains that Mulian did not wait for him at Jingang mountain. Lei asks Mulian what are the objects tied to the pole. Mulian tells him; Lei then says he would like to express his grief for Mulian’s mother and proceeds to sing funeral laments. Mulian complains, amidst laughter from the audience, that it sounds like a pig being slaughtered. He then proceeds to demonstrate how women in different counties perform it. After further witty exchanges, Lei and Mulian sing “Muyi teng er” (A Mother Loves her Son), followed by “Zhi jian Qianmian Xinghua chun” (One Sees Apricot Flower Village) (*qupai: Guabei*).¹⁵

In the next scene, Lei says he feels sick and starts retching. Mulian tells him that he is throwing up because he has violated his Buddhist precepts. Lei swears that he did not eat meat but had only thought about it. Lei asks Mulian to recite Buddha’s name (*nianfo*) on his behalf to help him repent. Mulian sings *Za shi feng fo ren* (We are Servants of the Buddha) (*qupai: Guabei*). A tiger appears out of the woods. Lei tells Mulian to run for his life; he says he was a bandit king and has killed before. He kills the tiger with his umbrella. At that point Bodhisattva Guanyin appears and tells Lei he has broken his vows. She sends Lei back to Putuoshan to practice for another three years before he could go and rescue his father.

In the final scene Mulian, holding the soul streamer (*fan*) in one hand and the staff (symbol of Bodhisattva Dizang) in the other, leads members of the family around the fortress of hell several times. Meanwhile a wooden plank raised a few inches from the floor has been erected. Each time they circle the fortress, Mulian stands on the plank, dips the streamer over the wall into the fortress and waves it a few times; then he leads the family members across the plank. This last symbolises crossing the Bridge of Sighs (*Naihe qiao*), which connotes the soul’s path to rebirth. As Mulian sings the verse “Dongxi nanbei sibu zhou” (The Four Lands of North, South, East and West), he lifts up his staff to smash the walls of the fortress. The remains of the fortress are then set alight, bringing the Smashing Hell rite to a close.

In this dramatic rite filled with histrionic antics, music plays a prominent role. Songs serve to link passages of dialogue, while percussion instruments punctuate the actions to heighten certain movements. To the ritualists the music combines with religious texts, ritual instruments and movements to empower and legitimise ritual. At the start of Smashing Hell, it is necessary to invoke Bodhisattva Dizang. A song praising the powers

¹⁵ In the puppet theatre, there is a complete scene where Guanyin transforms herself into a maiden from Apricot Flower Village to test Lei Yousheng’s resolve. In *gongde*, this scene is only implied by this song.

of Dizang is sung. While the officiant priest sings, he holds a water vessel in one hand, while with the other he waves a bell in time to the music. This handbell (*ling*) is an important tool in rituals for the dead as its resounding ringing is believed to draw the attention of deities and souls. When the song has ended, the officiant puts down the bell and holds up the water vessel. Accompanied by percussion, he writes a talisman in the air to purify the water; then he dips a finger into the vessel and flicks the water into the air. He repeats this action several times, turning to face different directions so as to purify the ritual space. Thus, although the music is borrowed from a secular context, here it is transformed by a combination of ritual texts, ritual percussion, esoteric movements and ritual paraphernalia to render sacramental meaning. Their singing, strengthened by religious texts, facilitates communication with the deities and the soul. Through music and all other ritual elements, the priest is ritually transformed into a spirit-medium to carry out the task of rescuing the soul from the underworld.

To further understand the meaning of music in ritual, it is important to consider the extent of participation by the patrons and what this music means to them. In the Rites of Pardon and Smashing Hell, audience interest and the level of intensity generated by the performance both contribute to making the music and the ritual meaningful. Sponsoring patrons often play an active role in the course of *gongde*. The chief mourners, usually the spouse or sons, carry the soul streamer, pay obeisance to the deities and the soul whenever required, and so on. These actions are part and parcel of the ritual event. However, in the Rite of Smashing Hell, the patrons' participation transgresses the boundaries that separate them from the ritualists. It is clear that all involved believe that the active participation by the eldest son (usually) in the role of Mulian, and later by other family members when crossing the Bridge of Sighs, is essential to the success of this rite.

Indeed, this crossing of the Bridge of Sighs is the most important and possibly most emotional moment for the family. The verse sung by the officiant, representing the compassionate Bodhisattva Dizang, while he smashes the fortress with the staff carries the omnipotent message that "The almighty staff was bestowed upon me [Mulian] by the Buddha, to shake the gates of Hell in Fengdu".¹⁶ The use of a variant of the free-metre *Man* ("Slow") at this point, in my opinion, allows extreme expression of emotion and, along with ritual actions, creates intensity and force. Furthermore the participation of the patrons themselves adds to convey the emotive and transformational powers of the rite, thus achieving ritual efficacy.

¹⁶ Popular Chinese belief holds that the centre of the Underworld is in Fengdu near Sichuan.

Hence, music plays a very important role in ritual. However, patrons do not often think or talk about the ritual in terms of its music. Indeed, when asked if they like the music or know about it, they often tell me they know nothing about music. The melodic and percussion instruments are so loud that they cannot hear the complexities of the music or understand the sung or recited or spoken words. Very often, when the ritualists are singing or playing instrumental interludes, the patrons or onlookers may be doing something else or talking among themselves. The music in ritual is thus not appreciated the way it is in the West (although on one occasion a patron of a *gongde* commented on the beautiful voice of one of the ritual performers). To them, music is such an intrinsic part of ritual that it is not thought of as a separate element to be appreciated. What is more important is that music is combined with the right actions.

The ritualists, on the other hand, know perfectly what they are singing and what ritual actions must accompany this. The music, combined with correct ritual actions, performed by the ritualists and also by patrons themselves, aggregate to effect ritual efficacy. Through *gongde* performance, patrons know that their ancestors are helped to a higher plane. More importantly, perhaps, is the notion of reciprocity: by performing the required ritual to ensure the happiness of their ascendant, they the descendants would in turn be blessed (*baoyu*) with wealth, prosperity and good health. A villager in Shishan told me that he commanded a *gongde* for his wife a year before; the following year, his sons were having new houses built. He clearly believed that the *gongde* performed for his wife was effectual and, as a result, the dead is endowing the living with good fortune.

Audience participation is important in *xianghua gongde* to boost the performance by ritualists. As mentioned above, when greater audience appreciation is shown in Blasting the Hall, more music pieces are played. The success of histrionic rites such as the Rite of Pardon and Smashing Hell also depend on audience interaction. Frequently these are the highlights of *gongde* for the villagers; in the clearing where these rites take place, villagers, both children and adults, bring along their own chairs and stools in readiness for the show. For them, as opposed to the patrons, the theatrical spectacle, the music and the tomfoolery which usually accompany these rites are pure entertainment. But their presence is important for the ritual performers: an audience enhances their sometimes improvisatory dialogues. In one instance, when the priest posed a question in the ritual play, someone among the audience made a witty comeback, bringing laughter to all.

Having an audience makes the ritual more *renao* (lively), particularly when there is interaction between audience and performers. In the eyes of the *gongde* patrons, the more people their event attracts, the more *renao* it is. This *renao* aspect is important in rural

rituals because the Chinese feel that the deities and the soul will not be appeased if there is insufficient “heat and clamour”; in such a case, it is felt, the dead will not bless the living with good fortune. Also, for the patrons, there is the factor of conspicuous consumption, that is, everyone in your village is able to see how much effort (and money) you are expending for your ancestor(s). Indeed, I have been told by several people in villages that it takes years to save for a *gongde*; when it is performed, there is no sparing expenses. There is certainly a status-raising element in the performance of *gongde* in rural areas. Someone in Yongchun informed me that a family usually has to spend more than 10,000 RMB on *gongde*. Liao Liangcai told me many people in Yongchun can hardly afford *gongde*. The family whose *gongde* I observed in Shishan told me that they could not have afforded it if without financial help from relatives in Malaysia.

Certainly rural *gongde* involve huge expenses: apart from the paper objects that must be burnt (paper houses in rural *gongde* are more opulent than any I have seen in cities), patrons must also pay for feasting (known in Minnanese as *jiat to*) for the ritualists, the whole village and visiting relatives. *Gongde* in villages often involve relatives and neighbours helping in various ways: the womenfolk help prepare the food (offerings, daily meals for all involved and the special feast); men ensure that firecrackers are set off at the right moments and see that everything runs smoothly.

5.5.3 Conclusion

While the appropriation of secular music for religious or ritual contexts is of course not unique to this case or to China (see for example Howard 2000), it is particularly apparent and relevant in the case of the *xianghua* Buddhist tradition. *xianghua* adoption of secular music is, I feel, not a principled decision but a result of many factors. One of these is the fact that the orthodox Buddhists do not recognise the *xianghua* tradition. This results in the isolation of the *xianghua* ritualists from, and hence their unfamiliarity with, orthodox Buddhist liturgical music. Furthermore, *xianghua* ritualists, though often skilled instrumentalists, are in *gongde* so busy singing and performing ritual acts that they generally employ at least three or four secular instrumental accompanists. For both these reasons, it is expedient to borrow local secular music for their rituals. In the view of some *xianghua*, there is a perfectly good aesthetic justification as well: since secular music appeals to the living, it should therefore also appease the soul and the gods. Liao Liangcai once said the music of the institutional Buddhists is “not *renao* enough for humans. Since having an audience is important for both ritualists (to enhance interaction) and patrons (to enhance the “heat and clamour”), the music of *xianghua* Buddhists must therefore be

lively enough to attract attention; hence there is a need to borrow from operatic music. From the patrons' point of view as well, the fact that this music may be of secular origin is irrelevant: the fact that it is performed in a ritual context is sufficient to transform it into valid, efficacious and powerful ritual music.

From the above, we see that to understand the meaning of music in ritual, it is important to examine a variety of factors including the performance context, the extent of participation and the levels of intensity generated by the ritual performance. In a ritual context, music has meanings beyond pure sound. It becomes a tool to tap into something that a certain culture sees as being much more special. In the Chinese mind set, establishing a connection with their departed ancestors is a far more rewarding event than merely appreciating the music. This is not to say that music is of no importance at all. A ritual is not complete without its music, but music is an element, among many others within a ritual, via which ritual efficacy is realised. The fact that *xianghua* music is closely linked with secular music reveals that apart from expressing ritual symbolism, music also reflects family and social relationships, community solidarity, emotions and social standing.

In conclusion, not only does music in ritual have multiple meanings, but it is how the music is experienced that gives it meaning.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

My study of the three types of *gongde* ritualists, their ritual paradigms and their liturgical music has yielded some interesting insights into religious practices in urban and rural contemporary China. It has revealed how a ritual for the dead which, up to late imperial times, had a more or less uniform set of symbols and actions, was revived and used by different groups in keeping with their varied concepts of orthodoxy and orthopraxis (§4.5.2). The *gongde* had plagued past Buddhists with its commercialism and conflicting ideologies expressed through praxis recognised by the masses rather than belief in doctrinal ideology. The hiatus of the Cultural Revolution and continued control by the CCP government provided the institutional Buddhists with an opportunity to break from past orthopractic control: some monasteries ban the performance of *gongde* while others have transformed elements of the “traditional” to reinstate religious orthodoxy. By re-inventing *gongde* and thus instilling new values, institutional *gongde* does not challenge communist ideological control but is in fact seen as supporting the socialist ideology of distinguishing religion from feudal superstition so that the CCP can firmly carry out the policy of religious freedom (MacInnis 1989:33). In the view of the CCP, religion in China today must conform to the Western-derived Marxist-Leninist scientific worldview that religion is a tool by the ruling class to oppress people.

As a result of institutional Buddhist attitudes toward and actions in *gongde*, liturgical music in institutional *gongde* has undergone much change: less emphasis is put on learning the regional Fuzhou hymn style, resulting in a shrinking repertory; this in turn results in the standardisation of hymn usage compared to past flexibility and variety. The breakdown of the teaching process also has its impact on music: the formal channel of learning hymn singing is practically non-existent for the younger generation in monasteries today. Casual learning (through osmosis, cassette tapes, etc) results in gradual modification of melodic lines. The impacts of change in institutional tradition are far greater than in the other two traditions.

The rise of the *caigu* tradition is the result of socio-political changes in the early 20th century. Their predominant role as *gongde* ritualists in post-reform Minnan is both as a gap

filler and as a bridge for the change from orthopraxy to religious orthodoxy. As more monasteries eschew *gongde* totally, the gap in the *gongde* market needs to be filled. As the number of their predecessors, the male lay *caiyou*, is now greatly depleted and Mao's promotion of equality for women in society has also taken root, the pious *caigu* are tacitly sanctioned by the institutional Buddhists as alternative *gongde* ritualists. Their willingness to include some mild form of traditional praxis also serves to satisfy those among the recalcitrant populace who prefer to cling to traditional beliefs.

Today the *caigu* are the main exponents of the Fuzhou hymn style which predominates in *gongde* in Minnan, having inherited this singing style from earlier generations of Minnanese monks. In post-reform China, they indirectly become the source of learning for the younger generation of monks. However, modern social changes and greater educational opportunities in Buddhist colleges for younger *caigu* also have some repercussions on their music. The young now refrain from learning the local *caiyou* style, resulting in its gradual disappearance. The lacuna of the Cultural Revolution means that some long and difficult hymns are not passed on. The depletion of repertory is perhaps an inevitable process over time, but surely severe political upheaval and modern social changes have hastened the process.

The *xianghua*, on the other hand, play a central role in rural popular culture. Their *gongde* paradigm represents the revival of a tradition based on older cultural practices. *Xianghua* rituals today epitomise traditional social values, especially familial values and social relations now less evident in urban rituals. While *gongde* performed by institutional and *caigu* ritualists reflect a breakdown of social familial units and changes in social relations - a common process of urbanization and modernization - *xianghua gongde* still strongly highlight lineage and family connections, close social relations and the strong concept of reciprocity between the living and the dead.

The music of the *xianghua* tradition, with its strong secular nature and dramatic forms, joins with words and symbols to provide a powerful vehicle for confirming and maintaining the traditional social relations and cosmological order still highly valued among the rural population. *Xianghua* ritual and music can be said to form a link between the present and the past.

The three types of ritualists studied here provide a varied picture of the diachronic pattern of belief and practice in *gongde*. But on the other hand, cultural continuity can also be discerned.

6.2 Questions arising and future research

Comparative analysis of the hymns sung in Fuzhou has ascertained that the Fuzhou style as sung by the *caigu* came indeed from Fuzhou. Questions arose, however, about the identity of a small number of hymns. But this is not the only question concerning this regional hymn style. In the Fuzhou region itself, I had difficulty locating older monks who knew this style. Venerable Benfa of Tianwangsi was the only one I could find of his age group who could sing a large number of hymns. Apart from Benfa's two disciples, younger ones I came across tend to know only a small number of hymns. We saw that major monasteries now ban *gongde* in their premises; monks living in these come from other parts of China. What is the real state of the local liturgical music in this region? Furthermore, the fact that this style has a widespread influence among Chinese Buddhists in Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and perhaps in Japan and even in America raises interesting questions. Taiwan Buddhists, for example, claim that a style they use in rituals servicing the dead originates from Gushan Yongquansi monastery in Fuzhou. I found, in an exploratory inquiry, that the influence of Fuzhou style in Taiwan may have come via Minnan rather than directly from Fuzhou (see Tan 2001). I will further investigate the Taiwanese claim to their tradition in a post-doctoral project.

In the 1930s and up until the Communist takeover in 1949, many Fujianese, particularly Minannese, monks migrated to the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. Unlike Mainland China which experienced a long period of disruption in cultural traditions, these Southeast Asian countries were able to practice the Buddhist traditions relatively continuously. Is the Fuzhou style perhaps better preserved among the diasporic Buddhists? Or has migration further influenced changes in the music? Although these countries did not experience political upheavals such as the ones in China, could different socio-economic changes in each country have influenced other changes in Buddhist practices? Scholars of Daoist rituals (e.g. Dean 1993) have called for more comparative research in other areas of China and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Similarly in Buddhism, there is also a need to carry out more work comparing its ritual structure and music. Many questions raised here deserve further study, possibly by a team of scholars.

Gender issues received only cursory treatment in this thesis, since further pursuit would have involved delving into historical aspects of women's roles and position in Chinese society, extensive collection of data from both men and women, and so on. Certainly, the

caigu tradition raises important questions. For example, why do the women's ritual performances not challenge or threaten the still male-dominated Buddhist society? My preliminary conclusion is that the institutional Buddhists are happy for the women to take over the performance of a ritual that they are uneasy about. But are there any other reasons behind this open-mindedness? In contrast, in the rural *xianghua* tradition women do not assume an important ritual role. Why is this so? Future exploration of the complex processes that affect both gender and ritual performance will certainly enhance our understanding of the inter-gender relations between *caigu* and institutional Buddhists and of gender roles in rural society in general.

As for the *xianghua* tradition, their Buddhist correlation is apparent in several ways: the scriptures, images, and even some of the hymns; but they also show closer affinity with local folk customs, which are also manifest in folk Daoism. Structurally and possibly musically, the *xianghua gongde* have much similarity with those of the Daoists. It is apparent from this study that this topic is one that needs to be separately investigated, and comparative research with Daoism will no doubt yield interesting results.

The CCP government's implementation of the religious policy reaffirms citizens' rights to freedom of religious belief. For nearly two decades, the expansion of religious activities, particularly in coastal areas, has reached unprecedented fervour. However, the CCP continues to view religious practices as a threat to socialist development and stability, but by the late 1990s, their hold seems to have relaxed somewhat. The institutional Buddhists no longer pose a threat as their goals are seen to be compatible with the communist socialist ideologies. However, my observations in Minnan reveal that the institutional Buddhists' stand against degeneration in their religion by getting rid of the controversial *gongde* or reinventing the tradition may still be a struggle. The fact that some institutional ritualists can be swayed by demands to include undesirable elements shows that economic rather than ideological persuasion still holds strong. As for the CCP's tolerance of the continuing rise of traditional rituals for the dead and the reappearance of large-scale clan rituals, it is difficult to tell if it is a sign that the CCP's control of rural regions is slackening, or whether they no longer see these as a challenge to the state ideology. The chapter on institutional treatment of *gongde*, or the government's tolerance of rural rituals, I feel, has not closed; only time will tell if the current situation will endure or whether it is an ephemeron.

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N.B. 1) Title translations in [] are mine; those in () were provided. 2) T. = *Taishô shinshû daizôkyô* (newly revised Tripitaka inaugurated in Japan's Taisho era, 1912-26; see below)

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Discography

- CFJ 001 to 039: my DAT field recordings made in Fujian from July 1997 to March 2000; annotated copies will be deposited with the International Music Collection of the British Library National Sound Archive.
- R1: *Chinese Buddhist music*. LP: Lyrichord LLST 7222. Recorded in Hong Kong and Taiwan by John Levy, 1969. Notes by Laurence Picken & John Levy.
- R2: *Fobao zan: Fuzhouyu changsong* [Praising the Buddha: Fuzhou dialect hymns and recitations]. n.d., Changle: Fujiansheng Yinxiang Chubanshe.
- R3: *Zhaoke: Fuzhouyu changsong* [Morning lesson: Fuzhou dialect hymns and recitations]. n.d., Changle: Fujiansheng Yinxiang Chubanshe.
- R4: *Wanke: Fuzhouyu changsong* [Evening lesson: Fuzhou dialect hymns and recitation]. n.d., Changle: Fujiansheng Yinxiang Chubanshe.
- R5: *Pumenpin: Fuzhouyu changsong* [Universal Gate Chapter: Fuzhou dialect hymns and recitation]. n.d., Changle: Fujiansheng Yinxiang Chubanshe.
- R6: *Jingang jing: Fuzhouyu changsong* [Diamond Sutra: Fuzhou dialect hymns and recitation]. n.d., Changle: Fujiansheng Yinxiang Chubanshe.
- R7: *Tianningsi changsong* [Vocal liturgy of Tianningsi monastery]. 3 audio-cassettes, as above, YAF 12-14. 1991. (see also Hu Yao 1993).
- R8: *Yujia Yankou*. 6 cassettes: Zhongguo Changpian (China Record Co.) EL-65-70. 1986. Notes by Lin Haicheng.
- R9: *Chine: fanbai, chant liturgique bouddique, leçon du soir au temple de Quanzhou*. CD: Ocora C 559080, 1989. Notes by F. Picard (Fr./Engl.).
- R10: *Chine: fanbai, chant liturgique bouddique, leçon du matin a Shanghai*. CD: Ocora C 560075. 1995. Notes by Tian Qing (Fr./Engl./Ger.).
- R11: *Chine/China: Ka-lé, la cérémonie du bonheur/The festival of happiness*. CD: VDE-GALLO, CD-911, 1996. Notes by F. Picard (Fr./Engl.).
- R12: *Yuqie Yankou: Yinyue foshi* [The music of the Yogacara Rite of Feeding Flaming Mouth]. China Record, 1986. With notes by Ling Haicheng.
- R13: copy of private cassette tape of Fuzhou and National style hymns sung by an anonymous Xiamen *caigu*; given to me by the monk Guoman from Nanputuosi, who

received it from the *caigu*.

R14: copy of private cassette tape performance by Ven. Yi I, abbess of the London Fokuangshan Temple, to instruct members in the performance of the Water Penitence Ritual; recorded December 1995.

R15: copy of private cassette tape of National and Fuzhou style hymns by various singers, prepared and given to me by Cai Junchao.

Glossary 1: Selected Buddhist terms

- Ananda: one of Sakyamuni Buddha's ten major disciples.
- Asura: a class of contentious demons in Indian mythology who fight continually with the god Indra. In Buddhism the asuras are one of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings who protect Buddhism.
- Avalokitesvara (Guanshiyin 觀世音): literally meaning "He who perceives all sounds", the personification of compassion in the Mahayana.
- Avici Hell: one of the most terrible of the eight hot hells. Those who commit one of the five cardinal sins or slander the True Law are said to fall into this hell.
- Bhiksu (*biqu* 比丘): a fully ordained male cleric.
- Bhiksuni (*biquuni* 比丘尼): a fully ordained female cleric.
- Bodhisattva (*pusa* 菩薩): a compassionate being who aspires to win full enlightenment or to become a Buddha, but who postpones his or her own entry into nirvana in order to assist others to gain enlightenment.
- Buddha (*fo* 佛): one who has reached the highest level of enlightenment. In Mahayana Buddhism, the number of Buddhas is infinite, but the term often refers specifically to Sakyamuni Buddha.
- Dharani (*tuoluoni* 陀羅尼): a spell or formula said to protect one who recites it and benefit the person by virtue of its mystic power.
- Dharma (*fa* 法): the doctrine, scriptures, truth as interpreted in the Buddha's teaching.
- Gatha (*ji* 偈): a verse stating a Buddhist teaching or praising a Buddha or Bodhisattva.
- Guanxiang (觀想): a state of trance-like concentration.
- Evils paths (*edao* 惡道): the three lowest paths of transmigration: beasts, hungry ghosts and hell (see transmigration).
- Guiyi (皈依): Take Refuge with the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), the basic step in confirming one as Buddhist.
- Huixiang (迴向): transferring of merit.
- Jingang Shangshi (金剛上師): Vajra High Master, officiant in the Yogacara Rite of Flaming Mouth.
- Karma (*yinguo* 因果): a volitional action which is either wholesome or unwholesome, and in consequence either rewarded or punished.
- Manjusri (Puxian 普賢): a bodhisattva who is the symbol of the perfection of wisdom. In Buddhist art he is usually depicted riding a lion.
- Mudra (*shouyin* 手印): esoteric hand movements.
- Mulian (目蓮): Maudgalyayana, One of Sakyamuni Buddha's ten major disciples, known for his occult power.
- Nirvana (*niepan* 涅槃): The ultimate goal of all Buddhist endeavour, the extinction of craving and separate selfhood, a life which has gone beyond death.
- Samadhi (*sanmei* 三昧): a state of intense concentration of the mind, which produces a

sense of inner serenity.

Sangha (*sengqie* 僧伽): the Buddhist monastic community, one of the three Jewels.

Sramanera (*shami* 沙彌): a male novice in the Buddhist order who has vowed to uphold the ten precepts.

Sramaneri (*shamini* 沙彌尼): a female novice in the Buddhist order who has vowed to uphold the ten precepts.

Sutra (*jing* 經): a text which is claimed to have been spoken by the Buddha

Tathagata (*rulai* 如來): a title of the Buddha: “He who has thus come”, i.e. as the other Buddhas have come.

Transmigration (Skt. *Samsara*; Mand. *lunhui* 輪迴): the cycle of rebirth. The six paths of rebirth in descending order are deva, human, asura, beast, hungry ghost and hell.

Ullambhana (*Yulanpen* 盂蘭盆): a ritual held on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month to save the hungry ghosts and to make offerings to the sangha so as to secure better rebirth for one’s deceased.

Upasaka/ Upasika (*jushi* 居士): male and female lay Buddhists.

Vinaya (*lu* 律): discipline, or the “Book of Discipline”

Yama (*Yanluo* 閻羅): King of the Underworld.

Glossary 2: Selected English theoretical terms

A) Background

Many of the terms below are discussed and/or defined in the main text, at the locations cited; in those cases, only a short definition is given here. For other terms a more comprehensive discussion is offered here.

Terms for musical and textual division: In an attempt to avoid confusion between textual and musical phrasing, I chose to use different terms for the various-sized units of lyrics and melodies (see §4.2.1). When talking about texts, I use the terms “syllable”, “cluster” and “line” to designate a single lexigraph, a group of lexigraphs and a full prosodic line respectively. When discussing music, the term “unit” designates one bar of material; “fragment” refers to a group of two or more units, and “phrase” indicates the complete melody of a textual line. Obviously, a careful analysis would often need to look at units of a different size or scope. The question of the appropriateness of Hu’s choice of the single bar as his fundamental unit of analysis is discussed at length in §4.2.1.

B) Individual terms

Centonization: a process whereby groups of notes of varying lengths are borrowed from various sources to create a new piece (see §4.2.1).

Cluster: a group of lexigraphs of less than a line, with no necessary coherence. (This term was not actually used in the body of this thesis.)

Formula: “a group of notes which is regularly employed under the same architectonic conditions to fulfill a given musico-syntactical function” (Jeffery 1992: 90; see §4.2.1).

Fragment: a group of musical units of less than a phrase, with no necessary coherence.

Key: “the quality of a musical composition or passage that causes it to be sensed as gravitating towards a particular note, called the key note or the tonic” (Sadie 1980, vol. 10: 8). Discussion of the concepts of “key” and “mode” in Chinese music is complex (for a start, see these entries in the index to Jones 1995). Chinese traditional music is based primarily on an anhemitonic pentatonic scale, with occasional additional tones which may suggest modulation (q.v.). Many musicians today commonly denote the degrees of the basic scale with cipher notation as 1 2 3 5 6, although if a piece modulates the notation may become for example 4 5 6 1 2 or 5 6 7 2 3. It has become common to indicate the key (in a Western sense) of a Chinese piece by writing, e.g., “1 = C” or “1 = G” etc., as in Cao 1998; hence the “1” of cipher notation is like a “movable do”. However, the performers in this thesis do not discuss matters of key or mode. When I speak of a performer as “changing key”, I simply imply that the pitch level of the basic pentatonic scale has shifted, not that the performer is necessarily engaging in a conscious act of modulation.

Since instruments are rarely used to accompany institutional Buddhist vocal liturgy, the pitch of a piece is not fixed but is set by the precentor, who begins the first syllable

with melismatic tones.

Line: a complete textual prosodic line.

Modulation: In Western-style harmonic music and in many Chinese genres, modulation in the course of a piece is a developmental structural device. The term “transposition”, in contrast, usually implies a change of overall pitch level for some other reason, such as to accommodate a singer’s vocal range.

In Chinese music, temporary modulation may occur when the basic scale is supplemented by either of two “exchange tones” (4 to replace 3 and 7 to replace 1). They may serve the function of transposing the pentatonic scale, resulting in the feeling of modulation. For example, when 7 replaces 1 in the basic scale of 1 2 3 5 6, this exchange tone transposes the scale up a fifth (5 6 7 2 3). This is a common and recognized variation technique in instrumental music, but rare in pure vocal music such as Buddhist liturgy. I have encountered cases in Cai’s transcriptions and in my own field recordings, but so far I have not ascertained whether this is a conscious, intentional modulatory strategy or possibly an accidental or unconscious response to a particular musical situation. For further discussion, see §4.4.3.

Phrase: a group of musical units equating in extent to a textual prosodic line. In the repertoire under study, the two are co-terminous in almost all cases, although exact division of musical phrases in particular is sometimes difficult.

Repertory: “A repertory is a stock of ready performances, and a music-culture’s repertory is what most of us think of as the ‘music itself.’ It consists of six basic parts: style, genres, texts, composition, transmission, and movement.” (Titon and Slobin 1996: 10). In the case under study, each of the *diao* (Fuzhou *diao* etc) can be considered a named repertory of tunes and texts, although the various *diao* share the greater part of their texts.

Style: In English-language musicological usage, style is a very broad term which may include any or all of the elements related to the organization of musical sound itself: pitch elements (scale, mode, melody, harmony, tuning systems), time elements (rhythm, metre, tempo), timbre elements (voice quality, instrumental tone colour), and sound intensity (loudness and softness). But there is no widely accepted definition of the term “style” in English (Blum 1992: 175). In ethnomusicological usage it may also embrace strictly non-sonic elements of a performance such as bodily movement, though careful usage might distinguish “musical style” from “performance style” and again from “performance practice”. I use the term to translate the Chinese term *diao*, which is used to designate each of the several named bodies of *zan* melodies, each of which is united by a particular musical grammar (see §4.1 for further discussion). “Style” seemed the most appropriate translation because the ritualists themselves appear to conceive of these *diao* as differing in musical stylistic features even though they are actually primarily different repertories.

Syllable: a single lexigraph.

Transposition: See Modulation.

Unit: a group of notes of one 4/4 bar in length (with the exception of Hu's two-bar cadential unit 4).

Variant: the result of variation (q.v.), which may be either temporary and ephemeral or permanent.

Variation: temporary transformation that takes place during performance; for example, a melodic phrase may be ornamented differently by a singer on various occasions. The result is a temporary variant, which may eventually find favour and be established as a permanent new variant of the given musical material.

Selected character list of proper nouns and undefined terms

N.B. Names of authors cited in the bibliography are not included.

- aiguo aijiao 愛國愛教
ai zai 噉仔
an 庵
anling 安靈
Anxi 安溪
Bagua jiao 八卦教
bai 白
baichan 拜懺
Bailian zong 白蓮宗
Baizhang 百丈
banyan 板眼
Baojuan 寶卷
Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝
baoyou 保佑
bei 杯
bendi diao 本地調
Bianshi zhenyan 變食真言
Bianwen 變文
bu jingjin 不精進
Budong Jingang 不動金剛
bu haoting 不好聽
Bukong Jingang 不空金剛
caigu 菜姑
caiyou 菜友
Caodong 曹洞
Chan, Jiang, Jiao 禪講教
chanfa 懺法
Changle 長樂
Chanmen risong 禪門日頌
changnian 唱念
Chanhe 禪和
chaodu 超度
chaoling qu 朝靈曲
Chen Jinggu 陳靖姑
chengdao 成道
Chenghuang 城隍
Chengtiansi 承天寺
Chongfusi 崇福寺
Chongshengsi 崇聖寺
Chongwu 崇武
chuchan wen 出懺文
chujia 出家
chuyi shiwu 初一十五
Cibei sanmei shuichan 慈悲
三昧水懺
conglin siyuan 叢林寺院
da ai 大噉
Dabei zhou 大悲咒
dacheng 打城
daifa xiuxing 帶髮修行
dangjia 當家
dangzi 鐺子
daoqiang bai 道腔白
daoshi 道士
Dehua 德化
Dizang Pusa Benyuanjing 地藏菩薩本願經
dizi 笛子
Doutang 斗堂
erxian 二弦
fabiao 發表
fahua tan 法華壇
faling 法鈴
fanbai/fanbei 梵唄
fan bai 梵白
fangbian 方便
fangshe 放赦
Fang Yankou 放焰口
fangzhang 方丈
faming 法名
fan 旛
faqì 法器
Fenshui guan 分水關
fohao 佛號
Fojiao xiehui 佛教協會
Fojiao Zhengxinhui 佛教正
信會
foqu 佛曲
fotan 佛壇
foxueyuan 佛學院
Fuding 福鼎
Fuqing 福清
Fuzhou 福州
gaiyuan 改願
gan jingchan 趕經懺
Ganlushui zhenyan 甘露水
真言
Gaominsi 高旻寺
gezan 歌讚
gongde 功德
Guandi 關帝
Guanyin 觀音
Guanyin Shengdan gongde
fahui 觀音聖誕功德法會
Guanshiyin 觀世音
Guanzizai 觀自在
guifanhua 規範化
Guimen guan 鬼門關
guixiang 跪香
guowu bushi 過午不食
Gushan 鼓山
kezi 鈴子
haichaoyin 海潮音
haiqing 海青
Hongyi 弘一
huaban 花板
Huaihai 懷海
Huangposhan 黃檗山
Huayan 華嚴
Huian 惠安
huoju 火居
jiahua 加花
jiangjing yi 講經儀

- Jiangsu 江蘇
 Jiangxi 江西
 jianyuan 監院
 jiedie 戒牒
 jiejie 解結
 jiexia anju 結夏安居
 Jimei 集美
 Jin'gang Baochan 金剛寶懺
 jingchan 經懺
 Jinghai'an 淨海庵
 jingtan 淨壇
 Jingtu 淨土
 jinian fashi 紀念法事
 jinbiao 進表
 Jinjiang 晉江
 Jinmen 金門
 Jinping mei 金瓶梅
 Jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni
 jing 救拔焰口餓鬼陀羅尼
 Jushilin 居士林
 kaiguang 開光
 Kaiyuansi 開元寺
 kuilei diao 傀儡調
 kulou 骷髏
 kuqian 庫錢
 Lei Yousheng 雷有聲
 Lianghuang baochan 梁皇
 寶懺
 Liang Wudi 梁武帝
 li guoban 裡過板
 linggong 靈供
 lingtan 靈壇
 linggu 鈴鼓
 Liyuanxi 梨園戲
 luolilian 囉哩唵
 Longhua jiao 龍華教
 Longquansi 龍泉寺
 Linji 臨濟
 Lu 律
 luo 鑼
 man 慢
 Mazu 媽祖
 Meizhou 眉州
 Mengshan shishi niansong
 shuofayi 蒙山施食念誦說
 法儀
 Mianran 面然
 miao 廟
 Minnan 閩南
 Minyue 閩越
 mixin 迷信
 Mizong 密宗
 Mulian 目蓮
 muyu 沐浴
 muyu 木魚
 Naihe qiao 奈何橋
 Nan'an 南安
 nangu 南鼓
 nanpa 南琶
 Nanputuosi 南普陀寺
 naoting 鬧廳
 neitan 內壇
 Neiwumiao 內武廟
 nianfo 念佛
 niansong 念誦
 Ningde 寧德
 Omituo jing 阿彌陀經
 paiban 拍板
 Penglai 蓬萊
 pilu 毗盧
 pipa 琵琶
 pu 譜
 Pugongyang zhenyan 普供
 養真言
 puji fashi 普濟法事
 puoshe/poshi 婆涉/婆師
 pushi 普施
 Putian 莆田
 Putuoshan 普陀山
 qianzang 牽藏
 qielan sheng 伽蘭聖
 qigu 起鼓
 qing 磬
 qingling jian sanbao 請靈見
 三寶
 Qingming 清明
 qingshe 請赦
 qingshen 請神
 Qingshuiyan 清水岩
 Qingshui Zushi 清水祖
 師
 qixing ban 七星板
 qiyan shi 七言詩
 Quanzhou 泉州
 renao 熱鬧
 Renjian jingtu 人間淨土
 Rensheng fojiao 人生佛教
 ruchan wen 入懺文
 Sanbao wen 三寶文
 sancheng 三稱
 san fengqing 三奉請
 Sanqing 三清
 sanxian 三弦
 sanxing ban 三星板
 Senluo dian 三羅殿
 shanggong 上供
 shanyou 善友
 shao lingcuo 燒靈厝
 sheguan 赦官
 shifang conglin 十方叢林
 shifangyun 十方韻
 shifu 師父
 Shijiasi 釋迦寺
 Shishan 詩山
 Shishi 石獅
 shishi 施食
 shiwu 十五
 shoulu 手爐
 shou wujie 守五戒
 shu 疏
 shua naobo 耍鑊鉞
 shuangtiao 雙挑
 shufan bai 書梵白
 Shuilu fahui 水陸法會
 Shuilu yigui 水陸儀軌
 shuiwen 水文
 shuowang 朔望
 shusheng bai 書聲白
 siyuan 寺院

- songshen 送神
 suiwo chujia 隨我出家
 Suyansi 宿燕寺
 Tanwang zan 嘆亡讚
 tao shenghuo 討生活
 Taixu 太虛
 Tianhougong 天后宮
 Tianning qiang 天寧腔
 Tiantai 天台
 Tianwangsi 天王寺
 Tingdian 亭店
 Tongfosi 銅佛寺
 Tong'an 同安
 Tudi 土地
 tuiku 推庫
 Wanfusi 萬福寺
 wai guoban 外過板
 waijiang diao 外江調
 waitan 外壇
 wangsheng zhou 往生
 咒
 Weishi 維識
 Wenhua ju 文化局
 wugong 午供
 Wusheng Laomu 無生老母
 Xiamen 廈門
 xianghua heshang 香花和尚
 xiangke 香客
 xiangyou 香油
 xiangzhan 香盞
 xianji shi 縣級市
 Xiantian jiao 先天教
 xiaojiao 小叫
 xiaonao 小鑊
 xiaozai 消災
 Xichansi 西禪寺
 Xinjing 心經
 xiuxing fashi 修行法事
 Xiwang Mu 西王母
 Xuanmiaoguan 玄妙觀
 xuanshu 宣疏
 Xuefengsi 雪峰寺
 Yang Wenhui 楊文會
 Yangzhengong 養真宮
 yanshou 延壽
 Yanluowang 閻羅王
 Yaoshi tan 藥師壇
 yingfu seng 應赴僧
 yinhun 引魂
 yinqing 引磬
 yiseng 藝僧
 Yongchun 永春
 yongjia zhiluan 永嘉之亂
 Yongquansi 湧泉寺
 you ziji de diao 有自己的調
 yuezhong 閱眾
 Yufo jie 浴佛節
 Yunmen 雲門
 Yuqie Yankou Shishi Jiyao
 瑜珈焰口施食集要
 zaijia jushi 在家居士
 zan 讚
 zisun miao 子孫廟
 zhaitang 齋堂
 Zhaijiao 齋教
 zhaizhu 齋主
 Zhanggong 張公
 Zhangzhou 漳州
 Zhaomu kesong 朝暮課誦
 Zhejiang 浙江
 zheng 錚
 zhengban 正板
 Zhengyi 正一
 Zhi 指
 Zhifu shizhe 知府使者
 zhizhi hengheng 吱吱哼哼
 Zhongdian simiao 重點寺廟
 zhong xiao lian jie 忠孝廉節
 zhongzun 中尊
 zhou 咒
 zhuchi 住持
 zhufa 主法
 Zhuhong 朱宏
 Zhujing Risong 諸經日誦
 zhujing tan 諸經壇
 Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋
 zibei 字輩
 zou shema 走救馬
 zupu 族譜
 zhushi 祖師

Appendix 1 Buddhist establishments common in Minnan

Institutional <i>Conglin</i> Monastery	Hereditary <i>Zisun</i> Temple	<i>Caigu</i> -run Temple
Named <i>si</i>	Named <i>si, an, jingshe</i>	Named <i>si, an</i>
20 to several hundred ordained monks	1 to 30 monks and novices	1 to 5 <i>caigu</i> (ordained nuns sometimes found)
Property of whole sangha	Property of tonsure family	Property of <i>caigu</i>
Headed by <i>Fangzhang</i> (abbot) chosen by consultation and could not be tonsure disciple of predecessor	Headed by <i>dangjia</i> or <i>zuchi</i> chosen by predecessor from among tonsure disciples	Headed by <i>dangjia</i> or <i>zuchi</i> chosen by predecessor from among resident <i>caigu</i>
Head serves 1-2 terms of three years	Head serves until death or retirement	Head serves until death or retirement
Unlimited stay for wandering monks	Limit of 3 days	Do not accept request to stay
Daily devotions Commemoration services	Daily devotions Commemoration services	Daily devotions Commemoration services
Abide by code of rules	No strict code of rules	No code of rules
48 offices and ranks	No offices and ranks apart from <i>dangjia</i>	No offices and ranks apart from <i>dangjia</i>
Office held by semester	No semesters	No semesters
No taking of tonsure	Taking of tonsure allowed	No taking of tonsure
No training of novices	Specialize in training novices	
May hold ordinations	No ordinations	
Many operate seminaries for ordained monks	No seminaries	
Incomes from 1) land (less common today), 2) entrance tickets, 3) operating vegetarian restaurants and shops selling religious articles, 4) performing rites for dead (only some)	Income from 1) performing rites for dead, 2) donations	Income from 1) performing rites for dead, 2) donations

Appendix 2 Motifs of the nine hymns group, based partly on Hu 1986

The image displays 23 musical motifs, labeled U1 through U24, arranged in ten horizontal staves. Each motif is written on a single five-line staff in a treble clef. The motifs are as follows:

- U1: A single note with a fermata.
- U1a: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U2: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U3: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U3a: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U4: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U4a: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U5: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U6: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U7: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U8: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U8a: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U8b: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U9: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U10: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U11: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U12: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U13: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U14: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U15: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U15a: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U16: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U17: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U18: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U19: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U20: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U21: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U22: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U23: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U24: A sequence of eighth notes.
- U24a: A sequence of eighth notes.

U24b U25 U26

U27 U28 U29

U30 U31 U32

U33 U34 U34a U34b

U34c U35 U35a U36

U37 U38 U38a

U39 U40 U41

U42 U43 U44

U45 U46 U47

U48 U49 U50

Appendix 3 Occurrences of motifs in the nine hymns group

Motif no.	TJH	FDH	PCH	TIH	OH	OMBH	ONBW	OA	LLE
1	4	3	1		4				
2	4		1		4				
3	4	5	1	2	4				
4	4	4	1	2	4	9	8	6	9
5	2	1	1		2			1	
6	2	2	1		2	3		2	
7	2	2	1			3		2	
8	6	5	5	1	4	1	1	4	1
9	2	2	2	1	2			5	
10	2	3	1		2				
11	2	3	1		2				
12	2	4	1	4	2				
13	4	4	2	4	4	5	2		4
14	4	2	3		4	4	2	2	5
15	4	3	3		4	8	5	3	8
16	3	3	3		3	8	5		8
17	3	2			3				
18	1				1			8	
19	1	1						1	
20		1		1					
21		1		1		8			
22		1		1					
23		2		2					
24		1				6	10	1	10
25		1		3				2	
26			1						
27			2	1					
28				3					
29				1					
30				1					
31					2				
32									
33						1	1		1
34						9	7	11	9
35						12	11	1	19
36						2			7
37						5			6
38							3		
39							2		
40							1		
41							1		
42								1	
43								7	
44								3	
45								3	
46								5	
47								1	
48								1	
49								1	
50								1	

Appendix 4 Motifs of the 6-line “Censer Incense Hymn” (*Luxiang zan*)

The image displays six staves of musical notation, each containing three motifs. The motifs are labeled as follows:

- Staff 1: U15, U71, U72
- Staff 2: U73, U74, U74A
- Staff 3: U75, U76, U77
- Staff 4: U78, U79, U80
- Staff 5: U80a, U81
- Staff 6: U82, U83

The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The motifs consist of various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, often featuring eighth and sixteenth notes. Some motifs, such as U71, include slurs and accents. The motifs are separated by double bar lines, and the entire set is enclosed in a double bar line at the end of each staff.

Appendix 5 List of Fuzhou style hymns

Class of hymns	Names of hymns	No. of lines & textual prosody	No. of texts with same prosody	National style context
Incense hymns (<i>xiang zan</i>)	Censer Incense hymn (<i>Luxiang Zan</i>)	6-line 4, 4, 7, 5, 4, 5	48 +	yes
	Tathagata of Five Measure Incense (<i>Rulai Wufenxiang</i>)	9-line 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6	1	No
Water hymns (<i>shui zan</i>)	Willow Branch Purified Water (<i>Yangzhi Jingshui</i>)	6-line 4, 4, 7, 5, 4, 5	5 (7 in <i>Zansong Jiyao</i>)	Yes
Three Jewels hymns (<i>sanbao zan</i>)	Praise to the Buddha (<i>Fobao zan</i>)	8-line 5, 6, 7, 5, 7, 6, 7, 5	4	Yes
	Tathagata Gem of Buddhas (<i>Fobao Rulai</i>)	8-line 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5	3	No
	The Merit of Reciting Buddha's Name (<i>Nianfo Gongde</i>)	8-line 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 8, 8, 7	1	Yes
Prostrate and Take Refuge hymns (<i>Jishou guiyi zan</i>)	Jeta Garden (<i>Jiegu Yuan</i>)	8-line 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 7, 7	3	No
	The Great Enlightened One (<i>Jishou guiyi dajuezun</i>)	10-line 7, 4, 7, 5, 4, 4, 6, 4, 7, 4	3	Yes
Ten Offerings hymns (<i>shigong zan</i>)	True Incense of Precepts and Meditation (<i>Jieding Zhenxiang</i>)	8-line 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5	10	Yes
	Incense Burning Above (<i>Xiangfen Zai Shangfang</i>)	5-line 5, 5, 6, 8, 8	10	No
	Flower Offering to Manjusri (<i>Hua Fengxian Wenshu</i>)	5-line 8, 7, 7, 7, 10	10	Yes
	Wondrous Scripture of Lotus (<i>Miaodian Shuo Lianhua</i>)	5-line 5, 4, 7, 7, 4	10	No
Offertory hymns (<i>gongyang zan</i>)	Incense of Precepts Meditation and Wisdom (<i>Jiexiang Dingxiang Yu Huixiang</i>)	10-line 7, 7, 5, 5, 9, 7, 7, 5, 5, 9	1	No
	Putuo Mountains of the Southsea (<i>Nanhai Putuoshan</i>)	13-line; 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 4, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6	1	No
	Incense Flower Lamp Oil and Fruit (<i>Xiang Hua Deng Tu Guo</i>)	13-line; 5, 5, 5, 5, 3, 5, 7, 7, 5, 8, 7, 7, 6	1	Unsure

Appendix 6 Fuzhou hymn motifs

This page displays 18 musical motifs for Fuzhou hymns, arranged in ten horizontal staves. Each motif is represented by a single line of music on a five-line staff with a treble clef. The motifs are numbered as follows:

- Staff 1: Motif 1
- Staff 2: Motifs 2a and 2b
- Staff 3: Motifs 3a and 4
- Staff 4: Motifs 5 and 5a
- Staff 5: Motifs 6 and 6a
- Staff 6: Motifs 7 and 8
- Staff 7: Motifs 8a and 9
- Staff 8: Motifs 9a, 10, 10a, and 11
- Staff 9: Motifs 12, 13, and 13a
- Staff 10: Motifs 13b, 14, and 14a
- Staff 11: Motifs 15, 16, and 17
- Staff 12: Motifs 17a, 18, and 18a

The motifs consist of various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Some motifs feature a fermata over a note. The notation includes stems, beams, and various note heads.

This musical score consists of ten staves of music, each containing a single melodic line. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is characterized by a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a more complex melodic line in the right hand. The measures are numbered as follows: 18b, 19, 19a, 20, 20a, 20b, 21, 22, 23, 24, 24a, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 36a, 36b, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and dynamic markings.

41a 42 43

N.B Nos
44 and 45
do not exist

46 47 47a

48 49 50

51 52 53

54 55 55a

56 57 58

59 60 61

62 63 63a

64 65 66

Appendix 7 Catalogue of *ji* motifs and their variants

Key: a,b,c etc = motifs
 7, 4 etc = no. of syllables
 3/7, 4/7 etc = 3 of 7 syllables etc
 V = Vow to Be Reborn
 T = The Merit
 W = With This Merit
 TM = Three Merits
 G = Great Vows

motif a (8 beats)

The image displays eight musical staves, each representing a variant of motif a. The staves are labeled on the left as follows: a-7V, a-7V, a-7V, a-7V, a-7V, a-7V, a-7T, and a-7T. Each staff contains a single line of music in treble clef, spanning 8 beats. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, along with rests and ties. The first six staves (a-7V) show variations with different rhythmic patterns and phrasings, while the last two staves (a-7T) show variations with a different rhythmic structure, including a final eighth note followed by a quarter rest.

Motif b (8 beats)

The image shows a musical score for a motif labeled 'Motif b (8 beats)'. It consists of eight staves, each labeled on the left with a letter and a number: b-7V, b-7V, b-7V, b-7V, b-7V, b-7V, b-7T, and b-7T. The first six staves (b-7V) contain musical notation for the motif, which is a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4. The seventh and eighth staves (b-7T) contain the same notation for the first six beats, followed by the word '(cadence)' in parentheses, indicating the end of the motif. The notation is written in a single treble clef on each staff.

Motif c (5 or 7 beats) * (Transcription by Cai 1999: 240)

The image displays a musical score for Motif c, consisting of 18 staves. Each staff is labeled on the left with a specific rhythmic notation: c-4TM, c-4T, c-6W, c-6W, c-6W, c-6W, c-4/7T, c-4/7T, c-4/7T, c-4/7T, c-4/7, c-4/7T, c-4/7T, c-4/7T, c-4/7*, c-4/7*, c-4/7*, and c-4/7*. The notation includes treble clefs, common time signatures, and various rhythmic values such as quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, often grouped with beams and slurs. The score is presented in a clean, black-and-white format.

Motif d (4, 5, 7 beats)

The image displays a musical score for a motif labeled 'Motif d (4, 5, 7 beats)'. The score consists of 14 staves, each with a different rhythmic or chordal pattern. The staves are labeled on the left as follows:

- d-4TM
- d-6W
- d-6W
- d-6W
- d-3/7T
- d-3/7T
- d-3/7T
- d-3/7T
- d-3/7
- d-3/7
- d-3/7
- d-3/7*
- d-3/7*

The notation includes treble clefs, notes, rests, and various rhythmic markings such as slurs and accents. The patterns range from simple eighth-note sequences to more complex rhythmic structures involving sixteenth notes and ties.

Motif e (5 beats)

The image displays a musical score for a motif titled "Motif e (5 beats)". The score is written in 12 staves, each beginning with a treble clef and a time signature of e-4/7. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. Slurs are used to group notes across multiple staves, indicating a melodic line that continues through the system. The notes are primarily eighth notes, with some sixteenth notes and rests interspersed. The overall structure is a single melodic line divided into 12 parts across the staves.

Motif f (4 beats)

The image displays a musical score for a motif labeled "Motif f (4 beats)". It consists of seven staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The staves are labeled with chord symbols on the left: f-3/7T, f-3/7T, f-3/7T, f-3/7G, f-3/7G, f-3/7T, and f-3/7*. The music is written in a single melodic line across all staves, featuring a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various phrasings and slurs. The first staff (f-3/7T) has a slur over the last two notes. The second staff (f-3/7T) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two. The third staff (f-3/7T) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two. The fourth staff (f-3/7G) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two. The fifth staff (f-3/7G) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two. The sixth staff (f-3/7T) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two. The seventh staff (f-3/7*) has a slur over the first two notes and another over the last two.

Final Cadence (4, 5, 6 beats)

(Pattern 1)

Four staves of musical notation for Pattern 1. The staves are labeled on the left as fcp-4TM, fcp-6W, fcp-3/7, and fcp3/7V. Each staff contains a sequence of notes and rests, with some notes beamed together and some having slurs or ties. The notation is in treble clef.

(Pattern 2)

Five staves of musical notation for Pattern 2. The staves are labeled on the left as fcp-3/7T, fcp-3/7T, fcp-3/7G, fcp-3/7T, and fcp-3/7T. Each staff contains a sequence of notes and rests, with some notes beamed together and some having slurs or ties. The notation is in treble clef.

Appendix 8 Nine Penitence name chant tunes

Percussion

1 na mo pi lu

2 na mo pi lu zhe

3 na

4 na mo pi lu

5 na mo pi lu

6 (lei a) na mo guo qu

7 na mo mi

8 (ei) na mo

9A na mo (a) pi lu zhe

9B na mo (a) ben shi shi jia

Perc. 

1  zhe nuo fo

2  nuo fo

3  mo pi lu zhe

4  zhe nuo fo

5  zhe nuo fo

6  qi po shi fo

7  le fo

8  pi lu zhe nuo fo

9A  nuo fo

9B  mo ni fo

Perc. **H**

1

2

3
nuo fo

4

5

6

7

8

9A

9B

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