Chinese civilization and culture rests upon a philosophical foundation shaped primarily by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Ancient Chinese thinkers were convinced that through the realization of their human potential, man could find harmony and fulfillment in their relations with one another and with nature. Merged together, the philosophies of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) stress the importance of self transformation in human life: preserving and cultivating one=s life, and moving toward human perfection and human virtue. Thus, human life is primary, the world of things is secondary. Human virtue is considered to be the key to harmony and peace in the family and in the community. The means of accomplishing this harmony accounts for the differences between different schools of thought and practice. Taoist insight stressed following the inner way, the Tao of nature. Confucianism insight was that perfection can be realized through meditative insight in to the mind. Within Chinese music, for example, there is a Confucian-based aesthetic related to the positive and negative in music. Positive music, or shi yin, means Aproper sound@, implying that to be appropriate, good music must be both harmonious and promote peaceful to the listener. This implies that in ancient times music was used as an educational tool capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes. On the other hand, chi yue, meaning negative or extravagant music@ demonstrated inappropriate attributes of loudness and wanton noisiness, a stimulant for excessive and licentious behavior.

Chinese philosophy has also been  connected with politics and morality and has assumed most of the functions of religion in China. The Chinese put emphasis on social and moral reality as most fundamental, as opposed to Buddhist metaphysical reality and knowledge as real.. Likewise, the Theory of the Five Agencies is essential to Chinese understanding of the structure of the universe, rather than it=s origin. The Chinese do not follow a theory based upon an all powerful god as the source of all creation and being . Rather, the theory was an attempt to explain the functions of nature by appeal to inner principles or powers, and not some external force (i.e. gods or God). All the characteristics and tendencies of nature are the result of various combinations of the five agencies. The five powers of the universe that control the functioning of nature are symbolically represented by wood, fire, metal, water, and earth. The combination of these powers determine the workings of the universe. For example. In Springtime, the power represented by wood is dominant. When the power of fire dominates, it is summer, Fall represents the ascendency of metal, and winter results when water is dominant. Earth is dominant in late Summer. We also find (later in this document) that the five elements are organizational principles for categorizing Chinese musical instruments.

Chinese legends established a doctrine, eventually known as Confucianism, which taught that the origins of music in China were as old as the beginnings of Chinese civilization, that music was founded by ancient Chinese Emperors, it served the function of pleasing ancestors, it affected their quality of government, informed the individual development of character, and if properly performed created order between Heaven and Earth. Aspects of music, including the development of a formal system of music theory, standardized tuning of instruments, and the development of an aesthetic philosophy linking music to the Cosmos, governed the direction of music in China for thousands of years. Chinese legend has it that in 2697 BCE, a man named Ling Lun, was sent by the Emperor to the western mountains of China to cut bamboo pipes (lu's) from which fundamental pitches of Chinese music would be derived. Acoustical theory in China also developed the metaphysical notion about the relationship between music and the cosmos. At this same time the Chinese were already using a writing system related directly to that of their descendants. Very early the Chinese
developed a respect for the written word, as evidenced in the thousands of volumes of literature

**Music Theory and Chinese Cosmology**

Writings on Chinese music theory mainly concern the theory of Court and traditional Art Music of China, in which extra-musical concepts relating music to cosmology, philosophy, and politics played dominant roles in Chinese history. Chinese legend states that in 2697 B.C., Ling Lun was sent by Emperor Huang-ti to the western mountains to cut bamboo pipes (Lu=s) from which the fundamental pitches of Chinese music would be derived. A cyclical method of tuning (by fifths, on a piano keyboard this would be C-G-D-A-E) was consistent with Chinese views of cycles of dynasties, seasons, and other recurrent patterns in life. The use of this Pentatonic, or five-toned scale system connected music to other important concepts (i.e. Five Cardinal Points or directions, the five basis elements, the five known planets, the five continents, the five primary colors, and the five senses. The use of a five tone scale (Pentatonic) held other symbolic attributes: The primary tone (Kung) was associated with the Emperor, the Shang tone was associated with the Minister, the Chich tone with the State, the Chaio tone with the People, and the Yu tone with important Chinese objects. Acoustical theory in China also developed the metaphysical notion about the relationship between music and the Cosmos. There is further evidence of early music activity in China. Somewhere between 1600-1066 B.C.E. there is archaeological evidence of pottery ocarinas and stone chimes. By 1027 B.C.E. there were written records of tuned sets of bronze bells. By the 3rd century (B.C.E.) the tuning of court instruments was set to standard pitched pipes held by the imperial court. By 239 B.C.E., there was a predetermined set of mathematical ratios for musical intervals in the Chinese scale system. At about the same time there were classes of instruments organized and classified according to the material they were made from - metal, stone, silk, bamboo, gourd, pottery, leather, and wood. Each category was associated with the one of the four seasons, the twelve months, the five cardinal points and other metaphysical associations, which led to mathematical calculations to explain acoustical principles.

**Philosophy, Aesthetics and Good Government**

The ethical, philosophical, and political basis of Chinese government and civilization holds strongly to the beliefs and practices of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism. The Confucian Way, more of a social doctrine than a religion, has permeated Chinese life (and Chinese music) well into the Twentieth century. It=s teachings held, among other things, that the Acorrect@ performance of music could produce a peaceful political State and individuals that are virtuous. Ethics were the basis for good government and education of the people, aided by the correct use of music and correct practices of rituals, could inculcate ethical attitudes among the people. This concept of music used as a means for political and/or spiritual enlightenment has existed throughout history, as we have already seen in this course. Much like ancient Greece, ancient Chinese philosophers, mathematicians and music theorists developed metaphysical notions about the relationship of music to the cosmos, which lead to mathematical computations of music and musical acoustics. Chinese philosophy sees music as a tool for articulating the resonances among human beings and things that make up the world. Chinese philosophy also draw attention to features of musical experience that are relational in nature, and to the ways music affords enjoyment and refinement in perceiving the world. Deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy, the spirit of Chinese music reflects
Music is the harmony of heaven and earth and the flowering of spiritual understanding in mankind.

Advocated a stable social hierarchy reflecting natural balances and maintained by individual virtue and restraint.

Music is an educational tool, capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes. Music has ethical powers that can be beneficial or harmful, either helping to foster appropriate values or undermining them through extravagance.

Music is a reflection of patterns of reality, affording insight into the Dao, the way the world dynamically unfolds, music elicits awareness of the larger world.

Chinese thought draws attention to human intentions above stressing the notion of sympathetic resonance, the literal resonance of our bodies with the resonance of other individuals and musical instruments.

The Chinese correlate the tones of music with a wide range of other distinct elements in human experience. Music is seen as offering a basis for reflection on the way in which the elements of various categories are interrelated, and how human beings are related to each other and things.

According to Chinese philosophy, sound is the most direct manifestation of the universal life-force, or Qi of the individual. Music is defined as moving, patterned sound, and sound was believed to be the ground of Abeing@, since all things are thought to resonate in an eternally flowing current of sound. This sound current is also characterized as the breath (Qi) or energy of life which pervades the universe as spirit, its vitality resonating as audible (perceived) or inaudible (silent) sound.

The use of extra-musical associations is much more pervasive in Chinese music than in the West. When they are present, extra-musical associations can be reinforced by a deliberate inter-sensory projection, which can focus upon a poetic image, a story, a mood, or any combination of these. The origin of this concept goes back to the ancient Zhou Dynasty (1075 BCE). The ancient word sheng, sometimes the name of a musical instrument, but also refers to a consistent relationship between sound (sheng) and a condition of superior awareness (sheng). In the West, we often associate superior awareness with light (visionary, wisdom, enlightenment, etc.).

The literary cornerstone of Confucian tradition was the Wu Ching, also known as The Five Chinese Classics. These five books cover human activities for which the ancient Chinese hoped would please their ancestors, whom they believed to have control over individual human fortunes. By satisfying the ancestors with correct performances of ALi@ (rites) and AYya-yah@ (ritual music), the ancient Chinese expected favorable responses to their petitions concerning daily life, harvests, and the outcomes of battles.

Here is an excerpt from the fourth Book of Classics (1765-1123 B.C.E.) which addresses music’s relationship to natural order and to good government:

AMusic is the Harmony of Heaven and Earth, rites are their order.
Through Harmony all things are transformed, through Order all are distinguished.
Music arises from Heaven, rites are patterned after Earth.
Therefore the sage creates music in response to Heaven and sets up rites to match Earth.
When music and rites are fully realized, Heaven and Earth function in perfect order.

More recently (1955) the use of music to achieve ATao@ (Enlightenment) came from a former Chinese President, Chiang Kai-Shek:

AGood music can transform temperament, revive spirit, ease hard labor and strengthen willpower so that man=s living is made more harmonious and pleasant and his tasks become better and by that, high character in every individual and right social custom are subtly cultivated. So it=s importance is not only to the moral cultivation of each individual, but also can affect the prosperity and recession of a nation. A

For the Chinese, the aesthetics of music and all other arts have traditionally concerned the pleasurable contemplation of value as embodied in and expressed through the individual experience of Art. However, the Chinese notion of art resides not exclusively in the art object itself, but takes shape as one identifies the individual=s identification of self with the continuum of being and existence. Music is the first subject of Chinese aesthetics because, of all art forms, it was considered to be the most direct manifestation of the universal life force known as AQi@. Chinese writings define music as moving, patterned sound, and sound (according to the Chinese) is the ground for Being, since all things resonate in an eternally flowing current of Sound. This Asound current@ is the breath (Qi) or Aenergy of life@ pervades the Universe as a spirit. It=s vitality resonates as audible (perceived) or inaudible (unperceived or silent) Sound. Sound involves movement, and movement creates change, bringing with it a rhythmic exchange between Atension@ and Arelease@. Silence, on the other hand, with it=s apparent stillness and quietude, suggests the other side of change (continuity and stability).

The Musical Instrument of a Confucian Scholar

The Chinese Qin is a six foot long stringed zither similar in shape to the Japanese Koto has had a longtime historical association with Confucian sages, scholars and poets. The Qin was first mentioned in the Shujing (Book of History). By 300 BCE it was expected that any man who was a scholar and a gentleman would be required to learn to play the Qin. Much later, during the Song Dynasty (960-1027 CE) playing the Qin was seen as a act of contemplation, self purification, and self regulation; hence, it should be played in private, amidst charming scenery such as under pine trees or beside running creeks, in the privacy of one=s garden, or in the cloister of one=s library with incense burning. The Qin vogue reached its height during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). While much of Chinese tradition is written down, in these early times the Importance of oral transmission, and the realization and interpretation by the musician was an important part of the mystique of the Qin.
Listen to this musical example of the Qin:

**Musical Example: The Drunken Fisherman - Solo for the Qin**

Contrary to what the title might suggest, this piece does not depict a scene of drunken excess, but rather the gentle inebriation of a scholar fisherman meditating on the beauty of nature. The Qin is synonymous with self-restraint. The ancients intended it to be used for discipline, for tranquilizing one=s emotions, and for suppressing excessive and frivolous desires. In playing the zither, you must select a quiet and secluded place. It could be in the top story of a building, in the forest among the rocks, at a mountain precipice, or at the edge of the water. The weather should be calm, with a light breeze or a clear moon. You have to burn some incense and meditate for awhile....

This solo piece for the Qin is based on a four part structure, a theme and variations. There are six stanzas with a coda.

Stanza 1 - Introduction (Sanqi) . Slow, in free rhythm - introduces two of the three basic themes in two basic tonal centers - the second is a fourth above the first.

Stanzas 2-5 - Exposition (Rudiao - A-entering the music@) This section establishes the meter and principle motives are introduced, then varied through tonal variation, expansion or reduction of themes

Stanza 6 - Restatement (Ruman - A-becoming slower@) The three themes are reinterpreted in a different rhythmic configurations.

Coda (Weisheng - Atail sounds@) Themes 1 and 2 come to an abrupt end, followed by new materials in a slow staggered rhythm, ending with harmonics.

**Chinese Opera**

The Chinese love their musical dramas. **Jingju**, meaning **Atheater of the capital@**, known in the West as Beijing Opera or Peking Opera is one of more than three hundred varieties of traditional Chinese musical drama, each identified with a region or province of China. Of all these, Beijing is the most widely performed, and indeed, comes closest to being a national theater for China. Each regional style uses a different vocal repertoire, melody pool, instruments, and systems of stylized speech & gestures that often carry symbolic meaning known to the true follower of each tradition. Speech and singing styles are differentiated by intonation, rhythmic patterns, language, syntactic organization, and type of instrumental punctuation used.

Nevertheless, there are many stock conventions and symbolism in Beijing opera, just as there are in European opera. For example, in European opera, different voice types (i.e. Tenor, Baritone) are regularly associated with specific character types (i.e. Romantic tenors often play young, amorous males). The lower female voice (i.e. Contralto) frequently plays a character who conspires against the male and female protagonists (tenor and soprano). In Beijing opera, young men are often of romantic and dreamy inclinations, and will most often sing in the high vocal register known as falsetto. Older, bearded male characters in Chinese
opera, who may be associated with loyalty and trust, often sing in the high baritone register. Chinese warrior characters tend to sing with a forced, throaty voice. Jing, or painted face roles of male characters require a loud, hoarse manner of singing in a style that takes many years of training and practice to perform correctly.

Males Mature & Virtuous
Military - Martial Arts
Young Males
Females Virtuous Young Women - Vocal Abilities, Composure, Languid Movements
Old Ladies - Stern, Traditional
Clowns White Patch on Face
Painted Face - AJing@ (Meaning Ornamentation)

Color symbolism is also a conventional trait we understand in the West. Heroes dress in white, the bad guy, in black. Here we see color symbolism a little differently than the Chinese. In Chinese opera, black or red represent loyalty, bravery and straightforwardness, while white can represent treachery and falsehood. Blue is a color of ferocity or defiance. Gold and silver represent supernatural beings.

The repertoire of Peking Opera emphasizes the singing (several types of Arias used) of a basic stock of set arias, the use of heightened speaking pitch (stylized), dance, pantomime, martial arts, and acrobatic displays for the entertainment of Chinese audiences. The many costumes, gestures, facial painting, and movements of actors often have specific symbolic meaning to knowledgeable viewers. For example, there are more than twenty types of beards, and nearly forth methods of stroking the beard (symbolically telling about character, motivation. Peking Opera uses a small orchestra comprised of bowed and plucked strings, and many percussion (gongs, cymbals, and drums) instruments:

New material

Guqin Music
Pronounced "chin" (stringed instrument) or "goo chin" (old stringed instrument), the guqin throughout its long history has been the musical instrument most praised by China's literati. They categorized it as one of their "four arts", collected it as an art object, praised its beautiful music, and built around it a complex ideology. No other instrument was so often depicted in paintings, or so regularly mentioned in poetry. Because of the literati's fondness for writing things down, it also has the world's oldest detailed written instrumental music tradition, providing sufficient information to allow both historically informed performance (requiring use of silk strings) of early music, and practical exploration of the relationship between Chinese music theory and music practice.

Qin Ideology
The guqin has arguably the world's oldest surviving written solo instrumental music tradition, with the first surviving tablature dating from the 7th century CE, but "the way (dao) of the qin" has sources much earlier than that. It

Do qins need strings? The inscription on this fan says, "The wind in the pine trees and the babbling brook are nature's melody. Although the qin has been brought along, it is not necessary to put on the strings. Looking down on the hills there is a sense of grass in great quantity. Quietly attained by Hong Chaoran" (the painter,
has sometimes been claimed that when a Chinese literatus succeeded in attaining a government position he followed the structures of Confucianism, but when he lost his position he became a Daoist, achieving all by doing nothing.

As Zhu Quan states in his preface to *Shen Qi Mi Pu* (1425 CE):

> As the qin became a physical object, the sages made it in such a way that it could correct purposeful thoughts, provide leadership in worldly affairs, bring accord to the six influences and tune the harmony of the seasons. It is indeed the divine instrument of heaven and earth, and a most ancient spiritual object; thus it became the music used by sages of our Middle Kingdom to control the government, and the object used by princely men to cultivate (themselves); it is only appropriate to stitched sleeves (i.e., scholars) or yellow caps (Daoists).

**Qin Poetry and Song**

The Old Toper's Chant
1st of four scrolls
Because qin music was created by the same class of people who created classical Chinese poetry, often their themes overlap, and a large number of melodies on this website have, or could have, associations with poetry. The same can be said of painting. Two important examples which incorporate all three disciplines are several **Chu Ci** and **Hu Jia** poems.

**Qin poetry** here refers to poetry that mentions qin. **Qinshu Daquan** (1590) has an extensive collection (in Chinese) of such poetry. Some translations eventually will be included here.

**Qin songs** accompany qin melodies. Many Ming dynasty qin handbooks have qin songs. Some of the songs I play are,

1. **Zui Weng Yin**, (The Old Toper's Chant, see calligraphy at right)
2. **Jiu Kuang**, a serious drinking song
3. **Feng Qiu Huang**, an ardent love song
4. **Boya Diao Ziqi**, an equally ardent lament for a lost friend
5. **Yangquan Sandie**, one of the most famous farewell songs
6. **Gui Qu Lai Ci**, a famous poet enjoys being home
7. **Feng Ru Song Ge**, a qin song accompanies Wind in the Pines
8. **Kongsheng Jing**; a musical setting of Confucius' Great Learning
9. **Qingjing Jing**; a Daoist morning chant
10. **Yu Ge Diao**; read the transcription and sing along with the recording

Lyrics are almost always appended to qin melodies following the model of one character for each right hand stroke technique. Such intensive use of the lyrics suggests this was ideological as much as artistic. In fact, some argued that qin music should be sung because Confucius sang as he played. Others argued that singing just got in the way of qin tones.

The first two handbooks with lyrics show very contrasting approaches to the character-for-stroke model.

1. **Zheyin Shizi Qinpu** (<1491; my cd) has music which for the most part is primarily instrumental; **some of it can be sung**, but there are also passages where, for example, the finger runs across the seven strings and so there are seven syllables to be sung. Most of the lyrics were apparently written by the 15th century prince who compiled the book.
2. **Taigu Yiyin** (1511) has 38 qin songs, most of them clearly intened to be sung. The music seems to be slower and less ornamented, and the lyrics are mostly poems from the famous collection **Yuefu Shiji**.
Changing Concept

Introduction

Together with other historical genres like the Dunhuang pipa pieces (manuscripts printed 933 CE) of the Tang dynasty, ci 詞 song notation from the Song dynasty, and tunes of kunju 崑劇, the music of guqin inherits a myriad of ancient notation. However, reconstruction of ancient guqin music (known as dapu) differs from that of other historical genres in the sense that the product of dapu is usually not perceived as a revived tradition. In other words, the distinction between reconstructed and existing pieces is often ignored and such difference is often considered unimportant. While teaching pieces, seldom will a guqin instructor explain whether the piece is a living one or a reconstructed one. Also, dapu is considered a reconstruction-performance act; “the result of dapu is that of performance” (Cheng 1996:25). Eventually, reconstructed pieces are always indiscriminately included in any performances, recordings, and teachings. In that sense, the practice of dapu resembles Western early music performance because, firstly, reconstruction lies closely with performative acts; and secondly, the concept of revival is not explicitly stated in musical activities.

Much of the discussion in early music scholarship rests on the authenticity of early music performance. Summarizing the main critiques to the notion of authentic performance, Richard Taruskin writes, “the whole trouble with Early Music as a ‘movement’ is the way it has uncritically accepted the post-Romantic work-concept and imposed it anachronistically on pre-Romantic repertoire. … A movement that might, in the name of history, [have] shown the way back to a truly creative performance practice has only furthered the stifling of creativity in the name of normative controls” (Taruskin 1995:13). He further reassesses the notion of authentic performance: the “fidelity to the composer’s intentions cannot be used as a yardstick by which the value of a performance may be measured, and … it is not in expressions of such fidelity that the essential nature of authentistic performance resides” (Taruskin 1983:151). Inspired by these arguments and given the resemblance between dapu and early music revival, I try to theorize the practice of dapu by reassessing the issue of authenticity and its related context in Chinese music reconstruction.

Despite its seemingly mystical image, (as with other guqin-related issues, like notation, performance practice, historical origin, and so forth), dapu is being widely practiced among guqin musicians. After years of apprenticeship, most guqin students, if not all, will be taught some knowledges and ideas of practicing dapu. While any guqin player is allowed to practice dapu, only those cultivated and experienced guqin masters are considered as being able to truly experience the music. Their interpretations are thus considered authoritative. Nowadays, apart from the local/private gathering yaji 雅集 [elegant gathering], the most important music activity assembling guqin musicians from all around the country is the dapu conference (I will return to it in the last section). In addition, as I will argue, the modern conception of dapu is predominantly a twentieth-century invention, even though some scholars suggest that anpu 按譜尋聲 is a comparable practice in
ancient time. For these reasons, a critical examination to the practice of *dapu* enables us to understand the changing sphere of music scholarship in modern China.

**Defining Dapu**

In the simplest sense, *dapu* (literally, beating the notation) refers to a realization of *guqin* notation, a process of “deciphering and interpreting the tablature, whereby mute music in notation is converted to live music to be experienced” (Yung 1985:370). As mentioned, the tablature notation of *guqin* indicates gestures and finger positions, but provides few melodic, rhythmic, and metrical details. *Dapu* is an attempt to reconstruct music by realizing the rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and melody from an ancient notation that is no longer being played or passed on. With the discovery of many ancient manuscripts in the fifties, hundreds of pieces that were no longer recognized or practiced suddenly reappeared. Musicians felt an obligation to launch extensive *dapu* projects in an organized and systematic way.

The origin of *dapu* is unclear. The term “*dapu*” first appeared in an early twentieth-century essay “Duiyu changming qinxue zhi wojian” 對於昌明琴學之我見 [My opinion on promoting *guqin* music]; it reads, “the most difficult aspects of *dapu* is to deal with the different kinds of vibratos.” (Shi 1937:52) Yet, as in other narrations of Chinese tradition, in which history extends into the mist of time, there is no lack of aspirations to claim a long history of the practice. Scholars usually date *dapu* back to the Ming dynasty or even earlier; for example, Yung argues that the idea of *dapu* is suggested in the manuscript *Shenqi mipu* 神奇秘譜 (1425) (Yung 1985:382-83). Writing about his notion of historically-informed performance (HIP), John Thompson also suggests that, “I believe that Zhu Quan’s [朱權] aims in compiling and publishing *Shenqi mipu* were thus quite in line with the aims of those who today seek HIPs of early Western music” (Thompson 2001:4). However, it should be noted that neither the recognition of *dapu* as a *guqin* music activity nor the term itself did appear until the early twentieth century.

In this chapter I try to problematize the practice of *dapu* by dichotomizing two increasingly distinguishable approaches to *dapu*, namely, ancient and modern, historic and creative. I argue that *dapu*, whether as defined by scholars or as practiced by *guqin* musicians, is not a concept as unified as what dictionaries try to define. It is, however, a space for constant negotiation by different ideas on *guqin* music and music historiography at large.

**Between Ancient and Modern, Historical and Creative**

As mentioned, despite being claimed as having an ancient historical origin, the modern sense of *dapu* is in essence a twentieth-century music activity. Accordingly, scholars usually distinguish between ancient (*gudai* 古代) and modern (*xiandai* 現代) ways of *dapu*. A problem in the scholarship of Chinese modernity is that it is always difficult to
distinguish between what is commonly called “pre-modern” and “modern”. But we can still try to investigate the way people come to define their difference from the past and to articulate a new mode of practice, which is considered as “modern”.

Scholars usually distinguish between an ancient way of *dapu*, which was practiced by pre-twentieth-century musicians and the first generation of *dapu*-ists (like Guan Pinghu 管平湖), and a modern way of *dapu*, which is now being practiced by contemporary musicians. A Shanghai *guqin* player Cheng Gongliang 成公亮 points out that *dapu* functioned as a pastime and entertainment for ancient people (*guren 古人*); while for modern people (*jinren 今人*), *dapu* “has academic and music-archaeological values, with an historical mission to rescue Chinese music” (Cheng 1996:22). He further explains that, the text (*juben 據本*) used by ancient people to practice *dapu* was usually a contemporary manuscript that had just been published. On the contrary, modern people seek to base their *dapu* on early and ancient manuscripts, such as *Shenqi mipu 五知齋琴譜* (1721) and *Xilutang qinpu 西麓堂琴譜* (1549). He also identifies the fifties as a borderline between ancient and modern ways of *dapu*: “Before the fifties, the texts for *dapu* came primarily from those manuscripts published in the late Qing dynasty, like *Wuzhizai qinpu 五知齋琴譜* and *Qinxue rumen 琴學入門* (1864). After the fifties, following the large-scale fieldwork and thus discoveries of ancient manuscripts by Zha Fuxi 查阜西 and his colleagues, scholars started employing early and ancient manuscripts as text for *dapu*. Technically, the ancient way of *dapu* is described as *anpu xunsheng 按譜尋聲*, to “follow the notation to search for the sound” (Dai 2001:35-37; Cheng 1996:20-21), while the modern way of *dapu* is regarded as a scientific and systematic process to probe some kinds of historical trueness.

The second dichotomy exists between historical and creative approaches to *dapu*. It appears more contentious than the first one, and resembles the issue of authentic performance in the early Western music movement. In general, *dapu* is regarded as both a historically informed activity and an inventive one. Defining *dapu*, *Zhongguo yinyue cidian 中國音樂辭典* [Lexicon for Chinese music] writes,

* dapu, a technical term of *guqin*, refers to the process of playing pieces according to the notation. Since *guqin* notation indicates only the finger positions and gestures rather than notating the tune directly, there is a large space for rhythmic variety. As a result, a *dapu*-ist should accustom him/herself with the ways and techniques of performing *guqin* music. He should then speculate on the content of the piece. *Dapu* is a re-creation to regain the original appearance of the piece. Most of the ancient music has ceased to be heard today, so we should regain the music by *dapu*.4 (Zhongguo 1985:62)

Resembling the practice of early music performance,5 *dapu* inherits two distinctive, if not contrasting, natures: as a re-creation (*zaichuangzao 再創造*), or “creative *dapu*”; and
simultaneously, as a practice to regain the original appearance (zaixian yuanqu benlai mianmao 再現原曲本來面貌), or “historical dapu”. A basic formula to account for the dichotomy between historical and creative dapu will begin by acknowledging the presence of the two practices, and hail such a distinction as idiosyncratic to guqin music. In order to rescue either approach from antithesis, it will then try to discard the distinction, by showing how the historical approach guarantees the other. This paradoxical narration is obvious in many definitions of dapu: “As a special activity of music archaeology,” writes Cheng, “dapu is also an activity of artistic creation” (Cheng 1996:26).

John Thompson, an American guqin player who has spent twenty-four years in Hong Kong and completed several projects on dapu, is among the most unambiguous in advocating “historically-informed performance” (HIP) in dapu. He defines HIP as “a performance done in accordance with the historical records of how it was performed at some time in the past” (Thompson 2001). He further explains:

My aim has been to reconstruct what those note values might have been, and play the melodies as they might have been played at the time they were written down. ... Some of these early melodies have survived into the modern repertoire, albeit much changed; others disappeared centuries ago. Efforts to determine how they might originally have been played parallel efforts to reconstruct Western medieval and renaissance music. The latter was also written down, but much information was left out; for centuries it was rarely played, and when played it was in a style contemporary with that of the performers. ... The materials available for the reconstruction of early qin music are comparable to those for early Western music. A careful analysis and rendering of these qin materials produces music that, to the trained ear, is quite different from qin music played according to the style of today. Early Western music as heard today is the result of the work of thousands of scholars and performers. A comparable effort with the materials for early qin music could produce qin players capable of creative performances in styles which would allow a similar level of confidence that these might truly be sounds bequeathed to us from our distant ancestors. (Thompson 2001)

In practice, Thompson is quite discontent with the careless treatment by other dapu-ists in terms of pitch and the material of the strings. (I will return to this issue below. Actually this is where he tries to distinguish between “accuracy” and “authenticity”; he insists that the practices of some dapu-ists are imprecise rather than inauthentic; see Thompson 2001.) Concerning the decision of the pitch of the third degree of a scale, he writes, “early Ming or pre-Ming HIP requires the inclusion of the altered thirds; changing them to the standard pentatonic third is a late Ming or Qing qin style (ibid.). Thompson shows explicitly his incongruence with Yung on the definition of dapu. Quoting Yung’s opinion that “the old tablature should be seen only as a source for creating new music, and that any attempt to use it to reconstruct old music or an old style is both futile and in violation of qin tradition,” he comments that “this opinion of his seems to conflict with some of the evidence put
forward in his own writings" (Thompson 2001). In short, he believes that *dapu* should be regarded more as a historical activity than as a creative activity as Yung suggests.8

Despite Thompson’s criticism, his conception of *dapu* as a historical approach is paradoxically quite in line with most of the *dapu*-ists. Yao Bingyan 姚丙炎, a *guqin* player famed for his effort on *dapu*, pointed out that *dapu*-ists should "try their best to avoid subjectivity, and be loyal to the original notation"9 (Yao 1981:28). This concept of *zhongyu yuanpu* 忠於原譜 (loyal to the original notation) gives rise to *guqin*'s crucial position in the sub-discipline of music archaeology (*yinyue kaoguxue* 音樂考古學). Lin Youren 林友仁, a Shanghai *guqin* player, put forth the issue in an essay "qinyue kaogu gouxian" 琴樂考古構想 [Thoughts on archaeology of *guqin* music] (Lin 1985:7-15). In his opinion, *qinyue kaogu* 琴樂考古 [archaeology of *guqin* music] is a better term for *dapu*, because "*dapu* differs significantly from composition, … it is an artistic activity with a research nature and regulations"10 (ibid.:8). Then he tries to theorize the practices of *dapu* in terms of its aesthetics, procedure, finger techniques, tuning systems, and etc. As he puts it, his aim is to "change the traditional sense of *dapu* from an unconscious artistic activity, to an activity with both consciousness and unconsciousness, … to upgrade *dapu* as a systematic theory"11 (ibid.:7). In that sense, to understand *dapu* as music archaeology, an authentic musical "original" is assumed and is waiting to be restored to its pristine condition. As I will point out in the last section of this chapter, in order to stress the archaeological function of the historical *dapu*, *dapu*-ists are also deliberate in delimiting and distinguishing between the historical and the creative approach.

**The Power of Silk String**

Being classified as a "silk instrument" in the ancient *bayin* 八音 classification,12 *guqin*'s strings have been made of silk throughout its history. Documentations on the production of silk strings is plentiful. Huihuitang 回回堂 in Hangzhou, for instance, was famed in the Ming dynasty as a string production firm, whose product *bingxian* 冰弦 [ice string] was regarded as the most precious silk string brand and was reserved for imperial usage. Yet, the quality of silk strings has started to decline since the late Qing dynasty. Not until the seventies, when the *guqin* master Wu Jinglue 吳景略 started to produce metal strings, had silk been replaced by metal (wrapped with nylon) to increase the volume and erase the stylistic noise, as an attempt to modernize Chinese musical instruments.13 Today, while silk-string playing no longer exists in Mainland China (though there are recent revival movements), a majority of Hong Kong and Taiwan *guqin* players are still playing with silk-stringed *guqin*. Actually, silk strings found a new
champion in Hong Kong and Taiwan guqin players, who are very proud of being tradition-
guardians. Having been experimenting with the production of silk string for many years,
Wong Shu-chi 黃樹志, a Hong Kong guqin player, studies and publishes extensively on
guqin strings. Naming the string as Taigu qinxian 太古琴弦, the production of strings was
seen as an important act to continue the silk tradition.14

Another advocate of silk strings, John Thompson performs extensively with a silk-string
guqin, including all the pieces in his CD Music Beyond Sound. Silk strings also play an
important role in Thompson’s rhetoric of historically informed performance; using a silk
guqin is being compared with the use of period Western music instruments. Emphasizing
the use of silk strings in his presentation of historically informed performance, the silk-
stringed guqin is seen as an embodiment of traditional and authentic sound and tone color.

Medieval Western music is most readily identifiable through the instruments used to play it.
These are all different from instruments played today. Until the Chinese Cultural
Revolution, however, the qin had been basically unchanged for at least 1500 years.
(Thompson 2001)

In short, I suggest that the issue of silk strings is more political than the question of
material, sound quality, or tone color. Silk strings provides a site for the musicians and
audiences to imagine the music they play as ancient, and the music they listen to as
authentic. It is also a persuasive instrument for musicians to claim antiquity, if not
authenticity, in their performance and practice. Unlike the metal string, the silk string
stands out as a signifier of traditional. Together with the aged instruments, reconstructed
tunes, and theoretical modal scale, the silk string enables people to imagine an ancient
world of guqin music.

Dapu in Modern China and Its Practical Uses

Xu Jian 許健 describes dapu as war (zhanyi 戰役), and until now there have been six
wars of dapu since the fifties. Although the rhetoric of describing a project or plan as a war
is a typical communist one, the word “war” still implies an enemy to fight against. But what
defines enemies can dapu have? The answer lies in the predicament of having a dumb
and unmusical music history. (I will come to this issue in the next chapter.) Xu explains his
concept clearly:

China our country has a long and colorful ancient music history. It is not a silent history. If
we can enliven the three thousand odd guqin pieces into audible musical compositions, it
will provide plenty of examples and details for research. ... After [the dapu of Guanlingsan],
Chinese music history has this famous piece as a musical example. (Xu 1993:339-
40)15

Xu shares a widespread apprehension among Chinese music historians of having a silent,
dumb, and unmusical music history. To solve this problem, *dapu* seems to be a good warrior to fight the war against a silent music history. According to Xu (1993:340-42), there are six “wars”: first, the *dapu* of *Guanlingsan* 廣陵散; second, the *dapu* of *Jieshidiao youlan* 碣石調幽蘭 (known also as *Youlan* 幽蘭),16 in around 1956; third, the *dapu* of *Hujia shibapai* 胡笳十八拍; fourth, the pieces attributed to Xi Kang 嵇康 (223-63) and Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-63), including Changqing 長清, Duanqing 短清, Changze 長側, Duanze 短側, Jiukuang 酒狂, and so forth; fifth, the second *dapu* conference in Beijing; and finally, the third *dapu* conference in Yangzhou 揚州.

Besides the obvious eagerness of using reconstructed pieces to compensate for an unmusical music history, *dapu* is also believed to have further practical uses. Reviewing the achievement on *guqin* research of the last forty-years, Xu points out that *dapu* can benefit composers to compose musical works with Chinese national characteristics:

The outcome of the research [of *dapu*] is undoubtedly essential materials for Chinese music history, but that is not all. Composers aiming at writing musical works with Chinese national characteristics need to borrow materials from *guqin* music.17[17] (Xu 1993:344) Similar opinion is echoed elsewhere and presented in a more sensational manner.

Let’s imagine, if we can revive the sound of hundreds of *guqin* pieces, how much it can benefit the development of Chinese music, the research on Chinese music theory, and even the nationalist composers who employs native devices, by providing them with plentiful nutrients and energy! (Dai 2001:35)18

The theories of *dapu* are further elaborated by Wu Wenguang 吳文光, the son of Wu Jinglue 吳景略 (1907-1987), a master of the *yushan* 虞山 school. Both Wus are respected *guqin* players and scholars in the Mainland China. In an essay discussing the nature of *dapu* read at the fourth *dapu* conference in 2001, he showed an eagerness to justify *dapu*, and *guqin* music activity at large, as a practical and meaningful activity in the modern world. *Dapu* is useful because, according to him, it can help in constructing a database of Chinese music historical symbols, to aid new composition, rearrangement and so forth. I summarize the long paragraphs as follow.

The *guqin*, a seven-stringed zither, is China’s oldest stringed instrument, with a history of some 3000 years. Chinese music has a long history, and its essence is best expressed on the *guqin*. In Imperial China, a well educated scholar was expected to be skilled in four arts:

1. **Qin** (the *guqin*),
2. **Qi** (the game of Go),
3. **Shu** (calligraphy),
4. **Hua** (painting).
Historically, the guqin has been viewed as a symbol of Chinese high culture and the instrument most expressive of the essence of Chinese music. More than 100 harmonics can be played on the guqin, which probably is the largest number of harmonics of any instrument. The guqin has its own notation, which itself has a history of at least 1500 years. There are over 150 guqin handbooks in existence, which contain in excess of 3,000 pieces of music as well as essays on the theoretical aspects of the guqin and its music.

The U.S. spaceship ”Voyager” was launched in 1977, a gold CD was placed on board to introduce the music of our planet to the rest of the universe. the guqin piece “Flowing water” was included as one representative of the world’s music.

Undoubtedly, the guqin is a part of our world’s heritage, but today fewer than two thousand people can play it, and it is rarely seen in China. Music that was written over a period of many centuries is unknown to most people.

In Chinese, ”gu” means old and qin means ”musical instrument”. Historically, guqin was rendered as ”Qin” in most ancient texts. Because its long history, it has during the last 100 years been widely called guqin.

There is much symbology surrounding the instrument. For example, it measures 3’ 6.5” (Chinese feet and inches), to symbolise the 365 days of the year; the upper surface is rounded, representing the sky, the bottom is flat and represents the earth. The five strings of the earliest qins symbolise the five elements: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. When Bo Yikao, son of King Wen, first ruler of the Zhou Dynasty around the 11th century BC, died the Emperor added a sixth string to mourn his son; the sound of the sixth string is sorrowful. The seventh string was added by the second Zhou ruler, King Wu to inspire his soldiers when his country went to war; the sound of this string is very strong. Finally, the 13 mother-of-pearl inlays along the outer edge represent the 13 months of the lunar year.

Throughout Chinese history, every scholar learns and strives to excel in four art forms: music, board game, calligraphy and painting. Fine points of these arts are taught as part of one’s formal education; and skills in these arts are diligently honed and improved upon all one’s life. We often see these arts illustrated and mentioned in paintings and poems.
• **Music**
  The music instrument which one learns to play is a 5 or 7-string guitar called a zither or *guqin*. The *guqin* is a seven-stringed plucked instrument. Its body is a long wooden sound box. Two sound-holes, which are called "Fengzhao" and "Longchi" can be found at the bottom. Guqin is played by plucking and pressing the strings with the right hand and left hand respectively. Rich and colorful quiet sound. In the past, it was frequently used for accompaniment. With a long history of development, the playing of this instrument has become a distinctive performing art. The guqin is played while resting on the table. This painting shows a man playing the zither. The zither is clearly visible.

This illustration is reproduced from a book *Poetry of WangWei*. The text of the poem with its English translation are shown also.

王維 竹里館

獨坐幽篁裡
彈琴復長嘯
深林人不知
明月來相照

Bamboo Adobe by WangWei
I sit along in the dark bamboo grove,
Playing the zither and whistling long.
In this deep wood no one would know -
Only the bright moon comes to shine.

tr. Liu Wu-chi

[ Read about more poems by WangWei ]

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• **Qi - Chess Game - WeiChi (Go) [WeiQi]**
  WeiChi [WeiQi], commonly referred to in the Western literature by its Japanese name of Go, is the ultimate two-person board game.

discusses more about WeiChi than you will probably ever need to know.

Mysteries of WeiQi  King's Golden Rules

Weiqi board White Glaze Weiqi Board: the earliest one of its kind in China, Sui Dynasty (581 - 618), unearthed in Anyang City.
The *pipa* is a four stringed lute with a pear-shaped body. Its short, bent neck has 30 frets which extend onto the soundboard, offering a wide range (3.5 octavos). This instrument appears in texts dating up to the second century B.C. There are a lot of written texts of the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD) about pipa music played and the stories that inspired the composition for those pipa pieces. Since the Tang
Dynasty (618-907), the pipa is one of the most popular Chinese instruments, and has maintained its appeal in solo as well as chamber genres. The pipa technique is characterised by spectacular finger dexterity and virtuosi programmatic effects. Rolls, slaps, pizzicato, harmonics and noises are often combined into extensive tone poems vividly describing famous battles or other exciting scenes. The instrument is also capable of more lyrical effects in pieces inspired by poetry, landscapes and historical themes. Pipa music has been loved by Chinese people through centuries and there used to be a large repertoire of pipa music, a lot of them were lost, and some of them were handed down from generation to generation through individual artists and scholars. (more about pipa)