
Property of the State, Prisoners of Music: Identity of the Song Drama Players and Their Roles in the *Washi* Pleasure Precincts

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This paper responds to the widely accepted yet overly simplistic assumption in Song drama studies that the drama players were ordinary people, who were liberated from agricultural activities because of the economic and commercial boom from the ninth century onward, and acted of their own will to choose drama performance as their means of making profit. Based on an in-depth investigation of the long history of the musician household registration system from the early medieval to late imperial periods, this paper proves that the majority of the *goulan* drama players belonged to the musician households, were trained by and for the government, and had little freedom to change their identity. It also further reveals how the Song court and its civil and military bureaus controlled and used the entertainers in the pleasure precincts, deliberately established in the capital and other cities, to facilitate wine selling and other government-owned profitable enterprises.

Keywords: Theater, pleasure precinct, musician household, Court Entertainment Bureau, contracting.

As a tradition that may be traced to *baixi* 百戲 (the hundred games) performances in the Han (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), Chinese *zaju* 雜劇 (miscellaneous plays) performance achieved its maturity during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) periods, especially following the emergence of theaters called *goulan* 勾欄 (hooked-fence), a term evidently associated with the wooden-framed structures in which they were performed. Scholars tend to believe that the emergence of the *goulan* theater indicates a new stage in the development of traditional Chinese drama, during which the actors were liberated from their agricultural obligations by the unprecedented, rapid urbanization and commercial boom. They believe that the players were now free to chase the monetary rewards of performing dramas to satisfy the needs of the *washi* 瓦市 (tile-roofed market) pleasure precincts in large and small urban centers.¹ For this reason, the *goulan* theaters are also defined as “commercial theaters,”² a term denoting a free-market-oriented social and economic enterprise for dramatic production comparable to modern commercial societies. Some scholars even argue that because of the quickly increasing urbanization during the Song and Yuan periods, professional dramatic groups consisting of people from different walks of life, such as the script writing clubs, were also formed for the purpose of enhancing the popularity of dramatic performance with inclusive activities in order to attract broader audiences and increase their monetary gains. According to this line of argument, both drama performers and play writers had the needs of the audience in mind. This attention to satisfying the consumers’ needs and interests inevitably led to the commercialization of Chinese drama in various aspects (performance locales and crowd-pleasing themes, for instance) as well as to keen competition among performers and

1 For the discussion of the economy, agriculture, urbanization, population, trade, as well as technology of the Song and Yuan periods, see Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West, *Chinese Theater, 1100–1450: A Source Book* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), 6–9; for a more recent sketch of Southern Song urban development, see Michael A. Fuller and Shuen-fu Lin, “North and South: the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol.1, *To 1375*, ed. Kang-I Sun and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 533–34.

2 Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 9; Liao Ben 廖奔 and Liu Yanjun 劉彥君, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhanshi (di yi juan)* 中國戲曲發展史 (第一卷) (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 394–403.

writers occurring both in and out of the *goulan* theaters. In other words, pursuing profit was the primary force drawing people to the dramatic profession of dramatic performance, and they now acted on their own free wills when deciding what, where, and for whom to perform.³

To associate the development of pre-*goulan* Song and Yuan drama performance with its contemporary economic flourishing and commercial boom is not necessarily wrong, for an economic and commercial boom did provide the backdrop for the development of the Song and Yuan drama. But Song and Yuan drama players did not necessarily act freely in choosing this profession. In fact, questions remain as to what extent the Song and Yuan drama performers could have enjoyed their freedom and how closely their choices were tied to the purpose of profit making.

To clarify the characteristics of theater during this era, one can explore such questions as who those performers were, how they were trained, and who set up the *goulan* theaters. The answers to these queries reveal a far more complicated picture of the identity of the Song dramatic performers as well as their relationship with the government and to the economy in general. If we read the evidence carefully, it contradicts the above mentioned generalization that pictures the Song musicians as free men and women driven by economic need to choose a profitable profession and work for the immediate needs of the pleasure precincts by self-training. The facts even point to the opposite conclusion: the majority of those actors and actresses, as a lowly designated social class under government control, could not act freely; instead of being willing to perform in the pleasure precincts, they performed on command; their performance was indeed related to profit making, but it was organized by governmental bureaus and the actors and actresses—very often family-based, registered musicians—performed under duress on stages provided by the government. This is to say that a fair number, if not all, of the Song drama performers were slaves of the state.

3 E.g., Zhang Daxin 張大新, “Song Jin ducheng shangye wenhua de gaozhang yu gudian xiqu zhi chengshu” 宋金都城商業文化的高漲與古典戲曲之成熟, *Dalian daxue xuebao* 25.5 (2004): 50–54, and Du Guiping 杜桂萍, “Lun Yuan zaju yu goulan wenhua” 論元雜劇與勾欄文化, *Xuexi yu tansuo* 140 (2002.3): 95–101.

These two distinctly different conclusions as to the lived lives of Song performers derive not from different sources of evidence, but from the different ways that known facts are interpreted. A few interpretational pitfalls, as highlighted in the following examples, are involved in the assumption that Song drama players acted of their own free will to choose their professions in responding to the need of the urban pleasure precincts. These pitfalls can be caused by the misinterpretation of archaeological data related to drama performance, by mistaking literary sources as historical evidence, by intentionally or unintentionally neglecting the scattered nature of the source materials, and by misinterpreting textual materials in which dramatic settings or performance are described. Although all these sorts of misusing materials deserve detailed discussion, in the remaining part of this section, I will only briefly examine the causes of the pitfalls, while focusing on two examples closely related to the major issues discussed in this article.

The issue of misinterpreting archaeological data related to drama performance follows the availability of new materials provided by recent archaeological discoveries.⁴ Nevertheless, these discoveries must be primarily viewed in accordance with their corresponding burial conventions, religious practices, and geographical distribution;⁵ their connection with drama performance ought to be extrapolated on the basis of their archaeological context. Such an approach ensures an understanding of the burial motifs under broader cultural or religious backdrops instead of making the hasty conclusion that those motifs directly reflect the tomb occupants' actual life, an influential assumption widely shared in the field nowadays.⁶ It holds that, since those

4 For recent discoveries related to Song and Yuan drama performance and well as the studies they have inspired, see Feng Junjie 馮俊傑, *Shanxi shenmiao juchang kao* 山西神廟劇場考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006); Liao Ben and Liu Yanjun, *Zhongguo xiqu*; Liao Ben, *Song Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu* 宋元戲曲文物與民俗 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1989).

5 This is especially necessary when we consider that most of the drama-related archaeological materials are from tombs or temples located in Henan and Shanxi provinces. While this is obviously an interesting question that deserves further exploration, it is not the focus of this article.

6 For example, see Tanaka Issei 田仲一成, *Zhongguo xiju shi* 中國戲劇史 (Chūgoku engekishi 中國演劇史), trans. Yun Guishan 雲貴杉 and Yu Yun 于允 (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan chubanshe, 2002), 123–26.

dramatic images and scenes faithfully represent the tomb occupants' real life style, the depicted figures and dramatic roles can thus be easily dated or, in some cases, even identified based on relevant information, transmitted or excavated.⁷

This line of argument is nonetheless questionable. The creation of those tomb decorations, for example, may have aimed not to represent the real life of the dead but merely to express the wish of the living, a custom common in Chinese burial culture from very early on. Nor do the depicted figures necessarily reflect the form of contemporary dramatic performance, for the transmission of craftsmanship observes its own path, is typically highly formulaic, and does not necessarily acknowledge the actual stylistic developments in the performing arts of its day. This contention is further supported by evidence that reveals the mass-production nature of those decorations in the archaeological data.⁸ The similar tomb structures and decorations related to the dramatic art of those tombs also support the above inference, indicating that depicting dramatic scenes belongs more to a sort of trendy burial practice than a means of representing a specific historical moment at which the tomb occupants were enjoying dramatic performance.

Another pitfall, the misuse of literary sources as historical evidence, often occurs in the interpretation of relevant information from some dramatic writings. In the study of early Chinese dramas, such dramatic works as the lyrical suite “Zhuangjia bushi goulán” 莊家不識勾欄 (A Country Bumpkin Knows Naught of the Theater), the “Huanmen zidi cuolishen” 宦門子弟錯立身 (A Playboy from a Noble House Opts for the Wrong Career), and the “Lan Caihe” 藍采和 are among the most quoted, especially in regard to the form, structure, and operation of early Chinese theater. A classical example of this sort is Liao Ben's unavailing search for the historical Liangyuan Theater (Liangyuan peng 梁園棚) based on dramatic writings and other literary sources.⁹ In relying on these—often contradictory—descriptions to reconstruct

7 For example, see Xu Pingfang 徐蘋芳, “Songdai de zaju diaozhuan” 宋代的雜劇雕磚, *Wenwu* 1960.5: 40–42; Liao Ben, *Song Yuan xiqu wenwu*, 139–40.

8 Liao Ben, *Song Yuan xiqu wenwu*, 142.

9 Liao Ben, *Zhongguo gudai juchang shi* 中國古代劇場史 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1997), 48.

early Chinese dramatic theater, however, we must bear in mind that, far from presenting historical information, these literary pieces focus on specificity of style and manner of expression, valuing expressive nuances rather than factual clarity. Even if some of the descriptions seem to relate to particular historical events or actual places, they cannot be taken literally. More often than not, those events or locations serve as literary devices to provide settings for the unfolding of a story, but the story itself is not necessarily embedded in those historical settings.¹⁰

Failing to consider the piecemeal nature of the available data in interpretation is another pitfall that characterizes the analysis leading to the conclusion that common people in the Tang and Song acted of their own will to choose drama performance as their means of making profit. Interspersed in different contexts (official history, miscellaneous notes, and dramatic or fictional writings, for instance), and dated to different periods of time, these data usually do not address the overall picture of the historical and cultural development of Chinese drama, nor do they focus on the implications of modes of dramatic performance per se. When selecting an element of information from its original context and translating it into a new paradigm, it is necessary to distinguish these different historical and even cultural moments first and then examine whether the information makes sense in the new context while retaining its original integrity.

Take, for example, the records on “contracting” (*gu* 顧) musicians in the era of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). In an entry providing a list of musicians assigned to the Court Entertainment Bureau (*Jiaofang* 教坊) during the years of Qiandao 乾道 (1165–1173) and Chunxi 淳熙 (1174–1189), there appears a term *hegu* 和顧, which is interpreted as “employment based on

10 Stephen West nicely puts it this way: “[W]e would be mistaken to accept these terms [some specialized dramatic terms mentioned previously by West] simply as names given to an object or place. Contextualized by utility and function, they are not only a way of describing the everyday activities of life, but also a tool for creating a resistant, alternate society and alternate historicity.” See Stephen West, “The Emperor Sets the Pace: Court and Consumption in the Eastern Capital of the Northern Song During the Reign of Huizong,” in *Selected Essays on Court Culture in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Lin Yao-fu (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1999), 27.

agreement,” an indication that the Southern Song Court Entertainment Bureau contracted drama players, among other musicians, for events sponsored by the court.¹¹ The Song source itself does not clarify what this term really meant. Yet even if this term indeed denoted a hiring policy based on consensual contract, in its early Tang context this term often indicates that the contract or agreement was violated instead of obeyed. In other words, there was no true sense of agreement, since the included parties were not equally restricted by the terms and conditions that should be observed by all, the premise of a fair contract. Moreover, such violations often occurred between the government, the dominant party, and the common people (in this case, the drama players), the powerless group. For example, the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 says that Pei Yanling 裴延齡 (728–796), an official favored by the Emperor for his “talents” in collecting money for the emperor, was in charge of taxes; he seized goods from the markets “in the name of requisition by prescript without paying what they were worth” 以敕索為名而不酬其直 and forced people to work for the government “in the name of employment on the basis of agreement without compensating them for their labor” 以和雇為稱而不償其傭.¹² Based on this evidence, a misinterpretation of *hegu* as a contract backed by law leads to the erroneous conclusion that in the years of Qiandao and Chunxi, the contracted independent, professional musicians from the public theater outnumbered those affiliated with the Court Entertainment Bureau, so that the majority of entertainers “enjoyed free intercourse between the palace and the public world.”¹³ Moreover, whether or not the term *hegu* indeed refers to any hiring

11 The term is preserved in a Song *biji* 筆記 (miscellaneous writing) work. See Li Xiaolong 李小龍 and Zhao Rui 趙銳, eds. and annot., *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 109–19.

12 *Jiu Tangshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 135.2531; for a similar usage of this term, also see Li Tao 李燾, Shanghai shifan daxue guji zhengli yanjiusuo 上海師範大學古籍整理研究所, and Huadong shifan daxue guji zhengli yanjiushi 華東師範大學古籍整理研究室, eds., *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 9666.

13 Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 103–4; also see Zhang Li 張麗, “Songdai jiaofang yuedui de yange jiqi lishi wenhua tezheng” 宋代教坊樂隊的沿革及其歷史文化特徵, *Yinyue yanjiu* 2002.1: 65–71; Kang Ruijun 康瑞軍, “Hegu zhidu jiqi zai Songdai gongting yinyue zhong de zuoyong” 和雇制度及其在宋代宮廷音樂中的作用, *Yinye yishu* 2007.2: 79–88; Sun Minji 孫民紀, *Youling kaoshu* 優伶考述 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1999), 111.

process still remains debatable. For example, Li Xiaolong and Zhao Rui equate the term *hegu* 和顧 with *hegu* 和鼓, meaning to “harmonize the drum beats,” with totally different significance.¹⁴

The last pitfall results from misusing textual materials related to early dramatic studies without necessary scrutiny into the nature of those sources. The most oft-cited materials in the study of the dramas come from a few *biji* texts written in a retrospective, noticeably nostalgic tone about city life in the two Song (960–1127) capitals, as well as other anecdotal sources. It is true that these materials can be used suggestively, but because of their anecdotal nature as well as the affective response they provoke, they must be carefully navigated to reveal any social and political connotation they possibly convey. In other words, these materials cannot be directly used as objective sources. The danger of ignoring this warning when using these materials is that such misuse easily slides the argument into either free interpretation or the cherry-picking fallacy.

For example, in the *Xihulaoren fanshenglu* 西湖老人繁勝錄, the author mentions Xiao Zhang Silang 小張四郎 (Little Zhang Silang), a storyteller working in a *goulan* structure located in the Northern Pleasure Precinct of Lin'an 臨安 (modern Hangzhou 杭州), the capital city of the Southern Song dynasty, for so many years that people even referred to that *goulan* structure by his name.¹⁵ That the name “Xiao Zhang Silang” refers to that theatrical building, however, does not prove ownership.¹⁶ The overreading of the original text not only misrepresents this piece of literature that introduces famous storytellers, actors, and actresses in the thirteen *goulan* structures of the Northern Pleasure Precinct, but also misleads readers by tailoring the original information to fit an ill-defined topic. The *Xihulaoren fanshenglu* states that this storyteller “through his life had only occupied one single *goulan* stage in the Northern Pleasure Precinct telling stories and had never gone to other

14 Li Xiaolong and Zhao Rui, *Wulin jiushi*, 111.

15 Xihulaoren 西湖老人, *Xihulaoren fanshenglu*, in *Dongjing meng hua lu (wai si zhong)* 東京夢華錄 (外四種), Meng Yuanlao 孟元老 et al. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 123.

16 For an extreme example, see Du Guiping, 95–96. On the basis of such interpretation, this author goes even further to consider that all the Song *goulan* theaters were individually owned.

pleasure precincts to perform” 一世只在北瓦佔一座勾欄說話，不曾去別瓦作場 and this is why that stage was referred to by his name.¹⁷ Read between the lines, this passage suggests, in opposition to the above mentioned misreading, that Xiao Zhang Silang was not the owner of any *goulan* at all. The uniqueness of Xiao Zhang Silang’s success in working as a storyteller in a single quarter without moving around to find another territory during his life rather suggests that, for the majority of the Song storytellers, it would be difficult to survive if one performed in a single place without moving to another. Such constant relocation seems to negate the possibility that these performers could be the owners of their own *goulan* stages. The unique nature of Xiao Zhang Silang’s case lies in his skills and fame that enabled him to attract enough fans to make a living on a fixed stage only in one pleasure precinct. Performing on a single *goulan* stage over a long period is undoubtedly different from possessing that *goulan* property. Moreover, the character *zhan* 佔 (to occupy) in the above passage does not mean obtaining the ownership of the *goulan* structure at all; rather, it means that Xiao Zhang Silang’s skills and fame privileged him to use that specific *goulan* structure.

One of the recent trends in Song drama studies, as seen in Stephen West’s recent works, is to reconstruct the urban settings in which the Song court life interacted with the life of common people, and entertainment and entertainers played an important role in such interaction.¹⁸ Who those entertainers were and how entertainment carried out its role in Song urban

17 Xihulaoren, *Xihulaoren fansheng lu*, 123.

18 For example, see his “The Emperor Sets the Pace: Court and Consumption in the Eastern Capital of the Northern Song During the Reign of Huizong;” “Recollections of the Northern Song Capital,” in *Hawai‘i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, ed. Victor Mair, Nancy Steinhardt, and Paul Goldin (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005); “Huanghou, zangli, youbing yu zhu: Dongjing meng hua lu yu dushi wenxue de xingqi” 皇后、葬禮、油餅與豬——《東京夢華錄》和都市文學的興起 (Empresses and funerals, pancakes and pigs: Dreaming a Dream of Splendors Past and the origins of urban literature), in *Wenxue, wenhua, yu shibian* 文學、文化與世變 (Literature, culture, and world change), ed. Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2002), 197–218; and “Spectacle, Ritual, and Social Relations: The Son of Heaven, Citizens, and Created Space in Imperial Gardens in the Northern Song,” in *Baroque Garden Cultures: Emulation, Sublimation, Subversion*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 291–321.

social life are undoubtedly worth exploring in this context. In an effort to avoid the traps of the abovementioned fallacies by clearly identifying and meaningfully contextualizing available materials, this article will explore the identity of particular drama players by examining the registration system of musician households (*yuehu* 樂戶), and determine the institutional function of the Entertainment Bureau during the Tang and Song periods. Furthermore, it will investigate the ownership of the *goulan* theaters in those urban pleasure precincts in light of the governmental as well as military entrepreneurial operation in such obscure places as wine storehouses during the Tang and Song dynasties. The results of these investigations, reaching beyond Song dramatic performance, will reveal the formation of the musician household group, whose history was evidently maintained in imperial China at least from the Northern Wei 北魏 dynasty (386–557) onward.

The Birth of *Yuehu* and the Perpetuation of *Jiaofang*

In a broad sense, *zaju* drama players belonged to the category of entertainer, and their textual history may be traced to the *Zuozhuan*, in which they are described as musicians, jesters, or both.¹⁹ But the identity of the *zaju* drama players is more related to the registration system of musician households that started at latest from the Northern Wei 北魏 (534–550) period, an institution that had exerted tremendous influence on later dynasties before it was abandoned during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (1722–1735) of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). This system had defined, institutionalized, and perpetuated musician households and their social status for more than a millennium. It is no surprise that when this system was passed down to the Tang and Song dynasties, it also defined the *zaju* drama players.

To understand the Musician Household registration system, it is necessary to review its initial form in the Northern Wei dynastic history *Weishu* 魏書. The

19 Wang Guowei 王國維 holds that the Song and Yuan *zaju* drama might have germinated in an ancient shamanistic (*wu* 巫) tradition, but its direct, noticeable ancestors should be the *you* 優 (entertainer) groups. See Wang Guowei, *Song Yuan xiqu shi* 宋元戲曲史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 1–4.

setup of Musician Household registration is virtually associated with punishment of families (often times extended to the whole lineage) as sentenced culprits. For example:

When the capital city was moved to Ye, multitudinous bandits rose in the capital region. Some officials submitted a memorial to the throne, suggesting that harsher rules be established: those bandits who committed homicide, whether leaders or followers, would be beheaded, while their wives and children, put in the same household register, would be assigned [by way of demotion] to musician households; for those who did not commit homicide and whose booty did not exceed five bolts of cloth,²⁰ the leaders would be beheaded, and the followers be executed [by other means], whereas their wives and children would also be made members of musician households; for minor bandits whose booty did not surpass ten bolts, the leaders would be executed, and their wives and children would be assigned [as bondservants] to post houses, whereas the followers of the said bandits would be exiled.

至遷鄴，京畿群盜頗起。有司奏立嚴制：諸強盜殺人者首從皆斬，妻子同籍配為樂戶；其不殺人及贓不滿五匹，魁首斬，從者死，妻子亦為樂戶；小盜贓滿十匹已上，魁首死，妻子配驛，從者流。²¹

The fact that the capital city was moved to Ye in 534 indicates that this memorial was presented to the emperor at a time the Northern Wei was divided into two virtually coexistent polities: Eastern Wei 東魏 (534–550) and Western Wei 西魏 (535–556). Although the above “harsh rules” put forward by the Eastern Wei officials had never been enforced in reality, the wives and children of sentenced culprits were registered within a different category from the commoners prior to Eastern Wei, according to the passage above. If we consider that the registration system of musician households could not have been formed

²⁰ I suspect the number of bolts used to measure crimes of both the leaders and followers of the bandits to be larger than ten, for the according punishment is more severe than for the “minor bandits.” The context of this passage suggests that it is very possible that the character *shi* 十 (ten) after *wu* 五 (five) had been left out during the transmission of this passage.

²¹ *Weishu* (Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 111.2888.

overnight, we can reasonably estimate that such legal codes should have been in existence at least from the Northern Wei period onward.²² Registering the bandits' family members as musician households, based on the abovementioned "harsh rules," was ranked as one of the most severe punishments possible. This fact correspondingly indicates the low social status of those musician households. If we consider that the punishment for the least severe crime listed in the above passage is to abandon the culprits' wives and children to the post houses where they would serve as free laborers for the state, the situation of those registered as musician households must have been even worse.

This household registration system for musicians had been fairly consistently passed down through the following dynasties until the Qing, except during interims of chaos when the regular operation of the state was interrupted. How and when the musician household registration system was created is far from clear, but the extant materials suggest that it is possible that, if not all, a considerable number of musician households belonged to the relatives and their descendants of the criminals. Based on the above *Weishu* passage, the punishment of so registering the culprits' wives and children most probably amounted to a total loss of freedom. In other words, the relatives of the culprits became property of the state under the law. Tangible evidence is scarce as to whether or not those musician households, as the property of state, could be traded and, if they could, what policies would be enacted, but extant information does reveal the possibility that these individuals were controlled by the government differently from the rest of the registered population and, when it became necessary, could be given out as gifts. In the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (Writings on the Luoyang Buddhist Temples), a nostalgic work on the abandoned Northern Wei capital city, Luoyang, the author mentions two wards (*fang* 坊) clearly associated with musicians.²³ Considering the form of the Northern Wei Luoyang as a strategically planned, walled capital city strictly controlled by the government in such a way as to divide the city into walled wards and impose a curfew at night, it is reasonable to surmise

22 Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Jiuchao lü kao* 九朝律考, *Minguo congshu* 民國叢書 ser. 1, vol. 28 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989), 38.

23 Yang Xuanzhi 楊銜之, *Luoyang qielan ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 203.

that the musicians filling in the two wards mentioned in the *Luoyang qielan ji* were likely controlled by the government.²⁴ A record in the *Sanchao beimeng huibian* 三朝北盟會編 (Compiled records of covenanting with the north during the reigns of three emperors—Huizong 徽宗 [r. 1100–1126], Qinzong 欽宗 [r. 1126–1127], and Gaozong 高宗 [r. 1127–1162]—of the Song) says that in A.D. 1127, the year the two Northern Song emperors were captured by the Jurchens and, as a result, the Northern Song dynasty ended, hundreds of sing-song girls, drama players, and other kinds of entertainers were presented to the Jin 金 (1115–1234) court as ransom to meet their officially sanctioned demands. Although this record reflects a chaotic moment in Song history, it nevertheless provides clues indicating the low social status of those entertainers and the power that the government had over them.²⁵

In comparison with the opaqueness surrounding the question of which governmental department was in charge of the musician households in the Northern Wei dynasty, the *Suishu* 隋書 leaves unambiguous documentation that after the unification of China, all the musicians who remained from the previous polities were registered as musician households and were subject to the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichangsi* 太常寺):

Having figured out the Emperor's will, Pei Yun submitted a memorial to the throne, suggesting that all the male members of the musician households from the states of Zhou, Qi, Liang, and Chen be assigned as musician households. Among those in the sixth rank and below all the way down to commoners, those who were good at performing music and *baixi* (the hundred games) would all be affiliated with the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. Thereafter, those capable of strange techniques and making extravagant music were all placed under the Music Bureau; for each of these activities,

24 For the Northern Wei capital city (Luoyang) planning, see Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 82–88. For the political and social change after the relocation of the capital city to Luoyang, see Lu Yaodong 逯耀東, *Cong Pingcheng dao Luoyang: Tuoba Wei wenhua zhuanbian de licheng* 從平城到洛陽: 拓跋魏文化轉變的歷程 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006).

25 Xu Mengshen 徐夢莘, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Haitian shuju, 1939), 208–9; for an English translation of related passages, see Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 84.

the positions for National Academy Students were set up so that those techniques and music could be taught and transmitted. The number of musicians increased to more than thirty thousand. Greatly pleased, the emperor promoted Yun to be vice president of the Board of Revenue.

蘊揣知帝意，奏括天下周、齊、梁、陳樂家子弟皆為樂戶。其六品以下至於民庶，有善音樂及倡優百戲者，皆直太常。是後異技淫聲咸萃樂府，皆置博士弟子，遞相教傳，增益樂人至三萬餘。帝大悅，遷民部侍郎。²⁶

This passage not only proves the continuation of the music household registration system in the Sui dynasty (581–618), but it also demonstrates that the Court of Imperial Sacrifices became the bureau in charge of both sacrificial and popular music at latest from the Sui dynasty. In the “Yinyue zhi” 音樂志 chapter, a related passage also informs us of a practice possibly echoing what we see in the aforementioned passage from the *Luoyang qielan ji*, that is, placing the musicians in certain wards of the capital city, which explains why some of the ward names were associated with music.²⁷

By and large, the early Tang dynasty inherited the Sui court musical institutions, but a noticeable change in the Tang musical institution occurred in the second year of the Kaiyuan 開元 era (713–741), when the Jiaofang, or the Court Entertainment Bureau, was established, an event symbolizing the institutional separation of popular music from sacrificial music.²⁸ One explanation for the motivation to add a new bureau in charge of part of the responsibility originally taken by the Court of Imperial Sacrifices holds that Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) acknowledged the impropriety of

26 *Suishu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 67.1574–75.

27 *Suishu*, 15:373–74. For related discussion on this and the passage on Yang Yun’s memorial to the throne, see Kishibe Shigeo 岸邊成雄, *Tangdai yinyueshi de yanjiu* 唐代音樂史的研究 (Tōdai ongaku no rekishiteki kenkyū 唐代音樂の歴史的研究), trans. Liang Zaiping 梁在平 and Huang Zhijiong 志 (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 123–29.

28 *Xin Tangshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 48.1244. The Interior Court Entertainment Bureau established by Xuanzong in the second year of Kaiyuan (618–26), however, is different from the one that was set up immediately after the years of Wude (692), which was changed into the Bureau of Natural Harmony 雲韶府 by Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705). For a discussion of the differences between the two, see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 220–30.

incorporating the two different types of music—popular and sacrificial—within a single bureau.²⁹ The operation of the two bureaus, however, could not have been completely separated from each other in practice, especially when we consider that both bureaus included *sanyue* 散樂 actors performing music, games, and crude miscellaneous plays.³⁰ Moreover, the Entertainment Bureaus dispersed throughout the empire, virtually functioning as local-level Courts of Imperial Sacrifices, were responsible for the performance of both popular and sacrificial music. Also, the Court Entertainment Bureau had never been in charge of all popular music, but merely that performed by the “entertainers and performers of miscellaneous skills” (*changyou zaji* 倡優雜技). The real reason to establish the Court Entertainment Bureau separately from the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, besides Xuanzong’s weakness for roving actors who helped him ascend the throne by defeating Empress Wei 韋,³¹ was probably due to the increased influence of popular music. Popular music was thriving both in local venues and in court, to the extent that it competed with the Court of Imperial Sacrifices’s productions. Indeed, evidence shows that at least from the Sui dynasty onwards, performance of *sanyue*, in which incipient miscellaneous plays were included, was already used to entertain foreign envoys.³²

The Jiaofang, or the Court Entertainment Bureau in charge of palatial entertainment, also refers to places extending from the capital to local administrative units, such as prefects and districts, where musicians from registered musician households worked and lived.³³ In the Tang capital city Chang’an, there were both Interior and Exterior Entertainment Bureaus (*nei*

29 *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 211.6812.

30 Kishibe, 195–97. For a definition of *sanyue*, see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 14 and Ren Bantang 任半塘, *Jiao fang ji jian ding* 教坊記箋訂 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 44–46.

31 *Xin Tangshu*, 22.474–75. Similar information also appears in the preface of the *Jiaofang ji* 教坊記; see Ren Bantang, *Jiaofang ji jian ding*, 8–9.

32 *Suishu*, 15.380–81.

33 That during Xuanzong’s reign the entertainment bureaus were set up in local prefects and districts is clearly stated in the *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄, in which it says that once Xuanzong visited Luoyang and entertainers from “the entertainment bureaus of the prefects and districts” (*fu xian Jiaofang* 府縣教坊) performed the “hundred games” for him. See Zheng Chuhui 鄭處誨, *Minghuang zalu*, in *Minghuang zalu Dongguan zouji* 明皇雜錄東觀奏記, punct. and coll. Tian Tingzhu 田廷柱, Zheng Chuhui and Pei Tingyu 裴庭裕 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 26.

wai Jiaofang 內外教坊); the Exterior Entertainment Bureau further consisted of both Left and Right Entertainment Bureaus (*zuo you Jiaofang* 左右教坊). The *Jiaofang ji* also mentions that in Tang's Eastern capital city Luoyang, two large entertainment enclosures were constructed and were also called the Left and Right Entertainment Bureaus.³⁴ According to the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, in Xuanzong's reign, there were once 11,409 musicians serving in the Chang'an Jiaofang alone.³⁵ The number of musicians serving in the local Jiaofang must also have been considerably high. According to a statistic in the twenty-eighth year of Kaiyuan (i.e., A.D. 740), there were 328 prefects and 1573 districts in the Tang domain,³⁶ even if the Entertainment Bureaus were established in only half of those prefects and counties, the number of local Jiaofang musicians was still great. Musicians also served in the army, where they were called those from "barrack households" (*yinghu* 營戶), another segment of the registered musician household community. One record indicates that before the army obtained the permission to establish a "barrack household" system in A.D. 826, they had maintained a long history of hiring musicians from the local Jiaofang.³⁷ Furthermore, popular music and entertainment were also performed in monasteries and temples during the Tang, and the performers were mostly Jiaofang musicians.³⁸

The Song entertainment bureau system, while mostly inheriting the Tang musical institution passed down through the chaotic Five Dynasties in the beginning years of the Song,³⁹ witnessed a series of reforms, which, at first glance, tended to return the responsibilities of Jiaofang to the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. This seemed to have constituted a reverse path from the Tang experience in which the functions of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices were

34 Ren Bantang, *Jiaofang ji jiating*, 14–17. For the maps of the locations of the various entertainment bureaus in Chang'an and Luoyang, see Ren Bantang, *Jiaofang ji jiating*, 196–97; for the Chang'an Jiaofang, also see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 221.

35 *Xin Tangshu*, 48.1244.

36 *Xin Tangshu*, 37.960.

37 Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 631.

38 Xiang Yang 項陽, *Shanxi yuehu yanjiu* 山西樂戶研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001), 13.

39 In the *Songshi* 宋史 it says that, "in the beginning years of the Song, the musical institution followed the previous format of setting up the Court Entertainment Bureau, which altogether included four departments." See *Songshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 142.3347.

split into two separate administrative departments. In the beginning, the Song Jiaofang was subject to the Court of Palace Attendants (*Xuanhuiyuan* 宣徽院), a remnant of the Tang institutional structure. The *Xuanhuiyuan*, however, was abolished in the ninth year of the Xining 熙寧 era (1068–1077). Shortly after that, in the early Yuanfeng 元豐 era (1078–1085), the Song Jiaofang began to be supervised by the Court of Imperial Sacrifices.⁴⁰ The Jiaofang was even eliminated from the Southern Song institutional system during its chaotic beginning.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it was restored in the fourteenth year of the Shaoxing 紹興 era (1131–1162), which again lasted merely less than two decades, and then in the second year of the Longxing 隆興 era (1163–1164) it was abandoned again and from then on had never been reinstated throughout the Southern Song dynasty.⁴²

A further review reveals, however, that the abolishment of the name of the Court Entertainment Bureau did not necessarily remove its function but merely divided the musicians into different sections and reassembled them in three different departments: in the Deshou Palace 德壽宮 as palace entertainers; in the Lin'an Prefect 臨安府 as Yamen-registered entertainers; and in the Military Band (*Junrongzhi* 鈞容直) as capital military entertainers.⁴³ Whenever needed, either to celebrate the birthdays of the imperial members or to perform in festivals sponsored by the court, entertainers would be called in from the above divisions via the newly founded Music Instruction Office (*Jiaoyuesuo* 教樂所).⁴⁴ We should also be aware that the term Jiaofang might still have been in

40 *Songshi*, 142.3358. In the same chapter it also says that the Song Jiaofang already belonged to the Taichang Court of Imperial Sacrifices even before the ninth year of Xining (1076). According to Kishibe, this is apparently a mistake. In comparison, it seems that the claim that Jiaofang was subject to the *Xuanhuiyuan* before the ninth year of the Xining era carries more weight; see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 294–96.

41 *Songshi*, 142.3359. Kishibe believes that this must have happened from the first year of Jianyan, i.e., A.D. 1127, the first year of the Southern Song dynasty; see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 296–97.

42 *Songshi*, 142.3359.

43 Hu Ji, 57,59; Zhao Sheng 趙昇, *Chao ye leiyao* 朝野類要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 30–31; Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 102–3.

44 *Songshi*, 142.3359; Wu Zimu 吳自牧, *Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄, in *Dongjing meng hua lu (wai si zhong)* 東京夢華錄 (外四種), ed. Zhou Feng 周峰 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1998), 301.

use even after it was eliminated as a governmental office. For example, in the *Wulin jiushi*, the entertainers are still listed under the Jiaofang Music Office during the Qiandao (1165–1173) and Chunxi (1174–1189) eras (*Qian[dao] Chun[xi] Jiaofang yuebu* 乾淳教坊樂部).⁴⁵ Although this does not necessarily indicate the uninterrupted contemporary presence of Jiaofang as it previously was, the continuous use of this term nevertheless reflects the similarities or even overlaps of the functions between the abolished Jiaofang musical office and the newly installed *jiaoyuesuo* in people's eyes.

In fact, evidence tends to suggest that the vicissitudes of the Court Entertainment Bureau during the Song had not deeply affected the entertainment bureau at its local or military levels. The Song dynasty, more than any previous period, witnessed the prevalent influence of Yamen-registered entertainers at the local levels. The *Songshi* records a court-sponsored banquet in 984, telling that “the musicians from the districts of Kaifeng Prefect and various military units were gathered and lined up in the imperial street” 集開封府諸縣及諸軍樂人列於御街.⁴⁶ The *Yueshu* 樂書 also states that in the Southern Song “all the military units have musicians” 諸營軍皆有樂工 and “throughout the empire, all provinces have Yamen and military musical offices to register male and female musicians” 凡天下郡國皆有牙前樂營以籍工伎焉.⁴⁷ Each of these passages, if it indeed describes the development of its musical institution in the Southern Song dynasty, suggests that the abolishment of the Jiaofang musical office did not loosen governmental control over the musicians, but most probably, did the opposite: it enhanced the efficacy of such control by dividing the Jiaofang's power into three functional units, as listed above. Indeed, a net of entertainment bureaus extended to all levels of Song institutions over nearly the entire Song domain.⁴⁸

45 See Li Xiaolong and Zhao Rui, *Wulin jiushi*, 109.

46 *Songshi*, 113.2699.

47 Chen Yang 陳暘, *Yue shu* 樂書, in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), vol. 211, *juan* 188.

48 Xiang Yang, *Shanxi yuehu yanjiu*, 16.

The Legal Formation of a Lowly Social Class

The *zaju* drama players were situated in the system described above and, during the Song, played a significant role. According to the *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝, completed around the year 1235, the “roving actors learned and taught what was included in the thirteen divisions of the Court Entertainment Bureau, yet only regarded the *zaju* division as first-rate” 散樂傳學教坊十三部，唯以雜劇為正色。⁴⁹ Here the institution of the “thirteen divisions of the Court Entertainment Bureau,” although coexisting with the Southern Song Jiaofang for only eighteen years, was developed from the Northern Song Jiaofang musical system known as the “four divisions of the Court Entertainment Bureau” (*Jiaofang sibu* 教坊四部), which, traced further, were inherited from the Tang dynasty Jiaofang system.⁵⁰ Available evidence shows that *zaju* drama performance already constituted a noticeable aspect of the Northern Song Jiaofang system. A passage in the *Menglianglu* mentions that “in the past, MengJiaoqiu, the Great Deputy of the Court Entertainment Bureau at the capital city Bianliang, was able to make *zaju* dramas and Ge Shoucheng composed the Forty Greater Melodies” 向者，汴京教坊大使孟角毬會做雜劇本子，葛守誠撰四十大曲。⁵¹ Whatever the case might be, either having a *zaju* drama maker as the Great Deputy of the Court Entertainment Bureau or having a Great Deputy of the Court Entertainment Bureau trained in the composition of *zaju* dramas, this passage conveys the message that the performance of *zaju* drama may have exerted considerable influence on Northern Song society and musical institutions.

The Song people’s inheritance and development of this dramatic tradition may be observed through the changes of some of the roles over time as well as the music and tunes that the Song *zaju* drama adopted. For example, the increasing popularity of *zaju* drama in the Song enabled the incorporation of the *canjun* 參軍 (administrator) play, which is considered the precursor of Song and Yuan *zaju* drama passed down from the Tang Jiaofang system, into the *zaju*

49 Guanpu Naideweng 灌圃耐得翁, *Ducheng jisheng*, in *Dongjing meng hua lu (wai si zhong)*, 84.

50 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 681–719, especially page 692.

51 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 301–2.

drama category and, as a result, the *canjun* as a *se* 色 (role) disappeared in late Southern Song Jiaofang organization.⁵² Moreover, the majority of the Song *zaju* dramas use the music (especially the *daqu* 大曲 and *faqu* 曲法 music) that had been transmitted from the Tang Jiaofang via the registered musicians.⁵³ Studies disclose that one hundred and three out of the two hundred eighty entries of the *zaju* dramas listed in the *Wulin Jiushi* use *daqu* music.⁵⁴ Even though the Jiaofang as an official musical institution only existed for eighteen years in the Southern Song, the function of these musical institutions inherited from the Tang did not experience dramatic change. Kishibe convincingly demonstrates that throughout the Song, the distribution ratio of players assigned to different roles basically remained unchanged relative to the Tang. The fact that there were more *bili* 篳篥 (Qiang flute) and *di* 笛 (flute) players in the Southern Song Jiaofang relates to the particular needs of *zaju* drama: a fairly large number of *zaju* musical pieces were played by *bili* and *di*, both of which belong to the *daqu* division of the Song Jiaofang system.⁵⁵

The transmission and rules of the Jiaofang system, however, define the *zaju* drama players as those who belonged to the lowest social status. Almost all the Jiaofang musicians during the Tang and Song periods came from registered musician households that belonged to the *jianmin* 賤民 (people of lowly social status) category, a specific social class that formed before the Tang dynasty, as we see in the *Weishu* passage examined earlier. The Tang *jianmin* class consisted of two different types: government owned *jianmin* (*guan jianmin* 官賤民) and privately owned *jianmin* (*si jianmin* 私賤民). Members of the former group, who were usually associated with criminal acts and consequent punishment that were either committed by themselves or their

52 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 311–14.

53 Zhang Li, “Songdai jiaofang yuedui,” 65–71. For a detailed discussion on the four divisions from the Nanzhao 南昭 through the Tang to the Song, see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 681–719.

54 Li Xiaolong and Zhao Rui, *Wulin jiushi*, 245–50; Wang Guowei, *Song Yuan qiqu*, 45–52. Wang Guowei lists in detail the music used in the Song *zaju* dramas in his work. At least more than one hundred and fifty of the listed Song *zaju* dramas use *daqu*, *qufa*, *zhugongdiao* 諸宮調, and other *ci* 詞 music styles. Among the twenty-eight kinds of music that the one hundred and three *zaju* dramas use, twenty-six belong to the “forty *daqu*” music taught in the Song Jiaofang.

55 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 315; Zhang Li, “Songdai jiaofang yuedui,” 66.

relatives, include (1) official slaves and maids (*guan nubi* 官奴婢), (2) official households (*guanhu* 官戶 or *fanhu* 番戶), (3) miscellaneous households (*zahu* 雜戶), (4) craftman and musician households (*gongyuehu* 工樂戶), and (5) musicians of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichang yinshengren* 太常音聲人). The Tang musicians, first subjected to the *Taichangsi* and later to both *Taichangsi* and *Jiaofang*, were basically from categories (4) and (5). The *Taichang* musicians, on the highest echelon within the *jianmin* class, could have more freedom in marriage, property allowances, and other privileges than registered musicians from category (4). For example, they could be registered in local prefects or districts, receive land from the government as commoners, marry with commoners, as well as enjoy other benefits as did commoners. The only element that differentiates a *Taichang* musician from a commoner is his long-term duty to provide music service to the government (but they could ask for retirement after a certain number of years). In comparison, musicians from category (4) could not be registered in local prefects or districts; they could only “marry with those in the same musical professions” (*dangse xianghun* 當色相婚) and were forbidden to marry with commoners or officials. Only a very small number of female musicians could be concubines of commoners or even officials after they were redeemed, that is to say, after their musician registration was paid off with a fair amount of money.⁵⁶

The issue of privately owned *jianmin* is not the emphasis of this paper, but because it helps clarify the term *hegu*, which is usually translated as “contracting” in the modern sense, it is necessary to provide some historical context for this issue. The “followers” (*suishen* 隨身), for example, a sub-group within the caste of privately owned *jianmin*, can enrich our approach to this issue. Among the four categories, i.e., (a) “privately owned slaves and maids” (*si nubi* 私奴婢), (b) “dependents” (*buqu* 部曲), (c) “female retainers” (*kenü* 客女), and (d) “followers” included in the caste of privately owned *jianmin*, the sub-groups (b), (c), and (d) are not significantly different in terms

⁵⁶ For a recent work addressing how courtesans played a role in the Song and Yuan social, marital, and moral life, especially in its gender terms among men’s life, see Beverly Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012).

of their individual rights and social status, and can all be incorporated into category (b), “dependents.” “Dependents,” like sub-group (a), were controlled by their masters; but unlike sub-group (a), they were not seen as their masters’ property, could not be sold (but could be given away to others), and could be married to commoners. The Tang laws granted the “followers” the same rights but in the meantime, demanded that they take the same responsibilities as the “dependents” and “female retainers” did; on the other hand, however, they were legally defined as inhabiting a relatively higher sub-group than the “dependents” as indicated in legal codes following such hierarchical orders as “commoners, followers, and dependents.” The Tang legal writings clearly state that “followers” are not commoners by law; instead, they were “hired” (*lin 賃*) by their masters. Once thus employed, they became, by default, members of the *jianmin* social class; their rights as commoners were legally breached, and, as a result, they could no longer claim the freedoms and rights they formerly could as commoners. In other words, by “hiring” a commoner as a “follower,” a master would not only monopolize this follower’s service, but he was also legally entitled, at least partly, to the freedoms and rights of the person he “hired.” From this perspective, at least during the “contracted” years, the “follower” was virtually a “dependent” to the master.

This perspective also sheds light on our understanding of the Southern Song *hegu* issue. To be sure, the interpretation of the term *hegu* (associated with “contracting”) should be examined with the Southern Song social and historical context, but the functional continuation of the Tang institutions, certainly the musical institution under discussion included, enables and requires an interpretation that must coincide with the Tang legal codes and institutional function, in this case, the Tang legal definition of “contracting” or “hiring” associated with the designated social class to which the registered musicians belonged. In this sense, it is more convincing to view the Song “contracting” matter in terms of the Tang legal codes and social conventions than in terms of modern social and economic norms.⁵⁷

57 The discussion on the Tang *jianmin* social class is based on Huang Xianfan 璣璠, *Tangdai shehui gailue* 唐代社會概略 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 1–65. For a detailed study centering on musicians from the same class, see Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 129–67.

Moreover, this *jianmin* social class was responsible for the teaching, production, consumption and transmission of both sacrificial and popular music. The “Baiguan zhi” 百官志 chapter of *Xin Tangshu* provides necessary information on music teaching, teacher, student, as well as such issues as the salary and promotion of musicians during the Tang dynasty.⁵⁸ Following the practice of having Music Erudites (*yinsheng boshi* 音聲博士) teach music in the Sui 隋 (581–618), the ensuing Tang government regarded music teaching highly from the very beginning.⁵⁹ The Tang Music Erudites belonged to the Court of Imperial Sacrifices including four echelons, among which, the position of Instructorial Erudite (*zhujiao boshi* 助教博士) could be held by skillful registered musicians after strict and extensive training. Once advanced to this position, the musicians could escape their *jianmin* identity and to ascend to a higher social rank. Both teachers and students were evaluated on the basis of their achievements before they were allowed to move forward in their teaching and training processes. For students, only those who could master at least the “fifty difficult melodies” (*wushi nanqu* 五十難曲) were qualified to provide their service to the court and were considered as “having completed their study” (*yecheng* 業成). In the Song, after the “four divisions [of the Jiaofang] were incorporated into one” (*sibu heyi* 四部合一), all the musicians were required to play “forty greater melodies” selected from the *Qufa* and *Qiuci* 龜茲 divisions.⁶⁰

Mastery of the required number of melodies took a fairly long time. One record mentions that to learn to play the “fifty difficult melodies” or “forty greater melodies” generally took about 1,500 days.⁶¹ Musicians came to the capital city, or more specifically, the Court of Imperial Sacrifice, the Court

58 *Xin Tangshu*, 48.1243–244. Similar contents also appear in *juan*14 of the *Tang Liudian*, see *Tang Liudian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 14.406.

59 *Suishu*, 67.1574; *Tang huiyao*, 34.623.

60 Chen Yang, *Yue shu*, *juan* 188. The Same content also appears in *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考, *juan* 146 and the *Yuzhi lülü zhengyi houbian* 御制律呂正義後編, *juan* 89. The Song Jiaofang basically followed Tang’s four-division musical institution in the beginning; then starting from some time before A.D. 1100 (when Chen Yang’s *yueshu* was completed), the four divisions were incorporated into one; at last, some time before A.D. 1235 (when the *Ducheng jisheng* was completed). The Southern Song Jiaofang became a department with thirteen divisions. For the reforms of the Song Jiaofang institution, see Zhang Li, “Songdai jiaofang yuedui,” 65–71.

61 *Tang liudian*, 14.399.

Entertainment Bureau, or probably later in the Southern Song, the Music Instruction Office, to be trained for a certain amount of time each year (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 12 months depending on how far from the capital city musicians lived) until they graduated. That means it took from four to twenty-four years in all to train a qualified musician.⁶² As for being promoted, the court players seemed to have had more opportunities due to their proximity to the center of imperial power, yet from the Tang to the Song, the majority of them were usually prevented from holding office by convention.⁶³ Some scholars hold that the Song Jiaofang musicians did not necessarily belong to a *jianmin* social class, based on a record in the “Yuezhi” chapter of *Songshi*, which says that the musician advisors could be promoted to be Temple Directors (*Miaoling* 廟令) or high ranking military officers (*Zhenjiang* 鎮將) after they were fifty years old and had served the court for at least twenty years.⁶⁴ This single bit of evidence, however, is insufficient to make the case. For example, some Tang musicians were also appointed to high ranks as military officers, as we see in the example recorded in a chapter of the *Tang huiyao*, but this change in position did not modify the legal status of the Tang musician households as part of the lowest social caste. In other words, a few exceptional cases would not change the identity of the musician households as a social class. As for the Song case, the *Songshi* clearly states that the Song inherited the Tang Jiaofang system and set up four divisions similar to that of the Tang Jiaofang from the very beginning.⁶⁵ Although later in the Southern Song dynasty, Jiaofang was not on the governmental bureau list, the Jiaofang musical institution remained. As a replacement for the department of Jiaofang, the Southern Song *jiaoyuesuo* virtually functioned largely as the Jiaofang. In a word, the Song Jiaofang was built on the musician registration system that had constantly defined musicians as *jianmin*; on this point, we do not see any dramatic change in identification of the musicians other than as being *jianmin* from the Tang to the Song dynasties.

The musical training method reflected in the Tang Jiaofang system

62 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 172–76.

63 For examples, see *Tang huiyao* vol.34 and *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 vol. 72.

64 *Songshi*, 142.3358; Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 91–93.

65 *Songshi*, 142.3347–48.

also helped to transmit the traditional Jiaofang music from one generation to another and perpetuate the function and influence of the Jiaofang system modeled upon the Tang system. After the musicians learned the standard music at *Taichangsi* or Jiaofang, some continued to play music for the court; the rest went back to serve local prefects or districts, either for the local governmental or for the military sectors.⁶⁶ All the musician households belonged to the *Taichangsi* or Jiaofang musical offices. Those who were not registered in the *Taichangsi* or Jiaofang did not have registration records at local prefects or districts. Nevertheless, the registered and actual living places were not necessarily the same. That is to say, the majority of the Tang registered musicians were registered at *Taichangsi* or Jiaofang by law, but generally lived locally. They came to the capital to receive training or provide services each year; otherwise, they lived in local prefects or districts. They could also pay for exemptions if they could not carry out their duties for such reason as illness.⁶⁷ Thus, the local musicians' musical styles were consistent with court practices. On the other hand, as members of the group of low social status were forbidden from marital relationships with people from other walks of life, and the identity and profession of registered musicians were passed down from one generation to another, it is understandable that few would voluntarily choose drama performance as their profession, as lamented in an edict issued in 619 at the beginning of the Tang dynasty:

The musicians registered in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices are nowadays those, because of their crime, banished to military or governmental offices to learn and practice music, a custom having been passed down and inherited since earlier generations. Some descendants of eminent literati families and senior officials, once tainted by this profession, would continue without change to their low status and pass it along to later generations. Their marriage ties with the literati families have been thus cut off and their registrations have remained inferior to those of commoners. It is regretful indeed that such great shame and egregious practices exist.

66 *Tang liudian*, 14.406.

67 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 141–48; 303–4.

太常樂人，今因罪謫如營署，習藝伶官，前代以來，轉相承襲。或有衣冠世緒，公卿子孫，一沾此色，後世不改，婚姻絕於士類，名籍異於編氓，大恥深疵，良可哀愍。⁶⁸

Although this edict continues to address the first Tang emperor's limited leniency toward the musicians serving the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, such generosity was not extended to all the musicians; moreover, the text clearly stipulates that even his limited leniency was not applied to "those who were assigned to musician households from the first year of the Wude era" 自武德元年以來配充樂戶者.⁶⁹ It thus goes without saying that the musician household system (the "practice having been passed down and inherited since earlier generations") continued in the newly founded dynasty. This passage relates to the issues under discussion in that the musician household system formed prior to the Tang dynasty had been passed down to the Song and later dynasties without major changes until its eradication much later in the eighteenth century.

Based on the above examination, the identity of the Song drama players becomes clear. Contrary to the argument that identifies the Song drama players as common people freed by the commercial and economic booms since late Tang, especially during the Song, and driven by profit to flock to urban areas that housed industries of entertainment, I suggest an alternative interpretation based on my investigation of the imperial musical institution, i.e., the Jiaofang system initiated before, perfected in, and continuing after the Tang dynasty. Only by situating the Song drama players in this context can we efficaciously answer such questions as who the musicians were, where they came from, and how they were trained. The musicians subject to the Jiaofang system, as shown above, were mostly from the registered musician households, a social group often associated with crime and punishment. They were required to receive their musical training from official musical authorities and to provide service to the court, local government, and military units. The institution where

68 Song Minqiu 宋敏求, *Tang Dazhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1959), 465. A similar account also appears in the *Tang huiyao*, 34.728.

69 Song Minqiu, *Tang Dazhaoling ji*, 465.

musicians were trained in rotation and took turns to provide musical service both in court and in public spaces. That is to say, the musicians as well as their descendants from registered musician households amounted to property of the state. Although exceptions might occur occasionally in that some lucky musicians were able to eliminate their identity of being registered musicians by marital relationship (mostly limited to the experience of female musicians) or even to be appointed to important governmental or military positions (limited to that of male musicians), these cases were extremely rare and were insufficient to change the identity of the musician social group as a whole. The Song drama players, like their predecessors as well as their contemporary musician and entertainer colleagues, were deprived of the freedom to choose other professions and had to be trained and later to train others in the composition, performance, and transmission of both sacrificial and popular musical works. They were the property of the state and prisoners of music; but it was their efforts that enabled the musical tradition they inherited to persist to their time and continue to prosper.

Who Owned the *Goulan* Theaters?

Now that the social class of the Song drama players has been established, it is time to further the discussion by questioning the assumption that all theaters during this time period were individually owned, usually by the performers themselves. This line of argument was introduced at the beginning of this paper, but we have not yet addressed the question as to who may have owned the theaters. Was it possible for the musician households to possess their own theaters? If it was, how? If it was not, how might we identify the owners? What was the nature of the relationship between the owners and users of these important public and imperial performance spaces?

The term for entertainment theater during the Song was *goulan*, or hooked fence,⁷⁰ a structure usually connected to the *washi* 瓦市 (tile-roofed market) pleasure precincts located in commercial markets in the booming Song urban

70 For a discussion of the linguistic term and physical form of the *goulan* theatrical structure, see Feng Yuanjun 馮沅君, *Gu ju shuo hui* 古劇說彙 (Beijing: Zuoji chubanshe, 1956), 1–6.

centers. These pleasure precincts were also called *wazi* 瓦子, *wasi* 瓦肆, *washe* 瓦舍, or *wajie* 瓦解, but it is unclear how these terms relate to one another; nor do we know exactly the origins of these terms. We can only vaguely guess, based on their connotations related to buildings, that the terms *washi*, *washe*, *wasi*, and *wazi* may have shared the same origin pertaining to structures located in urban commercial areas for entertaining purposes. Since there is no significant archaeological information on *washi* structures available to consult, scholars rely exclusively on textual evidence to glimpse what they might have looked like. It seems that from as early as the Southern Song period on the origin of this concept had already become an issue, as mentioned in the *Menglianglu*:

Washe refers to the description that “people gather like assembled roof tiles, and disperse like scattered roof tiles.” It is not known when it started being used in this way.

瓦舍者，謂其來時瓦合，去時瓦解之義，易聚易散也，不知起於何時。⁷¹

This passage may have something to do with the term *wajie* 瓦解, which seems, in contrast to the other terms mentioned, not explicitly associated with architecture. It is noticeable, however, that in transmitted literature sometimes the characters *jie* 解 and *xie* 廨 are interchangeable and again the latter is combined with *she* 舍 to denote official buildings.⁷² If this is the case, then all these different terms for the urban pleasure precinct originated from the tile-roofed buildings constructed especially for storytelling, drama performance, and other types of entertainment. This is why most scholars tend to associate *washi* or similar terms that stand for the pleasure precinct with actual buildings.⁷³ Some argue that the term *washi* may indicate a type

71 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 291. An almost identical narrative also appears in the *Duchengji sheng*; see Guanpu Naidewong, *Ducheng jisheng*, 84.

72 For example, see *Jinshu*, 92.2403 and 95.2502.

73 Cf. Zhou Yibai 周貽白, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhanshi gangyao* 中國戲曲發展史綱要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1979), 72; Shen Zu'an 沈祖安, “Shi yu Nan Song, yuan yu Hangzhou: Nan Song zaju de xingcheng” 始於南宋，源於杭州——南宋雜劇的形成, in *Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou* 南宋京城杭州, ed. Zhou Feng (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1997), 252; and Deng Shaoji 鄧紹基, “Zhongguo gudai juchangshi xu” 中國古代劇場史序, in *Zhongguo gudai juchangshi*, Liao Ben, 1–2.

of music instrument covered with tiles and thus, *washi* denotes music in general.⁷⁴ Recent scholarship attempts to tie *washe* and *goulan* with Buddhist temples as well as Sanskrit dramatic performance, either through linguistic comparison or the reinterpretation of relevant Chinese translations of Buddhist sutras. But there are also different voices contending that the selected linguistic connections and reinterpretations ignore the counter argument that the seemingly Buddhist-orientated terms—for instance, the “game enclosure” (*xichang* 戲場)—used in those interpretations as evidence are originally Chinese terms that reflect Chinese theatrical experiences and were borrowed to translate Buddhist sutras.⁷⁵

Another explanation of the origin of those terms referring to the Song pleasure precincts, first discussed during the Ming period and often held from then on, suggests that the term *washi* or *wasi* was originally a loanword associated with the term *wali* 瓦里, a Liao 遼 (907–1125) governmental office.⁷⁶ As explained in the *Liaoshi* 遼史:

Wali is the name of certain government offices. They are set up in all the tent palace and under all tribal confederations. In cases where royals, consort relatives, and senior officials commit a crime, their relatives are seized and banished to those offices.

官府名，宮帳、部族皆設之。凡宗室、外戚、大臣犯罪者，家屬沒入於此。⁷⁷

74 For example, see Wu Sheng, *Washe wenhua yu Song Yuan xiju* 瓦舍文化與宋元戲劇 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 43.

75 Kang Baocheng 康保成, “‘Washe,’ ‘goulan’ xin jie” 「瓦舍」「勾欄」新解, *Wenxue yichan* 1999.5: 38–45; Kang Baocheng, “Xichang: cong Yindu dao Zhongguo—janshuo Hanyi fojing zhong de Fanju shliao” 戲場：從印度到中國——兼說漢譯佛講中的梵劇史料, *Liaoning Shifan xueyuan xuebao* 26.11(2002): 48–55; Huang Jie 黃傑, “Washi xinyi” 瓦市新臆, *Zhongyang xiju xueyuan xuebao* 中央戲劇學院學報 108(2003): 105–9; and Huang Dahong 黃大宏, “Goulan: chuantong wenhua yu fojiao wenhua xianghu yingxiang de yige fanli—dui Kang Baocheng ‘Washe, goulan xinjie’ yiwen de zhiyi” 傳統文化與佛教文化相互影響的一個範例——對康保成「瓦舍」、「勾欄」新解一文的質疑, *Tangdu xuekan* 18.71 (2001): 85–87.

76 Liao Ben, *Zhongguo gudai juchang shi*, 40; Wang Shunu 王書奴, *Zhongguo changji shi* 中國娼妓史 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1998), 119–20.

77 *Liaoshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 116.1544.

This passage tells us that the *wali*, as official departments in charge of the relatives of certain high-status criminals, extended all over the Liao Empire. Nevertheless, those *wali* offices were not prisons. Instead, they housed the special group of people (who were not criminals but could no longer live their normal lives) as workers, servants, and entertainers for the imperial court and the princes and were therefore registered separately by the clerks called *zhuzhang langjun* 著帳郎君 (Court Attendants of Registration),⁷⁸ according to a process which may not accidentally resemble the Tang and Song Jiaofang system. The similarity between the administrative duties of the *wali* offices and the Jiaofang system, in addition to the phonological connection between *wali* and *washi* pointed out by scholars, is indeed inspiring when scholars attempt to trace the origin of the term *washi*. This linguistic inquiry may also eventually indicate who the performers were and who owned the *goulan* theaters in the Song *washi* pleasure precincts. It is possible, for instance, that the Song people adopted the Liao term *wali* with slight variation to name the pleasure precincts in big urban centers because the source of the Song *washi* entertainers was the same as that of the Liao *wali* entertainers. In this sense, the *goulan* theaters in the *washi* pleasure precincts were probably set up, owned, and controlled by the court, local prefects and administrative districts, and, later, military units.

Although not definitive, textual evidence indicates that the earliest *washi* pleasure precincts, those that appeared in the Northern Song capital city Bianliang and possibly other big cities, were controlled by the Northern Song Jiaofang entertainment bureau. An entry regarding the entertainment quarters in the *Dongjing meng hua lu* indicates that:

Since the eras of Chongning (1102–1106) and Dagan (1107–1110), entertaining performances in the pleasure precincts in the capital city have been presided over by Zhang Tingsou and Meng Zishu.

崇觀以來，在京瓦肆伎藝，張廷叟孟子書主張。⁷⁹

78 *Liaoshi*, 31.371.

79 Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, annot., *Dongjing meng hua lu zhu* 東京夢華錄注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 132.

The interpretation of this short passage has been controversial. One reading of this passage, following Feng Yuanjun's opinion, considers the term Meng Zishu 孟子書 a storytelling topic.⁸⁰ Ni Zhongzhi 倪鍾之 even thinks that it might be an early example of the Chinese *xiangsheng* 相聲 (comic dialogue) talk show.⁸¹ This faulty line of reasoning is due to a problematic punctuation method that fails to make an adequate distinction between this and its adjacent sentence.⁸² Moreover, such an interpretation also suffers from a lack of evidence that confirms the existence of such storytelling or comic talk-show topics in either of the two performance traditions. In fact, reading between lines of this passage, we can confidently conclude only that Meng Zishu is the name of a person in charge of the performances in the pleasure precincts of the Northern Song capital city Bianliang. And we do find a Meng Zishu serving in the Northern Song Court Entertainment Bureau in a collection of anecdotes compiled by the Southern Song scholar Wang Mingqing.⁸³ Meng is also mentioned as a Jiaofang musician official in the *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, a collection of manuscripts on the Song's dealing with its northern neighboring polities during the reigns of Huizong, Qinzong, and Gaozong.⁸⁴ Although further information is still needed to identify Zhang Tingsao and how he acted, either working with Meng Zishu or operating independently, it is reasonable to speculate that Zhang Tingsou, like Meng Zishu, also worked for the Jiaofang entertainment bureau. It is also probable, based on this inference, that the Song government, especially the Court Entertainment Bureau, was for a time directly in charge of the Bianliang *washi* pleasure precincts, although

80 Feng Yuanjun, *Gu ju shuo hui*, 33.

81 Ni Zhongzhi, *Zhongguo quyi shi* 中國曲藝史 (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1991), 150–52.

82 For example, it is often punctuated as such: 崇觀以來，在京瓦肆伎藝，張廷叟《孟子書》。主張小唱李師師、徐婆惜、封宜奴、孫三四等，誠其角者， suggesting that Zhang Tingsou is famous for his skills in telling stories about the Mengzi shu, writings on Mencius. See MengYuanlao 孟元老, Jiang Hanchun 姜漢椿 trans. and annot., *Dongjing meng hua lu quanyi* 東京夢華錄全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2009), 81; a similar reading of this passage also appears in MengYuanlao, *Dongjing meng hua lu*, in MengYuanlao et al, *Dongjing meng hua lu (wai si zhong)* (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 29.

83 Wang Mingqing, *Hui zhu lu* 揮塵錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2001), 99.

84 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, vol. 2, 214.

the precise nature of government control awaits further exploration.

Not only did the Northern Song Court Entertainment Bureau play a role in administering the *washi* pleasure precincts in the capital city, but he *zaju* drama players affiliated with the Court Entertainment Bureau also performed in those pleasure precincts. In a *biji* collection, the author nostalgically mentions some famous *zaju* drama performers who used to play there in some of the largest theatrical buildings called *peng* 棚 in the capital city:

In this area, the Lotus and Peony Theaters in the Middle Pleasure Precinct and the Yaksa and Elephant Theaters in the Inner Pleasure Precinct were the largest; each could hold an audience of several thousand. After people such as Ding Xianxian, Wang Tuanzi, and Zhang Qisheng played there, was there anyone else performing in those places?

內中瓦子蓮華棚、牡丹棚、里瓦子夜叉棚、象棚最大，可容數千人。
自丁先現、王團子、張七聖輩，後來可有人於此作場？⁸⁵

Among the three names mentioned here, although the identities of Wang Tuanzi and Zhang Qisheng are less than clear, Ding Xianxian, as the deputy of the Northern Song Court Entertainment Bureau from the early years of Xining (1068–1077), appears in a number of works in which a few anecdotes describe

85 Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing meng hua lu*, 14. My understanding of the second sentence of this passage emphasizes the nostalgic nature of this writing. Here the mention of the great players of the past in those enormous pleasure precincts of the lost capital city only makes the lost age more memorable, a sense of sadness compatible with the subtle nuances the whole work delivers. Stephen West offers two similar translations, in which he seems to suggest that the listed famous performers were the first group playing in those big pleasure precincts and making those places famous. An earlier version of West's translation goes, "From the generation of Ding Xianxian, Wang Tuanzi, and Seven Sages Zhang, people of later times were allowed to perform here," appearing both in his "The Emperor Sets the Pace: Court and Consumption in the Eastern Capital of the Northern Song During the Reign of Huizong," 32, and his "Recollections of the Northern Song Capital," 410. A slightly different later version ("From the time of Ding Xianxian, Wang Tuanzi, and Seven Sages Zhang many people later performed here") appears in the introduction of a collection of the translations of eleven dramas co-edited by Stephen H. West and Wilt Idema, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), xi.

his adept quibbles in communication with the Song officials.⁸⁶ For example, in the *You yu lu* 優語錄 (collection of entertainers' words) compiled by Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), it says that in the early years of the Xining era, Ding mocked the reform initiated by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) in his dramatic performance;⁸⁷ in the *Xu moke huixi* 續墨客揮犀, it says that in the ninth year (1076) of the Xining era, Ding represented the Jiaofang performing *zaju* dramas for the birthday of an imperial family member;⁸⁸ in the *Pingzhou ke tan* 萍洲可談, it says that Ding “served in the Court Entertainment Bureau for several decades” 在教坊數十年; on an occasion in his later years, when he commented that he was too old to serve the court by offering his criticism from an actor's perspective, the officials teased him for forgetting his lowly social status.⁸⁹ Although anecdotal, these materials all convey, directly or indirectly, the message that Ding Xianxian was a famous *zaju* drama performer active in the Court Entertainment Bureau for many years, especially recognized for his wit and guts in carrying forward the custom of entertainers to admonish the most powerful strata with their mimicry, pantomime, and other forms of performance. Under the assumption that the *washi* pleasure precincts must have been exclusively unofficial and commercial in nature, Liao Ben holds that Ding Xianxian could have performed in the theatric buildings mentioned in the

86 For a compilation of these anecdotes, see Wang Guowei, *You yu lu* 優語錄, in *Wang Guowei quanji* 王國維全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2009), 2:350–6; Deng Zhicheng, 67–69. Stephen West considers all these famous players from the Court Entertainment Bureau, but he does not elaborate how he reaches this conclusion. See West, “Recollections of the Northern Song Capital,” 410, 421.

87 We cannot find this anecdote in the current version of the *Tieweishan congtan* 鐵圍山叢談, as Wang Guowei suggests. It may have been included in a different version of the *Tieweishan congtan* that Wang had access to but is now lost. However, a passage in the *Tieweishan congtan* does mention Ding as the Deputy of the Court of Entertainment Bureau. See Cai Tao 蔡條, *Tieweishan congtan*, punct. and coll. Feng Huimin 馮惠民 and Shen Xilin 沈錫麟 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 5.

88 Peng Sheng 彭乘, *Xu Moke huixi*, punct. and coll. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (bound with *Moke huixi* by Peng Sheng and *Hongqing lu* 侯鯖錄 by Zhao Lingzhi 趙令峙) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 470–71.

89 Zhu Yu 朱彧, *Pingzhou ke tan*, punct. and coll. Li Weiguo 李偉國 (bound with *Houshan tancong* 後山談叢 by Chen Shidao 陳師道) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 165.

above passage only before he served the Court Entertainment Bureau. This sort of rigid demarcation between the official and unofficial entertainment sectors, with the *washi* pleasure precincts unofficial, remains questionable not only for its lack of evidence, but also for its neglect of the Jiaofang institutional function. This hypothesis would, in contrast to what Liao Ben suggests, naturally explain Ding's celebrated performances in those famous pleasure precincts when he served as the Jiaofang deputy.

In fact, extant information seems to suggest that the government may have indeed owned and administered those theatric structures, at least in the capital cities, for financial and other related purposes. For example, in the *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志 (Lin'an Gazetteer in the era of Xianchun[1265–1274]) it clearly states, as per the following text, that the *washi* pleasure precincts located both in and outside of the Southern Song capital city were set up and managed by governmental offices:

After the peace negotiations in the eleventh year (A.D. 1141) of the Shaoxing era (1131–1162), Yang Hewang became the Commander-in-chief of the Palace Command. The soldiers in his army were mostly from the west and north, therefore he ordered the erection of tile-roofed buildings at the left-hand and right-hand camps of the army, calling entertainers and musicians in and making those buildings playful places for days of leisure. Thereafter, the Palace Maintenance Office entered the city and constructed five tile-roofed buildings to house entertainment. Nowadays the *washi* buildings located outside the city walls mostly belong to the Palace Command and those located inside the city walls, to the Palace Maintenance Office.⁹⁰

紹興和議後，楊和王為殿前都指揮使。從軍士多西北人，故於諸軍寨左右營創瓦舍，招集伎樂以為暇日娛戲之地。其後修內司入於城中建五瓦以處游藝。今其屋在城外者多隸殿前司，城中者隸修內司。

90 *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* (Song Yuan difangzhi 宋元地方志 series) 1891 edition, comp. Qian Shuiyou 潛說友, 19.3549.

According to this and a similar passage in the *Menglianglu*,⁹¹ the first batch of *washe* pleasure precincts outside the Southern Song capital city Hangzhou were built and managed by the army for the purpose of entertaining that group exclusively. Later on, as the above passage describes, another five *washe* pleasure precincts were built inside the capital city, but this time by another governmental office, the Palace Maintenance Office. This organization was mainly responsible for the construction and repair of palace buildings, but the Music Instruction Office in charge of musical training, sacrificial music, and entertainment performances, was also subordinate to it as it eventually replaced the Court Entertainment Bureau. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the removal of the Court Entertainment Bureau from the governmental bureau list did not mean that the Song government no longer administered musician households, musical training, or musical services. In fact, there was merely a reformation of the function of the old Court Entertainment Bureau as it was dismembered into three divisions: the court, the military, and the capital city Prefect. As it clearly states in the above passage, those *washi* pleasure precincts inside of the capital city unambiguously belonged to the court. It should, therefore, not be surprising at all that the former Jiaofang entertainers, Ding Xianxian, for instance, performed in the *washi* theaters located inside the city.⁹²

Serving the State Enterprise

We may go even further to argue that the majority, if not all, of the entertainers, the *zaju* drama players certainly included, were controlled by

91 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 298.

92 In some recent articles, Stephen West suggests that the sharing of imperial space with common people for entertaining purposes in a urban setting not only represents the age-old political ideal for a sage ruler to share his pleasure with his subjects, but also, through the construction of urban space, reveals a new construction of relationships among the emperor, his ministers, and his people, which was closely associated with their newly developed urban life style. Opening large pleasure precincts and sending court performers to play on and be in charge of the pleasure precincts are, no doubt, compatible with this new development. See Stephen West, “Huanghou, zangli, youbing yu zhu: Dongjing meng hua lu yu dushi wenxue de xingqi,” 197–218, and his “Spectacle, Ritual, and Social Relations: The Son of Heaven, Citizens, and Created Space in Imperial Gardens in the Northern Song,” 291–321.

the court, local prefect, and military entertainment offices. This inference is based on the following observations. First, as we have discovered, the history of the imperial Chinese musical system indicates that the musician household registration, starting at least from the Northern Wei onward, served as the foundation of the official Song musical system. The Jiaofang system in the Song experienced a series of reformations, including, for example, the abolishment and restoration of its name, and then its administrative responsibilities being divided and shared by three sectors (the court, the capital city Prefect, and the military) following the political and military vicissitudes of the Song dynasties. According to this system, musicians and entertainers were almost exclusively from the registered musician households, which were generated through a long-standing legal practice aimed at punishing criminals, especially humiliated officials and their family members. The musician households were registered specifically, defined as a group of lowly social status, and separated from the rest of the society by being allowed merely to marry their own peers and being not allowed to choose other professions.⁹³ Music and entertainment had been almost exclusively created and transmitted through this group of government-owned *jianmin* despised by people of higher status and, as a result, the general public was deterred from professional involvement in music or drama.

Secondly, the government also limited the general public's engagement in music or entertainment. One rationale explaining the government's disparaging attitude towards musicians and entertainers lies in the registered musician households' association with crime and punishment. Another reason for the government to discourage the public from choosing this profession is evidently connected with the concerns of social morality. As reiterated in different contexts, it was a law that the entertainers, except for a very limited number who worked for the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, could not marry people from other walks and those who were not a registered musicians usually must lower

93 For a later example of this sort, see the edicts of a Yuan emperor collected in the *Da Yuan shengzheng guochao dianzhang*, in which it clearly states that neither officials nor commoners were allowed to marry the musicians. See *Da Yuan shengzheng guochao dianzhang* 大元聖政國朝典章 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1998), 18.719–20.

their social status to marry entertainers from registered musician households.⁹⁴

The Song-period drama “A Playboy from a Noble House Opt[s] for the Wrong Career” serves as a good illustration in this regard. It tells that during the reign of Emperor Shizong of Jin 金世宗 (r. 1161–1189), the son of an Associate Administrator (*Tongzhi* 同知) of the Henan Prefecture fell in love with a *zaju* drama actress and, in order to marry the actress, he had to give up all his social privileges and join that dramatic troupe.⁹⁵ Although literature cannot be taken as a historical record, there is ample information in this piece not only describing the low social status of the dramatic performers, but also indicating that having marriage ties with the dramatic performers constituted a sacrifice with both social and economic consequences for a scion of officialdom.

Accusations against entertainers appear frequently in the “Lunyue” 論樂 chapter of the *Tang huiyao*. It is said that entertainers were blamed for the decline of dynasties and that roving entertainers were forbidden to perform in the public square, so as to keep the villagers from being corrupted.⁹⁶ This ban seems to have remained consistent and been passed down all the way to later periods, as we see in an early Yuan legal account recording the punishments for leaders of a group of northern villagers who had tried to learn drama performance. The villagers admitted their misconduct and the ban against training to perform and performing dramas was strictly enforced:

With the exception of those properly registered musicians, in all cases in which male members of good families, rural or urban, refuse to engage in their proper occupations, and instead learn and practice miscellaneous music and lyrical tales, they should be banned from doing so.⁹⁷

除係籍正色樂人外，其餘農民市戶良家子弟，若有不務本業，習學散樂、搬說詞話人等，並行禁約。

94 Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 129–67.

95 Qian Nanyang 錢南揚, *Yongle dadian sanzong xiwen jiaozhu* 永樂大典三種戲文校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 219–55.

96 *Tang huiyao*, 34.623–32; for the ban of roving musicians performing in villages, see *Tang huiyao*, 34.629.

97 *Da Yuan shengzheng guochao dianzhang*, 57.2103. These words are among the suggestions that were adopted by the policy makers and included in the laws.

Such tight control of the musical and entertaining activities reflected in the above passage also re-enforces the first point about the separation hierarchy of social classes and the policing of social practices that issued from the criminalization of this artistic expression. In a word, both the identity and the profession were inevitably degraded. Guided by such social norms, it became understandable that although the art that the musicians created was enjoyable, the musicians themselves were condemned for the low moral standard they represented.⁹⁸

Finally, I suspect that the *washi* entertainers, like the registered female entertainers working in the drinking houses and elsewhere (more details will be provided later when necessary), were cheap laborers monopolized by both the government and the military for the purpose of profit. To facilitate this process, female musicians from the registered households were trained in rotation and, in return, they provided their services not only to entertain the court members, officials, soldiers, and the public at government-sponsored festivals, but also to make money for both the government and military bureaus by performing on the stages set up and managed by the government and the army.

To clarify this point, first, we return to the passage cited from the *Lin'an Gazetteer* in the era of Xianchun about the initial construction of the *washi* pleasure precincts in and outside of the Southern Song capital city Lin'an. Notwithstanding the fact that it was for the purpose of fulfilling the military need that the first *washi* pleasure precincts were erected outside of the capital city walls, we should not take for granted that those *washi* pleasure precincts were exclusively established for the northerners, the majority, in the army. We should, instead, consider that all soldiers were eligible to entertain themselves at the *washi* performances that included music, storytelling, drama, and other artistic displays. Moreover, according to an entry in the *Dongjing meng hua lu*, the military-controlled *washi* pleasure precincts were also open to the public, even selling candy and snacks to attract women and children when the

98 The public attitudes toward musicians and entertainers in general reflect and are closely associated with the contemporary social, moral, and intellectual trends. For example, the promotion of male loyalty and female fidelity during the Southern Song unsurprisingly affected people's attitudes toward courtesans and entertainers. For this point, see Beverly Bossler, *Cult of Female Fidelity*, 161–289.

entertainers were about to perform.⁹⁹ In another Song *biji* collection, we learn that even those itinerant performers (*luqi* 路岐), whose performance skills were considered secondary in comparison with the *washi* entertainers, could also find access to the military camps to perform.¹⁰⁰

We should also be aware that those *washi* pleasure precincts may have been built to entertain the soldiers, but the entertainment may not have been free to them. In fact, the Song military personnel, employed by the government, had fairly decent salaries and benefits and seemed to have constituted a significant contingent of entertainment consumers. Dramatic and other forms of performance in those military-managed *washi* pleasure precincts, like the army's other types of business, such as selling wine and running hotels, brought considerable wealth to the military.¹⁰¹ For these reasons, it may not be farfetched to assume that those military *washi* pleasure precincts, despite their initial purpose, aimed to incur a profit for the army by targeting both the soldiers and the public. There is little doubt, either, that the *washi* pleasure precincts built by the Palace Maintenance Office inside the city walls were also open to the public.

The extant literature on the Song musician households does suggest that the construction of those pleasure precincts was a business run by the government on the basis of the musician household registration system. That the registered musicians played a significant role in the *washi* pleasure precincts, a government-controlled enterprise, may be better illustrated when compared with the sing-song girls working in the government-managed drinking houses. The history of registered female musicians serving the court, local government, and the army probably started along with the emergence of musician household registration system. In the early Tang era these women were called *gongji* 宮妓 (palace female entertainers), *guanji* 官妓 (official female entertainers), and *yingji* 營妓 (barrack female entertainers), respectively. Though changes occurred in this system over time, one thing

99 Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing meng hua lu*, 23.

100 Xihulaoren, *Xihulaoren fansheng lu*, 119–20.

101 Zhang Tongsheng 張同勝, “Songdai mubing zhi yu washe goulan de xingsheng” 宋代募兵制與瓦舍勾欄的興盛, *Heze xueyuan xuebao* 30.6 (2008):91–94.

remained remarkably consistent; that is, the female entertainers, who almost exclusively came from the registered musician households, were handily exploited by the government, either as prostitutes or as servants being placed in governmentally run programs to serve clients in order to fulfill their duty as registered musicians.¹⁰² For example, in the southern Song, in order to add more income into the state revenue, the Ministry of Revenue (*Hubu* 戶部), the department in charge of the Palace Maintenance Office that built the *washi* pleasure precincts inside the Southern Song capital city in early Southern Song, sent sexually attractive female entertainers to the government-owned drinking houses with the aim to increase wine sales. The following entry in a *biji* source compiled during the Song clearly illustrates the situation after listing nearly a dozen representative drinking houses located in the capital city:

The above were government-owned wine-houses under the Wine Department of the Board of Revenue. Each wine-house had dozens of official female entertainers and drinking vessels in gold and silver weighing a thousand ounces (*liang*) for use by drinking customers. In each wine-house several of them [female entertainers] were on duty, known as *xiafan*. When drinking customers ascended the upper stories of the wine-house, they would summon them as drinking companions by calling out their names on the nameplates on display; it was called “making one’s choices according to nameplates.” On the night of the fifteenth of the first month, all the female entertainers who were on duty swapped their wine-houses. During night service, each of them wore a wreath decked out with apricot flowers while sitting precariously on a flower stand. However, famous courtesans all hid deep inside secret pavilions—they were not easily summoned.

以上並官庫屬戶部點檢所。每庫設官妓數十人，各有金銀酒器千兩以供飲客之用。每庫有祇直者數人，名曰下番。飲客登樓，則以名牌點喚侑樽，謂之點花牌。元夕諸妓皆併番互移他庫。夜賣各戴杏花冠兒，危坐花架。然名娼皆深藏隧閣，未易招呼。¹⁰³

102 Huang Xianfan, *Tangdai shehui gailue*, 79–88; Kishibe, *Tangdai yinyue shi*, 363–459.

103 Sishui Qianfu 泗水潛夫, *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事, in *Dongjing meng hua lu (wai si zhong)*, Meng Yuanlao et al. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 441.

This passage vividly describes how registered female entertainers worked for the governmental wine houses. According to this passage, the author seems to have the impression that “in the beginning the governmental tax income did not depend on (wine selling) and at this moment such scenes merely reflected an adorned picture of peace and prosperity” 官中趁課，初不藉此，聊以粉飾太平耳。¹⁰⁴ Another Song *biji* work, however, unmistakably points out that the purpose of sending those “extraordinary official female entertainers” (*guanming jiaoji* 官名角妓) to the wine houses was merely “to try their best to sell wine” (*shefa maijiu* 設法賣酒) there.¹⁰⁵ It is also clear that, according to this source, the court allowed the Ministry of Revenue to keep part of the profit made through wine selling, especially during the Qingming 清明 (purity and brightness, i.e., the Tomb-sweeping Day) and the Zhongqiu 中秋 (mid-autumn, i.e., the Moon Festival), the markers of the beginning of two special wine brewing seasons.¹⁰⁶ In order to increase profits, registered female entertainers played a fairly noticeable role in the wine rituals. The celebrations, which culminated with parades that focused on the sexual attraction of the female entertainers, were organized by the Wine Department. The parade usually started from the military drill grounds of the prefects or districts, attracting people on the way to the major drinking houses owned by the government, and ended with a long-lasting, merry drinking party. The parade so ostentatiously featured the female entertainers that throughout the procession, even the well-dressed officials had to follow the team of female entertainers divided into three tiers marked by the ranks of their beauty and the quality and colors of their regalia.¹⁰⁷ It is also worth noting that *zaju* dramas and various acrobatic shows joined in this ritual of advertising wine selling too, since they were performed by the same group of people who all belonged to the Ministry of Revenue.¹⁰⁸ However poor or poorly-behaved they might be on ordinary days, all female entertainers were ordered to dress themselves up for the wine-selling advertising parade, either by borrowing or renting the regalia required for the

104 Sishui Qianfu, *Wulin jiushi*, 441.

105 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 214.

106 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 213.

107 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 149.

108 Li Xiaolong and Zhao Rui, *Wulin jiushi*, 80; Guanpu Naideweng, *Ducheng jisheng*, 93.

ritual; otherwise “they would be blamed and punished, and forced to do it twice” 責罰而再辦.¹⁰⁹

The efforts made by the Wine Department were paid off by bountiful returns. Although the price of wine sold in the official houses was usually higher than in privately-owned drinking establishments, the government-managed wine selling apparently ran very well with the help of the registered female entertainers. As mentioned in a Song *biji* work, “the daily earning in wine sales managed by the Wine Department amounts to several hundred thousand cash” 點檢所酒息日課以數十萬計.¹¹⁰ For example, in the tenth year (1077) of the Xining era, the tax income for wine sales was as high as 13.6 million string cash, exceeding the business tax profit for that year. The capital city alone contributed over 400,000 string cash to the overall wine sale tax. Besides, a fair amount of money went to the local prefects and districts without being taxed or being included in the annual budget, so the local government could rather freely utilize the money.¹¹¹ All these details seem to suggest that enlarging the tax avenue for the central government and seeking profit for local prefects and districts had been major forces driving the strong promotion of wine sales organized by the Wine Department. The organization of registered available female entertainers to attract customers, which cost little under the musician household registration system, highlights the government’s exploitative efforts in this regard.

I suspect that the *washi* pleasure precincts were built for similar economic reasons. Unlike the tax income from wine selling, the official data on the profit made in the *washi* pleasure precincts is unavailable. Nevertheless, the lack of quantitative data in this regard does not negate the possibility that the government profited from building and managing the *washi* pleasure precincts. In fact, as described in the wine brewing and selling parade, *zaju* drama performance also played a role in that ritual and contributed to the increase in wine sales and tax-related profits. A *washi* pleasure precinct was

109 Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 149.

110 Sishui Qianfu, *Wulin jiushi*, 450. For the prices of some of the wines, see MengYuanlao, *Dongjing meng hua lu*, 12.

111 Zhang Shoujun 張守軍, *Zhongguo gudai de fushui yu laoyi* 中國古代的賦稅與勞役 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1998), 97; Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 203.

a complex designed to consist of entertainment quarters, restaurants, and shops; entertaining activities would certainly help boost the business inside the complex and indirectly contribute to an increase in tax income for the government. Viewed from this perspective, the contribution of the pleasure precincts to governmental prosperity seemed to have been infrastructural.

Notwithstanding the infrastructural nature of the pleasure precincts and the lack of direct statistical data testifying to the actual earnings they brought to the government, money was also generated directly from the performance of *zaju* drama and other types of entertaining performances. Although scattered, related information surviving in literature rather clearly tells that the audience had to pay for the performances they wanted to watch. For example, in the “A Country Bumpkin Knows Naught of the Theater,” the countryman paid two hundredcash to watch the *goulan* dramatic performance.¹¹² In a fifteenth-century Korean textbook of Chinese conversation, it mentions that the entrance fee at a *goulan* theater was five cash.¹¹³ Both of the sources are dated to the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), but the prices here are not comparable.¹¹⁴ These may result either from the difference in location or period reflecting the difference of entertainment cost, or from the nature of literary presentation that is not necessarily in accordance with the exact cost of watching a *goulan* performance, but suffice it to prove that people indeed paid an entrance fee to enter the *goulan* theater.

We do not know, however, whether all the money paid as the entrance fee to the *goulan* theaters went to the government or not. It is understandable that the performers also needed money to survive and to support their families, but according to the stipulation of belonging to registered musician households, the entertainers were obliged to serve the government for a certain period of time each year without being paid. Therefore, it is possible that on principle,

112 He Xinhui 賀新輝, ed., *Yuanqu jingpin jianshang cidian* 元曲精品鑑賞辭典 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003), 17–18.

113 *Pak T'ongsa ōnhae* 朴通事諺解, in *Nogŏltae ōnhae. Pak T'ongsa ōnhae* 老乞大諺解·朴通事諺解 (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1978), 139.

114 For the dating of the *Pak T'ongsa ōnhae*, see Zhu Dexi 朱德熙, “‘Laoqida yanjie’ ‘Putongshi yanjie’ shuhou” 《老乞大諺解》《普通事諺解》書後, *Beijing daxue xuebao* 1958.2: 69–75.

those *goulan* performers performed without being paid, at least during their turn of service. How this was carried out under this principle, however, could be rather flexible. For example, as the following passage shows, some registered entertainers could be exempted from their stipulated military service by paying a certain amount of money to the officials to “hire” replacements for themselves:

Barrack female entertainers were *goulan* female entertainers on duty by turns. Each one of them was on duty for a month in a given year. Later, they often used the money they amassed to hire replacements through officials.

軍妓，以勾欄妓輪值之，歲各入值一月。後多斂資給吏胥購代者。¹¹⁵

This could have been the model indicating how some registered musician households fulfilled their duties during the Song. Like the *goulan* female performers who might pay for an exemption from serving the military, registered musician households could buy their way out of the labor of *goulan* performance if they so desired and had enough money. In other words, money and duties were exchangeable on the basis of the registered musician households’ willingness and financial means. This model may have well served the interests of both the government and the registered musician households. It not only helped the registered musician households find a way to buy their time to do businesses other than music and performance that they were not good at and helped the government hire and subsidize superior entertainers working in the *washi* pleasure precincts, but it also brought more income to the government.

This model also explains the *hegu* issue, i.e., the phenomenon of governmental employment of “indentured” entertainers, discussed in the beginning of this paper and elsewhere. If the abovementioned hypothesis that money was exchanged for the exemption of duty stands, the musicians listed under the category *hegu* in the *Wulin jiushi* entry about the court musicians

115 Yu Yue 俞樾, *Chaxiangshi congchao* 茶香室叢鈔, ed. Zhen Fan 貞凡, et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 9.1622.

must have been hired with the money from the registered musician households that paid for their absence. The Palace Maintenance could hire either those who belonged or did not belong to the registered musician households, but in consideration of the low social status of Tang and Song musicians and people's pejorative attitude towards the musical professions, the number of non-registered musicians would be understandably limited. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that most of the "contracted" entertainers would be registered musicians trained in the Jiaofang system. By the same token, some individuals or family troupes were able to "occupy" certain *goulan* theaters for decades, making a living by performing there.

The entrance fee and the monetary form that some registered musician households used to exchange for the exemption of their yearly duties might have been considerable, but in comparison with the profit that the Palace Maintenance and the military may have made in managing those urban center pleasure precincts, exemption fees were unlikely a major source of wealth for the government or the military. The Xiangguo Monastery 相國寺 pleasure precinct, for example, might already have occupied an important commercial trade spot some time before the Song, but it clearly became one of the noticeably profitable *washi* pleasure precincts in the early Northern Song dynasty, as one source mentions:

The Xiangguo Monastery of the Eastern Capital [i.e., Bianliang] was a *washi*. The monks' dorms were scattered. In the central courtyard, the space between the two wings could hold ten thousand people. Travelling traders doing business all gathered in the Monastery. Those who flocked to the capital with goods to sell and in search of goods to resell must pass through here.

東京相國寺乃瓦市也。僧房散處，中庭兩廡可容萬人。凡商旅交易，皆萃其中。四方趨京師以貨物求售轉售他物者，必由於此。¹¹⁶

116 Wang Yong 王 , *Yanyi yimou lu* 燕翼貽謀錄 (Bound with *Mo ji* 默記 by Wang Zhi 王銍) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 20.

This monastery's longtime prosperity as a commercial center is due to its connection to the imperial court as well as its location and its great capacity that allowed merchants to conveniently store and trade their goods. For example, following the above passage, it says that in the second year of the Zhidao 至道 era (995–997), Emperor Taizong 宋太宗 (r. 976–997) ordered the reconstruction of the three gates of this monastery and bestowed upon it the insignia of the Xiangguo Monastery in his own hand, a public display of not only governmental authority but also imperial favor towards this monastery.¹¹⁷ This endorsement certainly brought considerable income to this pleasure precinct. According to one of the Song *biji* works, the Xiangguo Monastery *washi* pleasure precinct opened five times a month and “myriad people traded there,” exchanging commodities ranging from jewelry and artworks to rare species of birds and animals, daily utensils, and religious items.¹¹⁸ Although it is unclear whether or not there were monastery-owned stores in this precinct, there is little doubt that the monastery could profit by renting its properties, as the Puqing Monastery 普慶寺 did:

The east wing was linked to the kitchens and wells; the west wing was linked to the gathering place of the multitudes. The market therein is comprised of rows of stalls. The monthly rents collected from them provided the income upon which the Monastery depended.

東廡通庖井，西廡通海會，市為列肆，月收僦贏，寺須是資。¹¹⁹

The above passage from a stele inscription composed by Yao Sui 姚燧 (1238–1313), a literatus active in late Southern Song and early Yuan, describes the layout of Puqing Monastery renovated and expanded during the reign of Emperor Wuzong 元武宗 (r. 1307–1311). According to another stele inscription written by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322), the newly renovated Puqing Monastery had about six hundred rooms;¹²⁰ the rental income of a

117 Wang Yong, *Yanyi yimou lu*, 20.

118 Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing meng hua lu*, 19.

119 Yao Sui 姚燧, *Muan ji* 牧庵集, *Congshu jicheng* 叢書集成 edition (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 129.

120 Zhao Mengfu, *Songxuezhai ji* 松雪齋集 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1991), 14b.

portion of those rooms was sufficient to support the daily expenses of the whole monastery.

In comparison with the Puqing Monastery, the Xiangguo Monastery must have been superior commercial center in terms of gross profits. It was a fairly lucrative business to house merchants and other travelers and to store their goods in the monastery, especially the latter, which may have helped the merchants avoid taxation because monasteries were exempt from such fees.¹²¹ We then have evidence to conclude that the *washi* pleasure precincts controlled by the army and the court operated in a similar pattern. The Song government monopolized wine, tea, and salt businesses and local merchants had to travel to the capital city to acquire products gathered there to sell or to purchase governmental permits to trade certain commodities. Extensive trading activities occurred in the capital city both seasonally and on a daily basis. Tax-free storage facilities for merchandise were certainly attractive to businessmen. In fact, compared with the Buddhist monasteries, both the Palace Command and the Palace Maintenance Office were privileged to help merchants in this regard and, therefore, were more appealing to the merchants.¹²² The *washi* pleasure precincts constructed by both Palace Command and the Palace Maintenance Office apparently facilitated the needs of both sides: the army or the Palace Maintenance Office on the one side; the merchants, tied with its connection to the imperial court and military quarters, on the other. The *goulan* performances, forming part of a complex scheme to increase income for both the military and the Palace Maintenance Office, also helped attract and entertain merchants and shoppers and thus made the *washi* pleasure precincts flourishing markets.

Conclusion

Centered on the history of the musician household registration system and the relationship between the registered musicians and the Court Entertainment

121 Huang Minzhi 黃敏枝, “Songdai siyuan de gongshangye jingying” 宋代寺院的工商業經營, *Songshi yanjiu ji* 宋史研究集 17 (Taipei: Guoli bianyi guan, 1988), 355–96.

122 The Song military involvement in commerce serves as a good example in this regard; see Liang Gengyao 梁庚堯, “Nan Song de junying shangye” 南宋的軍營商業, *Songshi yanjiu ji* 宋史研究集 32 (Taipei: Guoli bianyi guan, 2002), 317–89.

Bureau that the registered musicians were subject to, this paper offers a different view on the identity of those Song drama players as well as their role in the *washi* pleasure precincts. First, rather than considering the *zaju* drama performers as individuals liberated by governmental commercial boom or personal financial success from their lands, this paper identifies them as part of the registered musician households, a subgroup of people stigmatized by profession and differentiated from the rest of society because of the crimes committed by one or multiple members of their families. This system was evidently established in the Northern Wei dynasty at the latest, and was steadily transmitted to later Chinese dynasties until its abolishment in the eighteenth century. Under this long-lasting system, the musicians, *zaju* drama performers included, were restricted from changing their lowly social status or profession by marriage ties with people from other walks of life. In other words, their social identity as registered musicians was transferred from one generation to another, except in a very limited number of cases where one could luckily break this karma by advancing themselves to serve the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (an option limited to males) or be taken as a concubine (an option limited to females) of commoners or officials. Usually associated with crime and prostitution, the registered musicians represented low social status and degraded morality, which deterred the rest of society from joining in their profession, although the service that they provided became more and more popular following the expansion of urbanization and commercialization in the Tang and Song dynasties.

Secondly, this paper argues that the *goulan* theaters located in the *washi* pleasure precincts were not the property of individual actors or actresses, as some scholars suggest, but were profitable government-owned and managed stages on which the registered musicians performed. Neither the military nor the court set up these pleasure precincts and the stages for nothing. Both the military and the governmental office, court or local, targeted the audience for profit, which was generated both by the entrance fee that the audience paid and by the business related to the pleasure precincts. Since information is too limited regarding either of these two means of acquiring wealth to allow a meaningful analysis as to exactly how the direct and indirect profit that

the *goulan* performers generated contributed to the military and the court, I employ the wine-sale model and the monastery-derived economic model to illustrate the possible ways that the military and the government may have managed the *washi* pleasure precincts for the purposes of financial gain. In this regard, I argue that the contribution of the *goulan* entertainers to the *washi* economy was more accessorial and infrastructural (by attracting and comforting businessmen) than directly pumping cash to the military and relevant governmental offices.

In the illustration of the above two points, this paper reaches its final conclusion that for over a millennium of Chinese imperial history, the musical tradition, both ritualistic and popular, was transmitted via a social class of nearly the lowest social status that was rather strictly and steadily maintained by the government through the musician household registration system. Notwithstanding their low social status, the registered musicians were not necessarily people of low birth; instead, a fair number of them were victims of the law that extended punishment to the relatives of criminals. Once registered as musician household members, they existed as property of the state and the prisoners of music—their and their children's and grand-children's future was mostly predicated often by crimes distant in time and relation, and they were destined to be the government's or the army's cheap laborers, entertainers, prostitutes, and pimps—but simultaneously, creators and transmitters of the state music. They were legally designated as base and immoral creatures to entertain both the human domain and a ritualized heaven supposed to issue its mandate to the human domain underneath.

國家的財產，音樂的囚徒： 宋代雜劇演員的身分及他們在 瓦市中的角色之研究

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宋雜劇研究中有一種過於簡化但被廣泛接受的假設，那就是雜劇演員都是平民百姓：由於自晚唐以來經濟和商業的繁榮，一部分人得以從農業生產中解放出來，並自願地選擇雜劇演出作為其謀利的手段。本文就是針對這一假設作出的回應。文中對於自南北朝至兩宋時期持續幾百年的樂戶制度作了深入探討，並在此基礎上對宋代雜劇演員的身分及其在瓦市經濟中的角色和地位作出推測，認為不僅在勾欄中演出的大部分雜劇演員出身於樂戶，接受政府培訓，為政府服務，不能自由改變樂籍身份，而且從皇室到相關政府部門及軍隊系統都在大都市，尤其是都城，設有瓦市，並利用瓦市操縱藝人為其權酒及其它政府控制的商業經濟活動服務以從中牟利。

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